

Sharing portfolios with the wider community



This was Anna's idea. She decided what she wanted to say and only needed help with spelling some words.



Emma and Mr Shanks

Parent's voice

Emma got very excited one evening as I put her to bed. She told me she was visiting Warrengate Hospital the following day. I told her there probably wasn't a visit, as I had not received a notice about it. When we arrived at Kindergarten the next day, I spoke to the teacher, who told us the Warrengate residents were visiting the Kindergarten a few days later. We counted down the days, and Emma awaited the visit with great anticipation. She told me she particularly wanted to see a resident called Mr Shanks, who she had met on a previous visit.

What's happening here?

Photographs on display and items in the children's portfolios record visits between children and residents from a local hospital for the elderly. This exemplar includes two samples of the documentation of these visits, which have been ongoing over four years.

What aspects of community participation does this assessment exemplify?

The children's portfolios serve as bridges for developing ongoing whanaungatanga or reciprocal relationships between the children and elderly residents in the local community. A photo records Emma showing her portfolio to Mr Shanks during a visit by the residents to the early childhood centre.

Entries in the children's portfolios by teachers and parents record the children's participation in these developing relationships.

How might this assessment encourage community participation?

The head teacher notes (see below) that the visits have developed warm relationships between the children and the elderly. She also comments on the positive contribution this has made to the children's (and the parent's) attitudes towards the elderly. Photographs on display, together with photos and comments in the children's portfolios, reinforce these developing positive attitudes.

What might this tell us about informal noticing, recognising, and responding in this place?

Intergenerational relationships are highly valued in this early childhood centre. The head teacher writes:

Children and the elderly sharing their mutual delight in each other are a powerful mix. Opportunities for this exchange of interest and joy have been encouraged in our kindergarten since our first visit to a local hospital for the elderly four years ago.

We have organised our centre to be more welcoming for our elderly whānau and have actively encouraged grandparents to stay with us as parent help or just for part of a session.

We had a grandparents/special friends' morning and afternoon tea and checked that our range of storybooks reflected these special relationships.

Our relationship with the residents of the hospital for the elderly is now ongoing and developing. We have had issues to sort out, for example, ensuring we have parent help, buying a teapot, wearing name tags, and so on. The children have really enjoyed sharing and showing their portfolios with their older friends. We have visited the hospital as a large group. (The children were fascinated touring the hospital and looking at the walking frames and equipment.) We are now looking at ways to visit in small groups. Parents are kept informed about the visits through displays of photographs and the head teacher's report. (For example, May: "The residents were delighted with the children's friendly interest and warm response and were quite fascinated watching the children making scones and planting bulbs. It was very touching, noting as they sat in their wheelchairs, their pleasure in watching our children being so physically active.")

(A full discussion of this kindergarten's experience is available in McKenzie [2003].)