

Te Manu Hou

Newsletter of New Zealand Kindergartens Inc

No. 12

Kindergarten Association Viewpoint

In the past 30 years there has been a clear recognition of the benefits of quality early education and care. The significance of the early years has been further reinforced by the latest findings of the Competent Children/ Learners Project.

Equally, failure to equip children adequately during this time is a strong predictor of later disadvantage. It is well known that children who enter school without basic social and emotional competencies are not ready to learn and may face emotional and academic problems throughout their young years.

Nearly a third of the calls to my office phone complaint line relate to the difficulties faced by the families of children who have some form of extra need. Early remediation is clearly desirable for the children, their families and for wider society.



In today's busy world parents also face challenges balancing their commitments to their children with the increasing demands of work. It is quite possible the amount of time you spend with some children in your centres may be the longest sustained interaction they have with any adult. Few people would disagree that being a parent is more complex than ever before.

In these circumstances a functional, mutually respectful partnership between families and early childhood providers becomes increasingly important. I am impressed by training available for parents, caregivers and volunteers to allow them to participate in early childhood centre programmes. These programmes use best evidence to help parents improve their child raising skills.

Working longer and therefore extending the hours children spend in professional care, needs careful and consideration. The Kindergarten Association has a sessional philosophy which I understand was an historical response to this question.

My perspective on early childhood development is guided by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. The convention is an important international document, signed by the New Zealand government, which recognises children's human rights. The right to education, freedom from discrimination, protection from violence, injury and abuse and



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recognition of cultural values are all enshrined in the convention.

There are specific rights considerations for a body of committed adult professionals who have a vulnerable "client base" unable to redress any disadvantage they experience. A feature of many calls to our office complaints line is that adults have difficulty clearly differentiating between adult and children's issues. Whose needs and rights are given priority in disputes between practitioners and children or their caregivers?

How does your association proceed in reconciling individual and collective rights issues?

Early childhood education has been on a successful path for some decades. When we look to the future, it must be constructed from an explicit human rights framework covering both the work of early childhood centres, as well as access and quality for every child.

Dr Cindy Kiro
Children's Commissioner

Words from the President



Kindergarten is the oldest early childhood education provider and has been part of New Zealand since 1867, throughout all of this time the passion that has driven those who are part of the kindergarten movement has been what is best for our children, our future. At

the NZKI national office there is a photograph of the conference attendees of the 1925 conference and the women in this photograph, while appearing foreboding to say the least, ensured that kindergarten was held up as a important and necessary educational service to New Zealand providing children with the tools they needed to make the most of their lives ahead of them.

Kindergarten continues to strive towards improving the outcomes for the children and as we move forward I am sure that we will persist, as we have in the last 137 years, be strong advocates ensuring that kindergarten is a flagship of early childhood in New Zealand as we support those parents and children who attend our kindergartens by providing a dynamic, friendly, learning environment for children.

In June this year over 200 attended the NZKI national conference hosted by the Nelson Kindergarten Association. The theme of pathways to the future was very topical with early childhood education in the spotlight recently with a new funding model a key part of the budget announcement, the regulatory review well underway, an ICT strategy in the process of being developed and professional standards being introduced for kindergarten teachers. Several speakers at the conference acknowledged the high quality of early childhood education provided by kindergartens. Delegates as those who have attended national conferences before them came away with similar aspirations and goals as those wonderful women who attended the 1925 conference.

This issue of Te Manu Hou celebrates some great achievements that are happening now in our kindergartens throughout the country. As a changing and evolving early childhood movement we are faced with constant changes and if we looked back at some of the practices even ten years ago we can see how far we have come and the great thing is that research is backing up what we have always believed. Children who have the opportunity to attend a quality early childhood service such as kindergarten reap the benefits for many years. I hope you enjoy the new format of this issue and reading the wonderful stories that spell out what makes kindergarten so special, and why we are so passionate about children's learning and development in our kindergartens.

Karen Boyes
President
New Zealand Kindergartens Inc.

Kindergarten Association First in Safe Practices



Ruahine Kindergarten Association has achieved the Tertiary (Highest) level of ACC Workplace Safety Management Practices – the first Association in New Zealand to achieve this.

This was confirmed by an audit of Workplace Safety Management Practices undertaken by Assurance and Business Advisory Services PriceWaterhouseCoopers on behalf of ACC in June 2004. To meet this level, Ruahine Kindergarten Association had to demonstrate compliance with guidelines comprising 9 major sections which each had between 9 and 27 component requirements.

Before applying for the audit the Association had to undertake a self assessment using the same criteria that the audit would use. The self assessment was undertaken by the staff participation group which comprised of 4 staff representatives, 2 Professional Services Managers and the General Manager. This enabled us to confirm that we not only had all the systems that were required but we could demonstrate how the systems worked through various paper trails.

The main areas for the audit revolve around Policy, Planning Review and Evaluation (of OSH), Hazard Identification and Control, Induction/Training Programme (for OSH), Reporting Recording and Analyzing of Workplace Accidents, Investigation of Accidents, Employee Participation, Emergency Planning and OSH Procedures for Contractors. It is very satisfying to achieve this level of recognition with the efforts we have made to ensure Safe Workplace Practices. Four years ago we were the first

Kindergarten Association in New Zealand to achieve the Primary level. Two years ago we were first to meet the Secondary level and now we are the first to receive the Tertiary level.

We have been able to achieve this through well developed systems a high level of co-operation and participation by staff and an employee participation process.

I am sure that our credibility was enhanced by the fact that we contract independent Health and Safety assessment as well as Playground Audits for a number of sites each year. We were able to demonstrate that issues raised and non compliances identified by these processes or by ERO or the Ministry of Education were addressed promptly and effectively.

We have also ensured that each year we include one course for staff on some aspect of health and safety such as “back care” or “safe movements”. This year because of the introduction of stress as a hazard we contracted a course called “Stress Proofing” which assisted staff to identify stressors and how to manage them. It was with the same firm that provided the course at the NZKI March meeting. The course was compulsory for all Teachers.

In regular surveys of families with pre-school children safety always ranks by far the highest requirement of early childhood education centers by Parents. This recognition of safety priorities will be a further assurance for Parents who enroll children in any of the Association’s 25 Kindergartens.

This achievement will also result in a 20% discount on ACC Premiums which will enable expenditure of the savings on more direct service provision.

For Associations considering applying to join the ACC Workplace Safety Management Practices programme there is a very helpful book “How to implement safer workplace practices” which can be obtained from ACC. The layout of the book makes it fairly compatible with the audit standards which are also available from ACC.

I would encourage Associations to become involved with the scheme as the self assessment and audit do provide an excellent opportunity to test out your systems and it is a great learning opportunity.

Jerry Tanguay
General Manager
Ruahine Kindergarten Association

New Kids on the Block - the Wellington Kindergartens

In 2002, the Wellington Region Free Kindergarten Association Council, in consultation with its kindergarten teachers and communities developed a comprehensive five year strategic plan. In that plan, clear goals, strategies and priorities were developed which will guide the Association over the coming years.

The plan is based on a clearly defined philosophy that focuses on the right of all children to high quality early childhood education, with collaboration being a key facet of the plan.

The Association believes collaboration at all levels needs to occur and this includes between associations nationally.

It was therefore a natural part of our activities to begin discussions with NZKI because NZKI is the national voice of kindergarten – it is a legal entity with its own set of rules and with an ethical framework within which it operates. Therefore, on the instructions of the WRFKA Council, we embarked on discussions with the National Executive of NZKI about the possible relationships that WRFKA and NZKI could develop.

After exploring the possibility of informal relationships, it became clear to both parties that the most constructive option would be for WRFKA to formally join NZKI. This occurred at the end of 2003. Just over six months later and WRFKA has no regrets about joining. On a financial perspective, the levies have paid for themselves by the benefits of being part of a formal national organisation – benefits such as the insurance scheme, and the strengthening relationship with IBM are just two examples. The dissemination of information is another huge advantage – we're not having to reinvent the wheel on every piece of policy or initiative that we undertake. To have an organisation lobby for us at a national level is also incredibly valuable, because they are cognisant of every association regardless of its size – it's about everyone's interests rather than self-interest.

We are also learning from other associations – the issues facing small rural associations are different from those faced by larger associations, and issues facing south island associations are different from those facing associations in the north. Just as we have learned about difference, we have learned too that we each share common issues and so that reduces the feelings of isolation that can sometimes occur.

We also believe that NZKI has benefited from the input

of the Wellington Association. Benefited not only from more levies, but also from the added perspective and expertise of the people that form our association, and from the relationships and connections we have in the wider education sector by virtue of our place as the association that has kindergartens in the nation's capital city.

We didn't join the NZKI thinking "what can you do for us, we're doing you a favour by joining", just as NZKI didn't adopt a superior attitude to us. That's because both parties have the same vision: that one national organisation that works within a framework based on what's best for all children is the most positive framework within which to move into the future. This doesn't just mean mutual benefits, but also mutual responsibility. WRFKA will not necessarily agree with everything NZKI does, just as other member associations may not totally agree with NZKI's position on something. But we will still accept that that is the decision of most and so will support that.

The Council members, teachers and staff of the Wellington Association have really appreciated the warmth and friendliness of NZKI members. We already enjoyed positive relationships with the Hutt City, Upper Hutt, and Wairarapa Associations, and relationships with other NZKI associations has been an extension of that.

Being part of a formal national organisation still enables us to operate autonomously. Each association has to make its own decisions, just as we made ours. We hope that the positive relationships enjoyed with other associations that are not members of KI will develop into something more formal in the future – it can only be good for all of us, most of all, for the children that attend our services both now and in the future.

Amanda Coulston
General Manager
Wellington Region FKA



Upper Hutt Kindergarten Association Fire at Cottle Kindergarten

On a beautiful summer's day in Upper Hutt during the January holidays the teachers and children were feeling relaxed and starting to think about returning to work and kindergarten.

The teachers at Cottle Kindergarten were looking forward to going back to work to see their new lino but unfortunately it was the laying of this lino that started a fire.

The fire quickly took hold of the kindergarten and engulfed it in flames. Although neighbours were quick to call the fire service the damage was extensive by the time the fire was under control.

Association personnel responded immediately and put an action plan into place to deal with the aftermath of the fire. The first job was insurance but the most important task was to find somewhere for the children to go. Fortunately a neighbouring school, Brentwood, had a double sized classroom available and allowed the kindergarten to move into it for term one at a minimum cost. Although the space and outdoor environment were not ideal e.g. it needed temporary fences that teachers had to move at morning tea and lunchtimes, teachers just 'got on with it'. The support from other kindergartens in Upper Hutt as they rallied to find equipment and furniture so the kindergarten could reopen was incredible. Even more incredible were the resources that kept arriving from kindergartens in the Wellington Region, Hutt City and Kindergarten Wairarapa Associations. The teachers were overwhelmed with this support and it allowed them to open in temporary premises with sufficient equipment and resources.

The term it took to rebuild the kindergarten saw the Executive Officer and Senior Teacher working on something to do with the kindergarten nearly every day. We had been unprepared for the amount of time it would take. The purchasing of replacement furniture and equipment was also time consuming and stressful for the teachers. Fortunately the rebuilding of Cottle

ran to schedule and the children and teachers were able to move back to the new kindergarten at the beginning of term 2.

Whilst our insurance cover has proven to be more than adequate, in terms of building and contents, it has caused us to rethink our business interruption insurance. If we'd had to hire a building the cover would not have been adequate to cover all business interruption costs incurred. As a consequence, for a minimal cost, we have increased this.

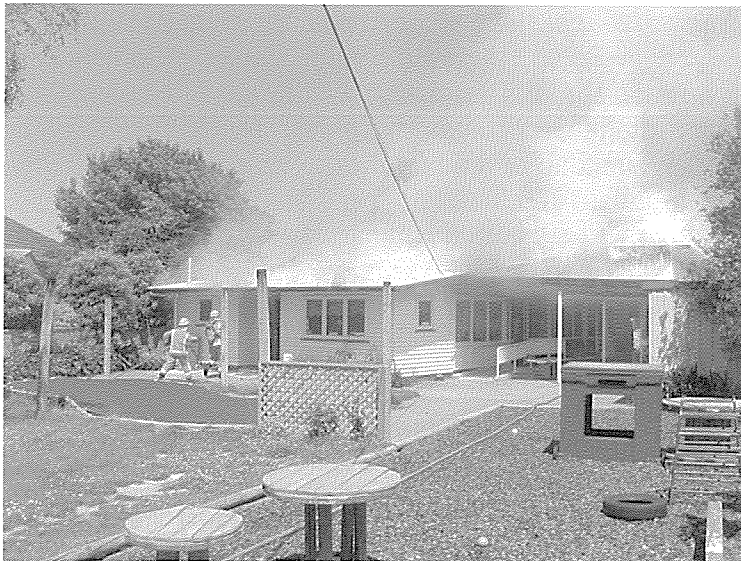
What was really emotional about the fire was walking through the devastation and realising that there was years and years of work and love from teachers, Association, Committee and parents gone into making the place what it was and there was all

that commitment melted altogether.

Fortunately equipment and resources can be replaced. The new kindergarten looks fantastic and children, parents and teachers are happy to be back. They now have the opportunity to rebuild on a disaster and create new memories for the coming generations.

Our thanks go to all the people and services who helped in the process:

- NZ Fire Service
- NZ Police
- Insurance Company whose assessor was amazing
- Allied Builders who rebuilt the kindergarten
- Flair Flooring
- Parents and Committee for their support
- Teachers for their commitment
- Brentwood School
- And all the kindergartens who donated resources and equipment



One Teacher's Big Adventure in a Small Land!

It's strange how things turn out in your life! I have wanted to travel to New Zealand since I was 13 years old, after reading my first romantic novel. My main reason for wanting to visit then was to see ninety mile beach (all those who have read 'Touch not the cat' by Mary Stewart will understand why.) Also at that point in my life my ambition was to become a top lawyer. Life doesn't always turn out the way you planned!

Now more than 16 years later I finally find myself in NZ! And this time it's not the ninety mile beach that is my main priority. I am now a Leading Teacher and work as part of the Wiltshire Early Years Team. I spend my time supporting local pre-school groups on the implementation of the foundation Stage Curriculum, a curriculum based primarily on play. Instead of reading romantic novels I read new theories in childhood development and have found again and again that NZ is the place to go and see real child centred principles in practice. The early year's curriculum is very much focussed on the holistic development of the whole child.

I was fortunate enough to make contact with Diane Daly, from the National Kindergarten Association and this is where my adventure began, on a rainy day in July in the north shore of Auckland!

I pride myself on being a very child centred practitioner, always putting the choices of the children first and encouraging independence! Then I visited Kindergartens in NZ! WOW!!! It was amazing I saw children handling hot glue guns, real tools for woodwork and having the choice of outdoor and indoor provision throughout the session. It's not unusual to see pre-school settings in the UK using their outdoor areas, but it was a wet and windy day and still they were out! Also it was the variety of activities and resources on offer. The outdoor areas are no bigger to those here in the UK; but the sand pits took up a large proportion of the space and they are covered by a canopy to allow for wet play. In one Kindergarten I was amazed to see a large tray filled with lots of old radios, circuit boards, plugs and cassette players. I watched in wonder as a group of children used the real tools to change screws, leads etc.

Another wonderful moment for me was watching a group of children play with their pet mice. "What's so amazing about that?" I hear you ask. "We have pets in pre-school and nursery settings here!" Yes, but do you problem solve how all 19 of the new born babies will be able to fit in the cage? You have got them for a whole week before you can re-home them, how will

they survive? In this Kindergarten, the children decide to plan how to make a 'mouse run' out of the blocks. They then decided to make some toys for the mice to play in, such as wheels and climbing frames! After planning it on paper, they made their dream a reality and created it all using junk from their creative area!

The curriculum Te Whariki encourages practitioners to go with the interest of the child. Even the vocabulary is different. Instead of Personal, Social and Emotional Development they have 'Well Being' and 'Belonging'. You don't find Maths and Communication instead you have 'Contribution', 'Communication' and 'Exploration'. Within each of the curriculum's principles they have stands such as 'Family and Community' and 'Empowerment'. The language used within the curriculum speaks volumes for what is asked of the children. Also this curriculum goes from birth to five. How sensible!

I found the whole experience very humbling. You get caught up so very easily in health and safety, adult interaction and curriculum planning that even I forget what really counts! Children can cope with experiences that some adults, including myself find daunting!

So what have I learnt from my visits to NZ kindergartens? We have some excellent early childhood centres in the UK, but we need to make sure that everyone strives to achieve the same goals. I know now that everything that we as Early Years practitioners are trying to achieve is do-able. It's not out of our reach! We all believe in giving children the very best start to education and we desperately want them to succeed. But to do that we have to be willing to take risks and just go with where our children lead us! My visit to New Zealand fuelled my desire to continue working alongside our marvellous and dedicated practitioners here in Wiltshire.

Who knows? Maybe in the next few years there will be more of us handling hot glue guns, rewiring old radios, splashing in puddles and playing in mud. And if we can't quite manage it we can always ask our children to show us how!

Nicola Smith

TE MANU HOU ADVERTISING RATES

Full page	\$150.00
Half page	\$75.00
Quarter page	\$40.00
Less than quarter page	\$30.00

Hunter Park kindergarten

Hunter Park kindergarten is in Waipukurau, we serve a rural township and the outlying rural area. Our town features a Kohanga reo, a private childcare, ourselves and one other kindergarten on the opposite end of the town. We have 63 children on our roll with a maximum of forty children attending on any one day. Children share places attending for a minimum of two days each a week with one exception. We are open for children on Monday through to Friday from 8.30am until 2.00pm each day. We employ 3 full time teachers, a teacher aide during child hours and a resource person to cover lunches.



Autumn Picnic

Hunter park changed sessional to extended hour on the 12th of November 1998 as a result of community consultation in response to falling rolls.

What we love about extended session is that it gives you more time to spend with each child because of better ratios and a longer day. Our teachers also benefit by getting quality administration time together at the end of each day, to write up learning stories, share how the day has gone and plan and evaluate ongoing learning.

What the parents love about it is the longer day especially the country parents, some of whom travel over an hour to get here, the extended session makes it worth their while attending. Our times tie in well with school hours giving country parents plenty of time to get back to school to pick up older children after collecting their children from Kindergarten.

At Hunter Park the wider age range gives greater opportunity for children to become peer tutors. Through out the curriculum we are more able to take an integrated approach to learning which sees the development of longer term projects. These can be built on from day to day, inspiring teachers and children into an ever expanding learning web. The extended day also allows us to provide broader experiences throughout the day from free play to quiet/ rest time.



Henry, Ruby, Jo, Ben and Sam make space ships

Our most recent example of this is our children's interest in space. Growing from observations of the moon after a trip to 'Seasons', it has been expanded by events such as the transition of Venus, Matariki and other space news. Now our learning about planet earth is leading us towards an exploration of world cultures and a connection with our other major ongoing health and fitness focus when they meet together at this years Olympics. All this being supported by a range of art, music, science, story and math's activities focused around our space learning centre.

The longer day and single session give us more flexibility to support these projects through a range of trips. Equity funding enabling us to offer opportunities to rural children they would not otherwise get.

As a team we find our strengths compliment each other and support our programme. Jude our head teacher has extensive, experience, knowledge of our community and cooking skills, Jo is renowned for creating stunning visual environments and extending children through a range of integrated art activities, David loves storytelling and science and we all enjoy music. All this ably supported by our teacher aide Louise and resource person Jenny.



Isaiah now an expert at our solar system puzzle helps Flynn to complete Saturn.

A Storehouse of Memories

In May of this year I had the privilege to be invited to the UK for 19 days. Most of that time would be spent running workshops on play, educating boys, and science in EC etc.

I had been invited over there by representatives from Easting Riding Council (Yorkshire) who run a child minding network (similar to home based care in NZ).

The time ran quickly and the people I met were very hospitable to a visitor from the “outer edges of the world”. Remarkably the people I had talked to never considered that New Zealand on the world maps we see through television etc would show NZ as being in the center of the world map rather than on the edges but never mind.

Over the weeks I had the chance to talk with hundreds of educators from senior positions in Nursery Schools to child minders in home based care.

The following points struck me from this exchange of “thinkings.”

- Play is perceived by educators in New Zealand as sacrosanct. In the UK I felt that play as a vehicle was under threat from people more excited by observable tangible “now based” outcomes that so “real learning”. I found this quite remarkable to think that a large amount of our thinking surrounding play has come to us from the UK in the past and maybe we now have a responsibility to “gift” them back some of their memories surrounding Teaching and Learning for young children.
- Health and Safety and litigation has had a marked input into what is considered OK and Not OK teaching and learning practices. In one example, educators were disturbed by a science idea (to cut holes in the sides of a yoghurt pottle to create a magnifying glass) because the holes might have a sharp edge through which children could cut themselves and the educator would end up being sued. I wonder if this could occur in New Zealand if we do not keep up with education for our families on what we do and why.
- OFSTED (our version of ERO) was also often in people’s conversations with me. Educators appeared to be more worried about what OFSTED’s latest issue was and how to teach to it, than thinking about the complexities that surround the dance of teaching and learning and articulating these.



2 yr – 4 yr Sure Start center in Hull

During my time in the UK I also had the chance to visit some of the “Sure Start centers” and of course no trip would be complete without a visit to Pen Green in Corby.

The ability with Pen Green for collaboration with Parents was an amazing experience to see and discuss. One interesting note I made from discussions with staff at Pen Green is their move away from practitioner research and instead up-skilling their parents to be the researchers. I feel this has a couple of strong points to it that we may wish to consider within the New Zealand context. One is that practitioner research can sometimes be seen as biased because it is within “our best interests” to get the results we want so could be easily discounted by the “powers” that be. The second point is that the Powers that be would find it more difficult to discount parent lead/driven research, as the ECE environment is here to support the child and parent.

If you ever have the chance to present in differing forums overseas, I would recommend it as it allows you to reflect on what is important to you as a practitioner and what amazing things other parts of the world are undertaking for children.

I would like to take the time to thank the children, parents and educators within the Yorkshire region as well as the kindness shown from the people in Corby to this stranger from the outer edges of the world

David Spraggs
Teaching Services Manager
Tauranga Regional Free Kindergarten Association