

# Letter from the Waikato

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An Early Years Research Centre, sited inside the Wilf Malcolm Institute of Educational Research, has recently been approved by the University of Waikato. This includes all the staff in early childhood on the Hamilton and the Tauranga campuses, and a number of staff in other disciplines at the Faculty who are interested in the early years. We used to be an Early Years Research Unit, and are very pleased to become a Centre. This means that we will develop a website, and this, we hope will be available in the second half of June. It will include case studies of research projects and publicity material about upcoming events. In the meantime, detail on our research projects can be found on the Wilf Malcolm Institute of Educational Research website [www.waikato.ac.nz/wmier/](http://www.waikato.ac.nz/wmier/)

The academic staff in the Faculty now includes a group of scholars who have built up a local and international reputation in the following three areas of research on the early years: *pedagogy*, *policy* and *community connections*. It's not just us, of course, who have developed this reputation, since we have collaborated on projects with researchers and teachers across the country, and we will continue to do so. Aotearoa New Zealand is a small country, and the value and quality of the early childhood sector here has come from a combined effort from many teachers, researchers, professional developers, thinkers and friends of early childhood across the country and over many years. We are very conscious of this legacy, and like the readers of *Early Education*, proud of it.

Those three areas form the three themes of our Centre research programme. Designed with a social justice agenda, the Centre's aim is to make a difference for young children, early years teachers, and whānau in Aotearoa New Zealand by undertaking robust research that influences policy, that makes a difference for children and families, and that informs scholars worldwide. The Centre will provide a coordinating and connecting function, creating a supportive platform for ongoing and future research by researchers at Waikato – on their own, in collaboration with each other,



Margaret Carr at the launch of the new Early Year Research Centre

and in collaboration with researchers in other centres of early years research in Aotearoa New Zealand and elsewhere.

The Centre has built up its profile from a range of research projects, including evaluation and curriculum work for the Ministry of Education. A great deal of our 'portfolio' is research with teachers. We have led a number of Teaching and Learning Research Initiative (TLRI) and Centre of Innovation (COI) projects. Both of these programmes are about collaborative projects with teacher-researchers, and we have enormously valued these opportunities to 'keep our feet on the ground', moving out of academia to listen to voices from teachers, whānau and children.

I personally find that it feeds my soul to sit down with teachers and talk about teaching and learning, or to be with children in a centre, and I think that is true for all of us who enjoy research with practitioners. Many of us, of course, began our early childhood careers as teachers in the field. The research community internationally is beginning to talk about the need to include scaling-up questions: questions that include the implementation of findings in the design of

a research project. That means that unless we keep closely in touch with teachers and professional development providers, then research findings will not make a difference; the research must deliver findings that include principles and strategies that can be adapted by the profession to 'fit' with their social and cultural community contexts.

It is not about translation; just as we want young children to develop adaptive expertise, this is also a quality that teachers must have as well. We are fortunate in Aotearoa New Zealand to have a well qualified teaching profession in early childhood; it is a fiercely complex task and the researcher community has found teachers to be invaluable collaborators and a ready audience.

The Centre is an *Early Years* Centre; it covers a wide age range. We have completed projects with babies in centres and a number of projects have included teachers and children in the first few years of school. We also support the New Zealand (school) Curriculum in its vision of what we want for our young people: confident, connected, actively involved lifelong learners. The school curriculum includes a cross-sector alignment between the strands of Te Whāriki and the Key Competencies in the school curriculum (and it takes this alignment across into tertiary education as well). In my view, that diagram on page 42 of the school curriculum should be made into a poster and on the wall of every early childhood centre and school classroom!

Our website, when it goes live in late June this year, will keep you posted at [www.waikato.ac.nz/earlyyears](http://www.waikato.ac.nz/earlyyears).

Warm regards,

Margaret Carr



The three directors of the Early Years Research Centre, Margaret Carr, Sally Peters and Linda Mitchell

# Early Education

## What is the future of 'Early Education'?

*"He tomokanga paepae he ara ki te aotūroa."*

*"Crossing a threshold leads to a path towards the future"*

The Editors and Editorial Board are working on a strategic plan for *Early Education*. For nearly 20 years, *Early Education* has been published and printed for distribution to subscribers. This year, we are considering whether to 'take the journal online' and if so, whether to also continue producing a paper-based version.

Going online has the advantage of lower production costs and easier access for students and researchers. However, going online would make *Early Education* less available to those who prefer to hold the journal in their hands. If we continue to print the journal, the cost to subscribers will likely increase.

What is your opinion? Can you help us understand the impact of these decisions on our readers? Your input is welcome. Deadline is 15 August 2013.

Please participate an online survey or give us your opinions by emailing us at [eejournal@aut.ac.nz](mailto:eejournal@aut.ac.nz).

The online survey is available at: <http://tinyurl.com/eesurvey2013>

Many thanks for your support.

**Sue Stover and Claire McLachlan,  
Editors**