



Continuity of Care



In any situation where they are separated from their parents, babies and toddlers younger than 30 months feel safe only when they are with someone else with whom they have an affectionate attachment bond.

Richard Bowlby

Next month TLC will start to implement 'continuity of care'. In this 'editorial' I will attempt to communicate what we mean by this, why we are doing it, and how we are doing it.

Firstly however, I would like to revisit the fact that TLC has what we call key, or primary, caregiving.

What is a key caregiver? The key caregiver is the main person who is in relationship with your child, recognising their cues, responding to their needs to build trust and confidence. This is also the person who provides most of the parent communication.

However, we are aiming for a healthy secondary attachment - the family are still the primary attachment for the child. Therefore, we don't want children to become 'dependent' on the presence of that key caregiver to have a good day, and they DO have warm respectful relationships with a few familiar people, such as the other teacher in the team, or the support teachers such as Katherine, Sanna, and Roxy.

Why key caregiving? We have chosen to implement key caregiving at TLC because we believe that

healthy attachments are critical for the wellbeing and development of children in the early childhood years.

Sadly there are not many early childhood centres in New Zealand who implement key caregiving, using excuses such as the difficulty of rostering. Warm, responsive, reciprocal and respectful relationships are at the core of our philosophy and values at TLC and we have seen key caregiving as critical to achieving this. Now, we are choosing to grow and improve the quality of those relationships by implementing continuity of care.

So what is 'continuity of care'?

Continuity of care can have a variety of forms; what *we* mean by it, is that one familiar person will transition with a group of children (which we are calling a cohort) from our baby room until at least the transition to the Kowhai (3 year old) group. One teacher, currently Ania, will remain as an anchor in our baby room to ensure consistency of the expertise and practice in this age group. The remaining caregivers will rotate and move with their key children. So, in March, Guida will

move with a group of babies to the toddler room, Elena will move with a group of toddlers to our Mamaku room. Josie will move up to join a new group of babies in our baby room. Another set of transitions will take place later in the year, currently scheduled for July/August.

How are 'cohorts' formed?

Children are grouped into cohorts based on a similar age and stage of development. The appropriate cohort is and will be arrived at by discussion between caregivers and family/whaanau.

Why do this? It takes TIME to build a relationship, both between the child and the caregiver, but also between the family and the caregiver. If the caregiver remains with child for longer this knowledge, relationship and trust retained and built upon. We believe that this gives the child greater security, improved attachment, and therefore the ability, or brain wiring, to form healthy attachments for the rest of their lives.

The wellbeing of the child is at the heart of our decision to do this.

Consider the number of carers.... fewer is better. A child needs a secure base from which he can feel free to explore. Ideally, he should have one primary carer so he is able to develop attachment to an adult.

Having the same carer as a child grows from infancy to toddlerhood also promotes security.

Magda Gerber, Your Self-Confident Baby, 'What to look for in group care' pg112/113

Continuity of Care

by Guida Lawrence

Continuity of care is about to be implemented at TLC. I will accompany the three babies who are ready to leave the infant room and move into the toddler space.

Although I am looking forward to it, there is a process of letting go which I will have to manage.

Knowing when and how to let go versus holding on is something which toddlers are in the process of learning as well. It is an ability which will serve them throughout life. They are continually engaged with the conflict between holding onto the secure base of the familiar and known versus letting go of this in order to explore ⁽¹⁾. Their emerging independence and autonomy is driving them forward into the unknown ⁽²⁾.

In a sense I feel that each of the teachers at TLC who are moving into different rooms with the key children in their cohort will be experiencing a feeling of letting go, and encountering some of the challenges that toddlers face. I have a relationship with my fellow teacher (Ania) and this will change – just as the relationship between an infant and its parent changes. The shift from infancy to toddlerhood means they need the parent to let them go a little further, a little faster, a little longer: let them go and explore but of course still be present to identify boundaries. I will develop a new relationship with my fellow toddler teacher (Tamaki). Similarly, the young toddler is beginning to understand about new relationships – this is the period of separation anxiety and learning about the difference between their primary people and others. Learning to let go surfaces significantly in this arena. The parent will come back.

Another change for me will be a new environment – and exactly so for the new toddler. As they begin walking their whole environment changes and takes on a new perspective. The world changes – objects and furniture look different when you're vertical. Try it out for a few minutes – lie, sit or crawl on the floor. Enjoy the new world!

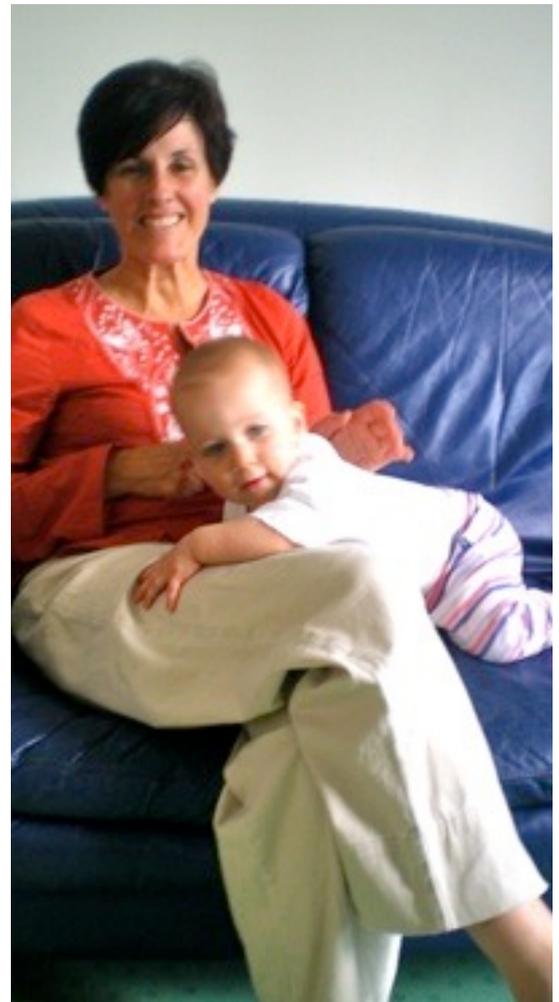
But amidst the moves and changes we teachers will be experiencing, I know too that

I am supported. Respectful management, slow changes, open dialogues, all contribute to my sense of personal value at TLC. This kind of support is what we are offering the children too ⁽²⁾. In their transition between rooms they have our respect. We move slowly into the space – they have many visits beforehand, eating together and joining in with their new group. We recognize their challenges. The babies know they can move freely between the infant and toddler room if and when the older toddlers overwhelm them.

I am very excited to be a part of this new practice of Continuity of Care at TLC. I hope that our learning will be able to contribute to the wider community of early childhood education in Aotearoa and New Zealand.

(1) "The Emotional Life of the Toddler", A Lieberman 1995

(2) "RIE Manual", M Gerber 1979



The Development of Empathy

By Elena Marouchos

No teacher likes to admit that an accident happened on their watch but unfortunately it did. The old adage “accidents happen” is true especially when working with toddlers. It seems like one minute I was entranced by rambunctious antics and infectious giggles and in the next I was attending to a bleeding nose. Although I know there is much learning that happens for both the children and teachers in these moments one still can't help reflect on how or what I could have done differently both in setting up the environment but also in my actions. But I digress. This is not a reflection on how and why accidents happen but rather on a moment that humbled me and made me review the literature and reflect on toddler compassion, empathy and most of all friendships and the development of empathy. That afternoon I witnessed an interaction so poignant, so gentle and lasting that after everything had passed I had to take a moment to compose myself and selfishly indulge in a long cuddle from a bemused toddler. Evidence of her amazing signs of compassion for her longtime friend left behind in her portfolio for her to draw upon in future.

By the age of 2, children normally begin to display the fundamental behaviors of empathy by having an emotional response that corresponds with another person. It is not uncommon for one set of tears to bring forth another set from another. It is in these instances that, at times, I wish I were an octopus and now appreciate the image of eastern religious deities of a ‘mother’ God with many arms ready to embrace. It starts off with them being distressed at seeing another's distress and evolves into scenes where sometimes, the toddlers will comfort others or show concern for their friends. But guess what all this emotional learning does not stop there for our toddlers for it is also during this period that toddlers will play games of falsehood or “pretend” in an effort to fool others, and this requires that the child know what others believe before he or she can manipulate those beliefs. As a beginning teacher I find this the most challenging behaviour to deal with. It not only requires you to know this child incredibly well but to be able to distinguish between being distressed at another's distress, especially when the floodgates and wailing start and knowing which ones are developing working theories that include ‘oh, I get a cuddle/reaction/ CREAM when I cry or tell you I have a sore...’ This behaviour too requires acknowledgement, but a change in tone, a bit of patience and lots of explanation and talk about emotions, genuine signs of hurt and why perhaps they had to wait for a cuddle or I asked that they have a lie down on the pillow until they are not feeling so sad and are ready to join their friends. Typically the toddlers at this stage are verbal and inevitably when you ask what is wrong the words they use will be directly related to the scene they have just witnessed e.g. ‘sore’ – pointing to an old injury, bruise or scratch, ‘ice’ or ‘cream’ if they have just seen this being applied.

My review of the literature made me wonder about sympathetic versus empathetic behaviours and in the process I stumbled across a new word – ‘emotional contagion’. In summary:



Sympathy is, "I'm sorry for your pain."

Emotional Contagion is, "I feel your pain."

Empathy is, "I understand how you feel."

This made me wonder where in this range of developing empathetic behaviours would a toddler who recent and similar experience be? It made me question some of the instances where I had possibly assumed a child was aiming for the sympathy vote or showed distress at another's distress and wondering if the incident triggered a memory and instead was trying to say “I feel your pain”. Perhaps my own understanding of this is incomplete but either way it served to review my own practice and think more clearly when assessing behaviours in these moments and trying to deliver a response more meaningful to the child.

Empathy is for grown ups?

In my last article I reflected upon the myriad things children learn in their second year of life empathy may not have seemed to be at the forefront. It still seems ingrained to many of us, perhaps because of our own developmentally orientated childhoods, that walking, fine motor skills, rudimentary language, etc. probably first come to mind. While browsing for gifts over the holidays I noticed that even the toys and books primarily enforce these skills – blocks, shape sorters, books with first words like colors. Not that there is anything wrong with these in the environment but in reality the world around is full of colour, shape and number and if we believe that children have a driving need to explore the world around them then surely by ensuring a safe and emotionally secure environment and offering them plenty opportunities for free play then surely they will learn their colours and numbers?

- *At 7-9 months of age infants understand the concept of attention to objects by others. This shared-attention is result of the baby understanding that a person besides themselves finds an object of interest, and hence has a different thought. (*Baron-Cohen, S. (1991). Precursors to a theory of mind: Understanding attention in others. In A. Whiten (Ed.), Natural theories of mind: Evolution, development and simulation of everyday mindreading (pp. 233-251). Oxford: Basil Blackwell*)
- *At 12 months old infants can predict the behavior of someone else, an essential ingredient of empathy. (*Falck-Ytter, T., Gredebäck, G., & von Hofsten, C (2006). Infants predict other people's action goals. Nature Neuroscience, 9 (7), 878-879. (PDF 138kB)*)
- *18 month olds show understanding of another person's goals and intentions but do not do so for inanimate objects. (*Meltzoff, A. (1995). Understanding the intentions of others: Re-enactment of intended acts by 18-month-old children. Developmental Psychology, 31, 838-850.*)
- *24 month olds display comforting behavior. "Recent developments in research cast doubt on early conceptions of young children as primarily egocentric and uncaring of others' needs. Studies reviewed indicate a broad range of social competencies children bring to their interpersonal relationships. As early as 2 years of age, they show (a) the cognitive capacity to interpret, in simple ways, the physical and psychological states of others, (b) the emotional capacity to experience, affectively, the state of others, and (c) the behavioral repertoire that permits the possibility of attempts to alleviate discomfort in others." (*Zahn-Waxler, C., & Radke-Yarrow, M. (1990). The origins of empathic concern. Motivation and Emotion, 14, 107-130.*)

Why is empathy important?

Empathy is the foundation for a variety of skills and attitudes that I aspire for all children as:

- Empathy is necessary for successful social relationships
- Empathy leads to increased academic achievement
- Empathy leads to creativity
- Empathy decreases violence and aggression, including tantrums!
- Empathy is the root of a global worldview
- Empathy reduces prejudice and builds tolerance
- Empathy is the root of biophilia – the love of life and living system and respect for living things in general

From the above we can see that nurturing empathy is just as important as the other skills like walking, reading etc.

Model, model, model.....

How can we facilitate this learning? Well we have to remember that **"Our children are watching us live, and what we are shouts louder than anything we can say."**(*Wilferd A. Peterson*)

Teaching empathy isn't just about helping children develop feeling words but about showing them empathy and displaying empathy for others in our own actions. Toddlers are notorious parrots and the words we hear in the toddler room are indicative of scenes they witness. As adults we have a choice and yes it's easy to give into the emotion but we have to try and remember that there is a listening, absorbing being in the vicinity. When someone cuts us off in traffic I can let

road rage take over or I can say "they must be in a hurry. That must be frustrating for them." When something drops on the floor or on your foot, breathe and say 'that hurts, it's sore...It slipped or I dropped it because....'. Explain, explain – the cause and effect. It is also important to name your and their emotions because this helps them to understand not only the emotions (sad, happy, frustrated etc) but also why.

"What parents teach is themselves, as models of what is human – by their moods, their reactions, their facial expressions and actions. These are the real things parents need to be aware of, and of how they affect their children. Allow them to know you, and it might become easier for them to learn about themselves." – Magda Gerber

I truly agree that of all the skills we encourage our children to develop, social intelligence may be the most essential for predicting a fulfilling, successful life. As parents and teachers we can have a profound influence in this regard and therefore it is important that we are aware of this as every word, move and gesture are being observed... We also need to curb our natural tendency to intervene too soon and 'protect' our children when they seem challenged as these good intentions can spoil rich opportunities for physical, cognitive, creative, social and emotional development. Instead we need to realise that we're the ones under the microscope and everything we say and do is modelled. This has to be the best motivation for being gracious and respectful during our interactions and more importantly for some of us to heal old wounds by doing it "better" than it was done for us.

When a baby falls down or gets hurt, even if it is obviously a minor injury, our instincts might tell us to rush over, pick her up immediately and shower her with sympathy or distraction in an attempt to calm her as quickly as possible. [Magda Gerber](#) advised something a little different and counterintuitive (especially for those who find a baby's cries difficult to hear...namely, all of us!). She encouraged parents and caregivers to remain calm so as not to add our alarm or distress to the equation, and to take our cues from the child. She also suggested that we take the time to reflect on the experience to help the baby understand it, acknowledge her feelings and support her to express them freely and completely.

Strengthening continuity - the logical next step...

By Nikki Grazier

I love teaching at TLC. It is one of the best early childhood centres in Auckland if not the country. Marie has the most fantastic vision and the ability to manifest it. Her commitment to the teachings of Magda Gerber and Emmi Pikler has led her to create fantastic environments and gather passionate, skilled teachers and other team members who have great respect for children and whose practice I find beautiful.

So in March this year, TLC begins the next step of it's evolution and to me it is a logical next step.

Many centres don't even have a key teacher (primary caregiving) system. Why?

There are many reasons, unfortunately often it comes down to the fact it is easier for the staff and centre organisation not to. Many centres have such high staff turnover or absenteeism and they advise the caregivers not to get attached to the children. Having key teachers means that you have to organise the staffing differently to accommodate the children's daily rhythms. Lastly, even though there is a huge amount of research over the last seventy years about the crucial benefits of infant attachment, in relation to their emotional, social, cognitive, language development and resilience, sadly to say some centre managers still don't believe it, or conveniently look the other way. These centres have their day-to-day organisation based on the needs of the adults and not the infants and toddlers they have a responsibility to be providing high quality care and education for.

Therefore most early childhood centres in NZ couldn't even begin to contemplate having long-term continuity of care, with the teachers transitioning with their group of key children.

This is because as well as a key teacher system, a centre has to have a lot of other things in place to make it work. Just a few of these are: visionary leadership, supportive management, passionate early childhood professionals who are open to change, respectful practice, teachers who flow in their work with each other without structured rosters, a mixture of logistical, theoretical and practical thinkers, a strong team ethos, great communication, and a strong underlying philosophy, such as Magda Gerber's Educaring Approach (often referred to in New Zealand as RIE(Resources For Infant Educators)).

TLC has all of these.

So now...the next logical step is having each teacher transition with their small group (cohort) from Infants to the Mamakus (0-3).

I am the only teacher at TLC who has taught in a long-term continuity model previously and it was one of the highlights of my teaching career. Being part of a child's and their families' lives for up to three years is amazing and the depth of knowledge, understanding and trust accrued during this time is incredible.

One of the benefits to this longer term attachment between the key teacher and the child is that any of the challenges and disruptions caused by transitions from one area to another are usually eliminated. The child has his or her peers transition with them, as well as their trusted teacher. The parents are less anxious because their trust relationship with the key teacher also continues. So the biggest change is a different environment.

Continuity is also provided by the streamlining that we have with the daily routines such as meal-times, sleeping and nappy changing. In each room we add complexity to these slowly over time in partnership with the children's increasing competence and confidence.

I am so excited by this, because when Elena brings a small group of toddlers into the Mamaku room in March she also brings with her, her knowledge and understanding of those children, and she can continue to empower their learning and development without having to reinvent the wheel.

This model will go from strength to strength.

TLC emerges from a beautifully glowing chrysalis into a butterfly.

Nikki.

I wish to take this opportunity to say a huge thank you to Josie for being my co-teacher over the past year. I love your way of working with children, your calmness, consistency, care, compassion and grace. I have learnt a lot from you and I would like to send my best wishes as you begin the next chapter of your teaching career in the infants. Love Nikki.



Whatever you can do or dream you can, begin it. Boldness has genius, and magic and power in it. Begin it now.

Goethe

Continuity For Kowhai By Marie

In our path towards continuity of care, we have consulted with our community via the parent voice committee. One of the questions that has been raised, is “If continuity goes up until the children turn 3, then how will that affect our children transitioning to the Kowhai group?”.

First of all, we are doing some intense self-review to assess the outcomes for children of the move to continuity of care, and we will adapt as we learn, so, there is no ‘one answer’. Secondly, we will always adapt to the individual children’s needs, that is at the heart of our philosophy as a centre.

It is our belief that by the time the children reach the age of 30 months or so, that their need for that key caregiver is less, not gone, but less. We believe that if the child has had a secure attachment in those first 30 months, that they have learnt about how to form healthy attachments, and will be able to go in the pre-school group confidently able to do this.

We are aware that around 30 months, the child’s friends figure in their world more significantly, and they will be moving into the Kowhai group with their friends.

In a lot of ways, the hardest transition, for both children and their whaanau, was the move from our toddler room upstairs to our Mamaku room downstairs. It was a new environment and a new team. We find that the move from the Mamaku room to the Kowhai room is often much easier,

the children already being familiar with the environment and the team.

We are not saying that caregivers will NOT move with the children into the Kowhai group, in fact it is our current expectation that Nikki will move with a cohort of Mamakus into the Kowhai room in July or August. However, we have only asked our teachers/key caregivers to commit to staying with a cohort until they turn three, when they take on a cohort of children for continuity.

I know from past discussions with our parent voice committee, that one worry is that having the same key caregiver up to 30 months will mean that the child is less prepared when they go to school, to make new relationships/ friendships. In fact, our belief is that the opposite is true, that giving children the opportunity of a health secondary attachment up to the age of three actually helps them to form a healthy attachments - it wires their brain up for it, and this makes them MORE able to form new relationships and friendships for the rest of their life. In fact we are doing this BECAUSE we believe it will make life and relationships easier in the future, and that in fact that key window of opportunity for this brain wiring IS in the first three years!

If you have any questions, please let us know, we are more than happy to discuss this with you.



Lots of people act well, but few people talk well. This shows that talking is the more difficult of the two.

Oscar Wilde

Strengthening communication with our parents: a new initiative By Robyn Powell



Have you ever had a desire to implement something new but it keeps getting put on the back burner again and again because other things win the priority time slot? If you have, then we are probably rubbing shoulders in the same club.

At the beginning of the year we were quieter than anticipated while children slowly dribbled in from their holidays. My window of opportunity creaked open just enough for me to jump in. I have been aware for some time that as children move through the groups from toddler to Mamaku, to Kowhai and to Tui, the moments we have had to speak with parents about the changes, challenges, expectations and learning opportunities for their child have been spasmodic, rather hit and miss depending on whether we can find a moment to talk at drop off and pick up time. The practice of writing it all down in a letter seemed to miss out an important component, like, the parents themselves! The plan to formulate the brochures, to schedule a meeting time with the parents of the children moving and then enjoying some uninterrupted adult time to discuss it..... finally all came together. Right now I feel over the moon. Why, because we have strengthened those ties with our families and I feel that our sharing together has enabled us to work that much more closely for the benefit of our children.

I would like to say thank-you to Marie and all the teachers who worked hard on the brochures for their group and the whole team for facilitating the meetings at the end of the day. I would like to thank those parents who have been part of this new initiative as I have felt warmed by your willingness to adjust your busy schedules to fit in with us and the other parents. So many Dads came as well. It was fantastic.

The 'second-time' round parents fed back that whereas before they never really knew what the different challenges or expectations were as their child moved from group to group, the meeting facilitated the opportunity to discuss these things in more depth. Nikki, who swapped her Teacher hat for her Parent hat, commented that it helped her to have both Zoe and I present as she could see we were both on the same page her child Jacob. Others commented that they would like to, or are already working on, the same things with their child at home. That looks like and feels like consistency for the child, would you say? Our vigorous discussion with the new Kowhai parents was too short, so we have learned to facilitate a longer time, more like 40 minutes, not 20.

Although Nikki and Elena are not teaching together until the middle of March, it was exciting for me to see the ease in which their practice was consistent for the children. I attribute this to the many discussions teachers are having some of which were previously facilitated at a 'Continuity of Care' meeting.

On a final note, I attribute the new initiative getting off the ground to Tanya, Amelia's mum who said to me at the beginning of the year "I am really looking forward to making a time to talk to you about the Tui group now that Amelia is in the group." Something inside me said, "This is your chance Robyn to begin something new to strengthen our communication with all parents, do it now and do it well." Thank you Tanya for your initiative, and your willingness to find a time to talk which gave me the little push I needed to climb through the window of opportunity and begin this new initiative with parents.

If you want to build a ship, don't herd people together to collect wood and don't assign them tasks and work, but rather teach them to long for the endless immensity of the sea.

Antoine de Saint-Exupery

Hello! By Amy Heslop



Hello everyone, I hope I am familiar to most of you in my role as support teacher on Thursday and Fridays. It is a privilege to be part of the teaching team here at TLC. I am looking forward to an exciting future ahead here at TLC after I graduate in a Bachelor in Early Childhood Education at Auckland University of Technology in August this year!

Over the past five weeks I have been relieving Zoe's teaching position with the Tui group as she has been on her own intrepid journey around Mexico! This time has given me an opportunity to get to know our wonderful TLC children and families better and to recognize how important it is to build positive relationships.

It has been an uplifting experience for me as a teacher in training to gain a real insight into the role of the teacher and to observe young children's learning. I have been able to get to know the Tui children much better and observe their likes, dislikes, interests and dispositions. They have demonstrated the fact that young children are individual, independent, competent and confident learners, whose speech and choices should be heard and respected.

One main quality that surprised me in the Tui group children is their ability to step up and take

responsibility for themselves, others and their 'Tui jobs'. This ranges from setting up for meal times, mentoring younger children and looking after their own belongings. One important aspect of promoting respect within the curriculum is involving young children in the daily things that concern them.

I have witnessed Tui children show empathy towards each other and their younger friends. This in turn has taught me to be a better role model and has helped me realize that, as a child observes and feels empathy, they will learn to treat others in the same way. Even though children are seen as unique individuals they are of course part of a valued family and a wider community. I was lucky enough to be part of the Tuis Yoga session with Gabrielle and children's 'special happy last days' before moving onto school. I have gained a deep insight into the importance of TLC building strong positive relationships with their children and families.

I have fully enjoyed and embraced the time I have spent with the wonderful Tui children. I have been very lucky to have witnessed the joy and fun of the early childhood years in an environment that provides children with the freedom for exploration, discovery and self expression. TUI CHILDREN ROCK!

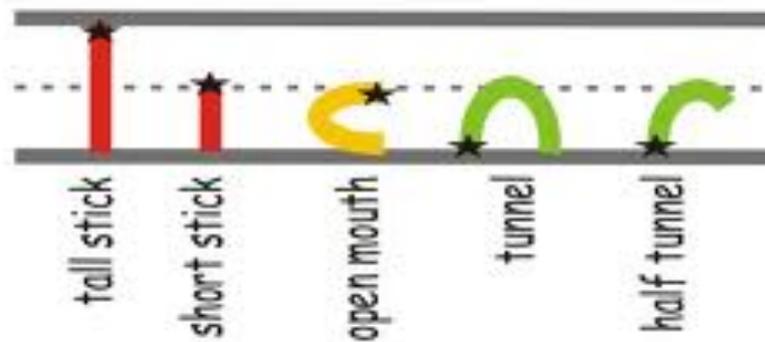
The real voyage of discovery consists of not in seeking new landscapes but in having new eyes.

Marcel Proust



Casey Literacy Club Parent Evening THURSDAY 15th MARCH 7 - 8 PM

Please join us to find out more about our literacy programme and how to support your Kowhai and Tui Children in this precious journey.



The primary work of infancy and toddlerhood is to become securely attached to the significant adults in their life. And only when they've done that work can they be ready for peer relationships. So toddlers will parallel play alongside each other, whereas a three year old will fully engage with another child.

Miriam McCaleb

Dates for your diary

March	April	May	June	July
Upstairs Parent Teacher Interviews - book your time with your key caregiver	Downstairs Parent Teacher Interviews		MATARIKI Fish and Chip Night Thursday the 21st	
Downstairs Parent Evening - Casey Literacy Club Thurs 15th 7pm.	Teacher Only Day Thursday the 5th CLOSED ALL DAY			
Family Sports Day Sunday the 25th March 10am-12pm Vermont St Reserve				
PVC Meeting Tues 13 March 7pm	PVC Meeting Tues 10 April 7pm	PVC Meeting Tues 8th May 7pm	PVC Meeting Tues 12 June 7pm	PVC Meeting Tues 10 July 7pm

TLCStuff Yoga Talk

Gabrielle Matches, William's mum, has started her new yoga practice, with classes and therapy sessions held in Cockburn Street, Ponsonby. Gabrielle is going to do a talk for the TLC community about the yoga classes she offers on **Monday the 19th March at TLC** - Everyone is welcome.

Updating your Contact Details?

Have you or your emergency contacts changed address or phone numbers? We would like to encourage you to make sure we have up to date

details for you **in case of emergencies**. Can you send any updated details to Plonic@thelearningcentre.co.nz.

Feedback

We love to get your feedback on our newsletter from you, all comments are welcome. Please send all comments/feedback to Marie@thelearningcentre.co.nz





The master of the art of living makes little distinction between his work and his play, his labor and his leisure, his mind and his body, his education and his recreation, his love and his religion. He hardly knows which is which; he simply pursues his vision of excellence in whatever he does, leaving others to decide whether he is working or playing. To him he is always doing both.

Buddha

The Learning Centre



**It's not
what the
vision is,
it's what
the vision
does.**

Peter Senge

