

A Lesson In Learning

E noho rā

By Kelly Watson

As my time at TLC begins to come to a close and I prepare to move to Christchurch in search of personal growth, I find myself reflecting upon all the incredible things that I have gained from being at TLC for nearly five years.

While doing this I can't help but consider the definition of what it means to be a teacher. Through this I keep coming back to the appreciation that its not just what we teach children thats important, as it is what we learn from them. Although I have studied and taken upon myself some of the wise words of other adults, it has often been that when observed and listened to, the children have been one of my greatest teachers.

I have also come to realise that one of the gifts that the RIE philosophy has given me is the chance to see a child's potential. When I really slow down and I mean REALLY stop and observe the children its easy to see just how capable they are. When children are free to take the lead and experience learning at their own pace its then that I am able to stop thinking that I have to teach them instead of modelling what is possible and taking the time to learn from them.

So following this, here are some of the most valuable things that children have taught and continue to teach me...

★Childrens appreciation of nature is not just slowing down but observing and appreciating nature in the smallest ways. Noticing water droplets on a banister, feeling a autumn breeze as it brings down a shower of leaves, studying a praying mantis's movements, observing tricks of light as they reflect off objects and listening to the sound of spring are just some of the experiences that children have helped me to appreciate.

★I often have to remind myself not rush to help children with their 'problems' as that takes away the opportunity for them to learn that obstacles in their way, are exactly just that. A problem is just an obstacle which challenges us and that ultimately gifts us with learning, new knowledge and a better ability to problem solve in the future.

★Having observed the honesty (sometimes blatant), forgiveness and unconditional love that children forever seem to have excess, I am often reminded that these are qualities which I should exercise more myself.

★Seeing the curiosity, exploration and imagination of children highlights the magic that it can bring. It also allows me to see the world anew like the time when a child asked me 'why is vegemite brown' and I couldn't answer them.

★I have come to realise that I should never, ever underestimate how much children know, feel and what they are capable of. Understanding this means stopping doing everything for them and seeing just how much they can do when given time and a chance.

★Reflecting upon the 'adult world' I find it amazing to note how much of our time is spent trying to avoid its realities rushing from one place to the next forever in envy of and searching for the escape that our children so easily have daily. The thing I admire the most about children and what I am still aspiring for is to just be. Few things are more energising and rewarding than to slow down and be present in the moment appreciating it for what it is.

So as I move to Christchurch in the hopes of continuing my own lifelong learning journey I hope to extend upon just some of the lessons that the children have taught me.

Feeling a sense of gratitude I have to mention just how much I will miss everyone feeling truly blessed to have had the opportunity to have been invited into the lives of so many families. Equally so I am eternally grateful to have been working with and under the mentorship of what are surely some of the best teachers in the country (and I assure you that I am not one for exaggeration). So while some have called me crazy and others courageous I leave for Christchurch inspired by the words of Confucius who was quoted saying

“wherever you go, go with all your heart”.

Alvin Toffler

The illiterate of the 21st century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn.

