

Toothbrushing a part of the day at He Manu Hou

He Manu Hou bilingual early learning centre in Timaru are the first ECE in South Canterbury to implement a toothbrushing programme. The centre, along with Arowhenua Māori School, piloted the evidence-based toothbrushing programme in South Canterbury, Te Hā o Aoraki – *The breath of Aoraki*.

He Manu Hou kaiako, Missy King said, “Through trial and practice we have developed a paraihe ngā niho (toothbrushing) routine, which is working well for us, and is a regular part of our curriculum. He Manu Hou is a mixed aged kaupapa Māori setting, so we had to figure out how this was going to work for ngā tamariki kātoa (all children). Tamariki are involved in this programme from when their baby teeth break through”.

As part of the programme He Manu Hou have supported whānau and tamariki through ongoing conversations and education around healthy teeth and kai.

Tamariki brush their niho (teeth) after lunch. “Tamariki are really keen to brush their niho (teeth) and pack up their pouaka kai (lunchbox) when they see the toothbrushing being set up. This is Ako in practice, as our older and younger tamariki are learning and doing together”, said Missy.

“It’s great to see our tamariki supported with the knowledge of ‘how’ to brush their teeth,” according to one whānau member.

“The mahi that the He Manu Hou kaiako have invested in this programme has led to the best practical ways to implement the programme within our ECE setting. These findings are being shared with other centres to support the implementation of Te Hā o Aoraki within their space,” said Missy.

The programme is a collaboration between the South Canterbury District Health Board, the local public health unit Community and Public Health, Community Dental Service, and Arowhenua Whānau Services.

South Canterbury District Health Board’s Director of Māori Health, Joseph Tyro, is encouraged by the findings of the pilot programme. “We’ve trialled the programme locally and are now very confident this programme will make a positive contribution to the oral health of children in South Canterbury. We are excited to see this programme rolled out to more Early Childhood Education Centres and schools in our region.”

The rollout of the toothbrushing programme, delivered by WAVE (Wellbeing and Vitality in Education), kicked off in June in Early Childhood Centres, with the WAVE team doing presentations to kaiako (teachers) to introduce the programme. WAVE Child Nutrition and Oral Health Promoter, Hacer Tekinkaya said, “Having a healthy smile is important and we want all tamariki to have the opportunity to brush their teeth and learn basic oral hygiene from an early age.”

South Canterbury District Health Board’s dentist Aravind Parachuru reiterates the value the programme adds. “We know that this programme works to reduce cavities, and the pilot programme has also shown us that it helps tamariki to remember to brush their teeth at home, which is fantastic” he said.



ENDS

To see the article on Stuff click here: www.stuff.co.nz/timaru-herald/news/125791505/south-canterbury-children-embrace-toothbrushing-programme