

CASE STUDIES



NATURE PLAY CONFERENCE
2018



www.littlekiwisnatureplay.com

THE ECO SCHOOL

Whanganui

We've been running for 2 1/2 years in various forms. We started as two mums who loved bringing our kids on adventures. Our friends started joining us with their kids and it has all grown from there. We currently offer a weekly playgroup, school holiday family excursions, and ECE/school field trips.

We work mainly providing nature immersion on our 5-hectare learning farm, but also offer excursions based in various parks and reserves locally. We also organise trips over school holidays for families to attend (up to 2 hours from home!).

We have single-handedly created a nature-play movement in Whanganui. We won a grant that allowed us to provide free or subsidised sessions for about 700 children this summer. We have an interactive Facebook group of over 300 members and growing who create their own nature play meetups. We have weekly meetups that attract pre-schoolers and home schoolers.



I wish I would have started running as an excursion site (rather than trying to be a care-providing program) from the beginning. We got mucked around for about 2 years trying to figure out how to work within MOE guidelines. Now we just have centres come to us.

We have learnt what the MOE won't let you do. Ha!

I am hoping to work with schools to look at funding models where our educators are part of their school community, so they are more easily able to access our services. Constantly looking for grants.

CONTACT

223 No. 2 Line, Okoia, Whanganui

022 190 7323

theECOSchool@gmail.com

www.theecoschool.net

Facebook: Nature Play in Whanganui, The ECO School



AVONHEAD PLAYCENTRE

Christchurch

Avonhead Playcentre started their outdoor nature play sessions in January 2016, called "Wild Wednesday Explorer sessions".

Held all year round, no matter the weather, children from birth until school age can play and explore as part of a Playcentre-fully funded session. The Explorer sessions began after supervisors and parents noticed a gap in their programme.

Children as young as a few weeks old can be in direct contact with nature for 4 hours each week. Each term is planned in advance, with input from children, who tell us their favourite places to go with parents and supervisors. Favourite places to explore include Bottle Lake Forest, where hut making and fairy play come alive, to local reserves where children can hunt for bugs and draw in the mud with sticks or their fingers. All our sessions have one thing in common though - no structured playgrounds.

Watching children taking risks and trying something new is always a way to measure the successes of our Explorer sessions. We are seeing children break out of their friendship cliques and embracing each other as equals, no matter the age. They are helping each other take risks and watching out for the younger ones. At times they are all magically playing the same imaginative game and it's wonderful to see.



If we were to go back and start again from the beginning I think we would still do everything that we have done because if it was anything different we would not have learnt what we have along the way as parents and educators.

Something we have learned along the way and probably straight from the beginning of our sessions was that we did not need to take "stuff" with us. We started our first three sessions carrying around a massive container of items we thought the children might want during the session for example a clipboard with pens and pencils for children to draw with. And it's easy to look back now and realise how silly that was because there was so much at our fingertips to use to draw with. So, we ditched a big box of "stuff" at week three.

Growing our Wild Wednesday Explorers sessions to our maximum of 30 children is our next goal. Also, to continue to help other Playcentre's wanting to start their own outdoor sessions. We believe every child needs to experience time in unstructured outdoor areas.

CONTACT

166 Waimairi Road, Ilam

<https://www.facebook.com/AvonheadPlaycentreCHCH>



CHERRYS EARLY LEARNING CENTRE

Christchurch

Our Centre decided to start taking our children on Forest school trips for our older 4-year-olds 3 years ago. We started these in February 2015 at Mt Vernon Park in St Martins. This was inspired by our teachers who heard about the Invercargill Forest school's initiative and Enviro-schools cluster group discussions. later due to continuing earthquakes, we moved it to our local Ernle Clarke reserve and then later again to our local Thorrington school native garden.

These first walks allowed our children to explore and climb our local hills and discovered a small cave and crawled through grasses and boulders in a small stream bed, climb rocks and discovering fantails, cattle, sheep and looking down on the city and local scenery. We then changed to Ernle Clarke reserve where we wandered along our local Opawaho River getting to recognise and plant trees and plants, weeding and watering them and discovering wild areas.

Our successes are hiking and exploring our local hill area and then recently we explored our local river areas and experienced 'wild -play' in the bush, planting, caring for plants and trees, discovering ducks, shag, piwakawaka- fantails, eels and insects. discovering and building huts, vine swings etc.



We would have liked to have more trips to Mt Vernon Park, however, the transport issue with new health and safety requirements produced more stresses on staff.

We learnt that preparing parents /whanau well in advance, so they are well informed and clothe their children suitably and educate them regarding the principles of Forest schools going in all weathers etc.

We would like to use both areas at Ernle Clarke reserve and Thorington school and include children from school to deepen the local school connection and include our children who have moved on to school for ongoing Forest school experiences.

CONTACT

45 Riverview Street

Beckenham

Christchurch 8023

www.cherrys.co.nz



TIMBERNOOK

Christchurch

TimberNook is a nature based child development programme. We focus on both therapeutic and education benefits of children being in nature.

Started 7 years ago by paediatric occupational therapist in USA, NZ launched 3 years ago in Hawkes Bay & Wellington.

Operating in Christchurch for 12 months under Director Kim Tenebaum. Keen to offer outdoor nature immersion programmes for local children, especially to be an alternative to current premise based services for ECE or for school holiday programmes. To have children active and creative in their day.

Range of programmes and age groups - Tiny Ones 0-6yrs, Going Wild Weekends, multi-day programmes for primary aged children in school holidays, hosting ECE, school and community groups. A mix of creative individual and group experiences using all the senses in natural setting as well as unhurried free play with loose parts.



Our successes are connecting children with nature and opportunities, re-connecting any adults that come with them! Realising how creative & capable all children are – especially progression over time. Although we use 'risky' play, there are very minimal incidents. Adults see children in a different light. Challenges – rain poses difficulty with some organisational aspects but doesn't seem to worry children. Cold does – e.g. wind. Ensure spare clothing. Wet & muddy clothing – ensure wet bag/ plastic bags tied to main backpack! When getting going – plan & prep then go! You will be enjoying seeing your children in a different setting & context. When up and running – observe and reflect upon what is occurring and 'read' the ebb and flow. Next we plan on using new sites and using different curriculum themes and experiences.

CONTACT

kim.tenebaum@timbernook.com

www.timbernook.com

fb: TimberNook Christchurch NZ

<https://www.facebook.com/TimberNook-Christchurch-NZ-169364596885994/>



KIDSFIRST KINDERGARTENS LINCOLN

Mahoe Reserve, Boundary Road, Lincoln

Kidsfirst Lincoln has been facilitating Enviro-schools programme since 2003. "Being out in nature" within the community supported and enhanced education for sustainability practices. This has also offered opportunity to engage further in Place Based Education.

Selwyn District Council, Lincoln Envirotown, Lincoln High School Enviro Group, Enviro-schools, Kidsfirst Lincoln joined together to plant native trees and vegetation in Mahoe Reserve which is short walk across the road from kindergarten.

Jeanne Williams (head teacher) visited Fiordland Kindergarten Nature Discovery in Te Anau. She explored how that kindergarten engaged with children "to be" in nature and looked at their risk management systems (<http://fiordlandknaturediscovery.blogspot.co.nz/>).

Kidsfirst Lincoln, Experiencing Nature Excursions at Mahoe Reserve (previously a gravel pit), was initiated in 2013.



Experience takes place all year round, all weathers. Monthly 10 older children, 1 teacher and 2 parent helpers visit the Reserve "to be" in nature. Take food, drinking water, writing paper and pencils, protective clothing and a tent resource.

Experiences: investigating wildlife (e.g. bugs, birds, plants), "being in nature" without traditional play-based kindergarten props. Sing karakia at entrance to signal entry to our special place.

A great success is that older children assume roles of responsibility to teach younger children on trips (ako). Children and adults act as kaitiaki to clean up at Mahoe.

Parent involvement is crucial. Adult to child ratios mean we cannot venture outside the gate without parents help. Ensure parents understand and "know" purpose and value of their contribution.

We want to explore other areas of nature that exist in our local environment. Exploring with Kidsfirst Opawa St Martins – reciprocal visits to "be" in nature in wild spaces of both Kidsfirst Lincoln and Kidsfirst Opawa St Martins.

CONTACT

Kidsfirst Kindergarten Lincoln



TIAKI EARLY LEARNING CENTRE

Rotorua

In 2012, the Tangata Whenuatanga competency of Tātaiako, along with a growing body of research regarding the reciprocal benefits of place based education, prompted the teachers of Tiaki to commit to spending quality time once a week with young children in their local community. Since then the children of Tiaki have spent many hours playing, learning and exploring in this beautiful natural environment. With the blessing of the local hapū, Ngāti Te Roro o te Rangi, they have developed a wetland on the edge of the lake and are responsible for this ongoing project.

Children connect with nature through, regularly spending time in a natural environment in all weather, independent and guided exploration, considered risk taking, the learning of local pūrākau and the concept of kaitiakitanga.

By spending at least one day a week at the wetlands the children have the opportunity to become deeply immersed in this natural environment. This enables them to not only make strong connections with nature but to grow a sense belonging. It also allows them to develop an awareness that they can make positive change in the world.



"When people acquire a deep knowledge of a particular place, they begin to care about what happens to the landscape, creatures, and people in it. Places known deeply are deeply loved, and well-loved places have the best chance to be protected and preserved, to be cherished and cared for by future generations." – Michael Stone

I'm not sure we would necessarily do anything differently. If we had done things differently we may not have ended up where we are today. In saying that we are constantly reflecting and make changes and refine things where need be, like upgrading our wet weather gear for example.

We have learnt that place is important. Children's communities are amazing resources, rich in their unique history, culture and natural environment.

We plan to continue to grow and develop the wetland and to further engage the local community including, hapū, schools, other centres, local weavers and other community groups.

CONTACT

Hinemoa Point, Rotorua

tiakiearlylearningcentre@gmail.com

