

Early Education



Volume 68 Autumn 2023

- *Reo Rua Pukapuka Pikitia: Strategies for developing Te Reo Rangatira*
- *Talanoa, vā and picturebook pedagogy to support Pacific identities in a kindergarten setting*
- *Using social stories as an intentional teaching strategy*
- *Children's mental health in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic*
- *Exploring the current climate of mathematics in early childhood education*
- *A data-informed look at sustained shared thinking*





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Design and layout

Wilf Malcolm Institute of Educational Research
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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.

Contributions can be sent to the 2023 editors

Claire McLachlan:

cmclachlan@waikato.ac.nz

Karyn Aspden:

k.m.aspden@massey.ac.nz

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Editorial

*Kia tau te mauri e kōkiri nei
I ngā piki me ngā heke
Ko te rangimarie taku e rapu nei
Tihei mauri ora
Settle the mauri that stirs inside of me
Through the ups and downs
It is peace that I seek*

(Gifted by Mero Irihapeti 2021)

When we last came to you at the start of 2022 (Volume 67) we reflected on the challenges that Covid has brought to our world and the very significant implications for our tamariki, whānau and kaiako in ECE settings. We looked ahead with the hope of more peaceful and settled times. Although, as our opening karakia expresses, we acknowledge that it continues to be a time of ups and down, personally, professionally and politically. Many are uncertain about the future and wondering what the days ahead will bring with the continuing health situation, significant weather events and an election on the horizon. And yet day by day our core work continues as we support the learning journey of our tamariki, walking alongside our families, whānau and ECE communities.

In Aotearoa New Zealand we are guided each day by the taonga that is Te Whāriki (Ministry of Education, 2017), our foundational curriculum document that informs our relationships, our ways of being and our local priorities and aspirations. Most of the time we think of the strands of Te Whāriki - Mana Atua, Mana Whenua, Mana Tangata, Mana Reo and Mana Aotūroa - as they relate to tamariki. But there is an important message when we reflect on what these strands mean for us as educators, kaiako, caregivers and adults in ECE spaces

and the ways we uphold our own mana. We must attend to our own well-being, and ensure our health and well-being are protected. It is important to feel that we have a place, and are valued in our teaching teams, as well as to know the positive contribution that we make through our relationships and interactions. Communication and creativity are at the heart of ECE teaching, including being heard and expressing ourselves in positive, safe, encouraging and culturally sustaining ways. And lastly, even as teachers and adults, it is important that there are places for continued exploration and ako moments so that we grow personally and professionally, through having fun, co-constructing, problem-solving, and embracing opportunities to try new things with and alongside our colleagues, tamariki and whānau. Te Whāriki reminds us that one of our responsibilities as kaiako is as role models, so we hope this brief reflection on the strands through an adult lens might encourage you to pause and reflect on your own teaching journey.

The articles in this current issue take us on a varied journey, exploring a range of diverse yet important topics in early childhood education. There is quite the smorgasbord of ideas, topics and provocations as we have come to appreciate in each issue of Early Education. To begin, Jacqui Brouwer and Nicola Daly introduce us to Reo Rua Pukapuka Pikitia and describe their research project which fostered whānau drawing on their community cultural wealth to create strategies for developing Te Reo Rangatira and early literacy. Over a period of four weeks, Jacqui and Nicola engaged with whānau in the kindergarten setting to introduce dual language picture books, promoting ways for whānau to effectively and

meaningfully bring Reo Rangatira into their homes to support language learning and to foster rich opportunities for sustaining language. Findings affirmed the powerful potential of picture books for families/whānau to support their tamariki in the acquisition of one of Aotearoa's official languages, in support of the bicultural commitment of Te Whāriki, the ECE curriculum.

As a wonderful partner piece, Angela Fuimaono, Nicola Daly and Janette Kelly-Ware then remind us that in a socially just world children must see themselves reflected in the picture books that we present and share in our early childhood settings and homes. The analogy they draw of whether picture books serve as a mirror in which children are able to see themselves, their culture, beliefs and language reflected, or merely a window into other lives is a powerful point of reflection. Using a Talanoa-vā approach the authors draw a series of vignettes that show the ways teachers and children responded to Pacific picture books. The authors highlight the potential to weave a local curriculum that truly draws on families' funds of knowledge in ways that are culturally sustaining, validating and responsive, allowing children to explore their own culture as well as their peers'.

There is a growing understanding of the importance of social-emotional competence for young children, and the important role of the teacher to support learning and to foster the social and emotional skills that support well-being and resilience. Vicki Gifkins and Tara McLaughlin offer both professional and personal insight in introducing Social Stories as an intentional teaching strategy for supporting learners in this space. Perhaps not well known in New Zealand, Social Stories are stories or narratives, often in the form of a short personalised illustrated book that supports young children to understand specific social concepts, skills, or ways of responding in given situations. Social stories were initially used with children with autism or learning disabilities. The authors share how such stories can be of benefit to all children and can be meaningfully used as a tool in ECE services.

Continuing this emphasis on well-being, Barbara Scanlan and Galina Stebletsova offer a thoughtful piece about the impact of COVID-19 on families, whānau and children in Aotearoa New Zealand. Recognising the significant and likely ongoing implications of lockdown and isolation periods, Barbara and Galina encourage kaiako to adopt a stronger focus on children's mental health as well as enhanced support systems for families and whānau. They draw ties to Te Whāriki and He Māpuna te Tamaiti in affirming the need for careful social-emotional support during this time and the important role teachers can play.

We then take a visit to the challenges and potential for fostering mathematics in early childhood education, and the importance of ongoing professional learning and development in this space. Karen Mackay and Linda Clarke offer valuable insights into strengthening enjoyment of, and engagement with, mathematics in early childhood education, asserting that early childhood is an optimal time for children to develop positive mindsets towards mathematics that will set the scene for lifelong learning. The authors offer some great examples of ways in which assessment and pedagogy can be strengthened to make mathematics more visible and given greater priority in our ECE settings.

This issue also gives us the opportunity to read more stories from our recent collection of Teaching and Learning Research Initiative (TLRI) projects. In this issue kaiako from Linton Kindergarten and Makino Kindergarten, with Tara McLaughlin, Sue Cherrington, Lynda Hunt, Vicki Gifkins, Karyn Aspden and Claire McLaughlin, share their research journey in exploring how sustained shared thinking can promote children's learning and progress. These descriptive case stories illustrate the many positive outcomes experienced by tamariki, whānau, and kaiako as a result of meaningful and extended interactions between kaiako and children, as well as the ways in which an observation-based, data-informed approach was significant for the teachers involved. This article offers new insights into the potential of sustained shared thinking in

ECE settings as well as ways in which different data sources can inform teacher practice and help us better understand children's learning and progress.

Fannie Johansson, Anna Barabanova and Sara Hansson offer interesting insight into the nature of early childhood around the world. COVID-19 restrictions have made international conferences much more difficult to navigate. In response the authors participated in a three-week online international discussion, bringing together student teachers from Bulgaria, Finland, Germany, Japan, Poland, Sweden and Spain as a way of building global understanding and connection in sustainable ways. We suspect that such approaches will only grow, and this "letter" shows the information sharing that can happen productively online. Bringing together student teachers the authors asked the overarching question: 'how does early childhood education (preschool) work in your country?' This article opens an opportunity for student teachers in Aotearoa NZ to contribute to the ongoing conversation.

To close the issue we invited Tessa Putze, an ECE teacher and Masters student, to share her thoughts as a practitioner engaging with the wonderful 2nd edition of *Te aotūroa tātaki: Inclusive early childhood education - Perspectives on inclusion, social justice, and equity from Aotearoa New Zealand*, edited by Alex Gunn, Nicola Surtees, Diane Gordon-Burns and Kerry Purdue (2020). Tessa reminds us how important it is to reflect on the nature of inclusion in early childhood education, and the power of hearing the narrative of different voices as they experience both inclusion and exclusion in early childhood education. Tessa recommends this book as a resource to strengthen our professional commitment to inclusion and ongoing advocacy for all tamariki and whānau.

We trust that you will enjoy the topics on offer in this issue and find different points of insight. It is exciting to see the continued emergence of research committed to enhancing the experiences of all learners in our ECE

settings, in localised, responsive and culturally sustaining ways. There is a strong commitment to inclusion and diversity that weaves through each of these pieces that reflects the heart of ECE to uphold the mana of each child and their whānau and to ensure their experiences in ECE are positive, supportive and empowering for lifelong learning.

Arohanui,

Karyn and Claire.

Editors

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