



Christian Early Childhood Education  
Association of Aotearoa Inc.

## Building a Christ-centred Organisational Culture

*Colossians 2:7*

*“Let your roots grow down into Him and let your lives be built on Him. Then your faith will grow strong in the truth you were taught, and you will overflow with thankfulness.”*

# Vision and Purpose:

Promoting and establishing teacher well-being is the foundation of a strong healthy organisational culture. Without prioritising teacher well-being it becomes challenging for children's well-being to be at the centre of their educational experience. This internal evaluation tool is designed to enable centres to look closely at their organisational wellness and teacher well-being. It creates an opportunity to reflect on and create meaning about what this looks like from a Christ-centred perspective. It is a tool that allows all staff to take shared responsibility for improvements that the whole community can benefit from. "Teacher well-being is both an individual and a collective responsibility. It is holistic – and focuses on the spiritual, physical, mental and social wellness of teachers as professionals" (Education Council, n.d., para. 5). The Thrive tool is designed to be used alongside other documents such as *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 2017), *He Pou Tātaki* (Education Review Office, 2013), *Ngā Arohaebae Whai Hua: Self Review Guidelines* (Ministry of Education, 2006), and *Effective Internal Evaluation for Improvement* (Education Review Office, 2016).

It is our hope that at the heart of your centre's organisational culture will be an intentionality towards fulfilling and embodying your unique Christian vision, with the purpose to serve your local community and to excel as Christian professionals. It is our desire that centres fulfil their special character and are salt and light in our nation. Our current social and political climate brings with it many challenges that add to the complexity and demands on teachers. In order to maintain and hold onto the special character of our centres it is imperative that we take a holistic view of teacher well-being and recognise its importance. "...focusing on well-being gives teachers the strength and optimism to challenge and change the way they work without burning out or giving up" (Education Council, n.d., para. 3).

Well-being cannot be seen as a stand-alone issue. In fact, it seems apparent that looking at the bigger picture and considering the development of a professional learning culture, will have a longer lasting positive impact on teacher well-being. The term well-being, has often been viewed as merely linked to building staff morale. However, working with such a restricted or narrow understanding of the term will only have superficial and short term benefits rather than holistically enriching the teacher as a professional.

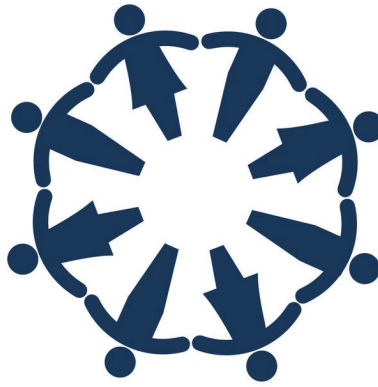
As members of one body, CECEAA centres have the opportunity to support each other and be far more connected in their journey. We hope this tool will help provide a platform for connections

There are six strands within the Thrive document which can be worked with individually or collectively. These strands include:

**Community**  
**Honesty and Transparency**  
**Belonging**  
**Relationships**  
**Value**  
**Engagement**

The intention of this document is not to create a checklist, but rather, to open up engaging and meaningful internal evaluation through honest reflection. Each strand is prefaced with reflective questions, followed by a rubric that is intended to stimulate professional dialogue and discussion based around a range of statements under three levels of the rubric: Developing, Focussed and Embedded. These statements can reflect both positive aspects and challenges; they are intended to describe the current reality of the setting, giving some specific examples for discussion. The word developing indicates that you are at the beginning of your journey as related to the strand; focussed indicates you have made some progress to ensure this area of your organisational culture is quite strong; and embedded, which is the highest level of the rubric, indicates your context is very strong in the identified area.

It is our hope that this draft internal evaluation tool will be the starting point for building a Christ-centred organisation culture where teacher well-being is valued and promoted.



# Community

***“I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another in what you say and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly united in mind and thought” (1Corinthians 1:10, NIV).***

“Interactions constitute an organisation’s social fabric, the lived values and norms of how things are done within the organisation. That social fabric in turn either increases or decreases the capacity of individuals to collaborate, to create new things, to facilitate information sharing and to adapt. There’s a deep connection between these small everyday interactions and an organisation’s overall performance” (Dutton, 2004, p. 40).

## Reflective Questions

- What do we need to know about each other to learn from each other? *“It takes a grinding wheel to sharpen a blade, and so one person sharpens the character of another” (Proverbs 27:17, TPT).*
- What systems or routines do I/we need in order to support individual and group learning?
- How does your community inspire you to do your best work? *“So speak encouraging words to one another. Build up hope so you’ll all be together in this, no one left out, no one left behind” (1 Thessalonians 5:11, MSG).*
- Where does Christ sit within your relationships as a team? *“For where two or three gather in my name, there I am with them” (Matthew 18:20, NIV).*

***“For His body has been formed in His image and is closely joined together and constantly connected as one. And every member has been given divine gifts to contribute to the growth of all; and as these gifts operate effectively throughout the whole body, we are built up and made perfect in love” (Ephesians 4:16, TPT).***

## Developing

- Staff do not see themselves as part of a community that will strengthen their learning experiences
- Staff meet to discuss managerial and logistic matters. Discussion does not extend to learning goals of community members and reflective dialogue
- Decision-making is completed in isolation without dialogue from the various roles throughout the centre
- Some social activities are arranged by the centre with minimal attendance
- Work spaces are limited and are not always accessible
- Prayer is limited to before meals and other centre routines

## Focussed

- Staff understand the value of a learning community but may still struggle to prioritise their own learning
- Staff meet regularly regarding progress of learning goals and seek out dialogue and reflection as part of the learning process
- The decision-making process is inclusive of specific roles within the hierarchy. The broader community is informed of the decision but not asked for input
- Staff either contribute to the community by sharing their knowledge or inquire about improving their own learning. Both contribution and learning are seen as an interdependent community
- Staff learning and work spaces reflect the centre's purpose but can be inflexible
- A wide variety of social activities are arranged by the centre that are inclusive of all community members
- Prayer is included in staff meetings as well as some centre routines

## Embedded

- All staff contribute and grow through the independent, reflective dialogue and engagement with each other. Staff grow and succeed as a community
- Time and space for staff to work within their collaborative communities is allocated and prioritised among all staff
- The decision-making process is transparent and collaborative
- Work spaces are attractive, purposeful, and reflect staff needs
- A variety of social activities are generated and arranged by community members of the centre
- Prayer is naturally integrated within daily practice. Staff collectively and individually pray for each other and the needs of the centre



# Honesty & Transparency

***“Live in the truth and keep your promises, and the Lord will keep delighting in you, but he detests a liar” (Proverbs 12:22, TPT).***

Trust is necessary to build a great team and occurs when members get to a point where they are comfortable being honest and transparent with one another. Statements such as “I messed up”, “I need help”, “Your idea is better than mine”, “I wish I could learn to do that as well as you do”, and even, “I’m sorry” are sincere and genuine. This helps to form a bond that surpasses what many people ever experience in their lives (Lencioni, 2012).

## Reflective Question

- How honest and transparent are your collegial conversations? *“We rejoice in saying with complete honesty and a clear conscience that God has empowered us to conduct ourselves in a holy manner and with no hidden agenda. God’s marvellous grace enables us to minister to everyone with pure motives, not in the clever wisdom of the world” (2 Corinthians 1:12, TPT).*

***“Lord, you know everything there is to know about me. You perceive every movement of my heart and soul, and you understand my every thought before it even enters my mind. You are so intimately aware of me, Lord. You read my heart like an open book and you know all the words I’m about to speak before I even start a sentence. . . . God, I invite your searching gaze into my heart. Examine me through and through; find out everything that may be hidden within me. Put me to the test and sift through all my anxious cares. See if there is any path of pain I’m walking on and lead me back to your glorious everlasting ways” (Psalm 139: 1-4, 23-24, TPT).***

## **Developing**

- Communication is mainly based around systems and processes
- Team members operate independently
- Problem solving and parent/whānau concerns and issues are deflected to leadership and/or management when possible
- People tend to be reactionary rather than responsive when dealing with challenges
- Staff keep what they notice and recognise about children to themselves
- The centre policies and procedures for teacher health, safety and support are in development

## **Focussed**

- Staff talk with each other about how they learn best
- Staff identify what they don't know in order to expose themselves to new ideas and experiences
- Staff are self-aware and know their strengths and preferences for learning and areas of improvement
- Staff look forward to getting reflective feedback in order to help them take the next steps
- The centre policies and procedures for teacher health, safety and support are accessible but staff are not made aware of changes to policies and procedures

## **Embedded**

- Staff see mistakes as an opportunity for learning
- All staff are able to apologise when necessary, regardless of people's position
- Everyone in the community is entitled to conversations and support in regards to career progression and professional learning and development
- Life and holistic development opportunities according to individual interests and abilities are taken into consideration
- Everyone takes responsibility for issues or challenges that may arise regardless of their place in the centre
- The centre policies and procedures for teacher health, safety and support are clearly communicated and accessible



# Belonging/calling

*“God knew what he was doing from the very beginning. He decided from the outset to shape the lives of those who love him along the same lines as the life of his Son. The Son stands first in the line of humanity he restored. We see the original and intended shape of our lives there in him. After God made that decision of what his children should be like, he followed it up by calling people by name. After he called them by name, he set them on a solid basis with himself. And then, after getting them established, he stayed with them to the end, gloriously completing what he had begun” (Romans 8:30, MSG).*

Most organisations utilise only a portion of the knowledge, experience, and intellectual capital that they have accessible to them, however, a healthy organisation will do its best to tap into all that is available. (Lencioni, 2012)

## Reflective Questions

- How do you experience a sense of call to your current role in the centre? *“But like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves in all your conduct [be set apart from the world by your godly character and moral courage]” (1 Peter 1:15, AMP).*
- Are you able to articulate this calling to other members in your team? *“I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.” (Ephesians 1:18, NIV)*
- What aspects of centre life give you a sense of belonging?

*“But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light” (1 Peter 2:9, NIV).*



## **Developing**

- Staff continually seek affirmation from their leaders
- Meetings tend to be led by head teachers/managers and are purely operational
- Leaders appear to be constantly busy
- People view meetings as a responsibility as opposed to an opportunity to engage
- Staff are content in their daily work
- Staff are aware of creating the need for a work life balance
- Changes are communicated by the leadership

## **Focussed**

- Meetings are discussion based and people feel happy sharing their ideas
- Personal well-being opportunities are included in the centre calendar
- Leaders have time to connect with each staff member both professionally and personally
- Staff show interest in new challenges and there are some opportunities to collaborate
- Collaborative change management strategies are in place
- God-given gifts and talents are recognised and acknowledged

## **Embedded**

- Ideas are shared and put into practice to improve learning
- Staff are fully challenged and inspired by new possibilities and part of the change process
- Staff radiate vitality and seem relaxed and peaceful
- Leaders model a strong sense of personal well-being
- Staff are released to operate within their gifts/ strengths and calling



# Relationships

***“God has given me grace to speak a warning about pride. I would ask each of you to be emptied of self-promotion and not create a false image of your importance. Instead, honestly assess your worth by using your God-given faith as the standard of measurement, and then you will see your true value with an appropriate self-esteem”***

***(Romans 12:3, TPT).***

“Celebrate with those who celebrate, and weep with those who grieve. Live happily together in a spirit of harmony, and be as mindful of another’s worth as you are your own. Don’t live with a lofty mind-set, thinking you are too important to serve others, but be willing to do menial tasks and identify with those who are humble minded. Don’t be smug or even think for a moment that you know it all” (Romans 12:15, TPT).

The way we communicate with others and with ourselves ultimately determines the quality of our lives. (Robbins, 2012, p. 34.)

## Reflective Questions

- How well do you know your colleagues?
- What value to your place on the needs of others?
- Are you willing to serve others? *“Let the inner movement of your heart always be to love one another, and never play the role of an actor wearing a mask. Despise evil and embrace everything that is good and virtuous” (Romans 12:9, TPT).*
- How do you approach conflict with your team? *“Never hold a grudge or try to get even, but plan your life around the noblest way to benefit others. Do your best to live as everybody’s friend” (Romans 12:17-18, TPT).*

***“Real wisdom, God’s wisdom, begins with a holy life and is characterized by getting along with others. It is gentle and reasonable, overflowing with mercy and blessings, not hot one day and cold the next, not two-faced. You can develop a healthy, robust community that lives right with God and enjoy its results only if you do the hard work of getting along with each other, treating each other with dignity and honour” (James 3: 17-18, MSG).***

## **Developing**

- Conversations are based around social connections or organisational details
- There is a friendly atmosphere in the centre
- Non-verbal communication is positive and supportive
- The relationships are typically hierarchical in nature

## **Focussed**

- Peers support each other both personally and professionally
- During pressure points, kindness and support are strongly evident
- There is a strong feeling of mutual trust and respect
- People have a voice and are part of decision making
- Challenging conversations are accepted as part of growth
- Coaching sessions help build professional dialogue and improve learning

## **Embedded**

- Peers understand the values and beliefs that underpin their colleagues' practice and have discussed preferred leadership styles and ways of working
- Conflicts and rigorous debate are accepted as a sign of a healthy learning organisation
- The vision and purpose is shared, therefore a 'them and us' culture is not evident
- Coaching conversations are a 'way of being' and are not limited to being a formal session
- Leaders are more people-focussed than self-focussed
- Staff feel listened to and have the agency to be solution-focussed



# Value

*“For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them” (Psalm 139:13-16, NIV).*

## Reflective Questions

- What gives you a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction?
- How do you know you are valued as a team member? *“But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called today, that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin” (Hebrews 3:13, NIV).*
- How are Christ-centred values articulated and communicated within your centre community?

*"Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth. Worship the Lord with gladness; come before him with joyful songs. Know that the Lord is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture. Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name. For the Lord is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations" (Psalm 100, NIV).*

## **Developing**

- The vision and purpose is acknowledged but may not be understood or embraced by all staff
- Learning achievements are not acknowledged and celebrated
- Decision-making is completed in isolation without dialogue from various roles within the centre
- Staff attend meetings and learning opportunities. They observe and focus on what's 'good for me' as a first priority.

## **Focussed**

- Staff experience and share personal success
- Staff either contribute to the community by sharing their knowledge or inquire about improving their own learning
- There are conversations about staff well-being and ways for this to be improved
- Staff have shared understanding of the Christ-centred values and purpose

## **Embedded**

- The vision and purpose is clear, engaged with, and consistently re-evaluated
- Staff are driven by a collective purpose
- Staff celebrate their own efforts and achievements and those of others
- All staff feel valued for the contribution that they make
- Staff well-being is high and there are strategies in place to ensure this is continually revisited and developed.
- Christ-centred values are overt and are integrated into all aspect of centre life



# Engagement

*“When there is no clear prophetic vision, people quickly wander astray. But when you follow the revelation of the word, heaven’s bliss fills your soul” (Proverbs 29:18, TPT)*

Having a shared vision and purpose, along with innovation being highly valued is a key element of establishing a professional learning culture and supports teacher wellbeing (DuFour, 2004).

## Reflective Questions

- What is your understanding of the centre vision and philosophy and how these are outworked in practice?  
*“Then, with a unanimous rush of passion, you will with one voice glorify God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. You will bring God glory when you accept and welcome one another as partners, just as the Anointed One has fully accepted you and received you as his partner” (Romans 15:6-7, TPT).*
- How is Christ-centred practice interwoven within your pedagogical approach to learning and teaching?  
*“Imitate God, therefore, in everything you do, because you are his dear children. Live a life filled with love, following the example of Christ. He loved us and offered himself as a sacrifice for us, a pleasing aroma to God” (Ephesians 5:1-2, NLT).*

*“Whatever you do [no matter what it is] in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus [and in dependence on Him], giving thanks to God the Father through Him” (Colossians 3:17, AMP).*

## **Developing**

- Staff work tasks are communicated to them and staff are aware of the expectations around their job descriptions
- Staff are rarely given the opportunity to try anything new
- Innovation is mainly for those in leadership positions
- Work tasks are perceived as a means to an end
- Staff retention rates are low

## **Focussed**

- The vision and philosophy has been well articulated and staff are aware of how this links to their practice
- Staff are aware of how the Christ-centred philosophy aligns with the pedagogical approach
- Systems and processes are well established to enable children to have full engagement in all learning opportunities
- Staff are driven to create high quality learning outcomes for children

## **Embedded**

- The vision and philosophy is not only known but shared and believed in
- Staff engage in opportunities to extend the vision
- There are opportunities to be creative and innovative and it isn't perceived as potentially compromising the quality of the organisation
- Staff have a genuine commitment to weaving Christ-centred, biblically-based practice into all aspects of centre life
- Staff retention and well-being is high

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