

USE CASE COMPILATION



Studies & articles on how early
childhood educators use
Educa's online platform

USE CASE COMPILATION

THESE STUDIES SHOW A VARIETY OF WAYS OUR CUSTOMERS USE EDUCA TO MEET THEIR GOALS

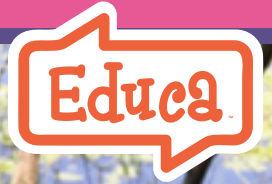
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Raising the Bar in ECE in Minnesota

THE WESTWOOD LUTHERAN EARLY LEARNING CENTER STORY



"A kind of magic happens when you trust, respect, and honor the ideas of children."

Educa Talks to Westwood Lutheran Early Learning Center Director, Kellee Nelson



Creating our curriculum was a process but it is clear to the State that our school is committed to weaving observation and assessment into our work with children.

It is no wonder that this Lutheran Learning Center has hundreds of children on their waiting list.

Westwood Early Childhood Learning Center in St, Louis Park, Minnesota is setting new standards in early education. It is a Lutheran early learning center with a Reggio inspired approach. It focuses on exploration of nature and parent collaboration to build essential [learner dispositions](#). Westwood is [ELEA](#) and NAEYC-accredited.

Lutheran early learning center director, Kellee NelsonEduca recently sat down with Westwood's director, Kellee Nelson.

Kellee attributes her lifetime commitment to the field of education to her upbringing. "I come from a family of educators and have been surrounded by education my entire life."

Over the years, Kellee's passion for teaching grew as she worked in schools throughout the United States.

Kellee's experiences include working at centers in Chapel Hill, NC, serving as an academic advisor and instructor at Concordia University, St. Paul, and as a site director at Google's Children's Centers in Mountain View, CA. In 2014, while pursuing a doctoral degree in education, Kellee became the second director in Westwood's 35-year history.



Multiple Inspirations Inform Curriculum

What drew Kellee to Westwood Early Childhood Center was the strong Lutheran faith component, Reggio inspiration, and the Nature Explorer certification. The Reggio Approach and Lutheran faith go “hand in hand.” Like Westwood’s founder Marilyn Stalheim, Kellee is active in the Reggio Inspired Network of Minnesota.

“There is a strong sense of community here and that is visible throughout the environment.”

Since the Reggio Emilia Approach does not have a set curriculum, Kellee worked with her community to develop Westwood’s own research-based curriculum. The state approved Westwood’s curriculum after a series of discussions and visits by Parent Aware.

Kellee is pleased that the Reggio Emilia Approach in early childhood education is more mainstream now. When interacting with educators just ten years ago, people would often give her “strange looks” when she mentioned the Reggio Emilia Approach. Now, there is momentum behind the student-centered philosophy and curriculum.

VALUES AND RESPECT

At Westwood, classrooms and offices are designed to encourage communication between teachers and curriculum specialists. "I think there is something really magical about Westwood Early Childhood Center. When you arrive, you see beautiful child created images on the halls and in the classrooms, you hear happy children, and you see collaboration between teachers."

Reggio is based on values, not specific outcomes. We commit to weaving observation and assessment into our work with children.

Recently Westwood embarked on a major construction project to improve safety and security. In the process, staff re-examined classroom and workspaces to find ways to encourage collaboration.

In true Reggio form, children are involved in any project at Westwood. Displaced from their classrooms for almost 5 months, the children chose objects to bring to their temporary spaces and re-imagined their permanent classrooms.



Indoor and Outdoor Spaces

KelleeAt Westwood, children participate in open-ended play both inside and outdoors. In these outdoor spaces, children find materials such as a willow tunnel, mud kitchen, and tree stumps. The goal is to invite children to non- directed and imaginative play.

As a Nature Explorer certified school, Westwood fills outdoor spaces with natural materials vs. traditional playground equipment. This research-based certification is a huge draw to prospective families thinking to enroll their children at Westwood.

Kellee explains that parents also appreciate the indoor learning environments at Westwood because they “are warm and welcoming, with large windows overlooking the lake.” In addition, loose parts and open-ended play opportunities fill the classrooms.



Team Building

When interviewing potential teachers Kellee asks if they are flexible, collaborative and open to new ideas.

“Teachers at Westwood are comfortable with unknowns, asking questions and taking risks.” As a result, curriculum evolves based on child and family input.

There is little turnover in staff at Westwood, and with good reason. Roles are fluid based on the needs and interests of the teacher. ***“We try to create an environment that meets a teacher’s needs and their journey.”***

When looking to hire teachers, Kellee looks at the values of the prospective hire. Westwood teachers are passionate about the Reggio Approach and willing to collaborate with colleagues and families. ***“Our goal is to recognize, respect and support our teachers.”***

Play

Kellee explains that families come to Westwood Early Learning Center for a variety of reasons including the emphasis on nature, Lutheran faith, Reggio inspiration, and the school’s rating as a high-quality program. Also, parents love that family engagement is a huge part of the Westwood community.

“There is a kind of magic that can happen when you trust, respect, and honor the ideas of children.”

As a play-based program, Westwood’s primary focus is on the development of the whole child. Kellee sees the value in play and viewing children for who they are now.

Kellee tells parents, ***“Children are going to get messy inside and outside.”*** That said, the emphasis on play is not at the expense of learning. Teachers naturally weave the standards into class in authentic ways.



Documentation Using Educa

Westwood's parent engagement increased significantly after introducing Educa. Educa makes learning visible and strengthens our community. It's been a fantastic resource for us.

Westwood's parent engagement increased significantly after introducing Educa. Kellee especially loves that Educa allows her to communicate in real-time with parents and track parent engagement. With a strong sense of community and family collaboration, Educa is a perfect tool for her center. Parents are engaged by commenting on learning stories and writing their own learning stories to inform teaching.

Teachers write stories on Educa aligned with the Early Childhood Indicators of Progress. Later, teachers are able to combine stories, curriculum and child goals into a comprehensive portfolio.

Learn more about Westwood

NOTE. Educa is proud to be an Evangelical Lutheran Education Association partner and supporter.

RISK AND RESPECT IN ECE : THE CHILDSPACE STORY



Interview with Childspace founders, Robin & Toni Christie



Teachers respect children by allowing them to take ownership of their learning.



Toni Christie, Childspace

Childspace stands out as a thought leader and relentless innovator in the New Zealand early childhood sector. Educa recently had the privilege of interviewing the Childspace founders, husband and wife team Toni and Robin Christie.

Toni and Robin are renowned early childhood trainers and owners of Childspace Early Childhood Institute in Wellington, New Zealand. Toni and Robin speak at workshops and institutes worldwide on the benefits of a pro-risk educational philosophy. They also own four early childhood centres and have been part of the Educa family since Educa's inception in 2011.

Toni and Robin opened their first child care centre in 1994. They pooled student loans to buy a villa in Wellington and converted it into a child care center. They created an environment in which children feel respected and free to explore their environment.

And so began Toni Christie's phenomenal [career](#) as an early educator, thought leader, international keynote speaker, magazine editor, and teacher of teachers.

Similarly Robin Christie, holding degrees in both art and early childhood education, led the way in child care environments, and participates with Toni in seminars and workshops worldwide. Their simple philosophy that children deserve respect and ownership of their learning has taken them far in the field of early childhood education.



Built on Respect for Children

The Christies found the basis of their philosophy within the theories of Hungarian pediatrician Emmi Pikler, who believed that an infant child should explore freely and without inhibition. Toni and Robin took this as the impetus for a hands-off approach, which allows the child to take risks in a safe and supported environment. In addition to the work of Pikler, Robin also references Tim Gill, a UK educator who has written extensively on the subject of [risk](#).



Our philosophy has always been about [respecting children](#). We have four centres in Wellington and our whole team centers around being 'pro risk'.



The phrase 'pro-risk' refers to the concept commonly referred to as 'challenging play.' "Childspace believes in a home-like atmosphere in which a child can have unrestricted movement within that environment."

Throughout the interviews, the word "respect" persists as the foundational principle guiding Toni and Robin at Childspace. While few would disagree on the importance of respect in education, some might be surprised at the direct link between respecting a child and allowing them to engage in risky and challenging activities at school.

Teachers respect children by allowing them to take ownership of their learning.

Adults are present as supporting guides, rather than instructors or inhibitors of challenging learning opportunities. Toni explained that adults often want to "save" a child and rush in to help, which ultimately restricts the child. Instead, she suggests allowing a child's natural inclination to engage in their environment take center stage.

Nurturing Capable, Confident Learners



Children are capable of assessing risk and enjoy pushing themselves by climbing, building and using their imagination.



Toni says risk looks different for each child, depending on disposition and development. A toddler may observe other children engaging in play and for that child, that activity is a risk and ultimately confidence-boosting. Other children may create, design, and interact with objects in new ways, testing their understanding of their world. Children are capable of assessing risk and enjoy pushing themselves by climbing, building and using their imagination.

Children at Childspace spend a lot of time with "loose parts" rather than traditional toys. [Loose parts](#) are items like buttons and blocks that can be anything the child wants them to be.

Creating Comfortable Environments

Childspace works hard to create comfortable spaces for children. Comfortable, but with the freedom to explore their physical surroundings. This is an intentional system that allows young children to form attachments to specific caregivers.



We practice a primary caregiving system whereby each child who comes into our place has someone special (a teacher) for them. This is a much better system for a child to form attachment bonds and be comfortable in a home away from home.



This system also allows for educators to communicate meaningfully to parents. Parents engage when they feel the educators truly know their child.

When hiring, Childspace looks for teachers who have a genuine affinity for work with children.

"We look for teachers who have the right heart. It's very easy to say 'I love children,' but what we really want to see is people who enact that... And it does take a special person for that work."

Toni and Robin also know that in order for Childspace to be successful, their educators need to be on the same page philosophically.

Set in Green Space

Childspace has four centres, located in the greener suburbs of Wellington – Northland, Karori, Ngaio, and Wilton. Their centres all have green space around them and are close to downtown Wellington.

Childspace has always maintained the idea that they want to be small. They believe in being able to know everybody and operate like a whanau (family). “Our team is close. We have stayed together, at this size for many, many years now. We are twenty-five years old and in that time we could have expanded to have hundreds of centres. But it was never our mission of our vision to do that. We wanted to set a bar for quality and keep raising that bar.”



Despite this small school approach to education, Childspace is developing a forest school on ten acres of land outside the city limits. In this setting, young children will have an opportunity to interact with a wider scope of nature, not confined to the typical size of a backyard lot available to them in suburban Wellington. Toni envisions a fluid indoor-outdoor play space that will allow children to interact with farm animals and explore the surrounding woods.

Community and Technology



The problem Educa really solves is receiving input from parents and getting information to parents.



Regarding Educa, Toni explained “We have been with Educa since its inception. The creator of Educa, Nathan Li, came to us and said – ‘will you help me develop it?’ So we were on board right from the beginning.”

“In our mind it was always going to solve a lot of problems for us. We had paper-based and manual systems. There were issues for us around the amount of time our team was spending on documentation and parent communication. The problem it really solves is receiving input from parents and getting information to parents.”

One of the many positive attributes of Educa is its ability to build community and boost parent engagement.

“We have a neat community of parents, but they are very busy people. We can find it hard to engage with them. That’s one of the reasons why we use Educa. It helps us to engage with our parents and get their feedback when we put learning stories online.”

Reaching Extended Families

In addition, the Childspace community is wonderfully international, enrolling children from families employed at a variety of embassies in Wellington. As a result, learning stories provide a platform for immediate and extended families to connect with their children. “With Educa we can get grandparents in Scotland to look at learning stories here in Aotearoa New Zealand and that’s pretty special.”

Educa provides an easy way for Childspace to communicate their philosophy and methodology to their parents and the community. The Educa’s message board feature provides them with an ideal platform for announcements, hosting parent discussions, and communicating new initiatives. For busy parents, the message board is a vital link to the centre and their child.

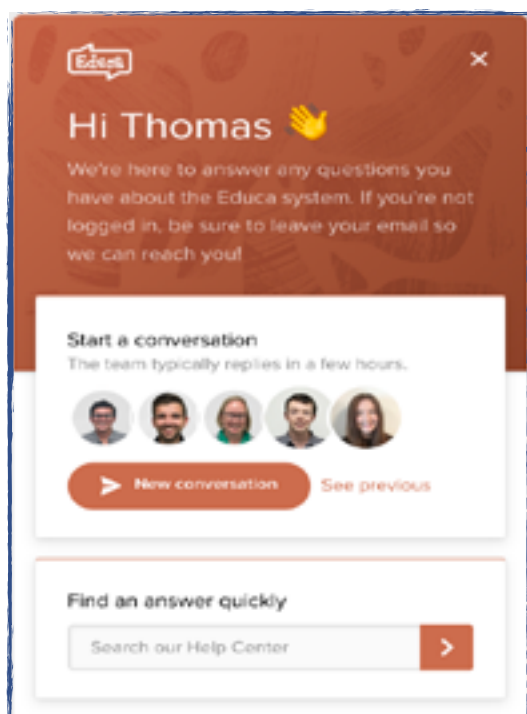


Kids Capers Childcare

Educa Case Study



Kids Capers Childcare is a family owned service consisting of eight centres, serving 950 families in Brisbane, Australia. Aiming to enrich the community, all eight Kids Capers centres recently switched over to Educa. Kate Maccoll, Company Educational Leader, shares her thoughts on how all is going to far.



The Move to Educa

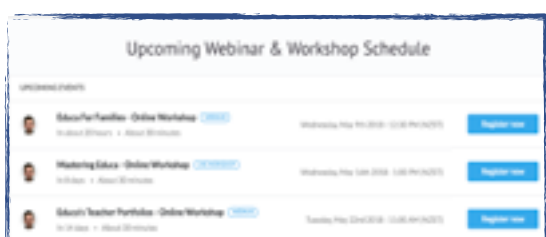
Previously Kids Capers had been using Xplor as an all-in-one solution. However, they found that limiting and so decided to seek out specialised providers. Their choices were QuickKids for their student management and Educa for documentation and parent engagement.

Before making the move to Educa, Kate wanted to ensure that there was an adequate support system in place to support their users. With a readily available Support Team, a broad library of help articles and online training offered, Educa was a good fit for Kids Capers.

"Educa has a helpful team!"

Since making the move, Kate constantly refers to Educa as "very easy, with a very helpful Support Team." From the features offered on the site, to the guidance provided to the Kids Capers centres by Educa staff, the ease of use has had the biggest impact across their eight sites.

Consequently Kate has found that there "have been fewer complaints raised by staff". This impact is also felt by the families who are using Educa, as both "parent and educator satisfaction is high."



Interested in setting up a free trial account?

Drop us an email at info@geteduca.com to get started today!

SHOWCASING CURRRICULUM

Bloom Early Education



Where: Edmonds, WA

About: Preschool, pre-K and Kindergarten

Curriculum: Combines play- based and emergent

www.bloomlearning.com

CHALLENGES

Wanted to use their own curriculum in a way parents would understand.

Parent engagement can always be better.

Teachers needed a way to track their development.

RESULTS

Educa has become a selling point, helping enrollment.

Improved family engagement and connection to Bloom.

Teacher standards rising due to higher visibility of writing.

What Bloom Was Looking For

Bloom's owner, Miriam Dressler, is working to provide the highest quality childcare possible. That includes special curriculum that focuses on child self-regulation and school readiness. And an emphasis on parent participation and collaboration.

These features of Educa jumped out for her:

1. Ease of adding any curriculum.
2. A communication tool that "helps their program stand out."
3. Two-way connection – not just push, parents postalso.
4. Teacher portfolios, whereteachers record their growth.

Bloom had used Teaching Strategies Gold in the past, but "parents didn't engage with it, and we didn't want to be forced to use a curriculum that wasn't ours."

Educa provided that opportunity. Miriam said "The interface is easy to navigate. I'm not a savvy computer person. So I knew if I could find my way around, it would work for most people."



We always show [prospective parents] Educa. It gives them an insight into what we are all about. Sometimes that can be the deciding factor ... in enrolling.

Miriam Dressler, Owner



How Educa Has Helped

There is authentic collaboration with parents. Not only do parents contribute, teachers use Educa to deepen parent understanding of their child, including sharing challenging behaviors -- a basis for honest discussions. "... making it easier to reinforce learning at home has been valuable to the families and children."

"Teachers are taking more care because they are now linking to developmental milestones in Educa, and they know families will read them. It's not just 'oh, we had fun today,' we're really talking about developmental achievements and challenges."

"Many of our students have family in other countries, so this is a wonderful way to keep in touch."

SAVING TEACHER TIME

Case Study for Seattle Creative Kids Preschool



Where: Seattle, WA

About: Year round preschool

Curriculum: Reggio Emilia inspired.

www.seattlecreativekids.com

CHALLENGES

Teacher time lost sorting through papers, filing and transposing for parents

Multiple communications platforms

RESULTS

Saving teacher time in documentation.

Saving teacher time also in communicating with families.

Parents like the connection to what's going on in school.

Helps present a professional image to parents.

Why Creative Kids Chose Educa

At Creative Kids, a Seattle-based preschool, teachers write a number of child observations. That means lots of paper. Prior to Educa they used Shutterfly, email, Facebook and paper notices to communicate with parents – too many channels, too much time wasted.

Looking for a simpler solution, Creative Kids investigated Educa. They particularly liked the ability to connect preloaded learning criteria to their observations and how easily they could upload pictures.

Director Shelia Cloney said: "... multiple platforms are hard for parents and teachers to maintain/review. It takes too much time to prepare documentation that nobody sees."

"Educa is a professional site just for schools and it keeps our school image professional. It has been a business goal to find something like Educa for years!"



*It's wonderful to have everything in one place."
"Educa is one-stop shopping
and saves teachers lots of time!"*

Sheila Cloney, Director



How Educa Has Helped

Most importantly, moving documentation online with Educa is saving time. Teachers are streamlining their processes and getting "more organized by the week."

"Teachers like the learning descriptions. No more sorting through papers looking for the right text!"

It was easy to get started. Sheila said "I personally struggle with new computer applications and Educa was not hard for me to use."

Parents like Educa also. "For parents, the ability to look at Educa on the phone makes seeing what's going on at school easy. Families like the ability to add other family members to review."

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT IN A BUSY WORLD

Trinity Lutheran Preschool



About: Half-day preschool

Location: Lynnwood, WA

Curriculum: Play-based

CHALLENGES

Losing connection to parents due to dwindling parent time.

Concerned that school philosophy not properly understood.

Paper notices not working anymore.

RESULTS

Family collaboration is up and “our parent engagement graph continues to rise.”

Teachers love the closer connection to parents and the positive feedback.

Recording activity by learning goal helps inform planning for each child.

Background

The Trinity curriculum is based on developmentally appropriate practice. Like many play-based early learning programs, Trinity takes great care when communicating the educational value of its activities, relying mainly on face-to-face parent interaction and documents given to parents.

However, according to Kimberly Vail, a teacher at Trinity, this approach was getting increasingly difficult. Parents had less and less time to talk at drop-off and pick-up. Instead, they were requesting more updates by text and email, less intimate and less engaging forms of communication.

Why Trinity Chose Educa

Trinity was looking for a “secure, user-friendly” platform that would work for educators and families. Their hope was that the privacy and security of Educa, with its right-to-the-phone parent app, would engage parents and revitalize a connection that was being eroded by modern life realities.

“*Getting started was a painless process.” “[Educa] allows me to communicate a child’s educational journey by showing growth, development and opportunities available.*”

Kimberly Vail, Teacher

How Educa Helped

Through Educa, Trinity educators explain to parents the educational value of each activity in a shared photo or story, using group and individual updates, all connected to curriculum goals. In Kimberly’s words:

“[Educa provides] the ability to easily share a child’s remarkable learning and development.”

“We love that we are able to communicate with families about the amazing learning that is happening during their child’s time with us and we love to receive their feedback.”

Trinity also uses Educa to easily communicate with parents about events and news, and as a portal to share information, forms, etc. with families.

Dee Why & Educa: EMPOWERING FAMILIES



Dee Why Children's Centre is a culturally diverse child care centre in Sydney, Australia. We asked Brenda, the Director - to share some insights into how educators at Dee Why build strong relationships with children and families at the Centre and about the role Educa plays in empowering these families.

Brenda's Centre is one of 9 early learning services (ages 0-5) funded and managed by the Northern Beaches Council. Opened in the late 70s, Dee Why Children's Centre is licensed for 75 children from birth to school age per day. Currently they have more than 130 families enrolled and 25 staff members (many of whom work part time).

Dee Why is a unique suburb on Sydney's Northern Beaches due to

- a. the high density population and
- b. a much higher proportion of families from a non-English speaking background (NESB) compared to the rest of the local government area.

This makes Dee Why a multicultural centre with bilingual children, families and staff. Almost 50% of families who attend the Centre do not have English as their home language. This diversity is also reflected in the staff, with 25% of centre staff speaking a second language.

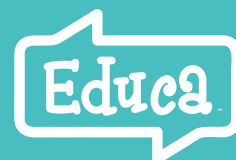
Brenda and her staff have become adept at meeting the needs of a mobile population. The suburb of Dee Why is the first place of residence for many migrant families. Once settled in Australia, lots of these families move to other areas within a few years.

“

Educa helps families who don't have English as their first language engage on a deeper level with educators at Dee Why Children's Centre.

”

Brenda Bambridge, Director
Dee Why Children's Centre





“We tend to see waves of new nationalities settling in the suburb, becoming integrated and then moving to other areas of Sydney. In recent years we have had Tibetan, Indian, Nepalese, and Russian and Serbian families moving into and out of our area.”



Also, the expense of housing in Sydney sees young families moving to more affordable suburbs as their families grow. Both these factors mean many families spend only a short time at Dee Why's Centre.

Learning Philosophies: All About Relationships

relationships are at the centre of our practice philosophy.

Dee Why rated 'exceeding' in the NQS area Partnerships with Families and Communities, so we asked Brenda to tell us more about how they achieved that rating.

“We base our practices on the **Early Years Learning Framework for Australia (EYLF)**. One of the central philosophies of the Centre is building the relationships between families, children and educators. We are influenced by the **work of Professor Ferre Laevers** who focuses on children's emotional well-being and involvement within the Centre. Professor Laevers states that if the child is not at ease, and doesn't have the ability to act spontaneously and with confidence, that learning will not take place and that children will not develop to their full capabilities.”



If you're interested in Professor Laever's theories,
[HERE'S A SHORT VIDEO INTERVIEW WITH HIM:](#)

Engaging Families: Inclusive Learning

Because family and community relationships are a focus at Dee Why Children's Centre, they are apparent in the relationships staff form with families and each other. Educators ensure they engage with families every day. Not only do they talk with families at the beginning and end of the day but they make time for one on one catch-ups during the day as well.

“ We love celebrating with families on their birthdays and for diverse cultural events such as Diwali, Chinese New Year, NAIDOC Week, and The Dali Llama's Birthday. But the biggest family event is our annual December Disco when we host up to 180 people. At this event all children from the nursery to the pre school groups dance the evening away with friends and family. It's a special night for everyone involved ”

Staff themselves describe the Centre as inclusive, welcoming and nurturing. It's telling that the centre has very long term employees and Brenda says this is the outcome of strong relationships in a happy and healthy workplace. She tells the story of one staff member running into a parent who had 4 children attend the Centre. To her surprise the eldest child - now in high school, remembered her. It's not that surprising then, that one preschool Mum we asked to describe the Centre told us it was an “amazing family with fabulous educators”.

Using Educa: Empowering Families

“ I have found the Educa system to be really useful, as it is such a simple way to find out what is going on at the centre. I love hearing updates on my child's learning and activities. ”

Katrina (mother of two children)



Using Educa helps Brenda and her team ensure families feel connected to the Centre. In fact, according to Brenda, Educa reveals a wealth of information about their diverse community's needs. "Due to the strong reporting abilities of Educa we have noticed that many NESB families access the system a higher number of times than other families. We surmise that these families are accessing the information multiple times to ensure they fully understand what is being presented and Educa gives them the opportunity to get family or other close group members to assist in this understanding. It also enables them to post comments and reinforce activities that they are doing at home in a way that permits time for them to compose their questions in a non threatening relaxed manner."

Educa has become an essential part of the information sharing network for parents, other family members and support people. Brenda tells us that families whose grandparents live in other parts of the world link into Educa, providing them with a unique connection with their grandchildren. For this inclusive multicultural service, nurturing connections with overseas families forms an important link in the partnerships they create between Centre and families. Plus families on holidays post stories about their travels, again maintaining connections with their children's peers and teachers.

The Centre ran this survey when they started using Educa:

Question: Do you like the new online documentation system "Educa" as a way of receiving individual information regarding your child & news from the centre.

Answer: YES

Using Educa also means being able to share in their children's learning at the time it occurs.



As Brenda tells us - "Previously, families would view their child's documentation of learning at parent interviews; when they have a few spare minutes to read documentation in the hallway at the beginning or end of their day; or in small grabs during the year. Now they are able to see the documentation of their child's learning and what is happening around the Centre at the time it happens and at their convenience. This has lead to greater involvement with the Centre and gives parents more information and understanding to engage with their child's day and the staff." One of Educa's best features is that it gives Dee Why educators and families the opportunity to celebrate each child's individual progress.

Finally, we asked Brenda to share with us what a day looks like at Dee Why Children's Centre and she summed it up beautifully:

**“Children and educators together -
leading play and learning”**

OAK TREE HOME CARE:

Breaking language and distance barriers with Educa.

Oak Tree Home Care opened in New Zealand just over 12 months ago and are committed to helping young families for whom English is a second language adapt to the New Zealand education system.

They have a large number of Chinese, Korean and Pacific Island families in their care. Manager Stephen Dallow and his team have been extremely successful thanks to their focus on empowering grandparents to become home based caregivers by providing them with training and resources.



Stephen and his team began using Educa to document learning and share it with families mid 2015, and found having the ability to enable different languages in Educa such as Chinese has made a huge difference to their non-English speaking families.

“A lot of our families are not New Zealand born and have a lot of relatives overseas. Educa provides a way for them to stay connected and engage with the child’s learning, no matter where they are,” says Stephen.



STRENGTHENING COMMUNICATION WITH FAMILIES

Oak Tree Home Care now operates in multiple locations throughout New Zealand. As they grew, Stephen and his team became frustrated with the traditional 'hard copy' style of documentation and communication.

“

“Paper portfolios were being left at home and forgotten, and we were receiving little or no feedback from families. We also had a lack of educator feedback on the child’s development and progress between each home visit,” says Stephen.

“After seeing a presentation about Educa at the Home Based Association Conference, we saw first-hand that those frustrations would be overcome.”

”



IMPROVING OVERALL QUALITY

“The ability to approve or auto approve learning stories has increased the quality of our documentation,” says Stephen.

Knowing the story will be read by peers and management has encouraged educators to put a little more time into documentation, ultimately creating a better story for the child.

The staff at Oak Tree also find the ability to download each child’s profile as they leave extremely handy, as families often want a copy of the child’s profile to keep.

BETTER INSIGHTS INTO ENGAGEMENT

“Educa reports provide us with statistics around overall engagement,” says Stephen.

Now parents and overseas family members are commenting, notices about trips and workshops are being seen and acted upon, and nothing can get lost!!”

We asked Stephen to share the single biggest reason he would recommend Educa, and here’s what he had to say: “It works, its user friendly, it’s easy to engage with families.”

A big thanks to Stephen Dallow for sharing his insights with us. If you are looking for a home based service with expertise in helping multilingual families, get in touch with the team at Oak Tree.

**GIVE US A CALL OR SEND US A MESSAGE,
WE’D LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU.**

Email: info@geteduca.com
Website: www.geteduca.com
(US & Canada)

GOLDEN SQUARE KINDERGARTEN

100% Family Involvement with Educa



“ **Not everything can be captured with pictures
and written observations,** ”

says Belinda Appleby, Teacher at Golden Square Kindergarten.



Having the ability to share videos with families is a powerful thing. When children at the Kindergarten discovered a dead bug recently, Belinda was able to video the children's reactions, emotions and thought processes and share the video with families and staff on Educa.

“ This one minute of video has been watched over and over again. The video included the conversations children had about what sort of bug it was, how it might have died and what the ants were doing to it...I would never have been able to write all of that down. ”

Golden Square Kindergarten is a standalone kindergarten located in Victoria, Australia. They have 111 children and 13 staff who are all connected to Educa.

The team at Golden Square believe children's play is a primary vehicle for learning, and children are provided with a rich learning environment with many opportunities to self-regulate behaviour, interact socially and contribute.

Giving parents peace of mind

The staff at Golden Square have found that sharing photos and videos via Educa not only helps them to capture special moments in an engaging way, it also helps to put parents at ease.

“ A child was experiencing separation anxiety. The parents were quite distressed about leaving their upset child. We were able to send them a photo and a video of their child happily engaged in the program minutes after they left, ”

says Belinda.

The parents commented that being able to see this instantly on Educa meant they were able to continue with their day and focus at work without worrying that they had done the wrong thing.

Connecting with communities

Technology also makes it easy for staff to reach out to the wider community and communicate with everyone at once.

A teacher at Golden Square recently used an Educa dashboard messages to see if families could help with leading some children's interest activities such as pottery, gymnastics and basketball.

“Within half an hour we had messages, phone calls and parents offering services and help. We even have a session planned with our National basketball team the Bendigo Spirit,”

says Belinda

Using an online program like Educa makes it easier for busy families to feel involved, they can interact and respond with their child's profile no matter where they are.

100% family involvement

“Families are now adding their own stories with photos and comments about what the children are doing at home, especially if they do something special or go on holidays,”

says Belinda.

This is a great way to find out more about the children's unique interests and gives us an insight into their home life.

“The parents have really embraced Educa, the two groups that are using it fully have 100% of families accessing it regularly. Our latest feedback sheets have parents talking a lot, at our family night parents were raving about Educa,”

says Belinda.

“Many families have extended family locally, interstate and overseas that are following their child's progress and are adding comments and personal messages to the children regularly.”

To learn more about the fantastic program at Golden Square Kindergarten, visit their website for more information: <http://www.goldensquarekindergarten.com.au/>

Thanks to Belinda Appleby and the team at Golden Square for sharing their story.

CAIRNS TAFE COMMUNITY CHILD CARE CENTRE

Connecting with families using Educa



The Cairns TAFE Community Child Care Centre is a non- profit community centre where family voices matter.

Run by a parent management committee, they focus on providing the best care possible with an educational program based on the emergent curriculum.

Despite low staff turnover and a strong, supportive community, the centre was facing a challenge that is common throughout the early childhood education community:



Lack of time and resources to document and share learning with families, and as a result, a lack of family input.

“Although we have great relationships with our families we felt we couldn’t get through to them about how our program is designed to enhance learning through children’s interests,” says Barb Weeks, Director at Cairns TAFE Community Child Care Centre.

In 2015 they decided to try Educa. Within 3 weeks, they received more parent feedback than the previous two years combined.

Transforming Communication With Families

Now, instead of handwritten updates sent home every few months in a book, educators and parents have regular discussions via Educa.

“A parent arrived one morning and said, ‘I love this new app, before I might have read his scrapbook two weeks after an activity, but now I can read about it the day it happens. When my son comes home we can talk about it, and it is still fresh in his mind.’” Says Barb.

“When the families started responding with messages and adding their own stories I knew Educa was what our service needed.”

This communication led to stronger partnerships with families, motivating the staff to share more.

Making The Switch

Barb and her team found Educa surprisingly easy to use, despite varying levels of computer literacy. With free ongoing support and training from Educa, they were up and running quickly.

“I was quite nervous talking to my team about Educa, usually people don’t like change and I wanted them to love it as much as I did. Over a week I brought my lead educators in to my office one by one and showed them Educa. They were very impressed and excited.”

Even the educators that struggle with computers found it so easy to use.

Improving Processes & Efficiency

Educa made it easy for the team at Cairns TAFE Community Child Care Centre to let families know about their educational program, and how each child was progressing. This made meeting legislative requirements and National Quality Standards a breeze.

“I had always thought Partnerships with families was our strong point as we are a small service and all educators get to know all the families over a short period of time. But now I look back and realise how much closer Educa has brought us to our families,”says Barb.

Educa’s reporting feature enabled Barb and her team to identify potential areas of improvement and track progress efficiently.

Measuring Results

We asked Barb to identify some key outcomes she has experienced at her centre as a result of using Educa, here were her top five:

- Connecting with families
- Staff motivation
- Family input into programs
- More observations documented
- Sense of pride in what we do

“The reports available on Educa save us a lot of time, particularly when trying to communicate important information to management and educators,”says Barb.

“Educators can see how many learning stories have been documented for each child by month, how many times families have viewed the site, and which curriculum has been referred to most often.”

Parents are now able to relate whats happening at the centre to their child learning at home, and see play based learning in action.

“The toddlers had been interested in trains, so following the children’s interest, trains became the focus of the toddlers planned learning experiences. We documented this using Educa. A parent said to an educator ‘I am learning so much from the stories on Educa. You are so clever the way you are teaching everything through trains’. Wow, families are beginning to understand play based learning!”

We’re excited to see what’s next for Barb and her team as the continue build a program that connects families and empowers educators.

SANDCASTLES:

Using Educa To Communicate With Families

SANDCASTLES CHATSWOOD IN THE NORTH SHORE AREA OF SYDNEY IS AN EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTRE THAT VALUES COMMUNICATION WITH PARENTS.



In fact, partnering with families is one of the key components of their education philosophy:



Build secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships between educators and families and support parents as they balance work and family life. Partnership with families is important and family participation is welcomed and encouraged — Sandcastles: Our Philosophy



Centre director Samantha Kelly and her team of highly qualified and experienced educators provide an excellent early learning program under the Early Years Learning Framework. Her team strives to prepare children for education by encouraging creativity, inquisitiveness, and wonder by learning through play.

With busy parents and even busier educators, Samantha and her team needed an easy way to communicate with families and keep them involved in their child's learning at Sandcastles.

Since Sandcastles began using Educa, they've seen parent engagement skyrocket.



“It’s easy to send quick communication to families and they receive notifications to know when we upload a story or message. Parents can instantly look at photos and a story about what their child has done while they are at work/home,”

says Samantha.

“Parents are able to look at what the children have done before picking them up and then discuss with their children about their day. They can also look at their day when at home with their children rather than just asking what they’ve done and getting a response such as “nothing”.

It’s a great way for parents to emphasise the importance of their child’s learning, and feel connected to their development.

Samantha and her team are also finding the connection between parents and staff has grown. Here’s an example of a post from Christmas, when Samantha used their Educa dashboard to let parents know children had a gift under the tree.

By the next morning parents were already sharing their experiences (excerpt below). This immediate feedback has three results:

Happy children, happy parents, happy Director!

STRENGTHENING PARENT BELIEF

Tamarillo Early Childhood Center



About: For 1-5 year olds

Curriculum: Unstructured play-based Emphasis on day trips Large play-spaces outside

PARENT BENEFITS FROM EDUCA

The window into center activities creates transparency & comfort for parents.

The connection to curriculum helps build parent understanding of play-based education.

Posts are helpful on class trips, Tamarillo does a lot of them, when children (or parents!) are anxious.

Educa helps extended family overseas feel involved.

Parents can also post to Educa, helping teachers better understand a child's home environment.

How Tamarillo Started Educa

Tamarillo took up Educa's offer of a workshop session to start, which created real enthusiasm among the teachers. From there, Educa was announced to parents, with similar excitement.

Images from a few prior events were loaded and then parents were invited to join. "Parents loved it and wanted to see more."

Educa quickly became part of the center as a communications tool and as a source of new opportunities. For instance, children sometimes work with teachers to select images and topics for updates. Also, staff print images sent from family overseas for a class wall.



"Teachers used to go on Facebook at lunch, but now they browse Educa and read comments posted by others."

(director)

"I can see through the pictures the great work teachers do and their commitment to my child's learning."

(parent)



Parent understanding breeds parent confidence

The connection to curriculum helps parents better understand Tamarillo's educational approach. Teachers report more meaningful discussions with parents around learning.

Teachers are finding that in addition to parents appreciating suggested follow-up activities at home, they are contributing ideas and asking questions, leading to a tighter bond and collaboration.

"Parents report that Educa has enhanced relationships with teaching staff" as they "now understand the happenings of the day more easily and can ask questions about their child's learning, recent interests and skill development."

The images and educational context of the updates "strengthen their belief in the center" and how the learning is conducted.

Educa helps in a variety of family situations, e.g., a joint-custody couple found it "amazing" to always be in the loop and a grandmother felt at home visiting from overseas because of the Educa updates.

BECOMING INDISPENSABLE FOR TEACHERS

Feijoa Early Childhood Center



About: For 2-5 year olds

Philosophies: No technology with children. Unstructured play-based

HOW EDUCA IS USED

Daily center-wide update to all parents

Used to educate parents on curriculum values

Group and individual stories posted to parents and extended family overseas

RESULTS

Much better parent response to all staff messages

More honest conversations with families on child

Teacher morale boosted by positive parent feedback, making Educa “addictive.”

How Feijoa Started Educa

They started by uploading prior center events, trip photos, visitors, etc. to the Educa dashboard, which everyone can see – families and staff.

The positive response by parents encouraged teachers to post group updates by class. The appreciative response and feedback surprised the Feijoa teachers, in a positive way.

Eventually, Feijoa staff started posting a single daily update around 4- 5PM each afternoon to all parents, connected to curriculum goals, with ideas about how to carry on the learning at home.



“[Educa] just makes our parent conversations longer.”

Teacher

“[Educa] has me obsessed with his learning now. I treasure the chance to be part of that every day.”

Parent



Teachers on Educa

After early hesitation, teachers now find Educa “addictive.” They love the parent appreciation and feedback, and they enjoy looking at the contributions from parents and extended family.

Teachers find the insights into the home environment and the tighter collaboration with parents is having a “really positive and encouraging impact on child learning and development.”

The ability to educate parents by connecting everything to curriculum goals provides the context and background for more meaningful conversations with parents.

Parents on Educa

Parents speak positively about Educa. They report a “firmer grasp of the curriculum” because of the curriculum-linking.

Also, the posts are “conversation starters” for parents when children come home saying they did “nothing” or “just played.”



Farm Street Early Learning Centre

Educa Case Study

Farm Street Early Learning Centre is an independent childcare provider, servicing their local community of Rockhampton in Queensland, Australia. They have been using Educa since 2015 and Renee Clarke (Centre Director) recently sat down with us to share her experience.

The Problem They Were Looking To Solve

Prior to using Educa, parent engagement wasn't visible at the centre. Understanding if families were aware of the progress being made was difficult, as was giving parents the opportunity to provide feedback on the learning journey their child was taking.

"We wanted to know if parents were looking at the work the educators were doing. We wanted parents to be able to leave comments in response to their child's learning."

Renee Clarke, Centre Director

Before moving to Educa, Farm Street ELC had been using Qikkids E-Portfolio software, but they soon became aware that they were looking for a way to engage parents and to be able to track this. They found that with Educa's ability to report on parent input as well as the added benefit of being able to upload videos and documents (for staff and parents), the choice was easy.

Taking The First Steps

Understandably, some parents were initially reluctant, "We found some parents were hesitant to upload information in the beginning due to them not knowing who was able to see it."

Understanding the positive impact Educa could have at Farm Street ELC, Renee proactively sought to build confidence amongst parents, "We have put out information sheets on how they can access it and how they can interact with, and upload stories."

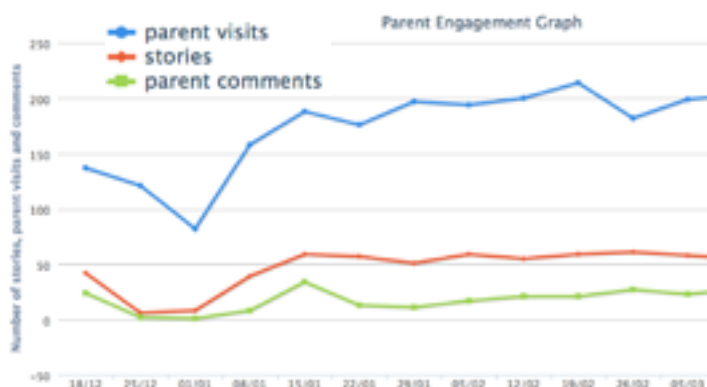
This has been aided by the Educa Support Team who have provided "great support from the get-go!"

"Families love it!"

Since switching to Educa in 2015 Renee has noticed overwhelming support from families, which she has been able to quantify by the Reports feature.

"We love the reporting that comes out of Educa. It's beneficial to us as it's easy to track parents accessing it, and track educators progress. "

Renee Clarke, Centre Director



Beyond visiting their child's profile, Renee has noticed parents are actively engaging in their child's learning, "Having parents being able to comment and upload their own stories is a real plus. We get heaps that do!"

Educa's Impact

The biggest change Renee has seen since Farm Street ELC started using Educa in 2015 has been that "educators are more confident." This has primarily been driven by parents interacting with educators and providing feedback.

Additionally, the Story Approval Settings have allowed educators to publish learning stories with the guidance of assigned mentors at their centre.

"Being able to have mentors who proof-read drafts before anything leaves the centre has really stood out for us."

Renee Clarke, Centre Director

This level of supervision, which can be customised for each centre, has resulted in the assurance that the stories published by the centre are of the highest quality. This supports the centre's mission to provide high quality childcare to the local community.



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Carlingford Kindergarten

Educa Case Study

Carlingford Kindergarten, based in NSW, is a privately owned centre providing a play based learning environment. Owner and Director, Gabriele Oly recently sat down and reflected on their first 6 months with Educa.

Easy, Meaningful Documentation

Before joining Educa, Gabriele realised "We spent a lot of time sending emails to families and tried to showcase information through our web page. On top of that we were using individual hard copy portfolios."

By moving to Educa, Gabriele saw an opportunity to streamline their documentation process. Learning stories, plans, curriculum and professional reflections would now be stored on a single online platform, easily accessible to both educators and families.

With intuitive linking between observations, planning and curriculum, Gabriele has found their documentation is "more meaningful, quicker and in real time for parents to see."



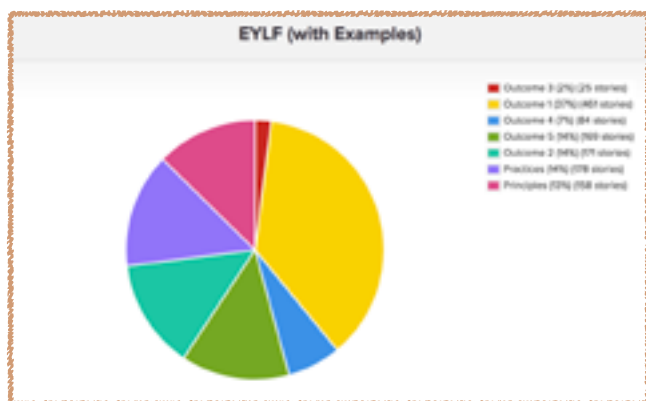
Gabriele has recognised that "Educa takes away the manual tedious work of creating a document from scratch, printing it out, then putting it in the folder, marking it off in the child's tally under the learning outcome and then finally trying to get the parents to view the folders and give their feedback."

"It's all in one place with Educa and there is no need to mark off the links to the children's learning as Educa does this for you."

Gabriele Oly, Centre Director

Improving Quality and Compliance

In the short 6 months since joining Educa, Gabriele has already noticed improvements in the quality of work produced by educators, noting that Educa "has made them become more accountable of what they are documenting and why, for example the importance of meaningful and good photos in learning stories to engage parents."



"We are now able to easily link our learning to the EYLF, NQS, to our philosophy, service goals and goals to individual children."

Gabriele Oly, Centre Director

"We are also able to keep a record of each child's individual learning and development, and record the needs of the children and their routines." Gabriele appreciates that these records have "enabled us to accurately fulfil our requirements and has significantly improved and supported the role of our Educational Leader."

"Parents Love It and Are Communicating More Effectively"

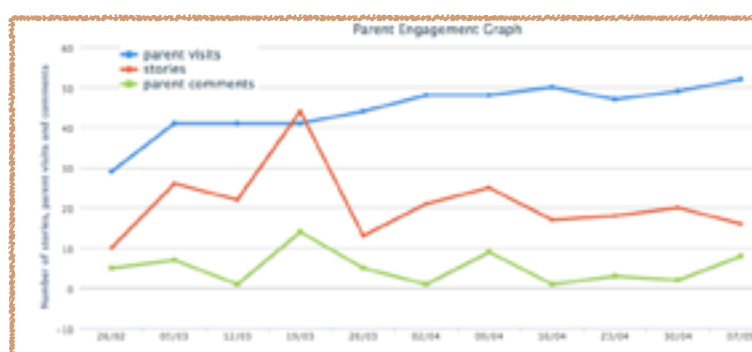
From the start families at Carlingford Kindergarten have been invested in Educa, "Our families were so keen, they kept pushing for us to go live whilst we were trialling the system."

Although Gabriele does remember there was some resistance at first by parents who were sceptical about their child's information being stored online. However one parent did concede that "Educa's security arrangements satisfactorily resolve all of my previous concerns around image security, ownership and location."

Gabriele recommends that her staff actively engages the families by encouraging them to share their own stories on Educa, "we find that once they have uploaded a story they engage so much more. Now we are finding more families are willing to share aspects of their family life."

"We are so fortunate that so many families are posting stories to share with us."

Gabriele Oly, Centre Director



A Word of Advice

For those centres new to Educa, or thinking of signing up, Gabriele advises that you should "just give it a go and try all aspects of Educa and customise it to work for your service. Listen to your educators and families as their feedback is the foundation for how you use it to enhance your service and make it your community of learning."



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Playcentre

Educa Customer Story

Playcentre's rich and unique philosophy of child-initiated play views parents as the first and best educators of their own children. Amy Crookston, former President of Ngaio Playcentre, shares her experience of adapting the Educa site to meet their specific needs and the impact she has felt at Ngaio.



Simplicity for Parent Educators

The experience amongst the Parent Educators at Ngaio Playcentre varies greatly, with more accomplished Educators working alongside those who are new to the role. Amy was looking to bring the Parent Educators together and encourage her members to equally contribute to a child's learning journey, regardless of experience. This led Amy to explore various e-portfolio software for Ngaio Playcentre.



"We wanted more of our parents to write learning stories more often and thought that having one place that had the ability to upload photos and write stories, or at least take notes while on session, could make this simpler"

Amy Crookston, President

Recognising the varying levels of IT competency at her centre, Amy was searching for a program which was simple, yet effective.

"Educa was easy to use, easy to read like a blog and we loved the newsfeed on our phones!" Amy remembers.

The simplicity of the site has allowed all the Parent Educators to get involved in writing Learning Stories, which has created a stronger community around the child's development where Parent Educators can more easily share ideas and learn from each other.

"New Parent Educators are writing better Learning Stories earlier due to reading each other's Educator Stories" Amy says. "This never happened before. They just sat in folders and only the parent would read them. Now everybody does because it is entertaining, like reading your Facebook feed."



Continuity is Central

Before joining Educa, ERO had identified that there was a need at Ngaio Playcentre for stronger linking between their documentation. Amy understood that it was crucial for "Parent Educators to be able to read what others wrote to create the continuity we were looking for."

"The connections between our Learning Stories, our Planning, our Evaluation and our PLODs is intense. Educa allows our Parent Educators to see what other children, besides their own, are doing and learning as recently as yesterday. They know the kids better and are able to respond to their learning needs quicker and build better relationships, faster."

Amy Crookston, President

The dedication and hard work from the staff at Ngaio Playcentre has certainly paid off, with a stronger emphasis on information sharing, which hasn't gone unnoticed since they started using Educa, "Our last ERO review showed we have excellent practice and we gained a 4 yearly renewal."

Meeting Playcentre's Needs

Due to the unique nature of how Playcentres operate it was vital that Educa was able to be moulded around their specific requirements, "The set up at the start was quite good and we were able to adapt it to meet our needs" Amy recalls.

Currently the teams at Ngaio post their evaluations as journal posts, which is just one example of how they have adapted Educa to work for them, "This means that we can see the evaluations in our Newsfeed and keep everyone up to date with what happened today."

With rotating teams of Parent Educators it is vital that staff can easily share and access daily learning records to inform their approach, "So the up to date nature of journal posting is amazing."



For other Playcentres considering Educa Amy recommends taking full advantage of its versatility, "Do it, but set it up right so you don't just have a Portfolio system. Use it to create continuity by making it easy and fun for your members to read about other people's kids. The impact will be huge!"

If you're interested in trialing Educa for yourself, drop us an email at info@geteducu.com





Hillcrest Childcare

Educa Case Study



Leonie Martin is the Manager of Hillcrest Childcare in Hamilton, New Zealand. Hillcrest have got off to a flying start on Educa. Leonie recently took some time to reflect on the impact Educa has made since they joined.

Making the Decision

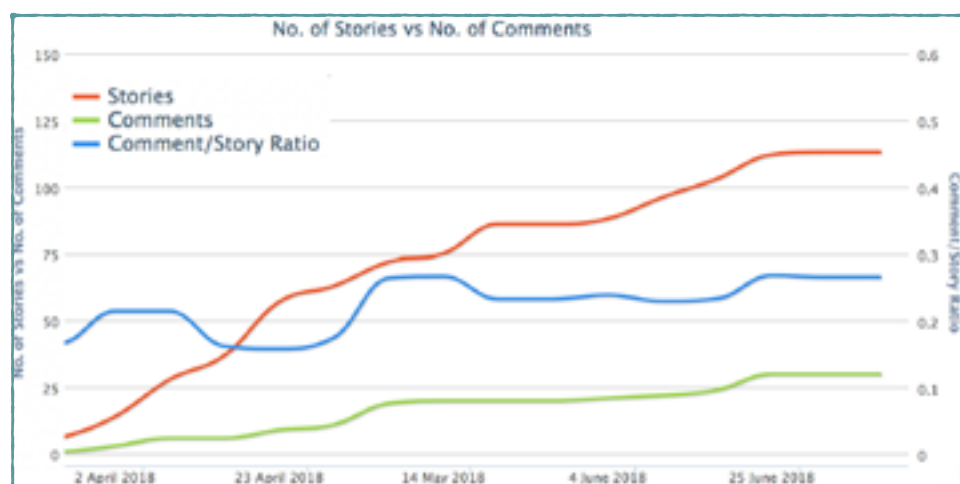
Before taking her current position at Hillcrest, Leonie had experience using Educa. She understood the positive change Educa could bring. Leonie found that the current approach at Hillcrest was often time consuming and made it difficult to reach families. "I knew we would be able to reach families more easily using Educa as it is online and it is such a user friendly website."

Central to Leonie's decision was also the Story Approval Settings offered by Educa. She recalls, "I wanted to be able to critique the learning stories before they were published to support the teachers in their documentation." Having this option available sealed the deal for Leonie.

Getting Parents and Staff Onboard

Leonie recalls that "There was resistance at first" from the staff at Hillcrest. Having not used Educa before "most of the teachers were unsure and thought that it was going to be difficult to learn and more time consuming for them."

Unfazed Leonie persevered and recognises that after 2 weeks of using Educa "the staff loved it." This quick turn around in staff attitude was partly due to "the seamless switch and the support provided by the Educa Support Team." Since then the staff have been "so excited and enthusiastic about their stories and the positive feedback we are receiving from families."



"It's great to see the teachers so enthusiastic and engaged with their learning stories."

Leonie Martin, Manager

Families have also enjoyed the benefits of Educa, providing “really positive feedback” to Leonie since they joined. She believes that “the major benefit is keeping parents informed using the Message Board and receiving stories instantly now.”

With parental engagement on the rise at Hillcrest parents are becoming active on the site and adding their own content and not just viewing what the educators have to say, “now parents are commenting on their child’s story and we have also had parents beginning to write their own Parent Stories on their child’s Educa profile.”

Leonie’s energised staff and the parent’s willingness to engage are making a real difference at Hillcrest. She highlights that “the improved communication between families is the most important benefit” of using Educa.

Improving Quality

With various reports, story approval functions and clear linking between documentation and curriculum available on Educa, Leonie is seeing improvements at her centre constantly, “The quality of working is improving and our productivity has definitely increased.”

“The continuity of learning is much more visible.”

Leonie Martin, Manager



These insights provided by Educa have assisted Hillcrest with upskilling, giving Leonie the confidence to say that “we have achieved the initial goal of making improvements to documenting children’s learning.” Rather than viewing stories as a “one off”, teachers at Hillcrest “are looking at the stories as a continuum of the children’s learning.”

In looking at the next steps for Educa at Hillcrest Leonie wants to incorporate their centre’s Vision, “Educa aligns well with our Vision and we are now linking our stories to our Vision and Philosophy.” This move only helps to further support the child’s personal development and the teacher’s professional development.

“We would definitely recommend Educa because the benefits are for all students. This enables teachers and families to form stronger links and allows the children’s learning to become more visible to everyone.”

Leonie Martin, Manager

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Peer Review Trial of Educa



- Collaboration
- Independence
- Eportfolios And Parents
- Ata
- Special Needs
- Professionalism

E-portfolios

Connecting parents, whānau and teachers in kindergarten communities

Raewyn Penman

As the New Zealand national early childhood curriculum, Te Whariki (Ministry of Education, 1996), nears the end of its second decade, it is of interest to reflect on how early childhood teachers have been able to engage parents and whānau in the pedagogical documentation and extension of their child's learning and to investigate if new digital technologies, specifically e-portfolios, provide opportunities for greater connections. This article discusses a review of the use of e-portfolios within selected kindergartens within the Kidsfirst Kindergartens in Canterbury/Westland.

Te Whariki and sociocultural assessment

Te Whariki is based on sociocultural theory which recognises the context of the growing child as the key to providing a learning environment and experiences that best support and extend that child's learning. Narrative assessments of learning in the form of Learning Stories are one of the main tools used by teachers in New Zealand to communicate learning to parents and children, invite parents and children to participate in the recognition of learning, co-construct how to progress this learning, and build learning communities. Engaging parents in this pedagogical documentation is recognised as critical to sociocultural assessment practices (Carr, 1999; Stuart, Aitken, Gould, & Meade, 2008). In fact, Cooper, Hedges, and Dixon's (2014) research with infant and toddler centres indicates that families are the "main cultivators of children's learning dispositions" (p. 737). To be authentic, assessment should be a dialogue between teachers, children, and

parents, and that parents should be active participants in the documentation, not solely consumers of it (Birbili & Tzioga, 2014).

Engaging parents and whānau in children's assessments has been identified as having many benefits for teachers, children, parents, and whānau. For example, families are able to provide a unique perspective of the child, increasing the depth of understanding of learning for teachers by situating knowledge in the wider context of the child's experiences (Birbili & Tzioga, 2014; Emilson & Pramling Samuelson, 2014). Clarkin-Phillips and Carr (2012), in their study of the impact of an integrated service model of early childhood education, found that making assessment portfolios "available, inviting and personalised" (p. 181) contributed to strengthening the affordance network for family engagement. Through being involved, parents gain a greater understanding of what is valued as learning in the early childhood setting and of ways that they can support and extend their child's learning in the home setting (Morrison, Storey, & Zhang, 2011; Stuart et al., 2008). Positive involvement by families through increased communication using such tools as documentation has been found to improve the social, emotional, and academic outcomes for children (Gonzalez & Jackson, 2012; Morrison et al., 2011).

However, commitment alone does not lead to meaningful participation by parents in e.c. assessment processes. Although teachers recognise the value of collaborating with children, parents and whānau, it can be a challenge to achieve the



level and type of participation required to improve formative assessment, even when teachers emphasise regular communication (Cooper et al., 2014). In an evaluation of the professional development programme Kei tua o tepae, 85% of teachers articulated ways that they elicited parent participation in assessment (Stuart, et al., 2008). Unfortunately this commitment did not translate into written parent contributions with 73% of assessments not containing any parent voice' leading the authors to call for "consideration about how assessment documentation can more effectively represent these practices of engagement" (Stuart et al., 2008, p. 106).

E-portfolios'?

So what can we do differently? The use of e-portfolios for assessment in e.c.e. is a recent innovation which offers new ways to engage with parents. E-portfolios are digital versions of the profile books or records of learning that children currently have at early childhood services. The interest in and awareness of e-portfolios at Kidsfirst Kindergartens (Canterbury/Westland) heightened mid-2013.

The trial

After preliminary research on e-portfolios investigating what platforms were available in New Zealand, what security provisions were in place on these platforms and reviewing the Kidsfirst Kindergartens cyber safety agreement for staff, the decision was made to begin a trial of this technology.

In August 2013 six kindergartens from a cross section of socio-economic areas began a four month trial of two e-portfolio platforms. Both platforms were accessed via the internet and included both a community page that could be accessed by all participants as well as secure pages about individual children. These personal pages were accessed by a password given to that child's parent.

The technological expertise of the teachers involved in the trial ranged from basic to excellent with most teachers identifying themselves as being average or very good. Each kindergarten teaching team received either a one hour webinar or a 1.5 hour face-to-face training session. Ongoing support was given to all teaching teams by the 'help' staff at the platform provider, either over the phone or through email contact.

Results of the trial

At the end of the four month trial, the teaching teams met with the Education Service Managers (Senior Teachers) to share their experiences and thoughts on e-portfolios. An online survey of participants was completed a few weeks earlier by 80% of participating teachers (18 out of 21) and 45% of parents (49 of 110).

Feedback from teachers:

Despite minor problems, 100% of teachers surveyed recommended the use of e-portfolios in kindergartens. The most problematic area was getting started. The survey indicated that setting up of the e-portfolios was straightforward for 50% of the teachers. However the other 50% of teachers needed some help; 6% of teachers found set up of the e-portfolios to be moderately difficult. A slight increase of workload was noted by 67% of teachers while 33% found that there was no increase to their workload. Teachers were asked to indicate the most useful aspects of using the e-portfolios. These are included below, along with

comments:

- **The ease of uploading stories and the increased communication with parents.**

The ability to upload learning stories and videos to an easy to read format that allows parents to read them and comment on them in their own time has been highly useful and beneficial.

I found it an easy way to share learning with parents. Liked being able to load learning stories but also just a photo that I thought was special and worth sharing.. It was quick and easy and as I was printing my story, I also uploaded it.

- **The increased feedback from parents.**

The parent feedback, I feel some parents find this way of responding to the stories easier and less stressful (English as a second language families).

It has been great to strengthen relationships with families and get greater input from them as well as a better insight into their home life. This regular feedback from them has been a huge encouragement to continue documenting their child's learning. I have also found it is a quicker way to document a child's learning. The fact that stories can be added quite quickly allows the learning from kindergarten to extend into the home, and vice versa., in the same day. Which is great for strengthening new knowledge. -I like the fact that we receive notifications when someone has commented on a story.

- **Communication and feedback from extended whanau.**

Receiving feedback from extended whanau especially family that is overseas. This often takes the form of a 'conversation between us, extended family and immediate family as comments are made back and forth.

the involvement from our families goes far beyond just the child's mum and dad (who often used to be the only whanau voice that we received). Now other family members from both NZ and all over the world can view the learning of our children. The photos within the learning stories are large and vibrant and really portray the learning that is occurring. [It] has also enabled us to share videos of the children. These are often more powerful than photographs and the children enjoy revisiting their learning through these.

- **The ability to keep parents informed about the events happening at the kindergarten.**

The ease which parents can access, read and respond to the stories - its great being able to have conversations with parents either online or in person about their child's learning and development.

- **Being able to include videos to illustrate children's learning.**

Engagement with parents has increased and happens regularly. Love that you can add videos to your story. These add a whole new dimension to sharing a child's learning.

From the teachers perspective, parents have responded to e-portfolios positively; they check their child's portfolio regularly, give verbal feedback to teachers as well as being much more likely to give written feedback to learning stories, and parents have encouraged extended whanau to read and contribute to the e-portfolio.

Feedback from parents

The majority of parents found the e-portfolios very easy to use and contribute to. Most parents accessed the e-portfolios on their home computers (79%), with the remainder using ipads (30%) or an iphone or smartphone (27%). Ninety-six percent of parents who responded felt that the e-portfolios were a good addition to the kindergarten experience. Ninety-eight percent of parents found the email alerts they received when new learning stories for their child or new information about happenings at the kindergarten were posted either useful or very useful.

The survey results showed that parents used the e-portfolios in a variety of ways - especially to share with the child and with extended family and staying informed about events at the kindergarten. See Table 1.

When asked if they visited the e-portfolio more than the profile book, 75% of those who responded answered yes' and made comments such as:

My daughter likes to bring the book home often, but having the stories sent to the portfolio to read ensures we don't miss any stories and get to read them right away!

I work full time, so the e-portfolio is perfect. I feel more involved.

Fifty-eight percent of parents thought that the e-portfolio experience had increased their knowledge of learning stories, their child's learning and how teachers use the learning

Table 1:

How parents used e-Portfolios

I read my child's stories on my own	92%
I read my child's learning stories with her/him	58%
I added comments on my child's learning	61%
I added learning stories about what my child is doing at home or on holiday	12.5%
I shared the learning stories with other members of my family	75%
I shared the learning stories with my friends	15%
I kept up to date with things happening at the kindergarten	71%
I talked to the teachers about the learning stories	46%

stories to progress their child's learning. When asked to comment on this increased knowledge, parents wrote:

I have learnt a little bit more about what goes on when Emily is at Kindy, what she has been doing and how she learns from her experiences. We can recognize different stages she is at and continue teaching and helping her along the same lines as when she is at Kindy.

I have discovered just how well the teachers know my child. The child's speak in the learning stories is valuable. I love reading about how my child is progressing in confidence and his interactions with others.

It's great being able to access the site, the reminder emails are fab, quite often when I'm checking my emails the kids aren't around so this gives me the time to sit down and have a good read. It's quite interesting to see the thought process that goes on behind the activities and what the kids and teachers take from it.

A number of parents (52%) took the opportunity to add general comments on e-portfolios.

I love the instant nature and being able to go back to the stories in my own time (while the book is mainly at Kindy). I have really enjoyed and appreciated having this tool to keep communication open and keep me involved while I also work and cannot always be involved with kindergarten and my daughter's day and learning.

A parent who had one child at the kindergarten and another child at preschool said of e-portfolios:

I think they are a quick and easy way to contribute and add my own stories to my child's learning journey. The apps make it easy to do this, and there have been times that I have wished my sons preschool would have e-portfolios as we do things at home and I think about the parents voice links to his learning stories and profile books.

Discussion and conclusion

In this trial, e-portfolios seem to have excited, informed and connected these kindergarten teachers, parents and whanau to children's learning in a way that the hard copy profile books have not been able to. The dialogue between teachers,

parents and extended whanau was enhanced through the use of e-portfolios and assisted teachers by providing important information about the child in the home context. This enabled teachers and parents to co construct learning goals. The increased feedback from parents has built another layer on the bridge between kindergarten and home experiences that connects and informs learning (Stuart et al., 2008).

The e-portfolio processes made assessment portfolios available wherever the parent could access the internet. The email alerts invited parents to read and respond to the assessments. The nature of the alerts being sent to the parent and whanau on their own device personalised this invitation. Making narrative assessments available, inviting and personalised in this way, has strengthened the agency of the parents and whanau who have begun to take on an increasing role and responsibility in providing information that assists with building on their child's learning both at home and at the kindergarten (Clarkin-Phillips & Carr, 2012). An example of this is evident in the following parent's comments a learning story in which a child challenges himself to learn to swing:

I love this story, its awesome to see the progression of Charlie persisting with a difficult task and really challenging himself! We have swings at home and we enjoy the swings at local playgrounds too, so we can work together on Charlie's new goal at home and beyond as well.

The input from parents and whanau provide context for young children, including how dispositions are cultivated (Cooper et al., 2014). An example comes from a grandmother living at a distance who wrote, after accessing her granddaughter's e-portfolio:

Wow - Go Keva! You love the monkey bars and now look what you have learned to do on them. Our Monkey Bar Girl swinging upside down with your feet tucked into the handle - that's really awesome, well done! We're so proud of you. Tracey [teacher], what a neat story you've written here and I think the photos are brilliant with what they have captured! To ?ne they show concentration as Keva is focused on doing what has been explained to her, and the smile as she swings off the landing indicates she is enjoying it. (I also saw this smile recently when Keva was doing what her swimming teacher was asking her to do.) I recognise the expression she has in the arm resting on the handle photo - her \look' when she appears to have enjoyed stretching herself and is seeming to be proud of what she has achieved. Thank you, Lynn (Nan).

Such input can deepen teachers' understanding of the child in multiple contexts. The findings from this trial have shown benefits in connecting teachers, parents, and whanau all as authentic contributors to the child's learning. Further research could investigate other aspects of sociocultural assessment using the platform of e-portfolios, such as increasing the co-construction of learning by the many members of the kindergarten community, whanau.

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REGGIO
EMILIA

HOW REGGIO INSPIRED
PRESCHOOLS USE
EDUCA'S ONLINE SOFTWARE

HOW EDUCA SUPPORTS

The Documentation & Communication Needs Of Reggio Emilia

The number of centers in that label themselves as Reggio-inspired or that belong to groups like the North American Reggio Emilia Alliance or the Australian Reggio Emilia Info Exchange is actually quite small. However, the influence of Reggio Emilia is widespread.

This is because Reggio is a trusted and powerful educational approach. Furthermore, it is not a stand-alone philosophy. Rather, it is dynamic and fluid, with techniques and attitudes that can adapt to fit local needs and integrate with other approaches.

Because of this, early childhood education in many countries is “Reggio inspired.” New Zealand, the founding place of Educa, is one of those countries. It uses Reggio-inspired thinking throughout its early education system. Therefore, it is no surprise that Educa’s features and setup reflect Reggio Emilia principles.

This article articulates the essentials of Reggio Emilia. It then reviews how Educa is an enabling technology for Reggio because it helps educators communicate the ideas behind Reggio and it simplifies the documentation tasks.



What Is Reggio Emilia?

Reggio Emilia is named after a town in Italy and was founded by Loris Malaguzzi (1920–1994). It revolves around these principles. Children:

- Are capable of constructing their own learning;
- Must be able to learn through experiences of touching, moving, listening, and observing;
- Learn through relationships with other children and with the environment;
- Should have endless ways and opportunities to express themselves — the hundred different languages, different ways of thinking, of discovering and of learning.



Reggio Emilia puts the child at the center. It aims for child outcomes using words like strong, capable and resilient and deeply curious. This thinking is part of learning guidelines, goals and curriculums worldwide. For instance, in Alberta, Canada, the Play, Participation and Possibilities framework outlines dispositions of a “mighty learner.”

The focus is on discovery and exploration by the child, facilitated by the teacher as mentor and guide.

A key principle is the idea of “emergent learning.” Teachers use a child’s interests to plan activities to stimulate a range of learning skills. In Canada, they encourage teachers to think of their planning as a web of activities. In addition, they use an emergent Curriculum using an “Emergent Planning Template” to create connections.

Reggio-inspired teachers need to be good observers. They need to plan activities around the child’s interests. It requires asking questions to further understanding, and actively engaging in activities alongside the child.

When a teacher is able to identify interests and help child-led projects take shape, this emergent learning is where the magic happens. Another aspect is “provocations” — activities, objects that provoke a response. This exploration of an area of interest, with appropriate planning, is a powerful tool for learning growth.

How Educa Helps Reggio Inspired Schools

Integral to the observation aspect of Reggio Emilia is the documentation of observations, (sometimes called learning stories) and the construction of a learning portfolio, which is then used in the planning process.

Educa makes this easy to do online. Like Reggio Emilia, Educa's platform has the child at the center. Each child has his own profile, which has observations, assessments, planning and any other pertinent information. All in one place.



Because Educa is online, the Reggio-inspired teacher can reflect and develop provocations with everything at her finger tips. Using the Educa app, it is also possible to add new photos or observations to the portfolio in a couple of clicks.

Adult As Guide & Collaborator

For many parents, playing the role of mentor and guide is hard. We are all so intent on “educating,” imparting knowledge, which in the Reggio world means depriving a child of the opportunity to discover that knowledge on his or her own.

Educa plays a huge role here. The software sets up an authentic collaboration with parents, where the teacher can play the role of coach for the parent, at the same time sharing updates on a parent's favorite subject, their child.

Teachers share learning stories and updates with parents in real time, connecting the observations to pre-loaded curriculum, learning guidelines or values inside Educa. In addition, Educa has room for educators to describe to parents the learning going on in any one instance if they feel it is necessary, and then gently provide ideas for parents to observe and extend the learning at home.

Demonstrating Educational Values

Communicating Reggio-inspired philosophies can be a challenge for educators. It's an unusual approach, with concepts that are unfamiliar to many parents. For instance, concepts such as emergent learning. No doubt, Reggio Emilia is a long way from the more traditional instruction parents might expect.

And so preschools and childcare centers that use Educa love that they can provide educational context to go along with their observations. It provides a way to not only communicate the power of their program,

of which they are justifiably proud, but it is also an ideal platform for reinforcing for parents their role as guides, not teachers.

The understanding and transparency that stems from this sharing builds parent confidence and trust in the educator's approach. It's a positive interaction. Parents grow to appreciate the educational value of the center. And teachers love the inevitably positive feedback.

Learning Portfolios

Reggio-inspired settings emphasize the importance of displaying and documenting a child's learning, and progression in thinking. While this can take many forms – sculptures, details of conversations, photos – with Educa everything is online.

The ability for parents to access these portfolios is golden. They can see their child's learning process and progress at a glance, whenever they want, and without teacher assistance. This easy transparency helps build a bond with the teacher and a confidence in the approach.



Free Demo

For an overview video of Educa and access to our live demo site, [request a demo here.](#)

EDUCA and MONTESSORI

Sharing learning, enhancing communication



IN BRIEF

Educa's first Montessori school signed on Nov. 2010.

100+ Montessori school clients.

Recommended by Montessori Association of New Zealand.

Proud sponsor of Montessori conferences since 2012.

Partner in Montessori Journey to Excellence research study (2014).

HOW EDUCA HELPS

Montessori curricula available in the curriculum library.

Parents can view progress and comment on shared learning.

Forms, communication and notices in online portal.

Teachers love the closer connection to parents and the positive feedback.

Background

Montessori centers were among the first early learning programs to join Educa – they have been part of the Educa story since 2010. Educa's online communication software is now used by 100+ Montessori centers in New Zealand and Australia.

How Educa Works For Montessori

Educa helps Montessori early learning services:

- Share updates with parents, connected to curriculum goals. This helps teachers demonstrate and reiterate the Montessori method and values.
- The private and secure channel provided through Educa creates a collaboration between center and home. Teachers can share activities, lesson plans, milestones and more.
- Educa's online platform reduces the environmental footprint, supporting the Montessori connection with nature.



"Educa offers an incredibly easy to use web-based portfolio and means of communication with parents and family."

Ruth Libby, Head Teacher, Koru Montessori



One Montessori School Experience

Educa facilitates two-way communication. With increased awareness of the learning at school, parents can continue the journey at home.

Educa helps Koru Montessori improve its environmental footprint - "since we started using Educa our paper usage [has] reduced considerably" says Ruth Libby.

In her words: "The cost of running this program is very affordable and more than compensated by the savings in printing and teacher time, some of which can now be used for other purposes such as...professional development. Fantastic."

9 Surprising Benefits for Preschools Who Share Learning

FROM FAMILY ENGAGEMENT TO
AUTHENTIC COLLABORATION





Technology is changing early childhood education. Secure online sharing software now makes it possible for early learning programs to include family members in the daily learning.

Teachers send individual and group stories about learning activity to parents and other interested parties.

Sharing the learning is different from sharing “moments.” “John was crying when you dropped him off but he is happy now.” That’s sharing a moment, like a private Instagram.

Software like Educa goes a step beyond moments, putting learning at the center. “Here is John cutting out a circle with scissors, working on his fine motors skills.” The teacher can link this image and/or activity to curriculum or learning goals that parents can see and it goes into the child’s record. Parents learn from the articulation of the skills being nurtured.

There are obvious benefits here for preschools. It keeps parents and extended family informed -- what parent doesn’t enjoy getting regular updates on their child’s progress? And it fits the raised learning expectations placed on child care and preschools these days.

Taking Advantage of Technology to Collaborate

This white paper examines the value of creating an authentic collaboration with families.

Using technology that connects learning to curriculum in a format that can be shared enables teachers and parents to work together, as a team.

The power of this collaboration is why engaging families is gaining traction as a key driver of better early childhood learning outcomes.

#1. Parents Join in, Extending The Learning

Send a parent a note saying this week we are working on the letter B, and parents will start playing Eye Spy with their child, focusing on things beginning with B.

Send a parent a picture of a child looking at and naming birds and they will keep up the bird-watching at home. Each of these posts creates a new learning opportunity for the child. An opportunity that the parent would not have had, if the sharing had not taken place.

By engaging parents this way, a teacher is effectively doubling the learning opportunities by recruiting parents to reinforce and build on what is occurring in the child care center or preschool.



#2. Teachers Love the Positive Parent Feedback

Drop off and pick up are hectic for teachers and parents alike. Consequently, many teachers feel they do not have the connection to parents they'd like. This is where an online sharing platform can be powerful.

When teachers send anecdotes, parents are normally appreciative. They feel comfortable with the private, secure channel that they now have with the teacher and will very often express their gratitude for your communication by replying.

And as we all know, positive feedback is powerful. It's addictive. Once educators start connecting with parents in this intimate and positive way, the number of learning anecdotes the teachers send tends to multiply. It's a virtuous cycle where everyone benefits.



#3. Positive Impact on Learning Outcomes

Learning outcomes in early childhood are hard to measure. We do know though that the best outcomes will occur when the teaching is individualized and when the learning opportunities are plentiful. Sharing the learning plays a powerful role here.

When a parent replies to a teacher's message, the teacher learns something about the child. If a picture of a child working in a group elicits a response from the parent about social skills, the teacher has more to work with.

A picture showing a child planting seeds in a garden may lead parents to ask if they should start a garden at home for their child. In this way, the teacher learns about the child and the home environment, improving their ability to provide individualized teaching and guidance that can inspire that child.

Educa allows teachers to map activity to a curriculum goal or learning outcome. By referring to this historical record, teachers can see strengths and weaknesses, allowing them to be more targeted in future interactions with each child. For instance, there might be a lack of evidence of a child working in groups, and so teachers know to provide more opportunities for that child to play within a group.



#4. Teacher Job Satisfaction Rises

One of the challenges of being a teacher in early childhood education is that sometimes it is hard to feel you are making a difference.

The power of a sharing platform like Educa is a real game changer. Teachers feel they know their children better because of the regular interactions with parents. And they know they are doing a good job every time a parent responds to an update they share.

This promotes a sense of satisfaction for teachers. With Educa, teachers receive positive feedback about all the good work they do. And because everything is in one place, Educa saves admin time and frees them up to do what they love to do. Teach.



#5. Parents Share Posts with Other Parents

Parents of schools that share learning are constantly reminded of the positive things going at the center, it's front of mind, and so it's more likely to come up in conversations with others. This helps referrals, one of the most powerful drivers of enrollment success.

Posts made in a secure platform like Educa cannot be "shared" on other social media networks, meaning parents choose who can see the updates.



#6. Sharing Helps Accountability & Compliance

Every shared activity, aligned with state guidelines, becomes part of that child's record. As do assessments or checklists using customizable surveys in Educa's milestone section. In addition, teachers can enter notes relating to individual children.

These updates, entered through the year to engage parents and to meet internal school requirements have added value as evidence of learning.

Furthermore, owners and directors can use the Reports feature, which tracks center activity for children and teachers. Compliance and internal accountability: Two surprising benefits from the simple sharing of learning.



#7. Align With Learning Guidelines & Demonstrate Your Educational Philosophies

Connecting observations to state or province guidelines and frameworks or to your own customized curriculum is easy to do inside Educa.

Not only is this evidence of alignment that helps in licensing, accreditation and quality rating inspections, it also helps parents see your educational value. Furthermore, it builds a collaboration around learning, putting everybody around the child on the same page.

This helps parents understand your philosophy and learning goals. Some parents might doubt the educational value of play-dough, for instance. But by sharing the fine motor skill and color recognition value of play-dough, you can ease their concerns

#8. Sharing Lets Parents See The Value of Your Program More Clearly

Every time you share curriculum in a post to all parents or you send parents a story with activity that connects to curriculum or learning goals, you are establishing your educational credentials. You are providing evidence of the learning that is going on in your early learning establishment.

This raises the perceived value of your program and reinforces the parents' belief that sending their child to your school was a good decision.

#9. Parents Will Love You

Okay, maybe this one will not be a surprise. For the families you work with, feeling a stronger connection to the preschool and receiving regular updates about their child will lead to a love affair with your preschool. They will feel comforted and confident in the work you are doing.

Any parents who might otherwise be less engaged will see the value in what you are doing for their child. More than likely they will reward your preschool with positive feedback, a decision to send siblings to your preschool and/or telling others about the great job you are doing.



Learn more about the value of family engagement at www.geteduca.com

Koru Montessori

Educa Customer Review



Sharing information about children is a daily challenge for busy parents and teachers. Educa has developed a web-based portfolio system that aims to open the window on children's learning.

Four Montessori early childhood centres in New Zealand were early adopters of Educa. Ruth Libby from Koru Montessori in Auckland shares why she was interested in Educa and the positive outcomes for parents and teachers at her center.

Founder Nathan Li spent some time showing me how it worked and our team spent more time trialling it for free on the Educa website. This was a great way to make an informed decision. We soon decided to introduce Educa at our center. The impact has been quite significant.

How We Use Educa

Educa offers an incredibly easy to use web-based portfolio and means of communication with parents and extended family. It allows our teachers to share learning stories with parents as soon as the story is written in a format that they can access wherever they are; at work, at home, overseas or out and about on their iPhone.

At Koru Montessori we use a variety of formats to communicate children's learning, progress, and interests, Montessori philosophy and center-wide news; namely learning stories, children's voice, group stories, newsletters, progress reports and specific notices.

Environmental Concerns Around Paper Use

Previously this was all in printed form and a costly party of the running of our center. We strive to be environmentally aware in all aspects of our center life and therefore this was a concern for us.

Since we started using Educa our printing costs and paper usage have reduced considerably. All these formats now can be put on our Educa site for parents to read, at a time that suits them and the need for paper is minimized.

Each child has a file on Educa that can be accessed only by their parents/caregivers. This is password protected and therefore security is assured. Parents can however share their password with family members if they wish and this means that grandparents and family who live overseas, or for some reason are not around, can see what the child has been doing at Koru Montessori.

How Teachers Use Educa

Teaching staff at Koru use their non-contact time to upload learning stories, photos, videos and reports, which can be written directly on Educa. The center's formatted template can also be used (each teacher at Koru has a favourite), saved as a PDF file and then simply uploaded to the child's file in Educa.

There is the option of 'approving' information before it is uploaded. An email simply appears in the teaching leader's Inbox to let them know there are stories to approve. Once approved, the story is automatically uploaded and the parents receive an email to let them know there is a new entry on their child's site page.

Connecting to Montessori Theory

We have also customized our site to include Montessori theory so we can link children's stories to these if we wish. This gives parents information about how the learning environment is linked to philosophy and methodology. It also means that our staff spend less time on each child's stories as the background philosophy is easily explained with a simple tick in the link box.

Parents Have Embraced Educa

All of the parents at Koru Montessori have accepted invitations to join our Educa site. The feedback we have had from them is quite outstanding. They find it a wonderful way to share with friends and family their child's life at Koru Montessori.

It also provides them with an insight into what their child has been doing on a regular basis, without the need to pass a portfolio backwards and forwards between the home and school. The child can sit with their family, look at their page, and talk to them about what they're doing.

Parents can upload and contribute their own stories to the site, or comment on a story or video we have uploaded.

Koru Montessori continues to have printed portfolios for the children but these do not contain everything we put on Educa, however their learning stories are in there plus real examples of their work, art, birthday celebrations, etc.

Other parent communications such as newsletters, excursion notices, special event notices, links for parents on philosophy, videos are no longer printed, but are easily sent and stored on Educa.

Parent Feedback

Some parent comments from a recent center review we undertook on communication included feedback on Educa.

“Love Educa. It’s very cool. A quick and easy way of reading about what our child is up to at Koru.” “Easy to use, love seeing ‘updates’ and progress.”

“We think it is an awesome site! We have shared the link with grandparents overseas and they love it as they can see what our child is doing and they can talk to him about it when we Skype - they feel included and present in his day-to-day life at school.”

“Educa is very easy to use. We like that we can access the stories anytime, anywhere and read them over and over again.”

“We enjoy look at it with our child, and he loves looking at himself. He tells us a lot more about his work whilst looking at these stories together. A great means of feedback in our busy lives.”

“The email updates are useful as we do not need to log on all the time to check whether something new has been added. The comments box is a useful channel for us to communicate with teachers.”

Support Has Been Responsive

We have found the team at Educa to be extremely professional and friendly. They are very quick to respond to any queries we may have and are a quick phone call away Educa has been able to make modifications to the site to meet our needs, which is wonderful.

The cost of running this program is very affordable and more than compensated by the savings in printing and teacher non-contact time, some of which can now be used for other purposes such as centre reviews, observation and professional development. Fantastic.

- Ruth Libby, Koru Montessori, Auckland, New Zealand





Childspace

Educa Customer Review

“I am constantly on the hunt for new, innovative ways to connect and inform parents and family about their children’s learning. As almost everyone has a smart phone or an iPad these days and communication is so often centered on technology it is beneficial we work with the times and take our communication with parents and documentation of children’s learning online.

Educa is a simple system designed to enable us to do exactly that, an online approach that allows teachers and family to access and share photographs, videos and learning stories Educa is remarkably easy to use, even for the newest technology converts.

Parent Engagement

It offers teachers and family the opportunity to connect and get involved with their children’s learning. Any family member with an email address can have their own log in.

Enabling the whole family, regardless of where they live in the world, to keep up to date on the latest learning stories and videos. There is even an iPhone App and Android App!

Updates are sent the instant a story is uploaded and family members can add their own photos and stories to their child’s portfolio. Parents can use the comment feature to post a remark or observation about their children’s stories, adding anecdotes about similar experiences, or escapades at home.

Creating or uploading a story is simple; Educa enables teachers and parents to enter their story and photos directly into its word processor. Or they can continue to create stories in their choice of word processor, before converting the file to PDF and then uploading it. There are also options to upload video or group stories. Adding in links to a curriculum is simple by using the check boxes at the bottom of the page.

There is also the option of creating group stories. Another great feature is the Dashboard or Comment Board. This provides managers and teachers with a space to update parents with the latest happenings at the center, by posting notices about workshops, important dates or newsletters.

Teacher Development

Educa also has a section just for teachers; this is based on the needs of those working towards teacher registration, this feature is also useful for supporting teachers and management with their appraisal systems. After writing a reflection or 'teacher story' teachers have the option to link to any of their children's learning stories or upload other artifacts.

Making links to the registering teacher criteria is as easy as ticking a box and teachers can choose to keep the story private, allow all teachers within their center to view or just their chosen mentor. All teachers also have access to the reports page which tells them, among other things, how often parents visit their child's profile and how many stories they have uploaded to each child.

Strong Support Group

The Educa team is very friendly and always ready to help. They appreciate feedback and always do their best to help with any problems. Updates come out regularly with new and improved features. These are followed up with emails from the Educa team explaining each new feature and how to use it.

The team is aware of the necessity of high security for a site such as this. Each parent's login allows them to view only their child's individual portfolio and profile. If they have more than one child at the centre the children can be linked so only one log in is required.

Communicates Our Value To Parents

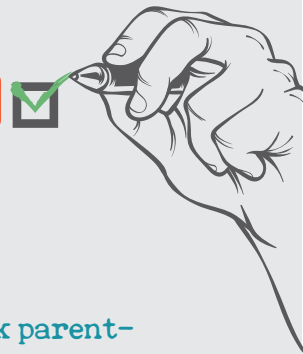
Educa has offered us another avenue for interaction between parents and teachers. It is more obvious to teachers that their hard work is really valued by parents. We love the instant feedback we receive from our very appreciate families.

Our center families have embraced Educa wholeheartedly. They enjoy receiving updates on their children and the freedom to login whenever they want, to have a second or third look at photos or a special story. We have many grateful grandparents, older brothers and sisters, aunts and uncles who enjoy their own log in, which enables them to view and comment too.

I would highly recommend Educa to any early childhood center.

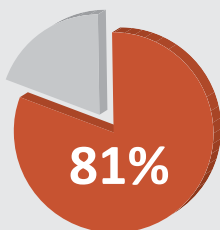
- Mary Rose Seifert
Childspace Institute

EDUCA CUSTOMER SURVEY RESULTS



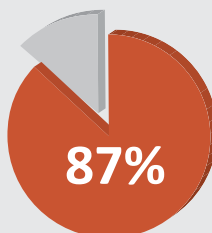
Educa is an online documentation and communications software platform for early learning programs. We recently asked our customers three questions.

Has Educa helped to streamline processes at your center?



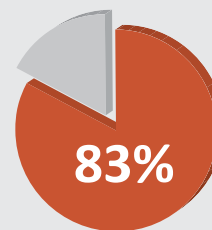
Said yes, Educa saves time.

Has parent engagement improved at your center since you started using Educa?



Said yes, Educa helps parent engagement.

Do you think parent-teacher communication has improved since you started using Educa?



Said yes, Educa has improved the connection between parent and teacher.

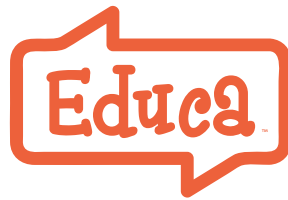
From the Survey

- Yes, and has enabled the development of new processes.
- Yes, it's simple.
- It's great for checking on teacher's work with their children's profiles.
- Yes. All stories are edited eliminating typos and poor English and the professional level has improved because they are monitored and suggestions taken up by the teachers
- Yes. For instance, it is easier to post a quick note on the dashboard and have everyone able to read it when important communication is needed. We need only print a few hard copies for display in center.

- My families definitely enjoy using it to see their children learning experiences etc.
- Absolutely. We have a lot of children who have family overseas and this has been wonderful.
- Yes, absolutely. We are thrilled with the response
- Yes definitely, We are more aware of who is viewing and getting great comments and feed back
- YES!! we have never had so much parent/ family input it has been awesome.
- Ten-fold!

- Families are commenting more on portfolio entries and it has opened up verbal communications between parents and teachers.
- We communicated well before, but Educa gives us the ability to say so much more.
- It is much easier sending newsletters and reminders out.
- Yes, parents seem to now know the importance I place on their child's education.
- For those in employment which makes it hard to come into the center, Educa is a great place for parent teacher communication.
- Yes, definitely. It is a more effective way to ensure parents are seeing notices and events etc. Especially for those parents who are at their computers during the day.
- Yes. Sometimes parents are rushing so much that they don't get quality time to chat about how their children are going so this forum helps that.
- Definitely, it provides a great platform for conversations with families

To learn how Educa could help your child care center or preschool, visit our website at www.geteducu.com.



WE'RE PASSIONATE ABOUT BRINGING EDUCATORS AND FAMILIES TOGETHER



Educa was developed in New Zealand by working father Nathan Li and launched in 2010.

Educa has over 200,000 active users in 85 countries. It is an online learning documentation and parent communication platform for early learning services.

**TO LEARN MORE OR TO REQUEST A DEMO
VISIT OUR WEBSITE.**

Website: www.geteduca.com

Or Email: info@geteduca.com

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