



## The Magic of Play at Edmund Hillary School, Papakura

The four pou located prominently near the hall represent the school values of Rangatiratanga, Kaitiakitanga, Manaakitanga and Whanaungatanga.



Principal Kataraina Nock explains that “the four pou underpin everything we do. The direct alignment between the Magic Play Box and the threads that weave across the pou are clearly visible especially when watching children play.

In any play session it is easy to observe examples of children demonstrating *Rangatiratanga* by self-selecting or being chosen by their peers to carry out roles of leadership or demonstrating *Manaakitanga* and *Whanaungatanga* through taking turns, looking after one another, sharing, negotiating and challenging each other just as they would as members of a whanau. In addition, the recycled materials which go into making the playbox and providing play equipment ensure alignment with *kaitiakitanga* and the special care that links us to our environment.”

New entrant and year 1 teacher Louise Faire describes learning through play in a school setting continues to be fundamental to children’s holistic development particularly during their first few years. The Magic Play Box allows children to empower themselves in their learning while developing strong relationships and a sense of belonging with their peers. The Magic Playbox also empowers children to contribute to their own and others learning while improving their wellbeing, communication and exploration skills. Through the provision of a range of items in the Magic Play Box children can let their imaginations run wild, allowing for the consolidation of learning and the space for new learning opportunities to arise through play.

Louise goes on to explain - How is this achieved? “The answer is very simple. Leave the children to create whatever it is they desire in the moment, stand back and observe. If they become stuck and need help, ask them questions to encourage critical thinking, problem solving and perseverance. Encourage other students to join in and help each other to foster collaboration and positive relationships. Encourage and reinforce positive language and communication by noticing and complimenting them



while they play and modelling and redirecting where necessary if there is any unkind behaviour. The only instructional content we did decide on as a class were boundaries around safety and what our expectations were to keep everyone safe and having fun, simple things like not hitting each other with the items or playing 'fighting' games with them.

For the needs of my new entrant students and for the space we have inside and outside our classroom it works best if we focus our attention on more formal learning in the morning and leave the afternoons free for the



Magic Play Box. Often, we bring it out before lunch depending on the children's needs on the day. Children can choose to do other play options or bring other play items such as dress ups, dolls, pillows and blankets outside and add them to whatever it is they are creating with the Magic Play Box. Once we have had morning tea the question, I get asked the most is - Is it time for the Magic Play Box yet? As soon as I say yes there is loud cheering from all. As a class we wheel it outside, the children work together with teacher support to take all the items out and pack them away again at the end. What happens in the middle during play is completely up to them. The children are now the teachers, growing and expanding their own learning with every play session, becoming robust and resilient learners."



Context – Edmund Hillary School, Papakura is part of the Healthy Active Learning initiative in the Counties Manukau region. Through the support provided by the Advisor and Community Connector it became clear that the concept of play was an important and integral component for the school both in the curriculum and in the extracurricular space. As a result, a Tū Manawa application was made to purchase equipment to support the delivery of play in the school. The Magic Play Box was just a part of the overall project for the school.

Acknowledgements for the story go to Kataraina Nock (Principal) and Louise Faire (new entrant-year 1 teacher).

**The purchase of the Magic Play Box was made possible through  
funding provided through  
CLM Community Sport Tū Manawa Active Aotearoa Fund.**