

Winter 2017

ISSUE 1

# TLCZINE



POLITICAL PARTY ECE POLICIES

**Free Movement & Literacy**

SHOULD INFANTS WEAR SHOES?

**Toilet Learning**

TRANSITION FROM TLC

# IN THIS EDITION

This is our first newsletter for a while. The need for newsletters reduced with the implementation of Educa which we use for regular, and topical, updates. We asked you in our 2016 community survey if Educa replaced the need for newsletters, and you mostly said no, and it has been on our radar since then to 'reboot' the newsletter. I have decided our rebooted version is more of a magazine with articles, than a 'news'letter, and and 'rebranding' the format. I hope you like the result.

**Election Special** Marie has pulled together the different parties policies (or lack of them) with regards to early childhood education

**Shoes** Elena looks at how infant's feet develop and why we advocate for no shoes at TLC

**How Free Movement Supports Literacy** Laura writes about how free movement supports literacy

**Toilet Learning** In this article, Ania explains how our philosophy works with children and their toilet learning. Essentially *"trust that he will learn when he is ready. Respect is based on trust."* – Magda Gerber

**Sanna's ECE Journey** We asked Sanna for an article, because she writes so beautifully, here is her early childhood journey

**Transition From TLC** In this article, Amy and Ania have looked at that important next step for children when they leave TLC

**Notes from Elena's USA RIE Journey** We asked Elena to tell us about her trip to the USA in April, when she presented at the RIE conference and then visited other RIE inspired centres

**Children's Book Reviews** A few reviews of children's books by PVC member Rebecca Roughan

**Tadpole Soup** Tatum asked her mum Sian to get the recipe for Helen's Tadpole soup - so here it is

**TLC Dates for your diaries** Important upcoming TLC dates for you



23 SEPTEMBER 2017

The New Zealand general election is on the Saturday - don't forget to vote.

## Magda Gerber

BE CAREFUL WHAT YOU TEACH;  
IT MAY INTERFERE WITH WHAT THEY'RE  
LEARNING.

## Early Childhood Education Policy Comparison

New Zealand has a general election looming in September. For me, Education is one of the most important policies that I judge the parties on, particularly Early Childhood Education (ECE).

In my view, realistically, either National or Labour will form a government, with the support of either Act and the Maori party (National) or Greens (Labour). So to get a view as to how things might play out for ECE you need to look at the policies for the two big main parties, and they how those align, and might be influenced by their smaller party partners.

**National** - Under National, the primary goal for early childhood has been 98% participation. I see this as prioritising QUANTITY OVER QUALITY, which in my opinion is a huge mistake. This goal has driven all policy since 2008, and has had a huge impact on early childhood in New Zealand. It has meant that all budget increases have gone to fund more children attending ECE, and the programs which were driving quality of education have been cut, or eliminated. For example, the removal of the 100% qualified teacher funding, and the increase in maximum license size (which affects group size, a widely recognised key component of quality).

**Maori Party** - Their policy on ECE is “Increase access to kōhanga reo and universal early childhood education by increasing free 20 hours to 30 hours”. This fishtails neatly with National’s prioritisation of participation.

**Act** - Act’s policy for education does not even mention ECE. They seem mainly concerned with ensuring parental choice around schools (such as charter schools)

**Labour** - I emailed Chris Hipkins for this articles and he said PARTICIPATION AND QUALITY. He says that Labour will reinstate the funding for 100% qualified teachers and the centre of innovation programme, and look at the ratios and group sizes for under two year olds. They plan to consult widely with parents and the sector for a revised Nga Huarahi Arataki – Pathways to the Future, the 10 year strategic plan for ECE.

**Green Party** - Ticks ALL the right boxes for ECE, and one is reassured that if Labour is the winner, the Greens will keep them to their promises.

**The Opportunities Party (TOP)** - Is gaining ground rapidly with 2% polling now. They say that they will invest in ECE, and “free full-time early childhood education with a particular focus on improving quality in poorer areas”.

What non of the parties is talking about, at all, is the ratios or funding for two year olds, which is disappointing. Currently two year olds, who are still toddlers with similar care needs to under twos, have half the funding of under twos, and over threes. They also have the same required, ratios as over threes (1:10).

# GIVE ME A CHILD UNTIL HE IS 7 AND I WILL SHOW YOU THE MAN.

ARISTOTLE

## SO WHO ARE THE PARTY EDUCATION SPOKESPEOPLE?

**Nikki Kaye** Replaced Hekia Parata, (who stood down in May, and is not running in the September Election). It is too early to say if Nikki Kaye will change National's policies, there was certainly no change in the recent budget, and Nikki, very much held the party line that they were increasing funding when all the industry sector organisation, including the Early Childhood Council said emphatically that any budget increases went entirely to new participation.

**Chris Hipkins** is Labour's Shadow Leader of the House, and Labours Education Spokesperson. I emailed Chris for more details about the Labour policy, and he replied the very same day, reassuring me that they WILL return the 100% qualified teacher funding, and that they will prioritise BOTH participation and quality early childhood.

Chris says that they will develop a "10 year strategic plan for ECE, which we have committed to developing a new version of in consultation with the whole ECE sector"

**Catherine Delahunty** has been the Green Party Education spokesperson for a long time. And you look at their policy for early childhood, and it is spot on. As well as having policy for 100% qualified teachers, smaller group sizes for under 2s, and controls over maximum centre sizes, they also have a view on collaboration for best practice:

Create models to share best-practice and professional development between centres, including reinstating the Centres of Innovation program.

**Tracey Martin** (I think, it is not clear) the spokesperson for NZ First. Jean Rockel (retired ECE lecturer, who we respect greatly) says that she speaks well, and is very committed to special education.

**David Seymour** ACT Party Leader is the Parliamentary Undersecretary to the Ministers of Education.

	100% Qualified Teachers	License Maximum	Teacher to Child Ratios	Policy Priority
<b>National</b>	No	No	No Change	98% participation (quantity not quality)
<b>Labour</b>	Yes	Yes, no specifics yet	Yes, Under 2's	Qualified teachers, consultation for policy, group size and ratios for under 2s, access to ECE.
<b>Greens</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes, Under 2s	Equity of access
<b>Act</b>	Not stated	Not stated	Not stated	Enhance choice and diversity, and raise standards of achievement in education.
<b>Maori</b>	Not stated	Not stated	Not stated	Affordable, available and responsive and includes initiatives such as .. kōhanga reo and whānau led centres.
<b>NZ First</b>	Yes	Not stated	Yes, Under 2s	Quality as an urgent priority Playcentre & Kindergarten
<b>United Future</b>	Not stated	Not stated	Not stated	No education policy that I could find at all.
<b>TOP The Opportunities Party</b>	Not stated	Not stated	Not stated	Free full-time early childhood education with a particular focus on improving quality in poorer areas

# SHOES

ALL THE SUPPORT NECESSARY FOR MOBILITY COMES FROM WELL-TONED MUSCLES AND ANKLES, WHICH ARE BEST ACHIEVED BY LEAVING THE FEET FREE OF SHOES.

*I observed you walking on the deck tiles outside this morning and could not help but smile as you navigated your way from the sandpit to the deck. I often wondered why you hardly ever chose the steps. Instead you consistently set yourself the challenge of crossing the deck tiles nestled among the moss, bushes, bark and sand. You would stumble, trip over the edges and wobble on nature's debris. Sometimes the frustration got too much and your caregiver would step a little closer offering you a cuddle or words of encouragement. Your face, often scratched by the tickle of leaves and reeds that would only add to your woes. "Why does he struggle so?" She asked.*

I have come to know that **the lesson is in the struggle** as Magda Gerber reminds us, but so are the answers; especially for us who sit beside them. 'Look a little closer....the answer is in how he moves'. Children come into this world trying to find balance. Each unfolding of their motor development is with purpose. The length of time each child spends on each movement- their commitment to getting right in their own way and in their own time. Observing infants unfold into toddlers not only defines what I do, but also who I who I am. I value making time to observe this unfolding - especially as I have come to appreciate not only the milestones, but all the steps in between. Each one a foundation for what is to come. The time spent practicing, revisiting, and even regressing, a marker of quality. Through their efforts I have truly come to understand the nuances of freedom of movement and the value of time for uninterrupted play. Infants come into this world head first and spend most of their time on their backs, practicing and refining each movement, not moving to the next position until their muscles are strengthened...from the back, to the side, to tummy, rolling, crawling and creeping and soon the vertical world is looming. Their vertical mobility draws my attention to their feet.

*I looked at the ways you achieved balance; lifting your arms up. At first I wondered if your arms were held up to walk or if you were used to walking on your own? Your arms were mostly held at midriff - a good position to achieve balance. You swayed forward and backward like a tightrope walker. Your whole body moving to support you in balance rather than a light sway. Your focus and concentration on the task ahead. You even dropped the truck along the way as getting*

*to the deck now seemed your goal rather than bringing the truck to the deck? I looked to your feet and again I wondered?*

*"Take his shoes off...let him feel the earth with the soles of his feet, and listen to, and respond with his whole body". Look at you now though...she sees it too. The excitement on her face shows the joy she feels as you confidently shift and adjust your body; from the way you curl your toes to grip on the edge of the tiles, tread softly over the bark and with a firm foot on the sand.*

Children collect information and sensations through their senses. The vestibular system regulates balance and is very sensitive to subtle changes in position or movement. It is located in the inner ear and is responsible for maintaining equilibrium. It is what allows us to walk upright and in a straight line. The proprioceptive system is located in the joints, muscles and tendons - our extremities. It is the second largest sensory system. Every time children stretch their muscles, bend, straighten, pull and compress their joints - information is sent to the brain to help maintain normal muscle tone or tension and smooth motor movements....Proprioception provides information about where a certain body part is and how it is moving. It also provides the basis for knowing where our extremities are in space.

*I wondered whether you could feel the earth beneath your hard soled shoes? I wondered if you were trying to curl your toes as you gripped the edge of the wooden deck tile? I wondered if your body knew when to tread hard and when to go softly? What messages was your brain getting in learning how to move and maintain balance when you could not feel the earth beneath you and using only your eyes to guide you?*

*As an infant on your back you touched your toes. I wonder if you sucked them too? I've seen the pleasure this brings but did you know it sharpens your foot's sense of touch too?*

**Sensory experiences are crucial to development and children naturally seek out opportunities to engage in the environment with their senses.**



*As you got your self into to standing I noticed you rocking back and forth. You're finding and maintaining balance constantly. Testing - "Rocking puts pressure on the forefoot, hindfoot, and along the perimeter. The foot is becoming a delicate respondent to what the rest of the body is doing."*

*I wonder if you spent enough time cruising around the room? - Holding onto furniture and walls. Moving in a side step of sorts amongst others. "The variety of steps used in cruising--as opposed to the more restricted steps of forward walking--places weight-bearing forces on all parts of the foot and encourages stimulation to both the edges and the middle."*

These are some of the reasons why we leave off the footwear. Let you take full advantage of the tactile and sensory explosion that comes with mouthing, kicking the surfaces you lie on, pushing your body forward against walls and off the floor with only your toe pads and tips of your feet. As you become more mobile and start to rock, cruise, toddle and walk my wish is for you to experience a full range of surfaces, rocks, bark, sand, grass carpet, smooth, rough . Each surface a lesson in how to move and each different and dependent on the seasons. The messages to your brain; not only in how to make sense of this world but also crucial to how you move. It's these message that tell you when to tread softly after it has rained , not just the reminders to 'walk carefully because it's wet'. It's the wisdom to tread lightly after an injury, to curl your toes when you climb

over the A-frame and dig deep in the muddy top garden. To feel the world with your whole body - from your head through to your toes and back up - Free and unfettered. When I took off your shoes this morning and you walked outside, you scrunched up your nose and curled your toes. Your body is coming to know the cold and is adjusting itself accordingly. When I brought you inside and placed your feet in the warm bath you smiled, your feet flat and toes spread. These messages are important and will carry you through your adult life with and help you to be sure footed because your body will remember how to react with or without shoes.

*When you were born your feet differed from the adults around you - chubbier and different in proportion. Not all the bones completely formed - some cartilage yet to calcify and quite pliable. I wonder if you wore shoes as an infant - those soft soles? "Did you crawl out of them? - it is because your feet were so pliable that you were able too? I worry for our infants who wear the trendy soles that may be ill fitting and damage malleable bones.*

My own observations of children leans towards the notion that what we place on their feet may have a direct impact on their development. It is also why I advocate for bare feet where possible, loose clothing for infants where they can wriggle their toes. Where children should be in bed un-encumbered and blankets, if any, loosely tucked. Tight socks and booties are just as much of a concern, especially for infants.

## THE SCIENCE BIT

A Study examined the gait patterns of 18-to 30-month-old children as they toddled barefoot and then in a variety of footwear: flexible sneakers, high-tops, and leather-soled shoes found that **when unencumbered by shoes, the muscles become stronger, maintain better balance through toe grip and ankle reaction, and allow the arch to develop naturally.**

*I grew up in the era where sturdy shoes were a must as this kind of stiff footwear offered more support; built arches and keeps ankles straight! Yet, recent studies hold none of these claims as valid. Instead the research negates these beliefs "... the foot arch will only relax onto the shoe's arch, it doesn't develop on its own as well.... Even a child who retains her 'flat feet' may not be in for future problems....low arches tend to absorb the stress of running better than high arches, offering possible advantages in sports."*

It also argues that *"ankles do not need to be kept straight through artificial means. When children are old enough and strong enough to stand up and walk, their ankles will be strong enough to support their body. All the support necessary for mobility comes from well-toned muscles and ankles, which are best achieved by leaving the feet free of shoes."* Their words not mine but what a great advocate for freedom of movement, letting children develop at their own pace and in their own time. These are the underpinnings of our philosophy, especially in the motor unfolding of children, 'in their own time' allowing children to spend as much time as is needed for this muscle strength and tone to develop and our role to offer long periods of uninterrupted play to practice and revisit and in this context to leave them unfettered to feel the world with their whole being.

## 28 Bones

What a complicated piece of engineering the foot is! With 28 bones intertwined with ligaments, tendons, blood vessels, and muscles, and some 17,000 nerve endings on the sole alone, it is designed for sophisticated transport. It senses the variable terrain beneath us and adjusts to the changes, carrying us with balance, grace, and precision from point A to point B. The foot masterfully absorbs the shock of impact--equal to five times our body weight when we run--yet, it is flexible enough to come up on tiptoe.

A baby's feet are not exactly like those of an adult. They differ in proportion and look chubbier. In fact, the arch often appears flat, both because it is obscured by fat and because it is not fully chiseled out until the child is walking and exercising the foot's muscles. Once the fat pad disappears--by the age of three or so--the arch usually becomes visible.



Only when a child begins hitting the trail outdoors or engaging in sports is supportive footwear recommended.

## 17,000 Nerve Endings

“As for shoes, prevailing opinion has veered sharply away from the theory that the rigid-sole, stiff-leather high-top is best for baby. Experts are now recommending flexible footwear. But the best "shoes" by far are the ones a baby is born with-- just plain soles” .

“the foot in its natural, unrestricted form is mobile and flexible and free of the structural problems so often encountered in shoe-wearing populations”



# FREE MOVEMENT & LITERACY

SO, WHAT DOES FREE MOVEMENT IN INFANTS AND BABIES HAVE TO DO WITH LITERACY?

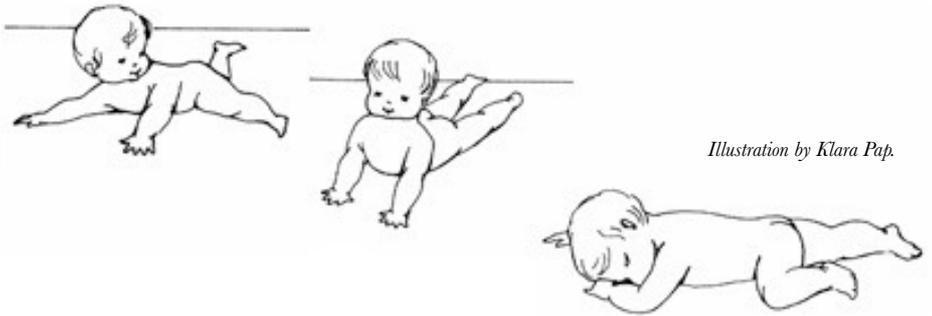


Illustration by Klara Pap.

**Free Movement is “natural movement initiated by the infant from birth. By ‘movement’ we mean how the baby moves her body, and whether she is allowed to move it by herself or if she is assisted by adults into positions.”** Maureen Perry

**“each milestone of motor development is reached by the infant’s own initiative as a result of his own efforts.”** Anna Tardos

Even when a child is in their mother's womb they are experiencing a sense of movement. From the moment that child is born, he or she uses their body to physically engage with the world. The sheer joy, exhilaration and learning a child experiences from being physically active is dynamic and foregrounds how we function and express ourselves as human beings. Infants and babies are constantly discovering a myriad of magnificent ways their bodies work as they play. An environment that seeks to embrace self directed movement, fosters a child's innate desire to explore and to learn about their body and the objects around them. Janet Lansbury (RIE Associate), a strong proponent of RIE practices worldwide, shares in a current article that recent studies have shown the invaluable connection between physical activity and cognitive function in young children. Janet highlights that **“exercise builds muscle, increases coordination, strengthens immunity, speeds up metabolism, elevates moods and activates the mind...”** (...).

Retrospectively, the positive effects that free movement have upon literacy feed into all of these very important areas. A baby's ability to move freely helps him to develop strong core muscles and gross motor skills. When a baby creeps on his tummy or crawls on his hands and knees, he is using his body in a cross lateral pattern. **Cross patterning connects the left and right side of the brain which encourages laterality and is a precursor to walking, running and of course, reading and writing.** (...). As this motion is

taking place, the baby is using his eyes to vertically track where he is headed. The convergence of vertical and horizontal eye tracking is essential for reading and writing as these are fundamental movement patterns that later transcend to developing hand and eye dominance, as well as hand and finger control. Finger control ability becomes more refined as a child works towards a correct three finger tripod pencil grip, which he uses to cross the midline simultaneously with both hands. In order to effectively control arm movement, a child must already have developed the muscle tone and stability in his trunk in his earlier years. Once this is strong and a solid base has been practised and established, the arm and hand are free to make more precise and coordinated movements.

Whenever I see a baby sitting or laying ever so peacefully on the floor turning through the pages of a book, it really makes my heart sing. I wonder whether they're interested in the imagery, or the way the pages turn from left to right, perhaps the sound of the pages? Is there is an element of anticipation or surprise as to what the next page holds? Is it how the book feels or sounds, the weight of the book or the immense concentration and coordination that goes into activating the fine motor skills of their hands and fingers in order to turn the page. Research makes it clear that very young children are actively engaged in 'meaning'. What is the meaning of this story for this child? Isn't it so interesting that when we observe a child reading, they could be engrossed and intrigued by the book for many different reasons. For a child to have acquired the strength in their trunk and spine to sit in an upright posture while reading, is a skill in itself! It is essential infants and babies are provided with environments rich in opportunity for representation and symbolic play through offering an abundance of books everyday. A colleague of mine reiterated to me, it all starts with the body, and it absolutely does! When children are trusted to be competent with their bodies at such an early age, they get to practice these skills over and over. They make their own unique meaning and narrative of what each reading experience means to them.

# TOILET LEARNING

“LEARNING TO USE THE TOILET IS A PROCESS THAT TAKES TIME. RATHER THAN PUSH OR MANIPULATE YOUR CHILD BY GIVING HIM TREATS SUCH AS CANDY OR A SPECIAL REWARD FOR SOMETHING THAT HE WILL LEARN TO DO ON HIS OWN, TRUST THAT HE WILL LEARN WHEN HE IS READY. RESPECT IS BASED ON TRUST.”

– MAGDA GERBER

Our approach to toilet learning is very much in line with our approach to sleeping and eating. We believe that we have certain responsibilities (sharing information about the toilet or providing healthy food options to choose from or a comfortable space for a child to rest and find sleep). But we do not force a child to eat, to sleep or to go to the toilet - these are the things that a child is in charge of because ultimately we want children to listen to their bodies and come to know their own rhythms. It is our role to provide the conditions to help these things happen rather than be seen as enforcers of when, how much and how often. Toilet learning should be a natural and gradual process that develops at the child's pace, rather than when the adults decide the child is going to be toilet 'trained'.

Toilet learning begins with nappy changes. We explain to the child what we are doing and allow them time to cooperate. Sending them the message from the very beginning, that this is their body, they are involved and will one day be in charge of the process. They are active participants in their care rather than passive recipients. We remain neutral and matter of fact when talking about poos and wees. This is why we do not talk about 'dirty' nappies and 'make faces'. We want children to see this as a natural process that is nothing to be ashamed of. The downstairs stand up nappy change table is at floor level and provides an excellent opportunity for transitioning children to be able to see their older peers using the toilet and go over and have a practice turn on the toilet. For many their interest is piqued by the toilet itself, the flush, the toilet paper and how to sit on the seat.

## **There are three areas of readiness when it comes to toilet learning; physical, cognitive and emotional.**

The child needs to be able to physically hold on while busy and to be able to let go when on the toilet i.e. bladder and bowel control. These may also not occur at the same time. Fine motor development is key for being able to pull their pants up and down is also an important skill and one that we allow children to practice during nappy changes. It can be frustrating for a child that is learning this new skill, to make it to the bathroom but not be able to get their pants undone on time. We do ask parents to bring in pants that are easy to take on and off, preferably with an elastic waist and not buttons and zips.

Cognitively the child needs to have an awareness of when they need to go, being able to interrupt their play in order to make it to the toilet. This involves keeping two ideas in mind at the same time, being busy playing but also being aware of their bladder. This is a specific developmental stage and there is no way to teach it. Some signs might be a child stopping what they are doing to announce that they need to make 'wees' or 'poos'. The upstairs toddlers, who are learning to listen to their bodies are quick to tell us that they have made 'wees' or 'poos' but usually with little control of when. With time they come to know the difference and to have better control of when.

Emotionally, they need to feel ready to take responsibility – and it can feel like a big responsibility to hold on and make it to the toilet on time. Because toddlers are in the process of working on their autonomy, pressure to use the toilet might result in flat out refusal.

When the child is ready and wants to use the toilet the whole process can be easy and stress free. In most instances children are physiologically ready before they are emotionally ready and waiting is therefore key as self-esteem and confidence come into play. Children deserve to own this accomplishment - the 'I can do it' that comes with the increasing autonomy of toddlerhood rather than a power play.

## **Regression is normal...**

Sometimes children will ask for a nappy after keeping completely dry while wearing undies, I'm reluctant to call this a 'regression', more just time off from practicing this new skill. I have noticed that a lot of children, when they have a nappy, will use it, even though they are capable of keeping their undies dry. I think it is going back to the familiar; they understand their nappy will catch the wees. I think in these times it's important to remember that this doesn't undo any previous learning. If they have mastered holding on, letting go and listening to their bodies, those skills are still all there, they haven't been unlearned and will still be there when the child chooses to wear undies again.

We continue to be neutral around nappy changes (actually we see these times as important, enjoyable moments for one to one connection), never saying 'yuck' or 'smelly', that way there is no shame or sense of failure when we say, "you're having a hard time remembering to go to the toilet today, let's put on a nappy". This isn't a punishment or a consequence, it's simply a break from trying something new, going back to the familiar if a child is tired or focused on other things and struggling to think about their bodily sensations.

The process of toilet learning can look different for different children. Sometimes they will do lots of practicing at TLC – taking themselves off for a nappy change without a teacher and changing their own wet nappy – to some children being more reluctant to use our toilets and preferring the familiar when away from home. We have had a couple of children that wore underwear at home but chose to be in a nappy at TLC for some time. When they did finally come in underwear, they would sneak into the bathroom when no one was looking!

Please let us know if you would like any more information. Your child's key teacher will feedback when your child is showing an interest in the toilet at TLC. Our nappy chart has a key so that you can see if they have been toilet or attempted to go.

This approach of toilet learning, rather than toilet training was researched over many years at the Pikler institute, where they would leave it up to the child to initiate the process. They found through their research, that the average of the children that were competently using the toilet was the same as the average age of children that had been 'trained'

***“Learning to use the toilet is a natural process that begins when your child's desire to be grown up and his neurological development have reached the point where he can control his bladder and bowels. We don't train children to use the toilet, we support them when they are ready.” Tim Seldin***

## SANNA'S ECE JOURNEY ..AND BEYOND...

I started working with young children when I was 18 years old. At that time in the world (and still today too), society was still dictating to a certain degree that children were generally only capable of understanding 'baby talk', one or two word commands, and they certainly weren't deserving of personal choice, having ideas and feeling autonomy. I had other ideas about this, having finished working alongside a family in Germany who taught me many, many things about young children and their capabilities.

When I returned to New Zealand, one of the first jobs I had while waiting for my studies to start (I was going to be a world famous fashion designer, don't you know), was for a small ECE centre doing relieving, earning \$12.50 per hour 'playing' with children. On my first day, I could see and feel on that rare sunny Wellington day that it was hot outside so I moved towards a young child, who was about 12 months old at the time. I said to her "Lily, it is hot out here! Can I help you take off your jersey?" She looked at me and paused, then raised her arms and 'told' me using perfect non-verbal communication that yes, yes I could help her take off her jersey. Another teacher nearby heard and saw this interaction and said, "I usually don't ask them if I can help them, I just help them. They can't talk back, can they?" I was silently horrified at what she had said. This was a qualified professional working alongside young children who probably got paid double my hourly rate (she being one of the few teachers at the time to have a degree in ECE education). Did she really think so little of a child that she couldn't offer Lily the same respect she would another adult? I thought about this interaction a lot over the next few weeks and decided that the children I worked alongside deserved intelligent, thoughtful, respectful and reflective humans to be with them when their parents could not. So when I was offered a job at an ECE centre, I put all my fashion dreams on hold and embarked on a degree in Education.

Fast-forward 17 years (*whaaaaaat?!*) and I found myself the mother of three young children (*also – whaaaaat?!*) and desperate to return to the job I love. Elena asked me how I would feel returning to TLC after Suski was born - not into the downstairs area with the big children as I always had been...but into the Weka room with two year olds and almost two year olds. Back full circle to where I began after not being with this age group for years. I was pretty positive I couldn't do it, more importantly did I actually want to be with this age group instead of my wild, imaginative 4 year olds who had grown so much in the year I had been away of maternity leave? I had always worked alongside older children, I was good at it and I was passionate about it. And Elena both scared and impressed me in equal parts with her wisdom, intelligence and vast knowledge of this younger age group. My choice in the matter was taken away from me anyway – there was no other position at TLC that suited my needs and the needs of the centre. Two year olds and almost-two-year-olds it was then.

I didn't sleep for about a week before I went back to work. I fretted about the language I would use. Would I say or do something stupid? I had anxiety about keeping up with them. Would I be exhausted and would I have enough left to give at the end of the day for my own children? I was over-analysing and under-valuing my skills. I questioned if the children would even like me after baring witness to the absolute love and admiration they have for Laura and Elena.

Which of course was all a huge and complete waste of time. From the very first day of working with this age-group I was reminded of how much I value routine and what that feeling of security within a routine means for the Weka children. Elena and Laura gently reminded me of the routines and the way things were done around the all-important care routines. There was never a single issue with communication because oh my god do these children communicate! I had forgotten about how much love and happiness I experienced the first time around working with this age group. I was in love.

I so looked forward to coming to work two days per week – their routine was as soothing for me as it was for them. I valued their growing independence yet adored it when they just wanted to sit down and cuddle. I admired the teachers' ability to recognise when the children needed space and time to practice self-regulation. I loved the children's enthusiasm for my ridiculous guitar skills, and their readiness to try new songs, and respected the wishes of those children who preferred to stand back and watch. Their individual preferences and ideas and thoughts and ways of doing things – I loved it all.

I am always confused by people who complain about the 'Terrible Two's' – two year olds are not difficult to read – they always have a reason for their frustration/sadness/anger – it is our job to learn to read them, be present and allow feelings to come.

Working and playing alongside Madeline, Logan, Ivy, Francesca, Henry, Arno, Olivia, Vivienne, Oscar, Harriet, Remy and Laura reconnected me with my past, and for that I am so thankful.

I have taken some time out of teaching regularly to focus on the needs of my nutty family, but I am always hassling Elena about letting me come and do relieving upstairs as much as I am able, generally she giggles and reminds me about the time not so long ago that I was dreading working with two year olds.



**"MORE MUSIC SANNA?"  
LANE AGE 22 MONTHS**

# TRANSITION FROM TLC

EDUCATION IS NOT THE FILLING OF A PAIL,  
BUT THE LIGHTING OF A FIRE.  
WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS

Having your special TLC farewell and taking the next step in education, can bring a myriad of emotions. Tears glistening in your eyes, struggling to be held back, excitement with a tinge of nerves, hands squeezed tight with uncertainty; and that's just the parents! For both child and parents, the next transition after TLC is a monumental milestone. Parents all approach this differently. Some with eagerness, some with grief that those precious early years are gone, with their safety net of TLC taken away. No feeling is right or wrong, it just reflects the unique personalities we have and how we react to change. Your child will look to you to gauge the situation. If they see you nervous or tearful this will leave them with the feeling of anxiety. Equally talking about school all the time and being over excited can put a lot of pressure on this change too. It's a hard balance to find!?

Choosing the right path of education can be tricky too! Alongside a few TLC parents (thank you!). We have put together some facts, tips and support links to help support this transition.

Children can start school or kura in New Zealand anytime between the ages of 5 and 6. Many families have chosen to keep their children at TLC for a little longer after their 5th birthday. This has proven to be beneficial. It is also common for children to take the (optional) B4 School Check. This is a nationwide programme offering a free health and development check for 4-year-olds. This can be done through Plunket or at your local doctors.

## **The new education act comes into effect this month and it's worth noting the change in compulsory attendance;**

Compulsory attendance has been introduced through the updated Education Act and requires that children regularly attend school once they are enrolled. Previously, regular attendance applied only to children aged between 6 and 16 years.

Before a child is enrolled at school, parents/whānau will need to consider whether their child is ready to regularly attend. Parents can continue to decide on a later transition to school based on their child's maturity and readiness, as the legal age for starting school has not changed from 6 years." Ministry of education

## **Local schools**

Many children go to a school close to where they live. Many schools have an enrolment scheme called zoning. If you live in

an area close to a school (the school's zone), your child is guaranteed to get a place at that school. If you want your child to go to a school outside the area where you live, you may have to apply and a place is not guaranteed.

## **State, state-integrated and private schools**

Most schools in New Zealand are owned and funded by the state. They teach the national curriculum and are secular (non-religious). There are 2 other types of schools - state-integrated and private. These are schools with a special character. They may have their own sets of aims and objectives to reflect their own particular values. They may teach a specific philosophy or religion. State-integrated schools are schools that were private and have become part of the state education system. They are funded by the government and teach the national curriculum. You will pay compulsory attendance dues. Private schools get some government funding but are mostly funded through charging parents school fees. They develop their own learning programmes and do not have to follow the national curriculum.

## **Māori-medium education (Kura Kaupapa Māori)**

Kura Kaupapa Māori are schools that teach in Māori and education is based on Māori culture and values. They are owned and funded by the state, and they teach the national curriculum for Māori-medium schools, Te Marautanga o Aotearoa. Many kura are composite schools - they have both primary and secondary departments (they teach Years 1-13).

## **Special education**

The vast majority of children and students attend their local school or early learning centre and learn and achieve alongside their peers. Additional support and funding is put in place based on individual needs. There are also other options within the education network including special schools

## **Home and distance learning**

If attending a school is currently not the best option - you might live a long way from the nearest school, travel overseas or have other reasons - your child can learn with New Zealand's Correspondence School Te Aho o Te Kura Pounamu. Correspondence School Te Aho o Te Kura Pounamu teaches early childhood, primary, secondary and special needs students. It uses multimedia and online learning. Your child can also study one or two courses if a subject they want to study is not available at their school.

# TRANSITION FROM TLC - CONTINUED

## Home Education

In New Zealand, all children aged between 6 and 16 years of age are required to enrol in and attend a registered school. Home education is where parents or legal guardians take responsibility for the education of their children, instead of enrolling them in school.

If you, as a parent or legal guardian, wish to educate your child at home, you must first get approval from your local Ministry of Education office.

If you get approval to home educate, you will receive a Certificate of Exemption from Enrolment at a Registered School. This indicates you are legally responsible for providing, supervising and monitoring your child's learning programme.

If you want to home educate more than one child, a separate Certificate of Exemption is required for each child.

Home educating is not the same as enrolling a child with Te Aho o Te Kura Pounamu – Te Kura (formerly called the Correspondence School), which is a registered school. Enrolment with Te Kura is only available to students in certain circumstances. The Te Kura website has information on enrolling with them. Home educators can access subjects at Te Kura on a fee-paying basis. Home educators who choose this option retain the overall responsibility for the education of their child.

## National curriculum

The national curriculum covers subjects that are taught at primary and secondary schools and the standards students should reach in each subject. Your child's primary education will focus on foundation learning across a range of subjects and competencies but especially in literacy and numeracy. Schools that teach in the English language use the New Zealand Curriculum. Schools that teach in the Māori language use Te Marautanga o Aotearoa (a curriculum based on Māori philosophies).

## 'School readiness'

The term 'school readiness' can hold different definitions. Through TLC's philosophy, teachers focus on 'life readiness'. Te Whāriki, New Zealand's early childhood curriculum, expectation is that, in their early years, children will experience a curriculum that empowers them as lifelong learners. Such as, manage self-care, communicate, be confident, independent, socially aware and self regulate. Children are, "Competent and confident learners and communicators, healthy in mind, body and spirit, secure in their sense of belonging and in knowledge that they make a valued contribution to society". A happy, capable, competent learner with a positive disposition and willingness to learn. These personal, social and emotional attributes are all what helps a child to be school ready. Most children will learn to read and write, and evidence tells us it actually makes no difference whether they learn at 3 or 7. What research does say however is that those who learn at their own pace, tend to read more for pleasure later in life, thus life long learners.

Talk to your child about their up and coming transition. Discuss any changes that have happened at TLC as other friends leave for school. Talk about what you do at school, which is different from TLC. You could read books, which have school themes or tell stories of your schooling days!! Familiarity, have visits to the school on the weekends to play in the playground and have a

wee walk around. Get familiar with the school run and surroundings. Take part in any school community events.

Talk to the teacher about your child

When teachers know children well they are better able to support their learning. The teacher might also appreciate you sharing your child's portfolio. This will give the teacher valuable information about your child's learning, and can also link up your child's early childhood, home and school or kura experiences.

Noho ora mai rā, nā

Amy



## School Visits

More the merrier! We can also come along and support your child during a school visit, making positive connections between TLC and School.

Visits are all about creating a familiarity for the child and an understanding of what happens in the classroom for the parent. Some schools aim to make your child feel special on their school visit, perhaps give them a special place to sit or maybe a hat or badge to wear. Other schools will treat your child like any of the other students in the class, slotting them in as if they had been there before. Whichever way your school approaches school visits what happens in the classroom while you are there should be what would happen on any given day. This being the case you are likely to see or have the following things happen

- Roll call
- Mat time and white board work
- News time – an opportunity for students to share news with their classmates
- Shared reading – teacher reading to students
- Letter recognition work on the board
- Individual deskwork – possibly copying and creating a letter or letters in books.



School visits typically run the full morning through to lunchtime. Again this depends on how your school prefers to structure them. They are usually long enough for your child to have a chance to have either morning, afternoon tea or lunch at the school giving them chance to understand how eating at school works.

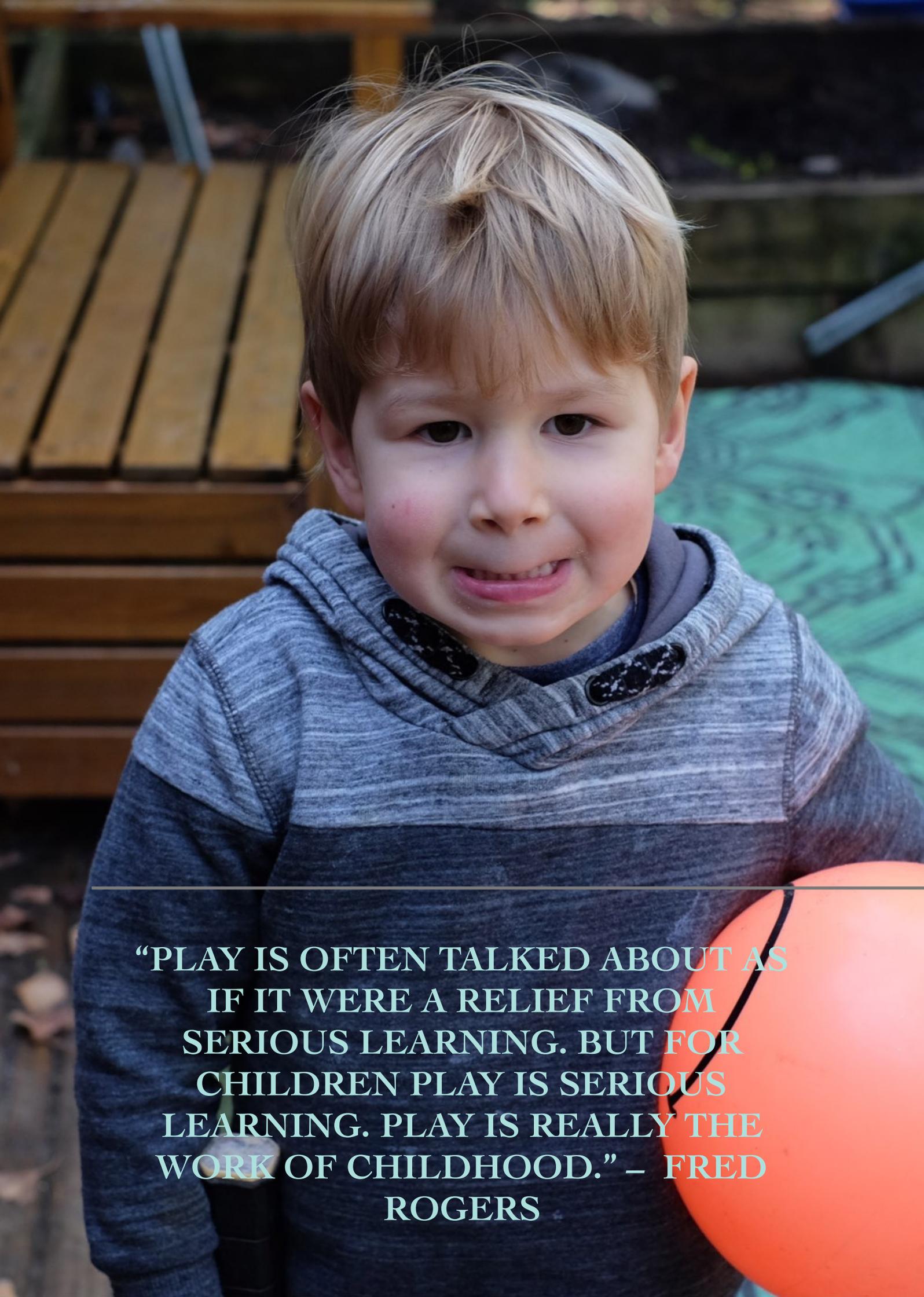
Feel free to have a look at this checklist from the ministry website for practical ideas: [https://parents.education.govt.nz/primary-school/your-child-at-](https://parents.education.govt.nz/primary-school/your-child-at-school/)

## Useful Links

<https://education.govt.nz/early-childhood/teaching-and-learning/ece-curriculum/transitions-in-ece/>

<https://parents.education.govt.nz/primary-school/your-child-at-school/enrolling-and-starting-your-child-at-school/>

<https://education.govt.nz/>

A young child with light brown hair, wearing a grey hoodie, is holding an orange ball. The child is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. The background is slightly blurred, showing wooden slats and a green patterned surface.

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“PLAY IS OFTEN TALKED ABOUT AS  
IF IT WERE A RELIEF FROM  
SERIOUS LEARNING. BUT FOR  
CHILDREN PLAY IS SERIOUS  
LEARNING. PLAY IS REALLY THE  
WORK OF CHILDHOOD.” – FRED  
ROGERS

## NOTES FROM ELENA'S JOURNEY TO THE RIE CONFERENCE AND BEYOND...

It's been a few months and I still struggle to describe the impact of my journey the USA. I do not use the word 'journey' loosely for it was a turning point in many respects. The kind where you look back on the past, embrace the good, the bad and then let go before facing the future. The main purpose - Polly had invited me to co-present alongside her at the RIE conference in Los Angeles. The topic, infants and toddlers as researchers and our role in it but I also had a strong desire to see how this philosophy played out in other centres and in other contexts.

It seems my mentor knows me well for these visits tapped into my passions and vulnerabilities. The first a lack of confidence to facilitate parent infant classes. "Ania, can do those...I'll work with the teachers" I am known to say. Yes, much of this has to do with her practice and innately gentle ways but if I am to be honest it's more about my own insecurities. I have none that call me 'mother' and therefore I am worried about being seen as credible, believable and most of all authentic. How can I facilitate a class for parents when I have no children of my own and the experiences that come from this to draw upon? I have been confronted with this on a handful of occasions over the years. The first time struck a chord so deep but I have come to realise that it is an honest question and that parents always want the best for their children. Now, in these moments I stay silent; my cue to listen - to try and understand what it was about my actions or words that caused this 'lashing' out; in the hope of treading more gently in future. I've had to confront my past and make peace with it in the hopes that I can add value, listen with compassion and most of all be seen as trusting and trusted. I walked away more confident that I can bring my authentic self to any moment and that I can pepper them with my own personality. Therefore I am more open to the notion of facilitating a parent infant class; even if only for TLC parents as an orientation into our philosophy and our ways of being with children.

There is another truth though that few know. That although I have not had the privilege of being called 'mother' this does not mean that I have not experienced some of the situations or been confronted with some of the decisions that come with being a parent. To know what exhaustion looks like, to respond heatedly because of my own stresses and tiredness, to let 'the rules' fall by the wayside for a moment of peace. To nestle beside and watch their chest rise and fall so can feel their breath on your cheek. The guilt and pressure about so many things this all whilst trying too run a home alone. I only wish I knew then what I know now. Then perhaps some of the concerns I had around the developmental charts, and as they grew older around school, subject choices and university would fall by the wayside. Now I just ask if they are happy? These are the children of my heart and they have proven themselves to be resilient in this changing world. I know them to be compassionate, loving and kind. So yes, while I am not 'mother' and I cannot truly know what it is to a mother this surely does not lessen my ability to listen with compassion, to be the objective one when subjectivity prevails? My arms are no less loving, my heart no less forgiving.

The teachers of Seattle opened their doors in kindness and with a spirit of generosity to share the work we do with children. My purpose, as Polly always reminds us, is not to evaluate the programme but to observe and to look for the 'spirit' of RIE. We are a critical lot - teachers that is and sometimes we forget to look at children for answers rather than focus on the adults. Unpacking what the 'spirit' looks like became more real especially when thinking of the many contexts. For example; what does

# "IT'S A BEAUTIFUL THING WHEN CAREER AND PASSION COLLIDE"

## UNKNOWN

freedom of movement look like for the homeless, primary care in a migrant community of seasonal work, uninterrupted play where playgrounds are shared and access is limited to two 45 minute trips a day, a world where centres might be open until 10 pm at night so that their parents can help with the emergencies of others, knowing that their children are cared for: I visited a daycare in the 'bowels of a fish market' as Polly likes to say but with a sense of community that I have yet to encounter. Through the eyes of the children, the rich diversity they encounter everyday, the sense of 'home' as I walked from room to room made my heart smile in so many ways. This despite the seemingly over regulated landscape they find themselves. Where everyday pedagogy is affected by legislation from the way children wash their hands even the very young that has teachers holding babies hands under taps rather than using cloths to the setup of the physical environment that made me appreciate just how much freedom we still have despite the recent changes in the health and safety act and ripples to playground safety.

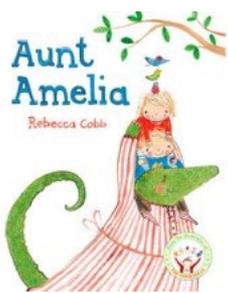
I came away with new ways of seeing, hopeful and excited to see to begin my internship but at the same time thankful and grateful to have found myself knocking at TLC's doors all those years ago. To be part of a committed team with shared values who truly embrace the notion of a caring curriculum rather than feel like a lone soldier. It was with honour I shared our stories and with grace I return ready to embrace this next part - The internship.

# BOOK REVIEW

CHILDREN ARE MADE READERS ON THE LAPS OF THEIR PARENTS.

EMILIE BUCHWALD

Finding books that suit Birdie's older (Tui) tastes and Zoë's developing appetite (she's in her last days as a Weka) - plus our tolerance for repetitiveness - can be difficult, but here is what's keeping us going at the moment (*Note - this was written in 2016 and not published at the time*)



### “Aunt Amelia” Rebecca Cobb

A cheeky story about two children being babysat by an Aunt who is suspiciously like a crocodile. She follows a list provided by the parents to the letter, but does the opposite to their instructions - much to the delight of the children (and our kids!). Fosters lots of spontaneous discussion about the disparity between the words of the

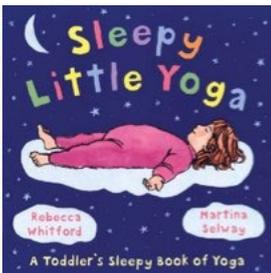
story and the pictures of the story. Plus, the smile from the fact everyone accepts that she is a crocodile!

### “Richard Scarry’s Best First Book Ever”



So I don't really like reading this one because it has no narrative, but the girls love examining the pictures and the little vignettes on each page. Zoë particularly enjoys this book, and the best bit is after a little shared reading she will happily look at the book by herself until lights out (bonus! Previous lights out required me being in bed until she fell asleep, hence my new favourite).

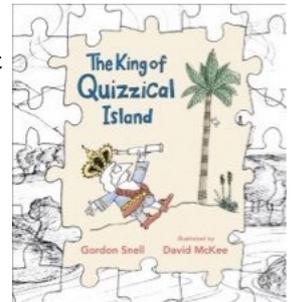
### “Sleepy Little Yoga” Rebecca Whitford and Martina Selway



This is another book that leads to independent reading after a few shared pages, and it gets us all in downward dog. Beautiful illustrations of each pose with a corresponding animal “Yoga baby .... Hangs upside down like a bat” and then photos of toddlers doing the poses at the back with a little explanation.

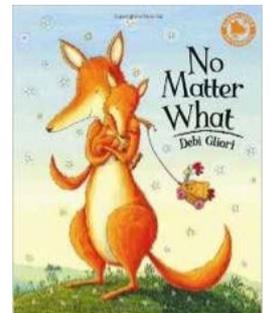
### “The King of Quizzical Island” Gordon Snell and David McKee

Greg's choice is an interesting tale of an adventuring King and his quest to the end of the world, only to decide it is round. Beautiful ideas from a parents' perspective, I really love the bit when he lands on jigsaw island and has to put the jigsaw together before he can move on. Better suited for Birdie, but Zoë will tolerate if sandwiched between two of her picks at bedtime.



### “No Matter What” Debi Glory

I love the pictures in this little story and the important message that we love our children no matter what. I use this book as a tantrum de-escalator, the distraction of the angry little fox and the story about how it is ok to be angry sometimes can turn tears into a giggle and a discussion about how to brush crocodiles' teeth (read it!)



Hope your whanau enjoy them too.



Zoe and Marlow

Recently, I had an email from Sian, asking for the recipe for Tadpole Soup (apparently Tatum had asked her mum to make this). We spoke with Helen, who had no idea. So, we asked Sian to go back to Tatum and find out a bit more - it turns out it was pea and ham soup - so here is the recipe that Helen used.

Cook a packet of split peas.

Cook a packet of frozen peas

Blitz them with 1 litre of chicken stock

Add 1 litre of Kara coconut cream

Dice and fry 2 packets of freedom farmed bacon

Add together and thicken with mashed potato and chopped parsley.

You can serve with garlic bread.

We hope this helps Sian and Tatum, and that you enjoy your Tadpole soup.

## Tadpole Soup



## Shopping List

Split peas

Frozen Peas

Chicken Stock

Coconut Cream

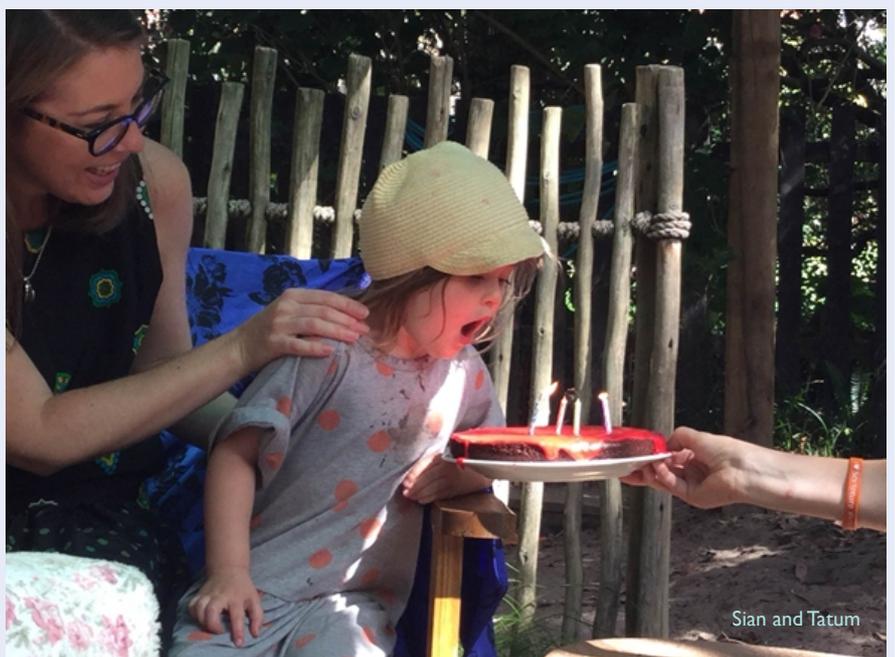
Freedom Farmed Bacon

Potatoes

Parsley

Garlic

Bread





“DO NOT KEEP CHILDREN TO  
THEIR STUDIES BY COMPULSION  
BUT BY PLAY.” – PLATO



"LET THE CHILD BE THE  
SCRIPTWRITER, THE DIRECTOR  
AND THE ACTOR IN HIS OWN  
PLAY."- MAGDA GERBER

## TLC DATES

**AUG** SEE ELENA FOR DATES  
Weka Parent Teacher Interviews

**AUG** 28 AUGUST  
Centre wide transition

**SEP** THU 22 SEPTEMBER  
Upstairs parent evening - topic -  
RIE principles & caregiving

**NOV** SEE ELENA FOR DATES  
Kākano Parent Teacher Interviews

**NOV** THU 9TH NOVEMBER  
Parent Evening with Polly Elam RIE  
President

**FEB** THU 22ND FEBRUARY  
Downstairs Parent Evening - topic  
- how the curriculum areas look at  
this age

**MAR** THU 22ND MARCH  
Upstairs Parent Evening - topic -  
how the curriculum areas look at  
this age

## UPCOMING SOCIAL

**SEP** SEPT DATE TBC  
Father's Day social event @  
Brothers Beer RSVP  
[sanna@thelearningcentre.co.nz](mailto:sanna@thelearningcentre.co.nz)

**OCT** THURS 19TH OCT  
Grandparents &  
Special Person Afternoon Tea

**DEC** THURS 7TH DECEMBER  
End of Year Party

## TLC CLOSEDOWN

**22** 5.30PM FRIDAY 22ND DEC  
Normal hours on the Friday

**04** 7.30 THURSDAY 4TH JAN  
Normal hours on the 4th. Charges  
will only apply on the 4th and 5th  
of January for children who attend.

Normal invoicing recommences  
from Monday the 8th of Jan.

The Learning Centre  
96 Vermont Street, Ponsonby, Auckland, 1011  
<http://thelearningcentre.co.nz>  
[enquiries@thelearningcentre.co.nz](mailto:enquiries@thelearningcentre.co.nz)

**A good enough parent, is good enough.  
Caregivers must be excellent.  
Magda Gerber**