

Minutes for the 'Men in Early Childhood Education Workshop' held at the Annual Conference of the Early Childhood Council, 30 March 2007

The men in ece workshop was held at the end of March 2007. The logic for this gathering was as follows.

New Zealand men make up less than 1% of ece teachers, the lowest recorded percentage figure ever. International research has revealed that efforts to increase sustainably the number of men working in ece are most likely to succeed when all parts of an ece sector commit to making this happen. Thus the workshop drew together senior participants from Government, teacher training and centre management.

The workshop participants were:

- from the Government sector - Chair of Parliament's Education and Science Select Committee Hon Brian Donnelly, and Karl LeQuesne from the Ministry of Education;
- from teacher training - Barbara Backshall from the University of Auckland, Lynda Boyd from the University of Canterbury, and Cathy Hide from the New Zealand College of Early Childhood Education;
- from service delivery - Jan Gaffney from the Montessori Association of New Zealand, Sharleen Thain from the Auckland Kindergarten Association, Sue Thorne from the Early Childhood Council, and Titoki Black, Ropata Hepi and Justin Poi for the Kohanga Reo;
- with both teacher training and service delivery hats Nancy Bell from the NZ Childcare Association; and
- Cynthia Shaw from the New Zealand Teachers Council.

Absent were Amalaini Ligalevu-Legge and Tahu Fasi from the Pacific Islands Early Childhood Council, and Minister of Education Hon Steve Maharey (who intended to participate but was detained elsewhere.)

Workshop participants were supported by a 'brains trust' that comprised:

- Jan Peeters, Co-ordinator of the Resource and Training Centre for Child Care at the University of Ghent, Belgium;
- Sarah Farquhar, author of a 2006 New Zealand research report on men in ece;
- Peter Heaslip, a New Zealand academic with a 40-year interest and involvement with the issue of men in ece;
- Richard Harty from the University of London; and
- Adam Buckingham ece teacher and participant at the 'men in early child care and teaching summit', the first nationwide gathering of New Zealand men working in ece - run in Christchurch two days before this workshop.

The following was discussed when the meeting examined what ece services might do to hire and retain more male staff

We need a bigger pool of potential applicants

- Is there a need to explain (and promote) why we need men in ece?

Promote the career to men

- Possible focus on mature age men 25 – 35 making their second career choice

Empower men in centres - as fathers, then involve them more and more

- Ask them what their skills are and allow them to deploy these in centres
- Have dedicated fathers' days
- Get the fathers doing things with the children, then grow them into teachers

Need for guidance for managers and teams about working with men in ece

- Nappy changing
- Parents' reactions
- Dealing with myths about the risks men pose
- How the team interacts/female staff attitudes and reactions/support the women to accept male teachers
- Note the existence of Australian and American handbooks that address these issues

Support 'Men in ECE' networks

- National group to consult with MOE/others (group in this room?) (Karl L said the MOE would help to set this up)
- Regional networks for men to support each other (Nancy B said NZCA might host these)
- Identify men and help them to get together/include fathers, not just teachers
- Men from networks could support promotion of ece careers to targeted men and to schools

Keep it proactive and positive

- Watch the language – a diversity issue, not a lacking in existing workforce
- Promote benefits of having men for children's learning

The following was discussed when the meeting examined what ece teacher education providers and career guidance could do to produce more male graduates

Making teacher education programmes attractive to men (recruitment and retention)

- Survey male students on their experiences
- Use male teachers to front for recruitment of men at Expos, with talks, etc
- Use taster programmes like STAR and Gateway
- Get messages out to school Careers' Counsellors
- HRC involvement? (possible cheerleader)
- Develop practical guidance for providers on how to recruit and (especially) retain men on their programmes
- Involve male lecturers/male teachers as guest speakers on courses
- Find male teachers for male students for practicums – need supportive supervisor
- Dealing with being only male or one of few in a class
 - Group male students in same classes
- Male support networks for new grads towards registration
- Review curriculum and assessment to make more male friendly

The following was discussed when the meeting examined how Government might work to attract more men to ece.

Promote what men can bring to children's learning and that ece is a career option for men

- Use STAR, Gateway and career advisor networks
- Explore what other sectors have done and how (eg nursing)
- Promote stories in local papers/media training for male teacher spokespersons
- Karl showed the 'Is there a place for you in early childhood teaching?' booklet (which has no images of men) alongside a new 'Is there a place for you in early childhood teaching?' pamphlet which does – as an example of how men might be given greater prominence in Teach NZ promotional literature

Teach NZ campaign to promote careers for men in ece

- Integrated strategy... Ministry could lead development
- DVD and new brochure
- Target men involved as fathers, volunteers, ante-natal classes, teachers in primary and secondary
- Research on young men's career choice drivers

Karl asked what level of Government support we wanted for our men in ece project, and received little in the way of specific feedback.

We then defined a working group

This group is Lynda Boyd (University of Canterbury), Karl LeQuesne (Ministry of Education), Titoki Black (Kohanga Reo), Sarah Farquhar (Childforum Research Network) and Adam Buckingham (ece teacher) - with support from the Early Childhood Council (Anthony Keesing).

We then discussed some general ideas

These included

- The labour market reasons for getting more men into ece (bigger pool of teachers)
- When do we announce our existence publicly and how?/what do we announce?
- Get success stories out there
- Need to get all political parties committed if it is to succeed as a ten year project

We allocated immediate tasks as follow

- Writing up of workshop minutes – Anthony K
- Checking minutes for accuracy – All
- Workshop members to consult with their networks and submit feedback focussed on what specific actions we should be undertaking (You may wish to go beyond the meeting notes for ideas.) – All
- Draft programme descriptions submitted
 - Guidance for managers and teams running centres – Jan G
 - Support for creation of a men in ece network/networks – Adam B and Karl L
 - Teacher education recruitment and retention – Barbara B
 - Teach NZ campaign – Karl L

- Broad Community promotion campaign (focussed on the work of this group) – Anthony K
- Steering group reviews draft programmes
- Whole group reviews draft programmes and commits to specific actions