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Ane leid is ne'er enough

Last weekend, a friend came over to visit; bringing with her some organic spray for my roses. Everything is just starting to take off and bloom with all the warmer weather; it is so exciting to see how the plants are now coming back into flower. As we stood there she noticed my cardoon plants which have spectacular foliage and an amazing flower which arrives sometime in January.

The reason I have planted these stunning plants is the flower resembles a Scottish thistle but maybe 4 times the size of the thistle. They flower in January around the same time as my mother's birthday. I said to Helen, my visiting friend, that I wanted to take my mum some thistles for her birthday. Helen stopped and looked at me and said, "Not thistles, you should call them cardoons." Her correction of my wrong choice of words went over my head but I did think at the time 'What is wrong with thistles?'



It was not until later that I thought about her comment, the connotation of thistle to her meant a weed, something unwanted and certainly not something of value that you would give to another person. However, for me a thistle represents Scotland, bravery, my heritage, my family and one of the pieces of the puzzle that make me a unique individual.

This made me think today of the significance of valuing language, culture and identity within our settings. My world view is different from another person's world view because my family's culture has shaped it. It is only when we listen to one another's perspective that we gain an understanding of culture and how this shapes our individual and collective thinking.

Te Whāriki states under Belonging that, "Acknowledgement of different family styles, and knowledge of the cultures of the children in the programme, are also important" (Ministry of Education, 1996, 55). Often, as teachers, we collect information from families about their heritage - maybe in the form of a pepeha and then this gets put into children's portfolios. I wonder though who reads those important pieces of the puzzle that help make up the individual child. I am sure there are creative ways in which this information is shared with others throughout centres in Aotearoa.

In my position, I am constantly meeting new children and when I do one of the initial interactions between us is about learning where we fit, what our place in the world is and how we might connect somewhere. Going into centres, children always ask, "What's your name? Are you a teacher? Why are you here?" Connections for children are important, as this gives them a sense of understanding the world around them and where they fit. The pepeha we collect from children can be the connecting points for families - how then are we making these visible and their value acknowledged?



My final thought is, I know that language plays an enormous part of cultural identity. I wonder how connected to my Scottish ancestry I would feel if my mother had not had such a broad Scottish accent and the ability to share her language through little sayings such as, "It's a braw bricht moonlit nicht the nicht" or "Ah dinnae ken". For those not fluent in Scottish - "It's beautiful bright moonlight night to night" and "I don't know". This is the same for our children within ECE settings; they will feel a sense of belonging, a sense of turangawaewae, a sense of connectedness to the wider world when we acknowledge and use the language of their families. It helps build in them an understanding of who they are as a unique individual. This assurance builds onto belonging and therefore assists in building resilience in children which will enable them to face life head on.

Lang may yer lum reek! - May you live long and stay well.

I guess you are possibly wondering about the title - it is not a typo it means - One language is never enough!

Lynn Rupe

ulearn 2012

Were you amongst the 2% of early childhood teachers who attended the recent ulearn conference in Auckland? If you were you would have been one of less than 30 teachers from early childhood attending - it was a big conference over 1500 teachers mostly from the primary and secondary sectors. I sat next to a school principal from a sole charge school in the Far North at the first keynote and we shared stories about the ways we were using information and communication technologies (ICT). This is one of the things I really like about ulearn, the opportunity for cross sector sharing, to hear of innovative practice across all three sectors and to get some good ideas. ulearn certainly delivered in this respect, participants were treated to a wide variety of workshops run by teachers for teachers, sharing their passion and their children's, families' and teams' enthusiasm and engagement in ICT. There were four keynote speakers, Dr Jason Ohler, Khoa Do, Kevin Honeycutt and Glen Capelli, all of whom were incredibly inspiring. Underpinning all of their talks were the principles of leadership, relationships, and the difference we can make to children's lives.

In the short space of a newsletter, there is not room to give these speakers the justice they deserve, but I urge you to look them up on the Internet and read their stories.

Dr Jason Ohler: <http://www.jasonohler.com/index.cfm>

Khoa Do: <http://www.khoado.com.au/>

Kevin Honeycutt: <http://kevinhoneycutt.org/>

Glen Capelli: <http://glennacapelli.com/>

What I also urge you to do is to think about how you are using ICT within your settings; technology can support collaborative, competent and connected learners. The key to this is the way we as teachers notice, recognise and respond to children's learning with ICT. In our early childhood settings, children do not learn anything in isolation, rather children learn alongside, with others, and with the support of others, children, parents, whānau and teachers. As Dr Ohler asked at ULearn, "Are you a door opener?" Are you a teacher who opens doors for children's learning or are you a door closer? Where children's voices are not heard, where their interests and passions are not supported? Are the children in your settings living two lives? One inside your early childhood setting and a different one outside of your setting, where their interests and passions are recognised and supported? Are you supporting children's interests and passions around Information and communication technology?

If you are interested in ICT and are looking for up to the minute information on what teachers are doing across the education sector then put uLearn 2013 in your diary now - it is always the second week of term two holidays and in 2013 it is again being held in Auckland. You might want to consider engaging in action research and sharing your findings at the next uLearn conference. I will see you there.

Jo Colbert



Finding and seeing the possibilities and the 'magic'

We have all done this, I know. We have been on holiday, with family or friends, having a lovely time, when almost unknowing we start to quietly collect things and put them in our pockets - shells, dried flowers, pieces of driftwood...car tyres!! Someone, often a partner, will ask what we are doing. For a moment we might ask ourselves, "What am I doing?" as the practice is so ingrained that we don't recognise we are actually doing anything!

Then we have to explain ourselves. "Well I just couldn't resist...", "I have been looking for these for ages...", "It won't take up much room..." etc. My husband gets annoyed when once I have filled my pockets I start on his. Now that I am not actually in a kindergarten everyday he refuses to fill his pockets with the interesting things I find. It is as if the world is viewed through a different lens, the lens of possibilities from a teacher's perspective.

I thought I couldn't get much further away from my work as a facilitator. It was the other side of the world - Spain. On holiday for months (3, actually). Up a mountain (Picos de Europa, the third highest mountain range of mainland Spain after the Pyrenees and the Sierra Nevada). Far, far away from my working life. Or so I thought...

As we cycled into the campsite, I noticed opposite the office a beautiful garden created for children. It wasn't a 'playing in' garden - no swings, sandpit etc. It was a 'looking at' garden. In fact, I was so entranced, I nearly forgot the exhaustion of having to go an extra 11kms straight uphill after an already exhausting day because we had misread the map. This garden made me forget about that. In fact, I nearly abandoned my tent-erecting-duty - but was quickly reminded!

I did go back to take photos and spend more time looking. I felt like I had entered a child's world. The care and attention, humour and joy that had gone into this was quite evident. I laughed out loud from time to time as I spotted something new.

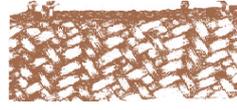
This wasn't really a family campsite, being high in the mountains (Fuente Dé) and not a lot in the area for children, it didn't really attract many families. It was more of a hiking, walking, action adventure place. Yet there was a garden for children. Or was it? As an expression of joy and humour, was it a garden for anyone who had time to spend here? What lights up the eyes of a child often lights up the eyes of an adult, and as Alison Gopnik reminds us, adults are children who have been around for a long time. So maybe that was what this garden was for - us aging children who still have an eye for playfulness and magic. Adults who are willing to be enthralled and enchanted.

So here are the photos; I hope you find in them elements that make you smile and if the child's eyes in you light up for merely a moment, then I am right - this garden is not just for children, it is for the child in all of us.

<http://www.auckland.ac.nz/uoa/home/about/perspectives/public-lectures>
<http://www.thepicosdeeuropa.com/national-park.html>

Alison Brierley





Observations from a centre

The teachers at The Park Early Learning Centre in Hamilton are involved in a research project with Educational Leadership Project, centred on engaging families/whānau.

I was visiting the infant space today and, as I watched the teaching and learning unfolding before me, I started to write as it struck me that these responsive engagements in learning were worth sharing more widely. In my role as a professional learning facilitator, teachers often ask me how it is possible to work so closely with children's individual rhythms in a group care and learning setting. This story, I think, shows some insights.

Today, as I sat watching, making myself as innocuous as possible to enable the natural day to unfold (although curious eyes could see a stranger in their room), what struck me was the quiet serenity over a lunch time experience. If we think about the ways children's brains are developing, this gentle listening to children's rhythms means their neurons are connecting in an investigative, social way, minus the cortisol that signifies stress.

I hope I can describe the scene and do this justice. Six babies and four teachers. This sounds a rather fabulous ratio, yet other babies were sleeping, following their self set patterns.



Four children were eating at a table with a teacher who sat quietly alongside, neither rushing or over-talking or taking over the task of feeding, when a child could easily manage this himself. No baby was restrained and yet all were sitting happily eating. Another child was held while being given a bottle. I listened transfixed by the quiet responsiveness. Soft music played in the background but this neither dominated nor seemed superfluous.



There was intentional teaching from the teachers who used their close relational understanding to appreciate the pace-setting from the children (not the other way round), to anticipate each child's rhythm and to respond to these before children became upset. Another child meandered outdoors, setting his own agenda as he explored there. A teacher sat nearby and allowed this quiet exploration to run its course. Later in the day, when most children were awake, the unhurried calm atmosphere prevailed because free exploration by these children, with their supportive teachers alongside, meant every child had agency. They were listening and being listened to. They were exploring because they were secure in their attachments with teachers they know and trust.

So how do they do this? My thoughts based on my observations:

The pedagogical leadership in the infant space places high value on the principles of Te Whāriki (Ministry of Education, 1996). Relationships, Holistic Development and Empowerment, from a baby's perspective, drive the practice that is embedded in the culture of this place. Now, this doesn't happen by accident or chance. While leadership matters deeply, the kind of leadership that really counts is the kind that leads by modeling wise practice. This is what I see happening. The expectations are set high and so is the modeling practice, plus the advocacy to management for children to have the best possible setting to explore. What lead teachers do is so critically important in nurturing their team's culture of learning and teaching. The Park infant teachers are passionately engaged in pursuing further learning, including their untrained or in-training colleagues, to strengthen their understanding of the theory that drives wise decision making. Much study about babies' socio-cultural learning informs teachers' practice here.



Teachers have invested time and effort into learning what wise practice looks like and much of their conversation is focused on continual improvement. They put this into practice with each and every baby, each and every moment.

It is the comprehensive interconnection of many factors that enable cohesive teaching and learning to happen. This very much includes the environment and this is set up for curious exploration. The door to the outside is open and children move freely. I think, a useful way of deciding whether a setting is responsive to babies is to look at the doors. Are they open or shut? This gives a very clear indication of whether children's curious exploration of the world are valued or not.



Another way to determine whether a setting is supportive of children's growing abilities is to see how many devices there are that limit the space children can explore or lock them into positions and spaces they can not get out of. There are none in this place. What I saw today were children's key teachers, understanding and anticipating children's rhythms and interests and children who have the time, the space and an inviting environment that draws them to freely explore the things that interest them.

So why is this setting primed for curious learning by children?

Most of the structural factors are in place and teachers continually advocate to improve these. Most essentially, the process factors, the aspects that are in teachers' hands are in place for this to happen. Not once, over the times I have visited, have I heard a raised voice or a child crying without attention from a teacher, assisting the child to re-centre her emotions. The pace is always unhurried and calm. The focus is on the child's rhythms not tasks to be done. So when asking ourselves about whether our place is the kind of learning environment that integrally works alongside a child, growing into this

social world, we ought to be looking at the ratios, the space, the group size, the environment, as aspects that underpin our ability to engage responsively in Te Whāriki terms. If these aspects, which are management's responsibility, are absent, then we must be continually advocating for children, speaking up to ensure change happens. Most essentially, we must turn our attention to ourselves. Are we life long learners? What books are informing our practice, who are the theorists and what research have we explored? We must take responsibility for our own professional growth.

Long ago I read an article written by Diti Hill (2001), *Passion, Power and Planning in the Early Childhood Centre*, and I've never forgotten it for it had such a powerful impact on my own practice. Diti says: "Children do not live their lives in curriculum fragments" (2001, p. 12). If we embed this into a dispositional frame where interest, exploration, communicating ideas and taking responsibility form the base for teaching and learning communities, wrap these up in Te Whāriki's principles, then we will all have listening, responsive spaces for babies to learn in. It seems to me that children are much more able to go into a flow state than adults (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997) and yet, we so often minimise and marginalise this learning state by slicing and dicing babies' days into task driven care moments.

Today, as I witnessed the teachers' responsive engagement with children's rhythms I couldn't help thinking this was inspirational and worth sharing.

References:

Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1997). *Finding Flow*. New York: Basic Books

Hill, D. (2001), *Passion, Power and Planning in the Early Childhood Centre. The First Years: Ngā Tau Tuatahi. New Zealand Journal of Infants and Toddler Education*, 3(2), 10-13.

New Zealand Ministry of Education. (1996). *Te Whāriki: He Whāriki Mātauranga Mo Nga Mokopuna O Aotearoa*. Wellington: Learning Media.

Lorraine Sands



Weaving Professional Education into our Practice

I have been reading: Inspiring Spaces for Young Children by Jessica Deviney, Sandra Duncan, Sara Harris, Mary Ann Rody and Lois Rosenberry

[ISBN 978-0-87569-317-2](#)

This beautiful book is what we might call a 'coffee table book' for early childhood setting staffroom tables. Placed on a table for flicking through or reading it will inspire and provoke our thinking and action for creating wonderful and potentiating learning and teaching environments. It reminds us that, "**Children are miracles... we must make it our job to create, with reverence and gratitude, a space that is worthy of a miracle.**" Anita Rui Olds (2001)

This book is filled with wonderful, wonder-filled full size photos and quotes, such as, "There is no better time than now to start growing a beautiful environment for children. Plant the seed, nurture it, and watch it grow" (p.5). These quotes and photos will be useful in stimulating team pedagogical discussions too. E.g. "What seeds are we planting for children here in our environment?"

This book inspires through and covers seven principles of design:

- * nature inspires beauty
- * colour generates interest
- * furnishings define space
- * texture adds depth
- * displays enhance environment
- * elements enhance ambience
- * focal points attract attention



It offers guidance and possibilities for transforming any early childhood setting into a place of beauty, creativity and learning. This book challenges us to think past just providing 'areas of play' or table top activities into creating a learning and teaching space that makes us all feel valued and loved. It supports teachers in creating a learning environment that potentiates and strengthens learning muscles - the learning muscles, such as, curiosity, courage, trust and playfulness, enquiry, persisting, expressing, kindness, and empathy, that we treasure, foster and cherish in the spirit of the Principles and Strands of Te Whāriki.

I thoroughly recommend this book to teachers and centers. It does what it sets out to do. It provides challenge, pleasure, sustenance for the mind and soul.

Kathryn Delany

Fireman Sam - Junior Cadet

Fireman Sam - Junior Cadet iPad app is one of our favorites at the moment. It is a must have for any avid Sam fan. I think with iPads, much like any learning environment, children must be able to 'find something of interest here' so having a variety of apps that connect with childrens' interests on our iPads is a must.

The catchy Fireman Sam song introduces the game. This is a particular hit with the children around me. In fact, this is what they like to play most at the beginning.

There are six interactive games on this app: Hose Practice, Hide n Seek, Load Jupiter, Sky High Rescue, Fire Fighter, and To the Rescue. Each game offers a difficulty level of easy or hard.



Sam, in his Welsh accent, offers prompts and support for playing the games, e.g.

"Yes, that's the one."

"Well done."

"You are doing really well."

"That's it, well done."

"Excellent work."

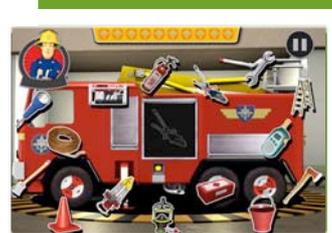
"It's good to see you've turned up ready for duty."

"Keep going."

"Well done, you have rescued the cat."

"Oh dear, time's up - remember practice makes purrfect."

I like this kind of feedback Sam gives, it fits with some of the dispositional language and feedback we as teachers like to give. It supports learning goals.



Read more on <https://itunes.apple.com/gb/app/fireman-sam-junior-cadet/id484081903?mt=8> and follow their links for a preview video.

Kathryn Delany



Upcoming Events

December 2012 -

March 2013

30.11/01.12.2012

Celebrating Learning Stories Book Launch and Conference, Hamilton
30.11. - Book Launch
1.12. - Conference

03.12.2012

Workshops, Browns Bay
Alison Brierley: Exploring Social Competence

10.12.2012

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

11.12.2012

Workshops, Ponsonby
Alison Brierley: Learning Stories revisited - Planning for Learning

04.02.2013

Workshops, Ponsonby
Jo Colbert: Learning Stories Part 1: Finding the Story

07.02.2013

Workshops, Papakura
Jo Colbert: Learning Stories Part 1: Finding the Story

11.02.2013

Workshops, Ponsonby
Jo Colbert: Learning Stories Part 2: Building Complexity and Connections in Learning Stories

12.02.2013

Seminar Series, Morrinsville
Robyn Lawrence: Social Competence

13.02.2013

Seminar Serie, Te Awamutu
Jo Colbert: The Language of Learning

14.02.2013

Workshops, Papakura
Jo Colbert: Learning Stories Part 2: Building Complexity and Connections in Learning Stories

18.02.2013

Workshops, Ponsonby
Jo Colbert: Learning Stories Part 3: The Great Escape: Breaking through the Chains of Planning

21.02.2013

Workshops, Papakura
Jo Colbert: Learning Stories Part 3: The Great Escape: Breaking through the Chains of Planning

25.02.2013

Workshops, Ponsonby
Jo Colbert: Literacy - Putting the Spotlight on Literacy

26.02.2013

Seminar Series, Whakatane
Robyn Lawrence: Companionship

28.02.2013

Workshops, Papakura
Jo Colbert: Literacy - Putting the Spotlight on Literacy

04.03.2013

Workshops, Ponsonby
Jo Colbert: Literacy - 21st Century Literacy - Supporting Children's Literacy Learning in a Digital Age

07.03.2013

Workshops, Papakura
Jo Colbert: Literacy - 21st Century Literacy - Supporting Children's Literacy Learning in a Digital Age

11.03.2013

Workshops, Ponsonby
Jo Colbert: A Closer Look at Building Learning Power and Dispositions

12.03.2013

Lecture Series, Hamilton
topic to be announced

14.03.2013

Workshops, Papakura
Jo Colbert: A Closer Look at Building Learning Power and Dispositions

14.03.2013

Seminar Series, Te Awamutu
Kathryn Delany: One the Mat - Wrestling with the BIG ONE

18.03.2013

Workshops, Ponsonby
Jo Colbert: Learning Environments

19.03.2013

Lecture Series, Auckland
topic to be announced

19.03.2013

Seminar Series, Hamilton
Robyn Lawrence: Companionship

21.03.2013

Workshops, Papakura
Jo Colbert: Learning Environments

25.03.2013

Workshops, Ponsonby
Jo Colbert: Building a Culture of Self Review

28.03.2013

Workshops, Papakura
Jo Colbert: Building a Culture of Self Review