

# Froebel and the Whānau

“Mothers are their children’s first educators and must be involved in their children’s learning” (Tovey, 2017)

## Rationale

### What we know

- Froebel believed “every mother should be an educated kindergartener as to begin the system in its rudiments at home” (Douai, 1872, p. 3).
- When parents are involved in their child’s learning, they “achieve at a higher level and have more positive attitudes toward school” (Jones, 1991, p. 7).
- Music and song are integral in building and developing relationships (Bruce, 2012), which connects to our value of whanaungatanga (relationships).

### What we see

- Teachers are excited to share our Froebelian based philosophy and introduce our approach to whānau (families).
- Parents are interested in understanding more about Froebel.
- Children are using devices to listen to songs and rhymes at home which parents tell us is an individual activity.
- Music, waiata (song) and karakia (prayer) are often heard and shared and engages all children.



Evvy, a child at the setting, enjoying the piano.

## Aim

To support parents to build their confidence and competency in understanding Froebel’s principles and philosophy, and to develop skills to practice this through song, rhyme, and fingerplays at home.

## Implementation

A flyer was distributed, inviting parents to a workshop on Froebel and to offer them an opportunity to develop Froebelian based skills.

Froebel’s principles were explained to parents. They were encouraged to think about and share their child and home in relation to these principles. This helps to build a community and network between the parents of the setting which is an essential component of Froebel’s approach (Read, 2003).

### Using songs, rhymes, and fingerplays

Parents were asked to share the songs that they sing at home and to think about the message or meaning behind the song. They examined any symbols that could be used or seen in these songs and considered how they might be visually represented to support the meaning or idea communicated.

After the parents had analysed a range of songs, they thought about everyday routines and events that related to their chosen song and contexts that the child could explore (Dyke, 2019).

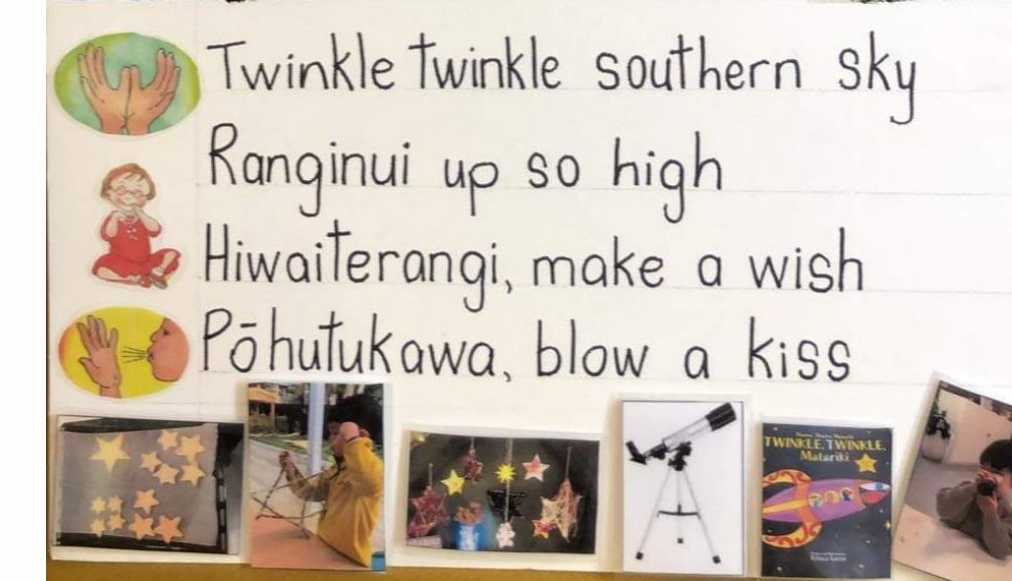
The final part of the workshop centred around poetry cards and picking up the idea of symbolism and communication. Parents were tasked with creating their own poetry cards which included symbols that the child would be familiar with.

### Following up

Once parents had finished the workshop, we asked them to visit the setting to discuss how their poetry cards had been used at home and their perceived impact of this to foster positive parent-teacher connections centred around the learning of the child.

## References

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A poetry card shared with parents.

## Evaluation

Overall, this project has had a significant impact on the parents in our setting. Parents indicated that they felt much more confident in their understanding of Froebelian principles and philosophy and were eager to use the poetry cards at home. This project was beneficial in introducing parents to Froebel’s principles and philosophy and giving them practical skills of being a Froebelian educator. By explicitly taking parents through a Froebelian approach, we hope that they will feel empowered to become advocates for Froebelian practice.

Burke (2018) expresses the importance of using song to find out more about the child’s world and help to inform the setting of the child’s culture and life. This project is the beginning of building a network of interested parents and growing the community to ensure that Froebel’s philosophy is the guiding light for all the children in our setting.