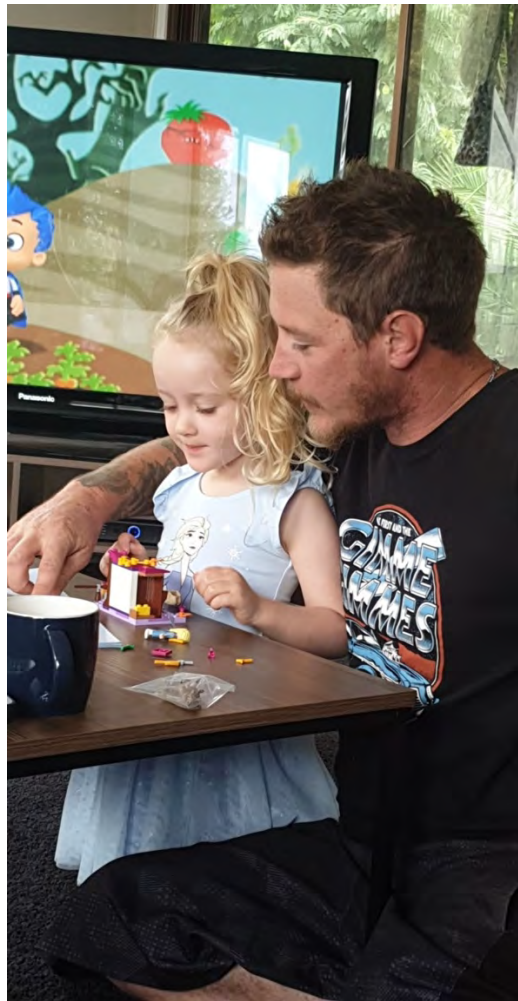


Early Education



Volume 66 Spring / Summer 2020

- Teacher Led Innovation Round 3
- Teacher Led Innovation Round 4
- Peer learning in ECE
- Privatisation in ECE
- Children, families in prison and ECE practice
- Reflexes and support early learning



Contents

Early Education Volume 66 Spring / Summer 2020

Editorial

Editorial Claire McLachlan	I
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TLIF 3 Collections

A leai se gagana, ua leai se aganu u, a leai se aganu u ona po lea o le nu u Janice Tauoma, Eneleata Tapusoa, Moasina Vili and Ashley Stanley	3
Nelson Central School: Raising student achievement by developing a whole school nurturing culture Tracy Watkins	11
Ngā reo e toru: Trissessment listening to whānau, tamariki and kaiako voices to make learning visible through assessment Sue Werry, Eric Hollis and Roberta Skeoch	13
Transition to school strategies: Strengthening our practice to support whānau and tamariki Kaye Hoffman and Hazel Lam Sam	21
Northcote Baptist Community Preschool: Digital fluency in the presence of an intentional teacher Elizabeth Lupton and Ann Hatherly	27

TLIF 4 Collections

Data, knowledge, action: A teacher led inquiry into data informed teaching in early childhood education Lynda Hunt, Tara McLaughlin, Sue Cherrington, Karyn Aspden and Claire McLachlan	31
Hokowhitu Kindergarten's journey: TLIF data, knowledge, action project Susan Hildred, Heidi Burden, Kylie Clayton, Julia Jones, Wilma Aldridge and Sue Cherrington	35
Kelvin Grove Kindergarten: Our TLIF journey Tammy Dodge, Leanne Walls, Angela Gibson, Penny Burton, and Jess Ballentyne, supported by Coralie Stanley and Tara McLaughlin	39
Riverdale Kindergarten's TLIF journey Coralie Stanley, Jules Greenfield, Nicki Walshe, Megan Philpott and Tara McLaughlin	43
TLIF Data, Knowledge, Action project: West End Kindergarten's inquiry journey Jo Ellery, Mel Kenzie, Debby Gough, Marie O Neil, Sue Cherrington and Lynda Hunt	47
The role of critical friends and organisational leadership in supporting teacher inquiries in ECE settings Sue Cherrington, Gaylyn Campbell, Roybn Vine-Adie and Tara McLaughlin	53

Peer reviewed articles

Children as teachers: How do we support children to be leaders amongst their peers?
Penny Smith 57

Challenging the old normal: Privatisation in Aotearoa's early childhood care and
education sector
Caitlin Neuwelt Kearns and Jenny Ritchie 65

Editor reviewed articles

Opening doors: Teachers supporting children with a loved one incarcerated
Charlotte Robertson 73

Reflexes and their relevance to Learning
Leanne Seniloli 79

Book reviews

Politics in the playground: The world of early childhood education in Aotearoa
New Zealand
Reviewer: Sue Stover 85

Working with two-year Old's: Developing reflective practice
Reviewer: Karyn Aspden 87

Contributors

Contributors..... 89



Volume 66 Spring / Summer 2020

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Contributions

Contributions of articles and photos are welcome from the early childhood community.

Early Education welcomes:

- Innovative practice papers with a maximum of 3,500 words, plus an abstract or professional summary of 150 words and up to five keywords.
- Research informed papers with a maximum of 3,500 words, plus an abstract or professional summary of 150 words, and up to five keywords.
- Think pieces with a maximum of 1500 words.
- Commentaries on management matters with a maximum of 1500 words.
- Book or resource reviews with a maximum of 1000 words.

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Nelson Central School

Raising student achievement by developing a whole school nurturing culture

Tracy Watkins

“Raising Student Achievement by Developing a Whole School Nurturing Culture” was a Teacher-Led Innovation Fund (TLIF) project led by Nelson Central School in collaboration with Auckland Point School, Auckland Point Kindergarten, Nelson Central Kindergarten and Grove Street Kindergarten. In mid 2016, a small ‘Nurture Class’, run by one teacher aide, was established at Nelson Central School to meet the social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBDs) seen in a small group of children at kindergartens and which continued when they entered school. Initial observations and quantitative data indicated that these behaviours were significantly improved during the 1.5 hours when the children were in the daily ‘Nurture Class’. This inquiry sought to examine whether the adaptation of the UK model of Nurture Groups (NurtureUK, 2020) and a shared understanding of early brain development and attachment in the early years could create an understanding of Nurture across the schools and kindergartens. Over an 18-month period we sought to answer three key questions:

- How effectively can Attachment Theory and the use of a small Nurture Class meet the needs of new entrant children exhibiting high social, emotional and behavioural needs and in doing so impact positively on their learning?
- How can we positively impact the learning of children by supporting the development of secure attachments between children and their whānau in the bicultural setting of Aotearoa New Zealand?
- How effectively can Attachment Theory facilitate a whole school nurturing approach and make a substantial difference to all learners?

The project took place over three phases, which are described next.

Phase 1

Lead teachers and teacher aides from the participating schools, kindergartens and associated RTLB received PLD to:

- increase their understanding, theory and implication of Nurture Groups,
- use the Boxall Profile tool to set targets for identified children and plan a Nurture Group session (see <https://www.nurtureuk.org/introducing-nurture/boxall-profile>)

Phase 2

All staff from the participating kindergartens and schools received professional learning and development (PLD) on “early trauma and the implication for brain development and behaviour” delivered by the educational psychologist assisting this inquiry as a critical friend. A second Nurture Class was set up at Auckland Point School. Boxall Profiles administered by kindergartens were shared with schools to support the transition for identified children. New Entrant teachers trained Year 2 staff in the use of the Boxall tool.

In Phase 1 and 2, pre- and post-data was collected from participants using questionnaires adapted from UK Nurture sources.

Phase 3

Sharing of information between kindergartens and schools continued. At Nelson Central School the educational psychologist facilitated a series of whānau workshops for caregivers whose children were in the Nurture Class and trained the Nurture Class Teacher Aide, with a vision that she would continue to run these workshops in the future.

Results of the inquiry

The outcomes for each of our key questions are outlined below.

Question 1: The effectiveness of the Nurture class approach

Pre- and post-data using the Boxall Profile showed significant social and emotional gains for all children in the Nurture Class. These were behaviours that would normally be developed during a child's pre-school years. The 2016–2017 cohort of children also decreased behaviours that inhibit or interfere with a child's engagement with school. This was not seen in the 2018 cohort. This suggests the part time Nurture Classes used in this inquiry were successful, but not to the extent seen in the full time Nurture Groups in the UK that were run by two adults. Qualitative data from the Nurture classes at both schools indicated that the six key principles of a Nurture Group were being implemented.

Question 2: Positive impacts on student learning

International research (Cooper et al., 2001; Cooper & Whitebread, 2007; Reynolds et al., 2009; Scott & Lee, 2009; Seth-Smith et al., 2010) suggests strong relationships with the caregiver can help facilitate a nurturing relationship between them and their child. This was a focus for the new entrant teachers and the Nurture Class teacher aide. Caregivers were kept informed of their child's work in the Nurture Groups through the SeeSaw app. Due to unforeseen circumstances the Nelson Central Whānau Group only ran for four sessions. However, in this short time feedback from caregivers was very positive.

Question 3: A whole school approach

Pre- and post-data from the whole schools and kindergarten PLD showed significant increases in participants' perceived competence in attachment awareness. Findings showed:

- 36.3 percent increase in perceived competence across all participants,
- 34.1 percent increase in perceived competence across school participants,
- 56.6 percent increase in perceived competence across kindergarten participants.

This shift in awareness was also confirmed through qualitative feedback from the participants.

Conclusion

Evidence from all school and kindergarten participants in this inquiry indicates an increase in nurturing awareness that is being transferred into

their practice. Partnerships between the schools and kindergartens have strengthened. A number of participants have requested for brain development PLD to be delivered annually or, at the least, for all new staff. The Boxall profile measures indicate an increase in skills required to access learning at school in the New Entrant children who were in the Nurture Class. Future actions coming out of this inquiry include the establishment of a Senior Nurture class at Nelson Central School and a possibility of funding to run full time Nurture Groups at the two participating schools. Kaiako have intentionally continued beyond the TLIF, to embed the use of collaborative video coaching in their practice to ensure strengthened learning outcomes for the tamariki in their care.

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