

A Day for Teachers: Honouring Practice, Honouring Mokopuna | He Rā Mō ngā Kaiako: Whakamanawatia ngā tikanga me ngā mokopuna

Saturday 8 August 2026 – 9am – 3pm

Session 1 - How Babies' Brains Work

Ever wondered how babies' brains work and why knowing this is important?

A baby's brain is highly malleable which means it has a remarkable ability to change with experience. How you interact with babies matters because these experiences will shape their brains. Knowing how babies' brains work will enable you to be more aware of how your relationships with babies can make a positive difference to their development, learning and life! In this workshop you will learn more about the makeup of the brain, the functions of each part, and their influence on growth and interactions. Join us in this learning through kōrero and hands-on, interactive experiences.

Presenter - Raewyn Penman is a Senior Lecturer | Pūkenga Matua with Te Rito Maioha. She has a deep commitment to bicultural practice, curriculum innovation, and empowering kaiako across Aotearoa. With over 40 years' experience Raewyn brings a rich blend of practical wisdom, academic insight, and cultural responsiveness to her work. Her passion lies in supporting kaiako to engage meaningfully with *Te Whāriki*, fostering environments where tamariki thrive and teachers feel confident in their practice.

Session 2 – Self confident fools or competent and capable children? Understanding working theories as a resolution of process versus outcome for young tamariki – What does this mean in practice?

The tension between process and outcome / know-how vs knowledge / subject content knowledge vs learning to learn has been a dilemma in early childhood education which continues to this day. Should we be focussing on the process of learning, the know-how, and learning to learn rather than on subject content knowledge itself? In the current age, facts can be seen to be cheap – after all we can 'just google it'. After all, Te Whāriki "positions our children as 21st century citizens, learning how to learn in a fast changing and globally connected world." (MOE, 2017, p. 2). At the same time, Jerome Bruner warned us that if left unchecked, the focus on skills and processes could result in children becoming "self-confident fools" (Bruner, 1977. p. 65), having great confidence in their ability to learn, but holding little knowledge or understanding.

The concept of working theories provides a way to dissolve this tension. In this workshop, I argue and illustrate that working theories are simultaneously processes and outcomes. I draw on my doctoral research to offer a model which illustrates how young children develop their working theories, illustrating how they are simultaneously processes and outcomes. In particular, I will use the model to unpack one young child's developing understandings about jumping and swinging while touching on other associated working theories that were developed at the same time. Using the model can then enable a deeper appreciation of the complexity of working theory development, leading to the beginnings of strategies to better understand, foster and support young children's working theory formation.

Presenter - Dr Daniel Lovatt is a Kaiārahi Mātauranga ā-Rohe | Regional Education Leader at Te Rito Maioha, Early Childhood New Zealand. Previously he has worked as an engineer, early childhood teacher and curriculum leader. Daniel's PhD explored ways children develop, and ways teachers support young children's development of working theories about the STEM

Session 3 – Integrating Social Justice in the Arts

Integrating social justice in the arts is not about teaching “big issues” in heavy ways, it is about using creative processes to amplify the voices of tamariki, strengthen identity, build empathy, and support agency, all while honouring the values of te ao Māori and the rights set out in the UNCRC.

This session will be hands-on and creative, with kaiako actively making an creative piece with support. Kaiako will engage in a range of practical arts experiences that model how tamariki can explore ideas of social justice through creating. Using open-ended materials, kaiako will explore examples of arts-based responses to social justice issues and then create their own expressive pieces, reflecting on both the process and the possibilities for classroom practice.

Key Outcomes – Kaiako Will Be Able To...

- Integrate social justice thinking through arts-rich experiences.
- Strengthen children’s voice, agency, and leadership.
- Use arts processes to explore real-world issues safely and meaningfully.

Presenters – Victoria Kees and Hannah Lineham

Victoria Kees is a Kaiārahi Marautanga, Course Leader, and Kaiako at Te Rito Maioha in Ōtautahi. With over 25 years’ experience across home-based and centre-based ECE, she has worked in teaching, leadership, and professional learning roles. She teaches in the Bachelor of Teaching (ECE) and supports tauira to deepen their understanding of early childhood contexts. Her interests include leadership, curriculum, cultures of thinking, teacher wellbeing, culturally responsive pedagogy, and research on equitable access to quality early learning.

Hannah Lineham is a Lecturer | Kaiako at Te Rito Maioha, where she teaches in the Bachelor of Teaching (Primary) and Graduate Diploma of Teaching (Primary) programmes. With experience teaching in Māori-medium bilingual settings in Ōtautahi, she brings a strong commitment to kaupapa Māori pedagogies and culturally responsive practice. Hannah’s work is grounded in real-world teaching, with a focus on supporting kaiako to translate theory into practical, purposeful practice