

# Education for Sustainability (EfS) at Collectively Kids

Curriculum document – Collectively Kids written 2012-2013, reviewed by Dr Jenny Ritchie and Dr Iris Duhn 2014, finalised 2015

Mō tātou te Taiao ko te Atawhai  
Mō tātou te Taiao ko te Oranga

It is for us to care about the environment to ensure its well-being  
In doing so we ensure our own well-being and that of future generations

<http://efs.tki.org.nz/Toitū-te-Ao-Carving>

*Sustainability is the capacity to endure. In ecology the word describes how biological systems remain diverse and productive over time. For humans it is the potential for long-term maintenance of wellbeing, which in turn depends on the wellbeing of the natural world and the responsible use of natural resources.*

(Definition of Sustainability, Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopaedia)



## Introduction

Over the years a commitment to environmental sustainability has come to form the foundation of all aspects of the centre community at Collectively Kids.

Current environmental issues pose a challenge for education in general and for teachers specifically. Peter Moss (Professor of Early Childhood Provision at the University of London) has written an article titled: “*We cannot survive as we are: the educator in an education for survival.*” He describes the article as “*a reflection about education at a very particular and perilous moment of humankind’s history*” and he asks the question – “*given the state we, humankind, are in, what is the purpose of education and what are the requirements of the educator?*”

At Collectively Kids we believe that it is our role as teachers to address issues of importance in children’s lives and to engage with each other, children and parents and whānau at the centre and the community in these issues. There is no doubt that the environmental crisis we face will impact on the future of our children and that it is already impacting on the lives of many people particularly in the developing world.

In the introduction to the UNESCO report, *The contribution of early childhood education to a sustainable society*, Pramling and Kaga suggest that Early Childhood Education (ECE) has a particularly important role to play in EfS and that this role requires a new view of education:

*“...our societies urgently require new kinds of education that can help prevent further degradation of our planet, and that foster caring and responsible citizens genuinely concerned with and capable of contributing to a just and peaceful world...these new kinds of education must be available to all – not just a handful of people - and take place in various settings,*

*including families and communities... they must begin in early childhood, as the values, attitudes and behaviours and skills acquired in this period may have a long-lasting impact in later life. Thus early childhood education clearly has an important place in the efforts to bring about sustainable development (Intro p9 UNESCO)."*

Developing an EfS curriculum specific to our vision, life, learning and teaching at Collectively Kids is another step in our journey to become a more sustainable community and to reach beyond our four walls. This approach is outlined in the summary of the New Zealand Council for Educational Research Teacher Learning and Research Initiative project the centre was involved in:

*The double emphasis on local specificity and global issues that is embedded in concepts such as critical "pedagogy of place" offer potentially robust and hopeful perspectives for early childhood education. The focus on ethics and the ongoing commitment to critical engagement with power relations has the potential to enable and support local responses to global issues.*

(p3 [http://www.tlri.org.nz/sites/default/files/projects/TLRI-Ritchie-et-al-summary\\_1.pdf](http://www.tlri.org.nz/sites/default/files/projects/TLRI-Ritchie-et-al-summary_1.pdf))

The Collectively Kids' EfS document aims to be dynamic providing entry points for all members of the community, opportunities for learning, innovation, action, change and fun. It enables us to make visible and strengthen the links between teaching and learning and our philosophy, environment policy, strategic plan and centre processes in the area of sustainability.

## Links to national curriculum documents

Aspects of *Te Whāriki* (Early Childhood Curriculum) are compatible with EfS and the *New Zealand Curriculum* mentions environmental sustainability, however neither document addresses this topic in any depth. It has been pointed out by Jenny Ritchie during her review of this document that the Māori text of *Te Whāriki* does have a stronger focus on sustainability and Kaitiakitanga, unfortunately the text has not been translated into English.

## Te Whāriki

The aspiration for children that is articulated in the opening pages of *Te Whāriki* is both essential to, and a desired outcome of EfS:

*To grow up as competent and confident learners and communicators, healthy in mind, body and spirit, secure in their sense of belonging and in the knowledge that they make a valued contribution to society. (p9)*

The emphasis of the curriculum on the "critical role of socially and culturally mediated learning and of reciprocal and responsive relationships for children with people, places and things" (p9) is central to the place based approach (act locally, think globally) of EfS at Collectively Kids.

The bicultural heritage of Aotearoa and Te Tiriti o Waitangi are given major importance and this links to the ongoing aim of making such an approach more visible within EfS and curriculum at the centre.

## The principles of *Te Whāriki*

### *Empowerment – Whakamana:*

Provides a rationale for giving children the opportunity to engage in more sustainable ways of thinking and living in the present and the future through meaningful experiences.

### *Holistic Development –Kotahitanga:*

Sustainability is integrated into all aspects of centre life to support the flourishing of learning, teaching and living well together in diverse communities

### *Family and Community – Whānau Tangata:*

EfS at CK involves families (documentation, purchasing, community events etc.) and community initiatives.

### *Relationships – Ngā Hononga:*

Finding new and more environmentally and socially just ways to relate to each other (locally, nationally and globally) and to our environment are a key goal of EfS.



## The Strands, Goals and Learning Outcomes

The document discusses “working theories”:

*“Working theories become increasingly useful for making sense of the world, for giving the child control over what happens, for problem solving, and for further learning” (p44)*

Engaging with working theories is important in terms of understanding the environment and developing more sustainable relationships with it, particularly reframing ourselves as part of the natural world (we are animals too) rather than in control of it. Working theories relate to scientific exploration and understanding ethical and political aspects (social and environmental justice) of EfS.

Te Whāriki describes knowledge, skills and attitudes combining as “dispositions” or “habits of mind” and “patterns of learning”. One focus of EfS is to question some of the taken for granted habits and attitudes to come up with more sustainable approaches. Being resilient, resourceful and persistent are all dispositions important in the process of addressing and adapting to rapid environmental and social change.

Te Whāriki consists of five strands and the specific goals of some of these are more directly relevant to EfS than others. However a sense of personal well-being (Strand 1), belonging (Strand 2), being a contributing member of the centre community (Contribution Strand 3), being a powerful communicator (Communication Strand 4) and explorer (Exploration Strand 5) are all goals of EfS. Sustainable education aims to ensure the social, spiritual, emotional, cultural, physical and intellectual well-being of children in the present and in the future.

### *More specific links:*

- How we behave with others - rules, negotiation, articulating ideas, exploring fairness, experience, understanding of and respect for diversity (Well-being, Belonging, Contribution, Communication)
- Being a powerful member of the centre community with rights and responsibilities, living and learning with diverse others, including non-human others in the natural world (Belonging, Contribution, Communication)
- An increasingly complex repertoire of communication skills that can be used for a wide range of purposes including critical thinking and advocacy (Communication)

- Risk taking (Well-being)
- Links with the parents and whānau, community, local tangata whenua, the wider world and a respect for Papatūānuku should be promoted (Belonging)
- Knowledge of the environment and caring for it (Well-being, Belonging, Exploration)
- Knowledge of local geography (Belonging)
- Problem solving and researching (Exploration)
- Exploring informally and playfully and in more structured ways, engaging with all curriculum areas (Exploration)
- Understanding nature and developing a sense of responsibility for the living and non-living world (Exploration)
- Technological experiences and skills (Exploration)

## The New Zealand Curriculum

*The New Zealand Curriculum* (for primary and secondary schools) does not specifically address EfS but environmental sustainability is woven into the principles, values and vision and forms a part of the Social Sciences.

Education for sustainability is taught as a subject at senior Secondary School and this is supported by an online document. The four key concepts are of relevance to EfS at Collectively Kids:

- Sustainability is about individuals, groups and societies adopting ways of thinking and behaving that allow them to meet their needs and aspirations without preventing future generations from meeting theirs. (p5)
- Equity is about fairness. As understood in EfS, it incorporates respect for all life, social justice, intergenerational fairness and the fair distribution of finite resources. (p5)
- Interdependence is about the interconnectedness of people and diversity, community, democracy and globalisation. (p5)
- Responsibility for action – This is about getting involved in the future. As understood in EfS, this concept points at an action orientation, informed decision making, citizenship, guardianship or kaitiakitanga, thoughtful consumption, enterprise and entrepreneurship, resilience, and regeneration. (p5)

It incorporates principles of Kaupapa Maori pedagogy and has some examples of how this may be achieved which may be useful for us as well as a good list of websites.

## Education Review Office

The performance of Early Childhood centres in New Zealand is monitored by the Education Review Office (ERO). Our ERO review in May 2012 describes environmental sustainability as a strength of the centre. The reviewers note that:

“Teachers include “environmental responsibility” in their programme plans. This involves teachers, through their interactions and activities with children growing their understanding of sustainable living within the community. This focus impacts on all aspects of the programme in positive ways.”

“The focus on sustainable futures recognises children’s ability to gain thoughtful and deeper feelings about the environment.”



## Vision



*Ko te Oranga Taiao, he Oranga Tangata*  
*A healthy environment is a healthy people*

We believe that a focus on environmental sustainability is necessary, enjoyable, good for our holistic well-being, cognitively challenging and rewarding.

We aim to work together as a community to live more sustainably at Collectively Kids focusing on individual, collective (local and global) and environmental well-being in the present and the future. Within this process we are all learners and teachers with different levels of expertise and knowledge.

Our role as teachers requires specific, intentional learning about and teaching of sustainability as well as a philosophical, practical and consistent commitment to the goals of our philosophy statement, strategic plan and environment policy. We focus on:

- Experiences that are meaningful to all members of the centre's learning community
- Engaging in "playful" approaches to teaching and learning
- Using teachable (spontaneous) moments
- Exploring the interests of children adults and the wider community in spontaneous and planned ways
- Make children central to curriculum development and assessment for learning and planning for change

Our goal is for all aspects of CK life to be measured against their environmental and social impact while acknowledging that there is a great deal of uncertainty in terms of "best practice" in sustainability. Such an approach requires the community to:

- Consider the tensions between the rights of the individual, the group and the environment
- Be open to change, reflection, new ideas and ways of doing things
- Engage in critical examination of taken for granted habits, ideas and expectations
- Demonstrate a willingness to learn new skills and to take risks

More specifically the curriculum aims to meet the recommendations for ECE education for a sustainable society outlined by Pramling and Kaga (2008):

- 1) It embraces the notion of the child embodied in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child which sees the child as a person with rights and as an active participant who makes a powerful contribution to the centre community.
- 2) It aims to provide a holistic and robust approach to environmental education which moves beyond simply offering children the opportunity to experience the environment. The aim is for teachers to provide children with opportunities to "engage in intellectual dialogue" focussing on sustainability and on reflecting on the rights of the environment. It should include compassion and "respect difference, equality and fairness." In addition it should focus on the "7R's from education for sustainable development (reduce, reuse, recycle, respect, repair, reflect and refuse)." Scientific and technological knowledge and skills are also important.
- 3) It incorporates respect for and appreciation of diversity. "Early Childhood education should help children acquire an identity firmly grounded in a culture closest to them, while developing a sense of themselves as world citizens." (p12). The notion of citizenship includes democratic values and practices which children actively participate in.
- 4) It encourages the questioning of current ways of living and being from the point of view sustainability. "...sustainable development requires people to be able to think critically about things taken for granted, and to find creative solutions and alternatives to unsuitable habits and practices which tend to dominate at present...Young children can be encouraged to question over-consumption through discussion about familiar food products, clothes, toys and advertisements. Such discussions could be expanded to incorporate considerations about their counterparts in less materially rich circumstances, and stimulate conversations about solidarity and cooperation."(p13)



one world



for lots of animals, plants  
and other living things



Collectively Kids: A small place  
working hard to live more  
sustainably





## Framework

### OUR PHILOSOPHY (opening statements)

Children have the right to a peaceful, safe, secure, healthy, socially just, environmentally sustainable present and future.

Children have a right to respect, unconditional love and an early childhood education, which recognises them as active citizens and as active participants with rights and responsibility within the sustainable community at Collectively Kids.

Children of all ages and their whānau and families have the right to full participation irrespective of ethnicity, gender, ability or background. They have the right to express who they are as an individual and as part of community free from discrimination, assumptions or stereotypes.

We are committed to promoting Aotearoa's bicultural heritage within the centre and recognise that the implementation of Te Tiriti o Waitangi requires significant and ongoing effort on the part of management and teachers.

We work together as a community of learners where children, families, whānau and teachers collaborate in, document and extend the learning that goes on at the centre and beyond. We strive to provide a holistic programme where the rights and interests of children and their families are respected and where a sense of wellbeing is fostered.



### ENVIRONMENT POLICY (opening statements)

At Collectively Kids we (teachers, children, families) work together to address the environmental issues which face Aotearoa and the rest of the world.

*The principles of this community are:*

Care for the self

Care for others

Care for our immediate and global environment that sustains us

A commitment to Aotearoa's bicultural heritage, particularly to supporting kaitiakitanga (guardianship of the environment)

**Aims for our community from the environment policy form the headings for the curriculum goals below**

## Curriculum goals

The learning environment refers to the physical environment, resources, structures and processes of the centre, the wider community, intentional (planned and spontaneous teaching).



## **Aims for our community are to continue to:**

### **Develop skills, knowledge, habits and resilience that will help us to adapt to the effects of rapid social and environmental change**

The learning environment will give children and adults opportunities to:

- Develop relationships with the natural world, recognising that our environment/planet sustains us and that the rights of the environment must be considered
- Develop a sense of the environment – explore their place in the world, learning where they fit in and reflect on how their actions impact on the environment
- Value the environment and engage deeply with all aspects of nature e.g. experience different weather, play outside throughout the year, learn to respect flora and fauna as living things that have rights
- Develop scientific context/content knowledge (e.g. the water cycle, water testing at Oakley Creek, animals and biodiversity including the importance of predators and other “scary” animals like bees, membership of Forest and Bird, including subscription to Kiwi Kids conservation magazine for older children)
- Extend children’s interests and development of working theories through active exploration (including all curriculum areas) of the social and natural world, supported with appropriate resources
- Engage children in playful exploration and increasingly more challenging experiences to complicate understanding (e.g. hands-on exploration of water and ice to learning about the science and importance of water) and actively listen to children’s complex ideas
- Encourage the development of skills which support sustainable living practices e.g. growing and cooking/preserving/preparation of food, mending/fixing/adapting resources, involving children in community activities outside the centre (e.g. Oakley Creek)
- Gain an understanding of global issues and ways in which we can help (e.g. resource books that explore diversity and global issues, Oxfam “gifts unwrapped” and other campaigns)
- Problem solve and find creative and sustainable solutions for small and big problems (e.g. restorative justice approach, how to share produce, how to look after resources, how to look after living things)
- Take responsibility and make meaningful decisions that build their view of themselves as capable and resourceful people and active citizens whose views are important (e.g. contributing to letters to government)
- Explore risk and support persistence and resilience including emotional, physical and social resilience
- Gain an understanding of Māori perspectives of caring for Papatūānuku (Earth Mother), Ranginui (Sky Father), Tane-Māhuta (Guardian of the Forests, Birds and Insects) and Tangaroa (Guardian of the Oceans)

### **Reduce our carbon footprint**

#### ***Curriculum goals:***

- At the centre

The learning environment will give children and adults opportunities to:

- Take active part in and responsibility for centre practices such as hanging out washing (rather than putting it in the dryer), caring for our resources, treasuring what we have rather than buying new, eating and sometimes harvesting local, organic, home cooked, generally unprocessed food, walking or using public transport on outings, not wasting water, recycling, composting, limiting packaging and food waste



- Plant and garden more effectively e.g. using a gardening calendar, learning about composting and planting, attracting animals (e.g. bees) beneficial for gardening, ensuring that fruit is not picked before it is ripe
- Respect the plants and living creatures at the centre by not damaging plants or killing insects and other animals in the garden exploring the herbs (touch taste and smell), eating produce
- Understand of the cost of resources (learning how things are made, what they are made from, looking for sustainable items and high quality items when buying new)
- Discuss consumption (do we need it or do we just want it), the “cost” of manufacture of toys etc., alternatives to bought gifts

- In the wider community

The learning environment will give children and teachers opportunities to:

- Host meetings and visits at CK and offer presentations to promote EfS
- Continue our engagement with the Oakley Creek project which gives the CK community the opportunity to explore and contribute to a natural area which has been largely replanted by volunteers. Children walk and run along the pathway, learn about the natural environment, collect rubbish and plant.
- Be involved in other environmental projects – hands on and donations (e.g. Forest and Bird donations)

## **Advocate for the reduction of emissions to a safe level (350ppm) and for a halt to environmental degradation**

### ***Curriculum goals:***

The learning environment will give children and adults opportunities to:

- Use opportunities for advocacy and involvement as they arise
- Articulate their “environmental” concerns in letters to government, displays and petitions (for example teachers have written letters to government, children have added comments, families have had the opportunity to sign, members of the CK community have attended marches)
- Share “eco” stories (including assessment of children, newsletters, information about sustainability with families on a regular basis)

## **Address issues of social justice within the centre, in our community and globally**

### ***Curriculum goals:***

- Exploring our bicultural heritage

The learning environment will give children and teachers opportunities to:

- Incorporate aspects of Tikanga Maori into centre practices e.g. kaitiakitanga, manaakitanga, support tuakana/teina relationships, mihimihi
- Use basic Te Reo ( korero/waiata/pukapuka) with an aim to continuing to develop skills and knowledge in this area
- Explore local maunga/awa/moana
- Develop closer links with Whatua Kaimarie and/or Unitec Marae

- Exploring diversity

The learning environment will give children and teachers opportunities to:

- Role model and promote positive attitudes to cultural diversity, disability and social justice through discussion, resources (books, toys, puzzles), interactions with visitors, outings into the community

- Be part of an inclusive setting that welcomes diversity and respects and values contributions from the whole centre community as well as friends of the centre
  - Gain an understanding of and show respect for each child's culture
  - Gain exposure to a range of languages using centre languages as a starting point
  - Develop an understanding of global diversity and global social justice (conversations, books etc) and discuss what can we do at the centre (donations, purchasing etc)
  - Develop an understanding of government and active citizenship
  - Develop an understanding of the UN Convention for the Rights of the Child
  - Explore social justice within our relationships in the centre community
- The learning environment will give children and adults opportunities to:
- Learn about the limits and boundaries of behaviour and expectations of belonging to a community
  - Discuss fairness, the rights of individuals versus the rights of the group and how what we do affects others
  - Articulate points of view and listen to other people's points of view in a respectful way
  - Help others in meaningful and responsible ways e.g. feeding babies, helping with complex tasks throughout the day
  - Interact with children of all ages and develop the notion of CK as a family
  - Learn to share and take turns

## Plans for the future



- Developing a science and technology curriculum
- Professional development – understanding environmental science, developing a deeper understanding of related issues, making links between what we do at CK and the broader context (including social and global issues), reading including current events
- Continuing to share our work
- Participating in research opportunities as they arise

For further information have a look at our website (which includes all policies and has eco section with presentations) [www.collectivelykids.co.nz](http://www.collectivelykids.co.nz) or email us [collectivelykids@xtra.co.nz](mailto:collectivelykids@xtra.co.nz)



## References

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