

Welcome to the first newsletter for the Ngā Mātāpuna o te Waihora Learning Community Cluster.

The Ngā Mātāpuna o Te Waihora cluster consists of Early Childhood Centres and Schools in the Ellesmere area. The Cluster works together in a variety of areas with the aim of supporting our tamariki that attend our Early Childhood Centres and Schools. This initiative is supported by the Ministry of Education. The purpose of our Cluster newsletters is to inform the Community of the initiatives and programmes the Cluster has running.

Initially the Cluster was named the Leeston Learning Community Cluster. In consultation with Taumutu Marae the name has been changed to the Ngā Mātāpuna o Te Waihora Cluster.

We thank Taumutu for their support of the Cluster.

Clusters across Canterbury have been established in response to the Christchurch Earthquakes. The Ministry of Education set the following Goals for Clusters.

Greater Christchurch Education Renewal Recovery Programme Goals

- Learners achieve the best possible outcomes
- Young people become confident, connected, actively involved, lifelong learners
- Young people acquire skills and qualifications that will enable them to make their own futures and contribute to New Zealand's future
- Maori and Pasifika learners and those with special educational needs are supported to realise their potential
- Learners find their identities, languages and cultures valued and supported throughout their education
- Learners can access suitable pathways through education and into work

Based on these goals our Cluster has established the following Long Term Outcomes for 2016
All schools and centres are effective partners in a Professional Learning Community that:

- provides regular opportunities to share common challenges and successes
- offers combined professional learning opportunities for staff
- enriches the learning of all students
- conducts transition processes that enable all learners to succeed
- implements activities that engage the community in LCC planning

The Cluster Early Childhood Centres and Schools look forward to 2016 being a fine year for the children of this area. The Cluster will continue to work for the benefit of these children.



Year 6 children at their Writing extension programme. See Page 3



A breakout session from our Cluster Conference at the start of the year. See Page 2

Cultural Narrative

In November, 2015, Te Taumutu Rūnanga presented He Puna Kōrero mo ngā Kura, Educational Hub Cultural Narrative to the Ngā Mātāpuna o te Waihora; the schools and learning centres of our learning cluster area.

This important document was commissioned by the Ministry of Education and produced with the support of Liz Brown and the Te Taumutu Rūnanga Mātauranga Portfolio, Mātauraka Mahaanui, Tekerei Norton and the Te Rūnanga or Ngāi Tahu Cultural Mapping Team.

The narrative provides a very valuable insight into the cultural history of the region in which our learning centres are located – a cultural history that not only builds our understanding of Te Ao Māori (The Māori World) in which we are all part of, but also provides essential understanding for the design and enhancing of existing and new educational institutions and facilities. 'Design' referring to both physical characteristics such as buildings, appropriate landscaping and plantings, as well as what we do in our educational institutions in terms of building cultural understanding, honouring our bicultural heritage and enhancing our curriculum and values.

The narrative not only presents the fascinating history of our area but is a living resource for moving our learning centres forward into the future. Special thanks to Te Taumutu Rūnanga for providing a great resource for our schools.

Ngā Mātāpuna o Te Waihora Conference

In January this year we held our inaugural cluster conference at Ellesmere College. In 2015 when the conference was being planned, our initial thinking was that it would be a great way to begin our year's investigation into culturally responsive practice across our schools and centres. It quickly grew to include an opportunity to learn with and from each other and to provide an occasion for staff within the cluster to share their skills and experience as we collaboratively explore ways in which we can better meet the needs of our students.

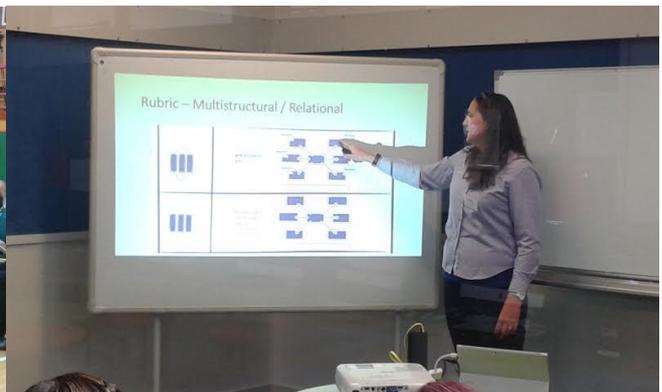
The focus on culturally responsive practice is a natural progression of the relationship we have developed both as individual schools, and as a cluster, with Te Taumutu Rūnunga. We are incredibly fortunate to work in the Ellesmere area where Taumutu supports teachers with resources, knowledge, people and programmes that contribute significantly to our teaching. We are grateful to Te Taumutu Rūnanga, particularly the education committee, for their support of this event and of our schools and centres.

Our keynote speaker for the day was Professor Angus Hikairo Macfarlane of Canterbury University. Angus is Professor of Māori Research at the University of Canterbury. His teaching and research focus on the exploration of cultural concepts and strategies that positively influence educational practice – exactly what we are hoping to further develop within our cluster. Angus's presentation left us with several deep issues on which to ponder and reflect and also several ideas and strategies which could be implemented immediately to improve the way in which we relate to, understand and engage with the students in our classes.

Staff from across the cluster volunteered to lead workshops and these were supplemented by external providers from agencies such as the Ministry of Education, Lincoln High School and Te Horanui RTLB service. Feedback from staff following the event was overwhelmingly positive with many staff commenting favourably on the relationships built across the cluster from pre-school to secondary level, the similarity of issues and needs across the sectors, and the generosity of workshop presenters in sharing their experience and resources.

The conference was largely financed by our cluster and supplemented by a grant from the Ministry of Education. As a cluster we are very grateful to the Ministry of Education and especially our Senior Adviser, Linda Youl, who assisted with planning and liaison.

It is our hope that this conference will be the first of many meetings across and within the cluster this year, providing opportunities for the relationships forged on the day to create further connections and sharing of resources for the benefit of all tamariki in Ellesmere.



Community Workshops

Autumn Workshops: Education seminars for Ellesmere Parents

Schools and ECEs from the Ngā Mātāpuna o te Waihora Cluster presented a series of workshops last Autumn, that hit the hard topics of parenting and gave practical ideas around supporting children's' learning. Topics included:

- Managing behaviour at home: Practical tips for managing challenging behaviours and rewarding the behaviour you want.
- Hot tips for reading: Making reading time with your child a happy and productive experience.
- Cyber-safety: Advice around the risks of the internet environment to children and some practical tips including where to go to get help.
- Recovery matters: Practical tips and tools to understand and support family and friends through the Christchurch earthquakes.

The workshops were well attended, and were held at different schools around the cluster.

Extension Programmes

The Gifted and Talented programme has been developed to meet the needs of our tamariki across the cluster. Needs are identified by surveying our students, sharing cluster data and identifying cluster wide strengths and needs that we can target our resources towards. We aim to continue having our gifted and talented students meet once a term to grow strong relationships of support for each other, and that each school will have a turn a hosting the programme term about. There will be a different kaupapa each term that addresses the needs and interests of different children, therefore targeting a wider group of students.

The details of all planned G&T programmes will be communicated to all cluster members so they are aware and can participate if and when appropriate.

The following workshops were held in 2015:
Term 1: Creating Art with a Māori focus linking in with Ngāti Moki (Southbridge)
Term 2: Extended Writers for Year 3-8 (Leeston)
Term 3: Coding using Scratch (Dunsandel)
Term 4: Creative play through Drama for ECE tamariki (Ellesmere College).

ECE Extension

Each year in Ellesmere each school provides extension classes as part of their "gifted and talented" programs in school, this year our ECE children were lucky enough to be included in this as part of our local cluster group. Drama students from Ellesmere College along with teacher Melissa Jones visited Leeston Playcentre and worked with a group of 4 year olds from all of our local ECE's to present an interactive play called the "Nickle Nackle tree. It was a meaningful learning opportunity for the college students and preschoolers alike and an enjoyable experience for everyone involved. College students got to prepare and preform the play with our four year olds, and they did this in a very respectful way which made the four year olds feel valued while they were offered an opportunity to extend their imaginations and creativity while receiving attention from much older children. This session tied in well with our focus over the last 12 months on Transitions. It is great for students to learn skills to interact with people if all ages and make connections in the community.



Children with the mural at Taumutu Marae they completed at the term One Extension programme.

Transitions

Throughout 2014-2015 ECE and New entrant teachers from our local cluster group have been working on and discussing transitions from ECE to primary school. It has been great to find out exactly what it is schools need children to know before they start school. We found that the most important skills we can teach our pre-schoolers to help them off to a great start in education is life skills. Knowing how to communicate confidently to adults and other children, knowing how to open lunch boxes and dress themselves, and being able to recognise their own name are vital things for new entrants to know. Learning to read and write is the role of school teachers and if children are confident and comfortable in their environment the learning will happen naturally. We have fostered great relationships between schools and ECE's with reciprocal visits, we have attended school fairs, Kapa haka performances, athletics days and our four year olds were lucky enough to attend an interactive workshop with drama students from Ellesmere College as part of our cluster gifted and talented program. One of our projects is creating books about our local schools for ECE's to share with pre-schoolers making school more familiar, the books contain photos of key people and places within the school grounds. We ran a survey where we talked to parents and children about their expectations and experiences of transitions and got some very useful information. We found the children were not concerned about the academic side of schooling their concerns centred around the routines and rituals at school, how things are supposed to work and what they are supposed to do. "Where do we eat lunch, when can I go to the toilet, where do I put my belongings, who do I talk to if I have a problem?" These were the main concerns of the children. It is great to have these insights into what is actually important to everyone involved, we know that the more exposure to the next level of schooling that students have, the more information we share with them the easier the transitions will be. We are very fortunate in Ellesmere that the majority of our children follow the same paths, from ECE to Primary school and then on to Ellesmere college which makes the path much smoother for the Tamariki in our district. Our aim for 2016 is to continue building the great connections and relationships and sense of belonging in our community to ensure our children receive the best education to help them become confident and capable learners and valued members of our society

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A Word from the Ministry of Education.

Congratulations to the Ngā Mātāpuna o Te Waihora cluster on the inaugural combined conference held on 29 January at Ellesmere College. What a fantastic start to the year, with teachers from all schools and early childhood representatives joining together in professional learning. Ministry staff joined the conference on this day and commented on the high level of professional discussion and engagement among participants. Organizing an event of this type requires a heavy workload over and above the regular work of an education leader and I would like to acknowledge the effort made by Principals and early childhood staff to establish the conference.

It has been a pleasure working with this group of Principals and early childhood leaders over the past three years as they collaborate to bring increased opportunities to children in the area. Collaboration of this type between the three levels of education (early childhood, primary and secondary) ensures a smooth and successful education pathway for children in the area in addition to offering opportunities for the learners which an individual school or centre may be unable to provide. The Ministry is excited about the progress of this cluster to date, and keen to support cluster plans for the future. This newsletter highlights some of the recent projects carried out by the early childhood services and schools in the Ngā Mātāpuna o Te Waihora cluster. Congratulations to all involved, I look forward to working alongside the cluster again in 2016.

Linda Youl; Senior Advisor; Ministry of Education