



MANUKAU EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION TASKFORCE

Increasing Participation in Early Childhood Education in Manukau:

A Tomorrow's Manukau: Manukau Apopo Project

Update August 2010

SUMMIT CALLS FOR CONTINUED ACTION ON EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION IN THE NEW AUCKLAND SUPER CITY

The well-attended early childhood education Summit held in Papatoetoe on 30 July 2010 called for continued action on Early Childhood Education as the new Auckland Super City becomes established.

This newsletter summarises the presentations and discussions at the Summit. The Taskforce is also working on a fuller record of the day, which will be sent out in September.

OPENING ADDRESSES

The Summit was opened by kaumatua Eru Thompson and Haare Williams, who reflected on the importance of early learning.

The Deputy Mayor of Manukau City, Gary Troup, stressed the importance of working together. "We need to ensure that the new city takes ownership of its role in ensuring that all children across Auckland have access to good early childhood education" he said.

"We also need to ensure that the ways of working that we have pioneered here, with more streamlined processes and with collaborative efforts from local government, central government and community are translated into the new Auckland and become part of the single city approach."

EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTRES, NOT PRISONS

Cr Colleen Brown gave an impassioned speech about the social context of the suburb of Clendon. Government is planning to build a 1500-bed prison in this community. What message is this giving to the families who live in this area? The leaders in the community believe that investment needs to focus on spending on families and young children. "Government needs to respect our knowledge and drive for change", says Councillor Brown.

BUILDING a PICTURE OF ECE in MANUKAU

Sarah Morrison of the Ministry of Education summarised the evidence around ECE in Manukau. She noted that Manukau holds 10% of the nation's under-5s, with the highest concentrations of young children in Mangere and Manurewa.

Insights into WHAT PARENTS WANT

Target families are **not** hard to reach when services are specifically designed for them. Kanohi-ki-te-kanohi is vital to engage Maori and Pacific communities; parents must be personally involved to retain participation, and services must be welcoming, physically close and local. Non-participating families want sessional services.

REACHING OUT to families

The Ministry of Education reported very positive outcomes from a project that took the message out to the people: in shopping malls and church groups, for example, or at public play days. Supported playgroups also successfully encourage parent involvement.



WHAT HAS BEEN ACHIEVED SO FAR?

A summary of the collective activity since the last Summit, recorded in a [handout](#) at the event, is available on the COMET website.

CENTRES ANXIOUS about BUDGET IMPACT

Michelle Pratt, Jane Marti and Peter Reynolds presented the key changes from the 2010 budget, and the likely impacts on ECEs. The impact is likely to be greatest for centres already in the 80 to 100% band and those likely to move into that band in the next few months. Smaller centres are also more at risk, and there is concern that some may be forced to close.

Groups then gave feedback about how the budget is impacting their centre, and what they are doing about it. Many centres expect to lose significant funds, which they say will force them to increase fees, and/or reduce cost. For many, this would mean fewer resources for children and less professional development for staff.

Centres also feel pressure to employ more unqualified staff, and some commented that trained teachers may face redundancy as centres adjust towards the 80% mark. There is concern that these changes could affect the quality of learning for children, and job security for teachers.

The most common actions were communicating with parents and staff, reviewing budgets, fundraising and lobbying. One person expressed a common concern: "shifting the focus from quality education to survival".



ABOUT the ECE Workforce in Manukau

An MOE targeted Staffing Survey of Education & Care services in the Mangere and Manurewa areas found that **54% of teachers in the area are qualified** (compared to the national average of 62%), that **66% of teachers live within 3km** of their place of work; and that **43% of Pasifika teachers are over 50** years old. Over two-thirds have been employed in their service for less than four years, and 8% for more than ten years.

In Maori immersion and bilingual services, just over 50% of the teachers are Maori; over 82% of Maori teachers are not working in a Maori immersion and bilingual service. Of the 240 Pasifika teachers, 92 (38%) are working in non Pasifika centres.

The Ministry noted that increasing supply and improving quality requires Ministry systems and processes to be more flexible. Local knowledge is essential for success.

MEASURING SUCCESS

Participants were asked to suggest targets for the city to work towards, and measures to track progress against these targets.

Measures of quality:

- Measuring the number of qualified teachers. Almost all those who mentioned teacher qualifications called for a **100% qualified target to be re-established**.
- Several respondents also referred to the availability of professional development as a measure of quality.
- More general references were made to quality learning, a welcoming environment or suitability to individual needs.

Measures of participation:

- There were many **calls for 100% participation as a target**, sometimes by age (e.g. 3 to 5-year-olds) and sometimes by type, e.g. formal ECE;
- ensuring even the lowest socio-economic areas reach national participation rates;
- checking whether all children can access ECE through matching the number of places to the number of children, or by measuring affordability or ease of transport access.

HOW CAN WE WORK FOR CHANGE?

Some clear messages came through in participants' answers to the question "**What one change could make the greatest difference to make early learning available for all in Manukau?**"

The most frequent answer related to **increased funding**, especially to allow **free ECE** for all children, to enable centres to be staffed by **100% trained teachers**, for more **professional development** for teachers and managers, and to support **informal and home-based care** as well as formal ECE. The importance of informal and home-based learning also came through in the strong support for **education and support for parents**, and in the call for a **greater variety of ECE options** to be available to families.

Quite apart from funding, many participants wanted **ECE to be more highly valued**, especially by the government and city council. For some, this extended to a desire for **ECE to be made compulsory**.

Another common theme was around the **importance of consultation** with local communities, and with Maori and Pasifika groups. Many also wanted ECEs to **form an action committee** to lobby government and the council.

Other solutions included providing **wraparound social services** alongside ECEs, working to a **long-term plan** to provide stability for the sector, **building more ECEs** by accessing council, school or church land or by establishing **mobile centres** in buses or vans; making centres more **welcoming**, improving **public transport** and **simplifying red tape** so teachers can focus on teaching.

