
NEW ZEALAND FREE KINDERGARTEN UNION
(INC.)

**NATIONAL
KINDERGARTEN
WEEK**

**18th - 24th JUNE
1973**

KINDERGARTEN AND THE COMMUNITY

The year 1973 marks the 84th year of the New Zealand Free Kindergarten movement. Founded by small groups of social and church workers dedicated to the idea of bringing organised creative play to pre-school children, the New Zealand Free Kindergarten Union (Inc.) is now a recognised and major educational organisation catering for over 25,000 children between the ages of three and five.

Contrary to what is an all-too-popular belief the movement is neither run by the Department of Education nor is it totally government financed. The majority of funds for the founding and subsequent operation of kindergartens is provided through the activities of local associations and committees, with some assistance from government grants.

A typical medium sized city has an Association as the controlling body of up to half a dozen kindergartens, each with its own locally elected committee. The assets of the Association may be valued at fifty to a hundred thousand dollars, of which two-thirds to three-quarters has been received as donations and the proceeds of fund raising campaigns. The Association is responsible for such matters as staffing, deciding matters of joint policy, maintaining standards, and planning for the future. Local committees are concerned with fundraising, finance, and the equipment of their own kindergarten. Membership of Association and committee is by election, usually from among parents of children attending.

Without the efforts of parents and the generosity of the community, there would be no kindergarten movement today. There are many claims on the time and the purses of New Zealanders. The continued expansion of kindergarten is proof that they have given unstintingly of both.

THE KINDERGARTEN TEACHER

Kindergarten teaching is a profession, requiring dedication, hard work, and training. The latter is provided by the Kindergarten Teachers' Training Colleges. Each year a careful selection is made from among the large number of school leavers who apply for positions at the colleges and they, after two years training, are appointed by local associations to posts in kindergartens.

The kindergarten teacher carries more responsibility than most members of the teaching profession. She is concerned with children at the most critical stage of their development, and the most vulnerable. She must not only guide her charges in their activities, but must also know where they are going in terms of ability and development. In addition, because the children are so young, she must be able to respond to their emotional needs for love and security.

KINDERGARTEN IN ACTION

At the core of the efforts of the community and the work of the teachers are the children. Enrolled from the age of two, they begin to attend kindergarten as soon as possible after their third birthdays and remain until they are five. Many parents are unaware of the requirement for enrolment. Most kindergartens have waiting lists and unless a child's name is on it, his chances of obtaining a place are remote.

Three-year-olds often go to one or two afternoon sessions until they are familiar with the routine and have achieved a measure of independence. Activities are centered around developmental play, using a variety of indoor and outdoor equipment. As a child's mental and physical abilities develop he is encouraged to progress to more complex activities, and begins to attend the more frequent morning sessions.

By the time a kindergarten child reaches primary school age, he has a considerable intellectual and physical lead over his contemporaries who have not had pre-school education. He is able to participate in group activities or work independently. He has a group of friends of his own age with whom to experience the new environment of the primary classroom. Most important, he enjoys learning and will suffer few of the problems that face those entering school directly from home.

KINDERGARTEN AND YOU

As a parent, you can assist kindergarten in a number of ways. First and most important, you can ensure that your two-year-old is enrolled and that your friends have enrolled theirs. If there is no kindergarten in your neighbourhood or local facilities are unable to cope with the numbers enrolling you can contact your local Association with a view to setting up an establishment committee for a new kindergarten. If your child is already attending, you can assist the committee by making regular donations, helping with maintenance or fundraising, and taking a turn on the committee itself.

As a member of the community you can support kindergarten simply by buying the occasional raffle ticket or going to a fundraising function. At a more active level you can assist efforts by Associations and the New Zealand Free Kindergarten Union to expand pre-school education by attending meetings, talking to your MP, or just reading the papers and discussing items of pre-school news with your neighbours.

Whether you are a parent or just an interested friend your support and encouragement will always be welcome.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT

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