



On the Monday morning of the week we went into lockdown we were talking with some parents and saying how unlikely it would be that we would close-after all at the stage the direction we had been given by the Ministry of Education was that we would only be closing the Kindergarten if we had a case of Covid here, and that seemed pretty unlikely as no one in our community had just returned from over seas. That afternoon we found out that we would be going into lockdown midnight on the coming Wednesday, just a couple of days away! Big surprise! And a little bit shocking! We made a very conscious decision that we wanted to support our families and whānau as fully as we possibly could over the coming weeks in this new situation. We decided that we would makes some short movies of us reading stories, playing games and singing songs to post on our online platform StoryPark, and that we would be responsive as we always are to any posts parents put up. We also took the list of parents phone numbers and created three groups of numbers that we rotated so each family got a call from a teacher once a week for a catch up chat with them and the children. We had plenty of work we planned on doing along with this while working from home, it was a great opportunity to catch up on our learning story writing and other documentation, and prep for our upcoming ERO review. We also had group chats as a team on messenger and Zoom meetings.

Going into level four lockdown wasn't much of a hardship for me I have to say. Firstly I was still being paid, full salary like the rest of permanent teachers in Nz. I live alone and although I am an off the scale extrovert I actually love solitude and am very comfortable in my own company. I also live on two hundred and forty acres of rolling countryside and native bush in a sunny little studio I have rented for the

last eighteen years. Easy! I think it was during our first Zoom meeting a few days into level four lockdown that I realised life was quite different for the two fabulous teachers I work with and not nearly as easy peasy as my lot was. They have a lot more on their plates with all the joys and challenges that come with being a wife and a mother and a teacher working from home. We talked about some of the elements of this mix during that zoom meeting. I asked Jo and Clare if they would consider sharing their experiences of lockdown in a post with our parents and whānau community on StoryPark because I thought if the teachers were experiencing both joys and the struggles through covid surely our parents would be going through their own journeys and it would be very supportive to hear Clare and Jo's stories. Jo and Clare both posted their reflections of their experiences on Storypark and I think they were brave and courageous and shared from their hearts. I know that the parents really appreciated this from the written and verbal feedback we have been given. I also shared about my life at home on the farm, through a series of Diary posts and it was lovely to connect with the children and parents through these and the feedback was very positive.

Parents and Whānau also shared so much. We loved all the posts, photos, stories and videos of all the fabulous things families were doing together, we got to home visit children virtually, and sometimes our phone calls were face time calls which added another level of intimacy and connection.

I really feel that the lockdown down experience has afforded a deepening of relationship with our parents and Whānau. I think the sharing of our reflections and the communication we had through StoryPark and on the phone with our families has added another layer of richness and connection. Isn't it ironic that isolation and separation has actually helped bring us closer!

Julie Killick  
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