



**Queenstown Montessori.  
Entry for the Dr. Nicola Chisnall  
Award.**

**Submitted by Jane McLeod.**

*No community action is too small or insignificant.*

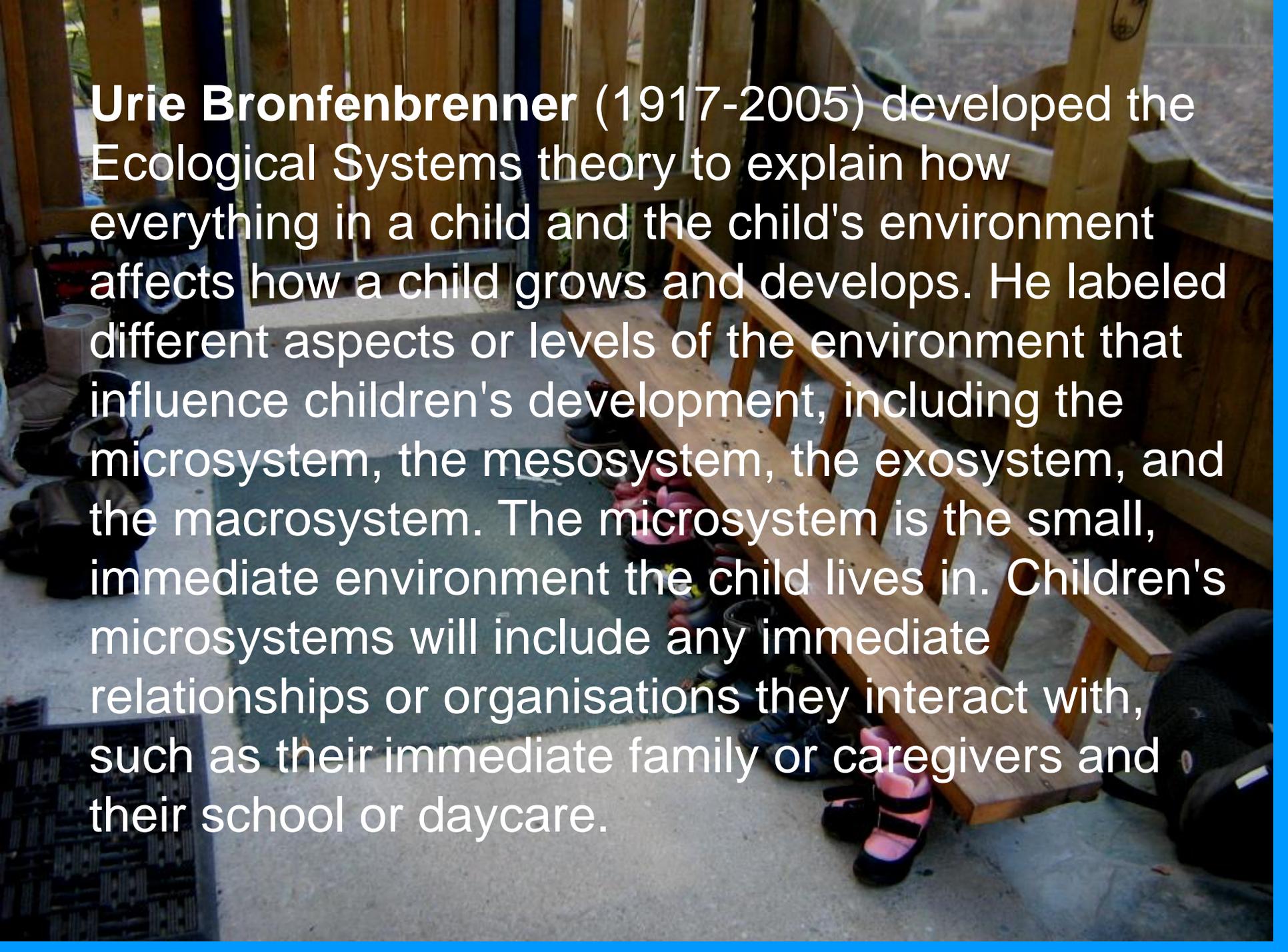
*This award honours Dr Chisnall's belief in Montessori's vision of children as "both a hope and promise for mankind" and children as the foundation for a "cohesive society".*

*In a narrative form this entry documents how we are trying to achieve this by showing the ripple effect our teaching has had.*

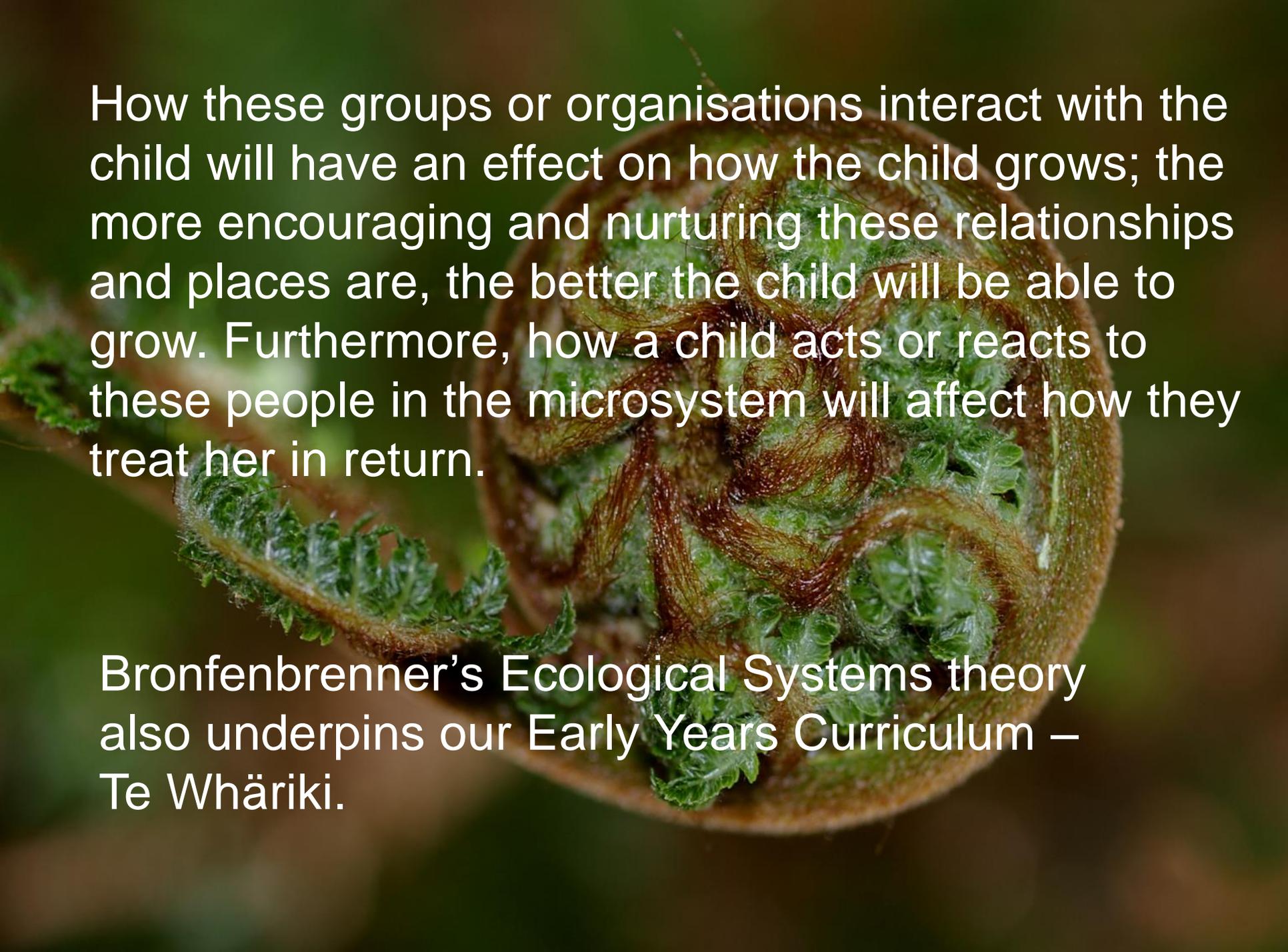
# Our Philosophy.

## Key points specific to this entry.

- At Montessori we have a deep respect for children as unique individuals.
- Our environment allows each child to explore, be curious, question and challenge while developing their own interests and linking these to their family and community.
- Through responsive and reciprocal relationships their abilities are recognised and they gain confidence in themselves.
- We integrate and implement the New Zealand Early Childhood Curriculum Te Whāriki within our philosophy and in all other areas.

A photograph of a wooden bench in a child's play area. The bench is made of light-colored wood and has several pairs of children's shoes tucked underneath it. The shoes include black boots, pink shoes, and black shoes with pink accents. The background shows a wooden fence and a concrete floor. The text is overlaid on the image in white font.

**Urie Bronfenbrenner** (1917-2005) developed the Ecological Systems theory to explain how everything in a child and the child's environment affects how a child grows and develops. He labeled different aspects or levels of the environment that influence children's development, including the microsystem, the mesosystem, the exosystem, and the macrosystem. The microsystem is the small, immediate environment the child lives in. Children's microsystems will include any immediate relationships or organisations they interact with, such as their immediate family or caregivers and their school or daycare.



How these groups or organisations interact with the child will have an effect on how the child grows; the more encouraging and nurturing these relationships and places are, the better the child will be able to grow. Furthermore, how a child acts or reacts to these people in the microsystem will affect how they treat her in return.

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems theory also underpins our Early Years Curriculum – Te Whāriki.

*This is Lenny.  
Lenny and her family moved here from Canada.*

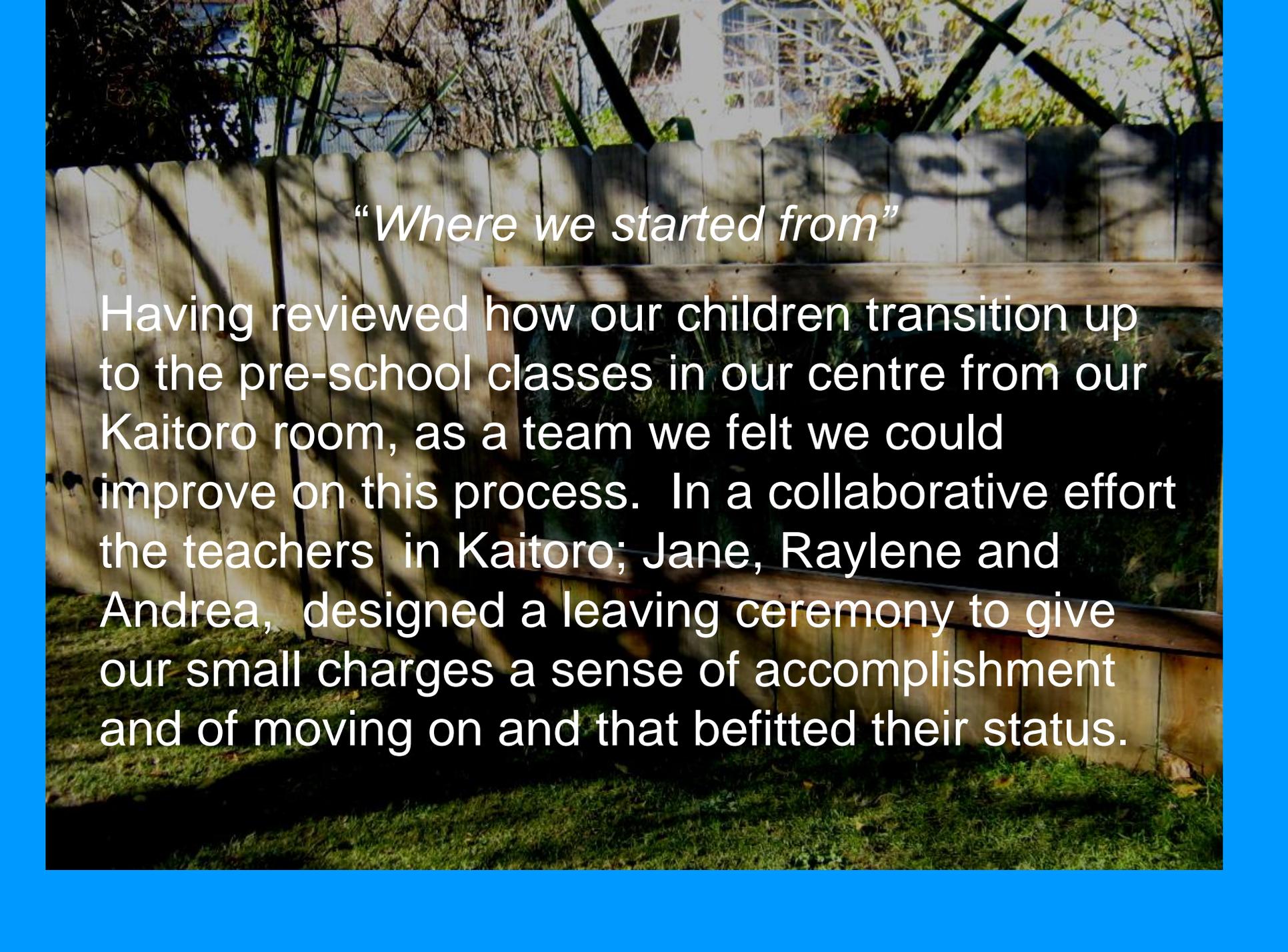


*This is her daughter Kyla.*



*This is the Kaitoro Toddlers' Room.  
Kyla spent a happy 11 months in this room but one  
day it was time for her to move onto pre-school.*



A photograph of a wooden fence in a garden. The fence is made of vertical wooden planks and has a horizontal wooden rail on top. The scene is outdoors, with trees and a house visible in the background. The lighting is bright, creating strong shadows of the trees and the fence itself on the grass and the fence planks. The overall tone is natural and somewhat nostalgic.

*“Where we started from”*

Having reviewed how our children transition up to the pre-school classes in our centre from our Kaitoro room, as a team we felt we could improve on this process. In a collaborative effort the teachers in Kaitoro; Jane, Raylene and Andrea, designed a leaving ceremony to give our small charges a sense of accomplishment and of moving on and that befitted their status.

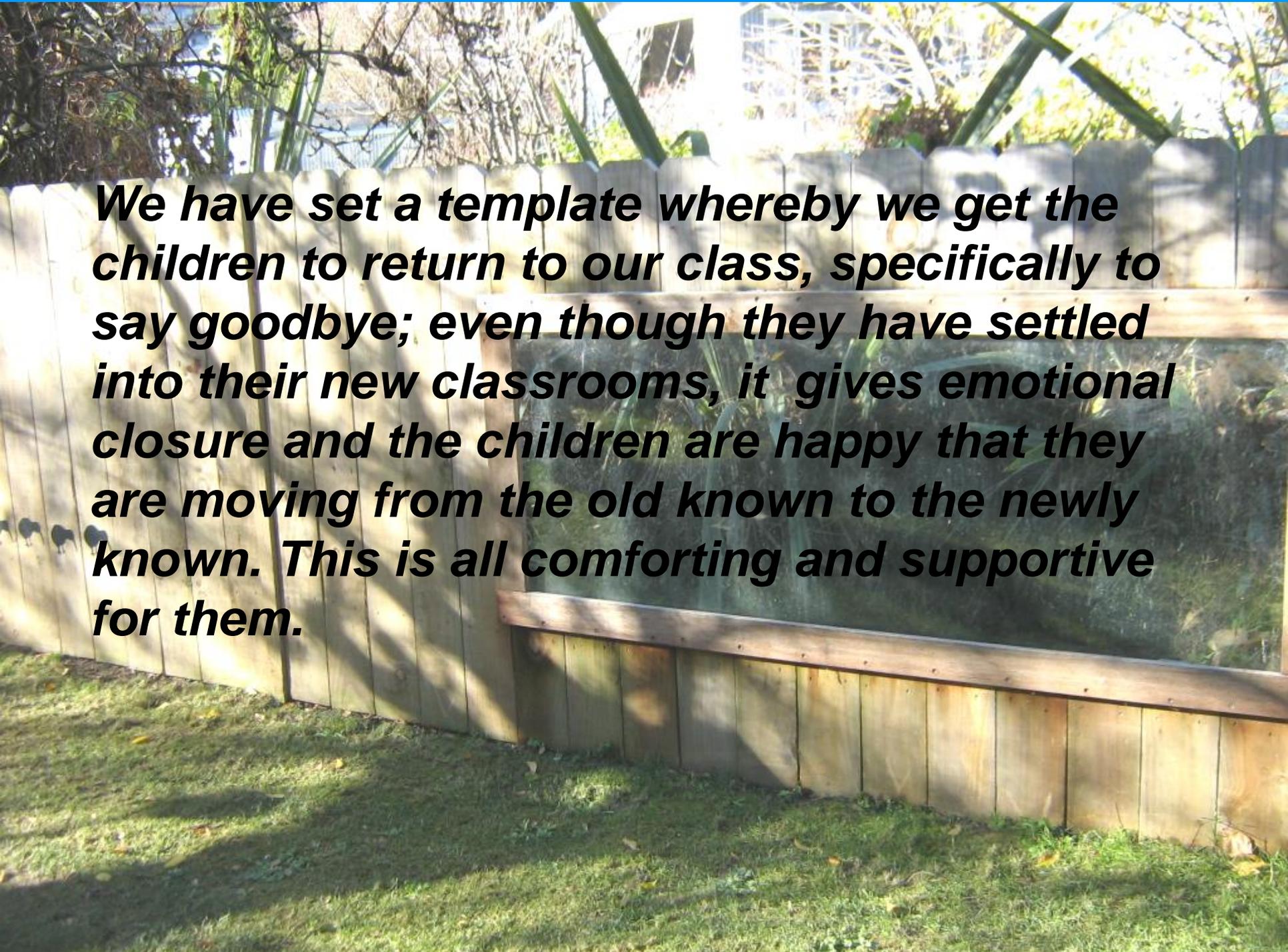
***“What we did”.***

**Graduation Kaitoro Style.**

**Group learning story.**

***Teaching is a dynamic and responsive process and as teachers and part of an overall teaching team, we constantly seek to improve our education delivery in an appropriate and sensitive way. This is documented to show how we moved through this process. As part of our self-review process, we felt we wanted to create a leaving ceremony appropriate for our young children as part of the transitioning process.***



A photograph of a wooden fence in a garden. The fence is made of vertical wooden planks and has a horizontal wooden rail running along its top. The background shows various plants, including tall green stalks and bare trees, under bright sunlight. The text is overlaid on the left side of the fence.

***We have set a template whereby we get the children to return to our class, specifically to say goodbye; even though they have settled into their new classrooms, it gives emotional closure and the children are happy that they are moving from the old known to the newly known. This is all comforting and supportive for them.***

***We have a kete, into which we gather their name cards and any pictures we have in the class, and then we get their profile books and during mat time we talk through their time with us in the toddler room. This emphasises the aspect of time passing as we all remark on how little they looked when they joined us.***



***We then put the cloak around their shoulders; this symbolises that the children are our taonga (treasures) and special to us. Raylene made this cloak with love and it shows in the choosing of the material—Aotearoa New Zealand stylised birds with a collar of feathers to indicate that our little ones are flying the nest.***



***Once we had perused their Profile Books, we said a Karakia whakamatunga-closing prayer, and the children all waved good bye. Teacher Andrea then walked our graduates up to their new classroom.***

***Here they were met at the door by their new teachers Jacob and Elena, who said a Karakia timatunga-beginning prayer to officially welcome them to their new class and a new set of friends.***



## ***“Progress we have seen.”***

We sent Kyla happy and confident off to her new classroom, room 4. This prompted Lenny to write a lovely Thank You to Kaitoro room.



Dear Andrea, Debs, Raylene, Jane, Sachi,  
and Theresa ☺

Thank you so much for all of the  
time, care, and love you have  
given Kyla over the past year. You  
have all gone above and beyond to  
make Kyla's first school experience  
such a positive one. We cannot  
thank you enough for all of  
your patience and understanding (early  
drop offs, late pick ups etc.) ~~from~~ from  
Kyla's 1st day of school, to  
helping to toilet train her, <sup>to transition</sup> her to "big class".  
Thank you!!! You have all been  
such a huge part of Kyla's  
life. Thank you again for being  
such wonderful teachers.

Love,  
Kyla, Lenny, Bernie ♥  
And Sienna ☺

Feedback from parents of other children who also graduated in the new style has been very positive and the children have settled quickly into their new classrooms.



Let's leave Lenny, Kyla and Kaitoro room's story for a moment and jump to Room 2 – one of the three pre-school classes at Queenstown Montessori. The following is a testimonial from our website that was written by Steph, a parent of a child in Room 2.

# **A Testimonial from the Johnstone Family.**

***"Thanks to the wonderful team at Queenstown Montessori who have helped shape our son into a confident, capable boy during the 2 ½ years he has been at the centre. The environment at the centre successfully fosters confident, thoughtful, happy kids equipped with plenty of life skills.***

***Each day that I collected our son from his classroom he was a calm, happy kid brimming with news of the day's learning adventures. When he first started at Montessori as a 2 year old, he was welcomed with nurturing, loving arms by the wonderful team in the toddler's room. And now, as a 5 year old leaving Montessori to begin primary school, he is well and truly prepared socially, emotionally and academically thanks to the competent and caring team at Queenstown Montessori.***

***I am grateful to the excellent educators at Queenstown Montessori who have provided our son with everything he needs to ready him for the next phase of his life".***

The child Steph is writing about possesses indicators that fulfills the Nicola Chisnall criteria for bringing about world peace through social justice.

Social justice at a toddler level is about being fair and responsive, and in having all needs met through every relationship (Berk, 2007).

So, what is the link between these two rooms in Queenstown Montessori?



Remember Lenny? Kyla's Mother is one of the teachers in Room 2, so when Steph was giving a testimonial for us it was specifically directed at Lenny's teaching skills.

Two of the hallmarks of a quality centre are qualified staff and low staff turnover.

As mothers, fathers and all caregivers know, we understand how important it is that our children's needs are met and balanced within our family and work lives.

So you can see how our efforts in the Kaitoro toddler room have extrapolating effects from us out into the community. Steph's son was nurtured in Kaitoro room and then was one of 25 children who Lenny helped teach in room 2.

*“What we may do next”.*

Currently we are working on our Toddlers Montessori Curriculum and Assessment, that again is responsive to the needs of our children and is pro-social in that it focuses on what they can do when they transition to pre-school and shows mastery of differentiated Montessori activities.

A photograph of a garden area. In the foreground, there is a green lawn. A wooden fence runs across the middle ground, with a stone wall at its base. Several tall sunflowers are growing in the garden, some with their heads reaching above the fence. The background shows a forested hillside under a cloudy sky.

*“Only through freedom and environmental experience is it practically possible for human development to occur.” Maria Montessori.*

# Thank you.

Berk, L. E. (2007). *Development through the lifespan*. (4th ed.). Boston: Pearson Education, Inc.

Urie Bronfenbrenner downloaded 8<sup>th</sup> June 2014 from  
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