

Editorial

Literacy in early childhood

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In this edition of *He Kupu*, the theme of literacy is explored with a particular focus on supporting teachers to recognise and respond to the wide variety of literacy skills children bring to early childhood settings. In a changing demographic, with multiple languages and oral language in the spot light (Education Review Office [ERO], 2017), this issue provides a timely reminder of supporting literacy through children's play and creativity while teaching critical lifelong skills. Language and literacy is not only foundational to later academic success but also to the development of child voice, agency and identity.

The articles in this edition provide theoretical and practical support for early childhood practitioners to recognise how to introduce and support early literacy and language. The practitioner section comprises five articles that provide a range of approaches and teaching strategies that can be applied by practitioners and parents to support their children's engagement.

In the first article in the practitioner section, Evelyn Davis relays to us her work with Vivian Paley's helicopter stories. Encouraging children's creativity and imagination while fostering feelings of friendship and belonging, the approach described by Evelyn is grounded in compassion and empathy while promoting the children's narrative skills.

With a focus on the development of child agency, Pearl D'Silva discusses ways to use picture books to extend children's interest in literacy to support their interests while giving them voice and encouraging their active participation in their own learning. Pearl also suggests strategies parents and teachers can employ to help create an optimal environment to help bring stories to life.

Looking at the role of the early childhood teacher, Chelsea Bracefield and Fiona Woodgate support teachers' understanding of viewing literacy through its multiple forms and reflects on strategies which teachers can use to support children in making meaning and creating meaning through language and literacy.

Amy Thynne identifies ways in which the teacher can promote skills that are fundamental to language and literacy development through building onto children's physical movement in play. Amy explains how teachers can foster pre-literacy skills in emergent and holistic ways.

Lastly, Shu-Yen Law explores how teachers can use questioning for children to critically reflect on the content of picture books and their own experiences in the community. Shu-Yen suggests reflective questions can help children think about issues around social justice and creating an equitable environment.

Moving onto the articles section, there are two research-based articles from current NZTC masters' students, and one theoretical article. Continuing the theme of critical engagement with literature, Maxine Dyer presents a theoretical perspective on critical literacy framed by the work of Paulo Freire which describes both the importance of his work and also how it can be viewed as accessible to early childhood teachers and to their practice with children.

Sophia Li examines the role of the Formal Language Policy in the homes of Chinese speaking families in Auckland, New Zealand. Her studies reveal the support provided by parents in the home environment to support the child's heritage language and foster their dual language development.

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In the final article of this section, Rachel Winslow reflects on the use of puppets as a methodological tool in a qualitative study that looked at children's working theories of kindness. The puppet play stories children created further developed their oral language and understanding of sequence of their scenarios that helped them express their views.

The issue of *He Kupu* concludes with three book reviews. Marjolein Whyte has written a review on *Weaving Te Whāriki* edited by Alex Gunn and Joce Nuttall. Zahra Herrmann has reviewed *Children's literature in a multiliterate world* edited by Nicola Daly and Libby Limbrick. Finally, Galina Stebletsova has reviewed a classic of Vivian Paley: *The boy on the beach*.

References

Education Review Office (2017). *Extending their language - Expanding their world: Children's oral language (birth - 8 years)*. Wellington, New Zealand: Author.