

Playcentre

Journal



ISSUE 140

Autumn 2011

Everybody is a leader:
The four responsibilities of leadership.

Experiential learning – ICT at Playcentre
Fire workshop – Working theories
Nature and children – Christchurch





Papamoa Playcentre (Western Bay of Plenty Association)



Levin Playcentre (Central Districts Association)



Port Ahuriri Playcentre (Hawkes Bay Association)



Laingholm Playcentre (Auckland Association)



Howick Playcentre (Tamaki Association)



Tauriko Playcentre (Western Bay of Plenty Association)

Supporting Each Other

As I write, we are all watching the events in Japan, with our emotions still fresh from the tragedy in Christchurch. Both of these events have affected us in Playcentre: one has put Canterbury Association to the test, and the other has rocked a newly founded Japan Playcentre Association.

I've seen and heard centres and associations offering money, equipment, and food to our affected regions. I know that centres have adopted Cantabrians needing a holiday away from Christchurch. And I know the New Zealand Playcentre Federation contacted the Japan Playcentre Association to check on how they were going, and to see what support they needed.

Support comes in many forms, and travels many different routes. Sometimes just the knowledge that people are thinking of you when you are in trouble, even if they cannot do anything else, lifts the spirits and makes us stronger for a few more minutes, hours, or days. Many people I have spoken to in Canterbury have expressed their appreciation for all the support from other associations and centres.

And yet I know that sometimes the support for the members of our own centres gets pushed to the wayside with our own troubles, the paperwork, and our busy lives.

Playcentre was founded on the idea of support. The idea that parents could help each other in a communal setting to provide education and self-improvement to the children and the adults, a cup of tea and an ear to listen when necessary, access to organisations that can help with difficulty, and a space where all of the above can happen.

It is very important that we show support to Canterbury and to the Japan Playcentre Association. They need it, and they appreciate it.

I just ask that you remember to support your fellow centre and association members as well. Playcentre is about supporting each other. Kia kaha.

Colleen Welch (Playcentre Journal Editor)

Playcentre Journal Cooperative: Colleen Welch (Western Bay of Plenty Association), Susy Mannall (Canterbury Association), Sue Easter (Waikato Association), Kathryn Gunson (Central Hawkes Bay Association) and Emma Woods (Canterbury Association).

EDITORIAL

Contributions of written pieces, illustrations and photographs are welcome either by post to 1 Barrow Place Te Puke 3119 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. You can download the permission form from <http://playcentre.org.nz/pressdocs/115.pdf>. The Journal is edited by Colleen Welch, who is supported by the Journal cooperative. If you are interested in participating in this group, please send an email to Journal@playcentre.org.nz.

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For Issue 141 we would like to receive stories and photos about:

- Examples of portfolios at your centre
- Recipes for healthy food the children can make on session
- Ways your centre supports people going through a difficult time
- Examples of tikanga at your centre.

Guidelines for writing for the Playcentre Journal can be found at <http://www.playcentre.org.nz/journal.php>
Please email your contributions to pcjournal@gmail.com or post them to 1 Barrow Place, Te Puke 3119.

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Cover photo:

Krishan Morris attends Port Ahuriri Playcentre on Thursdays. He loves to run and jump on the swing then laugh while he's swinging. (Hawkes Bay Association)

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Totara Park Playcentre (Hutt Association)



Onga Onga Playcentre
(Central Hawkes Bay Association)



Port Ahuriri Playcentre
(Hawkes Bay Association)



Kai around the fire pit.

Space to school – 5, 4, 3, 2, 1

Bucklands Beach Ohui-A-Rangi Playcentre held Auckland's first SPACE group back in July 2006. This month two of their very special 'babies,' Kendal Penney and Hamish MacDonald, are turning five and will be graduating to school!

Kendal and Hamish were only four months old when they joined SPACE and then stayed on at Bucklands Beach Ohui-a-Rangi Playcentre for the remainder of their early childhood education.

Both Kendal and Hamish have been such amazing wee characters to have at our centre. They have both enjoyed all aspects of Playcentre, and over the last year have really flourished in their favourite area of play—Kendal at the collage table and Hamish in the sandpit.

Hamish moved to Melbourne when he was two, however, he returned when he was three and quickly picked up where he left off. Only at a place with amazingly strong

families and Playcentre values could this be possible.

It has always felt natural to be close to our kids and to be part of their early learning. SPACE and Playcentre have been a huge part of our lives and some really great learning foundations have been built here – the best start for school and life.

Rachael MacDonald and Rachel Penny,
Bucklands Beach Ohui-A-Rangi Playcentre
(Tamaki Association)



Kendal and Hamish at SPACE in 2006.

Guy Fawkes night

Laingholm Playcentre enjoyed a Guy Fawkes get together with lots of family, food and fireworks! One enthusiastic mum let off volleys of smokeballs, whizzers and bang-boom fireworks. The children had a ball watching from the safety of the deck, and yelling directions like "The big one, do the big BOOM one now!" Once the pyrotechnics were over there were fish 'n chips, ice cream, and toasted marshmallows around a fire in the sandpit. It's always lovely to see the children's familiarity with each others' whānau deepen when the dads are around, and to feel the sense of whanaungatanga and community that any social event brings.

Huia Minogue, Laingholm Playcentre
(Auckland Association)



Pretty in pink

Our 2010 AGM had the theme 'Pretty in Pink' with everyone dressing up for the occasion and even those who forgot coincidentally wore pink anyway!

A fun night was had with pink punch to start and, after the meeting a supper of pink delights and coffee and hot chocolates (brown!), we gave a donation to the local breast cancer group.

Leanne Evans
(Central Hawkes Bay Association)

Annual Hawkes Bay Blossom Parade

Saturday, 11 September was the big day for Hawkes Bay Association. After many months of preparing for the annual Blossom Parade the children were all able to climb on board the float and parade around, as Playcentre children just so love to do.

The theme for the year was 'pink.' Many items were donated – from lawnmowers to letterboxes. We even managed to have a lamb on board the float (for Spring!) too. Balloons were stamped with the Playcentre logo and pamphlets were printed for distribution to all onlookers of the parade promoting our Hawkes Bay Playcentre shop and also promoting Playcentre. A CD player on the float played the new 'We love Playcentre' song and the children happily sang along throughout the parade.

It's not often that all our centres and children get together as an association to celebrate something we feel so strongly about – Playcentre. Angela Eccles, Hawkes Bay PR Convenor, was enthusiastic about the upcoming event and arranged a car and trailer for our truly magnificent float. Pregnant mums from different centres were known to stay up until midnight making decorations and every centre in the region banded

together to make a true team effort for the parade. All 11 of our centres participated in the parade. Ka pai!

Children of all ages wanted to be on our float and as long as they were once Playcentre children of course they were welcome—Playcentre full inclusion. We had Dads come along who had been Playcentre children too.

I know the children had a great day and so did all involved. A lot of hard work and preparation allowed us all to come together on the day and promote something we are all so passionate and want to tell the whole world about. We got our message across in Hawkes Bay at the Hastings Blossom parade.

As a bonus, we received the Highly Commended award from the Judges!

Helen Jackson (Hawkes Bay Association)



A big year for Urenui Playcentre

2010 has been a busy year for Urenui Playcentre, with the completion of a building renovation, re-licensing with Ministry of Education (MoE), and a visit from the Education Review Office (ERO). The extension/upgrade was planned to comply with new MoE Early Childhood Education Regulations 2008 which include improving disabled access and facilities, and adding showering facilities. Meeting these standards enabled Playcentre to be re-licensed with the MoE after the building was completed.

The Taranaki Electricity Trust, who provided much of the funding for the project, also contributed towards ceiling insulation, plants and mulch for the new gardens. Gardening has been a huge focus for the pre-schoolers who have grown their own popcorn, strawberries and annuals. The Urenui District Health Group also donated vegetable seedlings which the children enjoyed nurturing and harvesting. ERO was on hand to witness strawberry planting during their visit in August and reported positive feedback. A full copy of their review is available at the Playcentre or online.

On behalf of all the members of Urenui Playcentre we would like to thank Sarah Blyde and Shelley Hannam-Williams for all their hard work towards the renovation, and to Murray Butler, Davis and Melinda McClutchie, and Edward Carr for their significant contributions. We would also like to thank the TET and TSB Bank Community Trust for their financial contributions.

Katie Karr

Urenui Playcentre (Taranaki Association)

Len Brown stops for a picture and a chat

The mothers at Takapuna Playcentre were thrilled to meet Len Brown, Mayor of Auckland, at the Takapuna Christmas Carnival in December 2010. With a stall selling playdough, little wooden cars that zoom along, and sunflowers the children had grown, the families at Takapuna Playcentre were spreading the word about Playcentre and the open days being held in January, to attract new members. "We didn't realise that Len Brown's children had gone to Playcentre" said Claire Talbot. "It was great to have him at the stall."

Claire Talbot, Takapuna Playcentre
(North Shore Association)

Te Puna celebrates 40 years of Playcentre

Forty odd years ago 'pre-school' in the Te Puna area consisted of two or three playgroups. When Irene Richardson, who had been involved in Playcentre in Putaruru, moved to Te Puna, she decided that there was a need for a Playcentre. Irene banded together with other like-minded local families to open Te Puna Playcentre. On Wednesday 23 February 1971, Te Puna Playcentre held its first session in the Te Puna Hall. Nineteen children attended this session. Irene Richardson was the Supervisor (as she was the only parent who had done some Playcentre training). Erica Walpole, whose grandchildren currently attend Te Puna Playcentre, was her assistant.

The Te Puna Hall served the purpose initially, but sharing of the building wasn't ideal: all equipment had to be put away after each session; children's art wasn't allowed to be hung on the walls; the hall had to have any trace of paint removed from walls, floors or chairs. Just imagine the ordeal it must have been to clean every smidgeon of paint off the chairs! One of the roster person's duties was to spray for flies prior to each session as there was a poultry farm across the road which provided the hall with heaps of flies.

After several years of fundraising and searching for "their own place," the Playcentre moved to its current site, located right next to the Te Puna Primary School in 1980.

To celebrate this momentous occasion our Centre hosted a catered dinner on Wednesday 23 February 2011 for past and present members, which was held on our extensive covered deck area. It was fantastic to be able to hold this event at the Centre where past members were able to see how much the Centre had changed or what is



Irene Richardson and Natasha Rodger cut the anniversary cake.

still there from years ago. We had lots of photos displayed from over the years. We quickly realised that the children are doing pretty much the same things now as they were back then.

The evening was an acknowledgement and celebration to the dedicated people who have been involved in Te Puna Playcentre over the last 40 years. It started with a glass of wine and nibbles and an opportunity to mix and mingle, check out photos and catch up with old Playcentre friends.

Irene Richardson was one of our honoured guests. She is still very involved in Playcentre in the Western Bay of Plenty Association. We are so fortunate to have her experience and passion. Other guests included our life members, Helen Neale, Rosie Williams and Chantel Freeman, and our Santa (aka Robin) and his 'driver,' Rex Williams – who collectively have been treating Te Puna Playcentre children to a visit from Santa for the last 44 years!

The floor was opened to speakers, and after several people spoke, the common thread was the fact that their Playcentre experience directly or indirectly had a huge impact on their lives and indeed placed them in good stead to go on to do great things in their lives. We also learnt that problems the Centre has had over the years, are not so different to problems that we face today.

Our evening ended with Natasha Rodger and Irene Richardson cutting a big birthday cake. What a great night! What great memories! What a success!

Vanessa Fitzgerald, Te Puna Playcentre
(Western Bay of Plenty Association)



Len Brown at the Playcentre stall

Rūamoko is causing havoc again

A personal account

On 22 February this year I lost the debate about the best place to celebrate my daughter's birthday. A picnic in a park versus the new fast food outlet in the middle of the city ...

Under protest and with little enthusiasm I left the car parked on Colombo Street in the centre of the city and joined the others 15 minutes later in the new restaurant. Lunch was, as usual, a lively affair with four of my children, three mokopuna, a daughter-in-law, a niece and her flatmate all discussing events of the day and making plans for the rest of the week.

Next door a jackhammer and other heavy machinery kept assaulting my ears as they worked to repair the damage from the September earthquake.

Banter was halted by what we initially thought was an aftershock. The building started to shake, and as is the norm for so many Cantabrians, we looked up, rolled our eyes and waited for it to stop. After only a few shaky seconds we realised that yet again Rūaumoko, the son of Ranginui (the sky) and his wife Papatuanuku (the earth), decided to create havoc in Canterbury, and he was not planning to stop any time soon.

Things happened quickly. One minute we were eating lunch, the next we were huddled under the table, with things falling

around us. The mokopuna were silent and the adults clung to them and each other as we tried to come to terms with what was going on around us and the reality of the situation. Straight away we knew that this quake was so much more severe than the last one. The shaking was more intense and sharper. Thoughts of the machinery next door came to mind along with the realisation and dread that the structures around us, red stickered in the September quake, could fall onto the building we were in. My immediate thoughts were that we had to get out of here or risk the unthinkable.

The shaking subsided but the ground still wobbled like jelly. We hurried outside, totally unprepared for the sights we faced. People were standing and looking around, stunned and silent, holding each other as they surveyed the devastation.

After a quick head count and quietly thanking God that we were all safe, my leadership skills kicked in. I ordered my family and anyone else who would listen to get to the river. I knew the buildings were precariously perched now and another good aftershock would bring them down. It all seems a bit hazy now – I remember walking down a narrow track in the middle of Hereford Street towards the river; each side of the street was covered with debris



Heathcote Valley Playcentre.

from the ruins of what was once the tall and proud mixture of heritage and sky scraper buildings which defined Christchurch's inner city.

From there we made our way across Hagley Park with hundreds of others and congregated at my son's moderately damaged house. Family members picked us up and took us to our house in Darfield. Ironically, the place of September's earthquake's epicentre became our safe haven.

Every day I reflect on our experiences. I think about the what if's: what if I had been on time and we had left the restaurant and had been walking around the streets; what if the family had been in the car parking building to collect their cars; what if Sam was born the day before or after would we have been together or in different places and then what?

Today we are ok and know that we are in an enviable position compared to some families. Our grief for our city is raw and the shocking images on television continue to fuel that grief and the inadequacy we feel over being unable to fix things, but we feel compelled to watch. We know that many families have experiences that they will never get over and have lost loved ones whom they will never forget. Our thoughts and prayers are with them all.

Laine Barker, Chairperson,
Canterbury Playcentre Association



Aranui Playcentre.

We made it through

We survived the quake,
we're feeling rather lucky.
Though it has to be said,
the aftermath is getting rather yucky!

Mud and silt above the ground,
all thanks to liquefaction.
Because the damn stuff's everywhere,
the sewer's out of action!

We scooped the mud,
we moved the muck.
Our sections are all clear,
but now it's warm the spring breeze blows and dust does fill the air!

In the mornings neighbours all smile and wave,
removing the paper from its wrapper.
Then off they go out to the street,
to use the communal crapper!

Yes Port-a-loos are here to stay,
the street is quite a sight.
More seem to turn up every day,
they're not much fun at night!

Chins up, brave faces everywhere,
we're all being so strong.
But it's harder when the days are hot
and the port-a-pottys pong!

Our houses lean, the walls are cracked,
we're really in a state.
We all sit back and twiddle our thumbs,
waiting to hear our fate.

The drive to town is quite a feat,
the road's a bloody mess.
Pot holes and cracks are everywhere,
it just adds to the stress.

Friends and family make the difference they really pull us through,
it's nice to know when times are grim, they know just what to do.
They come to visit, they bring a plate or they call us on the phone,
so that even with the strife and mess we know we're not alone!!

Thank you for being there.

Debbie Waghorn, Brooklands Playcentre (Canterbury Association)



Heathcote Valley Playcentre.

Methven Playcentre provides stable ground

Methven is only an hour's drive from Christchurch, so since the earthquake we hosted many families who needed to get away from the devastation in their city and spend time in our town. Our Playcentre has also been busy with a number of children coming along for a session or two to keep occupied after the quake.

For two days we had the pleasure of opening our centre to a group of Saudi Arabian women and their children while they were staying in Methven. The women needed a safe and comfortable place to gather with their children and Playcentre was an obvious choice. Around ten women and 15-20 children ranging from three months to ten years, flittered from play area to play area, making the most of the time they were there. The paints and the dress-ups were the favourites, and the children played happily while their mothers sat and chatted. Our Playcentre mums volunteered their time to come down and help out, keeping everyone well supplied with baking and cups of coffee. It was a real eye opener for our children as the women were all dressed in traditional burka, not something we see often in our small town. All in all a great experience for all of us.

Liz McMillan, Methven Playcentre
(Mid Canterbury Association)



Dallington Playcentre.

See page 35 about how to prepare your centre for a Civil Defence emergency.

Information and communication technologies (ICT) in Playcentre

Blogs, Picasa, Google Docs, data shows – at Johnsonville Playcentre we have crossed the digital divide and discovered how rewarding embracing technology can be.

Last year, Johnsonville Playcentre was approached by Tara Fagan, facilitator for CORE Education, to take part in the Early Childhood Education Communication Technology Professional Learning Programme (ECE ICT PL), funded by the Ministry of Education. Having just started to dabble in the use of ICT at our centre, (a laptop for minute taking, new digital camera and multifunction printer) the opportunity seemed too good to resist.

The beginning

A team of six members ran an extensive self review of the centre. Where were we at now? Where did we want to be? At this point ICT was kept out of our thoughts. We wanted to discover a need and find the ICT solution to fit, rather than simply think of ways to use technology. From this review process we identified three areas where our centre could improve:

- communication between sessions
- mentoring of newer members
- post-session meetings.

From these the research question was born: "How can ICT be used to assist with continuity and planning?"

Possible ICT solutions

We brainstormed ideas. One of the first to gain merit was a blog of the session diary. However that idea was swiftly shelved

amidst concerns of privacy. Members simply didn't want their children floating around in cyberspace. Instead we trialled a number of alternatives:

• Printing photos on site

The new multifunction printer was utilised to print photos directly after session. Having photos instantly available stimulated discussion at the post-session meetings. We talked about the play, the learning, the Te Whāriki links and possible lines of direction (PLODs). Team members found it valuable to see play they had not witnessed, and newer members were exposed to the thought processes which form the basis of a learning story.

• Data projector

Then we thought: 'Could we use these photos to show non-duty parents what happened on session? Could we use them to enhance continuity as well as planning?' So we trialled a slide show projected onto a large white sheet. At the end of session we displayed photos from that day so parents picking up children could see the play that had occurred. At the beginning of each session we displayed photos from previous sessions so the duty team could get a feel for what had been happening. It was a fantastic way to stimulate continuity, with both the adults and children. And the tamariki loved

seeing themselves and their friends displayed larger than life.

Incidental uses discovered for the data projector included:

- projecting the laptop screen during post-session meetings so everyone could see what was written
- displaying meeting agendas, waiata and documents for discussion
- PowerPoint presentations for workshops.

• Picasa 3.8

Picasa 3.8 is free software, primarily for photo editing. In addition to cropping, enhancing and manipulating photographs, we used Picasa for creating photo montages and managing our photo archives. Picasa even has facial recognition – making it easy for us to present graduating Playcentre children with a CD of all the digital images of their play. While we found these features of Picasa to be great tools for enhancing the recording of assessment, they didn't appear to improve the continuity or planning. However, our data projected slide shows were created using Picasa 3.8 – and the programme is remarkably easy to use.

The blog

Several months into the project we felt we needed something more. Maybe a blog wouldn't be so scary? The ICT team



Kate Lewis (3) tells her mum about the sandcastle she has built and decorated.



Jakob Johnson-Frow (4) and cousin Elise Baddington (4) squeal with delight as they see photos of themselves on the slide show.



Lucas Ling and Mum, Siewfong Chai, contribute as Cara Baddington records the session diary.

attended a Cybersafety Workshop and learnt a great deal, including the need for an ICT and Cybersafety policy for the centre. Interestingly and importantly we learned that blogs could be 'closed' – password restricted so the privacy of our children could be protected. So despite our earlier reservations we decided to trial it.

We created a closed blog using Wordpress. Each day's session diary was taken home via data stick and uploaded, with photos of the play sometimes included. The blog was initially trialled by the ICT team, then opened to the centre. Reaction was overwhelmingly positive:

- the session diary could now be read at home—and was read
- newer members were logging in and learning
- planning was being shared between sessions
- continuity was easier
- the blog could be searched in many ways, including categories of play.

The blog and on ...

While the adoption of the blog marked the end of the official ECE ICT PL programme, Johnsonville Playcentre has continued to explore technology:

- purchase of a digital microphone for recording child's voice
- transfer of our music library to an iPod, allowing us to store songs in categories such as 'Marching', 'Te Reo' or 'Parachute', and protecting our music library from depletion due to missing or damaged CD's
- future proofing of the centre's technology needs by planning for cabling to be installed in our upcoming renovation
- utilising GoogleDocs for document editing, calendar sharing and project management.

So where will ICT take Johnsonville Playcentre next?

With the blog continuing to be a highly

utilised tool, the possibilities for extension are huge. Including rosters, meeting agendas/minutes, a child planning database, on-line calendar with automatic text message reminders and more. There is also a plan for wireless internet into the centre, so the on-line session diary can be viewed and updated on site.

And further in the future? Who knows. Other centres we met through the ECE ICT PL programme were utilising ICT in varied and fascinating ways.

- digital microscopes were used for children to explore objects in minute detail
- video was used in assessment of both learning and teaching
- children developed skype relationships with other ECE centres and whānau within New Zealand and around the world
- children created their own movies, eBooks and slide shows.
- portfolios were stored and updated on-line
- with adult supervision the internet was used as a research tool
- and there were more.

But is using ICT beneficial for pre-school children?

In CORE Education's report on the impact of the ECE ICT PL programme, the most prominent finding was that eLearning or ICT-based activities have significant benefit potential with respect to:

- enhancing children's learning
- helping services connect with their communities
- improving the quality of teaching
- realising that potential lies less in which technologies are used and more in *how* they are used.

A second high level finding was that such

learning and social connection outcomes are likely to be greater when children use the technologies themselves, or when they have some measure of control over which, how, and why various ICTs are used.

Maybe it is time to challenge our inclination to keep preschoolers away from technology. Maybe when used appropriately, ICT can be a useful tool in our children's learning and development. Embracing ICT has been rewarding and invigorating for Johnsonville Playcentre, and it feels like the e-journey has only just begun.

Lynley Lewis, Johnsonville Playcentre
(Wellington Association)

Useful Resources

- A demo of Johnsonville Playcentre's blog can be viewed at www.jvplaycentre.wordpress.com
- Easi Speak digital microphones cost around \$100 from www.edsoft.co.nz
- A Wordpress blog can be set up free at www.wordpress.com
- Picasa 3.8 can be downloaded free at www.picasa.google.co.nz
- Googledocs can be created free at www.google.com/apps
- More information on ICT in ECE's can be seen at www.educate.ece.govt.nz/learning/exploringPractice/ICT.aspx
- Laptops are sometimes available free through the IBM Laptops for Community Groups Scheme – contact your local IBM office

References

Ministry of Education (2010). *Effective Learning in Early Childhood Education? The Impact of the ECE ICT PL Programme: A Synthesis Report*. Retrieved from: [mnhttp://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/ece/79138](http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/ece/79138)

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Experiential Learning: The case of the family holiday in Argentina

Experiential learning is learning based on experience. This might be stating the obvious, but it is worth reminding ourselves of what we mean by it, as we say that we incorporate it into both, our tamariki's and the ngā pakeke (adults) education programme. Repeated experiences, such as routines and rituals, can consolidate learning; but here I talk about brand new experiences. New experiences give us the chance to challenge our thinking, to reflect about different ways of doing things and to expand our knowledge by making connections to past experiences.

The recent family holiday to Argentina gave my husband and I and our three children many new experiences with plenty of challenges to our accepted ways of thinking. The pōtiki (youngest) of the whānau, Marcus (10) is still young enough to un-self-consciously 'play'. It was his play responses to new experiences that both delighted me and made me reflect on the value of experiential learning. I will mention but three examples amongst the many.

We went quad biking around the dunes at a beach on the Atlantic coast. Marcus found this thrilling and exciting, and later that day, I heard the result of his imagination as he described to me in great detail a new quad bike he was designing. This innovative model had every outlandish feature a superhero could possibly need. The creative process took at least half an hour as we walked back from dinner, and was referred to for the next few days.

In Buenos Aires, the city of the tango, the buskers at the weekend markets were all performing – you guessed it – tangos! It was not long before Marcus' older sister and I were asked to become his dancing partners and we got to tango along the streets, complete with turns and fancy footwork. I enjoyed being part of this, but strictly refused to be 'dipped'.

Although Marcus had a short series of Spanish lessons at school, he did not retain a lot. Suddenly he realised if he didn't speak Spanish, people couldn't understand him. There was rapid motivation to learn. It

became a competition between Marcus and his older brother to collect as many Spanish words as possible and note them down into the diary with the translations. One hundred and fifty words later ...

Reflecting on these examples of experiential learning, I came to the following conclusions:

Te Tuatahi: The new experience that prompts learning. This means that an educator's role is to provide experiences beyond the learner's boundaries and not to always follow a child's current interests. Anybody who has not experienced gloop will not know to ask for it, but if the experience is provided, it might just become a favourite.

... an educator's role is to provide new experiences beyond the learner's boundaries and not to always follow a child's current interests."

Similarly, Marcus did not suggest we ride the quad bikes at the beach, but he found the new experience exhilarating and it prompted a long period of imaginative play based on his new knowledge of quad bikes.

Te Tuarua: Play in experiential learning is not the whole learning, but the response and the making sense of the experience. A presentation by Suzy Edwards at the Annual Australian Research in Early Childhood Education Conference (ARECE) held in Melbourne in 2008, (which I attended courtesy of the Gwen Somerset Trust) reported that 5-year-olds were more able to retain and articulate their learning of scientific concepts when they had a guided instructional experience followed by a period of free play. Neither the instruction nor the free play on its own was as effective. Our adult education programme follows a similar pattern. A workshop experience is followed by assignments, which, although not exactly 'free play', provides an opportunity for reflection and making sense of the learning experience. This 'making sense' can take many forms, and often requires someone to share with. When Marcus

developed his ideas of a super-duper quad bike, he needed a listener, someone who understood about quad bikes. After watching a tango performance, Marcus needed a partner to try out his new tango skills, but one who knew what a tango was and had some idea of how to do it.

Te Tuatoru: The desire to be a competent participant in society is a powerful motivator for learning. Experiential learning works well when the context of the experience is 'real' so that competence is seen to be important. The learner can be an observer, watching those who have already mastered the skills. Instruction is by role modelling, not by explicit instruction.

The learner then retreats to reflect upon the experience and practice the skills to gain mastery in a safe environment where mistakes are allowed. This style of learning is traditional for kaupapa Māori (Tauroa & Tauroa, 1986), and takes place in cultures around the world as described by Barbara Rogoff (2003). In my example, Marcus observed the tango, which is so much a part of Buenos Aires, and therefore was motivated to practice in a play situation. Being immersed in a Spanish speaking country provided Marcus with a desire to learn the language. His response was not to immediately try to speak Spanish to everyone we met, but rather play at it first (through a competition with his brother) to gain some sense of mastery.

Experiential learning is a vital part of our learning repertoire for both tamariki and pakeke, but it requires educators to introduce and support new experiences. This can be a challenge to the idea that our curriculum should only contain children's interests, but the results are worth it.

Suzanne Manning
Playcentre Education Convenor

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Tauroa, H. & Tauroa P. (1986). *Te marae: A guide to customs and protocol*. Auckland: Penguin.

Junk construction on a whole new level!



Today started off with a small pile of bits and pieces from the shed but ended up with something quite spectacular. The main builders were Harrison, Noah, Jack, Neeti and Sienna although every child on session had a hand in the 'contraption,' as they called it. Jon was soon relegated to building foreman/safety inspector as the children took charge. They worked well as a team and everyone was very determined as to what they wanted added to the pile. Carefully placed ladders allowed smaller children to climb on the structure. Kaleb and Blake were keen to see what all the fuss was about as they scrambled to the top. There was everything in there apart from the kitchen sink! Harrison was set on emptying the entire contents of the shed. Sienna added shoes, handbags and plastic food from the playdough area, and balls, buckets and spades were added. You name it, it was added! They were all very proud of their work.

Despite various activities happening during the session, Noah, Harrison and Jack continued to go back to the build which lasted the entire session. They were very safety – conscious: making sure everything was well balanced by looking underneath before climbing on top to secure more things. This proved challenging at times as things wobbled about. Everyone had a great time. It was, well and truly, junk construction at its best.

It was amazing how quickly it was all returned to its rightful place when it started to rain and they all helped tidy up too.

Nic Cobbett,
Howick Playcentre (Tamaki Association)



Gloop

Gloop has always fascinated me because of its ability to change from a runny sticky consistency to hard concrete once force is applied. When I saw a big container of corn flour under the sink I got as excited as Winnie-the-Pooh when he sees honey. My excitement got passed on to my daughter and she started singing with me, "gloop, gloop, we gonna make some gloop."

With gloop, size does matter, so that's why I took out the huge water trough. Yes, I used all the corn flour and left Playcentre without fingerpaint for a few days but it was definitely worth it!

First, we put corn flour into the trough, and then used the hose to add water. The boys loved it as they pretended to be firemen. Then I brought out some eye-droppers full of dyes for the children to add to the mixture. Amazingly, the colours remained partially separated and didn't turn into a giant pool of brown mud.

I offered the kids some spoons to play with but they all preferred to use their hands. I suggested they scrape some gloop from the bottom of the trough, look at the layers that had formed along with the different colours it had made and lift it high in the air to watch the mixture slither through their fingers.

Now came the really fun part. When it was time for clean up the gloop showed another unexpected quality. It didn't want to flow freely from the trough when tipped up but stuck to the bottom! I got some spatulas and started scraping it from the trough. In no time at all I was joined by six pairs of little hands armed with spatulas, spades, spoons and brushes helping me bang, bash, scratch and scrape the gloop away. It was fantastic fun.

Natalia Kim, Howick Playcentre (Tamaki Association)



Oscar and the eel

There was great excitement as we returned to Playcentre in term three to find an eel in our aquarium!

Our science area co-ordinator, Nicole, borrowed the eel from the Mosaic Gardens in Waihi and created a temporary home for him at our centre. Visiting the Mosaic Gardens is a popular excursion for our sessions and during term one many children had enjoyed feeding the eels in their stream. This had generated lots of questions about eels and we'd recorded this as an emergent interest.

Oscar, one of our four year olds, was familiar with eels from feeding one in a stream near his home. However, he'd never been up really close to an eel, nor had he had the opportunity to hold one. He eagerly waited his turn to touch the eel, finding it cold and slimy. Listening closely to Nicole, he learnt how to stroke the eel gently and how to pick it up. The eel's teeth were quite fascinating, as were the gills. Comparisons to fish were made and questions about how do we know if this eel is male or female? How does it move from the water to land and why does it do this? How old is it and how long does it live? Why is it also called 'tuna?' These provided a great stimulus for

parents and children to learn more about eels in New Zealand.

The eel stayed with us for a few weeks and was then returned to its stream. We valued the opportunity to have a closer look at a common New Zealand fresh water fish.

Paula Lourie, Waihi Playcentre
(Thames Valley Coromandel Association)



Oscar holding the eel.

Christmas with TV ONE

Our Santa in Hastings has become a bit of an icon. Kevin Watkins, (a long time politician) drives the car that tows the sleigh, and Ross Sweatman (Santa) both volunteer their time every December. As Christmas was approaching a few centre members thought, "Hey, why not see if Santa is available to come and visit our centre for our last session of term four?" So I made a call to see if the big man in red was available and to my surprise he was, on the day we preferred, too, what luck!

He would be visiting us with sleigh and all on Wednesday 15 December. However, there was a catch. It turned out the TV ONE crew would be visiting Kevin on this day, to film a story for 'Good Sorts.' TV ONE wanted to come and visit our centre too!

So the news travelled fast that the possibility of stardom could arise. The day arrived and this wonderful man in red turned into our street corner. The children sealed the deal with an ice block from Santa and then he was on his merry way to visit the rest of our city.

The show was aired on TV ONE for a split second, but there we were, our centre on television!

This show can be seen on <http://tvnz.co.nz/national-news/good-sorts-kevin-watkins-and-ross-sweatman-3985770>.

We look forward to this event again this year but hopefully without the TV crew.

Jolene Linnell, Cornwall Park Playcentre (Hawkes Bay Association)



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Dads at Playcentre



Mark Hanes with the Totara Park children.

Totara Park Playcentre has been lucky enough to have dad, Mark Hanes, attend regularly over the past year. Mark has enjoyed his time with the children, digging holes – the deeper the better – and creating volcanoes in the sandpit. Other highlights of his days included playing chasing games, role-playing and pushing swings “high enough to get that anti-gravity feeling.”

Mark felt accepted by the adults at our female-dominated Playcentre and found the children, particularly boys, enjoyed including him in their play.

Now that his son Rhône will begin school, Mark will say goodbye to Totara Park Playcentre. When asked if he would recommend Playcentre to other dads, he said it is good fun. “Get in there and enjoy yourself,” he says.

Paula Bloomfield,
Totara Park Playcentre (Hutt Association)

Playcentre kids in the lap of luxury

The wheels on the bus went round for Paremata Playcentre preschoolers recently after one of their number decided she wanted to share her love of luxury coach travel.

Aotea resident McKenzie Lawrence, two, so enjoys going on the Transit Coach Lines coaches with her mum’s marching team that she managed to convince her parents it would be a good idea if all her Playcentre friends had a turn too.

Ms Lovett, who coaches the Glennette marching girls, rang her favourite Transit Coach Lines driver Gareth Williams to see if he’d be prepared to take a group of under-fives and their parents on a short trip. Given Mr Williams is an ex New Zealand Army driver with eight years experience who had survived overseas deployments to Timor-Leste and Afghanistan, he said he thought he was up to the job.

The next problem was funding a luxury coach trip on a Playcentre budget. McKenzie soon solved this problem by getting her dad’s company Multispares, which supplies spare truck, bus and trailer parts, to pick up the remainder of the tab.

“We thought it was a good opportunity to cover the shortfall of the trip so the kids could have a turn in a coach. McKenzie loves going on marching trips on the bus; she talks about it for a week afterwards,” Malcolm Lawrence (McKenzie’s Dad) said.

Once the coach arrived at Lindale the children had lunch at the café after being lifted down off the bus by Mr Williams. “I liked sitting in the front of the bus because there were some seatbelts,” Joseph Reiher, four, said. “I could see the sea and the other cars.”

Meanwhile, McKenzie, who told her mum, “I like taking my friends on my bus,” is busy thinking about what she’d like to do for next term’s Paremata Playcentre trip.

Jude Pointon, Paremata Playcentre (Wellington Association)



Can you draw what you see?



Armed with clipboards, coloured card, oil pastels, pencils and felts, we took a group of our big kids to Martha’s Mine to see what was going on. Imagine our amazement when we got to the pit rim and found a digger working on a path right in front of us! We asked Ma’tais, William, Oscar and Sabine whether they could draw what they saw. Sitting with clipboards on their knees, they focused and started drawing. The digger, digger driver and another workman were so close. The digger’s flashing light was going as it moved forwards and backwards shovelling gravel onto the path and smoothing it out.

This was an experiment for us to take our big kids somewhere different and to ask them to draw what they could see. We were all delighted with the interest they showed and with their drawings.

Paula Lourie, Waihi Playcentre
(Thames Valley Coromandel Association)



Positive steps in the NZPF restructuring journey

This is a significant moment in Playcentre's history. March National Executive achieved two important milestones. An important step was taken in the Federation's Treaty-based relationship, with Māori Caucus being formally accepted as the Tangata Whenua Treaty partner of the Federation. Further, it was agreed to reorganise the structure of many Federation volunteer and paid positions.

National Executive is the governance body of the Playcentre Federation, where delegates from each of the 33 associations and designated Federation officers meet to decide on the policy and strategic direction of the Federation. This meeting was held over the weekend of March 11 to 13, hosted by Hutt Association at Totara Park in Upper Hutt. National Executive is held every six months, usually in March and October.

The path to structural reorganisation has been a long and eventful one. In 1997 Canterbury Association brought a remit calling for an outside organisation to review the structure of the Federation. This review was completed in 2005, with the publication of a report by Parakawhia McLean and Mary-Jane Rivers¹. Their report identified elements of the ECE context and social conditions which create pressure points for a structure almost exclusively reliant on volunteer work. In particular, the need to respond to a changing external environment, while recognising the reduced time available to families, and continuing to implement the recommendations of the Treaty Audit.

In the years from 2006 to 2010, the NZPF Standing Committee and several associations brought papers to National Executive meetings which implemented some of those recommendations. It became clear in 2010 that Federation volunteers were feeling undue strain, leading to several resignations and some tense relationships. October 2010 National Executive agreed that their March 2011 meeting would be dedicated to making decisions on a reorganised Federation structure in order to resolve the issues they

had identified. Standing Committee was charged with preparing information and documents to support this, and engaging an outside facilitator so that all Federation officers could contribute to the discussion and decision process.

In preparing material for the meeting Standing Committee surveyed all associations to clarify what they thought were the desired outcomes of structural change, and which elements of Federation structure and practice they considered essential to preserve. We then reviewed all papers and minutes from Federation

meetings which had discussed elements of structure, and drew this information into a coherent proposal². A history paper outlining the steps on the journey so far was also prepared³. Bronwen Olds and Huinga Jackson-Greenland facilitated National Executive. They are past members of Hutt and Wellington Associations respectively, and have experience working together and facilitating using a Treaty-based partnership model.

We were clear that it is for Māori within Playcentre to decide what representation they want to have in any Federation structure. During the meeting Māori Caucus reported that having a formal decision that Māori Caucus is the Tangata Whenua Treaty partner in the Federation's Treaty-based relationship would support them in proposing members for Federation positions. This recommendation was enthusiastically agreed to by the joint houses of National Executive. It was a deeply emotional moment to recognise this step as a way of cementing our Treaty relationship. One delegate used the metaphor that it was as if the Treaty partners had previously been 'living together', and now they are getting married.



National Executive decided to create two new part time paid positions to support the work of volunteers at Federation level. An Operations Manager will take on many of the day to day management tasks which are currently making volunteer workloads onerous. This position will report to the new Trustee board. A Property Funds Manager position was created to administer the four regional capital works funds.

In addition the volunteer teams were reorganised to clarify their functions and help them work together more cohesively. It was agreed to create three teams. An association support team of convenor and eight members, an education team of convenor and two members, and a Trustee Board of president, vice president, treasurer and board members. The convenors of the other two teams will also be members of the Trustee Board. Māori Caucus decided they needed a transition period to determine what representation they would like on Federation teams.

The next twelve months will be a crucial period of implementing these changes. It was a huge achievement for National Executive to cover so much ground in the two days available, and, understandably, it was not possible to finalise all the details that will be required. Job descriptions for the volunteer positions that have been called for at conference are still in draft form. A timeline will need to be put in place to review the effectiveness of the structure. The teams will also need to evaluate how they are working together, and National Executive will have input into all these reviews.

The decisions made at National Executive are a significant step for the Federation because we have been able to make decisions despite a level of uncertainty. This uncertainty is what has made decisions about restructure falter in the past. We learned during this National Executive that we, as a Federation, can have 'courageous conversations' with each other, and allow space for the transformation into a new structure to be completed. It is very exciting to now move forward with a sense of trust and anticipation.

**Maureen Woodhams, NZPF President
on behalf of the Standing Committee**

Footnotes

- ¹ Rivers, M. J. & McLean, P. (2005). Structural Analysis Report for Playcentre.
- ² Paper 1.1, March 2011 National Executive.
- ³ Background information on Federation structure history, March 2011 National Executive.



Reflections from the facilitators

Kia ora tatou

It was an honour to be part of the National Executive meeting last weekend as facilitators. An honour to support the harvesting of Playcentre stories: our stories, his stories and her stories. An honour harvesting the taonga from these stories to inform and lead the discussion on restructuring. We offered a process of journeying, a haerenga, as another step for Playcentre tamariki, whanau hapu and iwi. A process of transformation using the metaphor of transformation: the butterfly. The butterfly's process goes from egg, caterpillar, shedding of skin, chrysalis, and the slow challenging process of emergence to a butterfly in flight. We were inspired by the courageous conversations within and between the two houses: Tangata whenua and Tangata Tiriti, working at, enacting out, and living Te Tiriti o Waitangi. The decisions were a reflection of harvesting the best in Playcentre, careful respectful listening, at times challenging, and courageous conversations. The haerenga continues with the work to put these decisions in place. Hold on to your taonga, your stories, and your Treaty partnership as you move forward.

Kia kaha, kia manawanui,

Nga mihi

Tena koutou, tena koutou, tena ra koutou katoa,

Bronwen Olds and Huinga Jackson-Greenland

The World in your Sandpit

On Saturday 26 March, Playcentre Publications launched Bernard Woodhams' new sand play book *'The World in your Sandpit'* at Lower Hutt Playcentre, Wellington.

The afternoon started with a trek from the National Education meeting to Lower Hutt Playcentre. While they waited for the book launch to begin, education meeting delegates enjoyed exploring the Playcentre.

Bernard opened the first box of books with a flourish, and everyone present was eager to look at and read the book.

Then Bernard issued a challenge. "I've been told this sandpit is at least a metre deep. I want us to build the biggest sandcastle we can!"

Everyone grabbed a shovel and got stuck in. Even Somerset Bear joined in the fun. The resulting sandcastle was about a metre tall, and sported tyres, spouting and tunnels. At one point, there was even a stream of water flowing through the middle of the castle.

All present enjoyed the fun and are looking forward to sharing the new book with their centres.

Colleen Welch, Te Puke Playcentre (Western Bay of Plenty Association)

To order copies of this book please visit www.Playcentre.org.nz and then click Publications (Ph/fax (09) 827 3469).



Somerset Bear grabs a shovel.

Questions and Answers with Bernard Woodhams

How did you become involved with sand play?

My father made a succession of sandpits for my brother and me. We also played on beaches and helped make paths through the bush using spades and shovels.

How did you become involved in Playcentre?

I have always known about Playcentre. My mother and both of my grandmothers were Playcentre parents. My Grandmother was still active in Playcentre when I started school. I didn't go to Playcentre myself, because we

lived in the U.S. when I was under five, but both of my brothers spent at least some time as Playcentre children.

My own involvement came through my wife, Maureen. She joined our local Playcentre when our eldest child was two and the next was a baby, and stayed with the centre until all four of our daughters were

at school. I spent a couple of years out of the workforce during that time and took our younger children to Playcentre. I took the Playcentre training up to part three (between course three and four on the current curriculum).

At Playcentre I quickly became known as the adult who liked to play outside – not only in the sandpit, but also for running around, playing hide and seek and joining in various imaginative activities or big muscle type play.

How did you come to write this book?

The first Playcentre workshop I facilitated was on sand play, partly because I love playing with sand, and partly because I noticed there was hardly ever any sand play workshops. At the time my own centre had a small sandpit which was in an out-of-the-way corner. I chose to run the workshop at another centre, and on a Saturday morning to get the maximum use of the sandpit. Of course on the day it absolutely poured with rain and I ended up improvising the workshop on things you can do with sand when you can't use the sandpit.

When my wife Maureen wrote books on block and music play, I decided that I could use my experience and write a book on sand play – and this is it.

What is special about sand play?

It's all in the book! We often joke at Playcentre that everything you need to learn through play can be learnt in the sandpit. It is a natural material that can be made wet or dry to build, shape or sift and helps develop hand eye co-ordination and fine motor skills. There are some children who find the sandpit particularly absorbing, and watching and playing with them helped me to see how the sandpit opens up worlds and can touch on any area of learning. It also involves cycles of creation and destruction. I like the fact that no one expects perfection in the sandpit, so I don't feel pressured if my creations don't work out.



Author Bernard Woodhams.



Playing with fire at Peria Playcentre

Over many sessions we had been talking about and practicing lighting fires. Children learn by repeating experiences as they build on prior knowledge and skills. The children loved the different fires so much we decided to have a 'fire day' and put our new skills to the test!

We started by taking the children on a walk to gather firewood. We talked about the physics of fire and how it needs dry wood, air and a spark to be successful. We took our collection back to the centre eager to start our first fire. (It pays to have an extra stash of wood collected earlier in case there is not a lot of it lying around.)

We put a large piece of corrugated iron on the ground and the children happily scrunched newspaper and piled it on top.

The tamariki made a pyramid of wood over the newspaper and then placed larger kindling pieces on top. Adding some fire lighters allowed us to further discuss the different types of fuel that fire needs to burn.

Around the fire, we placed wooden planks to map out a 'no-go zone'. We could sit on the planks, watch the fire and stop the children milling around the flames.

We talked about safety and pointed out the buckets of water and sand placed around the plank boundary, the limp hose on standby and the handy fire extinguisher. This was a great opportunity to discuss the physics of fire again. Sand removes the oxygen from the fire; water removes the heat.

Finally, with bated breath, we lit the fire. It took a few attempts to get some decent flames but we weren't worried. Trying to get the fire lit allowed for rich, deep conversations and discovery. (Te Whāriki—Exploration: problem solving, trial and error, modifying working theories about the world.)



The children were kept at a safe distance.

Children mimic our actions, so be careful when role-modelling how to work with fire.

While we were waiting we had a discussion about first aid, how to prevent and treat burns and practiced stop-drop and roll.

Once the fire was roaring we left an adult in charge of watching the fire while the rest of us trooped inside the centre to prepare our yummy 'fire kai'.

Having a variety of stations set up allowed the children to choose which food to prepare and prevented over-crowding at any one area. Some chose to peel, core and slice apples before wrapping in foil with cinnamon



Preparing the kai.



and sugar. Others wrapped bananas in foil, sprinkled with chocolate chips. The last station allowed children to make damper, shape it and push it onto the end of long, (soaked) bamboo sticks.

At all of the stations adults were encouraged to step back and allow the children to do as much as they could by themselves. Children learn more by doing for themselves than they do by watching adults do it for them.

Once the food was stashed in the fire we traipsed over to the sandpit to explore the thrill of an enormous smoke volcano, experimenting with a variety of chemicals to see how they changed the colour of the flames before using a fire extinguisher for the first time. Even the smallest children can do this with a bit of help.

Excited, happy and hungry we returned to the fire to check the kai. It was another learning experience as some dampers burnt, fell off into the fire or were raw! (The butter and golden syrup made a big difference.) The banana skins turned an unappetizing black but the insides were delicious! I think the hot apples were the favourites.

Once growling tummies were replete the children practiced different ways to put the fire out. Some enjoyed pouring water on the dwindling flames (mind the steam), some dumped spades full of sand, while others relished the opportunity to use the ever-popular hose!

By the way, did I mention that during this entire morning it rained on and off...but that didn't dampen our spirits! They grow 'em tough up here in the Far North. Being prepared with tarps and umbrellas is always a good idea, whatever the weather forecast says!

Andie Tane, Peria Playcentre
(Far North Association)



Cooking the kai.

Spark up your

If you can't stand the heat: Fire safety issues

- Close supervision is paramount.
- Someone must attend the fire at all times, preferably someone without children present to allow for full concentration.
- Have numerous buckets of water and sand available. Use spades to ferry sand from the sandpit. Ensure hoses and fire extinguishers are close at hand.
- Have some way of making a boundary around the fire using ropes, wooden planks or bricks to create a 'no-go zone' near the fire.
- Revise fire drill procedures before lighting any fires.
- Check with your local council as to whether a fire permit is required.
- Inform any close neighbours that you will be lighting a fire so any signs of smoke will not cause alarm.



Spark up an interest: Scientific working theories of fire

- Three factors are needed to create and maintain fire: fuel (wood, paper, flammable material); heat (a spark or flame); and oxygen (an air source)
- Fire is necessary for life as it provides warmth and protection, and cooks food.

Fire up your learning: Linking 'fire play' to Te Whāriki

Experiences with fire fit nicely under all four of the Te Whāriki principles; children are empowered, the working theories inherent in activities with fire are holistic, children's prior experiences with fire through their families and community are valued, social relationships are strengthened through working together and talking around the fire.

Well-being

- They are kept safe from harm

Belonging

- Connecting links with the family and wider world

Contribution

- They are affirmed as individuals
- They are encouraged to learn with, and alongside, others

Communication

- They develop communication skills for a range of purposes

Exploration

- They gain confidence in their body
- They learn strategies for active exploration, thinking and reasoning
- They develop working theories for making sense of the natural, social, physical and material worlds



our sessions!

Light up children's love of reading

These are some of the many books you could read using the flickering camp fire to enhance the atmosphere and excitement.

- *The Mountain of Fire*
Ron Bacon & Manu Smith
- *Maui and the sun*
Gavin Bishop
- *How Maui found the secret of fire*
Gavin Bishop
- *Maui and the Goddess of Fire*
Gavin Bishop
- *Ko Maui raua ko Te Atua o Te Ahi*
Gavin Bishop
- *The Fire Woman*
Ron Bacon and Manu Smith

Fire up your Te Reo

ahi – fire

flame – mura, hana

burn (ignite) –
tahu, wera

burn (blaze) –
kā, toro, ngiha

burnt – wera ki te ahi

hot – wera

wood – rākau

cook – kōhue

A burning curiosity: exploring fire at Playcentre

- **Smoke volcano** – Make the biggest 'volcano' you can in the sandpit. (A bit of red or orange paint spilt creatively around the cone can add to the 'lava' effect).
- Carefully dig holes and tunnels in the top and through the sides. Roll/scrunch newspaper in the holes and light. The smoke will drift out of the holes.
- Make another huge 'volcano.' Dig out just the top of the cone. Light a fire in the top of the volcano for a smoke/flame effect.
- Light a fire on top of corrugated iron on the ground or sand. This saves the grass somewhat and keeps the fire contained.
- Dig out sods of earth to make a deep square within the ground to light a fire in.
- Make a mini hangi/umu, cooking food underground with hot bricks or rocks. Invite extended whanau to offer their expertise and advice.
- Bamboo thrown on a fire makes a cracking/booming noise. (Google ancient Chinese fireworks for information on early gunpowder and fireworks)
- Any number of food items can be cooked on/in the fire, on sticks or in pans: corn on the cob; marshmallows; bread; bacon; eggs; apples; damper; scones; potatoes. (Use Google to discover the amazing variety of campfire recipes!)
- Allow children and adults to experience using a fire extinguisher to put out the fire. Small, cheap ones can be purchased from hardware stores.
- Add inorganic salts to your fire to create amazing colourful effects. You can get most from gardening shops or farm retail shops. They should not be used on a fire that you are cooking on (or will be) and don't breathe in the smoke. Get a good fire going and sprinkle one tablespoon of each of the salts on the fire. Add only a little at a time until you're sure what each will do.
 - *Potassium Nitrate* (nitrate of potash) will burn fast and purple.
 - *Sodium Nitrate* (Nitrate of Soda) will burn fast and yellow.
 - *Table salt* (Sodium Chloride) will burn yellow.
 - *Copper Sulphate* will burn green (It's a blue salt).



Smoke Volcano.

Andie Tane, Peria Playcentre (Far North Association)

Tim and the water: Growing an 'island of interest'

Over the last few editions of the Playcentre Journal we have been sharing some of the case studies from the Teaching and Learning Research (TLRI) funded project called *Moments of wonder, everyday events: how are young children theorising and making sense of their world?* In the last edition we discussed how we adapted Claxton's (1990) island analogy to describe the development and editing of mini-theories, coming to see children's interests as 'islands of interest', which provide contexts for working theory development. These islands of interest might or might not develop into the 'islands of expertise' described by Crowley and Jacobs (2002).

As a practitioner-researcher and a parent at St Albans Playcentre, Eleanor White became fascinated by this 'island' metaphor and the implications it has for adults in terms of our interactions with children. She began to wrestle with questions such as:

- How can we recognise children's initial 'islands of interest' and the working theories associated with these 'islands'?
- Having taken this step of recognition, what intentional strategies can adults use to support children and give them opportunities to grow the 'island of interest' to become more complex, more connected and more compelling?
- What implications does this have for the way we interact with our children at Playcentre and at home?

In this article we share part of a case study about Eleanor's son, Tim, and how his working theories of how water moves developed over time and context as his 'island of interest' grew and developed.

Recognising an emerging 'island of interest' in a very young child

Eleanor first began to notice and document Tim's interest in how water moved when he was one year and eight months and mainly non-verbal. In June 2009, she recorded the following story about Tim and the tap.

Tim came to see me in the sandpit, waving a watering can and saying, "Help! Help!" He went to the outside tap and showed me it was too hard for him to turn on. I thought if he used it, he was likely to flood the whole veranda so I said, "Let's clip the



Tim looking under the water trough.

hose on and then you can fill your watering can in the sandpit." The hose was right there and I started putting it on the tap. Tim was not impressed. He said, "NO NO" and tried to pull it off and put his watering can under. I said, "I think it's a good idea to use the hose so we don't make a flood. Look, you hold the end and we'll make the water come out." He looked very dubious but I took him to the sandpit and gave him the hose and he stood there looking at it. I fixed it up and turned the tap on. I said, "Right the water should be coming now." He looked like I was away with the fairies but then the water started coming out. He seemed surprised but filled his watering can and kept on playing. (12.6.09)

Tim wasn't at all pleased with Eleanor's idea of attaching the hose to the tap and at the time Eleanor felt she had 'rushed' Tim into doing it her way, out of fear of a flood, rather than taking the time to talk over the problem with him like she usually did. It was Tim's resistance to her hose idea, together with his look of surprise when water emerged from the hose, that triggered Eleanor to wonder about Tim's working theories about water.

Only three days later Eleanor noticed another water related event. This time it was Tim's deep level of fascination in the pipe

and guttering system some of the older boys had created, together with him watching the water flowing through this system, that Eleanor noticed.

Today the older boys were playing in the sandpit and had made a complicated water flow system with pipes and guttering. Tim was fascinated with it. He would go over and look at the water flowing into one end of the pipe and then go round to the other end where it was coming out and lean right down to peer in and see what was happening. Then back to the start and have a good look at that and back round again. Also, he had a little beaker with holes in the bottom and he went and filled it at the basin. He was carrying it outside and then noticed that all the water was coming out of the bottom. He was most astonished. [15.6.09]

These events reminded Eleanor of how Tim showed the same fascination with turning taps on in the bathroom sink at home. Eleanor began to theorise about what it was about the water that interested Tim.

Tim loves to play with water at home. He has just realised that if he takes a chair to the bathroom he can stand on it and turn the tap on. Then he stands there watching it with fascination. I wonder if all this is

to do with him wondering about where water comes from and how it gets to other places. [15.6.09]

Eleanor and other adults began to notice Tim's interest in water and recognised other connections, like in the following story about Tim puzzling over Jakob's vertical slime-and-water pipe. Jakob had a pipe 'anchored' vertically in the sandpit and was filling it up with water and slime to make an explosion. There was another separate pipe next to it, horizontal on the ground, making an L shape.

Tim came over and watched Jakob pouring the water into the vertical pipe and then went round to the end of the horizontal pipe and peered right in to see if the water was going to come out. When he didn't see any he looked at me [Eleanor] and Uta [Jakob's mum] with a very puzzled expression. It was so obvious that he was thinking the pipes were joined and knew what he was expecting and was surprised

when his theory was disrupted. Uta said, "Good thinking, Tim. But look, they're not joined." She picked up the horizontal pipe and rested one end on a tree stump and Tim then spent ages pouring water from a bucket into the pipe and watching it run down. [26.7.09]

Eleanor believed it was very clear what Tim's working theory might be, as implied by his actions. This was another cue that she may be on the right track about his interest in the different ways water moves or travels, and his developing working theories.

In August another parent (Wendy) recorded a story for Tim at the water trough that included Eleanor supporting Tim to explore the role of the plug in keeping the water in the trough. Wendy noted Tim's interest in looking under the trough to see what was happening with the water and recognised the connection for Tim to a similar event the previous week. Wendy planned to revisit this again with Tim in the near future.



Tim looking into the water trough.

Eleanor was interested to note that over the next few weeks, every time Tim went past the water trough, he checked underneath to see whether the water was flowing out of the plug hole. At tidy up time, she invited him several times to pull the plug out and watch what happened. He continued to find this very interesting. On one occasion, she found Tim and his same age friend Luca kneeling together under the water trough watching what was happening. How he had managed to communicate that Luca should come and watch was a puzzle to both parents as neither child used much spoken language.

In these examples, Eleanor recognised Tim's 'island of interest' in two main ways.

- *His surprise, astonishment or puzzlement*

This was shown by his facial expression, 'he looked like I was away with the fairies'; his stopping short in his tracks and just looking, as when he carrying the little beaker outside and noticed water was coming from holes in the bottom; and by what Eleanor describes as 'peering' or looking closely at something as if he can't quite believe it.

- *Repeated actions or re-visiting the same activity*

For example, Eleanor noted that Tim kept going into the bathroom, turning on the taps and watching the water go down the plug hole. Also, that he kept checking under the water trough to see what was happening. It was as if he was asking himself the question, 'does this always happen?'



Tim in the water trough.

Theorising about working theories

An important strategy Eleanor tried was to put on her 'working theory glasses' when observing Tim. As Tim's parent she had an immense amount of knowledge about his interests and was able to realise this was something special to Tim. She used her background knowledge of Tim and the way he responded to different situations. She watched to see what was fascinating Tim about this interest and what he was developing theories about. This led her to theorise that his 'island of interest' was not just water but more particularly how water moves.

George Forman emphasises the importance of theorising about children's theories:

It does not matter if your theory of the child's theory is wrong. It only matters that you have a theory conversation with the child, and a good start for such a conversation is for you to venture a guess (cited in Shafer, 2002, p. 194).

Alise Shafer (2002) continues

When we venture a guess about a child's question or comment, we are prompting further inquiry, reflection or the correction of our own misconception. Even when we guess incorrectly, chances are good that we may gain a clearer insight into the child's line of thinking as the exchange proceeds (p.194).

Although the context of Shafer's and Forman's remarks is with three and four year-olds, we would argue that their ideas hold true for even the youngest of children. An important adult strategy seems to be to take a guess at the child's theory and talk to them about what they might be thinking, even though they might not be able to respond verbally. In Tim's case this happened through comments like, "Good thinking, Tim. But look, they're not joined." There were other opportunities where this could have been verbalised by the adults, such as commenting, "You look surprised the water's not coming out of the water trough today. Do you want me to pick you up so you can see inside the water trough?" and then seeing how he responded.

Growing an 'island of interest'

Crowley and Jacobs (2002) commented:

A typical island emerges over weeks, months or years and is woven throughout multiple family activities. Because of this, developing islands of expertise is a fundamentally social process. They



Tim watching Jakob.

are constructed through the on-going negotiation of children and parents interests, children and parents' choices about family activities and children and parents' cognitive processes including memory, inferencing, problem solving and explanation (p.334).

Eleanor's intimate knowledge of Tim at home and Playcentre enabled her to respond to seemingly small incidents because she recognised they were important to him. For example, in August Eleanor explained to Wendy why she thought Tim was looking under the water trough, drawing on their shared experience from the previous week. She then took the small, but important, step of inviting Tim to pull out the plug on the water trough on several occasions.

In December she recounted a story:

We were in a rush getting ready to go out to the Playcentre break-up last Friday and I left Tim in the bathroom brushing his teeth. Should have known with child number four that was a mistake. I came back into the bedroom and this little voice said, "Mum, the water's not going down the pipes." I rushed into the bathroom and, of course, the water was indeed NOT going down the pipes. He had put the plug in – the whole bathroom was under about an inch of water. Shows he's still thinking a lot about pipes though!

Whereas, she might have been cross with Tim for flooding the bathroom, Eleanor instead recognised its significance to Tim, remembering the effort he had put into



Tim working with the water.

understanding how the plug in the water trough worked and seeing how he was thinking about the parallels here.

Crowley and Jacob's (2002) illustrate an example of a child developing his island of expertise around trains, centred on the shared conversations and experiences he has with his mother and other family members. This links with a significant early piece of research on children's conversations, where Tizard and Hughes (1984) compared conversations four year old girls had at home with their mothers, with those they had with adults at nursery school. They found that at nursery school,

The richness, depth and variety which characterised the home conversations were sadly missing. So too was the sense

of intellectual struggle, and of the real attempts to communicate being made on both sides. The questioning, puzzling child we were so taken with at home was gone ... (p.9)

Eleanor found she was able to scaffold many of Tim's experiences at Playcentre because of her parental knowledge and the fact she was able to hazard a good guess about what he might be thinking. For her, one of the strengths of Playcentre was that she could be present with her child and could help him to interpret experiences by talking about experiences at home. Similarly, at home they could revisit experiences from Playcentre, for example, when looking through his Learning Story book, or talking with dad about their day.

Conclusion

Documenting Tim's growing 'island of interest' in water travel drew attention to the non-verbal theorising young children may be engaged in and the ways in which adults can notice, recognise and respond (Ministry of Education, 2005) to this in early childhood and home settings. Our findings suggest it is important to take the time to observe what is happening, and to 'test out' the adult's understanding by venturing guesses and checking the child's responses to these to see if the adult appears to be on track. Elsewhere (Peters & Davis, 2011) we have discussed the dilemmas adults face in supporting and fostering working theory development and the danger of 'highjacking' the child's thinking and following the adult's agenda. In the next article in this series Eleanor will share her reflections on the ways in which she, and others at St Albans, became more alert to children's interests, sensitive to the ways in which these might grow or wane, and became more open to exploring different strategies to support the development of working theories within a culture of enquiry.

Eleanor White, St Albans Playcentre (Canterbury Association), Keryn Davis (CORE Education) and Sally Peters (University of Waikato)

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Playcentre is for the parents

You might believe that you joined Playcentre for your children, as I did when I joined Playcentre in 1975. But let me whisper a secret in your ear: Playcentre is a parent cooperative and it is there for the parents to learn and to grow. It happens to be the best model of parent education that I know of, anywhere in the world. But I didn't always know this, if I thought about it at all, I thought Playcentre was there for the children.

When I was a new teacher sitting in a Thames staffroom in 1969, one of the older teachers announced that it didn't make one blind bean of difference what we teachers did at school. "Basically," he said, "the children will come in and leave after eight years and they will be replicas of their parents, with their parents' values and morals, with their dreams and ideals, with their loves and their interests." Just three years into my teaching career, and full of optimism and enthusiasm, I thought he was a supercilious cynical old

fossil. Of course I could make a big difference in children's lives.

Forty one years later, and still living in the same small town, I acknowledge that Mr Dickens (not his real name - for obvious reasons) was a great observer. He had been living and teaching in the same small town long enough to see how a community works, and how it perpetuates itself. He was right: the parents are the model and the children simply download from them their values, morals, ideals, behaviour, language, dreams, interests, hates and loves. So the big question is - how do the parents get to install any upgrades available on the parenting programmes that they 'downloaded' when they were being parented, the programmes which run automatically and sub-consciously in the brain computer? How do they get to install the new programme about Peaceful Parenting with Toddlers? Or the programme about Dealing with Conflict in Ways that are not Shaming or Violent? Or the programme

about Children's Learning through their Independent Exploration? Who provides such programmes for parents, and where is the Help Menu for support with these new programmes or their upgrades?

Like many of you, my parent education journey began with Parents Centre Antenatal classes - which was just as well. There were a few things that I needed to know! Then to our great good fortune, our little family joined Playcentre in 1975, which was also just as well. I shudder to think how differently my life and Clare's would have been had we not been to Playcentre. There I found a fantastic group of parents who were working together, observing their children, and arranging and attending courses and study groups. These parents were educating themselves. To continue with the computer analogy, they were getting upgrades for their communication programmes, their leadership programmes, their 'how to work in a group cooperatively' programme, and



Port Ahuriri Playcentre (Hawkes Bay Association)



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Howick Playcentre (Tamaki Association)

'how to recognise and support real learning' in their children. It was there at Thames Parawai Playcentre that I had time to sit and observe how children really learned and unfolded, and there I learned enough to know how to support that learning and unfolding: not at Teachers' Training College as you might imagine. I learned enough to go on and lead workshops myself, and to write 'Magic Places' in 1978.

You are lucky enough to have found your way to Playcentre, and I hope you grow to realise - more quickly than I did - what a find you have made. Sorry to say, but there will not be other avenues for you to learn more about raising healthy, happy, interesting, inquisitive children where you can attend with your children and 'do the practical' with support from others. You will not have another chance to work alongside others while you work out just to run the programme of Positive Boundary Setting, Conflict Resolution and Negotiation Skills with Little Ones, and the skills to run a co-operative venture. At Playcentre you have the chance to learn skills and behaviours which make the difference, not only for you and your relationship with your children, but with others throughout your life. Many women in public life acknowledge Playcentre as the place where they learned the valuable life skills they needed in the business and public arena, including ex-Governor General Dame Cath Tizard.

So far, my life with Playcentre covers 36 years, and I am as enthusiastic now as I was in the beginning, maybe even more so. With people so 'time poor' now, children and parents are being short-changed, and we won't know what Poverty of Soul that will mean for these children until they are grown and it is too late. Full-time parenting is regarded by the business and



Granity Playcentre (Buller Westland Association)

commercial sectors (and even by many parents themselves) as an odd lifestyle choice - if you can afford it. That couldn't be further from the truth: parenting is the most important job you will do. Ever. As Mr Dickens announced in 1969 - and as oceans of research has concluded in the intervening years - your children will 'download' from you, and they will mirror back who you are. Joseph Chilton Pearce puts it this way: "We tell children how to be, and they keep mirroring back what we are. If we are to raise happy intelligent children, we must bring to wholeness the models they are following." That means you. You are the model. Luckily, you are in the one place which is set up especially so that you can educate yourself in your journey towards wholeness - you are at Playcentre. Make the most of everything Playcentre has to offer you: for your sake, and for your children's sake.

Pennie Brownlee



Totara Park Playcentre (Hutt Association)



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WHY SHOP ANYWHERE ELSE!

Everybody is a leader

This is an edited version of the Te Kōpae Piripono COI Research Report (2008).

Why is it that leadership in early childhood education is so often associated with those in formal roles such as early childhood teachers, supervisors and managers? At Te Kōpae Piripono, we have a different view about leadership. For us, every member of our whānau (or learning community) – whether that be a teacher, child or parent – is a leader, in their own way and their own right.

Background

Te Kōpae Piripono is a Māori language immersion early childhood centre, based in New Plymouth. We are whānau-run and whānau-driven. In essence, we have the same kaupapa (philosophy) as Kōhanga Reo but we are independent in our governance and decision-making processes. For us Kaupapa Māori means 100% te reo Māori, as the medium of teaching and learning. The Māori language is the way we interpret and understand the world. It is the outward expression of our taha Māori and our mana Māori, our values, beliefs, authority, pride and identity.

For us, every member of Te Kōpae Piripono has an important contribution to make. Individual contribution is valued in its own right and everyone benefits in some way. The Kaitiaki (teachers) contribute their time, professional expertise and knowledge of reo and tikanga (language and protocols), and in return they are respected and honoured as professional leaders. The children's parents and extended families contribute their children's and their own strengths, knowledge and leadership. And the children (who attend Te Kōpae Piripono for up to their first five years of life) contribute their

energy, their mana, their heritage and their potential.

Our view of leadership quickly led to the formulation of Ngā Takohanga e Whā (The Four Responsibilities of Leadership) – that leadership be viewed in relation to four key responsibilities:

Te Whai Takohanga – Having Responsibility: is about having designated roles and positions of responsibility;

Te Mouri Takohanga – Being Responsible: is about an individual's attitude and actions: being professional, positive and acting ethically;

Te Kawe Takohanga – Taking Responsibility: is about courage, risk-taking, having a go, taking up a challenge and trying new things; and

Te Tuku Takohanga – Sharing Responsibility: is about sharing power, roles and positions. It is also about acknowledging different perspectives and asking for and providing assistance.

The concept of the Four Responsibilities seeks to strip away traditionally understood Western structures and notions about leadership, and instead focus on what really matters – people and relationships. Individual leadership at Te Kōpae Piripono is about supporting and, at times, challenging each other to acknowledge and take up our individual and collective responsibilities of supporting our children's and our own learning and development. The Four Responsibilities are, fundamentally, about how people – children and adults – view themselves, their perceptions, feelings, attitudes and relationships with others. Everyone's contribution matters and everybody is a leader.

Centre of Innovation Research

In 2008, Te Kōpae Piripono completed a three-year Centre of Innovation research project (funded by New Zealand's Ministry of Education). Our research explored how fear and anxiety afflict us, young and old, and are major impediments to our individual and collective development. Fear was found to be a significant barrier to whānau participation and particularly to fathers' involvement in their children's learning. We found that these emotional difficulties are generations old; the long-term consequences of families' negative experiences of education.

Fostering leadership across all levels, therefore, proved an intriguing challenge. But we found that with perseverance, caring, support and persistent positive



Smiles for the camera.

action (particularly by the teachers), whānau members were able to begin to be open, learn to trust and gain an inner peace. The dynamic transformative ripples of this process have been wide and far-reaching—especially for our children. We are excited to see them growing up proudly Māori, and as confident and active citizens of the world.

The Significant Role of Teachers

What teachers do is imperative to fostering leadership among whānau members. As the daily point of contact, teacher action serves as a type of ‘whānau glue’ that acts as a link between what, initially, appears to be a disparate group of families, united only by the shared desire for a Māori language education at Te Kōpae Piripono.

American educationalist, Janet Gonzalez-Mena (2007) puts it a bit more strongly than that. She argues it is teachers’ responsibility to initiate partnerships with families. The whānau model at Te Kōpae Piripono posits the whānau at the centre of children’s learning and development, not as some add on or after thought.

Dr Douglas Powell (1996) suggests that some teachers mistakenly view their role as being primarily involved with children. But he argues parents must not be ignored if teachers are genuinely interested in fostering partnerships. We contend that families should not just be there to implement teachers’ plans for children. The whānau relationship is the plan. In fact, teachers have a particular responsibility—to truly know the child, and their family. If this does not happen then authentic learning will not happen for our children.

But research also suggests that teacher fear and perceptions of parents can be barriers to successful parental support and family collaboration. According to Dunn and Kontas (1989), teachers who believe that parents are doing a poor job of raising their children tend to talk with parents less often, while teachers who view parents more democratically have more equal expectations of parents, whatever the circumstances.

Prior and Gerard (2007) point out that many teachers have a fear of criticism, of making mistakes and sometimes not knowing what to say or do to develop positive relationships with parents. Some teachers are immobilised by fear of failing and often avoid opportunities to interact with parents. But Prior and Gerard argue that when teachers face their fears and make efforts to connect with parents, they



Tera and Rupuha.

are more likely to find acceptance rather than criticism, success rather than mistakes, and more ways to connect than ever imagined.

Vignette: Hone Albert and Tera Dunn

Hone Albert and Tera Dunn are a young couple who have been part of the whānau of Te Kōpae Piripono since 2008. We first met Tera when she enrolled her youngest daughter, Deljah, at Te Kōpae Piripono. Tera was a young mother who wanted a Māori language education for her daughter. It was really hard to get to know Tera as she was extremely quiet and shy. But we could see Tera’s relentless support for her daughter and her determination that her children have nothing but the best education. Not long after Deljah started at Te Kōpae, we met Hone. Hone is a straight up sort of guy – the salt of the earth type of person. Hone calls a spade a spade.

When their sons, Manaariki and Rupuha, were born Hone felt compelled to ‘step up’. He could see how committed Tera was to the kaupapa of Te Kōpae and the

girls, and he wanted that for the boys too—growing up knowing and understanding te reo, and confident in who they were. He also realised that he could fill a missing link, as his grandparents were the last fluent speakers in their line. His generation and his parents generation, missed out. But to fully



Taiharuru and Papa playing.



Whiti using the fingerprint.

participate in marae, hapū and iwi affairs, he needed te reo Māori. He and Tera enrolled in language classes.

But Te Kōpae was a scary place for Hone – having to speak only Māori. This was a tall order for him, as he was only an intermediate speaker of Māori – that is, commands and sporadic sentences. A full-blown conversation with anyone was right out of the question! He was petrified! Now,

this is where the power of dialogue with Hone truly works! We sat down with Hone and Tera and simply talked – about their fears, their issues and their concerns. They talked about the things they were doing at home to increase the use of te reo Māori. Through the discussion, they discovered they were actually doing really well. It was just the daunting task of coming to the Kōpae everyday, made them feel like they were

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Terms

Kaitiaki Teacher at Te Kōpae Piripono

Kaupapa Concept, Paradigm, Philosophy, Purpose

Kaupapa Māori Māori paradigm

Kōpae Nest, Circle

Kōrero Speak, Talk

Kuia/Kui Female Elder

Piripono Everlasting Embrace

Reo Language

Tikanga Protocol

Māori Indigenous people of New Zealand

Muru Raupatu 19th Century Government Land Confiscations

Tumu Director

Whānau Family; Socio-political family groupings

failing miserably! So instead of laying down a challenge we lay down a welcome mat . . . How about Hone and Tera come and spend time at Te Kōpae with their now 18 month-old son, Manaariki. This they did, and they haven't looked back.

Hone is now different person. Almost every day he will go straight to the kitchen and make a hot drink for everyone. He has his own Māori language development plan. He actively participates in Te Kōpae routines such as wā huihui or mat time, hand washing and tidying up. All the children know Matua Hone. And the coolest thing – he speaks Māori only!

These are Hone's thoughts:

"I want my two boys to know who they are and that the reo is really important. Kōpae has helped us a lot in gaining the confidence to talk the reo at home. . . I am more confident as a Pāpā because I see the aroha that the Kaitiaki have for the tamariki and for the whānau. I think we need more places like Kōpae to help people like us get confident and show that we can do it."

Hone and Tera are an inspiration to us and to other families at Te Kōpae Piripono. They are a tight knit and dedicated young family who are conquering their fear every day just being part of the whānau. This courage and rich family involvement at Te Kōpae is an example of the powerful transformation that happens when the whānau are truly the plan.

Edited by Aroaro Tamati (2011)

Veterans make sense of Pike River

The day after the tragic second explosion at Pike River Mine, Johnsonville Playcentre Veterans met for a scheduled 'Vet' session. Though not directly affected by the disaster, it was obviously weighing heavily on the children's minds as they sat around in the sandpit and talked about it – my eight and a half year old son Finn busily boring into the sand to recreate the mine. His plan: "To get the men out."

All the kids had an idea of how we could rid the mine of the gas. "A giant vacuum cleaner!" yelled one. "A big fan!" suggested another. "Drill lots of holes and blow air in one so the gas comes out the others!" was another idea. In the end they decided to bore a second hole and fill it with water to flush the gas out. The plan was that the men float out and be rescued by the waiting plastic truck.

Work began in earnest. All the children started in a different section of the sandpit,



(L to R) Roddy O'Connor, Finn Lewis, Blake Lewis, Tyler Butters, Melodie Reddish, Elsie Reddish.

digging deep tunnels and curving channels—until they had a complex mine system all linked together. At times they worked with fun and hilarity, at other times in complete silence. What struck me was the total strength of focus they had. It was heads down and non-stop work. Who knows if they were driven by the thought of changing a tragic outcome or simply lost in the happiness of

being up to their knees and elbows in sand again.

When the tunnel system was complete they buried the hose in a delightfully snakelike fashion and turned it on. Now teamwork really came to the fore. They ran and jumped from section to section helping each other scoop, dig and clear blockages until the water completed the circuit, filling the mine's channels to the brim. Success – and jubilation!

For two hours the veterans played together, getting wetter, sandier, muddier – and happier. By the end of the afternoon it seemed they had forgotten all about completing their planned rescue. But maybe talking it over and acting some of it out with their old Playcentre buddies was all they needed to make a bit of sense of something so hard to understand. Young and old, our hearts were aching for those who had lost at Pike River.

I have always loved our Veteran sessions – giving our older children the opportunity to come back and play like they used to. But this particular 'Vet' session has made me really appreciate how valuable they are. We talk a lot in our house, especially about things like the Pike River tragedy. But how amazing to be able to still support and extend our children's learning the Playcentre way – right throughout their school years. You are obviously never too old to learn through play.

Johnsonville Playcentre Veteran Sessions run once a month during term time. With the Playcentre feeding into six local schools, the vet sessions create the opportunity for ex-Playcentre buddies to play together, and with friends and siblings still at the centre. Carpentry, sand play, junk construction collage and clay are favourite forms of play.

Lynley Lewis, Johnsonville Playcentre
(Wellington Association)

After School Club – A treasured part of our Playcentre journey

Levin Playcentre holds a session on Friday afternoon twice a term for our Playcentre kids who are now at school. We call this the 'After School Club.'

"It's just like the good old days when we were at Playcentre together" says five-year-old Eli.

"After School Club is great for us big kids because we get to take our school friends (some have never been to Playcentre before) and we see our old friends as well. We get to do whatever we like. It's fun to play with the play dough, finger paint, and paint again. We also dig huge holes in the sandpit, and make tyre or pulley swings in the old tree. Everybody loves it!" says Leah, 10.

As a parent I found that After School Club



has helped our two older children transition to school. They haven't had to say goodbye to the place they love after moving on to exciting new adventures. It is wonderful to see our school-aged children confidently walk back into their Playcentre, play with their old friends and take care of the newest siblings as though they have never left.

The Praat Family, Levin Playcentre
(Central Districts Association)



How does your centre support the transition from Playcentre to school? Does your centre have an after school program? Email us your stories (pcjournal@gmail.com) or join the conversation on the Playcentre Journal page on Facebook.

A trip to Mt Hutt

In September last year, Methven Playcentre organised a trip to the local skifield, Mt Hutt. After a week of rain the sun smiled on us and 17 children and 17 adults hopped on the bus to Mt Hutt. We had a great morning riding on the magic carpet, sitting in the snow groomer, having a ride on the skidoo and sliding down the hill. The children all had a cuddle with the mascots Shrek and Shred before we headed to the cafe for lunch.

For many of the children it was the first time they had been up the mountain, saw keas up close, and watched people ski.

Liz McMillan, Methven Playcentre
(Mid Canterbury Association)



Centre strengthening under the stars



of many happy graduates on the annual Ngaio Playcentre camp for current and 'old' members. The camp is the centre's tradition. This year 15 families stayed overnight at Kaitoke campground, and others visited for the day enjoying swimming, footie, biking, and way more toasted marshmallows than the recommended daily intake.

These get-togethers are really important to our centre. Because graduates can go to one of five or six local primary schools, we have to work to keep in touch and it really enhances our community feel. It is a joy to see the children at ease with trusted adults, and it's a safe start for families new to camping—there's always someone to help you put up the tent! We also have a fish and chip night and at least one graduate session each term.

This year we're very proud that a couple of first-time campers were converted – impressive, considering Kaitoke doesn't have showers. The starry night might have helped. We also met an informal gathering of families from Johnsonville Playcentre, who might adopt the camping tradition too. It's highly recommended, especially when the weather, as well as water and people, co-operate.

Sara O'Donnell, Ngaio Playcentre
(Wellington Association)

"It's going to work, Mum, because water and people are co-operating," explained Luke Chowdhury (7), while diverting a channel of the Pakuratahi into the Hutt River on a glorious Sunday in February. Sounds like a graduate session in a grand setting? Sort of—Luke was one

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Butterfly madness

With the onset of summer Totara Park Playcentre had a butterfly-themed day. We celebrated these amazing creatures with butterfly (mirror) paintings, butterfly and caterpillar biscuits and stories, as well as learning about the life cycle of the monarch. A scavenger hunt included finding the sign language for butterfly (you put thumbs together and move fingers up and down), learning the Māori words for butterfly and caterpillar (pepe and āwheto) and counting butterflies around the centre and caterpillars on the swan plant. It culminated in relocating some very fortunate monarch caterpillars to a better food source. We will watch the caterpillars grow and turn into beautiful butterflies.

Providing sanctuary to many chrysalises inside our centre, the children observed their progress and finally we watched avidly as five monarch butterflies hatched during one session.

Paula Bloomfield, Totara Park Playcentre
(Hutt Association)



Natural resources lead to imaginative play

When Nitin planted a rather large tree branch in a patch of soil, this led the children to think about *Jack and the Beanstalk*. We read the story together and they all turned into Jack and I was the giant. But then Noah chopped the beanstalk down and Harrison got a little upset. I pretended that the giant could not go home anymore. Harrison said: "It's ok, all of this ground is your home because you live in the clouds." Shouting "Fe Fi Fo Fum, I smell the blood of



Caught by the giant.

little boys..." they ran and screamed and I promptly chased them until I caught and pretended to eat one of them. Noah thought this was really funny.

All this running attracted more children, too many to catch using my bare hands. I got the big blue net out and set a trap. Soon I had caught my dinner. The boys found a way to escape and turned the net on me! Caught, I let them know that I was hungry. The boys brought buckets of sand, declaring it was my food. It was quite a banquet, 12 buckets with lettuce, chocolate, chicken soup, apples, kiwifruit, milky Milo and water. I was so full I needed to sleep. While lying on the ground underneath a tree making snoring noises, I had several girls climbing on me and all the boys shouting, "wake up giant.". I opened my eyes and growled. They all ran and screamed and the game started again... This play has now continued for three sessions and every time they see me they shout "giant" and run away. I'm not that scary... honest.

Nic Cobbett, Howick Playcentre
(Tamaki Association)



Olivia creates an octopus.

Seaweek 2011

In support of Seaweek 2011 Greenpark Playcentre renewed its connection to the sea, organising activities to get to know the characteristics, habitats and inhabitants of our ocean.

Together we constructed an octopus using a bucket and hoses through which coloured water flowed into the sandpit. The children learned all about octopi, about the body parts and how to count the number of legs. Some children placed the octopus legs in the sand to see the water bubble up, and declared it was 'just like the beach.'

The children read stories about the big 'Ika' and the 'one that got away' and went fishing for fish-shaped lollies swimming in blue jelly. They loved the taste and texture of the jelly that resembled the deep blue ocean. Octopi kept appearing around the centre in paintings and play-dough creations as we all talked and sang about what lives deep down in the deep blue sea.

Bronwyn Alton, Greenpark Playcentre,
Western Bay of Plenty Association

Inspired by nature

It's wonderful how children continue to surprise. Sam (5) was only ever fleetingly interested in the collage table in the last year of his Playcentre tenure. He much preferred putting out fires, fighting baddies, climbing and ball play. Imagine my delight and slightly flabbergasted surprise when on holiday, after an active session in the waves, he started making an amazing, unprompted creation from a mound of sand, shells, dry seaweed and stones. Quietly I watched while he was in 'the flow' working at his sculpture. Finally, he looked up and said: "Look at my sand monster!" This was a reminder of the importance of free play, having resources available to allow for creativity, and that ultimately the end product was less important than the process. Thus inspired, I introduced this play as an option for our tamariki at Karori Playcentre. Natural collage materials ready in the sandpit as well as the statement 'I am going to make a sand monster!' piqued interest. A number of tamariki joined in immediately, making mounds of sand and fully utilising the collage material. Niko placed a tail onto his sandy hill as a starting point

and created for over half an hour using drift wood, seed cones, stones and pumice – and what a lovely connection to home, as his dad also makes amazing sculptures. Olive, Katia and Emma were inspired by pumice, colourful ice-cream sticks and chopsticks, their creation becoming a cake. Ben later joined Olive when the girls' cake became a zoo and the tray, which by then had water in it, became the beach. What a lovely evolution of play.

Nature is truly a wonderland. The above play highlighted how simple we can keep it, because kids can do anything, and will continue to surprise!

Inge Doig, Karori Playcentre
(Wellington Association)



Niko Leifi-Shirley's sand monster.



He taonga i roto i te whānau – A treasure in the family

Within the Far North Association we are lucky to have a special kaiako amongst our whānau. Waikarere Gregory has been facilitating our wonderful Te Reo workshops and has now started a new Te Ao Māori workshop. Trainees can explore traditional Māori instruments and rakau, waiata, local myths and legends while being surrounded by the beautiful Māori language.

The mood for the morning of our first Te Ao Māori workshop was set with beautiful Māori waiata quietly playing in the centre as we arrived. Holding her brand new baby, Kootai, close in a sling Waikarere recited her pepeha me whakapapa. We were encouraged to mihi and hongī each other. The lyrical lilt of karakia filled our small room as we began our mahi.

We all enjoyed hearing the legend of how Kaitaia came to be named and Waikarere relished the part of the story that described the very beautiful women from Pukepoto – her own kainga!

The Pukepoto women sat on the summit (taumata) of their maunga, Taumatamahoe, and used parts from the mahoe trees to scent themselves. A tikanga of the time and of the local hapu was to betroth women, and so, although dazzled by the beauty of the wahine, Toakai, unfortunately, went away empty handed in his search for a wife. He was told, instead, to seek out two local sisters who lived in the area that is now Kaitaia.

However, when meeting the sisters she found he could not decide between the two. Setting them a challenge he declared whoever of the two created the best garden would become his wife.

Tarawhatia worked very hard and tended her garden day and night. Tukooti did not and left her crops to wither and die.

Toakai arrived back to inspect each of the sister's gardens and saw that one had been industrious while the other had lain around enjoying the sun.

So which one did he choose?

Why, both of course! Lucky man!

The area became known as Kaitaia- 'abundant food'.

Outside in the Playcentre garden, Waikarere explained the tikanga involved when working with harakeke. Karakia was said before any korari were taken and trimmed



Poppy lining up the rakau.

while little Poppy demonstrated persistence in organising all the sticks in lines.

There was much laughter and hilarity later inside as we were introduced to using our newly harvested rakau during the waiata E Papa Waiari. Our multi-tasking abilities were stretched to the limit as not only did we have to try to sing in tune while pronouncing te reo correctly but we also had to throw our rakau to our partner without taking an eye out! The most enthusiastic participant was possibly two-year-old Cruz!

Waikarere and Eve had us all gasping in amazement as they tapped, twirled, flipped and threw their rakau through the air, barely missing a beat. The rest of us may have a bit more practice left to do!

Exhausted by all the action we rested up with a kapu ti before traipsing outside to watch Waikarere demonstrate the purerehua. The whirring and buzzing emitted from it was eerie yet beautiful and even the tamariki sat quietly with wide eyes as we listened to the unusual sound.

We were surrounded by more new sounds when we explored traditional instruments, taonga puroro. Blowing into the pupu harakeke to produce music proved harder than it looked.

After more waiata, korero me katakata

sadly kua mutu ta taatou mahi—our work is finished. The most enjoyable part of our time together was sharing in Waikarere's passion, knowledge and skills in Te Ao Māori. She is a taonga to our Association and one that is deeply treasured.

Iti koe, e nga pipi o Hokianga
He waiu tangata tonu!

Small though you are, pipi of Hokianga
You are as precious as mother's milk!

Andie Tane, Peria Playcentre
(Far North Association)



Sarah playing the pupu harakeke.

Encouraging te reo Māori in our centre

At Paraparaumu Playcentre we have a number of simple ways to encourage the use of te reo Māori on session. A lot of our methods are adaptations and developments of ideas we liked when visiting other centres. One easy and effective resource is a large 'Kei te pehea koe?' wall poster created with bright photographs of the children modeling various emotions: one child is eating for hiakai, another pretends to be angry and frowns for pukuriri. The poster is displayed in a highly visible position in the centre with easy access for the children. The tamariki enjoy looking at their own picture and point out the word for the displayed emotion. The poster is also a good launch pad for conversations when we gather at the kai table and discuss how we are feeling today.

Another very simple, yet effective tool to use, is the word-of-the-week and the phrase-of-the-month. The words are circulated in the weekly notices with examples of their appropriate use, as well as being displayed on a board made for this purpose. The word and phrase relate to the centre's goal for the term. This term's goal is Mana Atua – Well-being. Our association's very helpful and approachable Bicultural Team teaches us useful phrases such as me hikoi koe kei roto—please walk inside and taihoa—wait, hold on.

The bicultural officers from Paraparaumu and Paekakariki Playcentres are liaising and sharing ideas and approaches to plan our bicultural journeys together. We intend to hold some bicultural events later in the year, such as a pōwhiri at each other's centres. We will visit Paekakariki Playcentre first where they will welcome us as manuhiri onto their centre, and a few weeks later we will welcome them onto ours. This will be an exciting challenge for us at Paraparaumu with preparations involving memorising a waiata and learning all the cultural protocols.

We are also planning a trip to Te Papa to enjoy the Matariki story time and Maori exhibit.

Rebecca Hewson, Paraparaumu Playcentre
(Wellington Association)



**Pakipaki, pakipaki, tamariki ma,
pakipaki, pakipaki, tamariki ma.** (clap, clap children)

**Kanikani, kanikani, tamariki ma,
kanikani, kanikani, tamariki ma** (dance, dance, children)

**Hurihuri, hurihuri, tamariki ma,
hurihuri, hurihuri, tamariki ma,** (turn, turn children)

**Hikoi, hikoi, hikoi, hikoi, tamariki ma,
Hikoi, hikoi, hikoi, hikoi, tamariki ma** (walk, walk children)

**Oma, oma, oma, oma, tamariki ma,
Oma, oma, oma, oma, tamariki ma,** (run, run children)

**E moe, e moe, e moe e moe, tamariki ma,
e moe, e moe, e moe, e moe, tamariki ma** (sleep sleep children)

**Pakipaki, pakipaki, tamariki ma,
pakipaki, pakipaki, tamariki ma** (clap, clap children)

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Babies learning to roll, crawl, stand and walk

Many studies have demonstrated the importance of babies achieving key milestones within the first year and a half, linking their achievements to success later on in life, particularly at school. What isn't clear though is how to support our babies to develop the gross motor skills and appropriate brain circuitry needed for achieving and retaining these milestones.

In this busy, fast paced society many of our babies are being carried around in and out of cars and throughout various activities confined to their car seats, slings, back or front packs for much of the day. They are propped lying, sitting or standing, or in contraptions that inhibit their natural urge to move. How can babies possibly build up the muscles and coordination they require with so little opportunity to practice these movements freely? How can a baby learn to roll over when they only have a short period of time each day lying on their backs on a flat surface with room to flap and experiment with their bodies? How can an infant learn to sit when propped up with cushions, using muscles that are not yet developed, without the constant threat of losing their balance baulking their learning about the world around them? How can a child possibly learn to balance safely on their feet if they are not given the chance to get to their feet on their own?

A baby's movement learning (the activation and pruning of relevant brain connections allowing them to safely and satisfyingly control their bodies) is optimised when they are free from stress and fear, when they have both time and space to freely experiment with their body's movements, and when they are allowed to have that priceless moment of ecstasy at the eventual achievement of a new skill (the neural circuitry for "try => overcome

frustration => succeed" is retained along with the new body control activations).

It is stressful for babies to be placed in positions where they are not comfortable or where they are stuck, unable to move safely into and out of the pose or situation. This stress in the brain inhibits learning as the brain instead flexes its stress response system, endeavouring to keep our baby safe in this awkward posture. If the natural order of movement from rolling to walking is allowed to blossom, our baby not only remains calm and fully open to learning about the world they have been born into, but can also begin to develop their sense of self – including their potential and a will to learn.

It's worth noting that a baby will not choose bottom shuffling as their main mode of movement if they have never been propped up into a sitting position (where they find themselves stuck and so ingeniously find a solution). When a baby is left to learn their own movement, they will usually learn to crawl briefly before they sit themselves up – the crawling skills give them a

safe entry and exit from the strong, upright sitting position. And lastly, walking our baby around holding an adult's fingers before they are ready gives the adult a sore back and is unlikely to assist our baby in learning to walk on their own. If anything it may extend the time baby takes to walk alone as they get used to someone being there every step of the way and not allowing them the opportunity to monitor their own balance and practice their independence.

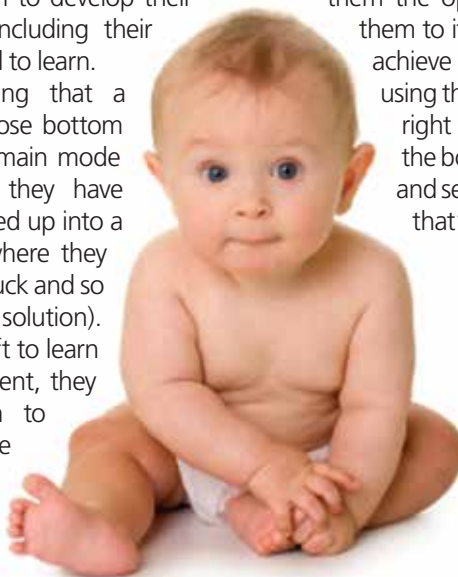
Babies who are given this gift of exploring their own potential may not achieve these skills any earlier than those who are directly assisted to do so but they will be sure to complete them without missing vital developmental steps to achieve their full natural potential.

If developmental delays are still apparent at 18 months in a baby who has been left to learn for themselves, at least the parents will know that they gave their child every opportunity and will be able to assist their child to "catch up" with professional help knowing they have done everything they could. Others being treated for apparent delays may simply not have been given the chance to follow their bodies' natural urge to develop movement and the delays may not have occurred had they done so.

Talking with our babies helps them learn language, and empathising with our babies helps them learn empathy. The best way for helping babies learn to move is to give them the opportunity and then leave them to it. They will almost certainly achieve each milestone beautifully, using their muscles perfectly, at the right time for them, and with all the bonus extras for later learning and self-esteem thrown in. Surely that's got to be worth it!

Sarah Best,
Alicetown Playcentre
(Hutt Association)

Article originally
printed in *Brainwave*
December 2010
Newsletter.



Be ready

Taken from the NZPF Health and Safety and Compliance Guidelines, 2010.

Disasters can strike at any time and often without warning. We can't prevent disasters but we can take some simple steps to ensure that we will be able to cope. All of us must think ahead and be prepared by involving the whole centre.

Our licensing requirements include having an emergency plan with the following points:

- Ensure all members know where to meet. Regularly practice this. Have a second place to meet in case the first area is not accessible.
- Ensure someone is responsible for collecting the emergency survival (civil defence) kit. This may be all in one place or in use around the centre (such as blankets).

- Maintain and update your emergency survival (civil defence) kit at least yearly.
- How to maintain contact with each other during an emergency
- How to contact your local civil defence for advice during an emergency.
- How to turn off gas, water, and electricity at the mains. All centre members should know where to find the mains.

In an emergency, utilities such as gas, water and electricity may need to be turned off. This may be because they are damaged or to prevent further injury to people and property. A plan of your centre should be drawn up and put up on the centre wall, showing the escape plan and where to turn off water, electricity and gas.

Always seek professional advice before reconnecting the gas supply.

People with disabilities

If you have members with a disability you should arrange some form of buddy system to ensure that their needs are being met.

People with asthma and other respiratory disorders may be especially affected by stress, dust, or volcanic ash. Have plenty of face masks in your emergency survival kit.

If you have special food needs, be sure to include as much as you can in your emergency survival kit.

If you need mobility aids, insist on bringing your aid if you are evacuated. Moving to safety is fine, but you won't want to be helpless when you get there.

Civil Defence Kits

Food and water in your civil defence kit should be replaced every 12 months. It should include enough food and water for everyone at the centre. Lunchbox food is not sufficient.

Websites like www.civildefence.govt.nz have guides for home, school, and work. Playcentres should have a serious look at the workplace civil defence kits as they cater for up to 25 people, whereas the home kits cater for five people. These workplace kits also go beyond water and food.

Include crayons in your kit. Crayons can write on windows, walls, and other surfaces so messages can be left for others.

At some centres, the civil defence kit is kept

in a wheelie bin and wheeled out to the front gate at the beginning of each session so that it is already available and ready in the event of an emergency. Backpacks are kept in the kit so that transporting the items without the wheelie bin is possible.

Make sure your equipment and building is safe

Regular building and equipment checks are crucial for making sure the building is safe in the event of an emergency. If you aren't sure, the civil defence website mentioned above has a 'Planning and Preparedness' PDF checklist that you can follow.

Here is the list of items for the civil defence kit suggested by NZPF:

- Canned or dried food
- A can opener
- Snack bars
- Baby food
- Formula milk for infants
- Teaspoons
- Sanitary products
- Pre-moistened towelettes
- A primus or BBQ to cook on
- Bottled water (three litres per person per day). Replace the water every 12 months.
- Disposable cups - plastic
- A first aid kit and essential medicines
- Spare toilet paper and plastic rubbish bags for your emergency toilet – we suggest at least 12
- Waterproof torches and spare batteries
- Candles
- Matches
- Bag of barley sugars (or similar)
- A radio and spare batteries. Check the batteries every three months.
- Supplies for babies and small children. Such as disposable nappies etc.
- Spare clothing
- Blankets
- Crayons

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“... children who really connect to the world around them, who develop a sense of themselves will assimilate a great deal of information about all aspects of the experience. Children who live second-hand lives, through received knowledge from television and DVD's, will only be able to record visual imagery of an event, or place that is in fact multi-dimensional.”

Claire Warden (Educational consultant and author)

