

## Belonging situated within rules, rights, and responsibilities

# The meeting

12 May

This morning Isaac came to me and said, “We need to have a meeting for boys only. We want to plan something only for boys.”

“Sounds like a good idea,” I said. “When would you like to have the meeting?”

“Today,” responded Isaac.

“What time?” I asked.

“Nine o’clock,” said Karl.

“Well, we have already had nine o’clock, today,” I said. “How about twelve-thirty this morning? After we’ve tidied up?”

“Yes. That will be okay,” said Isaac.

“You’ll need a notice so that all the boys know about the meeting,” I said.

Isaac found a piece of A3 paper and a felt-tip pen.

“Do you want me to write it or do you want to write it yourself?” I asked.

“You write it on a piece of paper, and I’ll copy it,” he said.

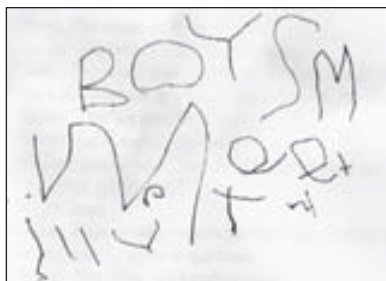
Isaac wrote on the paper and then stuck it to the front door.

I discovered later that Ben had copied it as well.

A bit later, Douglas told Sue, “I’m going to join the girls’ club because the boys’ group is going to do things that my mum will not be pleased about.”

Sue asked, “What are they going to do?”

Douglas said, “Hit each other, so I will join the girls’ club.”



### What’s happening here?

Two boys approach a teacher about holding a meeting for boys only in the centre. We don’t know what the boys plan at the meeting, but we do know that Douglas is rather pessimistically imagining the agenda (or perhaps he has inside information) and has decided not to join the boys’ club. This is the beginning of a story about the connection of gender to “what we do here”.

### What does this assessment tell us about the learning (using a Belonging/Mana Whenua lens)?

The children here are developing the inclination and the ability to have a say in the curriculum. The teacher is implicitly supporting this notion when she responds that a meeting “sounds like a good idea”, so the children are also learning that this kind of initiative is appropriate here. The children are also exploring a working theory to do with gender-based communities. Isaac wants a “boys only” meeting as he wants to plan something only for boys.

Planning meetings are events associated with a sense of place, and the boys’ holding one indicates a values system that includes children being permitted to have a say in the curriculum. In this case, the children are proposing community memberships (a boys’ club and a girls’ club) to which they will invite, or from which they will exclude, other children. We don’t know what the boys planned at the meeting. Interestingly, however, we know that Douglas is basing his decision on where to belong on the (probable) agenda rather than on whether he is a boy or a girl. He says, “I’m going to join the girls’ club because the boys’ group is going to do things that my mum will not be pleased about.” He appears to be developing the capacity to take a mindful or critical approach (a dimension of strength outlined in Book 10), resisting a very powerful gender-related invitation. This might well become a topic of ongoing dialogue at the centre, among both teachers and children.

### How might this documented assessment contribute to Belonging/Mana Whenua?

This could well indicate the beginning of a series of discussions about gender-related activities in the early childhood community, a debate that children and adults could return to, to reflect on possible directions.

### What other strands of Te Whāriki are exemplified here?

Preparations for the meeting included writing for a purpose (preparing a notice to announce the meeting), which is a feature of the Communication/Mana Reo strand. Fairness and inclusion, key aspects of the Belonging/Mana Whenua and Contribution/Mana Tangata strands, were also evident.