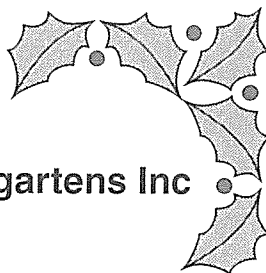


# Te Manu Hou

Quarterly Newsletter of New Zealand Kindergartens Inc  
No 9



NEW ZEALAND



Kindergartens Inc  
Te Putahi Kura Puhou  
O Aotearoa

## Pathways to the future (2002)

Anne Meade, Ph.D.

*Dr Anne Meade was the convenor of the Early Childhood Education Strategic Plan Working Group in 2000-2001. She filled a similar role more than a decade ago, which resulted in Education to be More (1988), the basis of the Before Five Policies.*

The long-awaited 10-year plan for early childhood education (ECE) policy, Pathways to the Future, is out. By 2012, the vision is for New Zealand to be the world leader in implementing a progressive curriculum for all children in ECE, with professional early childhood teachers, and supported whanau and parents. Attendance rates for Maori and Pacific children will equal others, as will their subsequent performance in school.

The 'scorecard' of 90+% adoption of working group proposals is cause for celebration. It is extraordinary for so much to be confirmed. Why the success? It was an astute decision to have a working group of those who know a lot about ECE – the national leaders – to shape it. It was a wise decision to take their formative ideas around the country; most people involved in ECE liked the goals and proposals.

It is a courageous decision for Government to increase professionalism requirements beyond the target suggested by the working group. This decision says our children deserve the best. However, it will be a challenge to get the numbers of registered teachers needed for the targets for childcare services (50%

in 2007, 80% in 2010, and 100% in 2012). Currently, it is a struggle to find enough qualified teachers to head these services. Every action outlined in Pathways to increase the numbers of qualified teachers must be adopted, and then some. And tertiary education policy will need to support, not undermine, this strategy.

The leadership shown in regard to registered teachers will ensure that New Zealand goes from being a world leader for its innovative ECE curriculum, Te Whaariki, to being world renowned for the way we put the curriculum into practice. The ECE curriculum sets out excellent foundations for school and lifelong learning. When the sector delivers on its potential, we will have the best.

The reasons for emphasizing the need for teachers to be qualified go like this:

- Babies are born ready to learn from day one. Infants' and young children's learning is no less (and no more) important than school or adult learning.
- Important learning in infancy and the early years includes:
  - developing and practising complex physical skills like walking, and riding a cycle,
  - learning to communicate using one or more languages,
  - learning to love learning,
  - constructing theories about people, places and things,
  - figuring out how your mind - and that of others - works,



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- becoming more independent, yet learning to contribute to groups.
- Research shows that a sensitive, qualified early childhood teacher is a major determinant in teacher-led services – if not the major determinant - of a developing child's progress.

These are also reasons to invest more in infants and young children. To improve their living environments, we must address child poverty. To improve their learning environments, we must expect the best early childhood teaching – from parents and from teachers/educators/ kaiako - and have a coherent set of policies to support them.

The working group strategies had a big emphasis on empowering early learning using Te Whaariki. Putting it all together, three major shifts to improve policy occur. First, doing more to help teachers teach in ways that better engage children, parents and whanau. Then ECE will attract more families and more teachers. Second, changing systems and regulations so people in ECE can focus on learning and teaching, and fewer will leave because of the 'paper war'. Third, having government agencies more actively involved in planning and advising to support parents and community providers.

Pathways to the Future confirms the directions proposed by the working group. It focuses predictably on three main goals: increasing participation, improving quality and promoting collaborative relationships. There are 10 strategies, and action steps so teachers and parents know what to expect. Some actions have greater prominence than in the working group report; others recede. The timeline for the Plan extends to 2012, not 2010.

For families, the emphasis on more children attending early childhood services is important. But, there must be quality teaching and learning if children are to benefit. The winners will be Maori, Pasifika, rural, and low-socio-economic communities. As well, the participation goal should put pressure on Government to address the costs of the increasing number of registered teachers required. If services are to remain affordable for parents as teacher salary costs go up, then Government must "provide funding to support access to affordable, quality ECE services" (p.11). The strategic plan expects pay parity for kindergarten teachers to flow on to other registered teachers in ECE. The increase in Rate 2 funding (Budget 2002) is necessary, but not sufficient. The current funding review must grapple with teacher costs, or the goal of increased participation will be at risk.

Up ahead, also watch: the exciting developments in the area of collaborative relationships; funding levels; the challenges in the regulatory review, for example, to find a place for centres to employ students in training for teacher registration qualifications and elders; and centres of innovation.

My regret is the loss in prominence of protection of community languages in Maori and Pasifika ECE services.

(First published in the NZ Herald, 12 September).



## NZKI Cultural Award

The award was established by Te Runanga A Rangitane o Wairau and presented to the Marlborough Kindergarten Association in 2001. It was established to help foster and forge closer relationships with Maori communities. The intention is that these relationships are ongoing and become an integral part of the Association and/or kindergarten. The award is not restricted to Associations as an entity. An Association may accept the award on behalf of one kindergarten. This is to acknowledge that often the way to forge good strong relationships is to start at the ground level and work upwards.

At the NZKI Conference in June 2002, Sally Kennedy, President of NZKI, presented the award to Peter van der Kroft, President of Northland Kindergarten Association.

## NZKI Board members

Two new members, Jeremy Neild and Diane Daley were elected to the NZKI Board in June 2002.



The Board of New Zealand Kindergartens Inc wish you all a happy Christmas and a safe and relaxing holiday over the New Year.

From the left: Michael Meadowcroft (Vice President), Karen Boyes, Sherryl Wilson, Diane Daly, Phil Wylie, Jeremy Neild and Sally Kennedy (President).

## Teaching and learning

*Hina Thompson, Senior Teacher, Wanganui Free Kindergarten Association comments: I would like to celebrate and share with you recent efforts made by some of our teachers to raise awareness of kindergarten and, how young children learn. The teachers' knowledge, commitment and enthusiasm were demonstrated in a number of articles, written to enhance our October Kindergarten Awareness campaign. I also applaud the editor of the Wanganui Chronicle for his community spirit and support in publishing the articles. (Due to limited space Win Livesay's article is printed in this edition and Evelyn Trass's and Susan Shand's articles will appear in the March 2003 edition of Te Manu Hou – Editor).*

## NZKI President's Award

The award is given for the most outstanding effort by an association in promoting kindergartens in the community, and in interacting with that community. Criteria includes: originality of idea; quality of effort; evidence of effectiveness; number of personnel involved and adaptability to other associations. At the NZKI Conference in June 2002, Sally Kennedy, President of NZKI, presented the award to Julie Otene, President of North Taranaki Kindergarten Association.



## Child's play is serious business

*Win Livesay*

*Teacher, Marie McFarland Kindergarten, Wanganui Free Kgtn Assoc.*

What is really happening when children are 'playing' at kindergarten? Why is 'play' a child's serious business?

First let me take you back a few years when the Ministry of Education produced an amazing curriculum for early childhood education. It was no easy task as it had to be relevant and useful to so many different early childhood education institutions – kindergarten, playcentre, nga kohanga reo, childcare and home-based care. It was a huge accomplishment – New

Zealand was the first country in the world to do this! It produced a curriculum called Te Whariki” (The Woven Mat) reflecting the concept that learning is an inter-weaving of a wide range of experiences and reflections.

More and more research confirms that play is a vital tool for young children’s learning. We’ve moved beyond Piaget theory of setting up the environment for children and just letting them get on with it to explore and learn for themselves. Research keeps confirming that careful planning and assessment of children by early childhood educators must take place for children to meet their potential to ‘grow up a competent and confident learners and communicators, healthy in mind, body and spirit, secure in their sense of belonging and in the knowledge that they make a valued contribution to society.” (Te Whariki, Part a, Introduction).

It may surprise you that kindergarten teachers develop individual plans for every child’s learning needs. Each plan is based on a child’s strengths rather than any perceived deficit. It builds upon the process of co-constructional learning, where both adult and child are co-constructors and have important ideas and information to contribute.

Every child has a turn of being a ‘focused child’. As part of our formal planning information is collected about the child’s play through observation. This is shared with the child and her parents. A joint goal that can be achieved both at kindergarten and at home is agreed upon, one linked with a learning outcome taken from Te Whariki. A strategy is jointly decided. One week later an evaluation or assessment of that goal takes place, and what further action, if any, needs to happen.

This process takes three weeks, with a continual rotation of three different children at various stages of being planned and assessed. In addition to this formal planning procedure, there is also a continual process of informal and spontaneous planning where educators daily and situational use their skills and insight to further the learning goal with the child. Here is an example of how it happens in practice:

It was Michael’s opportunity for formal individual planning and assessment. Teachers observed that Michael spent time every day doing carpentry. He also had discussions with a teacher about birds, bird’s nests and spring arising from a book he had asked to have read to him. The teacher used some warm, demanding, open-ended questions to co-operatively develop with Michael a plan to rebuild a vandalised bird table.

The teacher discussed this gathered information with Michael and his parent, emphasising positively Michael’s strengths/interest in woodwork. The goal for Michael to extend this interest was agreed, with an appropriate learning outcome. Wood that had been discarded from an old fence was found, and Michael’s mum was happy to contribute some ready-mix concrete.

Michael and teacher drew up a plan for the feeding table; Michael measured and sawed the wood to the correct lengths. He learned how to use an electric drill to start holes for the nails. Several children helped Michael dig a 60cm hole, set the table’s post and make and pour the concrete. Michael nailed the bird table to the post the next day, and the birds have been feeding on it ever since!

One of the bonuses of extending children is that, as seen above, other children also get involved. Lots of photos were taken of the entire process and put in several children’s profiles, along with a learning story of the project.

What are some of the learning dispositions Michel has developed from this co-constructional project? Michael:

- Took responsibility for his own learning
- Focused his attention on the project over three days, which gave him the opportunity to delay gratification
- Was able to express his ideas and feelings, and know they are valued
- Co-operated with others, sharing his project and giving other children a turn
- Was developing literacy and numeracy skills
- Was taking a strong interest in what was happening
- Was developing his sense of belonging and making an important contribution
- Was fulfilling a spiritual need for nurturing and taking care of small creatures
- Michael’s emotional IQ went up several notches

The teacher learnt that ‘the sky is the limit’ for children’s learning and thinking, and learnt from Michael how to hammer in nails straight! And if the teacher was doing this for the first time, he or she would have learnt the value of co-constructional learning, how vital planning and assessment is to extending children’s learning, and that having such a wonderful national curriculum makes us all accountable to good standards in teaching practice.



## A te reo Māori language policy for early childhood education programmes

Merren Dobson  
National Advocate, NZKI

The Final Report of the Strategic Plan Working Group to the Minister of Education, October 2001, for early childhood education sector proposed as a strategy:

*Develop a languages policy for early childhood education to provide direction and support for early childhood services delivering in te reo Māori and to strengthen the use and understanding of te reo Māori in all early childhood settings.*

Why does the Māori language need this kind of support?

A view from the Māori Language Commission is if the majority of New Zealanders and New Zealand institutions have generally positive attitudes to the Māori language, based on accurate and up-to-date information, this is likely to reinforce positive attitudes among Māori speakers and encourage them to make greater use of the language.

Unfortunately some misinformation about the Māori language still crops up in debate and discussion. The following information from the Commission's booklet Promoting positive attitudes to the Māori language in the classroom lays some of these myths to rest.

- *Learning Māori will hinder the ability of children to speak English.*

It is possible and indeed common for children to learn two languages simultaneously provided adequate time and support is available to the learners. It is also useful to remember that over half the people of the world – more than two billion people – are bilingual.

- *Māori is an archaic language that can't cope with modern New Zealand life.*

The Māori language like all living languages is constantly expanding and adding new words to its vocabulary. Recently the Māori Language Commission published Te Matatiki, a dictionary of 5,500 contemporary Māori words, that cover everything from kitchen appliances to space exploration.

- *The Māori language is not useful in an economic sense.*

It is often said that speaking Māori won't get you a job! This is in fact not true. There is an increasing demand for people with high-level Māori language skills in a range of professions, including teaching, the public service, the legal profession (especially through the Waitangi Tribunal), broadcasting, librarianship, and translation and interpretation. Furthermore, it seems

likely that the demand for Māori speaking staff will continue to grow exponentially as the number of Māori speakers increases.

- *Māori is a dying language anyway, so why bother?*  
Māori is often referred to as a dying language but this is a false description. In fact the number of people that speak Māori is growing rapidly through the success of Māori language preschools and primary schools. The Māori Language Commission estimates that the current population of 130,000 Māori speakers will almost double in size in the next 50 years. The language is being used in an increasing number of new domains, including television, science and the Internet.

- *But I don't want to be forced to speak Māori.*  
The Māori language is not, and has never been a compulsory subject at any level of the education system in New Zealand. The Māori Language Commission does not advocate compulsion preferring instead to promote positive attitudes to the language and respect for individual's language choice.

- *But I don't know any Māori people (or there aren't many Māori in this area).*

In a small nation like New Zealand we are all neighbours and we will come into contact with each other in many places and we will interact in many ways. There are now also many new programmes on television and radio that can help promote and foster understanding of Māori language and culture.

What can I do to help? Visit the Māori Language Commission's Website at [www.tetaurawhiri.govt.nz](http://www.tetaurawhiri.govt.nz) and download their booklet Promoting positive attitudes to the Māori language in the classroom for activities and strategies that can be used in the early childhood setting. Three booklets for parents Using Te Reo in the home are also available.

The Commission comments:

*You may feel from time to time that the use of the Māori language in this way is simply tokenism. However, it is important to remember that the greater the use of the language and increasingly positive attitudes will lay the foundations for the normalisation of the status of the Māori language as an integral part of our cultural landscape.*

Excerpts printed with permission from the Māori Language Commission, Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori, Wellington.

## Looking back

*Diane Daly, NZKI Board member*

So often I look back over my past 25 years in the kindergarten movement. I remember making the decision to pursue kindergarten teaching as a career. I had not dreamed since childhood of being a kindergarten teacher and, in fact I had had little to do with young children. I was nearing the end of Sixth Form and like thousands of 16 year olds do every year, I was wondering what I would do next. I had a couple of options open to me but Occupational Therapy training was in Wellington, for three years and I would have to survive on the Standard Tertiary Bursary. North Shore Teachers' College was a kilometre from home; a two-year course and it came with a generous student allowance of about \$40:00 a week. I feel embarrassed now when I remember that this was how my career started.

I started as a Superanumery teacher when I graduated (an extra teacher placed in a kindergarten because of an excess of teachers at the time). After one year in Auckland I was transferred to Whangarei for my second year. I felt like I had been sent to purgatory, (not realising then that Northland would become my home for the next fifteen years.) I won a permanent position at Riverside Kindergarten in my second year and a year later I was made Head Teacher at that kindergarten, a frightening experience. A new teacher, Val McCullum, was appointed to our two-teacher kindergarten. Looking back now I know that this was the stage that I started thinking of teaching as a career. The fun and passion we experienced in our work inspired us both and became our driver.

Today, I still see the excitement and passion in kindergarten teachers, bouncing with new ideas, working with their communities and constantly reflecting on teaching and learning. They work long hours and take work home. They are passionate about quality, about the kindergarten service and their role within it.

And now, after all these years of getting on with the job, of feeling put down by school teachers, of dealing with the babysitting labels, it appears that our work is

finally being recognised. It has been happening slowly over the past ten years. Teachers have felt it coming; we've read the research and international comment. We have followed the agendas of governments, been pushed and squeezed by so many, but never have I seen teachers so full of passion and energy as I do now. It is to the credit of so many people, including our teachers, senior teachers, associations, parents and our researchers and other educators that kindergarten is finally being recognised as a quality service.

I look back at the achievements, at the changes in teaching and learning brought about by the introduction of Te Whāriki. I remember the days before associations had administrators, when the association was run out of a shoe box under the bed, when things went wrong and there was no-one to call, when Education Boards paid our wages and maintained our buildings but assumed no personal responsibility for us as teachers and our association members could never be contacted.

We have come so far. We no longer pin envelopes on children's backs, or use checklists for assessment and we no longer 'get high' on the smell of meths from the Gestetner machine. Kindergarten is now a highly professional organisation. Kindergarten teachers are respected as teachers. Society has changed and the importance of quality early childhood education is now recognised. We will still fight for lower group sizes, lower ratios, freedom to diversify and be funded for extra hours. We will still recognise the inequalities that exist within our communities but will continue to advocate for improvement in these areas and now we have the forums to do this.

I know there is an element of excitement among teachers at the moment, but I also know that after years of vigilance and suspicion, of battling on regardless of outside influences, teachers will continue to be driven by their passion and enjoyment of teaching, to create wonderful learning opportunities for the children in their care. That's just the way they've always been.

### TE MANU HOU ADVERTISING RATES

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Please remember – we invite NZKI members of Boards, parent committees, teachers, Senior Teachers, Presidents and Managers to send articles to the national office of NZKI for possible inclusion in Te Manu Hou. The articles need to be supplied by email, in Word format, Arial font, and of approximately 500 words.

#### **Editorial policy statement:**

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

## Challenging Children to Move

*Evelyn Trass*

*Head Teacher – Marie McFarland Kindergarten, Wanganui Kgtn Assoc.*

'Run away and play!' 'Go outside and play!' What do we mean when we say this? I feel society does not really understand what 'play' is and therefore does not place enough value on what happens when children play.

Beginning at an early age, children need to be involved daily in a variety of fun physical activities aimed at developing their large muscles. All learning starts with the senses and the brain. There are six main pathways into the brain. We learn by what we see, feel, hear, smell, and taste – and above all by what we do.

Jerome Hartigan, an Auckland based scientist and physical training expert says, "physical motor learning forms the basis for all learning, including reading, writing, arithmetic and music". "Without motor learning" he says "the brain simply will not develop."

Physical education is about:

- Learning to move – developing movement skills and enhancing fitness, learning to move more effectively, efficiently and with increasing control and enjoyment. It involves trying out, persisting, participating and thinking.
- Learning about movement – learning about concepts such as space, time, effort, weight, flight, rotation, locomotion and balance.
- Learning through movement – learning about oneself, one's environment, and one's world. It involves

visual tracking, which is essential for reading, and develops skills that relate to music, mathematics, shapes, colour, relationships (with things and with people), social skills and fitness.

Children need to be given opportunities to explore movement and to use their imagination, to repeat movement patterns often enough to achieve success and then to be extended and challenged beyond what they can do. Success is of prime importance. It is a major need of children (and adults) and provides them with the motivation to continue to move and practise so that they further develop positive physical concepts and movement skills.

There is general agreement that genes account for about 50% of ability. Experience does the rest. Research indicates that experience in the early years, in particular, affect chemical and hormonal balance, brain cell growth, and electrical activity in and connections between brain cells needed for intellectual development. Young children use their eyes, ears, touch, taste, and smell motion and brain systems to explore new experiences. They activate many, many parts of the brain in parallel and help connect up circuits. As well, the search for novelty keeps youngsters physically active which is important for activating and smoothing motor brain circuits for stimulating the flow of oxygen to the brain.

'Free Play' is when children have the greatest opportunity to practise 'how to' actions and build their implicit memories. Brain research validates the value of experience based curriculum approaches for young children, and of supporting the emotional development of children.

## Encouraging Children's Independence

*Susan Shand*

*Head Teacher – Keith Street Kindergarten, Wanganui Kgtn Assoc.*

While pondering theories and thoughts for this article, I came across this statement "The ultimate goal of education is to help each child become a productive member of society". Well, I thought that to be exactly true and that process starts from birth. The child is in

the process of becoming both an individual with unique characteristics and a member of society.

Infants and young children possess amazing innate abilities to absorb from their environment. They are eager to grow, to do their best, to be loved and accepted and to become capable people. Look at the baby whose intense gaze soaks up every detail of the important people in his life. Look at the toddler who so desperately

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wants to move, climb, repeat actions over and over to learn about her world. Look at the two and three year-olds who want to help in the kitchen, 'weed' the garden or wheel the supermarket trolley. The young child needs to be able to participate, to be productive and to feel like he can contribute. Through contribution, the child gains a powerful sense of belonging. She is motivated by her accomplishments (not praise) and as she grows, she will possess a strong sense of independence and a commitment to those close to her and later to society, as a whole.

As parents first and then educators, we have a very important obligation, to enable children to contribute and develop a sense of independence. In contemporary society, we no longer need children to contribute in a physical or economic sense but this can rob them of the opportunity to participate and to grow from this.

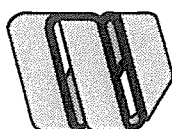
Once we begin to understand the process and significance of independence in the child, it becomes easy to find ways to support it. Many conflicts between the adult and child arise from the child's intense desire to become independent. Unfortunately, some adults (and teachers) do not want to give up any control and they have the tendency to do too much for the child – (perhaps through over-protectiveness, hurried lifestyles or showing their love). The more that adults do for the child, the less he will be capable of doing for himself. Yes, it is often easier for us to just do it but understand that it is only during the child's early years that he has this intense desire to develop his independence. If he is thwarted now, he will be likely to give up all desire for self-reliance.

So – to find the balance – as a young child cannot be totally independent. It is a long gradual process but we must try to provide as many opportunities as possible for the child to take responsibility within safe limits. This may require some physical changes e.g. a gate across the drive, a lower child-sized bench, plates and cups kept at child-height etc. Jobs he can do might include dressing himself, feeding animals, helping with food preparation and serving and all sorts of cleaning. Be thankful for his input and if you do need to re-do the job, don't do it in front of him.

One of the most heartening signs we, as early childhood educators, can observe in young children beginning their kindergarten years, is that of a child who has been allowed to develop his sense of independence. The kindergarten programme is a natural extension of the home environment. We build on skills that have begun at home.

The introductory paragraph in the publication *Te Whaariki*, (the early childhood curriculum that teachers follow), states that the curriculum is founded on the following aspirations for children: "to grow up a competent and confident learners and communicators, healthy in mind, body and spirit, secure in their sense of belonging and in the knowledge that they made a valued contribution to society."

In all the defined goals that we work towards, early childhood teachers are encouraging children to gradually take responsibility for their own actions and development. Recent studies show that children, who are confident at three years of age, are more competent in later years



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