

Playcentre

Journal



ISSUE 149

Autumn 2014

A Mōteatea for Playcentre

Redesigning Playcentre – War toys in Playcentre
Natural Play – Parents as educators





Wainuiomata Playcentre Playcentre
(Hutt Association)



Totara Park Playcentre
(Hutt Association)

It has been a humbling privilege to attend national meetings, over the past twelve months as Journal Editor, and be involved in the korero and planning that help to keep Playcentre running and to shape its' future.

Before I became involved at a national level, I had always thought of the Playcentre Federation as being a 'them'. Some hierarchy of folk who pulled levers and pushed knobs, but who were probably removed from centres and weren't aware of the issues that we face each day.

Attending national meetings has shown me that that 'them' is simply a group of our mums (and some dads) who are so passionate and committed to what Playcentre has to offer our children and communities, that they volunteer their time and skills to ensure that Playcentre will still be around as an option for our children and their children.

As an organisation, Playcentre is unique in that we are parent led and that we work as a consensus. To come to the best decisions for Playcentre, however, we all need to be involved as unfortunately there are no magic 'them' to make decisions if we don't.

I love the stories that our members share with us about their journey through Playcentre and how much being a member of this Federation has meant to them and their tamariki. Please keep them coming.

Marama Mateparae, Playcentre Journal Editor

Playcentre Journal Cooperative: Marama Mateparae (Western Bay of Plenty Association), Sue Easther (Waikato Association), and Emma Woods (Canterbury Association).

EDITORIAL

Contributions of written pieces, illustrations and photographs are welcome either by post to 502 Reid Road, RD 7, Te Puke 3187, or by email to pcjournal@gmail.com; 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. You can download the permission form from <http://playcentre.org.nz/pressdocs/115.pdf>. The Journal was edited by Marama Mateparae, who is supported by the Journal cooperative.

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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! For future issues we are looking for submissions on:

- Children's long term projects
- The importance of rough-housing for boys
- Mat time at Playcentre – why we don't use it and why we don't need it
- How to make time to do Course 3 and Course 4
- How skills learned from being a Playcentre member have translated to jobs in the 'real' world
- The unwritten rules and unexamined assumptions within Playcentre
- Professional Development Day at conference

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Charlize Moore, Waihi Playcentre,

Thames Valley/Coromandel Association

Building a garden

A community grant from the “Keep Waitakere Beautiful Clean Trust” has helped the new Ranui Playcentre establish a community garden.

The grant of \$500 has allowed the centre to purchase everything needed for our community garden including equipment for both adults and tamariki, beetroot, strawberries, courgettes, peas, broccoli, silverbeet, tomatoes, passionfruit, cauliflower, capsicums, potatoes and herbs. We wanted our children to learn about how things grow and what we need to do to look after them. We also wanted to create a stronger sense of community, to create a space where everyone could contribute, benefit and provide a sense of belonging.

Ranui Playcentre runs three general sessions each week, two CYCLE sessions (drop off sessions, for three-year-olds and older, for all centres of Te Akoranga) and one Himawori playgroup (Japanese Families learning traditions). We all contribute to the up keep of this garden, including planting, weeding, watering and harvesting. A roster system assigns and delegates jobs to each group to look after certain vegetables. The community garden has brought together everyone who uses our centre, creating a sense of responsibility and greater care in looking after our building.

I wanted to share our story, especially



with struggling centres. The new Ranui Playcentre was really struggling – we had low membership and our building was not very welcoming. With a small group of strong, dedicated parents who put in some hard work, we have cleaned up our centre. We have added a roof over our deck, with drop down curtains, and utilised PD workers to help with painting and cleaning

rubbish from in and around our centre . With relicensing ahead of us our work is not yet done! Our building needs to be extended and our kitchen replaced but our mighty little centre is growing, we have a strong sense of community and a lot of aroha. I am proud to part of Playcentre, whānau tupu ngātahi!

Liz Harawira, Ranui Playcentre,
Te Akoranga Association



The bulls are back in town again



Herekino Playcentre is tucked behind the local school in a small rural farming community west of Kaitiāia in the far north. We are comfortably situated in large expansive grounds with stunning views of the local mountains and the Herekino state forest.

I have been involved with Playcentre for nearly three years and am currently Centre President, acting Secretary and Education Officer at our centre. I quickly finished Course one, two, and three within two years of beginning my Playcentre journey and this year have enrolled in Course four. I am also a Playcentre workshop facilitator. Study, observation and writing for Playcentre courses, prompted me to enrol in extramural study at Massey University in Sociology this year.

My daughter, Hannah, who is four-years-old thrives at Playcentre and enjoys attending other centres when I am there at meetings and workshops. Hannah's interaction and socialisation with other children has benefitted and her behaviour when fully occupied displays all preferred characteristic strands of Te Whāriki. This year will be Hannah's last year of attendance at Herekino Playcentre before heading off to school.

In 2013, I was involved in applying for funding to build a new implement shed and a shade sail to cover our swing area. With the support of past members and Centre Support, our new shade sails were ready when ERO officers came to visit our centre, and they were the first to set up our swings under them.

The next big mission for Herekino Playcentre is to make an application for funding for a safe fence around our centre. This is urgently required, not so much to keep our children, in but to keep the two resident Angus bulls, who live just through the current wire fence, out! Whenever we have visitors and new children to our centre we have to warn them that "these are not show bulls who get led around the ring at the local A&P shows", rather they are breeding bulls. At certain times of the year they can become rather frisky and also aggressive. During October, November and December the bulls are taken away to be put with a herd of cows for breeding in but the rest of the year are in their paddock next to our centre.

One of the bulls is affectionately called "Romeo" by his owner who named him this due to his fence jumping antics to serenade would be neighbouring heifers. Romeo once jumped the fence and left large deep

hoof marks and other territorial markings everywhere around our centre (including the sandpit). Fortunately this incident did not happen during a session – as that folks, is no bull!

Our children love learning about these animals and ask who? what? where? why? and how? about these huge animals. Why are they in the paddock by themselves away from other cows? Why can't we pat them? Why aren't we allowed near the fence when they are nearby? I have observed several children self-initialising extended play regarding the bulls by creating fences and yards with the wooden blocks in centre and penning plastic animals pretending to be "Mr or Mrs Farmer". Children have also painted these creatures in their artworks.

Hannah and I enjoy Playcentre very much, it has enriched our lives and brought us into contact with like-minded and interesting people as well as meeting lifelong friends. We feel a great sense of belonging to our centre and local school, we live locally in the village and keep ourselves busy with family, study and centre commitments, the school, and of course our small farm. We Love Playcentre!

Natasha Leef, Herekino Playcentre,
Far North Playcentre Association

Heart matters

O hau Playcentre has been part of the Heart Foundation Healthy Heart Award for years. We have recently achieved the renewal of our Harakeke or gold level award. Last year we won the Health and Safety section of the Electra Business Awards. We believe in adding active play and encouraging healthy eating almost every day but very recently I have seen how important the Heart messages are for adults too.

I thought I was doing the right things. My BMI, that's body mass index, (only 5% of New Zealanders are within the guidelines) was ok, my cholesterol was ok, I exercised three or four times a week – just walking the dog and didn't drink much alcohol. I thought I was looking after my heart. But I saw the reminder to have a heart check-up and made an appointment – my blood pressure was up a little; I thought it was the result of some stresses at Playcentre and was sent for an ECG. I was told I had developed a heart murmur, nothing serious it was thought so I continued on as I had been doing. Pains in my chest when walking sent me back to my Doctor and referral to the cardio clinic in Palmerston North hospital followed. There an echo-cardiogram showed something more serious and I was warned about exercising and not to leave my cell phone at home ever! Now I was worried.

I had reason to be – a visit to the specialist informed me that I needed a heart valve replacement. An angiogram eight days later allowed me to see how much the valve was failing – I actually watched the dye/blood squirt back into my heart chamber when it should have been off round my body. A referral for surgery using words like 'sever' and 'urgent' arrived shortly after this. My planned holiday to Australia for my sister's wedding was cancelled. I was on the waiting list. Meanwhile I kept on working right up to the end of the year looking back I don't how I did it. I arrived home exhausted each



evening, I was deteriorating, losing mobility and getting breathless far more often – the rapid decline surprised everyone.

Surgery happened suddenly when I made it up the list "be in tomorrow." My surgeon was a Playcentre dad so it felt like family. Open heart surgery is major and can have complications but even so I was out of hospital in five days with nothing but the highest praise for the staff – that's all of them in Wellington Hospital. Two weeks later I visited my Playcentre to celebrate Heart Week and try to inform more people about the value of having a heart check (men from 35 years and women from 45 years). We dissected hearts, made healthy food and had the local paper down to record our efforts. Under four weeks out from surgery and I am back running SPACE.

I consider I am one of the lucky ones. I know that if I hadn't had that check, I was likely to have had a heart attack. I now have a mechanical valve in my aorta and will have to take Warfarin (a blood thinning drug) for



life but I can expect to live a long one with due care. I am walking the dog once more.

So the message here is 'support our children' and 'care for our Playcentre families' be it grandparents, parents or staff by reminding them of the need to have regular heart checks. Stay healthy. Encourage your centre to join the Healthy Heart Award as part of our wellbeing goals.

Rowena Bullen, Ohau Playcentre,
Central Districts Association



On Yer Bike!

Our 20-month-old son Noah walked excitedly into Playcentre with his backpack on his back full of kai and hopped on one of the plastic motorbikes. He was still on it one hour later having very happily cruised round outside stopping here and there to watch proceedings then zooming off to his next destination which may have been down the ramp from the sandpit edge, a feat which required mastering the skill of independently lifting his bike up the lip or it may have been having a quick paint at the easel ...

After seeing Noah gain so much obvious enjoyment from the plastic motorbike, I got to thinking about how much our children have gained from the various bikes (different sized plastic motorbikes/tricycles and good quality lightweight wooden balance bikes) we have at our centre. Our centre has great grounds for bikes – large flat grass areas, a lovely wide sandpit surround, ramps to ride off decks and steep grass hills to challenge the keen! We are also lucky to be located within the grounds of a primary school and can use their netball court right next door at any time.

I will never forget the absolute pride I felt when my oldest son, then a quite cautious three-year-old, first mastered the courage to ride down one of the steep grass hills. His face was full of determination and concentration and then – relief when he ran safely to a stop at the bottom.

Another bike moment I love is when our



middle son was just beginning his bike experiences on one of the little plastic motorbikes. He was lovingly encouraged and literally pushed along by a slightly older child many times over the sessions. Just last week, the same two children (now with some new friends) were riding their two wheelers from home on the netball court next door. They safely and confidently zoomed round racing each other and weaving in and out of the strategically placed chairs.

To further extend our bike-loving tamariki, we recently asked a police officer to visit and

teach bike safety before we headed off together for a ride around the block.

My three children and many others at our centre have thoroughly enjoyed riding bikes on Playcentre sessions whether it be independently or with friends. Bike play encompasses the four principles and five strands of Te Whāriki and enriches the experiences and learning on Playcentre sessions.

Bronwyn Toy, Aramoho Playcentre,
Wanganui Association

Bikes are more than “just for riding”

We love bikes at Playcentre, they build on our tamariki interests such as transporting, imaginary play and they develop their balance and coordination. It is wonderful to see this progress into their ability to manoeuvre the bikes, learning to ride around corners and ride on different surfaces. Some children can ride two wheeler bikes and they bring their bikes along with their helmets.

We have observed how playing with bikes helps to build relations with other tamariki as they learn about turn-taking, sharing and helping each other out.

At our Playcentre we use different terrain for the tamariki to ride up and down the



grass hill, sometimes we put crash mats for them to ride down the hill, along the concrete road (drawn with chalk) up the

wooden ramp, turn the tight roundabout at the top and back down again. Sometimes we add paint for them to ride through and make bike tracks on paper.

Given our location within Fernlea Primary school, our tamariki ride their bikes and tow the wagons to the school office to pick up the Playcentre mail, this builds on their transporting interests and creates a familiarity with the “big kids” school. Our tamariki are so proud of themselves for being a big help, doing real jobs for their Playcentre. A real sense of pride!

Karen Sagaga, Wainuiomata Playcentre,
Hutt Playcentre Association

Key messages around the strategic action process

Background

At National Executive in October of 2013, delegates agreed to a new Strategic Action Plan for the whole of Playcentre, at local Playcentre, regional association and national federation levels.

The Strategic Action Plan was developed from feedback Playcentre members gave over the past 12 months, and the research of the Action Research Team (ART). Playcentre members said clearly we need to find a way to run our Playcentres with less admin and less burnout. This Plan is intended to ensure that Playcentre survives and thrives into the future.

The first step of the Strategic Action plan is to create an environment for successful strategic action. A new national structure is being co-constructed by Centres, Associations and the Federation team over the next 12 months which will have the core focus of providing centres with the support they need to thrive.

Consultation process

No one person or small group can determine what a new national structure should look like. So every Playcentre member will be involved in this design process, and every meeting at each level of Playcentre will have this as their focus. A small group at October National Executive drafted a consultation process which allows every member to engage, without adding too much to existing workloads, and this has been added to by the March National Executive delegates in 2014.

Strategic action needs to be added to every meeting agenda at Centre, Association and Federation level. Every meeting will address something to do with strategic change. Associations/Centres received a short package of information on 20 November 2013 and on 11 February 2014 via the Playcentre Federation News. From February this is to include a question or two for every Playcentre to respond to at their business meeting. This is to ensure that what every Playcentre thinks is included at every stage of the design process.

Associations have also been asked to appoint one person in their Association to be the Strategic Driver for strategic action,

and they are now working together across the country as a team to help with gathering information and answering questions. If you don't know who yours is, ask your association or any federation officer.

The main role of the Strategic Driver is to understand the consultation on the national Strategic Action plan, and to collect and collate feedback from centres. They will meet with the Strategic Programme Director by phone or internet, every two months during 2014, along with a small group of other Association Strategic Drivers.

What has been done since October National Executive?

From the day after last October national executive Marion and Maureen, as Co-presidents, were flat out developing, advertising, selecting, recruiting and inducting the new Strategic Programme Director, Lorraine Skelton. Lorraine started in that role late January. Lorraine has had a long career as a Programme Director and Project Manager, focusing mainly in the process of change management, including training project managers at tertiary level for over 10 years, and also took a number of years out of that to take her three children to Playcentres in the wider Auckland area. The purpose of Lorraine's position is to oversee the roll out of the NZPF strategic plan and work alongside Federation Teams, affiliated Associations and their member Playcentres on the national strategic programme for change.

The Trustees applied for and received a large grant from the Todd Foundation to support the national strategic action plan work. This grant, of \$70,000 for each of the next two years, will cover the salary cost of the Strategic Programme Director position.

The work done by delegates at October national executive on possible alternative structures was pulled together into a suitable form to feed back to delegates at the March meeting, and to keep working on the next stage of constructing a new national structure. These possible alternative structures are a catalyst to what processes need to be in place to support thriving Playcentres, and what structures will best support those processes.



The models are just starting points, but will help with the discussion of what we want Playcentre to look like in the future. It is probably that the final national structure of Playcentre will be made up of parts of several of them, and some parts not already thought of.

A suitable criteria to evaluate any potential model against was also developed. This comes from the 12 months of research and input which resulted in the 2014-2019 Strategic Plan. If any new structure does not result in "More play, less admin", then it will fail our main criteria for Playcentre and we will not choose it for that reason.

What will an ideal Playcentre look like?

It is a given that any structure developed must empower Playcentres to strengthen and grow and respond to the needs of communities, rather than be bogged down with paperwork. There will always be paperwork that we MUST do, just as there is in every part of our lives, but we want this to be as little as possible, and be dealt with as quickly as possible.

The ideal is to see Playcentres doing what Playcentre was designed to do: providing great play opportunities for children, with support and mentoring for their parents and whānau. The ideal Playcentre should have a minimum of paperwork, and this should not distract members from playing with children, talking to each other about children's learning, and reaching out to new families in their communities.

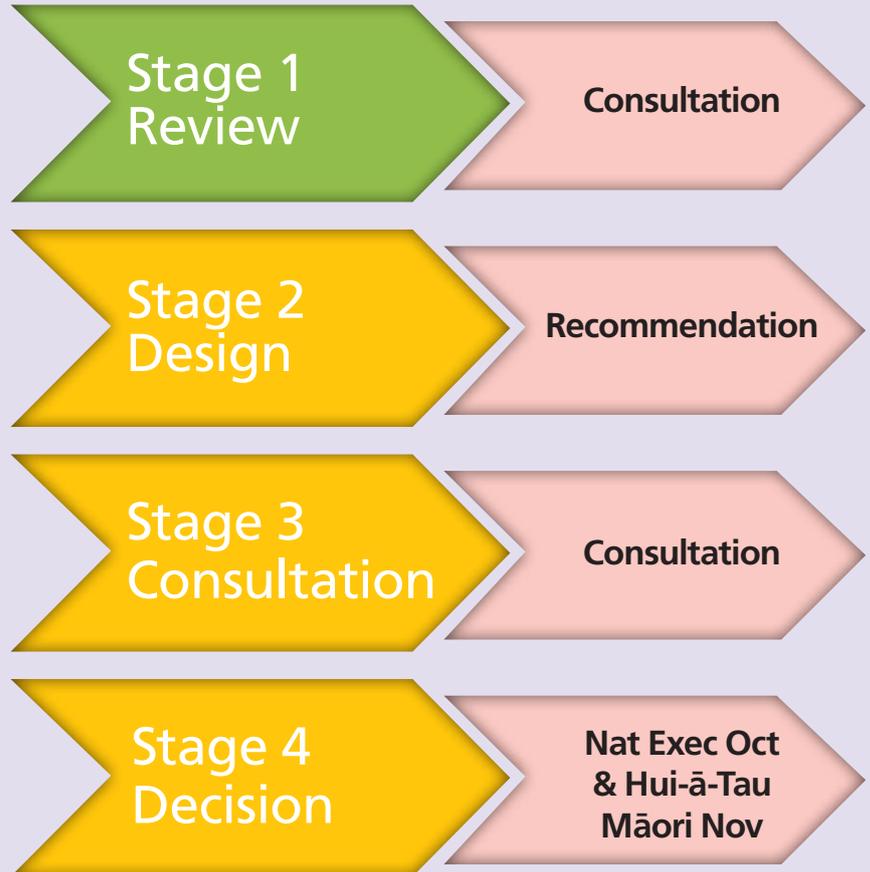
The administration required to "feed the ECE requirements", or meet our other external accountabilities, should mostly take place away from Playcentre sessions, and be done in a way to increase efficiencies.

We want every New Zealand family to have the opportunity for a Playcentre education. And for this to leave them feeling empowered and more alive!

Strategic Process – where are we at?

Over the past few months we have gained some great feedback around how to get to “More play, Less admin!” in Playcentre. Every centre should have received a flyer which shows the main feedback you have given us around your Positives, Minuses, and Interesting Thoughts for Playcentre. In June, you were asked to think about outside your Playcentre and how we currently engage with the community and how we might engage in the future. The below diagrams show where we are in the redesign process to date. Stage 1, ‘Review’ ended 12 July 2014.

Next steps will be moving into Stage 2: Design Recommendation – Develop an organisational blueprint. This stage will be looking at developing responses to the questions in the diagram, looking at the feasibility of models (including operational processes, costs and people).



Enabling Technologies:
What technology is needed to support the future of Playcentre

Enabling Processes:
What business processes are needed for the future of Playcentre

Enabling Capital:
Resources do we have the funds needed to support the future of Playcentre

Enabling Structure:
To develop an organisational structure necessary to implement the future of Playcentre



A Natural Play journey



From the minute I walked into Waihi Playcentre seven-years-ago I knew it was the right thing to do, the right place to be, and the right organisation in which to invest my time and energy. In those seven years one of the favourite parts of the journeys was my Natural Play journey. It started with the Creativity workshop when I was in Course 2 and by the time I had finished Course 4 I was about to tutor the creativity workshop myself. I wanted to recreate the experience of that Creativity workshop for others.

Someone once told me that to be a teacher you must walk the talk. After attending the creativity course I looked at our collage area and thought, well, we are definitely not walking the talk here. I was also hearing comments from mums and dads; *“Oh, they use so much glitter.”* *“Why does this area always get trashed?”* *“This stuff cost so much and they just throw it around.”* Hmm. So I put my hand up to clean up the collage area during the coming term break. I brought woven flax kete (\$2 from the \$2 shop), rolled them down and filled them with natural resources from the beach. Each bag had multiples of the same type of shell, cones, and drift-wood. Then in

hessian bowls we had lying around I put the smaller shells, lavender, kauri leaves. All the man made stuff went into plastic containers and was put away on shelves. Only scissors, felt pens, glue guns, coloured pencils, cellotape, paper and string were left out accessible to children. The area looked great after its extreme makeover.

When members came back for the new term, most loved the new look. Some asked where all the stuff had gone. I showed them and said, *“Let’s just see what happens. We can always get the man made stuff out if we are doing an activity that calls for it.”* I noticed the children worked differently in the area with more care being taken gluing and selecting items. Different types of glue were used including hot glue and cement glue (equal parts water, sand and flour makes awesome glue for sticking big pine cones etc to card).

Along the way I was lucky enough to attend “The Winter Sacred Urge to Play Conference 2012”. It was a weekend long; live in conference facilitated by play experts Natasha Kibble, David Spraggs, Kimberly Crisp, Lisa McKimm and Pennie Brownlee. They opened my eyes and heart to how it

could be. As I played and listened I thought, *Yes, Playcentre is on the right track, we just need to tweak it a bit here and there.* I came away understanding that children of today need a **Sacred Place** where they can **Play** out all their built-in play **Urges**. There are not as many opportunities these days for this to happen, and with fewer opportunities, our children’s ability to create and imagine isn’t growing and blossoming.

When I get a bee in my bonnet – look out, and as President of Waihi Playcentre at the time, my team was used to this; *“Oh no, here she goes again.”* So how was I going to get them to understand and experience what I have come to realise. I started by holding a mini workshop sharing what I had learnt. We sat around a campfire and talked of play in our childhood. We each took a natural resource – a stick, a stone, a piece of bark, a paua shell – and imagined all the possibilities; what could it be in our play? The possibilities seemed infinite. We looked at some pieces of plastic equipment and tried to imagine the possibilities – not many. We experimented with the physics of a plastic cup of water and a glass cup of water. Flick both and see for yourself what happens. We went



barefoot and walked down a steep bank by candlelight. It worked. Everyone was ready to join me on the Nature Journey once they had connected back in with the natural and natural resources themselves – so I offered this same workshop to our Association.

Back at the centre I asked permission to remove all the unnecessary plastic equipment and put it out the back for one term. I decided to just notice what happened.

Not all members were at the deciding mini workshop, so I sent out an email explaining the experiment. We replaced the plastic tea set with a real one bought from the second hand shop. Sieves and garlic presses replaced the plastic playdough presses. People went to garage sales and brought more crockery, cane baskets and wooden trays. We introduced a tea trolley with natural items on it alongside the playdough table:



pau shells make great bowls, leaves for plates, shells and stones for teas and sugar.

At the end of the term we reflected on what we had noticed. Most were happy with the lack of plastic. Some felt that crockery left unattended with children wasn't a good idea. Some still didn't understand why we had removed the plastic, and some felt it just needed to be replaced slowly. Because Playcentre is a parent cooperative, we came to a compromise. We put a small amount of plastic back out alongside the real/natural: a four cup plastic tea set went out in the playdough area; a couple of sweezy plastic playdough toys alongside real butter knives and garlic presses. The crockery tea set went up high but where children could still see it and ask for it. The real crockery and real glasses at the kai table stayed. Parents felt OK with this as long as it is a supervised area.

We also noticed there was more respect for the equipment by the children. They didn't throw it on the floor. If it fell on the floor they picked it up. I noticed my own child was using her imagination more. She would cook sausages (*banksia* cones) on the BBQ (piece of wood), she made more concoctions e.g. perfume, potions, and she 'baked' in the sandpit. An ice-cream shop was set up in the big blue box and bark was used for money. Her working theory was developed in the collage area where she built a ute, a boat, a trailer and a house all out of shells and walnut shells. Then it all turned into a submarine!

Coming to the end of my time being a Playcentre mum I knew that if our Playcentre members hadn't quite got the understanding for themselves as to why natural play is so important, I had few chances left to get it embedded more deeply. I enlisted the professional help of Pennie Brownlee. Pennie came to our centre and facilitated her Sacred Urge to Play day-workshop. 95% of Waihi Playcentre members attended and at the end of the workshop I could see in their faces that they too had 'got a bee in their bonnet'. Now we were a swarm. Awesome. Mission completed. I could end my days as a Playcentre mum knowing the passion for natural play will continue, and that our Playcentre will continue to grow as a Sacred Place to Play. There have been rumours of getting rid of playdough all together and I have noticed all the plastic in the playdough area has disappeared. This time it wasn't my doing.

Leona Moore, Waihi Playcentre,
Thames Valley Coromandel Association

Parents as educators: examining the funds of knowledge that reside in a Playcentre

Funds of knowledge is the belief that: "people are competent and have knowledge, and their life experiences have given them that knowledge" (González & Moll, 2002).

As Playcentre members understand how their unique funds of knowledge (the skills that their life experiences have given them) can support tamariki's learning, this will further enhance everyone's feelings of belonging and contribution, both in their home environment and in their Playcentre environment.

Often parents and caregivers can be whakamā (shy) about their parenting abilities, especially when entering a new environment, such as a Playcentre. If new Playcentre whānau can be made aware of their own unique contribution to their tamariki's learning, this will provide them with confidence for their parenting kete, which will further enable them to

actively participate in their child's early childhood education.

*"I haven't really done a lot that relates to children" ... oh wait!
"Yes, I do do that!"*

Often parents have a belief that a lot of their skills from previous employment and life experience do not transfer to their role as a parent.

One parent discussed her previous employment, where she used to be involved with career recruitment and career coaching. In her career coaching position, she worked

with people who had been made redundant after 15 to 20 years of working within that organisation. It was part of her job to "help them accept the change, to look at themselves and to think about what to do next. It was all about turning a negative into a positive." As we discussed how her previous skills could be used in her role as a parent, she commented: "I haven't really done a lot that relates to children."

We discussed how she had been in a role where her job was to turn the negative into a positive. We then discussed if she did that now, in her role as a parent. She replied "yes, I do do that!" In that moment, she became empowered as she realised she was using her vast funds of knowledge to create



positive learning experiences for her own children.

“You hear things that you don’t know much about. And you are also able to help out others too.”

Parents agreed that they face various challenges, but Playcentre helped them to minimise these challenges, as they share their own funds of knowledge with each other. One parent commented:

I came in this morning with (a child of her friend, who was crying). I felt stressed, as I had said I would make the playdough but I couldn’t. Two parents came and helped me. I received understanding and hands-on help as soon as I got here. I never regret coming. It may be hard getting here, but I never regret it once I’m here.

Parents agreed that they could rely on other parent’s advice to support them through their individual challenges. One parent observed:

We can communicate what our difficulties are. And we can help others, for example, with colicky babies. You hear things that you don’t know much about. And you are also able to help out others too.

This further demonstrates that as Playcentre members share individual funds of knowledge with each other, this further develops belonging and relationships in Playcentres.

“Yes, you would like a chocolate cake? We can cook one together.’ He learns that he has to put in an effort to get a reward.”

Parents believed that household activities that their children participated in taught their children practical skills, such as ‘how to make a salad’ and ‘how to do the dishes’. They also felt that attitudes were also being learnt. One parent mentioned that her son loves to bake with her. When asked what she thought he was learning from this activity, she responded:

As an adult, I want to say learning about textures, touching, measuring, but for him, I think that the main thing that he is having fun, but also learning that he can get something out of his efforts. ‘Yes, you would like a chocolate cake? We can cook one together’. He learns that he has



to put in an effort to get a reward. He learns patience.”

Parents voiced beliefs that action and behaviours developed learning dispositions (Carr, 1998). Through creating encouraging persisting with difficulty, this parent is helping her child to develop a learning disposition of perseverance.

To conclude ...

Parents can feel empowered when they realised their unique funds of knowledge and how these positively contribute to their children’s learning. Parents can support and learn off each other, as they shared their funds of knowledge with others. Children learn as parents share their funds of knowledge with them.

How can members in your centre discover their own funds of knowledge?

- Korero. Talk with each other about ‘life before children’ and your current employment. Learn about various skills you all may have. All of these will transfer to your role as a parent and caregiver – find ways to help each other discover skills and how these add to everyone’s individual ‘funds of knowledge’. Informal events, such as social gatherings, can provide fun and non-confrontational settings to encourage korero such as this.

- Ask individual members if there are any skills they would like to bring to Playcentre. I have played the piano for over two decades, but I have only just started introducing my own musical skills on session, because somebody asked me if there was anything I would personally like to introduce to a session. Sometimes people just need a bit of warm encouragement and guidance to feel comfortable enough to demonstrate their abilities.

Diana Cruze

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This is an overview of a research project that was done in a Playcentre as part of my Masters of Education, for the paper PROF551-13A: Engaging families and communities in early years programmes: collaborative and cultural inquiry approaches. Professor Linda Mitchell was my lecturer for this paper.

HEY MUM

What's this place you've brought me to?
There's so much muck and gloop and goo!
There's stuff to squish and things to chew

It's hard to think what next to do.

I might clean up my messy mate
Or maybe try and get a date.

It's safe to say without debate
This place we're at is really GREAT!

Mum, I think you're going blind.
I'm eating paint and you don't mind.

Next time you come I think you'll
find I'll be most cross if left behind!

There's water here, all brown and grim

Stand back folks, I'm going in!
Did I just see you crack a grin,
As I found out I cannot swim?

What's that you say? Did I hear right?

You don't care I look a fright?

You don't mind that I just might

Be pooping sand for half the night?

Hey Mum! I just heard those big kids say

This is the Playcentre way.

I think I could, I think I may
Be a gloopy gooey, messy, chewy,
soggy, painty, wet and sloppy,
mucky, clappy but very happy
Playcentre kid EVERY DAY!

**Nonie Ward, Windy Ridge Playcentre,
North Shore Playcentre Association**



Transition to School

Big Kids at Playcentre is always an exciting time in our children's Playcentre journey. With this in mind we always try to make it fun with lots of valuable learning. Of course one of the big reasons for Big Kids is to help our four-year-olds in their transition to school, we want this to be a time that they look forward to; not one filled with stress of the unknown, we want this transition to be an easy one for our tamariki.

Wharepunga Playcentre is located about 15 minutes out of Te Awamutu; we are a farming community, with a wonderful sense of belonging. We have a fantastic reciprocal relationship with the new entrant class at Korakonui School; where every term our Big Kids go across the road for a visit and at least once a year Room 1 make the trip over to us.

Going through our ERO review in November 2012, while having a conversation with one of the reviewers, she enquired about our relationship with the school and we mentioned how strong it was, I mentioned that I had thought about having the older siblings visiting a session, she thought this was a great idea as 'children learn different things from other children'.

A few months later I approached the school principal with the idea of having siblings come over for a visit. While talking she mentioned that if we were interested in something more leadership-based she would approach the year 7 & 8 teacher as

that would fit into the leadership programme they have.

If you ever visit a school you will see that when a child starts at school, it is the older children that look after them, make sure they are alright, always have someone to play with or just give a friendly smile, these are the role models for the younger generation and those at Korakonui school take this role very seriously. We all talked about it at centre and agreed that as a transition to school this would be a wonderful asset to have.

So Room 7 visited for their 'orientation' to see what the Big Kids Team Leader and children did while on session, they enjoyed dress-ups while visiting and the numerous activities available. We went through the term plan and worked out dates that would fit in with the school and our Big kids sessions. Three visits were planned and three different groups of children were sent over to 'lead' an activity. My goodness, when we picked up the children from their first session, they were buzzing and many even had an afternoon nap.

In the three sessions the children watched a puppet show that the students presented (they all LOVED that!) and then the big kids taught them how to make their own puppet show, they made a waka in the sandpit, they had face-painting, mask-making, treasure hunts, they learnt new games like 'sardines' and lots lots more.



It was especially wonderful for my son Jack as during his last term at Big Kids he was the only boy, so during these visits he was always 'attached' to the boys in the group, his relationships with them was a wonderful thing to see.

I was only on duty for one of the sessions, and wish I had been able to make it to all three, what a fantastic opportunity for our Big Kids and for the year 7 & 8 students. The interaction and learning going on was priceless, the talking, the watching, the playing – wonderful!

They formed lasting friendships, going to school visits wasn't such a HUGE deal and the older children weren't at all scary. We hope to make this a yearly occurrence in conjunction with the school, as it has been a wonderful experience for all those involved.

Korakonui School has started their own four-year-olds programme on a Wednesday afternoon, and instead of taking anything away from Playcentre it has complemented what we already have to offer, the children all know each other and it's been a wonderful experience for them. They get to 'catch up' with friends that they have made and you will often find those children from Playcentre Big Kids at home in any one of the classrooms at the school when they are visiting with their parents.

If you have a school close to you I would definitely recommend going to talk to the Principal and starting something like this. The transition to school, the experience and the joy of all those involved is well worth the planning.

Julianne Bull, Wharepunga Playcentre,
King Country Playcentre Association



Colour-coded children

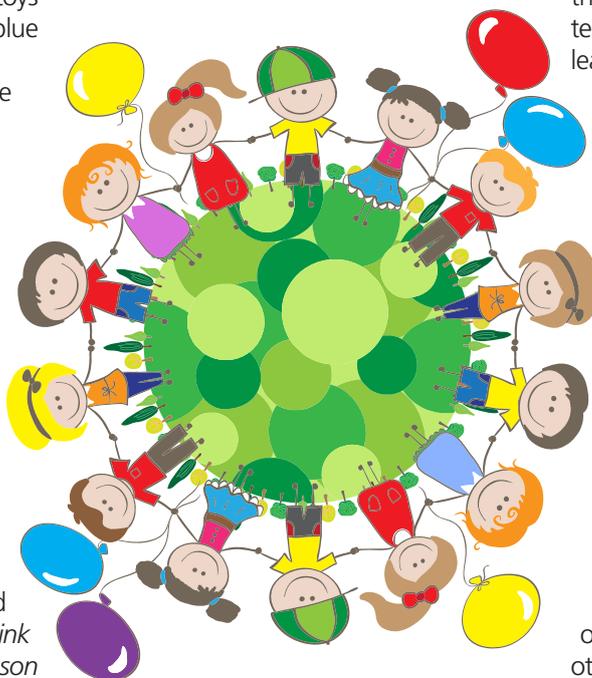
A trip through any toy store in New Zealand provides a vivid picture of children's current gender divide. It's a colour-coded world where girls can choose any item they like as long as it comes in a shade of pink or cheery purple, while boys are likewise limited but to darker shades of blue and green. Those of us raised in the 70's or 80's may remember a larger colour section in our childhood clothes and toys so how did we get to the strict pink/blue divide of today?

Historians agree that the linking of the colour pink to femininity and blue to masculinity is a recent phenomenon (Orenstein, 2011). Until the early 20th century all infants and young children wore the same clothing and toys came in a much wider palette of colours. In fact when colour-coding first began, possibly as a marketing ploy, pink was considered a colour best suited to boys while girls were believed best suited to blue. One of the first media reports of colour-coding for children can be traced back to June 1918 when Infant's Department, a trade magazine for manufactures of baby clothes, advised that *"the generally accepted rule is pink for the boy and blue for the girl' the reason being that 'pink, being a more decided and stronger color, is more suitable for the boy, while blue, which is more delicate and dainty, is prettier for the girl'"* (Kimmel, 1996).

By the 1950's though, the colours assigned to the genders had been reversed. Researcher's debate the reason for the change, although this is most often linked to trends set in place throughout WW2, but regardless of the reason by the beginning of the 1960's the linking of specific colours with genders was set; girls in pink and boys in blue. Despite the linking of colours to gender being only recent and the choice arbitrary it has become overwhelmingly prevalent in our society, so much so that it is often now considered "normal". In fact it is now so ubiquitous it is sometimes claimed to be a "natural" choice for children and linked to biological traits and their associated stereotyped gender expectations.

Although there are some studies proposing a biological basis for colour choice these studies have largely been debunked and Lise Eliot, renowned neurobiologist, notes that the

'truth is that neuroscientists have identified very few reliable differences between boys' and girls' brains' (Eliot, 2010, p. 32). Considerably more literature argues that current gender preference for certain colours are most likely based on environmental influences connected to children's early and overwhelming exposure to specific colours throughout childhood (Fine, 2012).



From birth, New Zealand children face ongoing exposure to colour based stereotypic messages. The pervasiveness of colour coding means that regardless of exposure to a wider colour palette at home or Playcentre children cannot miss the gendered messages they see all around them in the media and consumer goods. The long term impact of reduced colour choices for children is as yet unknown but researchers have begun to identify startling evidence of potential long-term negative impacts; on children's gender identity, social choices and agency and in how they understand their place in the world (Orenstein, 2011).

Specific colours are strongly linked to different highly prescriptive temperaments which increasingly limit ways for girls to express femininity and boys masculinity. The colour pink for example has been linked to traits such as sweetness, delicacy and gentleness and it is these traits which are stereotypically reinforced by girls' gender stereotypes. This message is further

reinforced by the learning experiences and expectations as gender based pink coloured toys engender girls to identify make-up, princesses, cooking and home play as central to their interests. Boys similarly have colour based stereotypic associations linked to strength, activity and increasingly aggression. This message is reinforced for boys as toys marketed to boys are increasingly positioning them as fighters. When we consider this in terms of the importance of modelling and learning through play we as adults need to really reflect on how the colours and toys we surround our children with might be impacting how they develop.

While I feel there is no intrinsic problem with specific colours I believe Playcentre should be a place where authentic play experiences occur unaffected by restrictions based on colour based stereotypic associations. So what can we do in Playcentre to tackle this issue? Does your centre or association have a policy on gender equity; if not this might be a good place to start or perhaps a review is due on a current policy. A gender self-review of your centre would also support the removal of any harmful colour-coding. Check out other potential colour based stereotype hotspots in your centre; are the portfolio covers colour-coded, what does your rack of dress-ups look like, do your members unthinkingly hand the pink cups to girls? With some work centers can be spaces where children have the ability to explore their gender identities and to explore and use a rainbow of colours.

Maggie Lyall,
Waikato Playcentre Association

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a for Playcentre Aotearoa

songs sung in traditional mode.¹ Mōteatea are instrumental in our culture, nga, our being through our Māori world view.

1

Line one: Beckons to the child to grow up and become a well-balanced person, imagine the parents singing this to their child whilst in the womb and through those early stages of childhood. This first line is taken from the famous proverb of Tā Āpirana Ngata, who inspired many a parent to find a better future for their children, and many a grandmother and father too, so I imagine myself singing this to my three grandsons who are from both Māori and English blood lines, full of love and genuine concern in the current times of a changing turmoil world in turmoil.

2

Line two: If we as parents do our part well and raise our children well, this will bring abundance to our families and our wider families and ripple out into the people (all people). By being involved in the upbringing of your children and grandchildren, you forge stronger family relationships, our three grandsons have brought us closer together to members of the community that we may not have gotten to know so intimately.

3

Line three: Acknowledges that the wisdom of our ancestors is vital in raising our children. Knowing your whakapapa/genealogy is what binds it all together and through honouring them, you honour all life. Know this yourself. Teaching our grandchildren their whakapapa is critical to help them know who they are. You teach them by being part of their upbringing, but you also educate them along the way with the wisdom of the old ones.

4

Line four: This type of knowing will sustain you physically, mentally and spiritually, you will have a well-balanced life. By having this type of relationship, you will have a well-balanced holistic life.

5

Line five: Honour the Treaty of Waitangi. As New Zealanders, Te Tiriti o Waitangi is the founding document of this country; it binds Māori with English and all other races.

6

Line six: Honouring Te Tiriti o Waitangi is what will hold this country together as one nation, and you will be able to find your pathway forward in life. It is important for our future generations to know about Te Tiriti o Waitangi, so we can understand one another in this country and not become prejudiced or judgemental. Again knowledge is the key.

7

Line seven: Every child is unique in the eyes of a parent. This line encourages the child to find and to stand in that uniqueness and strength. Self identity is encouraged, know who you are at all times and honour yourself.

8

The final statement really encourages the child to strive for a good, well balanced life, in all areas. It also means that the parent is the one who is responsible for this, the early years of nurturing your child are critical to his or her survival. You get one chance at doing it in those early years, so do it right. Again, my daughter and her three sons are the first in my family to use the Playcentre childcare service. It is nice to see that a Māori perspective is appreciated and acknowledged here.

the key things within it. This waiata is written with all nations in mind who attend any Playcentre throughout Aotearoa. The meaning of it is clear and coherent for you all. *Motherhood is the greatest calling in life.*

whānau o te Whānau Tupu Ngātahi
ku nei,
Aina Ferris

¹ www.maoridictionary.co.nz



War toys in our Playcentres



Many people have a vague knowledge that ‘war toys’ are not acceptable in Playcentres. But what is the policy about the children wanting to make swords – and use them? Do you stop the children from running around with sticks, ‘shooting’ each other? This article gives the history and reasoning behind the ‘war toys’ policy, to open up the debate on what might be appropriate in today’s Playcentres.

Playcentre started during World War II, and after the war there was optimism in society that early education was the key to preventing a repeat situation, and to rebuilding a better society. Helen May (2009) describes the psychological framework that was prevalent at the time, where correct upbringing and education of children would create emotionally and mentally healthy adults, who would not resort to violence to achieve their aims. This framework was part of the ethos of Playcentre.

Unfortunately, despite the best efforts of educators around the world, war continued to be waged in different countries, with Aotearoa New Zealand being involved throughout the 1950s and 1960s: Korea, Vietnam, and the Malayan Emergency. Anti-war protests started to become more strident towards the end of the 1960s, both overseas and in New Zealand. Playcentre was aware of these concerns,

and continued to discuss ways of supporting peace and discouraging violence (Stover, 1998).

The 1980s saw a step-up in Playcentre’s commitment to nonviolence. According to the *Peace Through Play* website (n.d.), the early 1980s saw a flood of ‘war toys’ released onto the boys’ toy market in Europe, which led to the formation of the “Play for Life” campaign. It was also the time of Nuclear-Free campaigns, which many Playcentre members supported. Another concern was the growing impact of television, and the amount of violence that was in children’s programmes. All these non-violence campaigns were influential in Playcentre, leading to several articles appearing in the *Playcentre Journal* from a variety of sources (e.g. Head, 1991; International Playgrounds Association, 1981; Ware, 1985). They also led to several remits, such as the 1985 remit calling for Playcentres to consider themselves Nuclear Weapon Free (a remit that was relatively easy to implement), the 1985 remit calling for stricter censorship on violent videos and films, and the 1988 remit on calling for a ban on advertising of war toys on television. The 1986 National Education meeting made a statement supporting the campaign against war toys. The Federation made a submission to the National Enquiry into Violence in

1986, and was represented on a 1988 Working Party to produce a Voluntary Code on the promotion and advertising of toys that promote violence – with the Playcentre Representative, Alison Stephenson (1990), being vocal in her disappointment that the Code was of a token nature due to the power wielded by the Toy Industry representatives. In the 1980s, therefore, Playcentre was actively discussing the issue of the promotion of violence in society through toys, television and advertising.

Whilst the central tenet of nonviolence was supported by most people, there was debate over how this should be achieved in Playcentre. The “Play for Life” view was that bought war toys encouraged violence by dictating the type of play that could occur using the toy. The campaign was not directed at banning all ‘war play’, pointing out that if a stick is the ‘gun’, then after a while the stick could (and probably would) be used in some other form of play. A bought gun, however, remained a gun at all times, and there was basically one way of playing with a gun – that is, to shoot with it. The 1986 National Education meeting which supported the anti-war toy campaign came to the conclusion that banning war toys was a negative approach, and the preferred action was to promote ‘positive play’ and ‘positive discipline’. Then in 1991 Northland

put forward a remit “that Playcentres be war toy free zones.” The explanatory note said that “to encourage a non-violent environment for our children to learn and play in, we need to ban all war toys from our centres.” In discussion at Conference, this was amended to “that Playcentres be free of commercially produced war toys”, and this was the remit that was passed, although not unanimously. Such a wording reflects the view that it is the toys themselves that were being banned, not the play.

A further remit was brought the following year from the Marlborough sub-Association, “that the NZ Playcentre Federation adopt a policy of positive action to limit the proliferation of war toys in the community”. The Rider sums up the argument: “War Toys do nothing to enhance children’s creativity and constructive play. The use of war toys implies that violence is OK and is a legitimate way to solve problems. Violence in our society is widespread and increasing. Concerted action expressing the community’s heartfelt concern is urgently needed.” Once again, however, it was not the issue of violence that was debated, but how to respond to it. Many felt that Playcentre had already made a strong statement with the 1991 remit, and therefore a community campaign was not necessary. It was also felt that it was not a good use of federation personnel’s time, which was, in 1992, heavily taken up with the demands of the *Before Five* reforms. The remit was passed with a narrow majority. Showing the

pitfalls of such marginal decisions in the days before consensus processes were used, very little was ever done in this ‘campaign for positive action’. The one thing on record is that soon after the Conference, the Ministry of Consumer Affairs put out a poster on toy safety standards that pictured a grenade, and the federation refused to accept them for centres on account of the ‘war toys policy’ (NZ Playcentre Federation, 1992).

After 1992, the talk of war toys dropped out of national Playcentre discussions. Attention was instead directed towards internal matters – dealing with the *Before Five* issues surrounding property, qualifications and other ‘minimum standards’, and also struggling with how to implement Playcentre’s commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi. There were other changes happening in the wider sector as well, concerning the development of Te Whāriki, the early childhood curriculum, which included a socio-cultural theoretical framework. As government-funded professional development supported centres to work with the new curriculum, the socio-cultural ideas began to take hold. The individualistic, psychological views of child development became supplemented with the views that children are influenced by cultural and society norms. The impact of gendered play was debated, and there was talk of how power circulates through society (and our Playcentres) and who has the ability to use it. Still a favourite Playcentre Journal



article for me is “Fantasy play: Exploring the hero within”, which discusses the value of fantasy roles such as the s/hero, the warrior, the caregiver, with tips for managing such fantasy play to allow exploration but diffuse aggression and exclusion (Chance, 1995).

In the new millennium, the violence associated with war became supplanted with an emphasis on violence within families. Although this had long been recognised as an issue by society, it became something that was talked about publically. The “It’s not OK” campaign started in 2007, with the message that “Family Violence is not OK, but it is Ok to Ask for Help” (It’s not OK campaign, n.d.). Society also took another step towards de-normalising violence as a part of life when the Crimes Act was amended in 2007 to



remove the defence of 'parental disciplining' for those charged with assault against their children. Although Playcentre members hold their own individual views about these developments, as an organisation, Playcentre has long been committed to making Playcentres safe places for children. For example, recognising and responding to violence against children has been a part of the Playcentre Adult Education programme since the 1990s (although much less has been said about helping the women who might be experiencing violence). Further, the Playcentre Federation had had a 'no smacking' policy for long enough that it was no longer questioned.

There is no doubt that children born and raised in Aotearoa New Zealand are more likely to experience violence through family situations than through war. Does this make a ban on commercially bought war toys irrelevant? Personally, I think not. In a society that is more and more accepting of violent images through all types of media, I believe it is more important than ever to make Playcentres a safe space for children.

Commercially made war toys encourage an attitude of acceptance of violence, and make violence a normal feature of life. They have none of the creative or research benefits of a self-made toy, and it is hard to engage in a conversation with children about the negative aspects of such a toy if it has been provided by the adults and therefore,

implicitly condoned. We cannot change the world in one easy step, but we can make our Playcentres places where children do not necessarily experience violence.

Suzanne Manning,
Hutt Association Life member

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Exploring play with weapons

While ago in a coffee shop in Taupō there was a box full of tiny soldiers. My son, Harry, instantly started to play with them, normally I would have been very hesitant but I have been reading a lot into weapon/superhero play so I decided to roll with it. He lined them all up, I asked him what he was doing and he said they are looking for treasure. He played with them for about 30 minutes, and there was no shooting, just hunting for treasure.

So a few weeks later he was sent some pocket money from his grandparents and he asked if he could spend it on some soldiers, we said yes. We went and got some and when we got home he was very excited to play with them. Again, he lined them up and this time there was shooting, I asked what are they shooting and he said water bombs. We discussed who was he shooting them at and why, and he said they were having a battle. I didn't want to interfere too much so I sat back and observed.

A few days later, he was dressed as a cowboy and again playing with his soldiers.

I asked him where do the soldiers live and he said in the bush. So we went and got paper and he drew a camp with tents and fire. So now the play had changed and we were playing and learning about survival. We discussed food, and he drew a pond for fish and an apple tree for his fruit. I asked about water and he said we couldn't get it from the pond because the water was dirty, so he drew a tap as there are always taps at campsites! He spent ages drawing his map. We got some animals, a cow for milk and chickens for eggs. There was a lot of imaginative play happening and questions around what to eat, how to cook it, where does it come from and team work. The next day on session he made a truck at the carpentry table, which as soon as he got home he put the soldiers on and drove them around the campsite he drew.

Harry has now started playing knights, we used a long stick and some string to make a bow. Mostly when he is a knight his younger sister is the princess and he is keeping her safe, although when she doesn't want to sit still anymore he gives

her the job of gathering the sticks for the campfire to cook their dinner on. Weapons are present in the play, although they are not really used. They are mainly used to protect the castle and his sister.

I can not say that his weapon play will always be about survival and protection, but at least it is a good place to start (if there is a good place). We have started the communication, rather than me saying no and him doing it with friends or when I am not looking. He does pretend to use guns, but we have a rule that we do not aim the guns at people and nine times out of ten (or when I am near) it is a water pistol, and a potion comes out which puts animals that are attacking him to sleep. I can say I want him to have fun and explore different things/roles/situations through play.

First of all I was very much against weapon play. I agree it does not have a place at Playcentre and it needs to be redirected, but it does outside Playcentre. My reasons for this are;

Our children need to experiment with their imagination in a safe place



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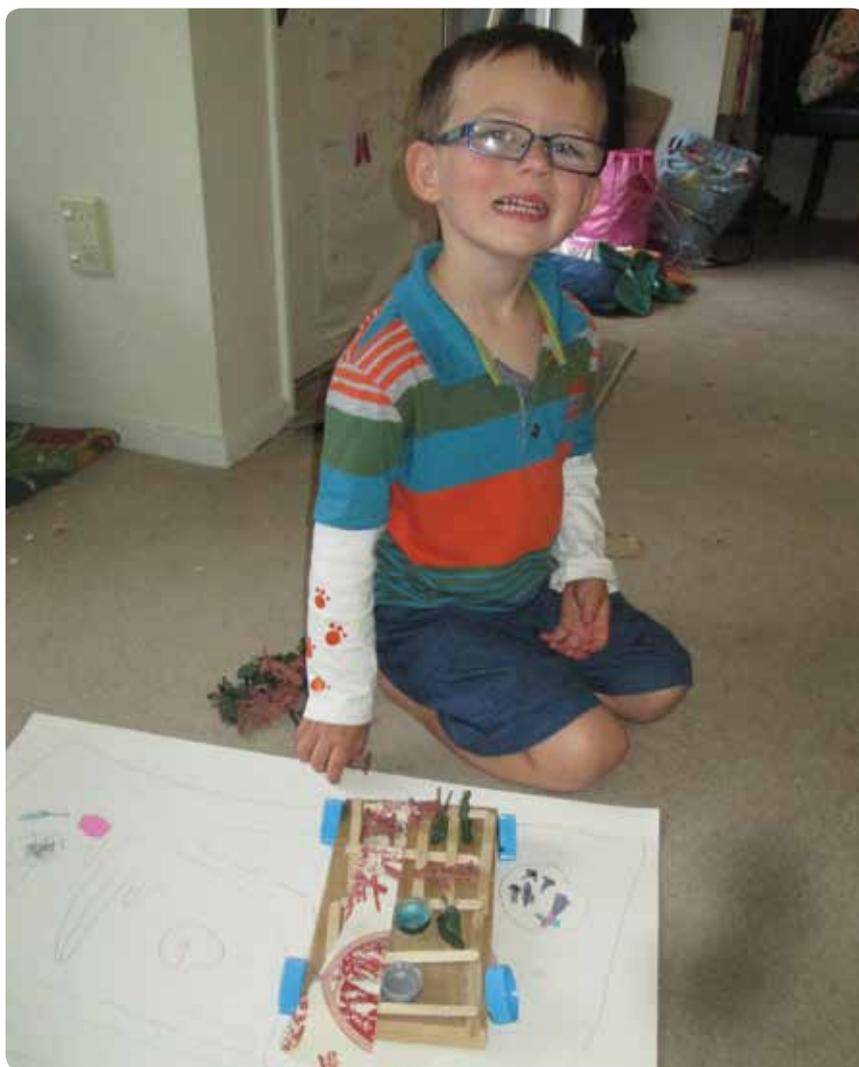
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tpashop@orcon.net.nz

WHY SHOP ANYWHERE ELSE!



when we are watching and listening, so we can guide them if they need it and keep it positive.

We set rules around the play. What is OK and what is not OK. For example being nasty to other children, using not nice words and physically hurting them is not OK. When one child upsets another child that is not OK. We need to remember they are children and testing their ideas, it is our job as parents and educators to explain the right and wrong ways to them, why their words/actions are hurtful and to stop it. This happens without weapons being involved.

Support their play – show them different options. It doesn't have to be about the battle, it could be about the cause – why are they doing it? Who are they going to save? What are they searching for? What else could they use to survive? How long will it take to get there? What will they

need? What is the weather like? What is the ground like?

It encourages questions and curiosity. I am a huge believer in books helping to explain so much. Recently we have been getting different books out from the library on knights, so we have been discovering about the armour they wore, how they built their castles, the conditions they lived it, what medically was available – so if they were injured what happened. This helped Harry to understand how dangerous weapons are.

If we don't, they will do it anyway when we are not looking and then it will be without our support. As it is discussed in our Playcentre training it is about the learning experience, what they are doing, what they are trying to make sense of.

Stacey Balich, Glen Innes Playcentre,
Tamaki Playcentre Association

An AGM poem

Monday's child is fair of face, with a great group of mums arriving from space.

Supporting parents alongside children's education, they thought
that joining Playcentre makes for great relaxation.

Their knowledge of play supporting the children, bought out lots of ideas that were
already within them.

They have eagerly jumped on board and taken on roles, and
have been really great at getting involved.

Tuesday's child is full of grace, with emergent planning Tuesdays cruise at their own pace.
A trip to the Kaimais on the ponies they rode, mud and puddles everywhere – a magical mode.

A new direction in processed cooking, eliminating the sugar when no one was looking.
Gisela's story telling magic with props and song, enchanted the kid's imaginations strong.

Wednesday's child is full of woe, but with always a smile to Playcentre they go.

A small team on board with many visitors and attendees, with
so many new faces it can be difficult to please.

But with a trip to Chipmunks and a visit from Dan the puppeteer,
with a road safety message brought much cheer.

Making birdfeeders, collage, glitter painting and more, this Wednesday team are really hard core.

Thursday's child has far to go, but with the guidance of Judy Gore they are in good hands you know!

A visit from Balagan's farm with spring babies in tow, cuddles
with lambs and hand bottle feeding the goat.

Squeals of delight chasing the animals around, but a nibble on
the finger by a scared bunny caused frowns.

Lots of new members with many ideas, wanting healthy sandwiches,
boat making, stamping and littlies copying their peers.

Physically active, volcanos and clay, all the fab activities make for a fun day.

Friday's child is loving and giving, an experienced team Kohanga Reo living.

Water play, messy play they've got it down, education workshop's the best in town.

Fly swat splatter painting not for the faint of heart, eat your
heart out New York met, Jackson Pollock art.

Na and her Thai food treats spoil them all, Friday team is a close bunch on friendships they call.

Saturday's child works hard for a living,

And the child that is born on the Sabbath day is bonny and blithe and good and gay.

At Christmas a visit from Santa in his vintage fire engine, was driving us
quickly over the speed humps which bought a lot of attention.

The Easter bunny hopped in with a wag of his tail; along with an egg hunt we followed his trail.

A big cuddle for all and a hoppity hop, Oh we love the Easter bunny especially the choc drops.

Matariki was great fun and a huge success, with lantern making
spring bulb planting, face painting Oh, what a mess!

Songs and stories, a shared kai and a blessing, 55 families equalled 165 people attending.

A fantastic night was shared by all, a real community event
to remember – like Cinderella and her ball.

We love Mount Playcentre for all that it is, making friendships for life, it is really the biz.

Watching our children building strong relationships with others, Playcentre
is a great place for our children, fathers and mothers...

EW & AB, Mount Maunganui Playcentre, Western Bay of Plenty Association

Playcentre philosophies spilling into the classroom

I've spent a fair few years as a Mum up to my elbows in slime, at the process cooking table, and at the carpentry table nervously holding nails being hammered by my preschoolers. Early in my Playcentre journey I completed Course 3 and I believe in the Playcentre philosophies. I loved the way my own children's learning evolved from session to session, with them following their current interests. And as I have returned to primary school teaching and left my Playcentre days behind, so many of those Playcentre ways have come with me!

I currently teach Year One at Oropi School in Tauranga. I am truly lucky to work in a school where my team leader equally embraces children's needs for free play, social interaction, quality conversation and child-directed exploration. So much so, that this year we have a paid teacher aide each morning who supports the children so that these interactions can happen, alongside our more traditional "reading/writing/maths" learning.

We have a fabulous set up in the old school Bike Bay ... We now have a shed next to our classrooms where children have free access to carpentry, hot glue guns, box construction, dress ups, water play, painting, sandpit play, playdough, messy play, mud play (including a mudslide when we supervise it!)... the list goes on! Our magnificent teacher aides (one of whom is Playcentre trained, and was a Playcentre supervisor for many years, the other whom is ECE trained) are able to have in-depth quality conversations with the children about their explorations, and to support and extend the children through their individual learning journeys.

What have we noticed with this approach? For a start, the children LOVE the chance to continue the creative, free play that they have been used to in their preschool settings. We notice LOTS of quality conversations happening between the children – fantastic social interactions, lots of great language use and continual opportunities for developing social skills and team work. We notice that those children who have not had these experiences in their preschool years are able to gain confidence and skills in a non-threatening and collaborative environment. And all children are able to develop their

gross and fine motor skills whilst playing in meaningful ways.

But what about the more formal learning? The children spend plenty of time learning to read, write and do maths, too. We as teachers are able to work with small groups in class, and give them quality targeted teaching, while knowing the children outside

in "The Shed" are being engaged in equally meaningful activities.

My Playcentre experiences have done so much to help shape my philosophies around this. And I think, really, the children are the winners at the end of the day!

Amanda King,
Western Bay of Plenty Association





Here, Judith, has built a cage for the animals. Some of the animals are allowed to use the slides on the edge of the cage. The dinosaurs sitting on the garage and watching the other animals are there to protect them.



Over the last year the themes of verticality and enclosure have come through her constructions. In this picture Judith and a friend, Daniel, had wrapped themselves together with a roll of sellotape, after they cut themselves free she came and built this around herself. You can still see the tape around her middle. This was in May 2013.

Recording learning over time

Something I've been thinking about over the last few terms is how I and we (as a centre and other parents) record learning that happens over time. The children's profile books with their learning stories and magic moments do this – but when do we get the time to sit down and pull together the learning and development that people may have noticed and written about?

Schemas can be used to recognise recurring patterns in children's play and learning, and in many cases it is a useful tool for planning activities to extend the child(ren) in question but personally I don't tend to use it to record long term patterns.

It is easier, as the parent, to note repetitive play at home, but this may not always be the case at Playcentre, and does it get recorded? And why do I think recording it is important?

I think recording it is useful as it allows the child to really see their development, to see how they have (generally) increased the complexity of their play, and mastered new skills through repetition. I slightly touched on this topic in the article Riley's Dominoes (Playcentre Journal issue 146). I know my children, as they have grown up, have taken more interest in looking through their profile books.

As a parent I have followed my daughter Judith's fascination with blocks, and I have

asked the other parents to take photos for me and let me know what the play was about so I could document it for her. Each individual play was interesting but over the course of a couple of years, more themes and complexity has been noticed, and she has also passed on her way of playing with blocks to quite a few of the other children.

Back in May 2012, Riley showed Judith how to place blocks on top of one another, how to make them cascade, and then she got him to help cover her up with them. This formed part of my article in Riley's Dominoes. At the time Riley and Judith were both two years and 10 months.

A couple of months later (July) she noticed a large construction of blocks made by some of the four-year-olds. She joined the construction by adding blocks to it.

In August 2012 I was asked to help her build a platform that she could stand on. She wanted to be able to look over the cupboard to the adults talking on the other side. Just going around didn't appeal to her. She has always enjoyed building things to help her to see over or higher – even to standing on my feet in shops to see that much more over the counter. This has not been encouraged! Over the following months more platforms were built – some long and low – how many Playcentre kids can fit on at once, some were high and the children needed help and support climbing onto them.

For Christmas she received her own set of blocks. These have been used to build theatres, towers, homes, boats, ramps, mazes to name just a few. However, the small amount of blocks, compared to Playcentre, appears to limit her vertical building ability at home.

Looking back over the past two years Judith has learnt skills from children who are both older and the same age. She has passed on her way of playing with blocks to children who are older and younger. Her creations have changed over time as she has grown and developed new interests. She has used the blocks to make sense of things she has seen away from Playcentre.

We have been discussing ways we can record learning over time. Here are few things we have come up with:

Spot patterns – especially with children that you have good relationships with.

Plan around a theme – cooking and gardening are easy ones. Do the same children always join in?

Also we have added a section to our Learning and Teaching Stories form. After an observation is written up, we plan an extension activity for that child. We now have a space on the form to record whether it worked or not, and what else happened.

I don't think there are ever going to be any easy answers to this, especially with children and parents changing their days at Playcentre – sometimes every term to meet their own needs. But I hope this gets people thinking, or sharing ideas of what works and what doesn't for your centres.

Sally Eyre, Wilton Playcentre,
Wellington Association



By June/July 2013 Judith was asking for help in building the towers ever higher, and being inside them too. Judith and Olive with help from me built this one. We had progressed to adding smaller blocks as spacers to create greater height, and windows. They were very good at taking it in turns to be inside while it was being built, with the one on the outside transporting the blocks and then both helping to place them. After it grew too tall for them to be lifted in an out they continued to work together building it higher, standing on chairs, and then adding the columns as ornamentation.

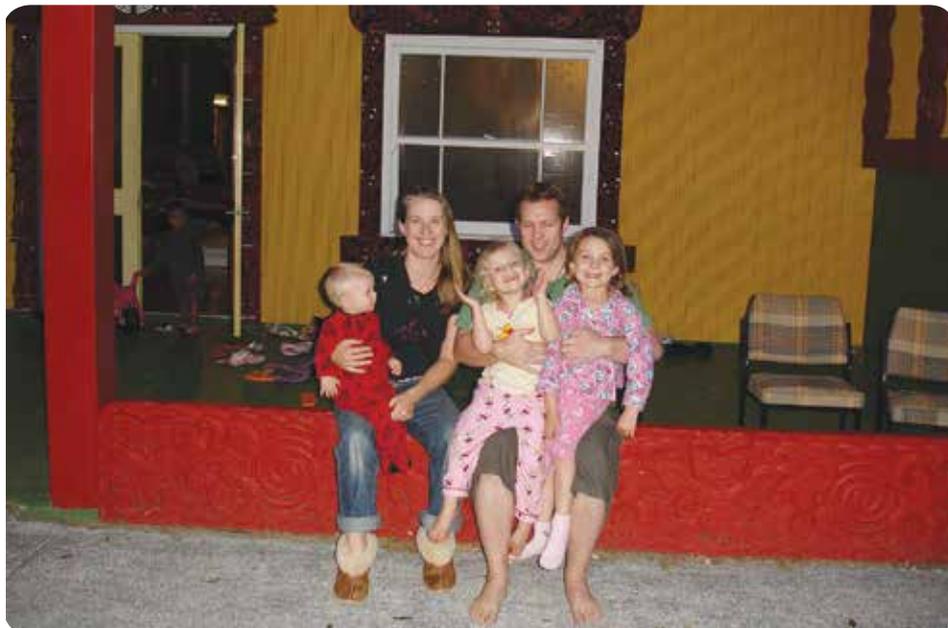
This is Playcentre – experiences during eight years of Playcentre

First contact

With not the foggiest idea of what Playcentre was I trusted to my parenting hero, Bronwen Olds, who'd told me: "Go up the hill, they'll look after you", and so I waddled up the hill, heavily pregnant, holding the hand of my 18-month-old daughter Lucy. We arrived to find one of the adults had parked her car up by the centre and several eager pre-schoolers were avidly "washing" it. Lucy soon got stuck in with those older children who would later become her friends and heroes ...

What's going on here?

Now with two-under-two I turned up to sessions sporadically; sat and played with my girls; shyly compared Lucy's lunchbox with those around me; and sidled out the door at the end, head down, hoping no-one would notice I wasn't helping with clean up. It took me several months to realise that these sessions were being run by parents just like me, not paid teachers. I didn't understand what my roles on session were and several times I forgot to provide morning tea (kia ora



to my team for not telling me off, someone quietly whipped up some scones instead).

Meetings?

I finally made it to one of these mysterious

centre meetings. As I sat and listened, ohhhhh, it slowly dawned on me: I'm part of the running of this Playcentre. I remember there being a strangely long discussion about the type of coffee the centre could afford to buy – I don't drink coffee so I didn't participate (I was too shy at this point to participate in any case). I was also exhausted with a baby who woke many, many times a night. A kind woman next to me perhaps noticed me nodding off, "you don't have to stay till the end, leave when you need to".

And so it begins

After a gentle couple of talks with the Education Officer I eventually realised I needed to go to one of those talks about Playcentre. Te Wai (Course 1) turned out to be a very enjoyable evening and I even felt myself getting a little excited about Playcentre, but "I don't think I'll do any more training, it sounds too hard". But suddenly the session I was attending at my centre became a Course 2 block course (Te Puna in one Term), OK then I may as well; they'll look after my children and all ...

Stepping up to a job

Still rather at a loss as to what on earth was





going on at this Playcentre place I'd ended up in, I headed off to the AGM – they offered free pizza and wine after all. "So who could take on the session lists for each term?", "Oh I can do that" I thought, "I like lists" and before I knew it the wine had raised my hand up and my name was down beside a job.

Opening a Playcentre with a Prime Minister

After the wine also volunteering me for joining the "Opening Ceremony" committee for our newly refurbished centre (it was the least I could do since I'd helped next to nothing with the actual renovations), I encountered my first controversy. Who do we get to open the centre? Surely we couldn't get The Right Honourable Helen Clark ... or could we? One group felt hopeful and went for it, meanwhile someone else, a recent member who'd done a most superb job of contributing to the major centre refurbishments, was asked. Doh! What are we to do once we managed to secure NZ's Prime Minister? I wouldn't say the day went off without a hitch however it was pretty fabulous and the video and photos of our doors jammed with well-wishers attested to that. The community support for this little centre on the hill was breath-taking.

Lots of little learning

When "calling the roll" at morning tea time, some adults would ask the children "Lucy, are you here?" I remember our superbly wise and sunshine-filled Centre Support Person, Colleen, pointing out: "What a silly question to ask! The children will see through that. Let's do them the respect of treating them as we would adults. How about 'Kia ora Lucy'". What a eureka! moment for me.

Then another person heard me say to my daughter 'darling, you're too short for that bike' and she said to me 'That's not her fault' – good call I realised!

Despite being challenging, I was falling in love with this place.

In awe

I noticed my eldest, Lucy's, name on a list during a Planning Meeting and then several stories (apparently called observations) turned up in her profile book that people had written. I was blown away that these other parents cared enough about my daughter to notice what she was doing on session and, even more, they understood how to break down what she was learning in that scenario. Wow! I needed to get me some of that knowledge!

Hallelujah!

It occurred to me that those I was admiring in the centre had done or were doing Te Manga (Course 3) or higher of this Playcentre training business. I figured I needed to do my bit. Te Manga in two terms was being held at what would soon become "the other Playcentre" to three-year-old Lucy and 18-month-old Sophie. Again, I felt myself in awe of the supervision team at this weekly training session. They really knew their stuff and yet were just parents like me. I also nearly wept with relief to discover some seriously kindred spirits amongst the workshop facilitators – people who were passionate about conscious parenting practices, child development, communication and also knowledgeable about Te Tiriti o Waitangi and Te Reo Māori. I felt I had come home.

Awakening

After nearly two years I was feeling more confident of my place in not only my local Playcentre but also in the wider world of Playcentre. Friends I made during that two terms of Te Manga training I have kept and will always feel a bond with. At my centre I could now provide more points on sessions and felt confident in my understanding of what we were trying to achieve here each



day we turned up with our children. Also the haze of that first year of a new baby was lifting and I was excited about working with this variety of adults on a range of adult things, along with my day-to-day care of two pre-schoolers. It was then that I got a call from the local Kindergarten to say there was a place for Lucy. I didn't see any need to change her out of this wonder-full environment; everything she needed was here at Playcentre. We added another independent session for Lucy, trusted in the care and attention of all these other parents and continued on growing and learning together.

Unpopular beliefs

Along with growing confidence, I felt a growing disquiet that mine and the mainstream parenting practices were diverging:

- Playcentre is the perfect learning environment for all pre-schoolers, from birth right through to school
- All families can benefit from being part of Playcentre
- Infants and toddlers shouldn't be in high chairs to be fed if possible; with so many adults they can be on an adult's knee or in a small seat with sides (I later discovered this is an ECE recommendation also)
- Car seats are for use in a moving car and not for carting babies around like heavy handbags
- We don't need to teach our babies to roll, crawl, sit, stand and walk, they'll do it beautifully by themselves

if given the opportunity to practice freely and regularly

- "Leaving them to cry so they'll learn to self soothe" is not a valid argument
- Adults aren't the bosses, we are aiming to work together in partnership, finding a balance well in the middle of the extremes of punitive and permissive parenting

Sometimes I felt quite heartbroken at the range of parenting practice I observed. How much do I ignore? When do I offer assistance or another alternative?

It's worf a crack Nigel!

So, no-one was looking to step forward for President ... OK I'll give it a go. I realised I'd need a good support person so I hand-picked my Vice. OK, now I can really get some things moving. With much assistance from my dear Centre Support Person I used what I'd gained from my Te Manga experiences and had a good crack at this role: meeting facilitation, complete with scene setting candles and local flora, calling for feedback, "is there anyone who can't live with this decision?", generating a centre-wide review of how we guide children's behaviour on session. My husband noticed a marked increase in how often I was out and how much I was working. Uh oh. What a year! Finally I understood what our association did and that other centres were REALLY different from ours. Some ideas flopped, others I'm still proud of.

A little tale

Two little girls are in the bath playing with

their toy ducks. The older one booms with a deep voice "I'm the Daddy Duck and I go to work", then another more softly states "I'm the Mummy Duck and I go to meetings".

Leadership training, now we're getting serious

I was up for the challenge of this Course 5 course that I didn't know was a Course 5 course until much later! I only knew it was a whole weekend (away from being a Mum) that I got to spend amongst really cool people! I learned how fabulous it is to do a car rally with only "Action" people like me in it. Awesome role-modelling, incredibly helpful learning, ups and downs, interesting conversations with trainees and facilitators alike ("Do you think I should have another baby" was one)...

With the big guns for a time

An invitation to support our association's current Co-President wasn't one I wanted to turn down. Off to Conference we went and some major eye-opening occurred! Pennie Brownlee's *Dance with me in the Heart* book was released (and I promptly returned home and conceived our third daughter through sheer desire to put Pennie's wisdom into practice!); MPs and strong-minded, wise women, and some of the workings of the wider Playcentre community were revealed to me during that inspirational experience. I'd tasted the bigger picture, I'd soaked in the amazing energy, I wanted more! Unfortunately I totally lose my mojo when I'm pregnant so I needed to patiently await a time when I could again dip my toe in those waters of everlasting Playcentre life...

Big bellied and running workshops

A casual mention while at Conference of wanting to run workshops to someone who happened to be the Hutt Education Convenor threw me slightly unexpectedly (but supremely happily) into the world of the "Hutt Facilitators' Guild". Once, twice, thrice I co-facilitated Te Tiriti o Waitangi – oooh, I like this, I do, I even love it! This was what I was born to do! This is what I need to keep doing! After a while I snuck into Child Development and began to put down roots there. Evenings heading out to facilitate were no problem: "Bye!" I happily called to my little family "I'm off to hang out with adults!" My husband was a star and Sophie and Lucy (and later Kendra) have lasting images of a mother who is making a difference in the world, both with and without them.

SPACE and Brainwave

Before I became pregnant I'd put my name down for training to be a SPACE facilitator: "I reckon I could do that..." Lying on the floor, (morning) sick as a dog but determined to make it through the weekend (at least I didn't have to look after other little human beings for these two days), I had another Hallelujah! moment. Kathryn from the Brainwave Trust did a presentation that validated so much of what I was trying to do with my children – "Hurrah!" I nearly yelled through my green pallor. "Thank you, oh thank you" I said to Kathryn at the end and determined to find out more about this research-gathering, oh-so-fabulous organisation called Brainwave – yet another moment of clarity as to why I was embracing this Playcentre-lark so completely.

New baby, new confidence

Now that I'd been part of this Playcentre business for a few years and felt a deep sense of trust in it, I felt confident to call on other members for help in my time of need. Heavily pregnant with daughter number three, Kendra, I arranged pick-ups and drop-offs for Sophie heading to three sessions per week. I understood that I would surely repay these many favours in the future when I was able, but that it wouldn't necessarily be a repayment to those who'd helped me this time. Pay it forward is how it works ...

SPACE and Brainwave and Playcentre

I co-facilitated a SPACE programme with my little Kendra the same age as the other babies in the group. She was a model baby – kicking happily and then falling asleep when we did waiata. She was deeply into her explorations with the treasure basket items, and inspired the other babies (and parents too) to indulge their curiosity. Preparing SPACE sessions and training as a Brainwave presenter, balancing with needs of, and desire for, Playcentre participation and school involvement, and home/family life also, was growing tricky. Luckily Kendra was a sunshine baby and was happy to be with others. Our bond was particularly strong and our family was working well together. The hardest thing was getting Lucy to school on time!!

Other people love my children!

One morning at Playcentre a friend came to me and said "I dreamed about Kendra's gorgeous, big, luscious legs last night!" Another woman often made a special point



of telling me stories of Kendra on sessions and asked to look after her at her house. Sophie had a best friend, Ruby, and her mum was basically a second mother to Sophie – having her over very regularly. What an amazing community to be part of.

Ups and downs and time for change

With increasing consternation I realised there was not a strong belief at my centre in the benefit of Playcentre for older preschoolers. NZ culture has it that three and four-year-olds go to Kindergarten. Even my family would ask my girls: "so how was Kindy today?". It's an institution that's expected still (that is unless both parents are working, which is increasingly becoming the norm). I didn't share the concerns my fellow members seemed to have – that children need Kindy to "prepare for school". If doing school routines was perceived as difficult for a five-year-old then why on earth would it

be easier for a three or four-year-old? My training had shown me that without doubt Playcentre was whole and complete in itself for a young child's preschool years. Lucy had stayed along with her best friend Ryan through to starting school. They were "like peas and carrots" to quote Forrest Gump. But more and more of our centre families were choosing to send their older children elsewhere and I could see that our Playcentre was the poorer for these choices. I had done some looking around and realised it was time for a change. I wanted for my children to be cared for on sessions by adults who believed in Playcentre for big kids. I decided to make a switch to another Playcentre – this one was historically strong and one that had done a great job holding onto its big kids. This was a tortuous decision with much second guessing but I trusted to my beliefs and made the change.

Quietly confident

It's a strange thing starting out somewhere new but in actual fact knowing rather a lot about the overall picture of Playcentre. I quietly settled in – focussing on ensuring my two little girls grew confident in the new setting. I informed teams of their characters and created a special child plan for Sophie who was only two terms away from heading off to school. Sophie turned five during the final term though carried on to the end of the term in her five sessions per week. I re-started my Playcentre training and enjoyed finding out how things were done here. The adults were amazing with Sophie particularly – enjoying her face painting prowess and her pink fairy dress uniform. A young woman called Annika was on an exchange from Germany and she quickly earned the besotted devotion of Sophie.

Haere ra Sophie

We had held one for Lucy and we wished to celebrate Sophie's move to school also with Poroporoaki – a transition ceremony. I'd read about one of these in the Playcentre Journal and was very inspired. We invited everyone from the centre, whānau and friends and it created a beautiful evening of sharing, receiving, preparing, meeting challenges,... and then there was just one on sessions!...

Te Awa, finally!

After three and a half years of hard work and good intentions I facilitated the discussions, ran the health and safety audit, etc. etc. etc. and I completed Course 4, known as Te Awa in Te Awakairangi/Hutt Playcentre Association. I received great support from the centre and all of the Hutt Centre Support People helping me with childcare so that I could complete this milestone – most appreciated. What an amazing community.

Education Convenor

For the last two years I had been on the Education team for our Association and now it felt like time to take on the Convenor role, with the stepping back of our previous super-woman-in-command! Unfortunately there was only one (though steadfast) member of the team so with the two of us doing our darnedest we had a crack at running the Hutt's infamous Adult Education programme. It was major up-hill learning and involved many challenges. We called for help several times and received some but ultimately this was a four to five person job and we were never going to be able

to fulfil on our visions and strategic plans; instead we simply kept the cogs going as best we could until an ongoing health issue strongly urged me to step down – leaving my stalwart companion to continue on alone. My sadness was all the deeper for missing out on attending the truly splendid National Education meetings – so inspiring and motivating to continue our journeys.

Tamariki Nui focus

At my previous centre I did quite a passionate push of support for babies' right to full inclusion, and the appreciation of what babies bring, on sessions. At this new centre I turned my attention to the super stars of our centres, those who are there the most regularly of all of us, those who are the glue that keeps the centre together, the superheroes of the younger tamariki, the immensely creative members of the session teams ... the four-year-olds! I became a voice of advocacy, along with other fabulous pro-Playcentre mums, for what the needs of tamariki nui were and how they differed from those of other younger age groups. I tried to support those with younger tamariki to have some space from their older child/ren by offering pick-ups to and from sessions and trying to not have a roster for parents on our tamariki nui session. I was also super keen on the concept of outdoor sessions but as the Mainlanders know "good things take time" and the centre wasn't yet ready for this radical option.

Completing Te Waka – Playcentre Diploma Leadership Strand

Leadership was where it was at for me in this magnificent training programme, so I gave it my all: completing first the tasks for Course 5 and then, 18 months later, the tasks for the Course 6 leadership strand. Taking my place among the many firsts Hutt have achieved in the Playcentre diploma completions – precious few others in the country have completed this ... aside from those amazing six women who have completed the entire Playcentre Diploma (all from Hutt Association!)

Final days

The last days were strange. Was I still part of the centre? Was I not? Utilising my Playcentre training to thinly sprinkle my well intentioned offerings to the last centre meeting – there was an interesting discussion about which coffee to buy so, along with growing from having nothing to contribute to meetings to

having to hold back my korero, my Playcentre meeting world and gone full circle! Kendra's countdown – "is it this many days left Mum?" (holding up two hands with spread fingers and trying to snuggle one or two fingers down). Wonderful people in the centre arranged a combined final session at our local pool, inviting many others from other Playcentres and the association. I was blown away by the spectacular, creative and heartfelt gifts I received. The super sausage sizzle kept us well energized and I felt really privileged to have pastmembers from our and other centres attending in support.

Parting thoughts...

So what have I gained? Patience (in enormous dollops!); respect for the many and varied stages of children's development; strategies for supporting children with all their good intentions but with execution sometimes rather lacking; re-igniting PLAY in me; superhero ninjas!; "I can work with young children"; other people's children running to hug me and sit on my lap; being happy to "make a fool of myself"; tolerance; appreciation; creativity; managing to still function with minimal sleep and maximum wake-ups; many friends – both children and adults; memories to cherish and learn from forever; many springboards to my future careers and passions; continuing self confidence in my abilities to work with adults and children alike; knowing how to set up a clay table appealingly; playing by myself and watching the children arrive with their natural born interest peaked at what I'm doing; understanding the huge learning that the sand-pit-kids gain; working with the child who doesn't want to eat with the others or who could use some tips to join in the play; knowing I'd chosen to learn and grow alongside my tamariki; knowing what it feels like to be the mother of "that child"; building deep and abiding relationships with other people's children from birth to school age, and other adults returning this precious favour with my three lucky daughters ...

I could never have been a stay at home mum without Playcentre and I never would have enjoyed my girls' pre-school years and engaged in their learning without being so strongly involved in Playcentre. This is a decision I have never regretted and don't ever expect to.

THIS ... IS ... PLAYCENTRE.

Sarah Best,
Hutt Association

A Playcentre blessing with Ngāti Whātua

Takarunga Playcentre is located on Takarunga/Mt Victoria, a volcanic cone overlooking Devonport. A Bill is in the process of being passed to hand back Takarunga and other sacred mountains in the area to a collective of iwi. As tenants, these changes to the ownership of the land were of a concern to us as we were at the end of our lease and also wanted to undertake some extensive works to the outdoor area that required approval from our new landlords. We were worried about how our new owners would view our occupation of their land and felt a little vulnerable.

By contacting kaumatua, John Retimana, of Ngāti Whātua (one of the pre-imminent iwi within the collective) a blessing of our Playcentre was arranged for a dawn morning in early April 2014.

Although many know that the mountain is a spiritual and special place (it was the site of a pā and the burial ground for a Māori leader) there is no record that this site has ever been blessed. This blessing was for Ngāti Whātua to stake their claim on the mountain, infusing our centre with positive energy. The occasion was also a chance for us to bless a carving we had commissioned (paid for by a Mahi Ngātahi o Puawai grant) by Uenuku Hawira which now stands as sentinel at the entrance path to our centre.

Not only does this Blessing recognise the sacredness of the site, but it provides assurance to our families that Ngāti Whātua recognise us as tenants of this land. Ngāti Whātua has also been supportive of our planned improvements to the outdoor area at our centre, and the renewal of our lease; our hope is that with their support, the current team will be able to implement our plans soon so we can capitalise on the momentum that we have for the benefit of our community.

At 5 am on the day of the Blessing we dragged our children out of their beds (some in their pajamas) to take part in this very special occasion. We were called on site by a woman from Ngāti Whātua with a kai karanga before we followed the elders of the iwi moving round the perimeter of our Playcentre undertaking the Blessing. This was not a mean feat in the dark of a very



steep and gnarly site! Fortunately there was no need to fill out any H&S registers and all arrived safely into the centre for the mihi (speeches)! We had many local dignitaries and past members with us who spoke, and Meagan and I spoke as Association President and the residing President of Takarunga Playcentre respectively. We listened and sang some beautiful waiata and shared some kai to finish.

It was an amazing morning and a celebration of different cultures and what it is to be at Playcentre. It was an affirmation of just how incredible the community at Takarunga has been and still is, and just how much benefit the adults as well as the children get out of being part of this incredible organisation. Playcentres all over the country teach children Te Reo and Māori tikanga, however, Takarunga Playcentre has an even more special connection to Māori being situated on this sacred site. In teaching te reo and Māori tikanga, we are effectively living part of the Māori culture and it becomes written on the heart and becomes an integral part of us. We feel the

spiritual relationship between Takarunga Playcentre and our Māori family and their tupuna to be hugely important for our future. Certainly, many of us here are immigrants to this country and we are grateful to be welcomed so warmly and hope we can come together more often to learn and be more connected to the indigenous people of Takarunga. In fact we already planning to celebrate Matariki with them and it really cannot get more special that!

I would like to say a huge thank you to our current members of Takarunga who continue to put huge amount of effort into our Playcentre and particularly to Siobhan who has been instrumental in making this Blessing happen and helping us unravel the intricacies of Māori protocol! Also a big thank you too to Meagan and Jo-anne from the Management Team, who have been a huge support to us. We truly have appreciated it.

Here is to the future of Takarunga Playcentre!

Marissa Willson, Takarunga Playcentre,
North Shore Association

Children's Poetry Book project fits well with Playcentre values

Western Bay of Plenty Playcentre Association wanted a project that would raise funds for a WBOPPA Web Site and also reflect our philosophy. We wanted to express our uniqueness and our beliefs in a way that connected Playcentre with a wider community. A project that was inclusive, creative and playful.

When I engage with young children I focus on the process and not the end product. It has been my experience that when adults and children throw themselves into a process that is messy, organic and sometimes frantic, the end result is always worthwhile.

When I first approached Creative Tauranga with a proposal to run a National Children's Poetry Competition and then publish a book of children's poetry set alongside children's artwork, I did not know what I was getting myself into. What an adventure!

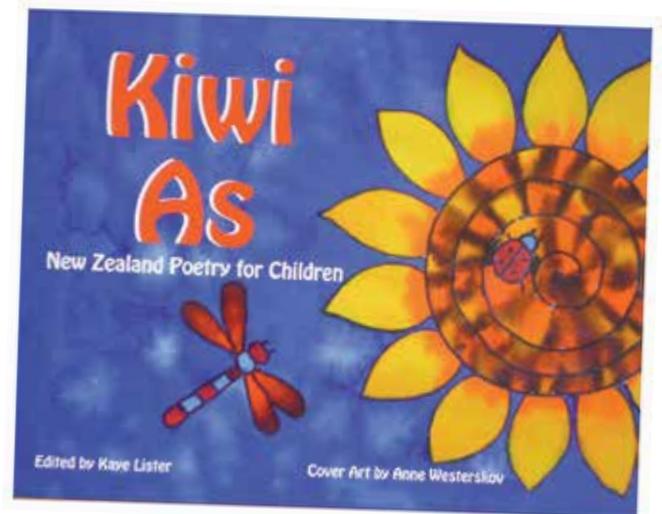
It often felt like a suspense thriller, full of drama, with an uncertain ending. The first and most important part of this project was to get the 200 entries budgeted for. The fun part was being on Central Television. The interview was a hoot with a useful plug for Playcentre and the importance of reading with our children. But with less than three weeks to the competition closing date we had received less than 30 entries. I

started to walk the floor each evening mumbling to myself. "Sixty entries would be good. That could work. We only need 15 variable poems for the book." Oh God, what had I done. Then they started to flood in at 20 a day. By the closing date we had over 200 entries. We had a deluge of ditties and a stampede of stanzas.

We asked for poems that explored wordplay and metrical beat, and activity and counting poems. Especially, poems with New Zealand content, fun to read aloud and listen to. And that is what we got.

Our judge Marcel Currin, local poet, musician and songwriter commented in his judge's report "It's deceptively difficult to write for children. Getting everything right – rhythm, tone and rhyme – while also remembering for whom the poems were meant to be written."

With the poems selected, the next part of the project was to herd the images and



Kiwi As can be purchased from WBOP Playcentre Association for \$18.00 each including postage. Visit www.bayplaycentre.co.nz for details.

poems together better known as editing. I went about the task of gathering images from our Playcentres in a haphazard manner, but in the end I managed to match the artwork with the child. I spent almost a year collecting images and with so many to choose from, serendipity played a part and poem and picture found each other. I know now from practical experience, 'from chaos comes order' and you can trust the process. And the title of our book comes from a neat little poem that, as New Zealanders, we can all relate to. It was a messy, engrossing and enjoyable creative process. The end result being a great little picture book of New Zealand poems for children.

As parents we understand what an important role illustrations play in a children's book. If done well, they grab the attention of young readers and make them want to pick up the book and find out what's inside. And there are so many good reasons to read to our children as they snuggle up beside us when we read together. If that first experience of reading offers fun and adventure curiosity grows and a joy for learning is developed.

Thanks to Marcel Currin (judge), Tommy 'Kapai' Wilson (foreword), Jenny Argante (mentor and friend) and Anne Westerskov (cover art). Also a big thankyou to the whānau/families of WBOP Playcentre Association for trusting me with their children's artwork.

Kaye Hubner,

Western Bay of Plenty Association



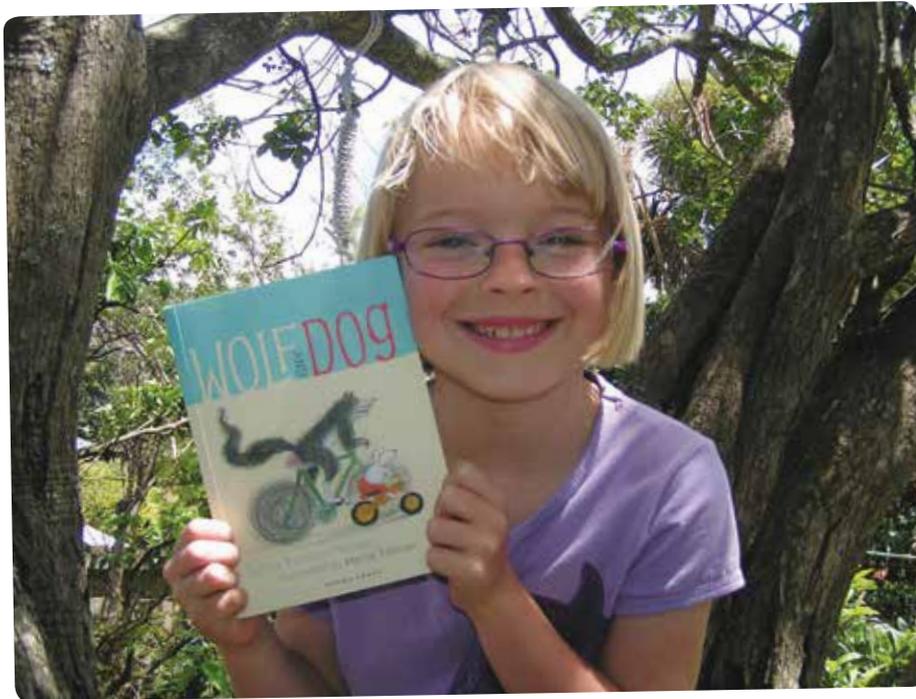
Kiwi As foreword...

There is no greater joy than spending time reading to our children. There are no better books to do this with than stories and poems written by locals about their local backyard. Kiwi As is 'kiwi as' and a platter of poems for all of our tamariki to enjoy. If you want to grow free range kids – feed them a daily dose of Kiwi As.

Tommy Kapai

Sir Mouse to the Rescue

'Wolf and Dog'



By Sylvia Vanden Heede
Illustrated by Marije Tolman
Published by Gecko Press
Book review by Zoe Bews-Hair, aged 7, (pictured)

What type of book is this?

This book is lots of poems put together to make one story. A very funny one too!

What is the book about?

Wolf and Dog is about the difference between two cousins and the fights they have and how they sort it out.

What did you enjoy about it?

I enjoyed how Dog always outsmarts Wolf in the end.

Tell us about the illustrations

There are illustrations on every page – some are big, some are small. What I like about the illustrations is that they are sometimes are very small but you can always understand them.

Would you recommend this book to your friends?

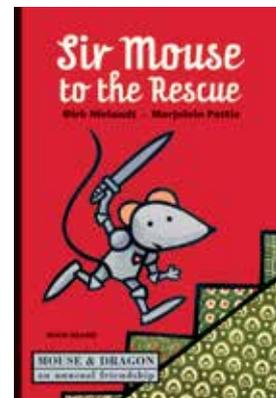
Maybe, if they are ready for some blockbusting fun!

What age group is it good for?

This book is a very good book for parents to read to children because parents like reading rhyming books and you can read a chapter a night.

What other books do you like reading?

I mostly like reading chapter books but occasionally like reading picture books. My favourite chapter books are the 'How to Train Your Dragon' by Cressida Cowell.



By Dirk Nielandt and Marjolein Pottje
Published by Book Island
ISBN9780987669629

Sir Mouse is a knight. As a knight Sir Mouse has the responsibility of many knightly duties, including welding a sword, rescuing tiresome princes from towers, and fighting battles with other knights (Sir Cat) and dragons. Mouse's best friend is also a dragon, luckily though, they never fight. And lucky for Sir Mouse that she has such a good friend, as she does seem to need a bit of help sometimes – like when rescuing the Prince (who doesn't really need rescuing but just likes yelling 'Help, Help').

Four-year-old, Billie, can't get enough of Sir Mouse and her adventures with Dragon. So much so, that Sir Mouse has been having a rather strong influence in the way Billie has been speaking with her own family and friends – where apparently sometimes, even if it doesn't make sense, that's just the way it is. Billie has asked for many repeat reads from Sir Mouse to the Rescue over the past several months. Older brother Sam (six-years-old), however, hasn't taken to Sir Mouse at all and seems somewhat put out that the females are getting to have all the adventures.

It's a book that is highly amusing read for parents too with a quirky new twist on old fashioned fairytales and subtleties that may not be appreciated by the younger readers or listeners. With creative and clever illustrations, Sir Mouse to the Rescue is presented in small chapters which make it a perfect bedtime read out loud – you can make it last as long or as short as you like.

Marama Mateparae-Clark,
Papamoa Playcentre, WBOP Association

Who are the NZ Playcentre Federation?

