

AUT

A young woman with long brown hair, wearing a red t-shirt, is smiling and looking towards the right. She is holding a colorful wooden instrument, possibly a maraca or a similar percussion instrument, which has a bamboo body wrapped with white string and a colorful fabric top. In the foreground, a young girl with brown hair is looking at the instrument with interest. The background is a green chalkboard with faint white drawings of a boat and a sun. The overall scene is bright and educational.

**A FUTURE IN
EARLY CHILDHOOD
EDUCATION**

A photograph of two young children playing in a ball pit. The child in the foreground is holding a red ball, and the child behind them is holding a yellow ball. The background is filled with many colorful balls in shades of red, blue, yellow, green, and purple. The children are smiling and appear to be enjoying their play.

WHAT IS EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION?

Fostering a love of learning in young children (0-5 years old) and encouraging them to feel a sense of their potential are the fundamental objectives of early childhood education (ECE) teaching.

To do this can involve a complex set of skills that overlap those of a social worker, developmental psychologist and play therapist, as well as teacher and caregiver.

New Zealand's ECE curriculum, Te Whāriki, encourages teachers to see infants and young children as full of mana, which leads to interactions and relationships based on joy and respect.

A well-run ECE service works with the whole family and aims to build strong communities, as well as ensuring positive attitudes to learning for very young children.

Do you like interacting with children? Do you find yourself drawn into their ways of communicating? Do you wonder what is going on inside their minds? Then a career in early childhood education could be a great option for you.

OUTLOOK AND TRENDS

Increased participation – The hours each Kiwi kid spends in ECE during the week has more than doubled since 2007. New Zealand is now ranked in the top third of OECD countries for participation in early childhood education, with 96.2% participation. Source: Education Counts, June 2015.

There are many reasons for the increase with most obvious being the introduction in 2007 of 20 free hours of early childhood education for 3–5 year olds.

There is also an increasing need or desire in many families to have both parents working and contributing to family income. In recent years the sector has seen significant growth in the number of very young children (less than two years old). Ministry of Education statistics show infants (under 1 year) spend longer hours in ECE than other age groups.

Rising Māori and Pacific engagement – There is a need for more Māori and Pacific ECE teachers as role models and speakers of te reo Māori and Pacific languages due to the increase in participation in ECE by Māori and Pacific children. Source: Education Counts Participation in Early Childhood Education 2015

Voluntary or not?

It has never been compulsory for preschoolers to attend early childhood education. However in 2015 the government decreed that beneficiary parents use ECE at least part time for children aged 3 and over, or have benefits cut. This will increase the need for ECE services and teachers.

Political challenges

1. In 2002, the Labour Coalition Government set the goal for all ECE teachers to be qualified by 2012. This policy

was abandoned by the National government in 2010. There are currently no incentives for teaching teams to have more than 80% qualified staff, which means lower demand for degree-qualified staff.

2. Ratios for children under two are also contentious. Currently only one teacher is required for five children, and there are virtually no restrictions on group size within centres, leading to sustained research-based lobbying to improve the regulations.
3. Another ongoing concern is the underfunding of early intervention for children with special needs.
4. Globally the impact of private investment on quality in ECE is under debate. UK childhood education Professor Emeritus Helen Penn, of the University of East London, says the ongoing investment in ECE services by the corporate sector is concerning given that internationally there is a strong co-relation between a large private ECE sector and poor quality outcomes for children.
5. In New Zealand private sector investment in ECE is encouraged by current government policy. In 2015 there were just under 4500 licences ECE services in New Zealand, of which nearly 2000 are privately owned (44%). Source Radio NZ. The expansion of private ECE services is creating more childcare options and while many are of very high quality, a number are not. The Early Childhood Council wants regulations for new service setups to be tightened.

Disparity among services – In the ideal setting, the beginning teacher is mentored through teacher registration. However, this doesn't always happen. Beginning teachers need to be careful that expectations are not too high (eg managing a centre or taking responsibility for the curriculum) or too low (babysitting).

WORK SETTINGS

Graduates find jobs through Facebook, Trade Me, the Education Gazette, the Education Gazette Online or word of mouth. A number apply directly to early childhood education centres. Many centres are happy for potential teachers to visit and leave their CVs. According to the New Zealand Educational Institute (NZEI), beginning teachers may need to relieve initially or move to find work.

Typical early childhood education options include:

Public kindergartens – Teacher-led services usually working with 3–5 year olds (some take 2 year olds). Traditionally kindergartens ran as morning and afternoon sessions for different age groups. Now many run full day sessions due to funding and parental requirements

Private and community based childcare centres –

Teacher-led, working with groups of 0–2 year olds, 2–3 year olds or 3–5 year olds. Follow Te Whāriki but also may incorporate other educational approaches, eg Montessori or Reggio Emilia.

Professional home-based care – there are two approaches to home-based care. Nannies look after a child/children in the child/children's home, often also doing housework, cooking meals etc.

In-home carers bring children into their home. They can legally care for up to four children, their own included. In most home-based services the child minder is supervised by a qualified teacher who must visit each child monthly.

Kohanga reo/language nest centres – Provide early childhood education and care based on a culture or language, eg Māori or Pacific Island languages.



TEACHER ROLE EXAMPLES

Early childhood educators plan programmes, provide learning experiences and discuss progress with parents and care givers.

'Learning stories' are the preferred method of assessment – typically showing how a child approached a challenge. The teacher analyses the story using relevant learning theory and the curriculum, and looks at how to encourage further learning. ECE teachers also oversee the physical demands of children in their care, such as meals, nappy changing and sleep routines.

With experience, ECE teachers may move into supervisory, senior teacher and centre management roles.

Some ECE teachers purchase, buy into or set up private childcare services.

Hospital play specialist or child advocacy roles are also taken up by ECE teachers.

With further qualifications, ECE teachers move into roles as early intervention teachers, professional development facilitators or teacher educators.

SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE

- Skilled at developing educational opportunities from child-centred play, curiosity and activities for children 0–5 years
- Competent in assessing, recording and documenting individual children's learning through learning stories
- Highly knowledgeable in Te Whāriki, the Ministry of Education's early childhood curriculum policy statement.
- Strong grounding in the social, cultural and political context of Aotearoa New Zealand with introductory knowledge of tikanga and te reo
- Ability to communicate easily with children and their whānau
- Collaborative, with excellent time management

PERSONAL QUALITIES

- Passionate about educating pre-schoolers
- Committed and imaginative
- Flexible and creative
- An advocate for young children
- Caring, empathetic and compassionate

SALARY GUIDE

There are no binding salary requirements for ECE teachers, other than the minimum wage. The Ministry of Education provides incentives for employers to pay more than this and the NZEI has negotiated salary bands for kindergarten teachers and some teachers in private services.

Pay for supervisory and senior teachers varies according to children and teacher numbers.

Teachers working for services within the collective agreement for early childhood registered teachers with the NZEI can expect the following:

	Salary (per year)
Starting salary	\$44,373
Top of scale	\$65,648
Head teacher	(with 0–3 staff) \$71,948 (with 7–10 staff) \$75,773
Graduate casual hourly rates	\$14.75 – \$22.00 hour, depending on centre, experience, qualification

Sources: Early Childhood Education Collective Agreement of Aotearoa NZ (2013–2015) NZEI Te Rui Roa, www.payscale.com

Salary range is indicative of the New Zealand job market at the time of publication (Jan 2016) and should only be used as a guideline.

PROFESSIONAL REGISTRATION

After graduation, many early childhood teachers register as teachers with the Education Council of Aotearoa New Zealand (EDUCANZ). Some employers require teacher registration, but not all.

THE AUT APPROACH

AUT's teacher education degree strongly emphasises diversity, with opportunities to explore approaches like Montessori, Steiner and Pasifika.

Across the six semesters of the degree, student teachers complete over 20 weeks of student teaching.

The length of placement builds from six days in the first semester to 25 days in the third year. Placements usually reflect a diversity of communities (low and high decile services) and age levels from infant to children approaching school age.



NICK BATLEY

Senior teacher, Tots on Triton Early Childhood Centre
Bachelor of Teaching in Early Childhood Education

"The joy I see on a child's face when they're learning something new is what I enjoy most about teaching young children. I believe ECE is really important for the socialisation of children. Through ECE they're making friends, sharing, communicating and learning how to respond.

I've been working at Tots on Triton for two years and just recently moved into the senior teacher role in the toddler room where I'm head teacher. I oversee the running of the room, for example, mentoring and supporting staff.

Currently we have 20 plus children in the room and three teachers. It is important to work as a team, discussing and planning so we are all in synch with how the room is set up and what we're doing. Communication is the key.

Our teaching involves doing investigations which means observing children at play to see what their interests are, and then building activities and themes around that. We then write learning stories about how they are responding and how they are developing.

The day also involves the routine of morning tea, lunch and afternoon tea, as well as three nappy changing times that we all take turns to do.

Misbehaviour isn't hard to manage. There is usually a reason why someone is misbehaving so we teach the children to problem solve and give them a chance to calm down. I would say paperwork is my least favourite part of the job but I continue to improve with it.

There are not many male teachers in ECE. The children love having male teachers around, so I'd really encourage any male doing ECE to hang in and get qualified. I get very little negative response.

I was always a bit of a clown at school and I find I use my humour a lot in my teaching. I also love playing the ukulele and getting involved in practical things with the children."

EMPLOYER COMMENT

"When we met Nick, you could hear his passion and could see he knew his strengths and what he could bring to the role. He has lots of common sense and is very grounded - all important for children.

The children love having a male teacher; it brings a different perspective and understanding about how we can do things. I also think it is good role modelling for children to see males doing things that may traditionally be seen as female roles.

We look for people who are obviously passionate when talking about the job. They need to be flexible and open, a good team player, collaborative and happy to offer new ideas.

The most important advice I would offer new graduates is to always be professional in their approach because ECE is a professional job, not simply babysitting. Gaining a qualification is part of that commitment to professionalism."

Val Parker

Centre Manager, Tots on Triton Early Childhood Centre

USEFUL WEBSITES

Education Counts

www.educationcounts.govt.nz/statistics/early-childhood-education

Child Forum

www.childforum.com/early-childhood-education

Teach NZ | www.teachnz.govt.nz

Education Council of Aotearoa New Zealand

www.educationcouncil.org.nz

Education New Zealand (ENZ)

www.enz.org/salary-early-childhood-teacher

New Zealand Educational Institute (NZEI)

Te Riu Roa | www.nzei.org.nz

NZ Kindergartens Inc | www.nzkindergarten.org.nz

Education Gazette | www.gazette.education.govt.nz


FURTHER INFORMATION

For the most up-to-date information on the study of early childhood education and the Bachelor of Education visit our website: www.aut.ac.nz/ECE

FUTURE STUDENTS

Contact the Future Student Advisory team for more information: www.aut.ac.nz/enquire


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The information contained in this career sheet is correct at time of printing, August 2019.

