

An
introduction
to
your

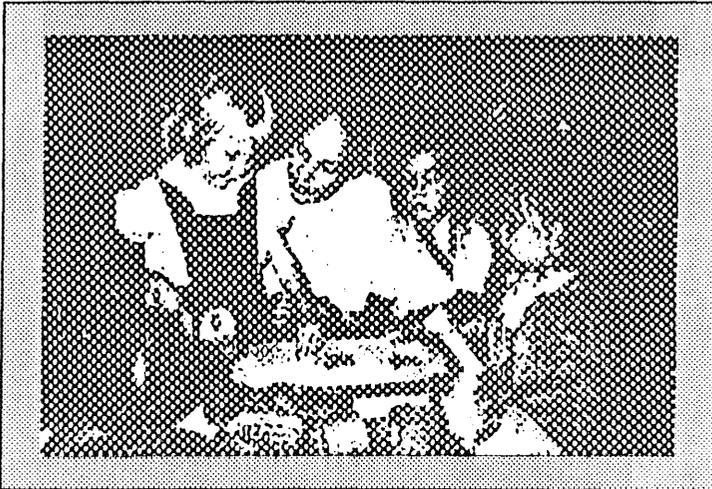
Kindergarten



Helen Wallace

AUCKLAND KINDERGARTEN ASSOCIATION

An introduction to your kindergarten



**by
Helen Wallace**

Photographs by Hubert Klaassens
and Taffy Pedersen Grant

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Foreword.

This Kit has been produced to be used in conjunction with existing introductory groups and as an aid to teachers in explaining their work with children.

I would like to especially thank the children, staff and parents of Grove Street, Tahunanui and Victory Square Kindergartens, Kaye Egington, Hubert and Taffy for their excellent photos, Susan Hicks, Judy Lummis, Trisha Garguilo, Clare Wells and Margery Renwick for their support.

HELEN WALLACE
NELSON
MAY 1989



Introduction to kindergarten.

The day your child starts kindergarten is an important one for you and your child. Often this is the first time your child has ventured away from his or her familiar environment. It may also be the first time you as parents have temporarily given the care of your child to somebody not connected with family and home.

In writing this introduction, we hope to help you understand the scope of your child's experiences at kindergarten, and the aims of early childhood education, so that this transition from home is made easier for you both and your time involved with kindergarten pleasant and fulfilling.

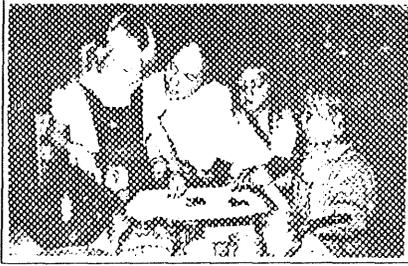
Parents have many reasons for sending their child to a kindergarten, all of them valid. Many of these reasons revolve around what your child may

'learn' at kindergarten. However, your child's first and most important educational institution is his or her home. Your family members are the experts about your child.

Many kindergarten teachers therefore attach great importance to visiting you at home or inviting you to attend a pre-entry session before your child starts kindergarten to get to know you both in the place where you feel most relaxed or in a small group.

So that teachers can help your child to get the most out of time spent at kindergarten, they need to know how your family works and how your child fits in. It's important for them to know such things as your child's place in the family, whether the child is shy or confident, and any other information which might be helpful in making sure that he or she feels comfortable and happy in the new environment of kindergarten.

You may have worries and queries about how the kindergarten functions and how you and your child can become part of the group. Talk about your feelings with the teachers - they are trained to answer your questions and hope to make you feel as welcome as your child.



What to expect.

The first day at kindergarten is exciting and worrying all at the same time.

Your child may leave home feeling very confident, but faced with a noisy, busy kindergarten, may feel insecure and clingy.

You may feel concerned about judging the right time to leave your child, but with the teachers help it can be made easier.

Play is a child's work and learning is happening all around even though children are not sitting down in structured groups. It is a good learning experience for children to just watch for a while before they feel confident enough to join in. He or she may need your support at this time and want you near.

Sometimes a child may appear quite happy and settled until the parent suggests that she or he is going to

leave. When faced with this loss of control over the situation the child becomes distressed, clingy or tearful which can be upsetting.

The teacher may advise that you stay for longer and settle your child, or that you should leave briskly. If the advice is to go, leave, after saying goodbye. A phone call after fifteen minutes will reassure you that all is well. If your child remains unsettled the teacher will undoubtedly ring you.

Don't ever leave your child without telling the teachers, and the child. Sneaking away breaks the precious trust your child has in you, and leaving the next time will be even harder. If your child becomes overtired by kindergarten it may be more suitable to attend only some sessions. Discuss this with the teachers and keep them informed of how you feel your child is settling in.

Children mostly go through their kindergarten time with a stable group of children. Often this contact is maintained at school, so getting to know other parents can be a way for you to join the kindergarten community.

Introduce yourselves - sharing this time with other parents is valuable and interesting.



The teacher/parent partnership and how you can join in.

Parents play a vital part in giving children confidence in a new situation and teachers can learn about your child most easily from you.

After initially settling in, when your child no longer needs you to be present, he or she still needs to know that you are interested in their kindergarten.

Their security is increased by your understanding the routines. Ask about things you don't understand or are concerned about.

Ideally teachers should make you as welcome as your child, but sometimes parents feel awkward and out of place.

Parent helping may help you feel more comfortable by giving you an opportunity to learn more about your centre.

Teachers should give you guidelines about helping, but some basic hints

such as talking to the children and trying to extend their conversations, and encouraging them to solve problems for themselves, will help you fit in.

As a parent helper, you are able to observe your own child and other children at play, and gain a better understanding of patterns of behaviour and development. You become part of kindergarten life, sharing the interests and activities of the children. You may find you see a completely new aspect of your child.

Children enjoy having a parent or family member at their kindergarten, and if you have a special skill or hobby to share, this is a further source of pride. Enjoy your child's delight.

Another way of becoming involved, is to join the kindergarten committee. Meetings are held regularly to discuss the day-to-day financial running of the kindergarten.

Teachers can offer practical suggestions and help with child behaviour and management skills, and will happily answer questions and share their knowledge.



How does your kindergarten function.

Most kindergartens are open for five days a week, with two groups of children attending. Children just starting kindergarten usually attend three afternoon sessions per week, for 2 1/2 hours.

As places become available on the morning roll, with children going to school, afternoon children move to the new group and attend five mornings a week for three hours. It is important for children to be with others of a similar age. If you feel that your child may be ahead of others of the same age, the kindergarten programme is flexible enough to allow special planning for your child whilst still keeping them integrated with their peer group.

Children are "free" to select activities

at kindergarten from a wide variety.

They include:

- exploratory,
- creative,
- dramatic and fantasy,
- constructive,
- manipulative and
- physically active play,
- music and movement,
- language and literature,
- science and nature.

Play encourages the child's desire to learn and gives satisfaction in achievement.

You may expect wonderful creations from your child. However don't be disappointed if these don't appear. The most important learning time is while a child is actually working and the finished product may have very little significance for the child.

Don't forget that learning social skills, whilst working in the sandpit, or building with blocks together can be more important for your child than painting or pasting. The art and creative activities are always available and children involve themselves as they need to.



What benefit is kindergarten to your child.

Kindergarten is not just a preparation for school. Children at kindergarten will learn skills that will help them through the rest of their lives. During their time at kindergarten, children will develop socially, emotionally, physically and intellectually.

The social skills that children learn at kindergarten are many. The first, and one that may take some time, is that your child learns to be away from you. He or she learns to be with teachers and other adults, and to rely on someone else to help with problems or to answer questions.

Talking and sharing home experiences with other adults as well as other children is a learned skill, one fostered in a kindergarten situation. The skill of being one of a big group grows from learning to cooperate in play.

Early social contact between children

is often aggressive and inappropriate. Teachers help to develop better and more acceptable methods of interaction between children.

Children develop control of their bodies and large muscles in play.

Teachers encourage: climbing, jumping, digging, balancing, dancing and coordination skills.

From this control comes the growing ability to control smaller muscles needed for holding a pencil, writing, drawing, doing puzzles, using scissors, tying, threading and buttoning.

Family corner and fantasy play help the child grow emotionally. Playing out situations that worry and upset or that are not understood, is a healthy way of coming to terms with the world around them.

Children learn by doing, questioning, watching and trying out skills. Some of the control and growth you may see include the abilities to hold and handle pencils, paintbrushes, chinks and crayons which are all pre-writing skills.

Matching, discriminating, sorting, copying and solving problems are all pre-maths skills, many of which are learned with sand and block play.

Children learn language to match the situations and things around them.

Without language a child cannot learn to read and understand. These pre-reading skills are fostered by talking, listening and contact with many varied experiences.

Other pre-reading skills are matching and discriminating, and learning that words can be recorded and read. These grow from being read to, handling books, being involved in music and rhythm, poetry, rhymes and jingles.

One of our main aims, along with you, is to foster the three most important attributes in your children: self-esteem, independence and curiosity.

Practical details.

There are practical ways in which you can cooperate with the teachers.

Children should be toilet trained before attending kindergarten. If your child still needs reminding or has special words relating to toileting make sure the teachers are aware of this.

Dress your child for active play involving paint and glue, fingerpaint and mud. Worrying about keeping clean may make him or her reluctant to join in, and conscious that parents may disapprove if clothes get dirty.

Shoes need to be suitable for climbing and balancing, and teachers are happy about bare feet in summer.

Any allergies, such as bee-stings, need to be discussed with the teacher.

Parents are often asked to provide fruit to be shared for morning or afternoon tea. Please do not send any other food, sweets or drinks to kindergarten, unless the child has a dietary requirement. Other children may be allergic or over-responsive to additives in food, so we keep it simple for everyone.

Please keep ill children at home. Colds and tummy-bugs are easily passed around. If children are ill for more than a week or have an infectious disease, the teachers need to know, and a phone call would be appreciated.

Toys from home may easily be lost or damaged. Teachers will happily look at treasures as long as they then return home with the parent.

Toddlers and babies in the family are usually welcome to attend when you visit or parent help, as long as you are aware of them and responsible for their explorations. For them it is an excellent early introduction to kindergarten.

Keep up to date with what is happening in your kindergarten and community by reading notice-boards and newsletters.

It is important for the teachers to have time to prepare for the children, and they appreciate parents keeping to beginning and ending times of both sessions.



On the way.

And so your child is starting kindergarten. Your feelings at this time may be a surprise to you. You may feel upset or sad that your child is growing past early dependence on you.

Alternatively you may feel relief that you can have some time to yourself or for other younger children. Being a parent is a hard and demanding 24 hour-a-day job. However the rewards are great when your children grow into happy well adjusted personalities.

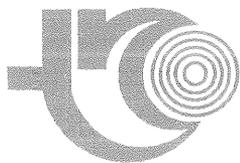
Your kindergarten and the teachers have an important role in helping your child so that his or her world is extended and enriched. As teachers we have a responsibility both to you and your child to provide a stimulating and welcoming environment for you to come into.

Children need an accepting environment where it's alright to make mistakes as well as get it right. Learning depends on feeling confident and good about yourself. At kindergarten we carry on the good work you have started in building your child's independence and self-esteem.

Confidence allows a curious child to learn about the world around him or her, an essential step in a life-time of learning.

Parents and kindergarten should work together in partnership to give children the three most important attributes for a successful and fulfilling start in life:

Curiosity - Self-esteem - Independence.



**Produced by the
Nelson Teaching Resource Centre
and Helen Wallace**
PO Box 1012, Nelson