

Teachers Report to the Committee and Community of Avon Kindergarten

24th May 2017.

Thank you very much for being a part of our kindergarten community and being willing to join us tonight.

This is my second AGM report here at Avon Kindergarten, but the first one as being in the head teacher role for the entire year. It has been a year of lots of “new beginnings,” building new process’ and relationships and a year where solid ground has been built for great things to grow on.

Learning and Teaching / Emergent Curriculum. (In other words what has been happening for the children.)

When I first began here last May we had a incredible imbalance of boys on the rolls compared with girls. One session to note had 17 boys and 2 girls attending. As this would suggest there was lots of boisterous play happening and wet days were loud! Needing to get the children fully engaged we, the teachers, began planning to meet the needs of the individual children. To this end we purchased some large building planks and put out the call out to our community for “loose parts” to be brought in. Loose parts like tyres, drift wood, beer crates, small cable reels, objects that the children could move around at will. Objects that need lots of energy to move and offer opportunities to develop skills around building, balance, loading, lifting, stabilizing, co-operating and turn taking. We now have several 1/2 pallets and a traffic cone added to the mix. These along with the trolleys, ropes and tie downs have all become treasured items within our outside play and offer unlimited combinations and opportunities for the children to work at activities that fulfill their own creative needs and allow them to set and met their own goals.

Providing a backdrop to this play is the “standard type early childhood playground equipment” which we would not be without. Our sand-pit, climbing boxes and planks, balls and swings are always in high demand and this year have been added too with many new items being purchased and others that have been upgraded.

Over the year we have also seen the enrolment of girls balance out the numbers. Other interests that have grown this year include literacy, music and dancing, large indoor constructions, the glue guns, carpentry, block, farm and animal play. We have seen many children develop deep friendships with others, the skills to negotiate and turn take and the ability to inquire about, and stay engaged in their interests for sustained periods. Seeing these skills develop in the lives of the children and being used is what we strive and plan for, as they are skills the children will need to succeed in all walks of life.

Another interest at Avon is that of gardening and sustainability. All the stages attract the children’s interest and involvement... weeding, planting, harvesting, preparing and eating the food. These processes and what they include such as composting, the worm farm and

recycling are all valued and the children take special active interest. Unfortunately one of the issues that we have with offering the opportunity for the children to be fully engaged is that the garden is behind the fence, out side of the licensed area. This means that having enough teachers or adults to be available to garden is often difficult. This is a challenge that we are working on and know can be overcome.

To support and add to the children's interests we have a wide range of visitors and "days" of interest; We have had visits from "Levity Beet" the musician, "CJ the Clown" "Zapo the magician," "Coach Mike" "Santa," the drama group from the Special Needs Unit at the High School, "Yellow Day" "Healthy Heart day" our own mini Olympics which were masses of fun, and an amazing bus trip to "Fernbrook Farm" (SO AWESOME!) , and walks in our neighbourhood to check out the lambs and to practice our road safety.

We would also like to thank Trisha for marrying Simon at the end of last year. This provided an opportunity for the children to explore many questions around "getting married" and an opportunity to dress Trisha up and wish her and Simon well.

Community and Whanau.

Something that is very important to us is our community. Over the year we have come to know and commit to the people that attend, and live, around our kindergarten. It is not just the teachers that are establishing these relationships, we are also seeing families connecting and working together, forming strong bonds and networks that are supporting and providing answers to genuine needs.

As a kindergarten we have given directly to families by joining with Wheelers and Duffy books to give each child two books every six months, we provide 8 hour sunblock for each child to keep safe during the summer months, our committee has provided two named food containers to each child to help reduce rubbish and foster healthy eating and we have held two events with the funds raised going to the family of Campbell Robinson who was so sick. In Dec we were the grateful recipients of "Christmas Gift Boxes" when generous Taranaki people got together and gave each child a shoebox full of gifts.

We also gratefully acknowledge the community organisations from whom we have received grants from this year; the TSB, TET, COGS, OI Environment, Tui Ora and Fonterra. We have also received many small sponsorship gifts in the form of items for our raffles and fundraising from local Stratford business'. Each of these gifts add to the resources and environment that we can offer to the children.

As teachers we have worked hard these last few months to be integral advocates for our kindergarten, whānau and children. We have liaised with many outside agencies, making contacts and referrals for individual children and their families: (the Ministry of Education, speech/language and behavior, Public Health Nurses, Banardo's and local doctors, to

name just a few). We have also attended the transition meetings with other local Early Childhood Centre's and new entrant teachers from most schools. Meeting with them regularly and building relationships is helping to make transitions to these schools easier for our children. A wish for the year coming is to make stronger ties with our local Avon school and to also compile a more thorough list of agencies to which we can refer whānau.

Staffing

From Feb last year through until August there were eight staff changes. The uncertainty and inconsistencies that this brought made this a difficult time for both the teaching team(s) and the children and families. Dec 2016 saw the permanent appointment of our third full time teacher thus forming our existing team of Trisha, myself and Rose. Erin our teacher aid has been studying for her Degree in Early Childhood and at this point is only weeks away from completing it. Being so advanced in her studies has allowed Erin to slot into our part-time teacher role for several hours each week and other times when she is required. Kathy has joined us this year to take up the teacher aid hours that have been left by Erin during these times.

We have also been joined by Stacey who is part of the Ministry of Education team supporting our kindergarten and children here that need additional support. Nicole Oliver, who has been funded through our MoE Equity, has come in three times to help children in the garden. We are grateful to have Toni our long standing and efficient kindergarten administrator. During this past week the MoE has carried out an audit on the funding that we as a kindergarten receive. The rules for these are quite complex and as you each know require a mountain of paper work and signatures. Toni's experience and diligence has brought our kindergarten through with 100% correct compliance. Thank you and congratulations Toni.

As teachers we have all been privileged to attend a wide number of Professional Development opportunities through out the year. Each opportunity allows us to keep up with trends and research, and brings us more knowledge of best practice and the ability to provide better outcomes for children. Some of this year's courses we have attended have covered the topics including; child attachment, keeping children safe, natural play environments, leadership, bi-cultural practice, speech and language, appraisal, e- portfolios, internal assessment, and computerized systems.

The past two terms have also seen our teaching team put a very large effort into forming new structures underpinning for our practice. For a number of reasons we were not able to take the strategic planning, philosophies and vision etc from the past team and carry these forward, so with the help of Seraya Hughes and Lois Sibsten, both professional leaders within our association, we are working to form new ones relevant and current for this team and our kindergarten.

Roll Numbers.

One challenge that we faced at this point last year was that we had low role numbers and partly because of the transient nature of many in our community it was hard for the kindergarten to sustain any growth that did occur. Steadily our numbers have built up and at this point we have full roles on two days and just one or two spaces on the other three days. A little added challenge this term is that our Association has had to increase the number of spaces that we are required to fill to 32 per day, instead of 30. Increasing by two per day doesn't sound much but because not all children attend all the sessions it is actually 10 spaces over the course of a week.

To achieve filling our roles many children who entered our sessions were younger than traditionally enrolled at kindergartens in the past. This is inline with local and national trends.

2017 however has seen a slight rise in the age of the children we are now admitting off our waiting list and with these children and older children who move into our area we have been able to fill vacancies and grow a sustainable roll.

Thank you.

There are so many people that I need to thank. It has been a year of moving forward and we could not have done it without the dedication, skills, enthusiasm, and support of so many of you.

Thank you to our president Lisa, and your husband Marcus who have continually invested in us. Thank you for so generously sharing your recourses and skills. This year could not have gone as smoothly as it did without you and your willingness to commit as often as you did.

Thank you also to Annette, your expertise and organizational prowess has been awesome and taken us along way. Vanessa thanks so much for your willingness to be treasurer and carrying us through this year. Thanks also for investing yourself into our Association at the Board level of which you are a member. Thanks also this this year's committee members, Ashleigh, Carlene and Pip. We will miss each of you as your children head off to school and take you with them.

Jess and Kaylene, thanks for mowing the lawns, and to all who attended our working bee, sold raffles, brought raffles, made ice creams, organized and fetched and carried for us, swept our floors, helped put toys away at the end of the sessions, and spent time with your child here, I truly, truly thank you.

To Trisha, Rose, Erin, Kathy, Toni and Stacey thank you for being awesome and dedicated "work mates". You each put so much of yourselves into giving the best for our kindergarten and children. Thank you!

Looking to the future.

It is with excitement and hope that we look forward to the Avon kindergarten of today forward.

We have a vision to carry on meaningful relationships that meet the needs of individuals and families in our community. That it is to be a place of learning that has best outcomes possible for all learners.

We look forward to the children being able to get out into our gardens more and learn about, and enjoy growing their own food and caring for the earth that we all share.

We are looking forward to having some building alterations that will provide an up-to-date space designed for children to be changed in a private and respectful environment.

We are looking forward to our guttering/flooding problems being sorted.

We are looking forward to having a large window placed in the back fence so that we can watch the farm animals next door.

We are looking forward to researching and designing a natural based environment for our children to play in. One with destinations to explore and hide in. One with flowers and leaves and sticks and water, and music and places to wonder, ponder and rest.

We are looking forward to interacting with you about your child's day, and their learning journey through e-portfolios, which are coming soon.

We are looking forward to being with you and your child and being part of their lives.

We have many dreams and aspirations for the future and invite you to bring yours too, so that together we can all be a part of what Avon kindergarten is to be in the future.

Thank you.

I move that my report be adopted.

Avis Laursen.

May 2017.