



Daisy Chain

Issue XI • March 2016

Welcome to our **eleventh issue** of *Daisy Chain* where we hope to regularly share our philosophy and practice in greater depth, as well as information from professional development courses that the teachers have undertaken over the past few months.

Welcome to Daisy Chain. The focus of our January teacher Wānanga was to define our Daisies goals for 2016, progress our self-review, remind ourselves how capable and competent children at Daisies are, and make improvements to our “environment as the third teacher”.

“We value space, to create a handsome environment and its potential to inspire social, affective and cognitive learning. The space is an aquarium that mirrors the ideas and values of the people who live in it” (Loris Malaguzzi)

I am sure you have noticed the new spaces created by re-using fabrics within the Daisies environment. During our teacher Wānanga we spent time focusing on our environment. Daisies kaiako created more small, accessible spaces, with practical support with hooks and lines by Robin Christie, from the Childspace Workshop. In this issue we share the rationale behind these spaces and the positive learning outcomes they have for tamariki.

Our current evaluation project (*Teaching for Success for Every Child*) is progressing steadily. ERO calls these projects ‘self-reviews’. During our Wānanga we spent time in small groups analysing and making sense of the data we have gathered. An update on the self-review can be found in this issue.

We hope you enjoy reading about our most recent professional learning and development day, and what it means for your children.

Nicole Beedell

In this issue...

Daisies Teaching Team Image of Children2
By Brigitte Alamani

A personal response to Brigitte’s workshop3
By Meg Kwan

Goals for 2016.....4
By Anne Meade

Accessible Alcoves4
By Lucy Hayes

Update on Self Review.....6
By Lauren Ryan



During teacher learning day, Daisies’ Kaiako got to practice their DIY skills as they created accessible alcoves.

Daisies' Teaching Team's Image of Children

By Brigitte Alamani

At Daisies, team members often talk about our *image of children* – who we believe children are, their identity and capabilities. We believe all children are competent and intelligent individuals, who actively construct their knowledge through interactions with people, places and things.

At our recent Wānanga o Kaiako (Teacher Learning Day), Anne expressed some disappointment about the extent to which kaiako respect children's capabilities and proposed some goals for 2016 (see below). I followed with a workshop on how the teaching team's image of tamariki is reflected in the physical environment at Daisies, whether we are aware of it or not.

The environment reflects of our values and beliefs, our aspirations for tamariki.

Our environment also acts as a *third teacher*—a Reggio Emilia philosophy-inspired concept which relates to how the environment actively “conditions how we feel, think and behave; and it dramatically affects the quality of our lives” (Jim Greenman). For example, if we believe toddlers (children between the ages of 18 months until about 3 years of age) are somewhat clumsy and messy, our environment would likely to be made up of plastic/unbreakable resources and our spaces would look tired.

If we turn this image around and believe that toddlers are curious investigators with an intrinsic motivation to explore the world through active engagement with ‘real things’, our

environment would be made up of household, and natural, open ended materials that provoke further thinking and wondering. Spaces at Daisies are thoughtfully positioned and set up with children's interests in mind.

At our Wānanga o Kaiako, I challenged the team's thinking and asked kaiako to consider whether or not our environment continually reflects our image of children. I believe in what educationalists Deb Curtis and Margie Carter say about learning environments, that “every environment implies a set of values and beliefs about the people who use a space and the activities that take place there”. I asked: Is the way our learning spaces are currently set up clearly demonstrating our belief that children are competent and intelligent individuals?

Is our environment good enough?



I challenged each mini team (Koromiko, Nikau and Whanake) to summarise their image of tamariki in one word.

Koromiko kaiako came up with **“Enthusiastic”**. Koromiko children are enthusiastic participants of our programme, always willing to try and give everything a go.

Nikau kaiako decided on **“Independent”**. Nikau children are at the point where they are beginning to assert their independence—everything is “I do it!”



Whanake kaiako chose **“Investigators”**. Whanake children have developed strong investigator dispositions, curious about people, places and things. As well, they have developed great research skills at Daisies.

Enthusiastic, independent investigators: this is our collective image of tamariki at Daisies.

Now, we are reviewing how this image of children is responded to when kaiako set up our environment. You may find that our learning spaces are evolving in the next couple of months as we explore and research ways we can more effectively utilise the environment as our *third teacher*, whilst ensuring that our image of children can be visibly *seen, heard and felt* throughout Daisies. Please tell me your ideas about what we can improve on. ... And watch this space (literally!).

Our teaching spaces are transferred to the outdoor environment. The Whanake tamariki created Ella the scarecrow and the butterfly garden as part of their gardening and growth investigation.

A personal response to Brigitte’s workshop

Kia Ora whānau. I was fortunate to join the Daisies team just in time for their first teacher learning day/wānanga of the year. I really enjoyed the experience and gained a lot from the day. Brigitte ran a workshop about our physical environment. We discussed and considered how the way we present Daisies reflects our view of the tamariki and their capabilities. After some discussion we came up with three key words for our team image of tamariki, which are Enthusiastic, Independent, Investigators.

I was able to learn lots about the Daisies environment, how it is set up and why. I also developed a greater understanding of the expectations the leaders have for our environment. I can now see the goals Daisies kaiako have in mind when they set up experiences in different spaces and I look forward to taking part in creating an environment that better reflects what capable young tamariki we have at Daisies.

By Meg Kwan

Goals for 2016

Anne spoke about her goals for the team's teaching in 2016.

Goal One: Respect, the core value will be very visibly magnified in terms of respect for the capabilities of tamariki and respect for the environment and equipment at Daisies.

Goal Two: Evidence will be apparent more often as the basis of practice and to show that all tamariki are progressing in relation to their learning goals. Entries in Storypark will be analysed regularly to ensure that kaiako are recording progress in learning (as well as what children do during the day), and use assessments to underpin their planning of learning experiences for tamariki.

Goal Three: Team work will be the hall mark of investigations. Team work will show up in enthusiastic dialogues amongst adults and children about each investigation question, and in the depth of thinking apparent in documentation about these investigations.

Workshop: Kaiako participated in an activity where each rated the level of respect that the team demonstrated for the capabilities of tamariki. They commented that the Daisies team demonstrates more respect for the capabilities of tamariki than other centres they know, especially in Koromiko. However, setting that comparison aside, half of the ratings were in the middle of the 7-point scale. They "set the bar high" at Daisies. The explanatory comments were often about inconsistencies in empowering children at different times of the day and in different places. Reflective comments helped explain the differences amongst team members – for example, some have had more professional education and training about Reggio Emilia approaches which foster amazing depth of thinking in children in their centres.



Accessible Alcoves

By Lucy Hayes

Lauren and I attended the Yeah Baby conference in Hawkes Bay in November 2015. Robin Christie (Childspace) facilitated a session called "Sanctuary Spaces". He talked about the benefits of having spaces for young children that have soft fabrics and low light, and allow minimal movement. He shared brilliant ideas about how to create 'sanctuaries'. Lauren and I acknowledged the drop off in these spaces at Daisies over the past year or so.

At the team meeting on 12th January, I shared some images borrowed from Robin with Daisies kaiako. Lauren and I presented some draft criteria developed for 'accessible alcoves' at Daisies.

The team finalised the criteria as follows:

- one-way entry
(not a thoroughfare)
- soft
- lower ceiling
- private
- small enough for just one or a few tamariki, and
- accessible at all times.

In two groups, kaiako did some preliminary thinking about creating some 'accessible alcoves'. Each group had to prepare a pitch about the *purpose of a space*, and *how it meets the 'accessible alcoves' criteria* to others in the teaching team. The purposes or intended benefits included support for children's emotional wellbeing and self-regulation.

Children can recharge in quiet spaces. They can enjoy extended conversations with a friend with fewer interruptions.

At our Teacher Learning Day on 26 January, Robin Christie came in to support our team to construct some 'accessible alcoves'. You may have noticed these spaces inside and outside at Daisies.

Under the loft in the front room now has a curtain wire and fabric to create a one way entry/exit. Consequently, many tamariki lie on soft cushions there and talk with a peer or share books. A curtain rail has been attached to the ceiling above the family play space. Long drapes act as a boundary, and create a more intimate alcove. Tamariki love this more defined play space in which they can explore transforming themselves into other characters – uninterrupted space and time is a fabulous thing for dialogue between tamariki!

Koromiko teachers created a soft cubby, complete with a Perspex mirror, which is a thinking space for up to two inquisitive infants. A thick blanket and



fabrics creates a low, soft and private retreat beside the small window near Koromiko. The sun creeps into this space to give enough light to tamariki revisiting their Learning Journals, making soft music or having a rest with a friend.

Our outside space is now home to a more permanent tee-pee style alcove. With large bean bags, flowers and books for décor, tamariki value this space for pretend play.

We all appreciate peace and privacy, in balance with the hustle and bustle of socializing. Kaiako have noticed children's play has become slower, and more engaged and sustained in these spaces.

"Accessible alcoves" at Daisies are sized for children and are safe, inviting and available at all times, for individuals independently, or with a peer (or two).



Update on Self Review:

How Kaiako contribute to every child's success

The longer question the kaiako are researching is: how do the learning and development theories that guide kaiako show in our documentation and contribute to each child's learning and success?

At the end of last year, we identified five aspects of our education programme and documentation that should link to learning and development theories and research being used by the teaching team, and that should contribute to every child's success. These are:

- Daises philosophy of practice, including Daises values;
- documentation of each child's unique learning journey (progression of learning over time);
- stories about learning and development from children, families and teachers included in material exchanged on-line and other documentation, such as notes shared by kaiako at parent conversation evenings;
- the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi: partnership, participation and protection of cultural identities;
- leadership to continually develop teachers' knowledge and skills.

During January and February we began looking for patterns in the data we have collected. We checked how the aspects (above) are incorporated into our documentation for each age group and each child. This is still in progress. We would, of course, like to see plenty of this information (research-based theory) included in our documentation and, also, holistic development made visible for every child. If this is not what we see when the data is collated, then we will make some decisions about further improvements to our programme and documentation of learning. We plan to share findings with you in the next issue of Daisy Chain.

A short parent survey is in the process of being developed, for distribution to you in late March. Please keep an eye out for this. Your views on what is important and valued in our programme will be very valuable, so we would love you to complete the survey.

I am leading this self-review. If you have any questions or comments please come see me! - Lauren