



Children and teachers at Lucknow Kindergarten in Havelock North work together on iPad projects.

IPADS SUPPORTING GOOD TEACHING PRACTICE

The above question was the beginning of a project between Frances van Dillen, education manager from the Heretaunga Kindergarten Association (HFKA) and Heather Bell, an education facilitator from Massey University's Centre for Educational Development. The teachers at Lucknow Kindergarten in Havelock North were asked if they wanted to explore this question and were excited by the potential.

Frances wanted the following outcomes from this trial:

- An understanding of the usefulness of iPads in sessions with children,
- An understanding of the usefulness of iPads as teacher tools,
- Information so HFKA could make decisions about future development.

The work was shaped by the identified educational priorities for this centre. The iPads would be used to build on what teachers were already doing well and help them to 'go to new places'.

TEACHING AS INQUIRY

Teaching as Inquiry underpinned the way this project evolved. The teachers, Christine, Lianne, Mandie, and Vicki, each chose one focus child and identified goals for them based on a range of current evidence. By targeting one child in this way, we kept the project manageable.

Teachers needed to learn how to use and manage the iPads and explore specific apps, as well as understand their impact on learning and the implications for their teaching practice.

Again to keep the workload manageable, we used very few apps but we really explored these in depth. In keeping with the centre's goals, we focused the project on developing social competence and literacy.

We developed our ideas at the weekly meetings and teachers put these into practice during the following week. Feedback at the next meeting informed decisions about the teacher's and children's next steps. This process was

Can iPads support good teaching practices and enhance children's opportunities to learn in early childhood? Education manager FRANCES VAN DILLEN and facilitator HEATHER BELL researched this theory.

repeated each week as teachers learnt more and had more evidence to bounce off.

In our last session we asked the big 'so what' questions. What difference had the approach really made to the children, what difference had it made to the teaching, and how did we really know?

WHAT WE DID

Rich conversations developed as we teased out refinements, new directions, or whole new approaches to using the iPads effectively to support learning and to gather evidence of shifts. These 'learning/evidence relationship' conversations helped with decisions about how best to move forward.

Picture Books (Book Creator and Doodle Buddy)

Books were created in two ways; using children's drawings, and with photos. Initially children drew pictures on the devices and talked about these. We captured their 'voice stories', along with written stories based on these. Children loved seeing their artwork and hearing their own voices when these were played back.

Other children watched and listened as their friends created and when their turn came up, no further instruction was necessary. The outcome was a book with several children's drawings and stories.

Teachers also used the devices to take photos of children and created books that were



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printed on the spot and shared with children that day during whānau time. By the end of the term children were in charge, using the iPads themselves and directing their own stories.

One pair of girls created a story based on the adventures of their little ponies. They shared the 'camera operator' and 'director' roles as they moved their ponies around the centre. Lianne asked the 'I wonder what you would say on this page' questions, captured their voices and wrote their words for them. Children printed off copies and read their books to their whānau group, word perfect, and using one-to-one correspondence as they followed the text.

Because the children's stories could be replayed and listened to across the team, this helped teachers to form sound evidence-based judgments that informed their next steps. These books also helped to facilitate really good parent/teacher discussions about the learning that had happened for their child that day.

Books could be shared at the centre, taken home, and copies were often emailed to parents who wanted to share them with distant family and friends.

Movies (iMovie)

Teachers would video their children during sessions, capturing moments that could be shared with them immediately or later at whānau time with the others. Lianne once filmed her children being super heroes one day and created a short movie trailer which she showed to her group at whānau time. They were very excited when they recognised themselves in the movie.

Sharing the movies with the children was a powerful way of encouraging them to engage in and take control of their own learning, and this became a great motivator for change.

Children's social competence was explored naturally, in context, and behaviours such as good citizenship came through clearly, which encouraged interesting, focused conversations with children.

Children would negotiate themes for future movies as they wanted to star in more of these, creating wonderful opportunities to explore other goals and learning outcomes.

The movies could also be replayed and analysed across the team, meaning all could contribute to decisions about next steps for both the teacher and the child. Again, they became a valuable asset for assessment purposes.

WHAT WE LEARNT

Authentic evidence

Using the iPads has enriched both the nature of the evidence that teachers can use and the way it is used. This encouraged the team to self-reflect, collaborate and create other ways of addressing their puzzles of practice.

In the final meeting, teachers were saying "initially I would ... but ... so now ...", showing how their thinking had changed and why. They easily dipped into the evidence they had on the iPads to support their thinking, and then trialled the new ideas that were generated. Showing the shifts that occurred as a result was easy.

Assessment for learning

The iPads have made the job of recording and sharing the learning so much faster and easier.

iPads have increased the number and value of learning stories that are being written.

These stories are created and shared with the children when the learning is happening during the session. Children are truly consulted about their learning and parents are talked to that day, either face-to-face or through email.

Child centred

Driving the conversations about how the iPads were used were the specific goals of the child. If a child is being encouraged to use more than 'gorgeous eyes' to communicate, how can I capture her voice so I can get her excited about it? If a child is being encouraged to get involved, how can I capture her playing without embarrassing her? If a child prefers to lead, how can I show her how to involve other children in her play?

These types of questions generated a raft of possible solutions from the whole group with the rationale underpinning each one being identified. Good child-focused pedagogy, with the iPad seen as part of the strategy, was being critically evaluated.

Whole learning community

The movie trailers are now shared with all children as they gather while parents come to collect them. Children can see what their friends have been doing, getting excited and asking all sorts of questions, and parents can also see what has been happening during the session. Transitions between the centre and home have been enhanced as going home with this shared understanding has created opportunities for rich conversations.

Quality parent participation has developed further through using the iPads. All family members are now easily included in the child's learning, regardless of how far away they are.

The videos and stories ensure parents are able to see their child positively as an engaged, happy and active learner. Parents share their stories too, meaning there are multiple voices from across the child's learning community adding to the knowledge of each child.

CONCLUSION

Teachers have integrated the iPads into the existing Lucknow kaupapa, building on the strengths that were already there. They continue to broaden and strengthen the way they use these devices, and have purchased more so each teacher has one on them at all times.

In the early discussions, Heather pointed out that iPads need to connect with teacher pedagogy rather than becoming another tool for children to play on. This project has shown the value of this thinking. Frances said the intention now is to disseminate this learning across other kindergartens and associations as the interest in the use of iPads in early childhood continues to grow.

Lucknow Kindergarten is proudly sharing their thinking with an increasingly wide and very interested audience. In the words of Alvin Toffler, "the illiterate of the 21st century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn and relearn." *



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