

Wellington Region Free Kindergarten Association

# Strategic Plan

2008 - 2012

2008



2012

# Strategic Plan 2008-2012

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## Introduction

The Free Kindergarten movement was founded on the work of 19th Century German educationalist Frederich Froebel. Froebel believed young children learnt best through play and exploration – hence the name "kindergarten", meaning child's garden. Early advocates of the Free Kindergarten movement in New Zealand had studied under Froebel. A key proponent was Mary Richmond who was pivotal in establishing the first kindergarten in Wellington in 1905 and in forming the Wellington Free Kindergarten Association in 1906. She believed that all young children should have access to environments that took them "off the streets" and nurtured their thirst for learning. The philanthropic underpinnings of the movement formed the basis on which Free Kindergartens grew in New Zealand and on which the Wellington Association operates today.

All teaching teams in Wellington Kindergartens implement the national early childhood education (ECE) curriculum *Te Whāriki*<sup>1</sup>. *Te Whāriki* is a bicultural document that reflects the unique place of Māori as Tangata Whenua in Aotearoa New Zealand. *Te Whāriki* is founded on socio-cultural theory that children's development takes place within systems that have a powerful influence on each other. In particular, Bronfenbrenner's<sup>2</sup> ecological theory of human development underpins much of the pedagogical theory on which *Te Whāriki* is based. The child-centred approach is in contrast to a more adult-directed approach where the adult (usually the teacher) determines the learning agenda and programme.



This strategic plan was developed during 2007 in a series of planning workshops spread through the year. The intention of the plan is to provide a broad statement of the direction, goals and strategies for the Association for the next five years and to provide a framework for those who work within the organisation to prepare their own operational plans and goals for the future. It should also be used as a vehicle for informing parents and whānau, communities, schools and others with an interest in our progress, of our intentions and commitment to deliver the highest standard of ECE.

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<sup>1</sup> Crown. (1996). *Te Whāriki Early Childhood Curriculum*. Learning Media, Wellington.

<sup>2</sup> Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The Ecology of Human Development*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

## 2. Diagrammatic Structure of Strategic Plan Elements

### **Our Vision**

(This is a statement of what we aspire to achieve and/or become in the long term)

### **Our Mission**

(This is a statement of our purpose, our services and for whom we seek to provide them)

### **Our Core Values and Guiding Principles**

(These are used to guide our decisions and to govern how we work with others)

### **Unique Character – The Key Precepts**

(These are our characteristics that define who we are and that differentiates us from other providers of early childhood education)

### **Meeting the Expectations of Our Communities of Interest**

(Here we define our specific commitments to nine groups who have a particular interest in our performance and service delivery)

### **Current Situation**

(This is a brief summary or snapshot of how we view our present circumstances – both the opportunities or positives and the challenges or areas of concern)

### **Strategic Intent**

(This is a high-level statement of the means or strategies by which the Association will achieve its vision)

### **Operational Planning and Implementation Through Continuous Improvement**

(This expresses our commitment to support the executive team to implement the strategies through a process of operational planning and continuous improvement)

## Strategic Plan Elements – What They Look Like

### Our Vision

To provide a diverse range of options, to continuously improve access for children, their parents and whānau and to build communities of mutual respect.

### Our Mission

We provide quality, inclusive and accessible early childhood education delivered in environments that are warm and welcoming and where learning is fun.

### Our Core Values and Guiding Principles

Child centred – at the heart  
Promoting quality  
In partnership with parents, whānau and community  
Accessible  
Inclusive  
Ethical

### Unique Character – the Key Precepts

Qualified teaching staff  
Affordable early childhood education  
Accessible early childhood education  
Community-based operational mode  
Community involvement  
Professional development and support

### Meeting the Expectations of Our Communities of Interest

The nine groups are:  
Children  
Parents and whānau  
Teachers  
Support staff  
Local community  
Partners in ECE, including Group Special Education, health providers and tertiary institutions  
Primary schools  
Ministry of Education

### Current Situation

We support the increased value placed on ECE by the Government and community as a whole.  
We play a leading role in providing quality education and the development of the whole child.  
We are committed to increasing the access and choices for parents.  
We are concerned with the scarcity of qualified teachers.  
The rate of change will pose challenges and opportunities.  
We are keen to develop even stronger partnerships with our communities and with parents and teachers.

### Strategic Intent

Lead in provision and delivery  
Attract, inspire, develop and retain great teachers  
Be responsive to our communities and maintain extensive involvement and dialogue with key stakeholders  
Strengthen our position in the community through articulating our practice and having a voice  
Build our resource base including revenue to develop and improve service  
Be responsive to children and their parents and whānau and celebrate their diversity  
Promote reorganisation and flexibility  
Promote the principles and practices of continuous improvement

### Operational Planning and Implementation Through Continuous Improvement

Principles of continuous improvement include:  
Being focused on the vision  
Being values-driven  
Being inclusive in planning and engaging with all our communities  
Adopting positive attitudes to challenges and opportunities  
Being innovative and evidence-based when adopting new practices  
Using objective indicators to measure our progress and to evaluate our programmes

### 3. Our Vision

To provide a diverse range of options, to continuously improve access for children, their parents and whānau, and to build communities of mutual respect.

#### What This Means to Us

Association guidelines, policies and procedures ensure consistency, while the mode of operation may vary from kindergarten to kindergarten. This is determined by the needs of individual communities. Currently, some Wellington Kindergartens offer sessional services, others offer all-day services, while others provide education and care for infants and toddlers as well as young children. The range of options available to families will continue to broaden as community needs change. Kindergartens of the future will be innovative and creative in their efforts to respond to their communities while at the same time maintaining the integrity of our core values and principles.

Expanding the number of services, changing the hours of operation (when community need requires it) and ensuring kindergarten environments are physically accessible to all children are ways we will continue to improve access for children, parents and their whānau.

Within the kindergarten community and at an association-wide level, it is assumed that each person plays an essential role in contributing to high-quality ECE for infants, toddlers and young children. Therefore, there exists a respect amongst members of the community for the different contributions that each makes – for the contribution of the teacher, the parent, the administration assistant, the older sibling. In nurturing communities of mutual respect where each member is respected for their expertise and contribution to the education and care of the child, an environment exists that truly celebrates the primacy of place that children hold.



#### 4. Our Mission

We provide quality, inclusive and accessible ECE delivered in environments that are warm and welcoming and where learning is fun.



## 5. Our Core Values and Guiding Principles

- Child centred – at the heart
- Promoting quality
- In partnership with parents, whānau and community
- Accessible
- Inclusive
- Ethical



### What This Means to Us

Our core values and guiding principles are underpinned by our definition of high-quality ECE. The term is used by almost every early childhood service and can mean different things to different people. Therefore it is important to explain what high-quality ECE means to this Association – what it looks like to us.

Indicators of quality ECE can be grouped as structural, and process or pedagogical indicators<sup>3</sup>.

Research, both within New Zealand and internationally, indicates several elements that form structural indicators of high-quality ECE. These are:

- staff qualifications, education and experience;
- adult-to-child ratios;
- group size;
- staff wages and working conditions;
- staff stability; and
- parent/ whānau involvement.



Researchers argue that structural elements facilitate quality processes that take place in an early childhood setting.

High-quality processes are based on pedagogy. Indications that high-quality pedagogical practice is taking place within an early childhood setting include adults engaging in interactions with children and providing environments for them that extend children's learning and development through the child's interests. Opportunities are provided that challenge and engage children in their ongoing learning and development, as well as celebrating their current strengths.

<sup>3</sup> Phillipsen, L. C., Burchinal, M. R., Howes, C., & Cryer, D. (1997). The prediction of process quality from structural features of child care. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 12(3), 281-303. [EJ 561 596](#).

*Children learn through responsive and reciprocal relationships with people, places and things.<sup>4</sup>*

High-quality pedagogical practice within our kindergartens consists of relationships and interactions that ensure children and their whānau feel a sense of belonging and respect.

In summary, pedagogical indicators of quality include:

- interactions with children that celebrate their learning and development and provide opportunities for extension through following the child's interest;
- opportunities for ongoing discovery and learning; and
- a warm and welcoming environment where children and whānau feel a sense of belonging and respect.



This approach to pedagogical quality is consistent with the national early childhood education curriculum *Te Whāriki*. When both structural and pedagogical elements are in operation together, the aspirational outcome is that children will:

*grow up as 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<sup>5</sup>.*

Pedagogical and structural determinants are interdependent indicators of high-quality ECE. Although different by nature, one's existence is dependent on the other, and so must be addressed with similar emphasis. This is a major focus of the Wellington Association.



<sup>4</sup> Crown (1996), *Te Whāriki*, p. 14.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, p. 14.

## 6. Unique Character – The Key Precepts



- i. Qualified teaching staff
- ii. Affordable early childhood education
- iii. Accessible early childhood education
- iv. Community-based operational mode
- v. Community involvement
- vi. Professional development and support

### What This Means to Us

- i. We believe that highly trained and competent teachers are essential in guaranteeing the best outcomes for all children within a safe environment.  
To this end, all staff employed in regulated teaching positions in a kindergarten managed by this Association will be qualified, registered early childhood teachers.
- ii. The Government announced up to 20 hours' free entitlement to children attending teacher-led ECE services from 1 July 2007. This will extend free provision to services other than kindergartens.  
While this has necessitated the introduction of fees in kindergartens, the Association will continue to develop policies and procedures that enable every infant, toddler or child attending a Wellington Kindergarten to have access to up to 20 hours' free ECE at an early childhood service – whether it be a kindergarten or another service.
- iii. We do not discriminate on gender, race, culture, religion or any other factor. Parent and whānau involvement is actively encouraged – however, no child is refused a place on the basis of the parents' inability to participate.
- iv. Effective financial management is essential to the ongoing viability of the organisation. To this end, the Association is focused on using all available funds to meet its vision. It is an Incorporated Society and, as such, must abide by the requirements of the Incorporated Societies Act 1908.
- v. The involvement and contribution of parents, whānau and the wider community is essential to the provision of high-quality ECE in our kindergartens. Involvement and contribution can take a variety of forms – from providing feedback to teachers via email, to saving up containers and boxes for the art corner, to sharing skills with children during session time.

*Ma tou rourou, ma toku rourou ka ora te iwi: with your contribution and my contribution we will make progress.*

- vi. The Association ensures professional competence through the provision of pastoral and professional support for its staff. This is implemented through a comprehensive system of professional development and guidance developed by the Senior Teacher and Association Office Teams.



## 7. Meeting the Expectations of Our Communities of Interest

As part of the strategic planning process, nine groups with a particular interest in the development and performance of the Association were identified, as follows:

- i. Children
- ii. Parents and whānau
- iii. Teachers
- iv. Support Staff
- v. Local community
- vi. Partners in ECE including Group Special Education, health providers, and tertiary institutions
- vii. Primary Schools
- viii. The Ministry of Education
- ix. The Association



**Based on our current understanding of their expectations, the Association will ensure that:**

- i. Children will learn in an environment in which they will have fun, are safe, are active and in which they develop social skills that enable them to interact constructively with others.

They will learn and grow in confidence and competence as they are valued and empowered in an environment which is familiar and offers the security of continuity and respect.

- ii. Parents and whānau will have access, both financial and geographic, to quality education and care in a welcoming environment in which their child will learn, be happy and safe.

The service will seek to meet the parents' need for inclusion and involvement and offer choices that are responsive to individual families' needs.

We will actively seek to make our kindergartens integral to their communities and provide parents and whānau with opportunities for networking and support.

Parents and whānau will be actively encouraged to be involved in the local kindergarten committee and/or to contribute to the life of the kindergarten in whatever way they are able.

- iii. Teachers will find an environment that supports their professional development, respects their commitment and offers opportunities for a rewarding career.

We will promote a positive working environment with strong links between teachers, parents and whānau, the community and the Association.

Teachers will be able to take pride in the quality of the education provided in the kindergarten environment and in the respect with which they are regarded by parents and whānau, the community and the Association

- iv. Support staff will be welcomed and appreciated for the positive and essential contribution they make to the positive environment created for children and their parents and whānau.
- v. The local community will be encouraged to have a sense of ownership of their kindergarten and to see it as a positive expression of the community's care for its members and particularly for young children.

Individual kindergartens will be encouraged to identify with and be responsive to the specific needs and culture of their community, reflect the positive things their community values and seek to become a source of local pride.

- vi. We work as partners in ECE with agencies and groups including Group Special Education, health providers and tertiary institutions to ensure children receive comprehensive, high-quality, holistic education and care.
- vii. We actively develop relationships with primary schools in order to optimise the positive transition of every child from kindergarten to primary school.

As an Association we will encourage individual kindergartens to build strong communication links with the primary schools in their area to work with them to ensure children are lifelong learners.

- viii. We are committed to working collaboratively with the Ministry of Education to meet regulatory requirements and to work towards improving participation and quality in ECE.
- ix. The Association will seek to provide high-quality governance, so that all its members and interested parties may be clear of our values, policies, goals and plans and may be assured that we are actively supporting our kindergartens and staff as they work to deliver quality ECE for the benefit of children, parents and whānau and our communities.



## 8. Current Situation

We support the increased value placed on ECE by the Government and community as a whole. We play a leading role in providing quality education and the development of the whole child. We are committed to increasing the access and choices for parents by increasing the flexibility and range of services we provide.



We are concerned with scarcity of qualified teachers and with the range in the quality of services provided in a fragmented sector. The rate of change in the expectations of parents and government for what is provided will pose challenges for the foreseeable future. We are keen to develop even stronger partnerships with our communities and with parents and teachers and to continue improving our responsiveness to the expectations of all three groups.



## 9. Strategic Intent

We will achieve and maintain our vision, to provide a diverse range of options, to continuously improve access for children their parents and whānau and to build communities of mutual respect, by adopting the following strategies as long-term priorities.

### A. Leading in provision and delivery

Our strategic goals include providing an environment where parents and whānau feel welcome and able to engage in their children's learning and where children develop as confident and competent learners.

We aim to be leaders in the delivery and practice of current theory that is valued and evident in practice.



### B. Attracting, inspiring, developing and retaining great teachers

We aim to have a team of motivated and competent teachers working with resources and in environments that are safe and high-quality and who are actively involved in self-review.

We seek to be the leading organisation where teachers want to work.

### C. Being responsive to our communities and maintaining extensive involvement and dialogue with key stakeholders (parents, teachers, volunteers, local community etc)

We aim to stay in touch with our communities to understand their wants and needs and to be flexible in the delivery of services.

We seek to be a hub for our communities and a preferred point of call for families with young children.

### D. Strengthening our position in the community through articulating our practice and having a voice

Communities will understand and value the high-quality early childhood experiences that kindergarten provides.

Support other community-based early childhood services to strengthen their capacity and quality.

## **E. Building our resource base including revenue to develop and improve service**

Our strategic goals include maintaining a strong position in ECE:

- with steadily growing rolls, number of kindergartens and services;
- continuously improving strength in our revenue streams and financial position;
- resulting in a well-resourced, dynamic and progressive organisation; and
- belonging to and supporting a strong and influential national kindergarten organisation that acts as an advocate for the kindergarten movement throughout Aotearoa New Zealand.

## **F. Being responsive to children and their parents and whānau and celebrating their diversity**

This should be reflected in:

- kindergartens that offer a wide range of options to meet the needs of children and their families; and
- new services that are quickly developed in partnership with parents and whānau.

## **G. Promoting reorganisation and flexibility**

An organisation that skillfully introduces change.

## **H. Promoting the principles and practices of continuous improvement**

The Board will support the executive team as it seeks to continuously improve operations and services.



## 10. Operational Planning, Implementation and Continuous Improvement

We invite the Executive to expand on these strategies to develop operational plans and to implement them while applying the principles of continuous improvement.

These principles include:

- being focused on the vision;
- being values-driven;
- being inclusive in planning and engaging with all our communities;
- adopting positive attitudes to challenges and opportunities;
- being innovative and evidence-based when adopting new practices; and
- using objective indicators to measure our progress and to evaluate our programmes.



As a Board we will seek to promote progress and continuous improvement in all strategic priority areas and in partnership with the Executive will develop a number of key indicators to keep track of progress and results.

We will also invite the Executive to include annual targets and improvement projects in relation to each strategic priority and to include them in the operational plans each year.

