

A Spotlight on Roskill South Kindergarten

Staying connected during the loooong rāhui!



This spotlight is a collaborative community story about the rāhui (lockdown) of 2021. From the very first rāhui we wrote Collaborative Community Stories to record this moment in our history. Collaborative Community Stories show how, as a learning community, we co-constructed the curriculum and planned together during this time.



Our pedagogical practice, along with our local curriculum, supported the success of our distance learning approach. Learning Stories are fundamental in documenting and celebrating children's learning. This formative assessment approach empowers whānau to understand the value of play and how it supports their tamariki's learning. So when the lockdown happened, whānau knew and understood how to support their child's learning at home.

Roskill South Kindergarten is situated in Mt Roskill in Tāmaki Makaurau, and is under the umbrella of Ngā Tamariki Puāwai ō Tāmaki – the Auckland Kindergarten Association. We provide care and education for children aged 3-6 years old. The Roskill South Kindergarten community reflects the diverse demographics of urban Auckland.

What we did

While we had lived through the rāhui (lockdown) of 2020, nothing could have prepared us for the rāhui of 2021, the longest yet – the Delta variant provided new challenges, including many weeks of being isolated in our own bubbles at home. Children's learning is powerful when we are face-to-face (kanohi ki te kanohi). Seeing each other, and hearing and feeling the relationships are important features when we engage with children. It is definitely a 'contact sport.' So, we reflected on how we could have contact, even though it was going to be from a distance.

We stayed connected online

When our kindergarten whānau is apart, we never lose the awareness that we are still connected to each other. In this rāhui we introduced Roskill South Whānau Chats on a Monday and Thursday, which provided a great way for all of us to stay connected – seeing each other from afar.

Whānau Chat sessions followed children's interests, and one session was influenced by Save the Children. We had a Superhero Party!

Roskill South Whānau Chats provided the opportunity to connect, to share and participate in songs, dancing and stories. It was a joy to see the children and it brightened the teachers' day and theirs. We noticed children's confidence growing as they became familiar with this new way of being.

Connecting and seeing each other through the online platform provided the opportunity to grow and maintain relationships, and this was a platform that enabled us to be a kindergarten whānau from afar.

Following on from our Whānau Chat sessions, we introduced smaller group chats, this provided the opportunity for children to share stories more in-depth, and organise chat dates for children.

Children and whānau became superheroes

Save the Children launched a new campaign aimed at empowering children during this rāhui. It featured [Super Millie!](#) Super Millie shared five ways to navigate lockdown using superpowers that all children have: creativity, inventiveness, decision making, knowledge and fun. Save the Children believes all kids are Superheroes, and so do we. Children-superheroes stick to their bubbles and stay home and keep us all safe.

Not only do we think our children were the superheroes of this rāhui, so too were their whānau. Parents are their child's first teachers. Right from the moment they are born, children and parents learn together, and during this rāhui this role was increased further – to superhero proportions!

We continued to develop relationships

At the heart of our teaching practice is the relationships that we develop with children and whānau and we believe our multi-layered approach to distance learning has strengthened our connections. The relationships with children and whānau we had before, and which continued to develop during this rāhui, supported children to transition when they returned to kindergarten. We are so grateful to be a part of a community that cares for each other and who value these relationships.

We welcomed feedback

We valued and appreciated the feedback we received from our whānau throughout this rāhui. It indicated to us that we provided meaningful support from afar.

And learning continued

Another learning from home opportunity was learning packs. An initial comprehensive pack was delivered to all children, and we followed up with mini learning packs a month later. See [Joy, Happiness & Magic](#) story below for more detail about this fabulous initiative.

During this time children continued to develop their working theories through the experiences they shared with their families and the opportunities the learning packs provided. At the same time, they also demonstrated “confidence in exploring, puzzling over and making sense of the world.”

Our distance learning programme has kept us connected and provided purposeful learning opportunities that have strengthened children's learner identity. The time children spent with their families and the everyday adventures they enjoyed together throughout this rāhui contributed to their resilience during this unprecedented time. When children feel safe, secure and loved they develop skills for adapting to changes and managing uncertainty.

We reviewed our health and safety procedures to keep everyone safe

Washing and drying our hands before and after food, when going to the toilet, and when they are messy from play have always been part of our routine at kindergarten. After the initial rāhui in March 2020, we reviewed all of our health & safety procedures and introduced a new routine – washing and drying our hands when we arrive at kindergarten. For children who have started kindergarten post March 2020 this routine is part of their induction when they begin kindergarten. The children are very skilled at following this routine and it is how the day begins every morning at kindergarten. We know hygiene practices are very important in protecting ourselves against COVID-19 and we continue to learn about good hygiene practices at kindergarten.

The Great Christmas Challenge

As the end of the year approached, the teaching team thought about how we could connect with the children who had not yet returned to kindergarten. We created an outdoor Christmas light display and launched The Great Christmas Challenge. We invited whānau to visit Kindergarten at night-time to see the magical light display, take a photo and share it with us on Storypark. This initiative was a great success!



Reflections, observations, and learnings

- » Kaiako, whānau, and children design our local curriculum. We found ourselves wondering how to keep working together while afar. Our multilayered approach to distance learning helped to bridge this gap. Our online programme and Learning Packs empowered all ākonga, and the learning was mana-enhancing for all.
- » It took us as kaiako a while to get used to this different way of working. Navigating the online 'Whānau Chat' required a bit of trial and error to find out what worked well and what didn't but we soon got into the swing of it.
- » We responded to feedback received from families. They were feeling overwhelmed by the amount of information they were receiving through other channels like social media and news media. We were mindful of how often we posted on Storypark.
- » Accessibility to devices for some whānau was a challenge. We continue working on this challenge to find a solution.

- » One indicator of success was seeing how well children returned to kindergarten from the lockdowns, particularly after the long lockdown in August 2021. Children returned happy and settled, with a strong sense of belonging, and managed the transition back into kindergarten with ease.
- » Following the success of our distance learning packs, we have now created Welcome to Kindergarten packs that support children's transition into kindergarten. In addition, we continue to provide learning packs for tamariki who are isolating at home due to Covid-19.

"Thank you all so much for all the love and effort you all put towards these learning bags and making sure the kids are still learning and being busy bees during lockdown! I swear teachers do not get the recognition they deserve you guys are awesome. All love from the Fa'atea family."

"Received the learning pack today, straight into it. So excited about everything, started with the watercolour pack, absolutely loved it. Thanks so much Roskill Sth, it has been so much joy in this lockdown with you guys. Take care."



"Me whiri mai te whānau, te hapū, te iwi, me tauwiwi, me ō rātou wāhi nohonga, ki roto i te whāriki, hei āwhina, hei tautoko i te akoranga, i te whakatipuranga o te mokopuna. The wider world of family and community is an integral part of early childhood curriculum."

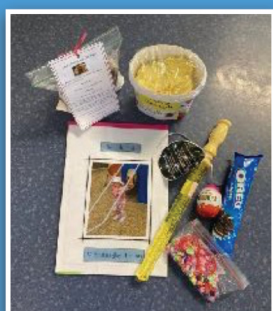
Te Whāriki pg. 20



Collaborative Community Story from Roskill South Kindergarten

Joy, Happiness & Magic. September and November 2021

What a tricky time this has been! Who knew that we would be away from Kindergarten for so long, staying home and keeping safe in our bubbles. We knew that the children were missing being at Kindergarten, so as soon as we were able to, Karen, Kim, and Nadine went into Kindergarten to put together learning packs. Our aim was to incorporate fun and interesting open-ended resources with no predetermined outcomes that would encourage children's creative and divergent thinking. In other words, bringing a little bit of Kindergarten into children's homes. For the learning packs Karen, Kim and Nadine made many batches of play dough, enough for everyone. We put together jars of baking ingredients with a cookie recipe for the children to bake at home, and we included lux flakes for children to make their own slime and enjoy some messy play fun. We put in bound books of paper for children to create their own stories, and personalised scrapbooks which promoted meaningful literacy learning. We also added coloured paper, craft supplies, beads, felt pens, chalk, sellotape, scissors, and glue sticks to stimulate children's creativity. There was even a treat for each child inside their pack. Karen, Kim and Nadine set off in their cars, bursting with learning packs. We had so much joy delivering the packs, and this provided a way for us all to connect again in person. In spite of contactless and socially distanced delivery, we were still able to see and chat with all our friends from kindergarten. We were so happy to bring a bit of magic to children at home, and to see the children's happy and smiling faces was a delight.



In October we returned to Kindergarten with our small bubble of children, and we put together a 'mini' learning pack to accompany the more comprehensive pack. Another cookie recipe and ingredients, clay, watercolour paints, a 'treasure bag' for children to collect natural materials and a mat for them to create ephemeral art, another scrapbook, and more paper and craft supplies were included. In both the packs, we included information for parents on what learning their child would engage in with the resources in the pack, and ideas on participating in learning from home in a fun and meaningful way. We were blown away with the responses from whānau and we were delighted to see the learning adventures children were enjoying at home from the photos and stories that whānau shared on Storypark.

Teaching Team Reflection

Te Whāriki, our early childhood curriculum suggests, "In an empowering environment, children have agency to create and act on their own ideas, develop knowledge and skills in areas that interest them and, increasingly, to make decisions and judgements on matters that relate to them." (Pg. 18). With this in mind, we were keen to provide resources that would support and enhance learning at home during this very loooooong rāhui. Children learn through doing, their play is their work, so we planned to provide a range of stimulating and engaging resources that empowered children to be leaders of their learning. The learning packs also empowered whānau to explore new learning possibilities with their children, often repeating experiences many times and extending the ideas provided.

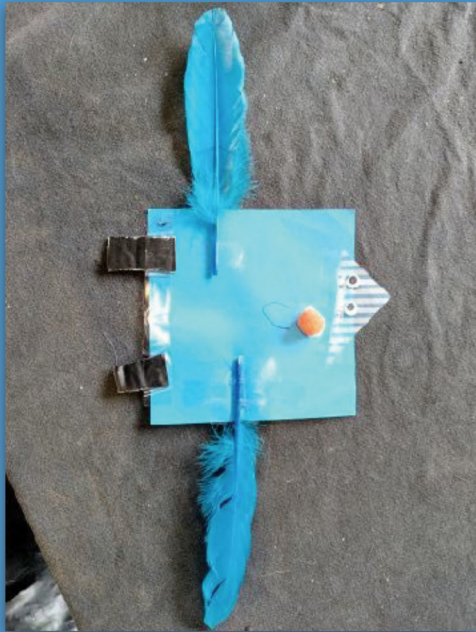
This whakataukī reflects on the importance of reciprocity, which is embedded in our partnerships with our kindergarten whānau. The act of giving is regarded as an expression of aroha, it is another way to show we care, which is more important than the gift itself. The learning packs were designed, packed, and delivered with an abundance of aroha, with the vision to be responsive to children's interests and excite and stimulate learning possibilities while at home. It was a joy to witness the happiness and magic it brought our children during this very tricky time. A little bit of kindergarten certainly reached our children, and for that, we are truly grateful.

Ahakoā he iti kete, he iti nā te aroha

Although the basket is small, it is given with affectionate regard.

Learning adventures at home!

We collected photos for each child and created an individual photo page as part of this collaborative community story.



Stories from home during the rāhui

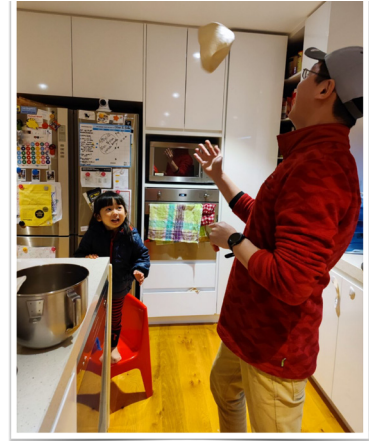
Bella's story

September 2021

Pizza making has become a tradition in our family during lockdowns. Bella and Oliver love to help Daddy make our own dough from scratch and watch Daddy do a few tricks and spins of the flattened dough up in the air. The most fun part is choosing their own toppings to go on the pizzas! Bella smeared a layer of tomato sauce first, then sprinkled some onions, shredded chicken, cucumber and corn which is then topped with a LOT of cheese! YUMMY!!! Bella had 3 pieces with a big smile on her face

😊 homemade pizzas are the best!

Anyone else made their own pizzas? We would love to see yours 🍕🍕😊



Kim said: Bella, those pizzas look delicious and they have just given me a good idea for our dinner. Yummy!! Homemade pizzas ARE the best!



Clara said: Wow Bella your pizzas look cool. I was surprised at how your Dad could throw the dough! The other day I made pizza dogs and bones for lunch! I love pizza too. 🍕 From Clara



Karen said: Thank you for sharing. I love the look on your face Bella, when you are watching your dad throw the dough. Your pizza look delicious. I haven't made a pizza yet but I have made Crunchy Lemon Muffins with the lemons from RJ's tree.



Nadine said: What fabulous photos Bella, and your pizza looks delicious!!!! Thank you so much for sharing :)

Stories from home during the rāhui

Olivia's story

September 2021

Olivia, after our first Whānau Chat during this rāhui, you and your Mummy shared a message with us:



From Olivia: (verbatim) Thank you for having a zoom with me. Can you see my friendship bracelets? I love you.



Kim said: Aww, I love your friendship bracelet and I love you too xx

A couple of weeks later you shared with us a fun project that you had been working on:



Hī teachers! I made a paw patrol tower today for my paw patrol toys! I used an old juice bottle and a pringles can. Mama tried her best to step back and let me go for gold ^-^ it felt like I was a kindy again for a little while and I loved it!



Kim said: Olivia, your paw patrol tower is very innovative. I love your design and all the loose parts you used to create with. Thanks for sharing your fabulous work with us xx



Karen said: Wow Olivia, creating with boxes is such a fabulous idea, just like at kindergarten. Well done, Mama for resisting the urge and stepping back. Your Paw Patrol friends will have so much fun playing on the tower. I wonder what fun adventures they will enjoy? :)



Nadine said: Olivia, that is a fabulous tower! I love your creative and innovative idea and all the interesting resources that you used. Chase looks like he is loving the view from the top!

Stories from home during the rāhui

Jharal's story

September 2021

Morning! Jharal wanted to share what he made with his dad yesterday, some yummy sushi. He made chicken teriyaki, salmon, and tuna Mayo sushi. We hope you guys are all safe and well x



Kim said: Wow, Jharal your sushi looks delicious. I love sushi, you might have to give me some lessons on making it. What a fun thing to do with your dad. Stay safe in your bubble xxx



Karen said: It looks like you are having lots of fun in your bubble Jharal. Your sushi looks amazing Jharal! What a fabulous cooking experience to share with your dad. Making sushi at kindergarten sounds like a great idea Kim, Jharal can be our teacher. Stay safe and have fun xxxxx



Nadine said: Yum Jharal, what a fun experience to share with your dad. I bet you enjoyed eating your sushi as much as you enjoyed making it! And yes I agree too, making sushi at Kindergarten would be a fabulous idea. Glad to see you safe and happy in your bubble Jharal, we miss you!