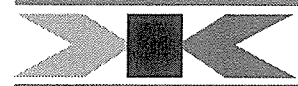


Te Manu Hou ★ Kindergarten Matters

Quarterly Newsletter of New Zealand Kindergartens Inc
No 3 ★ December 2000

NEW ZEALAND



Kindergartens Inc
Te Putahi Kura Puhou
O Aotearoa

Just Stargazing – or a window of opportunity?

Phillip Gammage and Peter Heaslip

*Phillip holds the de Lissa Chair of Educational Research in South Australia.
Peter is an education consultant and advisor.*

Astrologers sometimes talk about the conjunction of planets as being highly significant. While early childhood professionals do not work in such a way for their charges are an immediate presence, often involved, busy and needing immediate attention, perhaps there is something we can learn from astrologers, for there is an interesting conjunction occurring throughout the world of care and education which all of us should note, since it has major importance for our children, our country's policies and our futures. This conjunction is formed by the evidence which has accrued from several apparently disparate events affecting the last decade or so. These are

- the mounting evidence from neuro-scientists and psychologists that the first three to five years of life are massively formative and probably shape the architecture of the brain and much, if not all, of our later lives;
- the changing patterns of child-bearing, such that many women will have only one child (and perhaps 25% may not marry from choice);
- the realisation that divorce, remade families and step-parenting make the function of the family critically more important than its structure;
- the worldwide evidence that poverty is cyclic and endemic and that 'it knows no ethnicity';
- the increasing academic success of women and the fact that they are 'redrawing the economic map of the world';
- the long term cost-benefit

analyses of good early childhood provision which demonstrates impressively large social and financial savings for any society which provides such early childhood education and care for all its children.

To these one could easily add, that since 1966, the World Bank has become much more interested in the importance of 'social capital' and that from 1998-2000 the OECD undertook a detailed 'Thematic Review of Early Childhood Education and Care' in twelve countries. The latter showed, among other things, that care and education are not easily separated and that there is no justification of substance that could support such a separation.

"Yes" you might say "but what has this to do with me in my centre with my children?" Our reply is simply this. All over the world the focus is now on early childhood. Politically it is a big issue. Almost every child born in the Western world now has the potential to be 'an only child'. Indeed this is quite likely to be the norm, since the mythical average woman is back at work 13 months after full-term of pregnancy. Since women work outside the home in large numbers (well over 80% adult women do so in Sweden and Finland) and since we now know that the very architecture of the brain is affected by the quality of early attachment and consistency of circumstances, and since we have a divorce rate as high as 50% (South Australia), and since mobility in countries can separate families and drastically alter family circumstances,

Continued on page 5

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Have you visited the New Zealand Kindergartens Website
www.nzkindergarten.org.nz

Editorial

Karen Boyes, Board Member

Recently all those attending the Presidents and Managers Meeting heard our President outline the bridges being built in the celebration of Kindergarten Awareness Week, Averil challenged us to continue to build these bridges throughout the year. This issue continues in the building of bridges. Kindergarten is such a special place of learning for children, Lee Thomson's A Reflective Visit had me remembering the excitement of my daughter sharing her new discoveries at Kindergarten and thinking how her entry to school could have been more streamlined if such a programme was available back then. The bridges built with a local school are discovered by the Pahia/Waitangi Kindergarten on page 10. In the first of our regular book reviews, strategies and answers for marketing what we do in our kindergartens are uncovered in "Marketing Play". Labour's big picture for early childhood education is outlined by our Minister for Education building the sturdy construction bridge needed for a quality childhood education in the future. Phillip Gammage and Peter Heaslip challenge us to give up our "sectarian virginity" and reach for the stars by advocating for a quality unified early childhood education sector providing for New Zealand children. In a new regular section Ed-u-talk Russell Ballantyne outlines being champions for children. I do hope you find this an informative and enjoyable issue, and take up the challenges put before you.

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EDITORIAL POLICY STATEMENT

The views expressed in this publication are those of its contributors. They do not necessarily represent the opinion of the Board of New Zealand Kindergartens Inc. (*....likewise the grammar*)

Letters to the Editor



DYSPRAXIA CONFERENCE 2001
Call For Papers – closes 18 December 2000

The Dyspraxia Support Group of New Zealand is calling for papers for the above Conference to be held at Hotel Grand Chancellor, Christchurch. The theme of the conference is 'Planning to learn and learning to plan'.

Because children with D.D. still find it difficult to get the help they need within our school system, our aim is 'to help the educators of children with Dyspraxia – parents, teachers, therapists and professionals – by looking into how the dyspraxic child learns and by providing people with tools and techniques with which to educate the child. Within the Conference Programme, workshops allow for presentations from Professionals. The duration of the workshops is 1 hour 15 mins, allowing for questions. If you are interested in presenting at our conference, please provide an overview of no more than 150 words on what your workshop would include. Please forward to:

Dyspraxia Conference Team
PO Box 8910, Christchurch
Fax 03 343 5063 Ph 03 343 5064
E Mail team@conferenceteam.co.nz

Judy Davies QSM

Please forward your Letters to the Editor in the following format:

- 300 words or less
- Typed
- Name, address, telephone numbers, and signature of author *must be included*
- Anonymous letters will not be published
- The Editor reserves the right to publish or withhold letter
- No correspondence will be entered into
- Late letters will not be published, unless issues raised remain relevant for a subsequent edition of the newsletter

Letter deadline March issue – 15 February 2001

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Keeping our Word

*Hon. Trevor Mallard
Minister of Education*

Early childhood education is an area I am strongly committed to.

When I took over the education portfolio late last year, I was the first Minister in more than a decade who did not pass early childhood education on to one of my associate ministers. In the last six or so years there have been five ministers with responsibility for early childhood education. I want to make sure that that kind of stop and start approach does not continue.

I see early childhood education as an integral part of the education sector. If a child has access to quality early childhood education they are more likely to do well at school; to do well in tertiary education; to do well in the workforce and contribute to society as a whole.

The Government has identified increasing participation in quality education as our key objective for the early childhood sector.

In the school sector, we recognise that the playing field is not even. A child's family background impacts greatly on how well they do in education. The state has a role to make up some of that difference in opportunity through the education system. The Government is wanting to extend that to early childhood.

\$60,000 has been allocated to an equity funding working party. The working party is in the process of developing criteria and costings in this area.

At this stage we're looking at targeting services:

- in low income communities;
- in rural communities and areas of low population density;
- which provide immersion programmes without the support of an umbrella organisation;



I see access to quality early childhood education as crucial to the education aspects of 'closing the gaps'

- with children with low to moderate special education needs; and
- with children for whom English is a second language

Another Budget provision was to develop a long-term strategic plan for the early childhood education sector.

The number of children in early childhood education has grown. That's largely due to the labour market, to growth rates and to an economic climate that forces many parents back into work. There is a desperate need in many parts of the country for quality, affordable early childhood education, but there is no strategy to meet this need.

It is time to reintroduce some coherency to the sector. That is why

the Budget this year included funding for a long-term strategy for the sector. \$100,000 has been set aside in the first year to produce a discussion document, and run a nationwide consultation process. A further \$50,000 will be available in next year's Budget for a working group to do further work on the proposed strategic plan and prepare a report on early childhood education goals spanning the next ten years. The objective of the plan is to develop strategic goals and a framework for early childhood education policy that will:

- improve quality and access to early childhood education for all New Zealand children;
- identify and take into account relationships between government policy in early childhood education and other government policy goals, particularly those in labour market, health, welfare and Closing the Gaps policies; and
- give stability to the sector as to the future direction of early childhood education in New Zealand.

The working group, headed by Dr Anne Meade, has met several times and is making good

Keeping our Word *continued*

progress. I am expecting a final report before the end of August 2001.

This strategic plan is a priority for the Government. The result will provide a focus for all other early childhood education policy development. It will include goals developed by the sector and it will set out how those goals will be achieved.

But whatever the long term strategy comes up with, it is already clear where there are some barriers to participation.

In some communities, the lack of a suitable facility has been a major barrier to establishing a licensed early childhood centre. The Discretionary Grants Scheme provides capital assistance to community-based, not-for-profit early childhood education services. Funding is provided by the Crown as a grant to services. It has provided some capital to help boost communities' chances. The new Government supports this scheme; indeed, we are enhancing it.

This year's Budget contained an increase in funding for the Scheme. The General Pool has been increased by \$2.2 million over the next four years and the Pacific Pool by \$7.25 million over the next four years.

Improving the quality of early childhood education sits alongside increasing participation. One of the major factors of quality education at all levels is the quality of the teachers. I want to support teachers getting higher qualifications.

Ultimately the Government would like to see the Diploma of Teaching (ECE) as the benchmark qualification for all early childhood teachers. This is a big task and is likely to take some time.

In the meantime, work is continuing on a proposal which will require all 'persons responsible' in centre-based services and coordinators in home-based care networks to hold at least a Diploma of Teaching (ECE) or equivalent. I realise that kindergartens have always had a policy of only employing teachers who have a Diploma In Teaching Early Childhood Education which certainly has contributed to quality programmes in that sector.

Your contributions are welcomed
Next copy deadline for articles is
1st February 2001

I see access to quality early childhood education as crucial to the education aspects of 'closing the gaps'. While overall participation in early childhood education has risen over the past decade, attendance among Maori and Pacific children is still low in comparison to other New Zealanders.

A few weeks ago I announced that we are extending Maori and Pacific TeachNZ scholarships to the early childhood sector. There will be more than 100 scholarships available each year to support students to undertake study to become registered early childhood teachers.

Trained and qualified Maori and Pacific early childhood teachers will be vital to achieve our goal to increase Maori and Pacific participation in quality early childhood education.

Another development for early childhood education is my recent announcement in relation to sites for early childhood services. It is now policy that when the Ministry is looking for sites for new schools, there is enough land for an early childhood centre to be established also.

The type of early childhood education centre will be a matter for consultation involving the community and the Ministry of Education. The Ministry will assist by providing information such as demographic projections. I expect that many of these arrangements will involve kindergartens.

For existing schools, we will be supportive of early childhood centres attached to schools as long as there is available space or buildings which will not be needed for roll growth at the school.

I hope that by looking at early childhood provision before a school site is bought will ease the establishment of early childhood centres and will help the Government meet one of its objectives; to increase participation in early childhood education.

I wish you all well for the remainder of the year and for the holiday season ✦



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STORE MANAGER
CHRIS WILSON

Just Stargazing continued from page 1

early care and education becomes vital for a nation's survival. There is more to it than that, however. New Zealand has a long history of kindergartens, but these are now well outnumbered by care-centres. New Zealand also has a gentle and culturally 'kind' curriculum framework which can be used as a tool in the care and education of all children. Moreover OECD, in its summary reports, has pointed out the same issues that have been repeatedly mentioned to us by New Zealand carers and educators in the field and at conferences over the last few weeks.

These are –

- That the systems of the future need to be fully integrated (Does this imply we might become like Sweden or Finland and legislate for the 'inalienable' right of the child to care and education from birth?) People have also repeatedly asked for greater union between professionals (No more turf disputes, they have suggested)
- They have asked for clearer career structures (better scaffolding of the RPL and standards, less diversity in those standards across the country) Of course many of them mention money and salaries. But it is significant that this rarely has been the first thing mentioned.

So, this is the window of opportunity, or are we just two old men stargazing? We believe there is such a window and it is present now.

Never before has there been such an international concern with care and education of the young.

Never before have there been such clear cost-benefit analyses which show how much better it is to spend \$3000 on a three year old than spending \$30,000 later, locking up a dysfunctional 18 year old in prison!

Never before have we had major reports (eg McCain & Mustard, 1999) documenting exactly how vital are the first three years of life.

Never before have we been able to look at detached studies of several other systems at the same time (eg Thematic Reviews of ECEC on www.oecd.org)

We also have the secure knowledge that other countries are fast addressing the issue of integration. (South Australia has an education department which, for some years, has been fully

responsible for all early childhood services). We know that in many countries appropriate curricula are being planned from birth, and that carers are seen as vital educators who are trained to graduate level.

Within all this we can be aware of the many debates on quality. And what does good quality appear to stem from internationally? Why, from well trained people and from good staff:child ratios.

Luckily New Zealand has a Minister who knows the above and is already convinced of its importance. But is the profession so convinced? Are you prepared to give up your 'sectarian virginity' your 'balkanised' in-fighting and reach for the stars? Is New Zealand really so backward, so parochial, that it wants to keep all its petty squabbles between carers and teachers alive?

Denmark has legislated for a system of positive discrimination which it hopes will provide for 20% of males in ECEC. Finland trains its carers for a three and a half year degree course as the **minimal** qualification. Portugal is up-grading its care facilities. Finland tries to use private day-care intelligently (but with social justice) by allowing it to be 'bought in' by municipalities at the same cost as state provision. In short many countries are busy addressing old anomalies, trying desperately to provide equity and social justice, trying to cater for specific cultural histories and differences, but not all the expense of the prime goal – an integrated unified service. Interestingly the British NFER found that, of the different 'models' adopted by English Local Education Authorities, full integration of care and education using what one might call 'multiprofessional teams' appeared the most successful.

Is New Zealand ready for such integration, such a vision? One would hope that a country with a long tradition of fairness, a country which produced Te Whariki, a country which understood Froeblian approaches so well, a country which facilitated indoor/outdoor play spaces and was acknowledged for its social justice would rise to the occasion. But it won't be done with the 'let someone else advocate', or 'I don't want to work with them attitude'. We talk a lot of dispositions to learn in young children – and it is right to do so, they are indeed vital. The big question is whether the adults are equally disposed to learn.

Continued on page 6

Just Stargazing *continued from page 5*

A window of opportunity exists. It may not come again for a long time. The stars are in conjunction. For the sake of our children, we plead with you – please do something **NOW!**

This article has also appeared in the latest issue of Swings and Roundabouts produced by the Early Childhood Council

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A Reflective Visit

Durie Hill Kindergarten Extension Group

Lee Thomson

Head Teacher

For a long time; certainly much in my memory of nearly 20 years, the kindergarten movement had a tentative attitude towards learning with a capital “L”. Anything that resembled “formal” learning or learning that might be associated with schools was widely avoided as inappropriate and beyond “pre-school” boundaries. Kindergarten practices were often shrouded in mystery and open to misunderstanding and confusion from communities. This with a combination of narrow process and dinosaur time limits has led many parents to select other Early Childhood alternatives.

Happily much of this is behind us. In significant ways, kindergarten is discovering its new identity in the 21st century. Kindergarten teachers are reflecting on personal and centre practice, we are beyond the (nice people who make dough) epithet and we are pushing educational boundaries.

The introduction of Te Whariki and its ultimate selection as a national curriculum; have meant recognition for our spectacular skill base as teachers and organisers, which places us firmly in an integral position in the community.

We are the baseline for the beginning of continuous education. That said, each of us as teachers with training, knowledge and experience, bring our own particular and personal “flavours” to the culture/community we work within.

At Durie Hill kindergarten in Wanganui, I was offered the chance of an Early Childhood lifetime, to create a programme that would increase enrolments, placate the local community and prevent imminent closure. A big ask!! With the Association’s progressive backing and a wonderful team member, we embarked on a journey of exploration and discovery. My own view of Kindergarten in the world we live in, meshes strongly with current thought.

P.R is the key to survival in a competitive industry. High profile, economic strategy and service delivery will enable kindergarten to remain a viable and growing area. I believe that in the Early childhood market we have to meet the economic realities by promoting our excellent service options in meeting current community needs and parent requirements. Our extension group grew from meeting some basic tenants of service. Provision of a small learning group, a lengthy time span and educational practice that dealt with the issues of transition to school.

Extension group began as a focus on the children’s needs at the time. This older group needed a cohesive and directive role. We founded our new beginning in Anne Staveleys assertive behaviour text. The phrase “Stop it, I don’t like it” would give the same empowerment to children four years later as it did in its inception.

Using role modelling as a key we enabled older peers to set examples of appropriate and assertive behaviour. These peers then become guardians of the then fledgling “Group Contract”. The groups contract grew from a need for a behaviour and conduct code (safety orientated) that we could

culture/community we work within.

agree on. Democracy at this level is empowering and awesomely successful. Ownership of the code i.e. "we look after and care for each other" is sited in positive reinforcement. The behaviours and responses we want are locked into it. The group contract is visited regularly and works just as efficiently today. Regular discussions allow younger and new members the chance to participate and be involved. Over time the focus changed as the need changed.

Some of our learning strategies:

Key words and concepts on a high interest area i.e. the Beach – bee's – houses.

Children can discuss, illustrate and write usually in small groups.

Visits from Professionals i.e. doctor with equipment, a hands on tactile experience with discussion and follow up work.

Puzzles and games with numbers and letters in small groups – (especially purchased)

Self esteem models – presentation to the group of work or interest area. Farewell circle – each child says what they feel to leaving buddy – i.e. "I will miss you at the carpentry table".

Visits to the beach, Pizza Hut, honey factory etc with follow up work.

conduct code (safety orientated) that we could

Works books with pictures drawn and explanations using key words and phrases.

Pragmatically elements such as; eating lunch together, presentation of work schedules, small group participation creates an atmosphere that is easily translated into other settings. While there is no doubt that extension group has demystified and lessened the traumatic impact of beginning school; philosophically, we work to bring children's development needs to their full potential while they are centre based.

Kindergarten will never lose its particular and quite wonderful free association of art and music and freedom of choice. We have the children at a wonderful age and the impact is life long. Our kindergarten has grown very large, our parents are enormously supportive and we have several intensely built playgrounds to prove it. Extension is larger now but its value and validity are just as integral today.

We acknowledge that there are no new methods and historic input through peers, mentors and other models. It has a personal "flavour" to us; reflecting our team, children and the community we work within. Extension group is a fluid microcosm meeting needs as they arise; project work, individual work or intense beach visits. It's a delight and a reflection of the amazing diversity in Early Childhood Education +



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Ed-u-talk

*News-views from
NZ Kindergarten Senior Teachers*

Champions for Children

*Russell Ballantyne
Dunedin Kindergarten Association*

One of the biggest advantages that I perceive of belonging to our National Organisation is the ability to be a powerful voice for the most powerless group in today's society - that of young children. Whilst it is easy to be seen as joining the bandwagon espousing for children's rights [its almost fashionable I dare say] this is a journey that I believe that we are well overdue from embarking upon. While within each kindergarten association there have been sporadic outbursts [the Nelson Associations "gun licence" springs to recent mind] the lack of a cohesive national voice on issues that directly affect the groups that we work with is what I believe to be an inherent weakness of our structure. Too often kindergarten becomes national property when responding to an unfortunate serious accident or when extreme ideas were reported with the sole purpose to be ridicule such as the removal of the crosses on the Hot Cross Buns. Kindergarten, I believe, needs to take its role much more seriously and make its voice louder in the community.

Why should this be part of NZKI's role I hear you ask?

The reason is simple – this structure is made up of 2 main groups – parents and employees. NZKI represents the interests of parents groups – some 45000 families use kindergarten and our parent [sic] body makes up the largest proportion of those. If NZKI is made up of parents who want the best in services and resources for their children, then this group should begin to exert its voice.

Too often the teaching employees national body [recently NZEI] have taken this role and have stolen the moral high ground in terms of advocating best practice [and the associated benefits] for children. There is however a fundamental error in this – the union is a group that is very easy to negate by government [and others] in terms that "of course they have a vested interest – it's a group that is paid by its members to essentially get more money in their pockets." Any benefit for children could be perceived as first being a benefit for the staff and [perhaps] the motivator to make the teachers life easy.

The parent body however is a different group who are not so easy to downplay. Parents who volunteer hours of their time, who are active partners both in terms of financial and labour resources are a group whose collective voice [on the whole yet to be heard] is a very powerful tool and should be utilised. If parents fulfil their role as partners [as I would suggest that those on Associations have] then it is reasonable for partners to expect that the state honour their side of the deal. It is very hard for government to downplay parents as having "vested" interests, as that is their primary role and it is in this that your power lies.

By becoming champions for children you can make a difference – you can ensure that our children are valued by the policy makers, that the rhetoric re the importance of Early Childhood Education becomes more than just rhetoric and that value [not lip service] is placed on ensuring that the principle of every child having access to an affordable, accessible and effective early childhood education will become a reality.

There is however [isn't there always?] work that needs to be done.

To speak with credibility we need to ensure that we are a credible organisation who excels in their core role – that of the delivery of effective educational programmes for children. To speak with power you have to show that you "walk" your talk and that your integrity is high – the recent publication by ERO [What Counts as Quality in Early Childhood Centres Winter 2000] would suggest that we have some work still to do in this area eg in 13% of the Kindergartens there was inadequate or non-existent programme planning.

We also need to be able to speak with one voice and ensure that our focus is child orientated – that there would be benefits for the children and families that use our service. This challenge is enormous in respect that in the past we have struggled to speak as one and I believe that protocols will need to be developed to help guide this. The key aspect of this process is that kindergarten [NZKI] is a key stakeholder in the well being of young children and families and that collectively employees and parents need to be stronger in championing change to help make the lives of the families that much better.

So Champions for Children – are we up to it?

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www.nzkindergarten.org.nz



BOOK REVIEW

MARKETING PLAY by Rosemary Milne

Produced by the Free Kindergarten
Association of Victoria, Australia.

Reviewed by Bobbi Magdalinos,
Head Teacher,
Napier Kindergarten Association

As a kindergarten teacher, deeply committed and dedicated to the child-initiated programme, I have always balked at the idea of marketing what we do. Arrogantly I have held on to the doctrine that "we are the professionals, we know how children learn; they learn through play" – end of argument. Any other approach is nothing short of heresy!

I was impatient with anxious parents, stropky politicians, concerned board members and secular administrators to whom terms like 'developmentally appropriate' and 'holistic' meant nothing. They ask questions like "where's the education we're paying for in all this play?" and "they could be doing this at home, couldn't they?"

I knew we were providing children with the very best possible start, that they were learning and flourishing in our nurturing, holistic kindergarten environment and were being equipped with all the elements required to make it through life.

However, I neglected to appreciate that it was important to communicate what we are offering in the same language that parents were using to express their concerns.

For instance, why not promote play in the following terms, as suggested in **MARKETING PLAY**:

"In a competitive and turbulent global environment, where no job is ever secure, the idea of expertise must include – versatility, imagination, reliability and inventiveness. At the early childhood level, play is the perfect activity for the development of these qualities".

How inspiring and reassuring to parents such a statement would be!

In April this year, I attended a conference and study tour in Reggio Emilia, Italy and was made truly aware of what successful marketing of an early childhood philosophy can achieve. Not only are the parents of children in the Reggio system convinced that their children are learning in the most appropriate way, the entire community and city of Reggio Emilia supports its educational approach.

It has to do with enthusing parents and the community through skilful and successful communication of what we are doing. We will also be able to quell the move towards 'hot-housing'.

MARKETING PLAY by Rosemary Milne provides a variety of strategies and answers to questions using a marketing model to explain the abundance of benefits of play as a learning tool. Chapters are labeled "Clarify your Product", "Identify Your Targets", "Examine your Competition", "Develop your Sales Pitch", "Go Out and Sell". This marketese will be abhorrent to many early childhood educators but they should give this book a go, read beneath the hype to acquire some enormously useful tips to help us spread our gospel – that through play children form a solid foundation for all future learning.

It provides some outstanding examples of posters used to advertise the value of play and a huge glossary of books on the subject.

Although this is an Australian publication, where the early childhood years incorporate those from 2-7 and naturally there is no mention of Te Whariki, **MARKETING PLAY** would nevertheless be a valuable acquisition for New Zealand early childhood educators and administrators who are passionate about the benefits of their curriculum, but need to convince the wider community and avoid being sucked into a more teacher-directed fill 'em up – petrol bowser model of education.

A useful resource, to be used judiciously

Have your say – write to the editor – next copy deadline for letters is 15 February 2001

Building Bridges

Louise Grant
Teacher, Pahia Waitangi Kindergarten

During Term 3 this year our focus was on Tikanga Maori and as our nearest Primary School has an active Maori culture group that visited us two years ago, we rang to enquire if it was possible for them to come and give a repeat performance. The school has recently built their own whare runanga which is named after one of our ex kindergarten parents and therefore the invitation was reversed and we were asked if we would like to go to the school instead.

We were happy to accept and previous to the day spent time talking about the school, school bells, the teachers and other children from our kindergarten that had recently started there. We also made headbands with traditional designs that the children could wear during the visit and discussed the meanings of the designs; koru, patiki, maunga, and how they were used in carvings to decorate the whare. We played stickgames, made poi, enjoyed legends, made piupiu and practiced a new waiata to perform for the school.



We hoped the trip would increase the children's appreciation of Te Reo, give them confidence in new situations and with new adults and give them an opportunity to be creative and expressive in music and dance. We fulfilled these goals and many more! On the day we traveled to the school in private cars but gathered in the car park so as to enter the school as a group. One of the older pupils did a karanga as we approached and we had a parent who was happy to respond in kind. The children were wide eyed at this experience and solemnly took off their shoes as they entered the whare.

Speeches were made and waiata sang by the junior class, many of whom were familiar faces, and our children had no problem sitting quietly through this as it was kept brief. I replied to the speeches and then our group performed proudly with big smiles!

The school Kapa Haka group then performed for us followed by an explanation of the significance of the whare design by the school kaumatua. Our children were then buddied up with school children and off they went hand in hand to the junior room for a morning tea that the class had cooked in preparation the previous day. Popcorn, chocolate crackles, cordial and a very impressive birthday cake for the class teacher covered in candles!

The whole group then sat on the mat and was given instructions for the making of waka and whare, which they made with the eager assistance of the older children. The parents accompanying us were invited to the staffroom at any stage to join the staff for morning tea. After a brief speech of thanks and the gift of our koha, we took our leave tired but relaxed and happy.

The class teachers aide had photographed the occasion throughout with a digital camera and we were able to bring these pictures back to kindergarten with us to display and discuss.

The highlights were our children's confident performance of their waiata, the parents taking the opportunity to familiarise themselves with the school, and the general warmth with which our group was received. Giving the children their own school 'buddy' was also very successful.

In hindsight we would learn more waiata next time and maybe spend more time looking at the carvings and around the school in general. Overall a wonderful experience for all involved!





BoardTalk

News - views from national Board Members

LIFE IN A FUNNY HAT OR WHY BE A VOLUNTEER WORKER

By Michael Meadowcroft
Vice President

Being a board member is all about travelling to exotic locations such as New Plymouth, staying in luxury accommodation like the Airport hotel and then partying the night away in a funny hat all at someone else's expense. It is the pinnacle of a volunteer's career, being on the national body of an organisation.

Appearances can be deceptive.

I look around me at the people I know who are working for various organisations in a voluntary capacity (organisations that depend on voluntary labour) and sometimes I wonder why they are doing it, what is their motivation. And to be truthful mine as well.

Where does it all start? For most of us involved in kindergarten it started with our own children and a belief that we want or need to be involved with what our children are doing. Then again being facetitious; is it a lack of trust in what and who our children are involved with? Do we want to be in a position to keep an eye on what is going on?

And without a doubt we develop skills and knowledge because voluntary work involves us in so many situations that are new and unfamiliar. We find ourselves being responsible for the employment of people and their working conditions, financial management and in this organisation ultimately the wellbeing of the children in our care.

We want to keep using these skill, we are motivated by altruistic ideals and we become interested in more than just the wellbeing of our own children but in the wellbeing of all children. So we become more and more involved with the running of our organisation and become pivotal people in them. All the time we are benefiting personally and gaining valuable experience, which may not be available to us any other way.

Why am I personally involved in kindergarten in the first place? Many of you will have had as innocent beginnings as me. My daughter was starting kindergarten and somebody said we need a treasurer. I believe in being involved with what my children are involved with and I had the necessary skills and so ten years later here I am still involved with kindergarten.

Why the national organisation? It was something I believed in and felt was important. A strong advocate for kindergartens and children in New Zealand. I believed I had skills and experience to make a contribution and I seem to thrive on new experiences and challenges.

So I would like to say to all of you out there who are putting time and effort into this organisation and other organisations for no financial reward thank you for your time, your work, your effort and your commitment. You are part of a shrinking pool of available talent and you can be proud of what you achieve. Keep up the good work!



On behalf of the Board of
New Zealand Kindergartens Inc.
I wish you all a very Merry Christmas
and a Happy New Year

Averil Stevenson
President



INSURANCE CORNER - An update from your brokers

*Olwyn Griffin,
Wilkinson Insurance Brokers*

With the Christmas holiday break rapidly approaching, it is time to consider the precautions that can be taken before closing up for the extended holiday period.

1. Ensure that all water taps are firmly closed, and sinks are clear of any object which could act as a plug. If pot plants are to be kept in water, place these in a bucket rather than the sink.
2. If possible or practicable, have outside tap handles removed and replaced with key taps.
3. Check that any fire hose reels are turned off at the wall tap, not just the nozzle. (Hoses will eventually burst from the pressure).
4. Portable play equipment should be moved inside or into locked storage sheds.
5. Arrange for grounds to be maintained in a tidy fashion.
6. Check that all security lights are functioning.
7. Remove all cash from premises.
8. Where considered appropriate remove computers from the premises to a home location.
9. Ensure computers have been fully backed up and back-up records stored off-site.
10. If possible, or considered appropriate, remove shade cloths. (They are regularly stolen, slashed or jumped upon).

Please note that these are suggestions only, and not a requirement of your insurer. They are based on claims which commonly occur during this time.

ACC & the new workplace environment

With the new Employment Relations Act 2000 and the move from private workplace accident insurance back to ACC, HIH Workable have established AuditSure to assist you:

To Save Money

- a) by achieving audit compliant Safety Management Practices to gain ACC premium discounts
- b) by avoiding 'spot' penalties for non-compliance

To Improve Productivity

- a) by preventing safety based work stoppages
- b) by making all employees Health & Safety stakeholders

To Eliminate Risky Stopgap Answers

- a) by developing ongoing, in-house Health & Safety coordination
- b) by building a complete Health & Safety operating manual & system.

If you are interested in more information on this Health & Safety compliance programme, please give us a call on 0800 966 666, or talk to AuditSure on 0508 WORKABLE.

HIH Casualty & General - Financial Security of the insurer

As your broker, one of our roles is to ensure that the insurer who is carrying your insurance has an acceptable Standard & Poors (or AM Best) claims paying credit rating. You may have been reading about problems HIH were experiencing in Australia following their purchase of FAI, and wondered about the stability of this company who hold so much of your insurance portfolio. We can now confirm that HIHNZ has entered into an agreement with Swiss Re (a AAA rated Global re-insurer) which sees Swiss Re providing balance sheet support for HIH if that should become necessary. On this basis S&P have confirmed HIH credit rating can remain at A-.



FROM THE INSURANCE TEAM AT WILKINSON INSURANCE BROKERS,
WE WISH YOU A VERY HAPPY CHRISTMAS AND A TROUBLE FREE BREAK.
THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT OVER THE LAST 12 MONTHS.