

Describe

My son was 3 and we had just moved to Auckland to find that a restructure was going to occur in the office I had transferred to. Getting noticed by not being at work on time was something I wanted to avoid. I dropped my son, Adam off, read him a book and just as I was heading out the door, my son's educator ran over to me and said she wanted to talk about some behaviour Adam had been displaying. I was not able to stop and I told her that "this was not a good time". She frowned at me and looked quite perplexed as I left. I felt tension as I was interested in Adam's day at the Centre but I was not able to talk at that time. Better communication by both parties would have enhanced the situation at hand. In the few years that I have been in the early childhood sector I have overheard harsh judgments being made about parents and I have often thought about the incident that had happened to me. It has made me more aware of how as early childhood educators, our tone, our body language as well as our verbal communication is important to enhancing this partnership. Bear Park's philosophy is that of holding the parent in high regard and I can see that this part of the philosophy is practiced daily.

Inform

There are some key words that assist me to describe partnership. They are togetherness, combination, friendship and co-operation. In essence, partnership between ECE Educators and parents could be diagrammatically expressed as a venn diagram where three circles overlap with the middle circle being the child. When we communicate respectfully in all ways we bring together the parent and educator in a positive manner and through this we get to understand the child better.

Confront

Partnership is expressed in Bishop and Glynn (2000) as a joint outcome of learning between individuals and/or groups, teachers/pupils, people/text/resources. When judgment of parent behaviour becomes part of our practice, the communication lines cannot flow. Further, I find it difficult to understand how a trained educator without children can believe that they know more than a parent. We know different things and by sharing this knowledge we see the children as a whole.

Cagliari (2004 p.28) highlights the importance of recognition of all parties in the educational relationship each contributing complementary and necessary knowledge. This is identified as socio-constructivist theory. Vygotsky emphasised the importance of people surrounding the child, extended on by Brofenbrenner, with the four circles known as microsystem (immediate interactions), mesosystem (linking of microsystems), exosystem (large social systems) and chronosystem (emergence of all processes over time).

Reconstruct

The image of the parent at Bear Park is one of collaborator, initiator, one who brings a different dimension to the Centre from that of teaching. It demonstrates togetherness and respect of both the teacher and parent and that each has a same but different understanding of the child.

To me, communicating with parents means sensitivity, discernment, responsiveness and patience in both verbal and body language. It is not a power relationship, where one knows more than the other. Styles (2000) that as trained educators it is easy to form a view of the parent as inadequate and/or uninformed. An understanding, as explained by Styles (2000) that educators may be able to speak for all children better than a parent can but parents speak for their own child better than educators can. In essence the woven mat, as depicted within Te Whāriki.

References

Bishop, R., & Glynn, T. (2000). Kaupapa Maori messages for the mainstream. *School of Education, University of Waikato*

Cagliari, P. et al (2004). Thoughts, theories and experiences for an educational project with participation. *Children in Europe, 6* 28-30

Styles, L.K. (2000). Possibilities or partnership: Empowering parents to participate. *Early Education 24*, 5-9.