

Editorial

Whakapūpūtia mai ō mānuka kia kore ai e whati

Cluster the branches of the mānuka so they will not break

This whakataukī speaks of the importance of unity for strength (Mead & Grove, 2001). Thinking of the past, current and future issues of EEJ, we believe this whakataukī sits well with the shared vision and collaboration of our editorial teams past and present, as well as our supporters and the early education communities who make up the journal's authorship and readership. Extending to the wider early education sector, including teachers, staff, tamariki, whānau and communities, this whakataukī offers us an opportunity to reflect on the strength we find in our unity and support for each other.

2024 has been a busy and exciting year for the Early Education Journal (EEJ) and we are delighted to crown the year with our new look volume. Over the past year EEJ has transitioned from its previous home at the University of Waikato to Massey University, where it will continue to be published under the auspices of the Early Years Research Lab in the Institute of Education. We are very grateful to WMIER for hosting the journal at Waikato since 2018, and delighted that Massey University Institute of Education will support the continued contribution of this practitioner journal to the early childhood sector in Aotearoa.

Many thanks to the marvellous Professor Claire McLachlan, Pro Vice Chancellor, Education at the University of Waikato who carried the vision of the journal for many of the past years, continuing a long legacy of dedicated editors with a passion for early childhood education in Aotearoa New Zealand. With Claire's new appointment, Dr Karyn Aspden, the previous co-editor, now takes the reins and we warmly welcome Dr Linda Clarke, from Massey University, into the new co-editor role, and Estelle Pretorius as Production Editor. A transition of this kind is not possible without the combined efforts of a dedicated team and unmeasurable thanks are offered to colleagues at both Massey and Waikato, especially Associate Professor Tara McLaughlin, who has driven the redesign and development work over the past year.

From its earliest days, the journal was created to be a welcome space for teachers, emerging researchers and postgraduate students to share their research and their practice and begin their publishing journey. The journal will continue to offer both formal

peer-reviewed articles, along with the option for editor review, which offers more guided supports for the writing and publication process. Please encourage those you work with to contribute to the journal, which is very accessible to the early childhood sector. Many teachers have told us that finding information once they finish studying is really hard and that EEJ has played a valuable part in providing useful resources to support their professional roles, along with access to new innovations and research in the sector. While our purpose and commitment remain the same, this volume offers a new design and layout, to help make the online version even more accessible to our audience, including on mobile devices. We have also updated recent issues and made our historical archive accessible.

The 2024 volume offers a small feast of topics to be explored. The articles offer a fascinating look at some of the latest thinking in early childhood education. From teaching empathy to honouring *Te Tiriti o Waitangi*, these authors encourage us to consider our role in supporting tamariki to grow into empathetic, curious, and confident people. Collectively, these studies advocate for a holistic, culturally sustaining, research-informed and inquiry-driven approach to early childhood education. They highlight the importance of supporting teachers through reflective practice, professional development and engagement with community and place to address informed and responsive teaching practice in localised contexts. These insights provide a roadmap for shaping future pedagogical practices, both for experienced teachers and those beginning their professional journey in initial teacher education.

- Sarah Probine and colleagues share their research exploring how early childhood teaching teams have used inquiry-based learning to integrate local curriculum and inquiries, with influences such as Reggio Emilia. Rather than directly “importing” the influences of Reggio Emilia, in their inquiries the early learning communities investigated their local stories, taonga and places, leading to a prioritisation of bi-cultural practice development.
- In line with honouring *Te Tiriti o Waitangi*, Christine Keepa reminds us that the integration of te reo Māori and tikanga in early childhood settings remains essential. Her research underscores the need for strong leadership, professional development, and collaborative efforts to ensure meaningful incorporation of Māori language and culture within our education settings.
- Mehri Irajzad's exploration of Middle Eastern parents' involvement in early education services in New Zealand reveals the critical role of effective

communication between teachers and families. Barriers such as unfamiliarity with the education system and, most significantly, a lack of effective communication between teachers and parents hindered families' deeper involvement. These findings offer thought-provoking and valuable insights for early childhood teachers.

- Mackay and colleagues report on a Teacher-Led Innovation Fund project that demonstrated the effectiveness of intentional teaching strategies in promoting children's social-emotional competence. They found that teacher inquiry involving the use of reflective data tools enabled teachers to enhance their confidence and foster social-emotional learning.
- Sarah Mastrangelo and colleagues' position paper argues for embedding self-regulation practices into early childhood education to nurture empathy through natural interactions, rather than teaching self-regulation as a set of skills. The paper emphasises the potential of inquiry-driven learning to support reciprocal, empathetic relationships. The authors share multiple vignettes to illustrate the connections between empathy and self-regulation, as observed during trips to Reggio Emilia, Italy.
- Sarah Probine and colleagues describe the implementation of Key Teaching Tasks to improve student teachers' ability to link theory to practice and foster deeper pedagogical learning during practicum. The authors aim to inspire broader dialogue among students, teachers, and initial teacher education providers to enhance the integration of Key teaching Tasks and improve practicum experiences and outcomes.
- Christine Bailey, from Ferndale Kindergarten, shares the story of the Manaaki Project, in which school children mentored their kindergarten buddies, supporting transitions to school, fostering positive outcomes and developing a strong sense of community. Through Christine's article we hear from the kaiako, tamariki and parents involved in the Manaaki Project.
- Finally, we have two book reviews. Zhenlin Wang has reviewed *The Psychology of Starting School: An Evidence-Based Guide for Parents and Teachers*. Jessica Smith has reviewed *Early Childhood in the Anglosphere: Systemic Failings and Transformative Possibilities*. Having read these reviews, the EEJ editorial team are now very keen to read the books!

In 2025, we are excited to announce a mid-year special issue on the topic of teacher education and professional practice. We welcome submissions for this special issue (as well as submissions for other topics to be published in the Online First space). We hope you will encourage your ECE team, postgraduate students or associate teacher network to contribute to the journal. The journal is a supportive space for all, including student–teacher research and authorship.

We hope you enjoy the volume.

Ngā mihi nui,

Dr Karyn Aspden and the EEJ Team.

References

Mead, H. M., & Grove, N. (2001). *Ngā pēpeha a ngā tīpuna*. Victoria University Press.