

## 47<sup>th</sup> Annual NZCA Conference & AGM

### *Kōrero session notes*

#### **KŌRERO SESSION TWO – Infants and toddlers**

Provocateurs: Ann Pairman and Anne Meade

Facilitator: Gillian Dodson

Note taker: Sue Vaealiki

Anne – two issues

1. Disappointing policy decision not to work on ratios with this government – the improvement needed will not occur in this term of government.
2. Big conversation in team – how do you work with argument? Primary key teacher and continuity – as children go through centre.
3. Two-three year olds. Concerns are that they are an overlooked group. 1:10 ratio frightening. We differ the most from other countries.

Toddlers are often caught between the specialised nature of infants and older children.

PROS & CONS – we need to debate and discuss issues.

- Group size – what do we mean?
- Older toddlers stuck in between
- Ratios
- How do we support this age group

They need a flexible approach to cater to their whims. How can our programmes support this?

We want to create a ‘YES’ environment.

There is an issue of space – regulations are appalling

- very little research
- centres didn’t use to operate on minimum spaces
- not just square footage we need to look at, but use of spaces etc

Programme for toddlers. EC programme have pushed down – e.g. Group sessions for 2 year old, not a reasonable expectation.

A lot of the time we are tending them to be bored.

I agree, it’s a watered down version of the older children’s programme. 2 year olds can be competent learners.

Yes, solution is that we have an open gate system – 2 year olds make their decision to where they want to be – e.g. babies or older children, working well.

Do you have a key teachers system?

Yes, it’s working well, but not in the older group. We are having lots of discussion now. We are encouraging the teachers in the older group to try this.

10 infants and 3 teachers – this mitigates the issue. Creation of small groups takes the place of key teacher.

- 3 teachers cover the whole day – though teachers get tired

So what happens when more part time staff come in?

My interest is in the care of teachers. Work arrangements need to take account of the teacher's wellbeing.

What about the child? They are there very long days, some 10 hours a day. There is a mismatch between the adults and children's expectations.

And we get annual leave.

Are we too available?

7-6 – under 2's babies for 10.5 hours a day. I struggle with this. Is this in the interest of the child?

Is this about arguing for government change to maternity leave?

We are also there for whānau and we can't judge them.

They trust us that we have good quality.

Is there any research regarding babies who are in long day care?

Some mixed messages from research – stress levels go up once you go over 6 hours.

Does primary caregiver system lower stress levels?

Yes, it's more calming for the child. Needs to be more than one person and the child can make the choice.

Puts a big demand on the child and an expectation on one adult. It is group care.

I feel guilt and anxiety when I go on holiday.

Holidays are good.

Key teachers and secondary teachers – working well – helps for holidays.

Who decides who the key teacher is and who is the secondary teacher?

We discuss and we choose, but if the child can choose then we are flexible.

Plug for home based – home based has primary care giving and family – whānau. Small group size and home environment. Children are from the community and develop a whānau. Children learn together and are supportive of each other, learning together.

Group care – mixed group – very separate group, there is no perfect model. Teasing out pros and cons.

Children don't make friends with a whole group, just 3-6 friends. Children do make real friends.

In big groups, children tend to find it hard to find friends.

Noticed change from highchairs – to small toddlers. Have watched more friendships established around the kai table.

No research – a toddler will go to eat with friends. Opens up more possibilities for children to signal who their friends are and share these times.

Toddlers – ratios 1:5 under 2's

- 1:6 over 2's

I cannot see how ratios 1:10 would work. I would like NZCA to keep pushing for lowering ratios. I would like to know how we can keep advocating for this.

2-3 year olds on 1:10 band not common overseas.

- How do you regulate it? Its complex as sector is diverse. No clear resolution.

The other issue is that the government only thinks you need only 1 person. It's undervaluing children.

You just need a warm body.

Interpretation of teacher is perceived well by the public. We need to articulate this to parents better.

I tried to articulate to MP; response was that parents don't have training.

I was mother, nana, and then teacher. Trained teachers know more about child's learning intention.

And you didn't have 5 under 2's. We don't want to go back.

But we could, parents must advocate for us!

I am a parent of twins, I had additional support if triplets. We need to draw comparisons.

### **Space issue**

Is it looking at space? Noise levels will be higher? Where is a space for each child? Would more space make a difference in relation to group size?

What's in the space?

- over clutter
- natural environments

It is much better if child can get outside.

We talk about being in a good space outside every morning. We prepare the environment. This makes it a much quieter and calmer learning environment.

If we take something new in then we take something else out.

Trickle down curriculum – leads to clutter.

Don't set yourself up to fail.

Be clear about the age group you work in and be well prepared. Sometimes teachers don't have the right skills.

We need specialist teachers.

We send mixed messages – i.e. Display – it's all commercial.

What does it look like we value?

What is the most fruitful way for teachers to put energies in to having our voices heard?

Ministry of Education works for government, therefore we need to get parents to debate the issues.

Sometimes the agenda comes from unions, women's groups etc. Speaking with one voice.

We need to establish our priorities and get parents to also advocate.

Do we need to pick up on one issue?

- Find a solution
- And move policy forward.