

Children's Social Emotional Development a.k.a Good Mental Health

Movement is crucial to every other brain function, including memory, emotion, language and learning

*John J Ratey, MD
Author of 'A User's Guide To the Brain.'
Professor of Psychiatry, Harvard Medical School*



As a parent, does this seem an 'odd' topic for our newsletter? I mean, mental health is a bit of a taboo subject in society anyway, but in relation to children, even more so. Do you think we are getting a bit 'above ourselves' or taking ourselves too seriously if we say we work, not just to provide 'day care' or 'education' but also to support good mental health in the children we care for?

Well, it is all about the words you use. In our community surveys in the past, all parents/respondents without exception value a respectful and caring 'environment' for their children. The assumption that lies behind this, is that you cannot go far wrong if you care for children with love.

This month, I was lucky enough to sit in on an hour of the RIE Fundamentals training here in Auckland. I was especially lucky to sit in on the session where the class looked at how the RIE principles, support social emotional development in the areas of gross motor and fine motor development, and also in infant-infant interactions, and infant-adult interactions. **Magda Gerber said "everything is social emotional"**. As I listened, the students looked at:

- How providing a free movement environment for gross motor development enabled the development of the basic human skills of 'self-confidence' and 'persistence', etc
- How, providing passive toys enabled infants to be 'active' in their play, which just happen to help support their fine motor development (as well as things like visual tracking and 'in-hand manipulation skills and manual dexterity btw)

- At what social lessons language, tone of voice, and gentle touch, teach when intervening in infants exploration of other infants.

- At just what caregivers 'teach' or model in the care moments with children such as nappy changes; what children learn from observing the caregiver's interactions with their own parents etc, what they learn from the positive, or negative attachments, or lack of attachments that they experience while in childcare.

The above just skims over some of the areas of discussion, but at the end of the day, Magda Gerber was right, every single aspect of a child's day, environment and care can, and does, affect their social emotion development, i.e. their mental health, either positively, or sadly, negatively. This is a huge responsibility, but also incredibly exciting, because, ***we CAN make a real difference to children's lives ~ in a good way.***

I have talked before about how **'free movement', by supporting children's gross motor and fine motor development, lays some of the important building blocks for literacy.** This month, we organised a parent evening around our Casey The Magic Caterpillar Literacy Club. Barbara Brann's work was the the source of this information about the link between fine motor, and gross motor skills and literacy (see the Tui article).

Sally Goddard (author of several books on child development (which I plan on adding to our parent library), is a freelance consultant in neuro-developmental education and Director of the pioneering Institute for Neuro-Physiological Psychology in Chester, in the UK) has, through research, shown for example, that if the Asymmetrical Tonic Neck



Reflex (when the head turns to one side, the arm and leg on the same side extend) which should be ‘inhibited’ by six months of age, but is not, that it can:

- lead to hand-eye co-ordination difficulties - which can effect the child when learning to write.
- hamper the ability to cross the mid-line - making it hard for a right handed child to write on the left hand of the page.
- Can lead to a discrepancy between oral and written performance at school.

What we talk about as ‘free movement‘ putting a baby on its back to play, not putting them into positions which they cannot get into themselves (such as tummy time and propping to sit) allows the ‘normal’ inhibition of these ‘primitive reflexes.

What I have not talked about much before, is the mental and emotional impact on a child, who experiences ‘learning difficulties’ that can result from ‘ab-normal’ reflex development. It doesn’t take much imagination to picture the impact on their self esteem and confidence, as most children will respond with “I cannot”, or “I am not good at” type views of their struggle

Most early childhood, or primary school, teachers would never identify the real ‘cause’.

However, IF this ever is a ‘problem’ for your child, something *can* be done. We are lucky here in Ponsonby to have some enlightened occupational therapists who work with children and make it fun at the same time. See

www.childsplayot.co.nz



Applying Sunscreen

By Guida



The season is beginning to change and the feeling of autumn in the air brings a release from the humidity and heat we have had. But protecting skin from sun damage is a year-round requirement especially in this era of ozone holes and prevalence of skin cancers. In fact, as I write this my partner is recovering from surgery to the face to remove cancer affected skin – the actual damage occurred many years ago, and was only visible with microscopic technology.

With the babies and toddlers we always consider the amount of sun they are exposed to outside on the deck. We ensure the shade is sufficient, and consistently insist on them wearing hats (which is an on-going lesson!) We apply sunscreen prior to going outside in the mornings, and the afternoons.

Application of sunscreen is a care activity, like feeding and nappy changing, where we want to involve the child and allow them to become an **active participant rather than a passive recipient** (Madga Gerber). In order for this to happen, it needs to be a pleasurable experience, and one that the child looks forward to and can anticipate.

Here is a routine I have been using with the babies and toddlers. They already know our expectation that going outside means wearing sunscreen. Sitting on the floor, I invite a child to have sunscreen; s/he sits down facing me and with plenty of sunscreen in both my hands I show them and talk with them about which part of their body I will start with. Depending on

the child, I may begin with the lower arms and hands, or maybe the back of the neck. The back of the neck is a very sensitive place, and I always start low at the base, and use the length of my fingers to smooth the sunscreen upwards and around toward the ears and up over the jaw onto the cheeks. (This is a much more gentle and pleasant experience than having fingers coming straight at you towards your nose or forehead!) I repeat this a couple more times, covering the ears as well, and continuing on to the chin, forehead and lastly across their nose.

The movement of your hands from the back towards the front creates a very gentle motion towards you, and again is probably more pleasurable than the feeling of being pushed away (which may happen if you apply cream directly to the front). However, if you do apply sunscreen directly to the front of your child's face, cupping the back of their head with your other hand is supportive for them. Infants and toddlers are constantly refining their balance and co-ordination, so it is important to respect and take care with their heavy heads and developing neck muscles.

Naturally the child participates, sometimes with fingering the sunscreen in my hand, sometimes attempting to touch and manipulate the sunscreen dispenser. I continue to talk with them throughout, acknowledging their participation. After the neck and face, I proceed to their arms and hands, and then their legs and feet. The sunscreen is more easily applied to these areas, and the children are usually very keen to smooth it on their legs and hands themselves. And there is always another infant or toddler waiting alongside for their turn!

It might be helpful to know that gentle but firm touch (not tickling) to the back of the neck has a soothing and stilling effect. It is therefore a good place to begin sunscreen application if previous applications have produced agitation.

Te Whaariki, our Early Childhood Curriculum, has as its very first goal, that **'children develop an increasing understanding of their bodies and how they function ... and a knowledge about how to keep themselves healthy'**. The caring activity of sunscreen application gives them this exact opportunity.

Encouragement is oxygen to the soul.

George M. Adams

What Do Children Learn From Water Play?

By Elena

Can you remember placing your hands into cool water on a hot day, feeling how the water rippled over your fingers, the heavy feel of a bucket with water sloshing around? Water play delights the senses and is far more than simply pleasurable for young children. Water play like sand play and play dough is sensory play. In sensory play there is no right or wrong way to play and therefore no predetermined skills or abilities are required.

More importantly water play is good for children's physical, mental (cognitive), and social-emotional growth. When children pour water, they are improving their eye-hand coordination and physical dexterity. By playing with others in splashing water, watering plants or washing dolls, they develop social skills.

At the same time, children are using their minds as they explore why certain objects sink in water and others float. They learn concepts such as empty/full, shallow/deep, and heavy/light in a hands-on way. Children also learn new words that go along with water play, such as funnel, surface, float, and splash.

In summary here are some of the many ways that water play helps development:

Physical Development

- ◆ Improves fine motor skills - lifting containers with water
- ◆ Improves eye-hand coordination - pouring water

Cognitive Development

- ◆ Shows math and science concepts: sinking and floating, volume
- ◆ Shows that the same amount of water may appear to be different when poured into different sized and shaped containers
- ◆ Increases vocabulary - wet, dry, sink, float, splash

Social-emotional Development

- ◆ Provides opportunities to imitate - children wash baby dolls, pick up shells etc
- ◆ Provides opportunities for imaginative play in which children develop social skills.

Stages of Water Play

The first stage of water play is *functional play*. Children explore water with their senses; the way it splashes, pours, spills, and changes when it is added to sand or is frozen.



After functional play comes constructive play. In this stage, children move from exploring water to using it for play--for example, pouring water over a toy person and pretending he is taking a shower. We often make use of shampoo bottles for posting pegs but just the other day we saw a toddler 'pouring' shampoo over her friend's hair.

In the next stage, simple play develops into dramatic play, such as a fire-fighting story. Young children can even create their own props. How about getting them to create their own fish or boats using different to explore their ideas about sinking and floating?

Splashing & Spilling



Water play is valuable for children starting in infancy. Babies love to splash and sometimes make a mess, so it is best to create a large splash zone. Sometimes toddlers and preschoolers will splash or spill water. Splashing and spilling is part of experimenting with water. We try to have towels or clothes close by and involve and encourage young children to help mop up. In doing so we explain that someone can slip and fall on the water that spills on the floor. We find that children often enjoy the cleanup as much as the water play itself!

Water Wise and Sun Safe

Although we periodically apply sunblock throughout the day we encourage families to bring rash (swim) suits as these will ensure a greater level of sun protection for children while they enjoy water play.

How you can help your children learn from Water

Through playing with water children learn many scientific concepts such as how substances change e.g. melting, dissolving, temperature etc. How can we help children learn? By simply talking about what the children are doing. We do this by 'sports casting' announcing what children are doing. For example "Art is pouring water into the cup. It is overflowing." In this way we help children develop vocabulary. They learn the meanings of these words when they are actually doing these things and the vocabulary becomes relevant.

Sports casting can also help children expand on each other's play ideas. One child's idea of watering the plants might lead another to have a shower.

Adding Props

Look at children's water play to see where pretend play can be added in. Create a dramatic play area for children to wash doll clothes in a tub of soapy water and hang them up with clothespins to dry in the sun. After a trip to the zoo or reading a book about animals, offer plastic animals for the children to use in their play. The beach offers wonderful opportunities for water play with tidal pools offering many 'treasures' with different shapes, textures to explore.



These tactile experiences will not only provide hours of pleasure but in the process they will learn life skills and enrich their vocabulary. The next time you need to water a droopy plant involve your child and they will learn about the rehydrating properties of water and capillary action in the process. Before watering the plant or herbs ask your child to look at how droopy the leaves are, water the plant and a while later make the time to look at the plant again. By

simply observing the process your child is developing a working theory about the use of water in many different settings. Water play in the home can even be as simple as leaving the rinsing sink water after washing the dishes and provided some materials for your child to experiment with e.g. corks, metal and plastic spoons, stones, bottle caps etc

Ask Children Questions as They Play

Ask children open-ended questions about their play. These are questions that don't have a right or wrong answer. You might say "tell me about it." Make sure children have a variety of materials, and make enough available. If one child wants a bucket that another one is using, it helps if you have another bucket to offer. Give your child a chance to tell others about what they did and what they learned through their play. In this way your child's self esteem is allowed to develop while



you are able to listen and marvel at the learning that has taken place.

The secret of education is respecting the pupil.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

Our Curriculum by Josie

Our Mamaku room has welcomed quite a few new children in the past few months. We therefore thought it would be helpful to write a newsletter article which explains our curriculum to answer some of the parents' questions that how we teach and how the learning occurs in TLC.

Like all other centres across New Zealand, we follow Te Whaariki, the New Zealand Early Childhood Curriculum in our teaching. It was officially released in 1996 and is now implemented in all ECE settings. Te Whaariki inspires us to teach children to become competent and confident learners and communicators, healthy in mind, body and spirit, secure in their sense of belonging and in the knowledge that they make a valued contribution to society. Te Whaariki supports the four principles of empowerment, holistic development, family and community and relationships and the five strands of wellbeing,

belonging, contribution, communication and exploration. It is vital to know that following Te Whaariki, we view children holistically and recognize their learning through play and interactions with the environment and other people at their own pace. When we say holistic, we mean that a child develops physically, intellectually, emotionally, socially, culturally and spiritually. They develop in all these areas *when they are engaged in child-initiated play* which is their primary way of learning or interacting with the environment and other people. *We believe the teacher's role is a facilitator, supporter and to provide resources that foster the children's interests.*

Another way to understand it is to take our recent example of the children's initiated interest of taking photos.

What do the children learn in this experience? When they learn how to take photos, they need to hold the camera up and press the button to shoot the objects. This is actually very challenging at the

beginning as they have to hold up their arms still but move their fingers with their eyes checking the screen. Often as the children are doing this, their arms will drop. That's why you can see most of the photos are half or part of the objects. Practicing helps them to figure out how to control their arms and hands and develop good *eye-hand co-ordination*. When taking photos, they learn about mathematics through *spatial awareness* and what angles to shoot. A couple of them have learned to step back to have whole objects in the pictures. In addition, this very social play provides them with rich chances to *collaborate, negotiate and cooperate* with each other since they take each other's photos often. Observing their interest and their learning, as teachers we extend the learning by offering them more chances to take photos, creating a photo wall so that they can either review their own work or see some other photos, communicating with parents of their interest and involving them in it, sending the children's work to the parents and etc.. In this cycle, we observe what new learning is happening and then decide where to go next from there.

This is a typical example how the children's learning is shown in their interests and through the play they initiate. This is a very empowering learning process whereby the children are given the choice to do what they like to do, in turn, their interest really drives them to explore things (camera in this example) with enthusiasm. Their exploration of the camera through repetitive practice, verbal and non-verbal communication with each other, and contribution to each other's learning all have a very positive influence in terms of *building up their knowledge, confidence and social skills for the development of their well-being* and creating life-long learners. As teachers, we don't intervene much in their learning except offering them more chances, resources or creating the means to make more learning happen. Our children remain independent and develop self-choice in their learning. To involve the family is one way that helps to foster their learning through partnership in our community.



Teaching... can be likened to a conversation in which you listen to the speaker carefully before you reply.

Mary C,ay

by Trisha

Welcoming New Kowhai

It has been a great opportunity and a wonderful privilege to welcome our new children to the Kowhais – Alex, Ava, Chloe, Ethan, Jacob, Poppy, and Stetson. It is amazing to see them settling well in their new environment, exploring their interests, and building relationships. Through their interactions with their teachers, peers, and the physical environment, I see them developing trust and a sense of security and belonging. I have to give a lot of credit to the children who have been in TLC for a while for supporting the teachers in creating such a warm, welcoming environment for our new Kowhais and their families. I am amazed at how having new children has offered opportunities for both new and “old” children to learn more about and demonstrate kindness, helpfulness, respect, trust, openness, and gratitude. It makes all of us happy to see all the children building and nurturing their relationships. Welcome to our new Kowhais and your whanau!

Kowhai Creating

Brigitte and I have observed a huge interest in construction among the Kowhai children – building with large and small wooden blocks, the magnetic puzzles, and the marble run. We have seen how the children’s creativity, imagination, and knowledge as well as their fine and gross motor skills translate into amazing constructions. We aim to continue to support this interest and make their learning visible to them. We will put up a documentation board for this. It would be great to hear your stories about how your child demonstrates this interest at home too. We welcome your ideas as to how we could further support their interest in construction. Thank you very much!



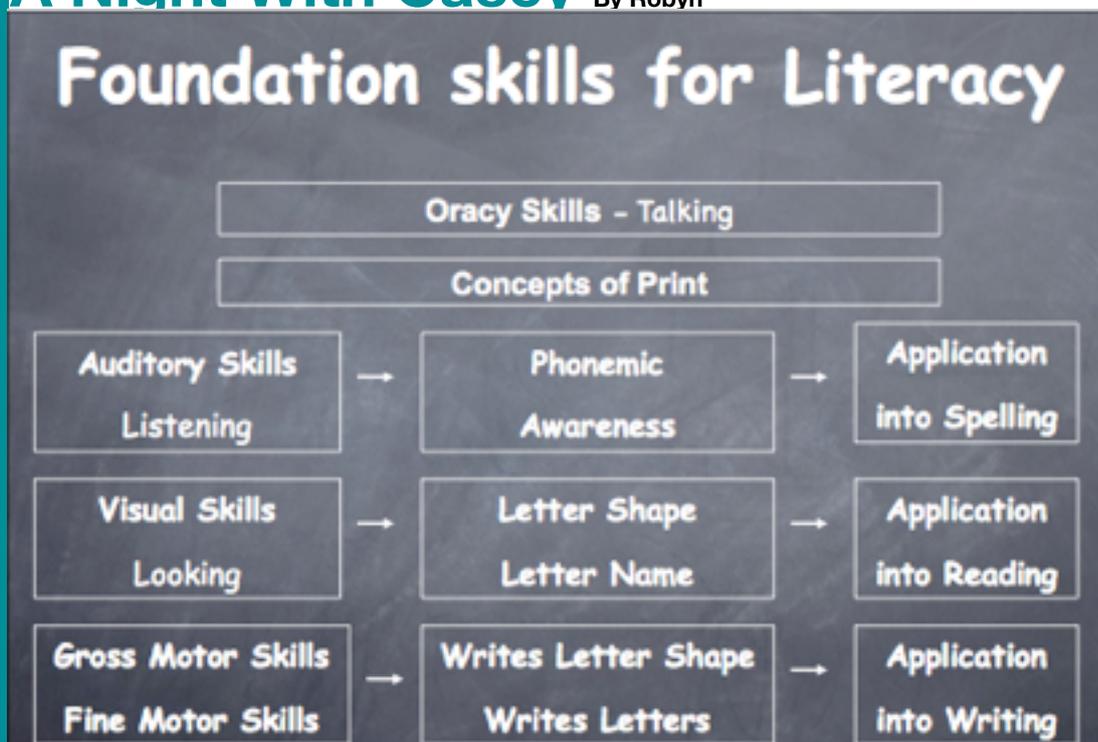
**Another
word for
creativity, is
courage**

George Prince

A Night With Casey By Robyn

If a seed of lettuce will not grow, we do not blame the lettuce. Instead, the fault lies with us for not having nourished the seed properly.

Buddhist Proverb



I felt thrilled to be a part of the buzzing parent evening that was held last Tuesday. Wanting our children to succeed is at the very heart of each one of us. The presentation Carla and I gave was drawn from the work of Barbara Brann, a specialist in the development of children's literacy. Barbara states *"Higher level cognitive tasks such as reading and writing are dependent upon the successful execution of sub-skills and the related tasks, many of which are motor tasks"*

Together we unpackaged the five foundational skills for literacy, Talking (Oracy), Moving (Motor), listening (auditory), Looking (Visual) and Concepts of print. We looked more closely at the skills and understandings that our children need before they are ready to write; how each of these five domains inter-connect and how we as parents and teachers can help develop these skills.

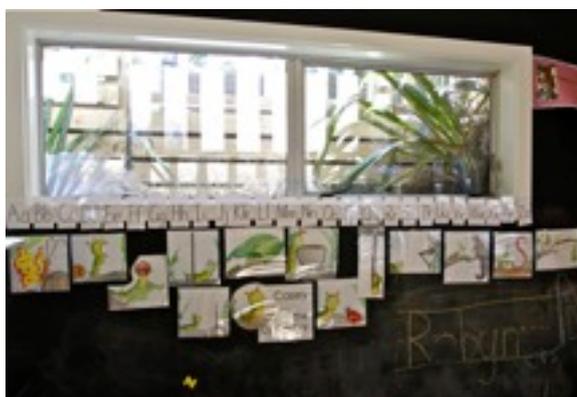
Coming from a position of knowledge and experience Barbara shares *"When children are exposed to formal instruction before they are 'perceptually ready', at some stage for their schooling they are likely to experience Frustration, Academic Confusion, Tension and Stress - the F.A.C.T.S of Learning Difficulties"*. Thinking back to last Tuesday I think I could confidently predict that for those who were nestled closely together in our Preschool, though they might forget all else, one slide will be imprinted on their minds

"A Solid Foundation Is Really

Important" It is in this context that Carla and I continually reflect on our teaching practice in the area of developing literacy. It's an ongoing challenge. Lets not support our children to run before they can walk. Lets find ways to develop the muscles that will eventually

be needed to hold a pencil correctly. Lets gain understanding as to why children mix up bs and ds and why balance, body awareness and strengthen impact on writing. It is imperative that we build a strong foundation. Casey of course was the star of the evening as we looked at one aspect of our programme at TLC - 'Casey Club'. 'Casey the Magic Caterpillar', the brain-child (or should I say Brain-caterpillar, haha) of Barbara Brann, is a story of a butterfly, caterpillar, possum, sticks, leaves written to make the shapes that we use to form letters familiar and meaningful. The illustrations are visual cues for the language skills. This book is one of the tools we use to support the children's emerging interest to make meaning of writing for themselves.

As we gain understanding of the development of literacy and work together to slow down the process we can help our children gain that solid foundation. It's a journey. I know for myself that in this journey of learning I learn faster and retain more if I am relaxed and enjoy the process. Although learning certain skills takes perseverance, when we have fun and see ourselves succeeding it gives us an appetite for more.



"If thou tastest a crust of bread, thou tastest all the stars and all the heavens."

Robert Browning

The Evolution of a TLC Baby Mash

Inspired By The Moon by Anne

I woke early this morning and decided to get up (5am) and get what I call, a head start on the day. The backyard was flooded with light; it was the moon in all its glory. Now at 6am it is totally dark outside, the moon is slowly going down. I've prepared the vegetables for the days cooking.

It's a working bee weekend for our daughter's DIY Rustic Eco Chic Country Wedding Celebration here where I live on the Kaipara, on 12th March in three weeks. The Wedding is small and intimate in Wellington on 24th of February.

We are using all the gifts and talents of family and friends. We are having a hangi using our own home grown beef and lamb. I have capsicums from my sister's garden ripening from green to red, (my sister is making the brides dress), I've been dead heading the basil to keep it flourishing in my son's and my garden, the bride and groom have been growing lots of different things in their garden, all for the wedding. We will use locally grown food and farmer's markets. Friends are helping with the cooking.

I'm cooking chickpeas at the moment to make hummus today. It's very easy to cook chickpeas so they don't give you gas as some of the canned chickpeas do;

1. soak 1 cup of chickpeas over night or for 6 hours covered well in cold water
2. strain and rinse chickpeas, put in a pot, then cover them well with cold water
3. bring to a boil, turn down heat to low and simmer for 40 minutes

Repeat steps 2 and 3. Each time you rinse the chickpeas the skins will float to the surface and can be skimmed off. Any remaining skins are so tender they just blend beautifully. Save some of the liquid for making hummus

To go with the hummus I'm including a fun recipe to make pita bread with the children. The bread only takes 30 minutes in a warm spot to prove, and 5 minutes to cook in the oven. The children can roll their own pita bread, and then watch through the oven door, as they puff up like a balloon during cooking. They need to be eaten on the day they are

cooked or frozen and reheated.

Horace's Lebanese Bread

From A New Zealand Country Harvest Cookbook, By Gilian Painter

- 3 teaspoons dried yeast
- 1-cup lukewarm water
- 1-teaspoon sugar
- 2 cups flour
- 1-tablespoon oil
- 1 ½ teaspoon salt

Combine the yeast, water and sugar in a bowl and beat vigorously with a whisk until all is combined and frothy. Then gradually add flour and oil and knead it until the dough is smooth and silky. Set it aside in a covered bowl for 30 minutes. Knock it back on a floured surface, sprinkle with the salt and knead that in. When thoroughly combined, divide the dough into 8 pieces and roll each piece out into a 12 cm round. Allow the bread to rest for 3-4 minutes on a floured cloth, then transfer to a baking tray and bake at 250 C for 5 minutes. Each circle puffs up like a balloon. Cool, wrapped in a cloth on a rack, before opening and stuffing with the filling of your choice.

Hummus

- 1 can chickpeas or 1 ½ cups cooked (drained, liquid reserved)
- 2 cloves garlic
- 2 teaspoons cider vinegar
- juice of 1 lemon
- 1 teaspoon EACH cumin, coriander & paprika powder
- 4 tablespoons olive oil
- 4 tablespoons chickpea liquid
- 1 heaped tablespoon Tahini paste
- 1 tablespoon tomato paste
- add more oil or liquid to form a smooth paste
- add more lemon to taste if needed

WHEN BLENDED stir in

- 1 tablespoon EACH fresh chopped coriander & parsley OR
- 1 teaspoon EACH dried coriander & parsley

Serve with corn thins OR baked toast OR raw vegetables such as carrot, celery sticks, blanched broccoli & cauliflower

Use as protein with pita bread, in wraps, or on toast



One hundred years from now, It will not matter what kind of car I drove, What kind of house I lived in, Or how much money I had in the bank, But the world may be a better place because I made a difference in a child's life.

Author Unknown

PVC News

PVC Responsibilities included: • Review Parent Communications • Organise TLC Community Events • Parents Voice / Champion, • Parents Voice for review of TLC Documents (e.g. Policy Reviews, Financial Report)

PVC Members

Minutes - Tanya Wigram:

tanya_diamond@yahoo.com

Chair - Tracy Duthie:

Tracy_Duthie@hotmail.com

Agenda -

KirstyBrownfield:kirstybrownfield@xtra.co.nz

Maree Lawrence

Gabrielle Matches

2011 Social Events

The PVC has planned the following Social Events for 2011:

- **APRIL - Family Sports Day**
- **Wed 22nd June - Matariki Fish & Chips Night - 5.00 - 7.00pm all whaanau invited.**
- **Thu 8th September - Art Auction**
- **Thu 15th December - Christmas Party**

The Next PVC meeting will be on Tuesday the 10th of February 7.30pm at TLC.

TLC Announcements & Notices

Summer Holiday Closedown

Last day of the year 24th of December.
Re-opens 10th January.

Other Dates For Your 2011 Calendar

Katherine, Robyn and I sat down to produce the TLC Annual Management Plan which amongst other things sets out key dates for the year. Dates you might be interested in are:

Parent Evenings:

- **February 22nd Casey The Caterpillar Literacy Club - All Welcome.**

- July - Over two's parent evening

- August - Under two's parent evening.

Exact dates and times TBC.

We also plan to carry out more **parent teacher interviews:**

- March - Upstairs Parent Teacher Interviews

- May - Downstairs Parent Teacher Interviews

- October - Whole Centre Parent Teacher Interviews

Parent Handbook Update Planned

We will be reviewing, updating and re-issuing our parent handbook during January and February next year. You may be asked to give permission for photos of your child. If you have any feedback about our current parent handbook, we would heartily welcome it.

Parent Teacher Partnership

Our teachers *beg you*, in partnership with them, to label/name your children's clothes. Robyn says "Even if it is just the initials, we are quite clever and can usually work it out". It is also another thing to support literacy!

Please Parents, Be Sun Safe

TLC asks that you apply sunscreen to your child before they come to TLC, as it can take half an hour for the sun-screen to become effective. Please make sure your child is sun-safe.

TLC Community Survey

The last minute timing of our TLC Community Survey has meant a low response rate. I really really want to give our community time to feedback before we close the survey and report on it, so I will print out some physical survey's ... but here is the link to put into your browser to respond on-line:

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/562W6VN>

Please please respond, what you think is very very important to us.

Feedback

Good? Bad? Ugly? Let us know what you think of our newsletter. What do you want more of, what do you want less of? email Marie@thelearningcentre.co.nz