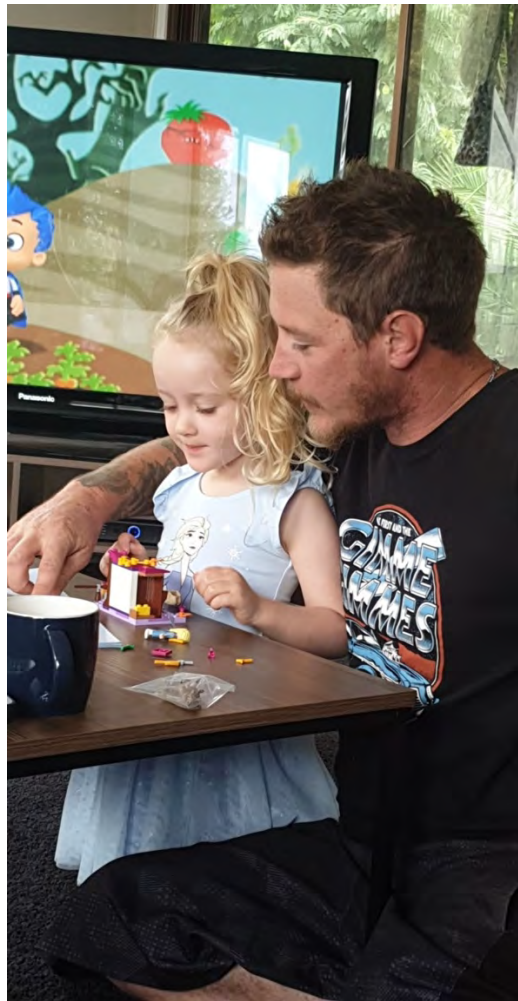


# Early Education



*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



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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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# Kelvin Grove Kindergarten

## Our TLIF journey

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**Tammy Dodge, Leanne Walls, Angela Gibson, Penny Burton, and Jess Ballentyne, supported by Coralie Stanley and Tara McLaughlin**

### Background and involvement in the project

At Kelvin Grove Kindergarten, we are licensed for 40 children and have a team of five teachers. The Kindergarten is located on the outskirts of Palmerston North City, within a residential high-growth area. Our inquiry question for the TLIF project was: *“to what extent are the tamariki demonstrating Kind Hearts concepts in their interactions with others?”* This question arose out of the work that we had been doing with embedding our Kind Hearts philosophy within the kindergarten. The kindergarten has had a long affiliation with Kind Hearts Manawatu and their support had been instrumental in the development of a Kind Hearts programme. The programme focuses on *maanikatanga*, identifying and acknowledging when children engage in kind behaviours and actions. This can include kindness to peers, others, and the wider community; taking initiative and looking after or helping others; and caring for the environment. Concepts of Kind Hearts align well with child concepts of social-emotional well-being. The community are behind the kindergarten and whānau regularly support this ethos through contributions to the hospital, baking and care packages for other whānau within our community. We interact with Kind Heart Manawatu, and regularly visit our local retirement village encouraging children to develop strong relationships with the residents there. We have been implementing this Kind Hearts philosophy for a five-year period and use this as a basis for our planning and philosophy. We were wanting to find out the impact this was having for our children and saw the opportunity that TLIF presented as the ideal way to look deeper into our Kind Hearts philosophy.

In 2018, we selected a group of children who would still be at Kindergarten in Term 4. We gathered consent from all families and prepared for our first inquiry cycle. We used three data system tools for our inquiry. This included two sections of the Child Profile, which focused on social emotional competencies and *Te Whāriki's* (Ministry of Education, 2017) learning outcomes. Our teacher researcher completed the CEOS live tablet observation for the focus child one day a week in each data gathering term. We also used GoPro footage which was edited to show useful clips for the five teachers to review together. Early in the project, we decided to re-gather data on the same children in our second cycle to provide data that may show growth in children's learning. Coinciding with the TLIF project, two members were attending Incredible Years and the team saw the re gathering as further opportunity to implement strategies and learning from this programme. In between the two data gathering cycles the teachers revisited the profile sheets to reflect on the growth of the nine individual focus children.

### Outcomes for children — One child's Journey

The children who were involved in the project all showed progression in their learning. We had three children who made significant progress and the data revealed substantial changes within their graphs and some wonderful video anecdotes which were shared with families. One child who demonstrated growth was selected to be part of the project because teachers had noticed he was spending significant time engaged in parallel imaginative role play. He had been noticed often observing others play but seemed to have reservations about becoming further involved. In the first inquiry cycle of data collection the child profile sheets, CEOS live table observation and GoPro footage mirrored what we had assumed. The two-hour observation highlighted blocks of time the child spent engaged in solitary imaginative play. The GoPro footage was particularly revealing. Teachers carefully listened to his language and

established his strengths and interests. Using all this information, a plan was created for the team to work with in between the two data collection cycles. This focused on the Te Whāriki Strand of Contribution, building the child's mana and learner identity. Using his interest in nature, native birds and caring for Papatuanuku (mother earth/the land) provided learning opportunities for the teachers to extend upon. During whānau group time, the Atua were linked into his learning giving him a foundation of knowledge about the living world. Two other peers become increasingly involved and the reciprocal interest provided the focus child a way to make connections and enter play with them. He often took a leadership role sharing his growing knowledge with confidence. While we were working on this individual plan, our data knowledge action plans (DKA) included the implementation of a problem-solving book (using puppets Mr Sprinkles and Mousey) and a matrix tracking the presentation of kind heart stickers (which was also part of our

DKA plans). This embedded the attributes of kindness, responsibility, and problem-solving skills for the child. He was able to use these skills throughout his learning about Papatuanuku.

When cycle 2 of the inquiry was completed, we compared the two sets of data. We noted several positive changes. He had engaged in many more kind acts within his second observation. This included 5 unconditionally kind acts when compared with 1 in his initial observation. Data also revealed increases in the amounts of time he had spent in collaborative play with his peers. This had risen from 58 percent in the first inquiry cycle to 92 percent in the second cycle. There was also a notable decrease in the time he had spent playing alone. In the first inquiry cycle, he was observed playing alone 33 percent. In the second cycle this had decreased to 7 percent. This was sitting alongside a huge increase in time spent with teacher and peers.

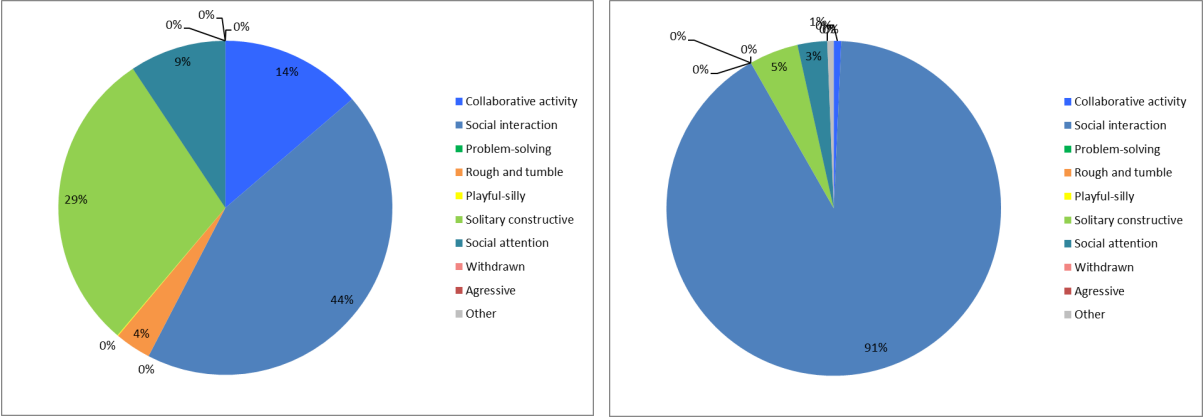


Figure 3. Social interaction  
May 2019

November 2019

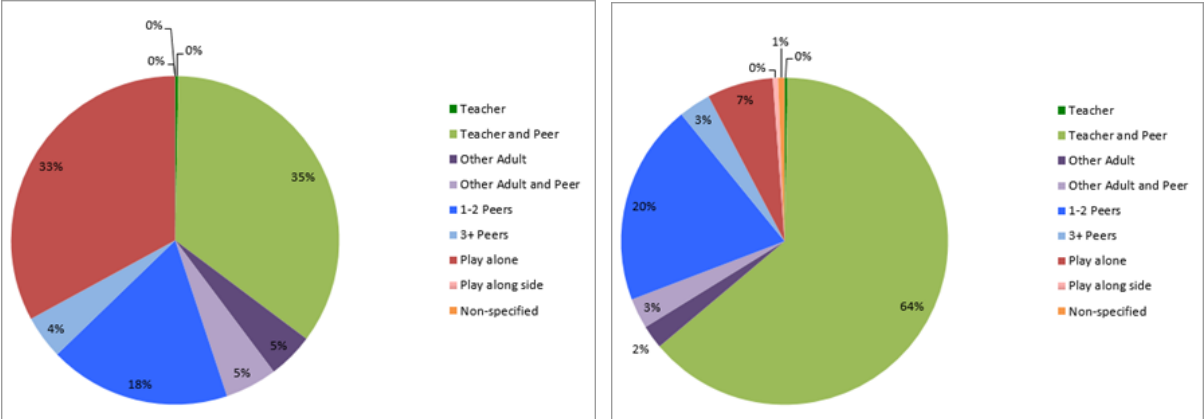


Figure 4. Time spent with others  
May 2019

November 2019

After completing the Child profile in cycle 2, the teachers had noticed progression in the observed child's learning. Reflections, observations and learning stories suggested that he was regularly engaging with a few friends, seemed settled, was working well within the kindergarten, and was taking on some leadership roles. The GoPro footage helped to capture some authentic examples of this and a strong interest of being a kaitiaki of the environment. This included building on his knowledge of nature. After analysis, the team met with the child's family to share the findings. The family were elated and wrote a reflection to include in the project, *"So a huge thanks to you for growing my little dude into a kindhearted caring problem solver he had now become"*.



**Figure 5.** Not good for the 'vironment

Still image taken from GoPro footage: Child was heard saying "not good for viroment [environment]" as he picks up the rubbish. He repeats "no good for vironment, now it's good for vironment, me chucking it in the bin" as he walks toward the building. He sees the teacher and says, "T know what me find, piece of rubbish down there" and he throws it in the bin.

Teacher says, "Man, you're responsible, good job".

This clip demonstrated the confidence that child had gained within the kindergarten environment and the level of responsibility and leadership he was now taking.

## Shifts in teacher practice

Being involved in the TLIF project has impacted on the team-teaching practice in many ways and on different levels. The focus on Kind Hearts prompted the team to define what this meant for us on a much deeper level. This has helped us to refine our practices and philosophy. We are now completing an internal evaluation to strengthen bi-cultural

component of our teaching practice. The inquiry highlighted how important the explicit teaching of problem-solving tools and strategies is to support kind heart actions. We developed problem solving tools to support our planning. We introduced puppets to explicitly teach key aspects and reinforce learning from previous days. The consistent use of the puppets prompted children to think about ways they could contribute to solving their own problems in social situations.

The most significant shift in practice was the team recognition that data added more depth, knowledge and focus to our planning and we were able to use the CEOS graphs, GoPro footage and Child Profiles in reviews, applications to the Ministry of Education, teacher reflection and team development. As the project progressed, teachers' confidence with data and data tools grew. After initial reservations, all team members are more confident to use formal observations and video as part of regular practice. By the second inquiry cycle, teachers were happy to wear the cameras as a tool for self-assessment of their teaching. This was a huge shift in thinking, as we soon courageously embraced the vulnerability this involved, using it as a pathway to reflect and improve our teaching practice.

Our inquiry strengthened how we work as a team and the professional conversations we had discussing the project, focused on planned intentions. We had wonderful moments when we all realised and celebrated the level of consistency we were operating at as a team. There were also moments of reflection when video footage challenged our philosophy and promoted deeper conversations that resulted in changes.

## What has been implemented as a result of involvement in TLIF

The team have changed our regular Assessment, Planning and Evaluation (APE) practices because of what we have learnt during the TLIF project. We regularly formally assess children's learning using a variety of observational methods. We systematically use the child profiles, to guide professional discussions and encourage teachers to think individually, then synthesise that information as a team. We analyse and compare data, which has led to improved outcomes that have been reflected in feedback from our whānau. We are hoping to integrate the GoPro into the planning cycle in 2021. We continue to refine our philosophy and our Kind Hearts focus. Linking to Purakau and Atua, the team are consulting with the community to ensure the continuity between home, kindergarten and



community remain strong. The teachers have been in communication with Kind Hearts Manawatu (Schools) to share our findings from the project. We have been excited about the development of *He Māpuna te Tamaiti* (Ministry of Education, 2019), which we will integrate into our Kind Hearts programme. As the effects of Covid 19 continue to impact on our country, we have been grateful for a robust programme centred around kindness to foster children and whānau well-being.

## Conclusion

Our team, tamariki, whānau and kindergarten involvement in research has resulted in very positive outcomes. At times, the project work was consuming and challenging. We had some team changes, and circumstances which meant that there was a significant increase in teacher workload. Through prioritizing the project, working closely with our Teacher Researcher and TLIF support networks, we were able to complete the inquiry and the two data collection cycles. Having a team culture that encourages resilience and challenge, embracing Kind Hearts on all levels supported the successes we had. The shifts in practice have had flow on effects, not only for the tamariki involved during the project but will also benefit children and whānau who will attend our kindergarten in the future. Teachers have gained confidence and knowledge to assess, plan and

evaluate children's learning using tools and data to inform the process. The knowledge we gained and shifts we have made to our practice have strengthened our Assessment Planning and Evaluation (APE) cycle. We have shifted our prior reliance on learning stories and now balance this with formal observations. We have kept this whakatauki close to our hearts as we have navigated the changes in our practice over the last two years:

*Ehara taku toa i te toa takitahi engari he toa takitini*

(My successes are not mine alone, they are ours—the greatest successes we will have are from working together).

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