



Introduction

Dispersing waves

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For seven years, Centres of Innovation (COI) have inspired reflection and stimulated change in early childhood education in New Zealand and overseas. At the point of planning this publication, news came that the COI programme was to end on 30 June 2009 as a result of government budget decisions in the recession. Fifteen COI had completed their projects, but five more had not. This publication gathers together a set of final papers from recent or current COI.

The 20 COI have made waves—big waves. Now those waves are dispersing. Hopefully the stories associated with them will flow on, and build new energy for transformations in early childhood education.

The collective impact of the COI programme has exceeded all expectations. In a valedictory letter, Peter Moss, Professor of Early Childhood Provision at the University of London, commended the “hard work, vision and commitment” of COI who have contributed “something very precious in the field [internationally] in the practice of innovation ... and played a critical role in enabling services to flourish and grow even better”.

At a functional level, their research has added significantly to the scant body of published local research. It has particular relevance to the sector in New Zealand, because early childhood teachers posed the questions in relation to topics that our sector leaders had recommended for each round.



The more remarkable phenomenon has been the magnetism of COI face-to-face dissemination. Wendy Lee summed it up on the COI DVD: “There is nothing more powerful than teachers talking to teachers.” Through their talks and workshops, the teacher-researchers have stimulated—indeed inspired—hundreds, possibly thousands, of teachers to:

- engage in critical thinking based on research findings that challenged their previously held assumptions about teaching and learning
- improve their planning and assessment for children’s learning
- be far more creative in using ICT to communicate how and why early childhood education is beneficial for children’s learning and development.

This final publication in the “Waves” series contains eight diverse chapters from COI who participated in three rounds. Six COI present research findings: three from research that was completed (Bush Street Kindergarten, Greerton Early Childhood Centre and Mangere Bridge Kindergarten) and three from projects that were closed early (Childspace Ngaio Infants and Toddlers Centre, Te Kōhanga Reo o Mana Tamariki and Otaki Kindergarten). Hutt Family Day Care offers a literature review, completed after their first phase of data gathering. Finally, First Years Preschool teachers describe their innovative, fearless approach to science.