



Philosophy Statement of the Playcentres in North Shore Playcentre Association

The centres in North Shore Playcentre Association are part of a national organisation, the New Zealand Playcentre Federation Incorporated. The New Zealand Playcentre Federation is a national organisation made up of 33 Associations representing all 496 affiliated Playcentres¹ which provide high quality early childhood education programmes for children and their families throughout Aotearoa/New Zealand. Families are empowered to work together to provide positive learning experiences for the children in a co-operative setting. Each Association is responsible for the Playcentres and the training in their area with meeting requirements of NZ Qualifications Authority and Ministry of Education, ensuring recognition of local needs and circumstances, and operating within an agreed national philosophy and standards.

¹. NZPF Statistics 31 August 2006

Mission Statement

Quality Early Childhood Education – a co-operative whānau/family experience.

The New Zealand Playcentre Federation fulfils its mission through the integrated provision of:

- Early Childhood Education Centres
- Adult Education
- Educational Publications

Fundamental Principles

The New Zealand Playcentre Federation acknowledges Te Tiriti o Waitangi as the founding document of Aotearoa New Zealand.

The New Zealand Playcentre Federation endorses the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of the United Nations (1971) which proclaims that all of the human family, without any distinction of any kind, has equal and inalienable rights of human dignity and freedom to education and training to enable development of people's abilities to their fullest potential.

The New Zealand Playcentre Federation acknowledges that Te Tiriti o Waitangi is an agreement between two peoples – Tangata Whenua and the Crown. Policies and operation of this organisation will seek to reflect Tino Rangatiratanga and Kawangatanga.

New Zealand Playcentre policy, programmes and management procedures are based on a number of underlying values.

New Zealand Playcentre Federation believes:

1. The whānau/family, as the fundamental unit in the community, is to be valued, promoted and supported as the most important setting for the nurture and education of our children.
2. Children have the opportunity to reach their full potential when whānau/ parents /caregivers understand their development and take part in their learning



experiences. Whānau / parents /caregivers and children learning and growing together is a creative combination.

3. An early childhood education service, run co-operatively by member families, provides a positive early childhood education option relevant to the New Zealand setting.
4. Parents can expand their skills and make a positive, professional contribution to high quality early childhood education services when empowered with appropriate training and support.
5. High quality early childhood education experiences for our children, with the active involvement of whānau/ parents /caregivers, are an essential and valuable investment in the future of our children.
6. The effectiveness of early childhood education programmes and the related learning environment are enhanced when:
 - Whānau/ parents /caregivers have choice and are involved in decisions about their children's education;
 - Whānau/ parents /caregivers are recognised as the first and best educators of their children and are encouraged and supported in this role;
 - the uniqueness of each whānau/ parent /caregiver member and child is acknowledged. Programmes respond to individual and special needs, and create a positive learning environment, which is inclusive and celebrates diversity;
 - whānau/ parent /caregiver and child integration is central to the learning experience;
 - children involved cover a range of ages (birth to six years), creating the benefits of nurturing, role-modelling, and social interaction and a family atmosphere.
7. Playcentre facilities provide a stimulating environment, which is physically, emotionally and culturally safe for all who attend. They reflect the family and community environment in which they operate, and offer a variety of opportunities for child-initiated play experiences, with emphasis on fun, learning, choice and enhancing parent-child interactions.
8. Training for whānau/ parents /caregivers strengthens self-esteem, improves parenting, develops personal skills and empowers parents by expanding their capabilities as the first and best educators of their children.
9. The operation of an independent largely voluntary organisation, within public funding systems, is an appropriate and positive contribution to early childhood education in New Zealand.
10. Whānau/family involvement in the operation and management of the Playcentre movement is both viable and valuable and creates many benefits.
 - Co-operative effort can achieve organisational goals and allow personal goals for those involved.
 - Self-management of the organisation affirms the right of whānau/ parents /caregivers to be involved in decision-making relating to the education of their children.



Adult Education

Playcentre Education is a New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) registered training provider and has a registered charter with the Tertiary Education Commission of the Ministry of Education. It is a subcommittee of the New Zealand Playcentre Federation and is responsible for the governance of education and training programmes available to whānau/parents and caregivers that choose Playcentre as the early childhood service for their families. These programmes aim to acknowledge, affirm and build upon the knowledge, skills, and experience parents already possess, to equip them to provide high quality educational sessions for their children, to administer and manage the centres and to participate in governing their Association and New Zealand Playcentre Federation.

Educational Programmes

The Playcentre Diploma In Early Childhood & Adult Education is an accredited programme, which is linked to the licensing of centres. It aims to provide accessible, flexible, field-based early childhood and care qualifications. It is specifically tailored to the needs of Playcentres within Aotearoa New Zealand and is consistent with Playcentre philosophy. It is an NZQA recognised level-6 diploma qualification and is made up of six component courses beginning with a very short introductory level-3 course. The programme includes communication, leadership, group processes, effective family support, the development of skills and theory of the facilitation of learning events for adults as well as for children, cultural awareness and Te Tiriti o Waitangi education along with parenting, child development and specific early childhood content.

Other Adult Education provided by Playcentre, in addition to the accredited programme, includes general parent-education, workshops on play, management, and tutor training.

The Playcentre Education Culture and Approach

1. **Values the skills parents have:** The creative sharing of skills, knowledge and experiences that each member brings results in a rich learning environment for all parents and children.
2. **Values experiential learning:** The education programme has a large practical component drawing on the everyday experiences of parenting one's children and working within centres with other families. Theoretical learning is strongly embedded in relevant practical experience.
3. **Takes account of family needs:** The education programme has evolved into a flexible, accessible, field-based one with multiple entry and exit points. This allows parents to step on and off to meet family needs. It is a part time programme where the learner determines the pace.
4. **Values volunteers:** The organisation has a very strong voluntary ethic. Our members are motivated by the opportunity to work collectively for the interests of their families. Tutor, commenter and management roles are largely all filled by volunteers.
5. **Values working together:** Consensus as a means of decision-making is seen as the goal. Team-work, networking, and extensive consultation with other members

are evident throughout all levels of the organisation. Many learning experiences occur in group-settings.

6. **Encourages new leaders to emerge:** No one person becomes entrenched into a position but others are encouraged to come through, learn by experience and grow into a position. The goal of current leaders is to prepare for those who follow. Trainees are encouraged to become mentors to others, then supported to become co-tutors, tutors, commenters and managers of the programme.
7. **Empowers learners to take responsibility for their own learning:** Learners will take from each learning experience that which is relevant for them at that time. Learning is largely scheduled by the learner to accommodate family and other commitments.
8. **Respects differences in learning style:** There is an emphasis on active participation in workshops together with a variety of other delivery methods in the presentation of the education programme.
9. **Values the dual heritage of Aotearoa New Zealand:** There is a strong thread of bicultural content throughout the education offered.

From NZPF Playcentre Education Charter

Playcentre Philosophy and Practice

Growing out of years of experiences and diversity of communities, Playcentre's philosophy and practice have evolved into strong statements about children, their families, and how they learn.

- **Children are respected as individuals.** At Playcentre, each child is seen as an individual. Through the free choice of play, parents are able to recognise individual children's needs and help children grow and develop according to those needs.
- **Children learn by doing – through play.** Children actively construct their own learning. Children's play is their work. It is all the activity a young child is involved in as they explore the world around them, making use of whatever comes their way. Play means having fun, or it may be a serious absorbing occupation; it may be noisy and energetic or quietly restful; it may be experimental or repetitive, solitary or sociable. It is through play that the young child learns and grows. They use their body, their senses, their intellect, and their emotions as they develop a variety of skills and abilities. They learn through their experiences, through doing and making things, through listening, talking, dramatising, facing new challenges.
- **Children learn best when they have a choice.** This notion has variously been described as free play, free choice play, or child-initiated play. This is one of the most important aspects of Playcentre philosophy. The role of the child is to choose the area of play and adult's role is to acknowledge the level at which the child works and to provide support and extension. The environment is structured but not the time. Thus the physical environment has an appropriately wide range of choices, and equipment must be inviting, and suitable for children from birth to school age.
- **Children's sense of self is developed to its fullest extent when they feel powerful within safe limits.** Constraints are kept to a minimum: respect the play of others, respect the equipment, and respect the needs and feelings of others – fundamental guidelines for learning to live in a co-operative and peaceful society.



- **Children learn from exploration and experimentation.** Exploration is valued. Honouring the process of a child's work is more important than the product created - as the Italian pioneers at Reggio Emilia say, "the product is witness of the process".
- **Children learn through their relationships and interactions with other people.** Young children are deeply influenced by their social environment. The quality of the social environment for small children is important for their learning. Ramifications of this include - stable groups of adults and children whom they know well, high adult to child ratio, and mixed ages playing and learning together.
- **Children learn in the context of their families and communities.** Families learning and growing together acknowledges the importance of parents as the first and most effective teachers of their children. Children learn about the community and develop a sense of belonging from parents working together. People, and the quality of their relationships, are an integral part of a young child's developing attitudes and beliefs.
- **Children's learning is an expression of optimism and hope.** There is a creative human spirit which shapes us as unique people even as we remain part of our cultures and our communities. Tapping this and seeing it expressed is life-affirming. It is also fun – and fun is an intriguing expectation of education in Playcentre both for adults and for children. Celebration of life and finding joy in shared work occurs in many Playcentre experiences – and is always there in the best.
- **The adult's role:** Although the child's own interest and enthusiasm provide the motivation for their play, the adult's role is an active one. They play with the child at their level. They watch, listen, explain, make a suggestion or develop an idea. They convey their own enthusiasm, thus increasing the child's effort and enjoyment. Rather than interrupting, directing or restricting the child, the adult supports the child in their chosen activity. In this way, the adult encourages learning. Playcentre keeps a high ratio of adults to children to help maintain a high quality of play and supervision.

Extract from North Shore Playcentre Education Programmes

Planning for Individual Children

The centres use a number of planned processes to ensure that every child is able to experience a quality learning environment.

One planned process is the close link between the home and the Playcentre. The involvement of parents at every level of Playcentre ensures that someone with intimate knowledge of that child is part of the Playcentre process and has an opportunity to advocate for that child.

A second planned process is the relationship between the Centre parents which encourages parents to talk to each other about their children. This happens informally during sessions. And it happens formally both at the brief evaluations done at every session, and also at formal meetings of the parents. The meetings are 'formal' because they are intentional and because they follow a deliberate format.



Plans for individual children can be discussed. For example, a child may appear to be sad and socially isolated because a friend has left for school. Discussion amongst the parents could produce plans such as:

- Ways to draw that child into new relationships, as well as encouraging the child to see her old friend
- Find out if the child might enjoy being labelled the oldest child at Playcentre and would appreciate some new responsibilities and more attention by key adults.

Such plans evolve formally (at a meeting) or informally (through conversations amongst parents). The key is that Playcentre parents relate regularly – and meaningfully - to each other. And through these relationships, plans are made and implemented for children at Playcentre.

A third planned process is the high number of adults who are present at Playcentre sessions. Having knowledgeable adults around allows children's unique interests, strengths and needs to be catered for and developed.

For most children, these three processes provide a rich and stimulating environment. Through formal and informal process, Playcentre parents can build up a plan for a group of children that starts with looking at each individual child and considering how to meet his/her interests, strengths and needs.

However, where a child is less well known or where the child's needs are exceptionally different, it may be that structured observations will be needed to develop an individual plan. Such individualised plans may be needed long term, if a child has special needs, or it may be that they are needed short term to deal with a specific behaviour.

Extract from 'Planning for Playcentre'

North Shore Playcentre Association Statement Regarding the Education Programme

Reviewed March 2009

The education programme provided to children at Playcentre is based on the philosophy of the organization

"Growing out of years of experiences and diversity of communities, Playcentres philosophy and practice have evolved into strong statements about children, their families and how they learn.

- **Children learn by doing - through play.** Children actively construct their own knowledge. Children's play is their work. They learn by doing.
- **Children learn best when they have a choice.** This notion has variously been described as free play, free choice of play or child initiated play. This is one of the most important aspects of Playcentre philosophy. The role of the child is to choose the area of play and the adult's role is to acknowledge the level at which the child works and to provide support and extension. The environment - not the time - is structured. Thus the



physical environment always has an appropriately wide range of choices, and equipment is kept inviting and suitable for children from birth to school age.

- **Children's sense of self is developed to its fullest extent when they feel powerful within safe limits.** Constraints are kept to a minimum: respect the play of others, respect the equipment and respect the needs and feelings of others - fundamental guidelines for learning to live in a co-operative and peaceful society.
- **Children learn from exploration and experimentation.** Exploration is valued. Honoring the process of a child's work is more important than the product created. As the Italian pioneers at Reggio Emilia say, 'The product is the witness of the process.'
- **Children learn through their relationships and interactions with other people.** Young children are deeply influenced by their social environment. The quality of the social environment for small children is important for their learning. Ramifications of this include: stable groups of adults and children whom they know well, and mixed ages playing and learning together.
- **Children learn in the context of their families and communities.** The practice of families living and growing together acknowledges the importance of parents as the first and most effective teachers of children. Children learn about the community and develop a sense of belonging from parents working together. People, and the quality of their relationships, are an integral part of a young child's developing attitudes and beliefs.
- **Children's learning is an expression of optimism and hope.** There is a creative human spirit which shapes us as unique people even as we remain part of our cultures and our communities. Tapping this and seeing it expressed is life affirming. It is also fun - and fun is an intriguing expectation of education in Playcentre both for adults and for children. Celebration of life and finding joy in shared work occurs in many Playcentre experiences - and is always there in the best." ¹

"Within Playcentre we plan to provide sessions which include four distinct (although relevant) components:

- Core curriculum
- Emergent curriculum
- Focused curriculum
- Opportunities for parent learning and reflection

¹ Good Clean Fun: New Zealand's Playcentre movement – Hill,D, Reid, R, Stover, S
Playcentre Publications 1998



Core curriculum

This is best described as what is available, or what children can predict will happen, session after session. This includes the play areas regularly available and routines such as morning tea. It includes the understanding that children have, that adults will help, that they are free to choose their own activities, that there will be children of different ages there, that their friends will be there, that there will be rules about the use of equipment and resources for all Playcentre children to enjoy.

The core curriculum is supported by:

- A well planned and maintained environment - equipment and play areas presented attractively
- Parents who understand the value of play
- Effective systems of communication amongst parents”²

Centre practices that support core curriculum within North Shore Playcentre Association:

- *Rosters for duty teams and daily roster that relate to the provision of play areas, organization of the session*
- *LEAP meetings*
- *Daily end of session LEAP evaluations*
- *Office holders in centre and monthly centre meetings: support the organization and operation of the centre*
- *Annual centre evaluation meetings and the development of annual plans/ budgets*
- *The adult education programme and the requirement of North Shore Playcentre Association for the parent/caregiver of enrolled children to participate in the adult education programme and for parent/caregiver to complete Course 2 prior to leaving their child on a session when the child is over 2 ½ years*

"Emergent curriculum

This is what children and families bring with them in terms of ideas and plans. It is also what emerges during the session.

The emergent curriculum is supported by:

- A resource rich environment
- High numbers of adults available to the child and aware of the child
- Intimate knowledge of child and immediate links between centre and home environment
- Parent education and training”³

Centre practices that support emergent curriculum within North Shore Playcentre Association:

- *Duty team members available to support children and families in terms of ideas and plans that they bring to the session*

² Planning for Playcentres: a hands on resource – Stover, S (Ed.)

³ Planning for Playcentres: a hands on resource – Stover, S)Ed.)

Wellington: The Crown p 67

Wellington: The Crown p 67



- *Daily contact with the parent/caregiver when the child arrives and departs, and during session if the parent/caregiver is in attendance*
- *The planning process: centres run a planning meeting- LEAP in week 5 or 6 of each term where the centre formally evaluates the programme from the previous 10 weeks. The centre develops a plan for the following 10 weeks as outlined in the LEAP process in centre education folders.*
- *Daily end of session LEAP evaluations*
- *Documentation of happenings on day sheets which give continuity across sessions.*
- *Documentation of children play/work! learning experiences, Narratives, photo records, the child's voice, and narratives from home and family/whanau .*
- *Training/education for the adult education programme*

Focused curriculum

"Whenever a group of Playcentre parents meet and make plans for particular sessions or for specific children they are planning for the focused curriculum. The focused plans might include trips, visitors, and activities which are organized by the duty parents.

Focused plans may arise out of:

- Assessment (formal or informal) of individual children or groups of children
- Family interests or concerns
- Curriculum areas

Because focused planning can concentrate on the needs, strengths and interests of an individual child, this is where we ensure we have the systems to provide a good learning environment for a child and family with special needs.

Focused planning is supported by (the same things that support emergent curriculum namely):

- A resource rich environment
 - High numbers of adults available to the child and aware of the child
 - Intimate knowledge of child and immediate links between centre and home environment
 - Parent education and training
- Plus
- LEAP meetings that bring out opportunities for activities/events
 - Local knowledge and enthusiasms of local people
 - Useful resource books (parent library)
 - Effective parent to parent communication systems

Centre practices that support focused curriculum within North Shore Playcentre Association:

The practices that support emergent curriculum also support the focused curriculum. (see above)



Opportunities for parents to learn and reflect

This is what makes Playcentres stand out amongst early childhood education providers. The involvement and education of parents fundamentally affects what happens in Playcentre sessions.

Opportunities for parents to learn and reflect occur

- At the evaluations held during and after Playcentre sessions
- Through the regular in-depth discussions with other parents
- Through observing how experienced parents contribute to the quality of sessions.
- In structured parent education and training activities.

A planning process in Playcentre needs to reflect all four aspects. And different people and different Playcentres at different times will balance up these four aspects differently.”

Systems operated by the Association to monitor and support the education programme in centre

- *Field Officer: visits the centre regularly to provide support to centre members with the operation and practice in the centre. A report is provided after each session visit.*
- *Centre Support System: set up to maintain required licensing requirements on sessions. A formal report is provided after each session.*
- *Association Supervision Approval Application Process: The Association requires that all Playcentres apply for approval of their supervision arrangements. This is to ensure that Playcentres are operating within the Association standards and those required by the Ministry of Education. The centre is required to provide information on the planning, assessment and evaluation process - LEAP.*
- *Adult education programme: Trainees participate in a programme that has tutor-led talks, assignments, and practical experience requirements which include workshops.*
- *Office holder support meetings.*
- *Association meetings.*
- *Access to professional development that enables centre members / Association teams to keep up to date with new developments.*

Documentation available at the Centre

- *Term roster/s*
- *Examples of duty team daily rosters*
- *Examples of planning for a term developed from LEAP meeting and documentation related to the assessment of children's learning – Portfolios.*
- *Day sheets*
- *Field Officer reports*
- *Centre support worker reports (if centre receiving support)*
- *Supervision approval applications and reports*
- *Centre Operations manual*
- *Course manuals for the Playcentre Diploma in Early Childhood and Adult Education*