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Same, Same but Different - Finding the Edge for Change Reflections from a Holiday Break

In September, while holidaying with my daughter's family, I found myself wandering through the sprawling Russian Market in the busy streets of Phnom Penh in Cambodia. Dozen's of pleasant, smiling stallholders advised me to buy their products neatly piled on tables in small booths. As I wandered the labyrinth of narrow alleyways my mind began to sink into a mesmerised state as I thought, 'There is so much the same just how does one choose?' Tables were piled high with T-shirts with slogans I had seen before; small dresses for children swung from coat hangers. Larger, beautifully designed pants, tops, dresses and clothing lined the back walls. Gorgeous shawls and rugs were stacked on the shelves. I walked by smiling and shaking my head in an effort not to engage the sellers. My grandsons had tutored me in the art of surviving the market with my finances intact! Their words rang in my ears, "Don't look them in the eyes unless you want to buy." In other words, 'stay indifferent, don't engage' was the advice I had been given. Suddenly, I spotted something different. It was a t-shirt, a simple grey t-shirt with the words '**same, same but different**' inscribed tastefully across the front. Yes, this was the T-shirt I was looking for. I had moved from passive cognition to action, my mind had woken up and I was ready to buy.

I soon found out that this saying was at times the humorous catch phrase in most South East Asian countries. This is the subtle plea of all shop keepers, 'Yes, it is the same but mine is slightly different - my product has the edge on others'.

I conducted a brief Google search and found reference to a movie directed by Detlev Buck 'Same Same but Different' based on an autobiographical story written by Benjamin Prüfer (2006). A true love story from Cambodia of a young German student falling in love with Sreykeo a bargirl in Phnom Penh. What makes one love story different to another? Buck writes that as soon as he read the manuscript - he knew the moment had come at last to make the love story movie he had always longed to make (you can read more about the movie here: <http://samesame-themovie.com/content>).

I believe for early childhood teachers 'finding the edge' that instigates change is a significant indicator of wise and skillful teaching. Gladwell (2001) in 'The Tipping Point' discusses amongst many things, epidemics that bring rapid change suddenly. He explains that a small change can make a huge difference and illustrates the claim by using the analogy of one small child coming to kindergarten with the measles virus resulting in large groups rapidly contracting the disease (to find out more about Malcolm Gladwell's The Tipping Point and his other books, go to <http://gladwell.com>).

"The tipping point is that magic moment when an idea, trend or social behaviour crosses a threshold, tips and spreads like wildfire." (<http://gladwell.com/tippingpoint/guide/index.html>)

Now I would like to take you to another recent holiday setting this time at Waikanae beach (Kapiti Coast) with my son's family. We stayed in a holiday home for a week and every day we went to the beach, often twice or three times. Waikanae beach lies in the shadow of Kapiti Island. The coast is exposed to the Tasman Sea and often the proximity of the island creates wild and unpredictable ocean rips and currents. On the third day my daughter-in-law and I were standing watching the beach and she said, "Everyday the beach has been different."

I thought about that; we could have said everyday the beach is the same; the same wet sand, the same dry sand, the



Weaving Professional Education into our Practice

salty ocean, the waves, Kapiti Island, the wind, the dunes, the marram grass, the driftwood, the shells, the seaweed. But she was right, everyday the beach was different. Everyday a small 'epidemic' happened, a small change made a huge difference.

One day the driftwood was in lines along the beach, the next morning the beach was clear and the driftwood had been scattered along the base of the dunes. Why was it that on Tuesday morning there were 17 dead large paddle crabs and two fish lying in the line of driftwood? Where did the foreign looking piles of golden brown kelp come from that were draped in piles around the huge stumps? Everyday it was as though the beach was littered with questions begging to be answered.

On Wednesday, 5-year-old Elise surfed the waves in delight on her boogie board with her dad. On Saturday, she was chasing wild surf out as the waves retreated and then on their return, rapidly and accurately estimating the speed and height of the waves and running for her life to prevent being knocked off her feet. Same waves, same water, same sand but different. An environment where the sameness established the familiar and the difference added the complexities that puzzlement and curiosity and figuring out result in. The child's natural response to change that connects with their thinking is driven by the joy, awe and wonderment they experience as they immerse themselves in the challenge. The 'tipping point' that results from thoughtful and meaningful change may be a small thing but it will have the potential to result in an epidemic of ideas.

I believe that teaching and learning is about finding that edge. The idea of moving from 'same old, same old' - a common New Zealand saying - that often generates boredom and indifference to the position of 'same, same but different' will result in thoughtful engagement and exploration that supports children in their quest to make sense of their world.

Robyn Lawrence



Who is... Carol Marks?



I have had a full and active life within the field of early childhood education and I have seen many changes over the years with legislation, programming, environments and practice.

My own childhood in the King Country has left me with many warm memories of freedom and enjoyment through play. Lasting memories which are brought to life again as I read current theory and the importance of play on young children's development and for them to have memories of a happy time within early childhood as they move on through life.

ELP has been intertwined in my teaching since 2001 and this work has impacted on my practice as I have worked alongside children, enjoying their passions, fun and a love of life as they explore their ideas and theories through play. Working with ICTs to enhance learning has been an interest for me over the past few years and I continue this interest at home with my mokopuna - much to their delight. The last 10 years these children have filled my life and bring daily joy to me as I share in their adventures. I look forward to the opportunities and challenges that will come with working for ELP, opportunities to learn alongside teaching teams as we explore quality practice and ways to make a positive difference to children's and teachers' lives.



A Potentiating (Powerful) Environment for Life Long Learning.

Max is a 4-year-old living in Parklands, an eastern suburb of Christchurch, that has been badly affected by the earthquakes and the subsequent liquefaction from the large quakes. Max has experienced all these quakes. He was up a tree at pre-school when the magnitude 6.3 hit. He said, "I held on tight and when it stopped I got down. I waited until it stopped before I got down." Max has been learning about earthquakes by personal experience, living alongside others who have been frightened and struggling in many ways, but at age 4 he plans ahead and makes sense of this life through his play.

Guy Claxton (2002) writes about a domain of learning called *Reflectiveness* which includes planning and anticipating needs and obstacles. Max has been doing this. He told his mother, "When you get a big one you don't know if it's going to turn into a small one and when you get a small one, you don't know if it's going to turn into a big one. If we get another big one at pre-school I will be a safe turtle and if I am at home I will get under my bed."

After hearing his father (a structural engineer) comment on how miraculous it was that more people hadn't been killed after the February earthquake, Max said, "Only a few people died with the earthquake, not heaps, only a few." Perkins, Jay & Tishman (1993) have written about the three parts of a

learning disposition and they have called them *inclination, sensitivity to occasion, and ability*. Guy Claxton and Margaret Carr have called them being *ready, willing and able* (Carr, 2001; Claxton & Carr, 2004). David Perkins later described *sensitivity to occasion* as *alertness* (Perkins, 2001). At the Breakthroughs' 9th international conference on thinking in Auckland in 2001 he said that attitude, alertness, and ability are 'closely entangled' and his research had indicated that alertness is the bottleneck to 'good' thinking.

"In our view, 'persistence' is not something that a learner 'acquires'. Instead, we see growth as a change in the likelihood that they will respond to difficulty in certain ways: by sticking with it; voicing doubts and digging below the surface, for example."
(Claxton & Carr, 2004)

In their paper 'A framework for teaching learning: the dynamics of disposition', Claxton and Carr (2004) write about the different kinds of learning communities or educational environments and I have likened Christchurch with all it's turmoil as a potentiating environment. Claxton and Carr (2004)

describe potentiating environments as,

"[t]hose that not only invite the expression of certain dispositions, but actively 'stretch' them, and thus develop them. It is our view that potentiating environments involve frequent participation in shared activity (Rogoff et al., 1993, p.533) in which children or students take responsibility for directing those activities, as well as adults. (Brown et al, 1993)."





Barbara Rogoff (2003) commented that generalising experience from one situation to another involves knowing “which strategies are helpful in what circumstances”.

Pretend play is helping Max make sense of his shaky world- he swings his toy sword and says, “When the earthquakes come, I’ll get them with my sword.” He plays ‘earthquakes’ with his friends, running outside to safety and playing with the baby on the floor. “The baby is dead, the earthquake came and killed the baby.”

Max had been away on holiday and when the family came back to Christchurch Max jokingly said, “Aah, earthquake, aah.” and laughed and rocked around in his car seat.

Opportunities are occurring within his family life to experience empathy and meaningful conversations are naturally interwoven through his day. There have been times when he has been the strong one, comforting his crying mother after a violent quake, telling her it’s all right, it was just an aftershock and cuddling his smaller sister Holly as the house rocked under them.

When his mother suggested that Christchurch was the best place in the world to live Max replied, “It’s not the best place in the world when there is liquefaction everywhere!”

Over time, the family have seen their section slowly eroded by liquefaction which is now impacting on the ground levels of their lovely home and although it remains strong, they may have to leave the house they have been in since Max was born. They have tried hard to remain calm as the aftershocks rumble through and Max now says, “I’m not scared of aftershocks any more, they are just annoying.”

After I experienced the magnitude 5.9 and the magnitude 6 quakes on the

23 December which literally slammed the house several feet to the north, then slammed it violently back with liquefaction pouring from the streets, no power and young children too anxious to go to sleep at night, I admire the resilience of these people to live their lives among adversity.

Max and his sister have accepted earthquakes as being what life is about, they know nothing else. It is part of their culture. Max is a participant within his learning community, he experiences earthquakes alongside others, at home and pre-school and at his friends. He hears the adults talking, he shares their feelings and anxiety, he participates when liquefaction is to be cleared from the section.

When reading a book about a pig wallowing in mud, Max said, “Look mum, the pig is swimming in liquefaction.”

Rogoff (2003) argues that,

“[I]ndividuals develop as participants in their cultural communities, engaging with others in shared endeavours and building on cultural practices of prior generations.”

A cultural practice is forming within Christchurch of helping neighbours and friends, of boxing on and accepting that this is part of their lives and that,

“[C]hildren engage alongside the other members of their community endeavours, learning through keen attention, collaboration, and the support of others in shared ongoing endeavours.” (Rogoff, 2003)

When Max attended another early childhood centre after the February quake when his pre-school was shut down, he could be heard discussing the quakes with his new friends and

stood in front of a large group to share his experiences. The pre-school curriculum Te Whāriki highlights the importance of young children learning within their families and communities and protecting and enhancing children’s identities as competent learners and communicators and learning through responsive, reciprocal relationships with people, places and things.

Will Max be like the elderly folk who have coped well with the earthquakes as he tackles uncertainty in his life? Max’s mum said, “The ones who have coped are those old people who went through the Depression and World War 2”. Imagine the learning dispositions they would have developed to help them cope with adversity! We do know that the skills and dispositions he will need to tackle uncertainty in life are receiving a strong foundation.

Also, when we think of the learning happening for Max, we can reflect on the important values of learning: to love, to communicate, to have pride, to share, to contribute, to survive, within a close knit community who care for each other.

Strangers turn up with spades and wheelbarrows to clear driveways, food has been cooked and shared and neighbours are keeping in touch.





As we reflect on the learning dispositions that are being strengthened for Max, we also need to be mindful of this unique setting that is providing “learning opportunities, affordances and constraints”, (Carr & Claxton, 2002, p. 12. and although Christchurch has been regarded as a place to be feared, it is also a place that is providing a powerful learning environment for young children like Max.

Earthquakes are just a moment in time for our ever changing earth.

At present it is Christchurch’s turn. Who will be next?

Carol Marks

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Jo's ICT List for 2011 - in Review

When I think back to the beginning of 2011, I had a wish list of new technologies I wanted to call my own (see newsletter 01/2011). A number of these devices I have acquired as the year has gone on and they include:

HD pocket video camera - a waterproof Kodak which has proven to be very handy, particularly over the last summer videoing the nieces and nephews. It has also been great to have around to take movies in the centers I work with. With the inclusion of HD video on most cameras now, I am unsure if I would purchase a separate video camera, although it is rather nice to have a device entirely dedicated to video.

iPod nano - great when I am out walking, or gardening, or driving. Driving so much I have downloaded audio books and podcasts to make the miles go a bit faster. The latest book I listened to was ‘A tiny bit marvelous’ written and read by Dawn French.



iPad 2 - I am writing this newsletter article on my iPad while I am at the hairdressers and I so enjoy this device. I can take my work with me wherever I go which is great. It has been useful when building relationships with children in the centres I work with, and is so portable I often leave my MacBook Pro at home and just take my iPad. Currently I am looking at doing some research into how centers are using iPads and want to work alongside some teachers and children in 2012 to try out some ideas I have for iPads. The front facing camera has been great for Skype too. I downloaded Pages and Keynote and aside from some of my favorite applications (more on these below) these are probably the programmes I use the most.



Twitter - I am still really keen on Twitter and after Facebook it is the second programme I open everyday. I love it as I use it as my 'internet filter' - meaning I follow the people & subjects I want to and I use the links tweeted to source more information. I follow various Mac writers, the Guardian, the All Blacks, Piri Weepu (a prolific tweeter, who usually starts the day with 'what's up tweeps?') to name a few.



iPhone 4s - I should have read the article I wrote for the January 2011 newsletter where I said I was a very happy iPhone 3GS user. I purchased the 4s and still have not really bonded with said phone. Three things I am not that happy with: the amount of data it uses (this could be the new operating system rather than the phone), the battery life and it just does not feel so good in my hand. I liked the round edges of the 3GS, it just felt more secure somehow and I always feel as if I am going to drop my new one. I have just read that a new iPhone is rumored for later in 2012 with an aluminum back and either a plastic or rubber bezel to protect the antenna.

Jo's must haves for 2011 were:

1. **iPad 2**
2. **Facebook messenger** - enables me to message my overseas son without paying for the text (this does use data so it is good to use around your wireless network)
3. **iOS 5** - this is the latest operating system for iPhone and iPad and is great
4. **Skype** - enables me to see my beautiful son who moved to Perth during 2011
5. **Kindle Reader** - so I can buy eBooks through Amazon and read them on my iPad.
6. **iPhone 4s** - read my blog post on why I am not so fussed with the new iPhone <http://jocolbert.wordpress.com/>
7. **Lion** - I still miss the 'save as' function and don't understand why it was changed to 'duplicate', it does have other features that I really like and it has a similar feel to the iPad now. I really like Launchpad and Mission Control, and the drop zone, which enables me to transfer data to other Lion users in close proximity.
8. **Games for iPhone, iPad** - I am still enjoying Angry Birds, although my latest addiction is Whirly Word and Tiny Tower these two can keep me entertained for hours.
9. **Panasonic Lumix TZ20** - this is way down the list as I would really like one but do not own one yet. My partner does however and finds it a brilliant camera with an outstanding zoom at 16x, it also has superb macro function as well as some more gimmicky functions like GPS - for those of you who take hundreds of photos and can not remember the location!
10. Last but by no means least, this is an oldie now but still a goldie: **MySky HD**. This has to be one of the most brilliant of inventions for those of us with either busy lives or too many people in one house to watch what you want to on TV. Fast forwarding the adverts, rewinding and fast forwarding for replaying the bits you misheard or skipping the dull bits. And with New Zealand television switching to digital later in 2012 I guess this is something we are all going to have to consider - which digital decoder to buy.

Jo Colbert



Long Grass and Paradigm Shifts

Alison Brierley

"All truth passes through three stages:
First, it is ridiculed. Second, it is violently opposed.
Third, it is accepted as being self-evident."
Arthur Schopenhauer
(1788 - 1860)

We don't have a lawn at our place. It has never been on our plan. It has also never been a priority as we planted thousands of trees, established vegetable gardens and built our house. It might have occurred to others. The hours our neighbours spend on their ride-ons probably allows some 'ruminating' time about those hippy neighbours who let their grass grow long!



My mother-in-law has taken many years to accept that she will never walk around a manicured lawn at our place. Her English sensibilities have been offended. No amount of information has changed her mind. I tell her about the waste of time and resources, and how this impacts on the environment. I also tell her about the uselessness of doing something that has to be repeated again soon. I even quoted from Greek mythology to make my point and alluded to King Sisyphus who was committed to a life of useless efforts and unending frustration. I described lawn mowing as Sisyphean! All to no avail. I have not shifted her mindset! As we only see her every couple of years we do make an effort to slash a path around so that we don't lose her in the long grass - she is quite short!

At times I have wavered. Sometimes I find myself admiring gardens in the city and noticing the even greenness and lack of weeds. I have to remind myself about the bees and insects. I remember Joe Polaischerm, the co-founder of Rainbow Valley farm, describing lawns as 'ecological deserts'. Not supporting any useful lifeforms and serving no useful purpose.

When we are asked about our lawn mowing plans - or lack of these - I always ask what the purpose of a lawn is. If children are going to play, if a game of croquet is scheduled - then yes, I can see a need for a patch of lawn. If a lawn is a path - then yes, it serves a purpose. If it has no purpose and supports no useful lifeforms then I see no reason to expend precious time, energy and resources.

So what has this to do with teaching and learning? We are going to have to consider and probably make some paradigm shifts in the near future. Some of these shifts will be around our responses to sustainability. This involves a close and serious look at beliefs, and taken for granted practices. It also involves sifting through the abundance of information that we are bombarded with. Without a doubt it will involve taking a stand against the status quo - which is never easy.

Julie Davis believes that sustainability is everyone's business! She says, "It is about how we live our lives now and into the future" (2010, p.3). In her book *Young children and the environment*, Julie talks about the role of education, "It is time for early childhood education to fully engage with sustainability - this is a moral and ethical imperative as well as an educational one." (2010, p. 14)



Some issues we need to consider:

- Waste and waste management
- Food production
- Toxins in cleaning products, resources and equipment.
- Buying of resources, what these are made of and where they are made
- Consumption of resources
- Re-using, recycling and reducing

So, a paradigm shift has been made at our place. It may sound trivial - it is only a lawn. With any shift in thinking you are always up against the 'status quo' and this often sets you outside the group of common thinking. It can also start something - a cycle of change that has a life of its own.

One of the side effects of these paradigm shifts for me is that I see things in a different light. I have noticed at least 6 distinctive different types of grasses thriving here. They each catch the light in a different way, they each mature into different seed heads and it seems birds have their favourites. The 'weeds' amongst the long grass attract the bees and they provide us with buckets of honey - I believe as a thank-you. My chickens love some of the weeds and seek them out with glee. My weeds even look great in a vase.

I love the long waving grass that I see out the window. I have got used to the wildness. The fact that I have time to appreciate the long grass means I have not spent useless hours mowing it!

"Ma te whenua ka ora te tangata
Through the land people will be nourished
Ma te tangata ka ora te whenua
Through people the land will be nourished."
(Whakatauki from Rainbow Valley Farm)

(Rainbow Valley Farm is an iconic award-winning 21 ha organic property designed on permaculture principles and ethics. Over the past 23 years, the farm has inspired thousands of people in sustainable living and the principles of permaculture in action.)

Davis, J. M. (Ed.) (2010) *Young children and the environment. Early education for sustainability.* Melbourne, Australia: Cambridge University Press.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sisyphus>
<http://rainbowvalley.co.nz/>





I Have Been Reading: Why Love Matters - How Affection Shapes a Baby's Brain by Sue Gerhardt

Most of us have known that love and affection matters. It matters to all human beings. Now we have this book and the hard cold science that clearly tells us why it matters.

In his endorsement of her book, Daniel Goleman, the author of *Emotional Intelligence*, says,

Sue Gerhardt has written a vitally important book - a must-read for every parent, teacher, physician and politician.

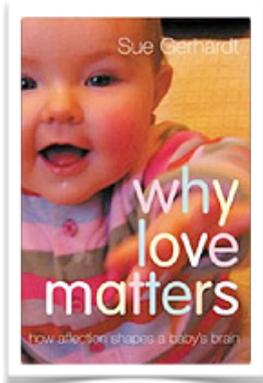
- and I agree. Sue Gerhardt brings to this book the neuroscience and psychological and biochemical arguments for a key teaching strategy in our early childhood education settings. She reminds us how important loving and responsive early relationships are to our becoming and being human. Future emotional development (learning) is dependent on early brain development and brain development is dependent on attachment and strong emotional connectedness and responsiveness. The effects of parenting and a pedagogy of care are etched into babies brains and have impact on their future.

She reminds that,

The X factor, the mystery tonic that enables babies to flourish as soon as they get it, is responsiveness. (p.196)

Sue Gerhardt goes on to tell us just what the optimal kind of responsiveness looks like. I found Chapter 3, Corrosive Cortisol, especially interesting. In this chapter she talks about what stress is for babies and the importance of minimising stress and thus reducing cortisol levels for babies and toddlers. Being willing and able to reduce stress for infants, toddlers and young children has implications for us all in early childhood care education settings.

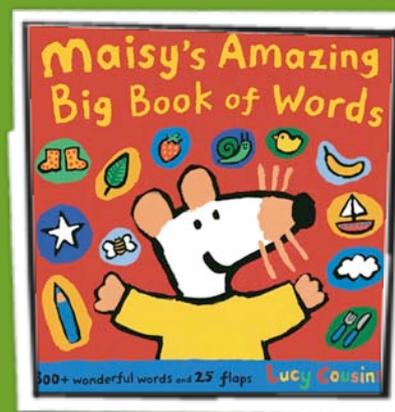
I recommend this book to all involved in working with and loving babies, toddlers and young children. It reminds us of our responsibility to foster and support loving teacher relationships with infants and young children, and to support and strengthen loving relationships between them and their parents.



ISBN 978-1-58391-817-3

I Have Also Been Reading: Maisy's Amazing Big Book of Words by Lucy Cousins

We are Maisy fans in our family. Maisy a wonderful little mouse who along with her friends Charley, Talulah, Panda, Eddie, Ollie, and Cyril has interesting and familiar adventures. This is Zane's and Pipiana's favorite first choice at the moment.



ISBN 978-1-4063-2783-0

It is just one of many of Lucy Cousins' wonderfully illustrated children's books about Maisy. There are over 300 words with illustrations to spy and 25 flaps that delightfully expose Maisy's friends, the farm, her pets and favorite things. This sturdy book is not a board book, however, it is made of very good grade paper and the flaps are strong and durable.



P.S This is Zane's 2nd Birthday Cake. Boohoo, his Mum and Dad are adventurous cake decorators.

They have raised the bar for birthday cakes in our family.

Kathryn Delany



Upcoming Events

February - April 2012

07.02.2012

Workshop, Ponsonby
Jo Colbert: The Great Escape

13.02.2012

Workshop, Browns Bay
Alison Brierley: Learning Stories revisited - What learning did I notice here?

14.02.2012

Lecture Series, Hamilton
Robyn Lawrence: Being brave - Overcoming fear through the support of a trusted companion

14.02.2012

Workshop, Ponsonby
Jo Colbert: Learning Environments,

18.2.2012

Under Twos Inspiration Day, Napier

20.02.2012

Workshop, Browns Bay
Alison Brierley: Exploring social competence, full-day seminar

21.02.2012

Lecture Series, Auckland
Robyn Lawrence: Being brave - Overcoming fear through the support of a trusted companion

03.03.2012

ELP Art Day Out, Auckland

05.03.2012

Workshop, Browns Bay
Alison Brierley: Learning Stories, day seminar 2

06.03.2012

Workshop, Browns Bay
Alison Brierley: Is this place fair?

Building a culture of dignity and respect

10.03.2012

Leadership Inspiration Day, Whangarei

12.03.2012

Workshop, Browns Bay
Alison Brierley: Learning Stories revisited - Catching the threads and weaving continuity

13.03.2012

Lecture Series, Hamilton
Kathryn Delany: This is your life - Learning Stories

15.03.2012

Workshop, Browns Bay
Alison Brierley: Exploring social competence, full-day seminar

17.03.2012

Leadership Inspiration Day Christchurch

17.03.2012

Big Day Out with ELP, Whakatane

20.03.2012

Lecture Series, Auckland
Kathryn Delany: This is your life - Learning Stories

26.03.2012

Workshop, Browns Bay
Alison Brierley: Learning Stories revisited - Kei Tua o te Pae unpacked and dusted off

27.03.2012

Workshop, Browns Bay
Alison Brierley: From problems to challenges

29.03.2012

Workshop, Browns Bay
Alison Brierley: Literacy, full-day seminar

31.03.2012

Under Twos Inspiration Day, New Plymouth

03.04.2012

Workshop, Browns Bay
Alison Brierley: Learning Stories revisited - Planning for learning

05.04.2012

Workshop, Browns Bay
Alison Brierley: ECE environments, full-day seminar

10.04.2012

Lecture Series Hamilton
Alison Brierley: Why does my brain hurt? A lighthearted journey into the world of adult learners

11.04.2012

Workshop, Browns Bay
Alison Brierley: Learning Stories revisited - What learning did I notice here?

17.04.2012

Lecture Series, Auckland
Alison Brierley: Why does my brain hurt? A lighthearted journey into the world of adult learners

30.04.2012

Workshop, Ponsonby
Jo Colbert: Finding the Story