

From the team at ELP: Welcome to our newsletter!

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Te Whāriki and Te Whāriki discussion group

There are a few things that happen in our lives that remain forever after imprinted on our brains. The first time I browsed through a particular yellow book that arrived in the mail is like that for me and I would guess for so many of us in early childhood. That first day as I started casually reading Te Whāriki I was suddenly transfixed to the spot. I just couldn't believe the way learning and teaching was being described. I had never heard of such Principles before, particularly ones that captured for me the essence of what I thought wise teaching and learning could be. And so, while I thought that finally 'someone' was describing the image I had of early childhood, it is only much later that I realise that I couldn't have been more mistaken.

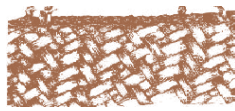
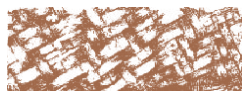


Understanding Te Whāriki has been a journey like no other. So far ahead of its time, it was at first difficult to figure out because it was framed in sociocultural theory and at that time many of us had no idea that such a frame existed. In our centres we tried to 'do' Te Whāriki Strands and for a term or so Belonging or Wellbeing would have been the focus as we stutteringly looked narrowly through those lenses. We seemingly jumped over the Principles into the Strands and dissected these, relegating the Principles to the back seat. Otherwise it's hard to understand why we continued to interrupt children's focus through fragmented programming and low stakes table-top activities. So we struggled and it was really not until Learning Stories (Margaret Carr, 2001) that we had a practical way of expressing Te Whāriki Principles. ...Over time, through conversations with teachers everywhere and supported by Kei Tua o te Pae, we realised that one way to explore these ideas further was to set them inside a narrative context and so provide a more physical form to take theory into practice. When we did this, our learning communities became energised. Thoughtfully written Learning Stories enabled us to support wise practice, because an analysis of learning was drawn directly from experience. Learning Stories engaged us in a dialogue around learning and prompted us to seek a range of possibilities for action.

Te Whāriki was innovative and as our understanding unfolded we could see children in a new light: as strong powerful learners, setting goals and working hard to achieve them. Our identity of ourselves as teachers changed too. We set about the task of growing communities of practice, adults and children researching together, investigating possibilities and building working theories about our world. Te Whāriki has a legacy in this country that has fundamentally changed the face of early childhood education and we owe much to its writers and the mentors we have known along the way, for none of us have made this journey alone.

In our travels, we have become increasingly aware of how enormously valued Te Whāriki is, not only in NZ but throughout the world. As a team we have discussed the notion of nationwide Te Whāriki discussion groups and decided to start the process in the

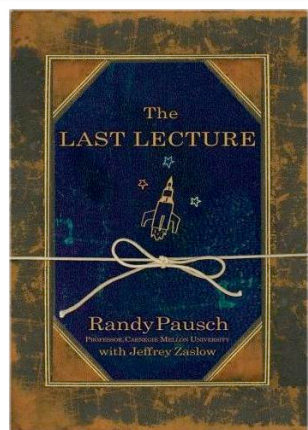




communities we live in and invite any interested teachers to share their thoughts around the four principles of Te Whāriki as a starting point. It will be an opportunity to highlight the possibilities around building a Te Whāriki community of practice, networking across the diversity that is such a feature of ECE in Aotearoa, New Zealand. An opportunity for us all to learn together as we listen to a multiplicity of ideas and exemplars.

There are many diversions impacting on teaching and learning at the moment and this Roopu will bring Te Whāriki to the fore. This will be a fabulous opportunity to foreground Te Whāriki as a living document and discuss what it means to us here in our context. How do we share and cherish its wisdom - discussing and sharing about the teaching and learning we do everyday? We were thinking that this kind of discussion group could happen once a term; a different centre offering to host subsequent meetings. Given how pressured the professional development budget is in this economic climate a wider place to share ideas across our sector through a 'no cost involved opportunity' may be timely. For more information, please contact [Annika Philipp](#).

Lorraine Sands



I have been reading...

The LAST LECTURE by Randy Pausch with Jeffrey Zaslow

Many of you will be familiar with Randy's **The Last Lecture** which featured on [YouTube](#) and television last year. University Professors at Carnegie Mellon University have the chance to give their Last Lecture. It is a time for them to consider and share with others what matters most to them knowing they possibly have the time to live it all out. Randy knew his Last Lecture was his last, he now had terminal pancreatic cancer. As I watched I thought about his courage and bravery with which he faced the end of his life as he talked about cancer, death and dying. His *"engineering problem...and now doing the best you can with limited resources."* All the while focussing on life and living, and sharing his wisdom with us. However, the lecture is a ruse. He reminds us that *"it was for my kids,"* He was *"trying to put myself in a bottle that would one day wash up on the beach for my children"* (p.x).

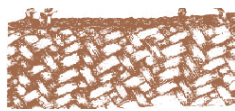
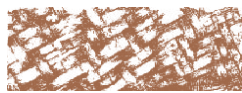
The Last Lecture is now a delightful little book in which Randy tells us many humorous and inspirational stories. He offers *"thanks to my parents who allowed me to dream, and with hopes for the dreams my children will have"*.

The stories all provide beautiful prompts for reflection about my own life. One in particular, called A Skill Set Called Leadership (p.43, 44), tells us how his role model James T Kirk of Star Trek helped him be a better husband, teacher and colleague. He reports that Kirk was *"the distilled essence of the dynamic manager, a guy who knew how to delegate, had the passion to inspire, and looked good in what he wore to work. He never professed to have skills greater than his subordinates. He acknowledged that they knew what they were doing in their domains. But he established the vision, the tone."* Randy's story and wisdom spoke to me of the skills we all bring to our work, but more so, the skills necessary to sharing leadership and how none of us have skills greater than the other just that what we contribute to our teams is complimentary and necessary to the function of the team or group.

I enjoyed this book and continue to 'dip' into it for pleasure and the reflective prompts and inspiration Randy provides. I recommend taking time to read it aloud and share it with teachers, parents and your family. Our stories have the power to transform lives. Sharing them is important. Randy's story will continue to transform.

Kathryn Delany

"We cannot change the cards we are dealt, just how we play the hand." Randy Pausch



ELP Lecture Series Review: Prof Margaret Carr Learning Pathways and Learning Journeys in the Early Years: Possible Learner Selves

Rating: 5/5 stars ★★★★★

Super learners and super learner heroes were introduced as the context for the examples Margaret showed. Margaret discussed her own learning heroes who exemplified *resilience, relationships and imagination* and encouraged us to think of [super learning heroes](#) and to reflect on who our own learning heroes were. Some teachers reflected that husband's, grandmothers and children fitted their criteria for a super learning hero. As teachers we are exploring what kinds of possible learner selves we are; children also explore this important question around identity. Carol Dweck believes that the possible selves that are hoped for can be grown, and that teachers play a vital role here.

Margaret reminded us how clearly the new primary curriculum links with Te Whāriki, and how the key competencies follow on from the Principles in Te Whāriki. Recent research in New Zealand - in which Margaret has participated - shows how children are building a sense of what it is to be a learner. Examples from both the Primary and Early Childhood sector showed the importance of documentation in giving specific useful feedback for children to revisit. Learning Stories that use learning

language and acknowledge the uncertainty and struggle involved in learning can help build in children a sense of themselves as powerful learners.

Margaret finished the evening with some possible challenges. *"Try something new and don't be scared"* and *"recognise and strengthen the hoped-for inspirations and possible selves and be inspired by those who have gone before us."*

As always Margaret is an inspiration and definitely a super learning hero in a category of her own.

Some reflective questions:
Who are some of your learning heroes? Imaginary? Famous?
Family and people you know?

In what ways are children trying and practicing different identities (possible selves) in your centre?

Alison
Brierley



Who Is... Julie Killick?

Welcome to the "Meet the ELP team" section of the newsletter! I've been Julie Killick for the last 49 years, and it's been a very entertaining experience! I came across a photo of me with my mother when I was about 23, the other day. Isn't it amazing how we change!!! How we change and how we stay the same, sort of miraculous really!

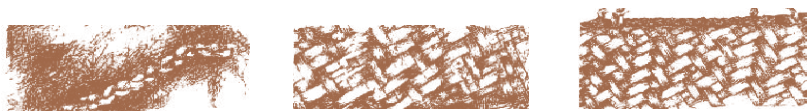
I enjoyed Margaret Carr's lecture the other night. She was talking about possible selves, learning dispositions, and building children's identity as a learner. I like the idea of possible selves, it is playful and offers experimentation. Who can I be in this moment? And who I can be this moment is influenced by where I am, and who I'm with. A few years ago I heard Carlina Rinaldi speak and she said something along the lines of "I can be me because you allow me to." I thought this was a bit over the top at the time, but the more I thought about it the more I appreciated the truth of it. We are creatures in context, and in a constant state of co-creation with each other. Sure I have an identity, as do you, but there is quite a lot of play in the wheel as we drive down the road together! It is such a privilege to be involved in this business of teaching and learning, isn't it?!

For the past 5 years I have worked on the Educational Leadership Project. Prior to that I have spent most of my career as a kindergarten teacher with 7 years working as a tutor introducing people to working with young children on a government funded scheme for people who were unemployed. I have been in early childhood since the early eighties and am so amazed at how the sector has developed over the years - especially with Te Whāriki and the introduction of Learning Stories.

I love the world of early childhood, and feel so privileged to be able to share in the wonderful adventure of children's lives. Joining ELP has given me the opportunity to work with a broad variety of teaching teams and this has been a fantastic experience. We are all so unique!

This year I am developing some work called "Growing Great Teams" and it's great seeing what is coming out of that. I have also run a new workshop around cultivating powerful teacher presence, and I find myself thinking about this a lot. I believe being able to really be in the present and be authentic in our relationships with children (and others) is a transforming life experience.





Comic Life

If you read my [blog](#) entry earlier this year you will know I am very keen on the programme Comic Life. Many of the teams I have been supporting have spent time exploring this programme.

Comic Life can be used on either Mac or PC and one of the reasons it is so popular is that it is simple to format and to find and insert your photos.

One of the downsides I see is that if you only use the templates provided within the programme it might limit the Learning Story you write. The Learning Story ends up fitting the template rather than using the template to fit your Learning Story. One of the ways around this is to design your own document and drag the photo panels across to your page or use a template and delete most of the photo boxes.

Comic Life is easy for children to use and if you are

confident in the use of Comic Life then you will be able to support children in their use of the programme.

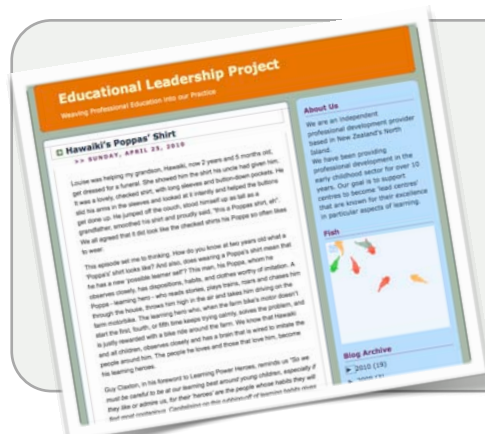
Children I have worked with are very keen on the style aspect and spend time working on and experimenting with the options, particularly for the title or lettering. A child may have been using the digital camera to document their work, Comic Life could then be used as the programme to publish these photos. You might type in the conversation the child had around the photos they have taken. Alongside the document the child publishes, would be a Learning Story from you to share the learning that happened for the child.

Innes Kennard has a license to sell Comic Life to schools and early childhood centres for \$4.00 per machine (these are for centre machines only, not for individual teachers). Innes' email is innesk@werc.ac.nz

There is also a [license document](#) on our website.

I have also developed an [instruction sheet](#) to assist you with Comic Life.

Jo Colbert



Did you know that ELP has a fabulous Blogsite open, current and up to date. I love reading the stories. I opened it just yesterday and there was the latest entry from Kathryn, '[Hawaiki's Poppa's Short](#)'. A beautifully written and deeply reflective story about her mokopuna, Hawaiki. By linking his statement into some of her recent thinking, we are suddenly transported into the world of possible selves and super heroes. The next entry is highly likely to be the first of a series of interesting and fun ways to increase the quality of the photos you take in trying out new techniques. So check it out when you take one of those recommended breaks as you slave over the computer. Have a moment of relaxation and give us your feedback through leaving a comment under our posts.

Upcoming Events

01.05.2010

Big Day Out with ELP, Whakatane

08.05.2010

Inspiration Day Napier

08.05.2010

Inspiration Day Wellington

11.05.2010

Lecture Series Auckland
Wendy Lee: Sustainable Leadership

13.05.2010

Seminar Series Blenheim

18.05.2010

Lecture Series Hamilton
Wendy Lee: Sustainable Leadership

22.05.2010

Inspiration Day Queenstown

22.05.2010

Inspiration Day Christchurch

08.06.2010

Lecture Series Auckland
Karen Ramsey - Stories of Interest:
Beyond the notion of planning

16.06.2010

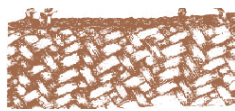
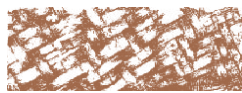
Lecture Series Hamilton
Carol Hartley - Transition to school

13.07.2010

Lecture Series Auckland
Carol Hartley - Transition to school

20.07.2010

Lecture Series Hamilton
Karen Ramsey - Stories of Interest:
Beyond the notion of planning



ELP abroad - as-salam alaykum Dubai, United Arab Emirates

Four years ago, four of us from ELP (Jo Colbert, Julie Killick, Karen Ramsey and I) were on our way to Iceland for an EECERA conference and also to run a conference at Pen Green in England. We stopped in Dubai and facilitated professional development for the teachers at the Yellow Brick Road and the Emerald City Nurseries. Returning to Dubai last month to work with the 'Beautiful Minds' Centres was a wonderful opportunity for me to reconnect with the teachers I had met on that earlier professional development opportunity. It was also a time to meet a significant new group of teachers as they work towards opening two new centres in Dubai. Teachers in these settings come from five different continents and bring a fabulous richness to life in Dubai.

The main focus for the professional development that I provided was on Learning Stories. Teachers all over the world are so keen to engage with the ideas and the possibilities that the Learning Story philosophy of assessment provides. I also spent some time discussing and debating issues around the child as an artist! This was the first time that the teachers had been provided with a week-long professional development opportunity. There is no doubt in my mind that the teachers appreciated and valued this opportunity. Here are a few photos to give you a sense of the experience of this week.

Wendy Lee



The physical environment is very different from centres in NZ.



Wendy with teachers from the 'Beautiful Minds' Centres



PD in action: teachers and managers enjoying a drumming and a Martial Arts session.

