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Fostering Toddlers' Emotion Knowledge through Storybook Reading and Collaboration with Whānau

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of
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Abstract

Emotion knowledge develops rapidly throughout the early years and is an integral part of the emotional competencies required as a foundation for all future learning. Toddlerhood is a particularly important time for emotion knowledge as toddlers begin to notice, name, and make sense of feelings in themselves and others. Multiple strategies can be used to strengthen toddlers' emotion knowledge. These include teachers' use of intentional and responsive pedagogy and high-quality parent–teacher relationships in which emotion learning is supported at home and in education settings. Effective interventions must be responsive to toddlers' diverse learning trajectories, engage toddlers' interests and be feasible for teachers and families to implement.

Tiered intervention models, such as *Te Tūāpapa o He Pikorua*, that help inform universal, targeted and tailored strategies, can support equitable outcomes and educational success. Prompted by this understanding, this study explored how a tiered storybook reading intervention that uses shared reading (universal), dialogic reading (targeted) and social story reading (tailored) across toddlers' early childhood education (ECE) setting and homes supports emotion knowledge learning and influences parent–teacher relationships. Situated in the toddler room of an ECE setting in Aotearoa New Zealand, this study used a single group mixed methods intervention design. A range of data was collected to explore toddlers' emotion knowledge, parent–teacher collaboration and parents' and teachers' perceptions.

Findings suggest that toddlers' emotion knowledge was supported by continuity and cohesiveness through bridged environments, and a structured yet flexible approach to intervention. The intervention was guided by a range of assessments to determine the use of specific and responsive strategies, ultimately supporting positive outcomes for all participating toddlers. Additionally, parent–teacher relationships and communication were supported through a shared focus on learning. A ripple effect that extended to other whānau and children was identified in the data.

The study offers a unique demonstration of tiered storybook reading intervention guided by *Te Tūāpapa o He Pikorua*. Drawing on this single-site demonstration, key mechanisms that influenced

toddlers' learning and parent–teacher collaboration are explored, and implications for future practice, policy, and research are discussed. Importantly, the research highlights positive learning for toddlers, parents, and teachers when an intentional, collaborative and responsive approach to learning is provided.

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Chapter One — Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This master's thesis research explores effective ways to support toddlers' emotion knowledge learning and parent–teacher collaboration through the use of shared reading, dialogic reading and social story reading in the community of an early childhood education (ECE) setting in Aotearoa New Zealand. *He Pikorua* (Ministry of Education [MoE], 2026a) and its theoretical underpinnings serve as a conceptual framework for this study. With a focus on toddlers as a specific age-group and parent–teacher collaboration, this study addresses gaps in research, including the prevailing challenges of establishing collaborative parent–teacher relationships and the persistent complexities teachers face in implementing responsive, high-quality pedagogy. This chapter introduces the researcher's background and motivation, a statement of the problem and how this thesis addresses it, the conceptual framework for research and storybook reading. This is followed by the research aim and question, an overview of the research design and an elucidation of the terms and use of language in this study and finally, an overview of the thesis structure.

1.2 Researcher Background and Motivation

I was born and raised in Switzerland in the 1980s and 1990s. Schwiizerdütsch (Swiss German) is my mother tongue but growing up in a multilingual country meant that I also learnt to speak German and French. After completing my compulsory schooling in Switzerland I attended a public high school in Florida as a foreign exchange student to learn English. I attained a baccalaureate in business administration in Switzerland before moving to New Zealand where I started a family. Accompanying my own children through their early years has taught me the value of early learning and development and inspired me to retrain as

an early childhood education teacher. Having had the privilege of experiencing different tiers of education (early childhood, primary school, secondary school and tertiary education) spanning three countries and the roles of student, parent, and teacher, has enabled a unique, multifaceted perspective on education.

My interest in supporting toddlers' emotional learning evolved over time and as a result of professional and personal experiences. After completing my teacher training within a kindergarten association, I worked as a teacher at a not-for-profit trust where many of the children had various adverse childhood experiences and/or were neurodiverse. This was reflected in a range of challenging behaviours, prompting my interest in social and emotional competencies, and how these are best fostered. In my teaching environments, the teaching of prosocial behaviour and emotions was a challenging endeavour and collaboration with whānau and family was also difficult.

These experiences served as the inspiration to embark on further study, largely with a focus on social and emotional competencies. After my first year of postgraduate study, I changed my place of employment, which prompted me to develop a better understanding of the influence of the different structures within the ECE sector in Aotearoa New Zealand, most importantly, differences between for-profit and not-for-profit settings, and how these influence children, parents, whānau, teachers, relationships, and pedagogy.

Eventually, through my work in a mixed demographic 'toddler room', with toddlers aged 2–3.5 years, an interest and focus on emotion knowledge as a component of social and emotional competencies and as a skill that typically develops during this age, grew. While working in this demanding environment, where we had up to 28 toddlers in one room with three teachers, I observed challenges in a range of areas, including communication with parents and whānau, challenging behaviours, and insufficient time for intentional, meaningful interactions between toddlers and teachers. This prompted my interest in exploring ways to

support teachers' pedagogy with the aim of enhancing toddlers' learning and teachers' collaborative relationships with whānau. After a chance encounter with the author of a range of books that focus on supporting toddlers' social and emotional learning, and as a teacher and parent who values the potential of storybook reading to support learning, I began to explore how my interest in social and emotional competencies can be combined with storybook reading, to support high-quality pedagogy in busy environments.

Alongside my teaching experiences, my own childhood in challenging circumstances, and my ability to create favourable circumstances for my own children, have shaped my sense of agency as an advocate for children, and my motivation to support equitable outcomes. I believe that it is important to explore diverse avenues to ensure every child is supported in developing important learning foundations through social and emotional competencies in their early years. In recognising the importance of collaboration with parents and whānau to ensure consistent learning for toddlers, the research question and the design for this study emerged. From here on, I will refer to myself in the third person, as 'the researcher'.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Learning and development in the first five years of life set the foundation for all future learning (Bryson et al., 2024) and high-quality early learning supports children to build a strong foundation for life (MoE, 2017). Within early childhood, toddlerhood is a distinct part of childhood, spanning from age one to three and a half. Data from the Ministry of Education show that a high number of toddlers attend ECE in Aotearoa New Zealand. In 2024, 72% of toddlers aged two years and 86% of toddlers/young children aged three years attended an ECE setting (MoE, 2026b). This positions ECE settings and teachers'

pedagogical practice as critical environments and mechanisms for healthy learning and development.

Emotion knowledge learning is an imperative aspect of emotional development that supports a positive, holistic trajectory for toddlers (Giménez-Dasí et al., 2015). Emotion knowledge begins to develop during toddlerhood, around the age of two, and can be supported through intentional pedagogical strategies (Giménez-Dasí et al., 2015). However, toddlers' learning needs are diverse and not all toddlers' developmental trajectories follow the same path. It is therefore imperative that teachers respond to individual needs (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, [NSCDC], 2004), which highlights the complexity of teaching and the importance of early intervention. Research has shown that teachers may need further support in teaching emotion knowledge and in supporting the diverse needs of all the toddlers they teach (Ulloa et al., 2016). Equipping teachers with effective and evidence-based teaching approaches that are adjustable to different needs and environments can support teachers' responsive emotion knowledge teaching.

In addition to teachers, parents play an important role in supporting toddlers' learning (ERO, 2026; MoE, 2017; Slot et al, 2025; Zulauf-McCurdy et al., 2024), including emotion knowledge learning. The ways in which parents support healthy emotional development vary, and support for effective learning can be strengthened through parent–teacher collaboration. High-quality parent–teacher relationships have long been recognised as foundational to support children's learning (Education Council, 2017; MoE, 1996; 2017). However, challenges to the development of effective relationships prevail (Zulauf-McCurdy et al., 2024). The Education Review Office (ERO, 2026) suggests that tailored communication and practical guidance for home learning support effective relationships; however, a systematic analysis of a range of interventions concluded that there is no firm consensus regarding best practice for strengthening effective relationships (Zulauf-McCurdy et al., 2024).

Within the Aotearoa New Zealand context, initiatives such as *He Pikorua* (MoE, 2026a) emphasise responsive support, early intervention, and strong partnerships with whānau as foundations for positive developmental outcomes. These priorities align with growing evidence that everyday, accessible teaching approaches can play an important role in supporting toddlers' emotion knowledge development while also deepening parent–teacher collaboration.

Accordingly, the identified need to support teachers' responsive and effective pedagogy in busy environments and to strengthen their collaborative relationships with parents, combined with the importance of emotion knowledge learning, create an opportune basis for research. Such research can explore how teachers', toddlers' and families' needs can be addressed effectively through an intervention that is responsive to toddlers' diverse learning trajectories. Therefore, this thesis research explores an accessible, everyday teaching approach for teachers through the application of *Te Tūāpapa o He Pikorua* and the use of storybook reading strategies through shared, dialogic and social story reading experiences. These reading approaches have been successfully implemented across a range of ECE contexts, age-groups and cultures and can be woven into teachers' everyday practice. Furthermore, reading can be used to enhance a specific curriculum/learning focus and has the potential to act as a gateway that supports parent–teacher collaboration. Additionally, the focus on toddlers in the present thesis research addresses this important age-group in Aotearoa New Zealand and a gap in research, which predominantly explores interventions with older preschoolers.

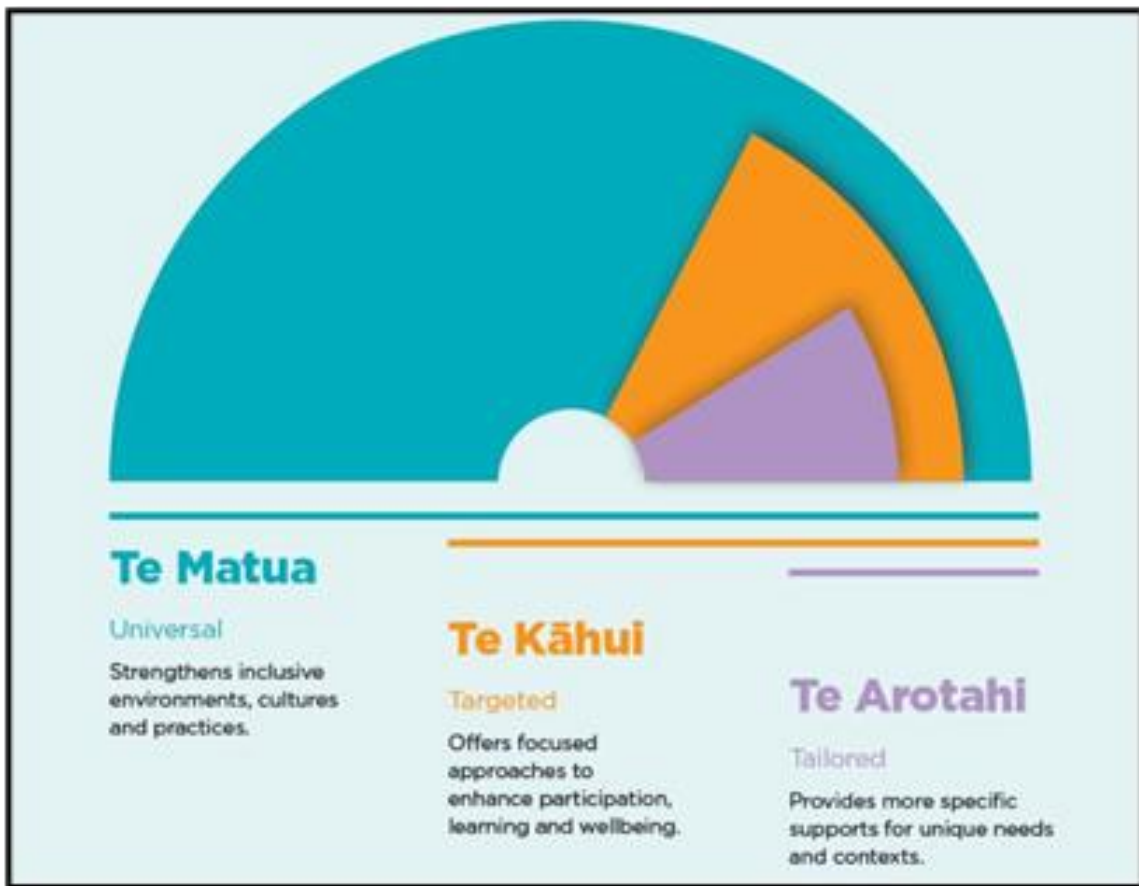
1.4 Conceptual Framework for Research and Storybook Reading

He Pikorua (MoE, 2026a), a collaborative practice framework for learning support in education and community settings, serves as the conceptual framework for this research. In

2020 *Te Tūāpapa o He Pikorua* (MoE, 2026c) was introduced by the Ministry of Education as a foundation for inclusive learning to support every learner to develop to their full potential (MoE, 2026a). *Te Tūāpapa o He Pikorua* and its practical application described in *He Pikorua in Action* (MoE, 2026d), fit within *He Pikorua*. The framework is designed with an inclusive relationship-, mokopuna-, and whānau-centred approach to intervention that is ecological, culturally responsive and affirming and based on evidence. The principles of *He Pikorua* as the conceptual framework of this study are further discussed in the methodology section in Chapter Three.

Te Tūāpapa o He Pikorua follows the standard model of tiered intervention frameworks, which typically include universal strategies on the primary level and intervention on the second and third levels. In *Te Tūāpapa o He Pikorua*, Te Matua is the foundational tier that promotes universal, inclusive learning environments. Te Kāhui is the second tier that enables adaptations to offer targeted strategies for learners who require more support. Te Arotahi is the third tier to access tailored intervention support for learners with specific and unique needs. There is fluidity within the three levels because all children should receive universal support with targeted and tailored tiers representing additional layers of teaching. See Figure 1.

Figure 1. *Te Tūāpapa o He Pikorua* (MoE, 2026c). The tiered intervention model consisting of *Te Matua*, *Te Kāhui* and *Te Arotahi*.



The present research sought to use *Te Tūāpapa o Pikorua* to design an intervention that could support teachers' responsive and effective pedagogy in busy environments and enhance collaborative relationships with parents to strengthen toddlers' emotion knowledge learning. Based on the researcher's personal experiences and investigations into the literature, the present research sought to use storybook reading as the foundation for the tiered intervention. Storybook reading through interactive engagement has the potential to support toddlers' literacy and language skills (Brodin & Renblad, 2020) and their social and emotional competencies (Betawi, 2014). Shared reading, dialogic reading and social stories were used as key strategies mapped against tiers of support associated with *Te Tūāpapa o Pikorua*.

The use of *He Pikorua* in the current research is grounded in the understanding that Te Tiriti o Waitangi is the nation's founding document. *He Pikorua* is guided by Te Tiriti o Waitangi, as is reflected in its commitment to partnership with whānau, valuing identity, language and culture, and ensuring equitable and responsive support for mokopuna. By placing mokopuna, whānau, and cultural context at the centre of decision-making, *He Pikorua* upholds Tiriti-based responsibilities to honour tangata whenua, strengthen relationships, and promote culturally grounded, mana-enhancing educational practices. The present study honours the commitment to partnership, participation and protection between Māori as tangata whenua, Pākehā and all other ethnic and cultural groups and provides the basis for power-sharing relationships (Education Council, 2017). The study aims to support equitable outcomes by providing equitable opportunities through a responsive approach.

Moreover, the research is situated in the ECE context of Aotearoa New Zealand and recognises *Te Whāriki* (MoE, 2017) as the early childhood curriculum, which creates a foundation for the pedagogical practice of teachers. *Te Whāriki* provides a framework that enables a flexible interpretation for services to be responsive to the diverse needs of infants, toddlers, young children, and whānau. Predominantly focusing on learning and development, *Te Whāriki* does not provide explicit pedagogical processes, instead it offers questions to provoke teachers to reflect on how their practices meet learning outcomes. One of these questions is focused on toddlers' emotions: "In what ways do kaiako respectfully support toddlers to express and manage their feelings?" (p. 40). *Te Whāriki* stresses the importance of adapting environments and teaching approaches to reduce any barriers to participation and highlights inclusive education that is responsive to diversity as a fundamental expectation of every ECE service. This includes toddlers who may benefit from additional learning support.

1.4 Purpose and Research Question

This research aimed to explore an intervention approach that is accessible to teachers, parents and whānau. The intervention developed was a tiered storybook reading intervention that focused on strengthening toddlers' emotion knowledge and parent–teacher collaboration. The tiers included shared reading (universal), dialogic reading (targeted) and social story reading (tailored), based on *Te Tūāpapa o He Pikorua* (MoE, 2026c). The research was underpinned by *He Pikorua* principles (MoE, 2026a), which emphasise the importance of pedagogy and relationships that are mokopuna and whānau-centred; collaborative; strengths-based; culturally affirming and responsive; inclusive; ecological; and informed by evidence.

The following research question was used to guide the investigation:

In what ways does a ten-week storybook reading intervention support toddlers' emotion knowledge and influence parent–teacher collaboration?

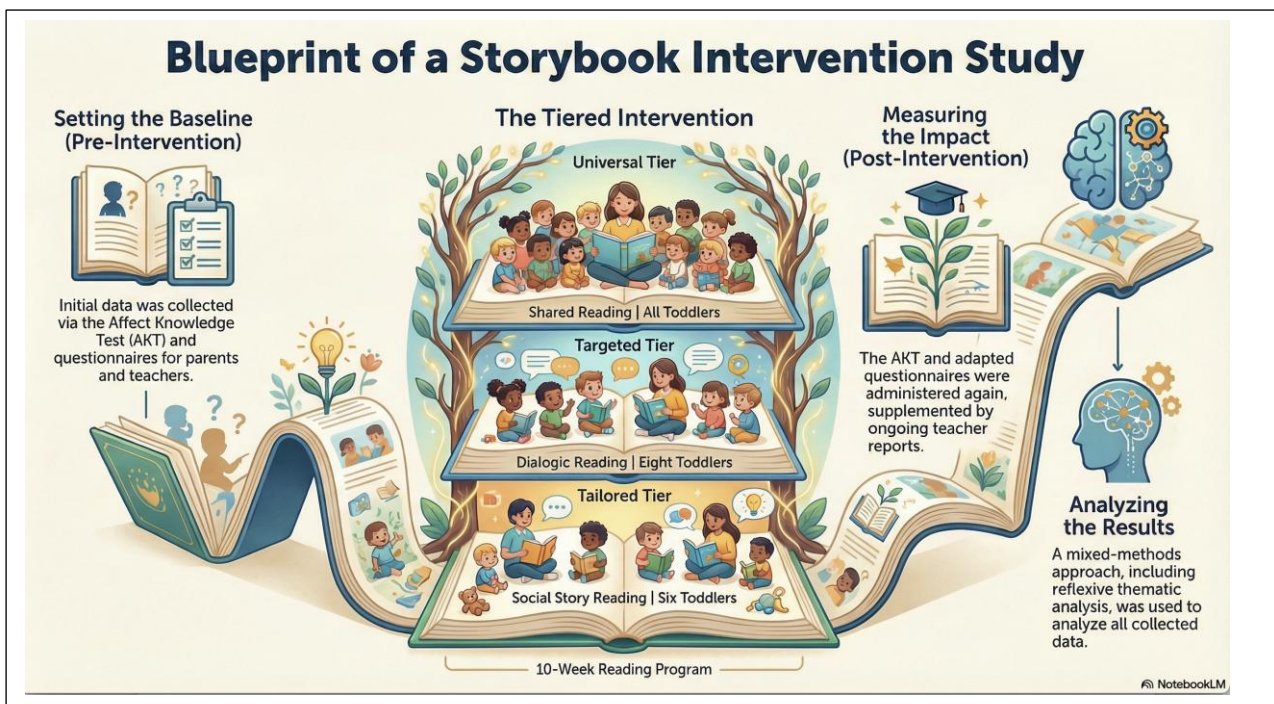
1.6 Overview of the Research Design

A quasi-experimental single group pre-test post-test design, with a mixed methods approach, was used to explore the influences of different mechanisms of a tiered storybook reading intervention on toddlers' emotion knowledge learning and parent–teacher collaboration. The research was conducted at an all-day early childhood education centre in Aotearoa New Zealand, specifically in the toddler room which is attended by children aged 2–3.5 years.

Quantitative data were collected about toddlers' emotion knowledge using the Affect Knowledge Test (AKT) (George Mason University Child Development Lab, 2025), and quantitative and qualitative data were collected from parents and teachers using questionnaires. Based on pre-intervention AKT scores and parent and teacher knowledge of toddlers, toddlers were assigned to different tiers of a tiered storybook intervention that

spanned across ten weeks. The intervention structure included ten weeks of universal shared reading with all toddlers, six weeks of targeted dialogic reading with eight toddlers, and three weeks of tailored social story reading with six toddlers. Post-intervention data collection included the AKT and adapted version of the parent- and teacher pre-intervention questionnaires, supplemented by teacher reports that were gathered throughout the intervention. A visual overview of the intervention, data collection methods and data analysis, generated by NoteBookLM (<https://notebooklm.google/>), is provided in Figure 2.

Figure 2. *Infographic of the intervention and data approach*



The research was approved by the Massey University Ethics Committee, approval number OM2 24/60. Ethical considerations included issues of power and autonomy between the researcher as the head teacher and her colleagues, students and families; the seeking of informed consent from parents and teachers; the seeking of assent from toddlers for every engagement in the intervention, including storybook reading and the AKT; issues of

vulnerability as the research involved very young children and their families. Ethical considerations are discussed further in Chapter Three — Methodology.

1.8 Terms and Usage of Language

Aotearoa	New Zealand
Aroha	love, affection, compassion, empathy, care
Mana	spiritual power, prestige, authority, status -a supernatural force in people, places or things and a spiritual gift. Mana is inherited, it is not static and can increase or decrease (Te Aka, 2003-2026).
Mokopuna	descendants (grandchildren). This is the term used for the word ‘children’ in He Pikorua
Pākehā	New Zealander of European descent
Pedagogy	the art and method of teaching
Pono	honest, genuine, sincere
Tamariki	children, youth
Tangata Whenua	people of the land, Indigenous people
Te ao Māori	Māori world view, Māori world
Te reo Māori	Māori language
Tika	fairness, appropriate, to be true
Whānau	extended family, the primary unit of traditional Māori society

1.9 Overview of the Thesis Structure

The thesis consists of five chapters. This chapter, Chapter One — *Introduction*, overviews the researcher background and motivation, provides the problem statement, introduces *He Pikorua* as a conceptual framework, and outlines the research design and the

terms and usage of language. Chapter One, and every chapter in this thesis, finishes with a brief chapter summary.

Chapter Two — *Literature Review* reviews local and international research. The literature focuses on emotion knowledge; pedagogy, including cultural social-emotional teaching; storybook reading and various reading strategies; the role of parent–teacher relationships and the role of parents in toddlers’ learning.

Chapter Three — *Methodology* introduces the research design. This chapter provides in depth information and covers the research aim and question; the study’s conceptual and theoretical underpinnings, including *He Pikorua* and its principles; the research design; ethical considerations; the research setting and participants; and data collection and analysis methods.

Chapter Four — *Findings* includes an overview of the participants and the implementation of the intervention. The findings are then presented within four key themes. Each theme is supported with data from the pre- and post- intervention AKTs, questionnaires and teacher reports. The findings are supported with figures and tables and reported with a degree of interpretation.

Finally, Chapter Five — *Discussion and Conclusion* provides an in-depth discussion of the findings and research insights in relation to the research question: In what ways does a ten-week storybook reading intervention support toddlers’ emotion knowledge and influence parent–teacher collaboration? Limitations and delimitations are acknowledged. Implications for ECE stakeholders, the sector and further research are offered and discussed, leading to the thesis conclusion.

Henceforth, the term 'toddler' is used as the primary descriptor; however, where literature specifies alternative age/developmental groups that do not fit within toddlerhood, terms such as 'young children,' 'children,' or 'learners' are retained to maintain terminological

consistency with the original sources. The word teacher in this thesis is used for both qualified and unqualified teachers. Currently in Aotearoa New Zealand, 50% of the staff are required to be qualified ECE teachers (Parliamentary Council Office, Te Tari Tohutohu Pāremata, n.d.).

1.10 Chapter Summary

Emotion knowledge is a vital component of the social and emotional competencies that are essential for a positive developmental trajectory across the lifespan. Toddlerhood represents a critical period for emotion knowledge learning. Tiered interventions that span across toddlers' primary learning environments, including home and their ECE setting, have the potential to support emotion knowledge learning through strategies tailored to individual needs.

In Aotearoa New Zealand, *He Pikorua* (MoE, 2026a) and its tiered model, *Te Tūāpapa o He Pikorua* (MoE, 2026c), provide support for parents, whānau, teachers and other professionals to collaboratively support children's learning. For the present study, the principles of *He Pikorua* provide theoretical guidance and the framework from *Te Tūāpapa o He Pikorua* is used for the practical application to inform a ten-week, tiered intervention in the toddler room of a mixed demographic, all-day ECE setting. Specifically, the study uses three variations of storybook reading—shared reading (universal), dialogic reading (targeted), and social story reading (tailored)—to support emotion knowledge learning among a group of toddlers. The research also explores collaboration between parents/whānau and teachers.

Overall, Chapter One establishes the rationale for the study by outlining the importance of toddlers' emotion knowledge, the need for responsive interventions, and the critical role of parent–teacher collaboration in supporting positive outcomes. Chapter One also introduces the conceptual and cultural frameworks that underpin the intervention; the

research question guiding the investigation; and the methodological structure used to explore the impact of a tiered reading intervention on toddlers' learning and parent–teacher collaboration. Chapter Two will discuss local and international literature regarding emotion knowledge learning and teaching. It will provide a review of the three reading approaches used for the intervention. Literature about parents' and teachers' roles in children's learning will be reviewed, including about parent–teacher collaboration and teaching strategies.

Chapter Two — Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

In this literature review, a range of empirical research from domestic and international studies is explored. Topics covered include toddlers' emotion knowledge; how toddlers develop emotion knowledge through language; and the teacher's role in helping toddlers learn about emotions. Storybook reading and the use of shared reading, dialogic reading and social story reading to support toddlers' learning are explored. The importance of parent-teacher partnerships and parents' role in supporting toddlers to learn about emotions are included. Based on the literature review, the idea of a collaborative and tiered approach to support toddlers' emotion knowledge through shared reading, dialogic reading and social story reading is suggested.

2.2 Emotion Knowledge

Emotion knowledge is a concept with multiple components that broadly includes the ability to recognise one's own emotions and the emotions of others (Sette et al., 2015), and the appropriate use of emotions in social contexts (Ornaghi et al., 2017). Emotion knowledge focuses on the learning of emotion recognition, emotion labelling, the understanding of causes of emotions as a multilevel sequence and language as important factors (Sette et al., 2015; Ornaghi et al., 2017).

2.2.2 Why is Emotion Knowledge Important?

Emotion knowledge learning and therefore the ability to accurately interpret and label emotions supports toddlers to initiate and maintain relationships and successfully navigate through social experiences (Shanty, 2016). Emotion knowledge influences prosocial

behaviours and is essential for successful relationships with others (Ornaghi et al., 2017).

Developing emotional knowledge through learning about different feelings and acquiring the terminology of different feelings supports toddlers' understanding of emotions and enables them to communicate and appropriately express emotions.

Emotion knowledge is an important aspect of toddlers' holistic development that is fostered through the intricate interplay of biological and environmental factors. Through the lens of the bioecological model, which acknowledges the interplay of biological and social influences on toddlers' learning and development, a view that recognises a range of influences on toddlers' emotion knowledge is enabled. Urie Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Bioecological Systems Theory recognises the child and their unique biology at the centre of their interactions and influenced by the world and other people.

2.2.3 How do Toddlers Develop Emotion Knowledge?

Toddlers' emotion knowledge learning begins from infancy, when infants start to recognise, respond to, and mimic the facial expressions of others (Ornaghi et al., 2017) and rapidly develops during toddlerhood. Emotion knowledge learning follows an age-related trajectory (Conte et al, 2019; MoE, 2019a) and young toddlers find the identification of emotions associated with positive experiences, such as happiness easier than emotions associated with challenging or more complex experiences, such as anger (Sette et al., 2015). From about the age of three, children begin to more consistently recognise and interpret other people's emotions (Sette et al., 2015).

The brain as a part of human biology plays a central role in the development of emotion knowledge. Specifically, the three parts of the brain consisting of the brainstem (reptilian brain), the limbic system, and the neocortex influence the way humans experience and manage emotions (Yale Medicine Magazine, 2008). Emotions originate from the most

basic parts of our brains, the brainstem and the limbic system. While the brainstem is only responsible for intrapersonal emotions, the development of the limbic brain is an important part of the human evolution that contributes to humans caring for others (interpersonal emotions) to ensure survival (Steiner, 2003). The stress-response in the limbic system communicates with the brainstem by sending signals. The cortex is the part of the brain that is responsible for language, abstract thinking, and planning (Mao, 2022).

Looking at emotions through the lens of neuroscience demonstrates that the development of emotion knowledge is influenced by an interplay of biology and environment. Neuroscience research indicates that the brain is malleable (Steffen et al., 2022), influenced and shaped by environmental factors, including experiences and relationships (Denham et al., 2009; NSCDC, 2004; Steiner, 2003). Thus, emotion knowledge can be supported through positive experiences and nurturing relationships, which can also buffer the potentially negative effects of adverse experiences (NSCDC, 2004). Because toddlers' brains are biologically shaped, yet highly malleable, nurturing relationships and positive everyday experiences play a crucial role in supporting their developing emotion knowledge.

Toddlers learn emotion knowledge from adults through social interactions (Vajcner, 2015). The way adults explicitly and implicitly convey emotion messages influences toddlers' learning and expression of emotion knowledge (King, 2021). These everyday interactions, such as how adults respond to toddlers' emotional cues, talk about feelings, and model regulation, provide opportunities for toddlers to observe, practise, and internalise emotion knowledge. In addition to the important role parents play in toddlers' development of emotion knowledge, teachers have a fundamental impact on toddlers' emotion knowledge learning (King, 2021; Ulloa et al., 2016). Within ECE settings, teachers' intentional teaching practices, calm emotional presence, and responsive relationships further shape toddlers'

ability to recognise, interpret, and express emotions (Ulloa et al., 2016). This highlights that toddlers' home environments and ECE settings are both key spaces where emotion learning occurs.

Language skills are not essential for toddlers to learn to recognise emotions (Ornaghi et al., 2017). However, language provides a tool for naming, thinking about, and discussing feelings and supports toddlers' developing emotion knowledge (Bailey et al., 2013). It is with the development of language around the age of two years when toddlers begin to label emotions, starting with basic feelings such as happy, sad, angry, and scared (Sette et al., 2015). From a sociocultural perspective, language learning occurs first through interactions with others (inter-psychological learning) before becoming internalised (intra-psychological) (Reunamo & Nurmilaakso, 2007). This means that adults' emotion language contributes directly to toddlers' growing understanding. Therefore, the language adults use becomes a powerful mechanism for shaping how toddlers learn to interpret, express, and make sense of emotions.

Environments and experiences rich in emotion language, including conversations between adult and toddlers, can foster toddlers' emotion knowledge. To understand how adults can actively support toddlers' emerging emotion language, it is useful to consider the specific forms of emotion language that adults can use to contribute to toddlers' developing emotion knowledge: Emotion language includes labelling, explaining and questioning about emotions (Ornaghi et al., 2017). Emotion labelling includes the nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs used to describe emotions (King, 2021). Emotion explaining, such as elucidating why we feel a certain way, supports toddlers' interpretations of emotions and situation knowledge. Emotion questioning refers to inquiring about how others feel. Emotion language can also be reactive and proactive: Reactive emotion language encompasses the verbal labelling of emotions following toddlers' expressions or behaviours, while proactive emotion

language is the intentional integrations of emotion vocabulary in experiences (King, 2021) such as storybook reading.

Another, less supportive aspect of emotion language is emotion minimising, which refers to emotion language that dismisses toddlers' feelings, such as telling them they are okay when they are expressing challenging emotions through crying (Ornaghi et al., 2017). Together, these insights highlight that toddlers' developing emotion knowledge is deeply shaped by the quality of their experiences and interactions and the emotion language available within their everyday interactions and environments.

2.3 Helping Toddlers Learn About Emotions: The Teacher's Role

Te Whāriki (MoE, 2017) is the Aotearoa New Zealand early childhood curriculum, which creates a foundation for the pedagogical practice of teachers. *Te Whāriki* provides a framework that enables a flexible interpretation for services to be responsive to the different needs of infants, toddlers, young children and their families. Predominantly focusing on learning and development, *Te Whāriki* does not provide explicit pedagogical processes; instead, it offers questions to provoke teachers to reflect on how their practices meet children's learning outcomes. One question in the document focuses on toddlers' emotions: "In what ways do kaiako respectfully support toddlers to express and manage their feelings?" (MoE, p. 40). *Te Whāriki* stresses the importance of adapting environments and teaching approaches to reduce any barriers to participation and highlights inclusive education that is responsive to diversity as a fundamental expectation of every ECE service. This includes toddlers who may benefit from additional learning support.

There are several relevant learning outcomes in *Te Whāriki* related to learning of emotion knowledge. These include:

- Managing themselves and expressing their feelings and needs | te whakahua whakaaro (p. 24)
- Expressing their feelings and ideas using a wide range of materials and modes | he kōrero auaha (p. 25)
- Understanding oral language and using it for a range of purposes | he kōrero ā-waha (p. 25)

In addition to *Te Whāriki*, teachers can access a range of resources, programmes and frameworks for guidance. These support ECE services and teachers to offer equitable education and care that is responsive to toddlers' needs. Frameworks designed for the Aotearoa New Zealand context with a focus on supporting toddlers' and children's social-emotional learning, include *He Māpuna te Tamaiti* (MoE, 2019a), *Kōwhiri Whakapae* (MoE, 2026e) and the *Hikairo Schema* (Mcfarlane et al., 2019), a framework developed for ECE teachers to guide reflective practice and foster strong, mana-enhancing relationships that promote positive attitudes and behaviours.

With a focus on supporting teachers to proactively and intentionally foster children's social-emotional learning, *He Māpuna te Tamaiti* is a resource created in alignment with *Te Whāriki* that contains six sections with specific teaching strategies. Section two focuses on emotional competence. These strategies complement *Te Tūāpapa o He Pikorua* (MoE, 2026c) by providing practical support for teachers. Additionally, in *He Māpuna te Tamaiti*, social stories are discussed as a way to support peer relationships. However, as indicated by Clarke (2021), insufficient effective PLD to support teachers in the successful use and implementation of resources like *He Māpuna te Tamaiti* may limit the way resources are utilised as a support for pedagogical practice.

Specific interventions, intended to strengthen the ways teachers foster toddlers' emotion knowledge have also been developed and researched. Giménez-Dasí et al. (2015) provide an example of such an intervention that was conducted with 2-year-old toddlers. Following the success of a study that used dialogue and reflection to support the emotion knowledge learning and social skills on 4- and 5-year-old children in the Spanish ECE context, Giménez-Dasí et al. (2015) explored if the emotion knowledge of two-year-old toddlers can be improved in an ECE setting when teachers engage in weekly interventions that focus on fostering the four basic emotions happy, sad, angry and scared, using marionettes. The sessions introduced fictional scenarios aimed at teaching the expressing, labelling, and understanding causes of emotions. Additionally, for what Giménez-Dasí et al. (2015) described as 'negative emotions' (which were emotions associated with discomfort) the teachers included regulation strategies. All participating teachers received specialised training and the intervention occurred during weekly 30-minute sessions over a period of six months. Positioned within the field of psychology and educational behaviour, the study conducted pre- and post- intervention tests of a control group and an intervention group, and parents and teachers completed an evaluation of the toddlers' development. The results indicate that the emotion knowledge of 2-year-old toddlers can be improved through intentional, targeted, and systematic intervention. The study by Giménez-Dasí et al. (2015) provides an example of a successful teaching intervention focused on toddlers' emotion knowledge.

2.3.1 Cultural-Social-Emotional Learning

Culture influences the teaching of emotion knowledge, and emotion knowledge learning is influenced by sociocultural norms, beliefs, and values (MoE, 2019a). Written from the perspective of developmental psychology and with a focus on social and emotional

competencies learned in school settings, Goodman (2024) urges teachers in Aotearoa New Zealand to examine their teaching of emotions through a decolonialised lens. Goodman advocates for inclusive emotion education that recognises holistic wellbeing and respects culture and identity within the teaching of emotions. This is reflected within the Māori concept of Hauora, which recognises aspects of mind, body, and spirit as integral parts of wellbeing (Goodman, 2024), and is in coherence with other cultures, such as the Chinese way of recognising mind, heart (emotions) and body as a holistic unit (Slingerland, 2013).

Through the idea of cultural-social-emotional learning, emotions are not taught as a universally uniformed construct, but instead with Indigenous views of wellbeing at the centre (Goodman, 2024). This aligns with the bi-cultural ECE curriculum *Te Whāriki* (MoE, 2017) that promotes a commitment to partnership between Māori and Pākehā and recognises holistic development that includes kare-ā-roto (emotions), equitable opportunities and outcomes through responsive environments for all, and responsiveness to the increasingly multicultural landscape of Aotearoa New Zealand. Reciprocal relationships between parents and teachers are recognised as an important foundation for culturally responsive pedagogy.

2.3.1.1 Ako– Reciprocal Education in a Māori Paradigm

Ako is a Māori pedagogical approach, a taonga tuku iho (inherited legacy), that explains a way of learning and teaching through expressing, sharing and exchanging knowledge and truths over time within a Māori worldview (Edwards, 2013). The Māori dictionary translates ako into learn, study, instruct, teach and advise (Te Aka, 2003-2026). However, Edwards (2013) argues that the depth of the meaning of words gets lost in translation and the concept of ako is much broader than teaching and learning: Ako incorporates reciprocity through the sharing of knowledge, energy and ideas between people,

acknowledging that learning of new knowledge and sharing of existing knowledge occurs simultaneously (Edwards, 2013).

Viewing ako as a reciprocal approach supports teachers to honour Te Tiriti o Waitangi by valuing the knowledge, contributions and participation of Māori, and by building meaningful relationships with children, toddlers, whānau and Iwi (Te kete Ipurangi, n.d.). This aligns with *Te Whāriki*, which emphasises valuing and extending on the knowledge that toddlers and their parents and whānau bring with them.

Because ako positions learning as co-constructed and grounded in relationships, it provides a useful foundation for understanding how teachers can support toddlers' developing emotion knowledge. Toddlers learn about emotions in everyday interactions, and the reciprocal nature of ako reflects how toddlers and teachers influence one another through shared experiences, emotional cues, and responsive communication.

2.4 Teaching Strategies — Storybook Reading

ECE teachers can support toddlers' emotion knowledge through a vast range of pedagogical practices embedded into everyday contexts. These practices include direct instruction, establishing trusting, reciprocal relationships, modelling of desired emotional behaviours, coaching, the use of emotion language (Ulloa et al., 2016), commenting on emotions and reassuring that different feelings are okay and validated (Clarke et al., 2021).

One explicit teaching practice to support emotion knowledge learning is storybook reading. Storybook reading through interactive engagement has the potential to support toddlers' literacy and language skills (Brodin & Renblad, 2020) and their social and emotional competencies (Betawi, 2014). Over time, a range of storybook reading strategies have been developed, including shared reading, dialogic reading and social stories.

2.4.1 Shared Reading

Shared reading describes unstructured reciprocal reading interactions with toddlers that provide opportunities for toddlers to be active participants in their learning (Bramwell & Doyle, 2006) and maximises their language learning (Vajcner, 2015). Shared reading enables teachers to respond to toddlers' current level of development (Bramwell & Doyle, 2006) and creates opportunities for reciprocal, language-rich conversations (Cohrssen et al., 2016).

During shared reading, toddlers can be supported to engage through thoughtful questioning by the adult. Shared reading evolves to continuously adapt to children's learning and development as scaffolding through questions is an intrinsic teaching technique of shared reading (Whitehurst et al., 1994). Supporting emotion language through questions demands more complex thought for toddlers and activates cognitive processes through the scaffolded navigation of more complex social and emotional situations (Bailey et al., 2013). Thereby, it is important that questions are carefully composed to elicit a response that furthers toddlers' emotion knowledge beyond their current understanding within the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (Bailey et al., 2013). The ZPD is an aspect of the Vygotskian socio-cultural theory and describes the continuously evolving position of a toddlers' development between what they have mastered and what they will master in the future. The zone represents what can be achieved with responsive support.

Research suggests that shared reading is an effective way for teachers to support toddlers' language development and emotion knowledge learning (Aram & Aviram, 2009; Guajardo & Watson, 2002; Grazzani et al., 2016; Ornaghi, et a., 2011). For example, in their study, albeit conducted over twenty years ago, Guajardo and Watson (2002) investigated primary school aged children's theory of mind development through book reading. Comparisons between a 'read only' control group and an interactive reading experimental

group highlighted significant differences in the post-test, with the experimental group performing better than the control group.

These findings align with a study by Ornaghi et al. (2011), conducted with 70 children aged 3–4 years in the Italian ECE context where the researchers randomly assigned the participants to a control or an experimental group. The study investigated whether intentional training using mental terms, such as *scared* and *angry*, enhanced children's development of theory of mind, a construct describing the comprehension that people have mental states (intentions, desires and beliefs) that guide their actions, and that is related to emotion knowledge (Ornaghi et al., 2011). Pre- and post-tests were administered to measure children's linguistic and cognitive development. The intervention consisted of two 20-minute sessions per week over a 2-month period, where the experimental group engaged in interactive discussions about the story following the reading, while the control group were encouraged to engage in free play. The results demonstrated that interactive book reading supports development more than book reading alone. This includes the development of children's emotion understanding.

In an extension of the study by Ornaghi et al., (2011), Grazzani et al., (2016) investigated effects of intentional instruction through shared reading on toddlers' theory of mind and emotion understanding. The median age of the participants pre-intervention was 29.9 months, and unlike Ornaghi et al.'s study, all 68 participants, including the control group and the experimental group, engaged in a shared reading intervention. However, the conversation of the control group during the reading focused on objects and the physical characteristics and actions of the characters, while the conversation with the experimental group focused on mental state talk. Toddlers' verbal ability, theory of mind and emotion understanding were tested pre-intervention and 3 months after the month-long, daily intervention. The results show that the experimental group, who received mental state talk,

demonstrated a growing focus on mental states and performed better in the post-test than the control group, who did not receive mental state-focused dialogue. This indicates lasting benefits of shared reading when the conversations explicitly include mental state talk. The most pronounced difference emerged in toddlers' emotion understanding, where the experimental group clearly outperformed the control group.

This aligns with a comparative study conducted with 95 26-month to 36-month-old toddlers in Northern Italy. In this study, researchers found an intervention programme based on the intentional teaching of emotion knowledge through stories followed by conversations, supported the development of emotion knowledge and prosocial skills (Ornaghi et al., 2017). In contrast, the same study found that the exclusive reading of stories without the subsequent conversation about emotions did not equally support toddlers' emotion knowledge learning (Ornaghi et al., 2017).

Aram and Aviram (2009), who conducted research with 40 children aged between 5 years and 8 years in Israel to explore the relations between reading and development, propose that shared reading may not only contribute to preschool children's language development, but it may also contribute to social and emotional development. Aram and Aviram note that books written for young children often focus on social interactions, which provide the opportunity to discuss emotional states and social situations. Additionally, Aram and Aviram emphasise that the type of books children are exposed to play an important role in their social and emotional learning. This aligns with suggestions from Doyle and Bramwell (2006), who report that social-emotional themed books frequently present adults and toddlers interacting and solving problems.

Repeated shared reading supports literacy learning, strengthens toddlers' engagement (Bramwell & Doyle, 2006; Vajcner, 2015), increases vocabulary learning (Cohrssen et al., 2016) and empowers toddlers by enabling them to predict what will happen in the story. In an

Aotearoa New Zealand based study Penno et al. (2002) explored the effects of targeted instruction through story reading on children's vocabulary. Although the participants in the research were school-aged, the results still offer useful insights for ECE. Penno et al. found that children's vocabulary is best supported through direct instruction and incidental learning, such as the repeated reading of stories, an insight that is useful for ECE teachers.

Additionally, the predictability of reading a known book is likely to feel empowering to children, highlighting that reading books to toddlers supports their development. Taken together, the evidence highlights the pedagogical value of repeated and language-rich shared reading as a meaningful context for fostering toddlers' language and emotion knowledge and empowering them as active learners.

As indicated by the literature, shared reading is a successful teaching approach to support toddlers' learning and development. The literature highlights that by focusing on specific areas of development during shared reading, such as emotions, toddlers' learning in the desired area can be accelerated. As much of the literature investigated shared reading with an older cohort, the findings may be understood as an indication of the potential shared reading has as an intervention for toddlers, who are at a developmental stage where the foundation for emotion knowledge is laid.

2.4.2 Dialogic Reading

Dialogic reading is a structured, interactive, book reading technique that was designed by Whitehurst et al. in 1988 and aims at educating adults to read books with toddlers in a way that fosters toddlers' engagement (Vajcner, 2015). Dialogic reading is based on the three principles of encouraging toddlers' extended thinking and articulation of their thoughts, giving feedback, and adjusting questions and feedback to the child's development to extend their learning through evocative techniques (Whitehurst et al., 1988). Thus, dialogic reading

is responsive to the ZPD. Dialogic reading follows the idea that active learning is more effective than passive learning (Whitehurst et al., 1988) and through its predictable structure, dialogic reading is empowering to toddlers. This highlights that dialogic reading is not merely a reading activity, but a carefully scaffolded learning experience tailored to toddlers' developmental needs.

Adults use question prompts to structure dialogic reading. After prompting strategic questions, adults then skilfully respond to and expand on the toddler's contribution (Abarca et al., 2017), creating a reading experience that is grounded in adult–toddler scaffolding. Through the strategic questioning and adult–toddler scaffolding, dialogic reading empowers toddlers as contributors and enables working within a toddlers' ZPD by adjusting the support to the current state of development to scaffold optimal learning (Bailey et al., 2013). When using scaffolding as a teaching technique, toddlers are supported to reach a higher level of understanding through support that builds on their current level of understanding. Therefore, dialogic reading offers a structured way for adults to extend toddlers' thinking while validating their contributions.

The adult is supported in the implementation of dialogic reading through a systematic and specific framework that provokes a dialogue following a sequence of steps (Chang et al., 2022). The acronyms PEER (Prompt, Evaluate, Expand, Recall) and CROWD (Completion, Recall, Open-ended, Wh-questions, Distancing), which corresponds to the letter P in PEER by providing a range of prompting methods, support the predictable implementation of dialogic reading (Chang et al., 2022). These structured supports make dialogic reading accessible for both parents and teachers, strengthening consistency and effectiveness across contexts.

After initially being used in home contexts during parent/child interactions, dialogic reading has also been found to be beneficial in teacher–child interactions (Whitehurst et al.,

1994). Dialogic reading is responsive to children's developmental level and can be adapted to best align with their current development (Vajcner, 2015), making it a suitable intervention for toddlers. Bramwell and Doyle (2006) suggest that dialogic reading enables a balance between social and emotional learning and emergent literacy, as it holds large potential to support children's early language and literacy skills during early childhood. Taken together, this evidence positions dialogic reading as a flexible and developmentally appropriate practice across home and ECE settings.

In an American context, Vajcner (2015) investigated the effects of dialogic reading of social-emotional books on 4–5-year-old children's vocabulary and their emotion knowledge. In Vajcner's quasi-experimental design, participants were divided into a school only dialogic reading intervention and a school + home dialogic reading intervention. Pre- and post-test results of the children's emotion knowledge indicated an improvement in both groups. However, the improvement of the home + school intervention group was significantly higher. This underscores the importance of reinforcing dialogic reading across multiple environments to enhance children's learning.

Bailey and colleagues (2013) explored the effects of dialogic reading of emotionally rich picture books on children's emotion knowledge between a mother and child dyad. The results of the study confirmed findings from other research (Conte et al., 2019; Sette et al., 2015) that children's emotion knowledge is largely dependent on children's age. In alignment with the findings from King's (2021) study, Bailey et al. (2013) also found difference in mother's engagement with emotion language between genders, as the language mothers used with boys was more negative, while the language used with girls was strong, positive, and included more questions. Furthermore, the results showed that girls' emotion knowledge was strengthened through maternal questioning, however, boys' emotion knowledge was not enhanced through questioning. Nevertheless, the researchers argue that questioning should be

considered when considering the emotion socialisation by parents. In response to the results, Bailey et al. (2013) advocate for questioning as an effective scaffolding method and suggest that asking questions when reading emotionally rich books with children supports their understanding of the causes and consequences of emotions. This aligns with the dialogic reading design.

Another study focused on the learning of emotion knowledge in the home environment by investigating the effects of mothers' interactive reading and oral storytelling on their children's social competencies (Curenton & Craig, 2011). Curenton and Craig found that there is no significant difference between emotion language used by mothers in book reading and oral storytelling. However, the researchers suggest that oral storytelling may provoke a more sophisticated dialogue than book reading. This seems to be supported by Shanty (2016), who had limited success with dialogic reading alone as an intervention for emotion knowledge.

In her master's thesis Shanty (2016) explored the effects of supporting emotion knowledge through dialogic reading. For her study, Shanty recruited 36 (N=36) participants from eight HeadStart classrooms in America, which were randomly divided into a control group (n=16) and an intervention group (n=20). Testing, which included an emotion knowledge test, was administered prior and post a 4-week intervention consisting of two weekly dialogic reading sessions. The control group was read informational books, and the intervention group was read books with a focus on emotions. While the results of the study confirmed the researcher's hypothesis that emotion knowledge would improve after the intervention, the differences between the control group and the intervention group were not significant. The researcher suggested that participants' attention during the intervention may have been limited, thus prompting a reflection on intervention group sizes.

Overall, the literature highlights dialogic reading as a meaningful pedagogical approach to support learning in numerous areas, including early language, social, and emotional growth. When used in home and school or ECE environments, dialogic reading can strengthen continuity across learning environments. Successful support relies on adult responsiveness and children's engagement.

2.4.3 Social Story Reading

Social stories are individualised short stories to provide young children and toddlers with support to navigate a specific challenge, situation, or skill to achieve a desired outcome (Briody & McGarry, 2005; Gifkins & McLaughlin, 2023; Whiting, 2023). Originally developed by Carol Gray for toddlers with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) to support language learning and making predictions about what to expect in social situations, social stories have also been found to positively support neurotypical children with limited language and social skills (Benish & Bramlett, 2011; Whiting, 2023). Social stories are also called scripted stories and can be written for an individual child or for a group of children (Gifkins & McLaughlin, 2023; Whiting, 2023).

Social stories comprise of four elements, including descriptive, perspective, affirmative and directive texts (Briody & McGarry, 2005; Whiting, 2023). Descriptive statements set the context and are important to guide the story. Perspective sentences enable a view into other people's feelings and opinions. Directive sentences provide guidance for positive choices; these should be limited to enable flexibility of the reader. Affirmative statements assert a value, commonly shared by a culture. Social stories are flexible and aim to provide children with guidance and knowledge to make positive choices and navigate through social and/or emotional challenges. Key to this is the aid of a visual script that supports the organising and interpretations of situations (Briody & McGarry, 2005). Briody and McGarry

(2005) suggest that 2 years of age is a suitable time for the use of social stories as it supports toddlers' emerging language skills and emotion knowledge through the modelling of positive behaviours in challenging situations.

A study conducted by Richels et al. (2014), positioned in the sphere of emotion knowledge, explored the suitability of social stories to teach emotion vocabulary to preschool aged children (39–54 months old). Although the study was limited to three participants with auditory challenges, the results indicated that social stories have potential in the support of emotion knowledge learning. More specifically, the results, following a 10-week social story intervention, indicated that all participants' correct use of emotion words increased and a two-week post-intervention test evidenced a sustained increase.

In Aotearoa New Zealand, social stories are currently not widely used in ECE (Gifkins & McLaughlin, 2023), although they are referred to three times in *He Māpuna te Tamaiti* (MoE, 2019a) as a teaching strategy to support social and emotional competencies. According to Gifkins and McLaughlin (2023), some teachers in Aotearoa New Zealand may be unfamiliar with social stories and may confuse them with learning stories, a formative form of assessment. This confusion appears to extend into the scholarly realm, where social stories have been referenced as a form of assessment (Rouse, 2015). The limited familiarity of teachers with social stories may be explained by the scarce amount of research available on their effectiveness as an early intervention strategy with neurotypical children and toddlers. Nevertheless, social stories are an accessible and suitable teaching approach that can be considered for any learner in ECE environments (Gifkins & McLaughlin, 2023).

Social stories can also be used by families and teachers, bridging learning environments. In a small action research project, Whiting (2023) used social stories as an intervention tool for children's undesirable behaviours during circle time and to reduce anxiety. The results indicate that through the collaborative use of social stories at the ECE

centre and in children's homes, undesirable behaviours were significantly reduced.

Furthermore, participating parents expressed that the social stories seemed to reduce their child's separation anxiety.

Overall, the research on social stories shows that they offer a flexible, accessible, and developmentally appropriate intervention to support toddlers' social, emotional, and language learning. Social stories can be used across both home and ECE environments. Their adaptability enables teachers and parents to work together, using social stories to promote consistency and strengthen partnerships that benefit toddlers' emerging competencies.

2.5 The Role of Parent–Teacher Collaborative Relationships

Parents and teachers play important roles in supporting toddlers' emotion learning (Slot et al., 2025; Zulauf-McCurdy et al., 2024). High quality parent–teacher relationships are paramount for toddlers' learning and development (MoE 2017, MoE, 2026a; Slot et al., 2025; Zulauf-McCurdy et al., 2024) and parent–teacher relationships are commonly recognised as a foundational pre-requisite for intervention models, including *He Pikorua* (MoE, 2026a). *Te Whāriki* (MoE, 2017) emphasises the importance of parent–teacher relationships in the principles family and community/whānau tangata, and relationships/ ngā hononga, stating that children's learning is supported through responsive and reciprocal relationships and suggesting that teachers must develop meaningful, collaborative relationships with whānau.

Toddlers have diverse learning needs and develop in different ways, which means teachers must respond sensitively to each child. Strong, trusting collaboration between parents and teachers helps ensure that toddlers' individual learning needs, including their emotion knowledge learning, are recognised, understood and effectively supported. In the diverse ECE landscape of Aotearoa New Zealand, high-quality parent–teacher relationships

can also support equitable outcomes for a wide range of children (Zulauf-McCurdy et al., 2024).

With regard to Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Systems Theory, home and ECE settings are toddlers' basic contexts, the microsystems, and the relationships between parents and teachers describes the mesosystem through the interactions between toddlers, parents, and teachers. These interactions and relationships can vary widely. Slot et al. (2025) discuss the parent-teacher relationship on a continuum from negative to positive relationships. At one end, negative relationships can be hierarchical and controlling with opposing goals and parents seen as intruders. At the other end, positive relationships are described as respectful, warm, supportive, honest and strengthened through open communication, shared beliefs, shared power and cultural responsiveness. Positive relationships between parents and teachers have positive effects on toddlers' wellbeing, learning and development (Slot et al., 2025).

A systematic review undertaken by Zulauf-McCurdy and colleagues (2024) evaluated interventions in ECE that focused on improving parent-teacher relationships. The review found that there was no firm consensus regarding how parent-teacher relationships can be improved through intervention. The review also recognised that many barriers to forming positive parent-teacher relationships prevail (Zulauf-McCurdy et al., 2024). Zulauf-McCurdy and colleagues suggest that adults who enter the education system as parents are learning how to build relationships with their young children's teachers, indicating that parents can benefit from teachers' initiative. The Education Review Office (ERO) states that tailored communication and practical guidance for home learning support effective relationships. ERO links parental engagement to positive outcomes for children, especially in the ECE sector (ERO, n.d). Overall, through research insights and guidance from services such as ERO and from curriculum documents, it is apparent that teachers' responsiveness,

intentionality and principled practice are key to developing and maintaining collaborative relationships with families.

2.6 The Role of Parents and Whānau in Children’s Learning

Relationships with family and whānau are at the centre of ECE in Aotearoa New Zealand as stated in *Te Whāriki* (MoE, 2017) “The wider world of family and community is an integral part of early childhood curriculum” (p.20) and recognised as the foundation of successful intervention in *Te Tūāpapa o He Pikorua* (MoE, 2026c). Moreover, the contribution of parents to their toddlers’ education is imperative (Blackburn, 2016).

Families play a crucial role in their toddlers’ learning. Research shows that parents who use more emotion language raise more emotionally knowledgeable toddlers (Curenton & Craig, 2011; Vajcner, 2015). The teaching of emotions by parents is often unconscious (implicit) as parents model specific emotions, demonstrate their emotion expression and situation knowledge, show what emotions are acceptable and when they are acceptable, and influence the environments they create. Research on parental influences in other learning areas also shows that parents’ attitudes toward their children’s learning, and their own, can shape children’s outcomes (Chen et al., 2023). These findings highlight that while parents play a central role in toddlers’ early emotional learning, much of this teaching may happen implicitly. Teachers may need to take initiative in helping families recognise their role in emotion teaching, and in offering guidance on how to support their toddlers more explicitly.

A study conducted by Blackburn (2016) investigated factors contributing to successful early intervention by exploring the perspectives of parents and professionals on their experiences with relationship-based intervention in a private early intervention centre in Christchurch, Aotearoa New Zealand. The results indicate that parents value being taught how to support their children’s learning. However, generalisation of this study is limited as it

was conducted at a private early intervention centre with toddlers with complex needs and Blackburn found that parents are more likely to welcome intervention support when the child's needs are clearly defined.

In sum, although whānau are central to toddlers' learning, the evidence highlights the importance of teachers initiating and nurturing these partnerships so that families are supported to engage meaningfully in their children's emotional development.

2.7 Summary of Chapter Two

Emotion knowledge learning can be enhanced through responsive pedagogical practices and collaboration with parents and whānau, particularly during toddlerhood, a critical period in emotion learning. As evident in the reviewed literature, language learning is an important component in the learning of emotion knowledge. Both the home and the ECE environment are important learning environments where toddlers' development and learning are fostered. Therefore, interventions that can be implemented across ECE and home environments and that have been shown to foster learning, such as shared reading, dialogic reading and social stories, are suitable to explore as a collaborative, tiered intervention between parents, whānau and teachers to support toddlers' emotion knowledge learning.

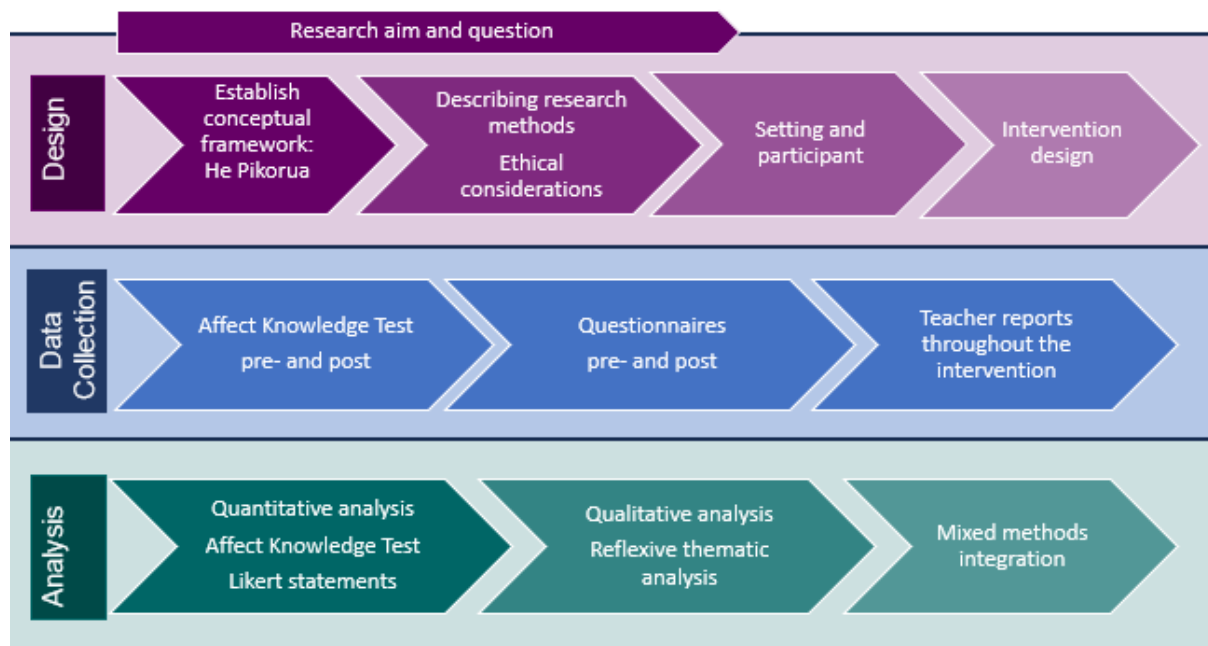
The exploration of such a tiered model of intervention, based on shared reading, dialogic reading, and social stories, may ensure that every toddler receives the most suitable support for their needs, with shared reading providing an unstructured intervention for all toddlers, dialogic reading offering a structured strategy for small groups, and social stories providing tailored support for individual toddlers. Next, Chapter Three outlines the methodology selected to explore an intervention involving three tiers of reading. The chapter explains how the research design explores the intervention's influence on toddlers' emotion knowledge and on parent–teacher collaboration.

Chapter Three — Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The chapter begins with the study’s aims and research question, followed by a description of the theoretical and conceptual framework, including *He Pikorua* (MoE, 2026a) which guided the study. Next, the research methods are described before an elucidation of the ethical considerations that keep the toddlers and their whānau at the heart of the decision making. This is followed by an overview of the study’s context and participants and a detailed description of the intervention design. Following the description of the storybook reading intervention, data collection methods are described. These include the Affect Knowledge Test, the questionnaires and the teacher reports. Finally, an overview of mixed methods data analysis is provided before a brief summary concludes the chapter. Figure 3 provides a visual overview of the key information that will be presented in this chapter.

Figure 3. *Overview of chapter three*



3.2 Research Aim and Question

This study aimed to explore storybook reading through a tiered intervention model, specifically examining how the reading intervention supports toddlers' emotion knowledge learning and parent–teacher collaboration. The reading intervention was structured across three tiers, reflecting the framework of *Te Tūapapa o He Pikorua* (MoE, 2026c):

- **Shared reading**, providing universal support through shared storybook reading.
- **Dialogic reading**, offering targeted interaction through dialogic reading to deepen toddlers' emotion knowledge.
- **Social story reading**, delivering individualised support through social stories to help toddlers navigate specific emotional and social situations.

Research question: In what ways does a ten-week storybook reading intervention support toddlers' emotion knowledge and influence parent–teacher collaboration?

3.3 Conceptual and Theoretical Framing

In alignment with *Te Whāriki* (MoE, 2017), the research is grounded in sociocultural perspectives, drawing specifically on Urie Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) and Lev Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory (Drewery & Claiborne, 2013). Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Systems Theory recognises the intricate interplay of nature and nurture as important influences on children's development. In understanding each child's unique biology at the core of development and further influenced by their interactions with their environment and other people, Bronfenbrenner's theory recognises the importance of social and cultural influences on human development. Similarly, Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory emphasises the important of culture on children's learning, emphasising the learning that occurs through social interactions (Drewery & Claiborne, 2013).

As a conceptual framework that connects to *Te Whāriki* and its socio-cultural underpinnings, *He Pikorua* aligns with the design of this study and guided both the intervention and the research. *He Pikorua* served a dual purpose: it framed the practical design and delivery of the intervention while also grounding the research in principles that aligned the ethical and relational aspects of the study. Thus, *He Pikorua* provided a foundation for the researcher's conduct throughout the research. *He Pikorua* is a flexible practice framework that is responsive to the needs of mokopuna and their whānau and designed to support an effective and collaborative learning support approach for practitioners. The seven principles of *He Pikorua*, outlined below, provided a pathway for all aspects of the research.

Mokopuna and whānau-centred: This principle places mokopuna and their whānau at the heart of decision-making, prioritising their interests, goals, and wellbeing. The study's tiered intervention approach reflects this principle by being flexible and responsive, and by tailoring support to meet the unique needs of toddlers. The study values the perspectives and agency of whānau, aiming to support positive outcomes for all.

Collaborative: In *He Pikorua*, collaboration highlights the importance of drawing on the shared knowledge, experiences, and perspectives of mokopuna, whānau, communities and support services. This principle is embedded in the current study which acknowledges the impact of parents, whānau and teachers on toddlers' learning, and actively engages them throughout the intervention and research. The contributions of parent, whānau and toddler participants' perspectives, ideas, and experiences, and their engagement was supported through storybook reading and interactions with teachers, fostering meaningful connections between home and the early learning environment.

Strengths-based: *He Pikorua* promotes a holistic, strengths-based approach that recognises the capabilities of whānau and communities to navigate challenges by working in

partnership. This study reflects that commitment by being responsive to the diverse needs of toddlers, parents and whānau, and by fostering equitable opportunities for every toddler to reach their full potential.

Culturally affirming and responsive: *He Pikorua* emphasises the importance of engagement with people's cultural identities and beliefs through culturally competent practice, which involves deepening the awareness, knowledge and skills to navigate a diverse society, ensuring interactions and communication with people from varied backgrounds are central to teaching practice (Macfarlane & Macfarlane, 2013). This study acknowledges the importance of emotion knowledge learning through social interactions as a way for toddlers to develop culturally appropriate emotional skills (Watanabe & Kobayashi, 2019) and embraces cultural diversity as a strength. To ensure that the research processes are respectful of te ao Māori, the guidance of the ECE centre's cultural advisor, the inclusion of culturally diverse books and the *He Pikorua* framework were central aspects of all processes.

Inclusive: This principle highlights the importance of using approaches that are adaptable, culturally responsive, and co-constructed with mokopuna, whānau, and teachers to meet their unique needs and values. This study reflects inclusivity through its collaborative design, actively involving toddlers, parents, whānau and teachers in shaping the intervention. The flexible and tailored nature of the storybook reading programme is a core feature, supporting meaningful engagement for toddlers, parents, whānau and teachers alike.

Ecological: This principle refers to the multiple environments in which we live, and the dynamic interactions within and between these environments. It strengthens collaboration by acknowledging the diverse contexts that shape our lives and learning. This study reflects the ecological principle by extending the storybook reading intervention beyond the ECE centre to toddlers' home environments, sharing books between centre and home, and fostering meaningful collaboration between parents and teachers.

Informed by Evidence: *He Pikorua* describes evidence-informed practice as a dynamic process that brings together research, professional expertise, and the lived experiences of whānau and mokopuna. This principle is underpinned by Macfarlane and Macfarlane's (2013) *Informed Practice Model*, which integrates three interconnected sources of evidence: Tika (research), Pono (practitioner knowledge and skills), and Aroha (whānau perspectives). This study reflects the informed practice model by drawing from a base of empirical literature that highlights the importance of emotion knowledge in the early years, from parents' perspectives and expertise of their own toddlers, and from teachers' professional knowledge and insights from working with the toddlers and their whānau.

3.4 Research Design

Aiming to explore how a tiered storybook reading intervention influences toddlers' emotion knowledge and the collaboration between parents and teachers, a mixed methods single group pre- post-test design was used. The single group pre- post-test design is a type of quasi-experimental method in which the outcome of interest is measured twice: once before an intervention and once after (Marsden & Togerson, 2012). This design is commonly used in social science research, including education (Dugard & Todman, 1995), as it enables researchers to observe potential changes in participants following an intervention (Shek & Sun, 2012).

The single group pre- post-test design has numerous benefits, including baseline understanding and efficiency. Understanding the baseline helps establish participants' initial abilities and perceptions, providing a reference point for interpreting change (Rochmawati et al., 2023). The design offers a rapid and straightforward method for exploring the effectiveness of an intervention (Stratton, 2019). However, the single group pre- post-test design also has limitations and delimitations. Delimitations mean the study's scope and

boundaries are intentionally restricted in several key areas that limit the interpretive power of the findings. For example, while this design fits the scope and size of a master's research project, without a comparison group, it is difficult to determine whether observed changes are influenced by factors other than the intervention, such as maturation, historical events, or testing effects (Marsden & Torgerson, 2012). Moreover, the pre-test may influence participants' responses in the post-test, potentially skewing results (Stratton, 2019). The small single-group design limits the ability to generalise findings beyond the study sample (Stratton, 2019). Nevertheless, the design is suitable as an exploration of a unique intervention and creative application of *He Pikorua* and can generate important insights for teachers and the wider education sector.

In the context of the present research, a mixed methods single group pre-test post-test design was an appropriate design to explore how a tiered storybook reading intervention influences toddlers' emotion knowledge and parent-teacher collaboration. More specifically, the use of mixed methods helps explore how toddlers, parents and teachers experienced the different levels of the intervention in relation to toddlers' emotion knowledge learning and parent-teacher collaboration.

Outcomes and perspectives were gathered before and after the 10-week intervention. This enabled the exploration of changes that occurred over time. To establish a baseline, pre-intervention measures of toddlers' emotion knowledge and parent-teacher interactions were collected using quantitative data, including the Affect Knowledge Test (AKT) and researcher-developed questionnaires. The post-test measures provided an insight into shifts that occurred after the intervention.

The qualitative data collected through open-ended questions and teacher reports enabled a deeper understanding of the ways toddlers' emotion knowledge was supported and how parent-teacher collaboration was influenced. The choice of the single group pre-test

post-test design supported ethical considerations to ensure that every toddler was empowered to benefit from the intervention in alignment with the professional responsibility of the teacher researcher (Education Council New Zealand, 2017).

3.4.1 Mixed Methods

It is the intention of mixed methods research to bring together the differing strengths and nonoverlapping weaknesses of quantitative methods with those of qualitative methods through separate data collection of each approach (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2006). Quantitative research methods enable the measurement of broad data and the relationships between variables while qualitative research methods yield detailed information and enable the collecting of experiences and their meaning, from the perspectives of participants (Creswell & Garrett, 2009; Driscoll et al., 2007). The combination of both methods enables the researcher to get a better understanding of the research problem than by using one method alone (Creswell & Garret, 2009; Driscoll et al., 2007). The Affect Knowledge Test (AKT) and closed questions in the questionnaires were used as quantitative data collection tools, while open-ended questions in the questionnaires and teacher reports were used as qualitative data collection tools.

The integration of quantitative and qualitative data can occur at different levels, including the design, the method and the interpretation level (Creswell et al., 2013). Integration can enhance the quality of a mixed methods study, and has a range of benefits, including but not limited the assessment of the validity of quantitative findings through qualitative findings, or the explaining of quantitative findings through qualitative data (Creswell et al., 2013). In this study, the quantitative data and the qualitative data were used to help tailor the storybook reading to toddlers' and whānau needs and preferences. The key

point of integration was at the interpretation level, where data were merged to identify potential impacts of the intervention and answer the research question.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

Before engaging in the research, approval was sought from the Massey University Ethics Committee. A full ethics application was completed, and approval was granted through the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Ohu Matatika 2, approval number OM2 24/60 (Appendix 1). Ethical considerations in this study are based on the view that toddlers are capable and competent social contributors with a sense of agency, in alignment with *Te Whāriki* and Te Tiriti o Waitangi. With support from a cultural advisor and through the use of the principles of *He Pikorua*, the researcher ensured that Tika and Mana were honoured throughout the study. Tika in research refers to fairness and validity. Mana refers to power and respect (Macfarlane & Macfarlane, 2013). The study involved toddlers under the age of seven and took place at a setting where non-participating toddlers were also enrolled and the researcher was employed in a leadership role. Therefore, issues of power and autonomy, informed consent and vulnerability were identified as important ethical considerations.

- **Issues of power and autonomy:** As the head teacher, the researcher's junior colleagues and the researcher's own students and their families were involved, causing a potential conflict of power relationships. The potential issue of power was addressed through careful communication, informed consent, voluntary participation and ongoing checking.
- **Informed consent:** In this study, informed consent was sought from all adult participants. This involved sharing information about the research, including the research aim, the duration of the research, and the expected level of involvement for

parents and toddlers through the AKT, the questionnaires and the storybook reading through conversations, flyers, poster and a Storypark post; and answering potential questions.

- **Assent:** Assent was sought from toddlers every time the reading intervention or AKT was offered. Assent means that the toddler agreed to engaging in reading experiences and the AKT. The AKT was administered during play and toddlers' assent was sought through careful and attuned communication, such as toddlers' oral agreement to participate, their gestures and/or facial expressions.
- **Vulnerability:** The research involved young children and their families, and vulnerability is in the nature of childhood. Therefore, the study aligns with the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* (Ministry of Social Development, 2024) and respected the participants' rights to information, privacy and protection while also recognising their rights to participation, an opinion and agency. See also Appendices 2 – Information Setting, 3 – Information Parents, 4 - Information Teachers, 5 – Consent Form Setting, 6 – Consent Form Parents, 7 – Consent Form Teachers.

3.6 Setting

This study was conducted at an all-day ECE centre in Aotearoa New Zealand which was the researcher's place of employment. The centre accommodates a wide demographic, including families and whānau from diverse cultural, linguistic, and ethnic backgrounds. This research was situated in the toddler room, which caters for children aged 2–3.5 years.

3.7 Participants

To recruit whānau and their toddlers as participants, in December 2024, the researcher announced the upcoming opportunity to engage in the study on Storypark, the centre's common communication platform, using a convenience sampling approach (Scholtz, 2021). This allowed any whānau with toddlers aged 2–3.5 to express interest. In January 2025, a follow-up post was shared, information flyers distributed (Appendix 8), and the study was advertised via posters at the setting, aiming to recruit 10–12 participants. Teachers from the toddler room were invited to participate, with no pressure applied. The researcher participated in the study as a teacher, working with and alongside colleagues.

The intervention was authentically embedded within the everyday curriculum, ensuring inclusive participation for all whānau and toddlers regardless of research involvement. Informed consent was obtained from those who agreed to have their data collected and analysed. This aligns with the characteristics of a single group pre-test post-test design while adhering to ethical standards. Details of consented participants are provided in Chapter Four.

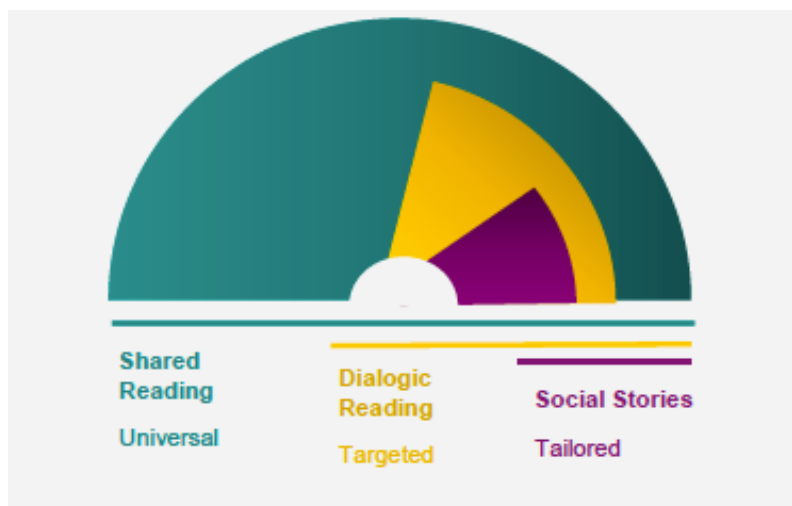
3.8 Storybook Reading Intervention

The tiered storybook reading intervention included shared reading, dialogic reading, and social story reading with the aim of facilitating a responsive intervention that enables equitable outcomes for participating toddlers. A key component of the intervention was the collaboration between parents, whānau and teachers to support toddlers' learning.

Two identical workshops were held to share information about the intervention and to introduce the different reading strategies. These workshops were open to the settings' ECE community, including non-participants and advertised via flyers (Appendix 9). A key intention was to build whānau confidence to read with their toddlers and to try a range of

reading strategies. The content of the workshops is in Appendix 10. Information about the intervention and research was also shared on the communication platform Storypark and in a printed flyer (Appendix 11). Training for teachers in the reading approaches and strategies occurred during a scheduled staff meeting. Figure 4 depicts the shared reading intervention model developed for this study as an adapted version of *Te Tūāpapa o He Pikorua* (MoE, 2026c).

Figure 4. *Tiered shared reading intervention graph*



The shared reading was planned for all toddlers during the entire 10-week intervention. Dialogic reading was available for all toddlers and planned for weeks 5–10. Social stories were planned for weeks 8–10, with participation dependent on multiple factors, including assessment and parents’ desires. Parents and whānau of toddlers who participated in dialogic reading and/or social story reading, were notified prior to the commencement of the new tier, through new information flyers.

The intention of the shared reading was to provide unstructured, interactive reading interactions between toddlers and parents/toddlers and teachers. Parents and teachers were asked to invite toddlers’ contributions during shared reading, and to focus the interactions on emotions. The plan for dialogic reading was to provide a structured approach to reading,

where parents and teachers used question prompts to invite toddlers' contributions, skilfully responding and expanding on these contributions (Abarca et al., 2017). Parents and teachers were asked to use prompts focused on emotions, to scaffold emotion learning with the toddlers. The social stories were individual short stories for toddlers who would benefit from more explicit scaffolding around emotion knowledge. Social stories are designed to help young children navigate a specific challenge, situation, skill, or desired outcome (Briody & McGarry, 2005; Gifkins & McLaughlin, 2023; Whiting, 2023). For this intervention, each story included simple language, clear emotional cues, and situational examples to support toddlers' developing understanding of four target emotions—happy, sad, angry, and scared.

In line with recommended guidelines (Gifkins & McLaughlin, 2023), the social stories were intended to incorporate photographs of each participating toddler in everyday, emotion-eliciting contexts. These photos were taken by the researcher in their capacity as a teacher and in accordance with procedures and policies of the ECE setting. (In accordance with ethical considerations and the ECE settings procedures, no photos of toddlers are included in this thesis). The photographs were paired with third-person narrative sentences providing context and modelling appropriate emotion understanding. Two A5-sized bound copies of each story were produced: one for use within the ECE setting, and one for parents and whānau to use at home. The reading intervention was tracked using the Reading Intervention Tracking Sheets. Three templates were created and used. Template one was used during the intervention weeks 1-4, shared reading only (Appendix 12), template two was used during the intervention weeks 5-7 (one copy per week), shared reading and dialogic reading (Appendix 13) and template three was used during the intervention weeks 8-10 (one copy per week), shared reading, dialogic reading and social story reading (Appendix 14).

Consistent with the responsive approach to intervention that was promoted in this research, this monitoring process enabled teachers to track reading interactions with toddlers

while integrating seamlessly with existing pedagogical routines. The tracking sheet also served as a data collection tool to track implementation and frequency of teachers' reading interactions with toddlers (intervention implementation data are reported in Chapter Four — Findings).

Prior to the commencement of the intervention, the teachers and the researcher discussed the positioning of the intervention books and the reading tracking sheet. A collaborative decision was made to place the books on a table that was easily accessible for the toddlers and enabled easy monitoring for the teachers. Additionally, the positioning of the books was intentional for teachers to use storybook reading to support toddlers' with settling during morning transitions.

Teachers were encouraged to weave observations, feedback or relevant information about the storybook reading with toddlers into the daily interactions they engage in with parents and whānau during toddlers' drop-off and pick-up routines. Relevant interactions were tracked in the teacher reports.

3.8.1 Books for the Storybook Reading Intervention

The books for the intervention included a range of storybooks from local and international authors and custom-made social stories. Shanty (2016) suggests that books should be inclusive of gender and culture, refrains or messages may be repeated during the reading, and the text must be developmentally appropriate. Books that focus on emotions with clear illustrations and clear messages are essential to support toddlers' understanding (Aram & Aviram, 2009; Doyle & Bramwell, 2006).

Together with the thesis supervisors and with suggestions from the cultural advisor, a list of books that reflected different cultural contexts was compiled for the intervention. One copy of each book was kept at the setting, and parents had access to several copies of books

in the parent library, except for *We are going on a Bear Hunt* (Rosen, 1989) and *Where the Wild Things Are* (Sendak, 1964), which were not included in the parent library due to insufficient funds. One book, *Kei te Pehea Koe* (Duncan, 2008), is written in te reo Māori. The remaining books are written in English. The list of books is depicted in Table 1.

Table 1. *List of books used for the intervention*

Title	Author Publishing Date	Publisher	Home Library	Setting Copy	Language
Abigail Fantail	Janet Martin (2000)	Jampot Productions	✓	✓	English
Feeling Series: Scared, Angry, Sad Happy,	Trace Moroney (2019)	Five Mile Press	✓	✓	English
I need a hug	Aaron Blabey (2015)	Scholastic		✓	English
I te tīmatanga: In the Beginning	Peter Gossage (2021)	Scholastic New Zealand Limited	✓	✓	English / Te Reo Māori
Kei te Pehea Koe?	Tracey Duncan (2008)	Penguin Books New Zealand	✓	✓	Te Reo Māori
Rainbow of Emotions: Making Friends with Your Emotions	Elena Ulyeva (2022)	Clever Publishing	✓	✓	English
The Little Mouse, the Red Ripe Strawberry, and the Big Hungry Bear	Audrey Wood (1984)	Child's Play International	✓	✓	English
We are Going on a Bear Hunt	Michael Rosen (1989)	Walker Books		✓	English
Where the Wild Things Are	Maurice Sendak (1963)	Harper & Row		✓	English

3.9 Data Collection

Data collection describes the systematic approach of collecting the information needed to answer research questions (Mwita, 2022). In this research, the Affect Knowledge Test (AKT), questionnaires, and teacher reports were used as data collection methods.

3.9.1 The Affect Knowledge Test

Assessing toddlers' emotion knowledge provides valuable insight into their emotional development (Watanabe & Kobayashi, 2019). The AKT is a standardised tool developed in 1986 used to measure the two key components emotion recognition and situation knowledge in young children and toddlers. It has demonstrated strong reliability and validity across diverse cultural contexts and is suitable for the socio-cultural framework of this study.

The AKT uses a play-based format and includes two sub-tests:

- assessing recognition and labelling of facial expressions during receptive/expressive tasks.
- evaluating understanding of stereo- and non-stereotypical emotion-eliciting situations using puppets during situation knowledge tasks.

Toddlers can complete the stereo- and non-stereotypical situation tasks and the receptive task through actions such as pointing and adhering felt-faces to puppets. For the expressive task, oral language, specifically the ability to use the four emotion words happy, sad, angry and scared or synonyms thereof in a comprehensible way, is required to label emotions. In this study, an adapted version of the AKT was used to assess toddlers' emotion knowledge before and after the storybook reading intervention. Adaptations were made to the stereotypical and non-stereotypical scenarios to suit the participant group. The decisions to make adaptations included the writing of scenarios that were reflective of the experiences and

environments of the participating toddlers. For example, a scenario about a caterpillar dying was relevant as the toddlers were observing the Monarch butterfly lifecycle at the setting during the time of the research. Additionally, the researcher created their own felt faces and puppets based on the manual.

3.9.2 Puppets and Felt Faces for the AKT

The researcher approached the George Mason University Child Development Lab (2025) to request a manual for the *Affect Knowledge Test-Teacher Version ("Puppet" Manual)*. Using the manual, the researcher scripted scenarios that reflect the everyday context of the toddlers. For the non-stereotypical scenarios, for which the researcher drafted two options, the researcher selected the appropriate non-stereotypical based on individual toddler knowledge. To implement the AKT, the researcher created emotion felt faces (Figure 5) in alignment with the originals for the expressive/receptive component, and three puppets (Figure 6) one girl puppet "Bella", one boy puppet "Jack" and one unnamed teacher puppet for the situation knowledge component.

Figure 5. Felt faces from the present study and images of the originals from the manual

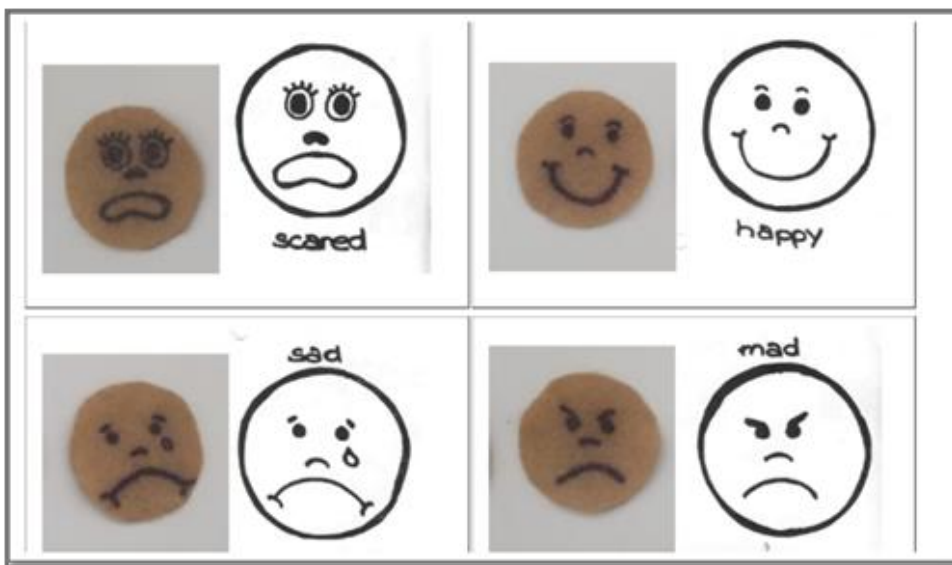


Figure 6. AKT puppets for the situation knowledge component



3.9.3 Questionnaires

Questionnaires are common in social science and are the most frequently used data collection method for the evaluation of educational programmes (Colosi, 2006).

Questionnaires were used to gather parent and teacher perspectives pre- and post-intervention. Two corresponding questionnaires were developed for each group, including Parent Questionnaire Pre-Intervention (Appendix 15), Parent Questionnaire Post-Intervention (Appendix 16), Teacher Questionnaire Pre-Intervention (Appendix 17) and Teacher Questionnaire Post-Intervention (Appendix 18). The questionnaires cover reading, emotions, and collaboration, with the post-intervention version including additional questions about the intervention. Items included open-ended questions for qualitative insights, multiple-choice and Likert-scale statements for ordinal data, and demographic questions for background information. Likert items used a 5-point scale from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree” (Joshi et al., 2015). Questions were designed by the researcher and refined following supervisor feedback.

3.9.4 Teacher Reports

To explore participants' experiences during the intervention, teacher reports were documented by the researcher who noted them in an Excel sheet. These reports captured part of everyday teaching interactions between teachers and toddlers, and between teachers and parents. Rather than being an additional layer of data gathering imposed on the setting, the teacher reports reflected the natural flow of communication within the learning environment. These reports enabled a deeper understanding of the practices, perspectives and other factors as they provide an insight into lived experiences (Oketch et al., 2025). In the present study, the observations and conversations documented in the teacher reports provide an insight into toddlers' emotion knowledge learning as it occurred, and reflect the spontaneous conversations between parents, whānau and teachers that were elicited by the storybook reading intervention.

3.10 Data Analysis

The researcher analysed the data from each source before integrating. Reflexive thematic analysis was used to analyse qualitative data and tables were created for the Likert items and AKT scores. Analysis explored pre- and post-intervention changes as well as the ways in which the intervention supported toddlers' emotion knowledge and parent-teacher collaboration.

3.10.1 Analysing the AKT

Toddlers' AKTs were scored using the score sheet. Toddlers received two points for each correct emotion, one point for the correct emotion valence (for example excited instead of happy) and zero points for incorrect answers. Each task is worth a maximum of eight points, with a total possible score of 32 points. The scores for each toddler were summed and

transcribed into an Excel file after each test phase. The pre-intervention scores supported the assignment of toddlers to different tiers of the intervention, with the aim of supporting learning and achieving equitable outcomes for all toddlers. All scores were then transcribed into a table to examine the results of the entire toddler population, the completed AKTs only, and the two sections of the AKT (reflective -expressive and situation knowledge). The results were used to explore changes between pre- and post-intervention results, and to assess the effectiveness of the different tiers of support.

3.10.2 Analysing Likert Statements

For the Likert statements, the researcher was interested in learning about changes between pre- and post-intervention responses, more than the scores themselves. With the understanding that scores represent a rank order, not a clearly defined size or distance between the answer choices, the researcher created a table that gave a clear overview of the changes between pre- and post-intervention answers.

3.10.3 Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing and interpreting patterns or themes in qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Thematic analysis provides flexible, transtheoretical tools to make sense of shared meanings and experiences (Braun & Clarke, 2022).

Reflexive thematic analysis was introduced by Braun and Clarke in 2006 and emphasises researcher subjectivity as a valued, inescapable aspect of data interpretation. It was selected for this research because of the researcher's involvement as a teacher, its suitability for exploratory research, and its flexibility which enabled the researcher to interpret and make sense of the data from different sources. Good quality reflexive thematic

analysis requires conscious, intentional work in a thoughtful and reflective research approach where many layers of thinking bring together the elements that make a successful analysis. In reflexive thematic analysis, data are not waiting to be discovered but instead interpreted through meaning making (Braun & Clarke, 2022). The six-step reflexive thematic analysis approach developed by Braun and Clarke (2022) was used to analyse qualitative data, as outlined below:

Data familiarisation: The initial phase of reflexive thematic analysis involves gaining a deep understanding and knowledge of the data through immersion and critical engagement (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Data familiarisation began with reading complete questionnaires and transcribing the data into an Excel document. The researcher initially read the questionnaires through two lenses: as the teacher, who had a deep insight of contextual information, and as a researcher, who focused on the data that was shared by the participants. To be fully immersed in the data, the researcher read the data multiple times, first focusing on individual participants, then on individual research questions. This iterative process enabled the identification of interesting elements and patterns that were identified.

Coding: Coding is the systematic act of looking for meaningful or interesting data that are relevant to the research question (Braun & Clarke, 2022). The questionnaire data were transferred as tables into MS Word files and systematically coded, using an inductive approach. An inductive approach uses observations of data to generalise themes and ideas. Coding evolved continuously as codes were reallocated, renamed, or replaced in alignment with the reflexivity of this analysis. For the researcher, this process involved constant reflection as they acknowledged their approach to coding was influenced by their knowledge of participants as a teacher while ensuring to use the lens of a researcher. The MS word files were printed to further refine the codes through a rigorous process until it felt complete.

Theme exploration: The exploration of themes entails trying to find similar meanings across the entire range of answers and investigating what similar ideas or meanings express to find a “pattern of shared meaning organised around a central concept” (Braun & Clarke, 2022, p. 77). Theme exploration involved mapping relationships from printed codes and then creating a thematic map as a working document using computer software to visualise connections and relationships between themes. This was not a linear process as the researcher continuously reflected on the meanings and connections of the codes.

Theme development and review: The development and review of themes refer to the verifying of themes to ensure that they make sense in relation to the codes and to the full dataset (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Re-engagement with the codes and the entire dataset led to the development of clusters and identification of connections and relationships between ideas. Some findings aligned and some appeared contradictory. However, acknowledging the intervention as the catalyst for these contradictory results enabled the researcher to recognise that the intervention caused shifts within participant perceptions. This observation supported the researcher to make connections across clusters, codes, and themes.

Theme refinement: The theme refinement involves the definition of themes (Braun & Clarke, 2022) by identifying coherent patterns and ensuring that the themes are supported by sufficient data. The themes and sub-themes identified in step three were copied into a new thematic map and reviewed to check for coherence, relevance, and unique or specific characteristics. Sub-themes were integrated, and themes lacking sufficient data or relevance were excluded, leading to the identification of four key themes. A diagram of the thematic map is illustrated in Figure 7 (at the end of this chapter).

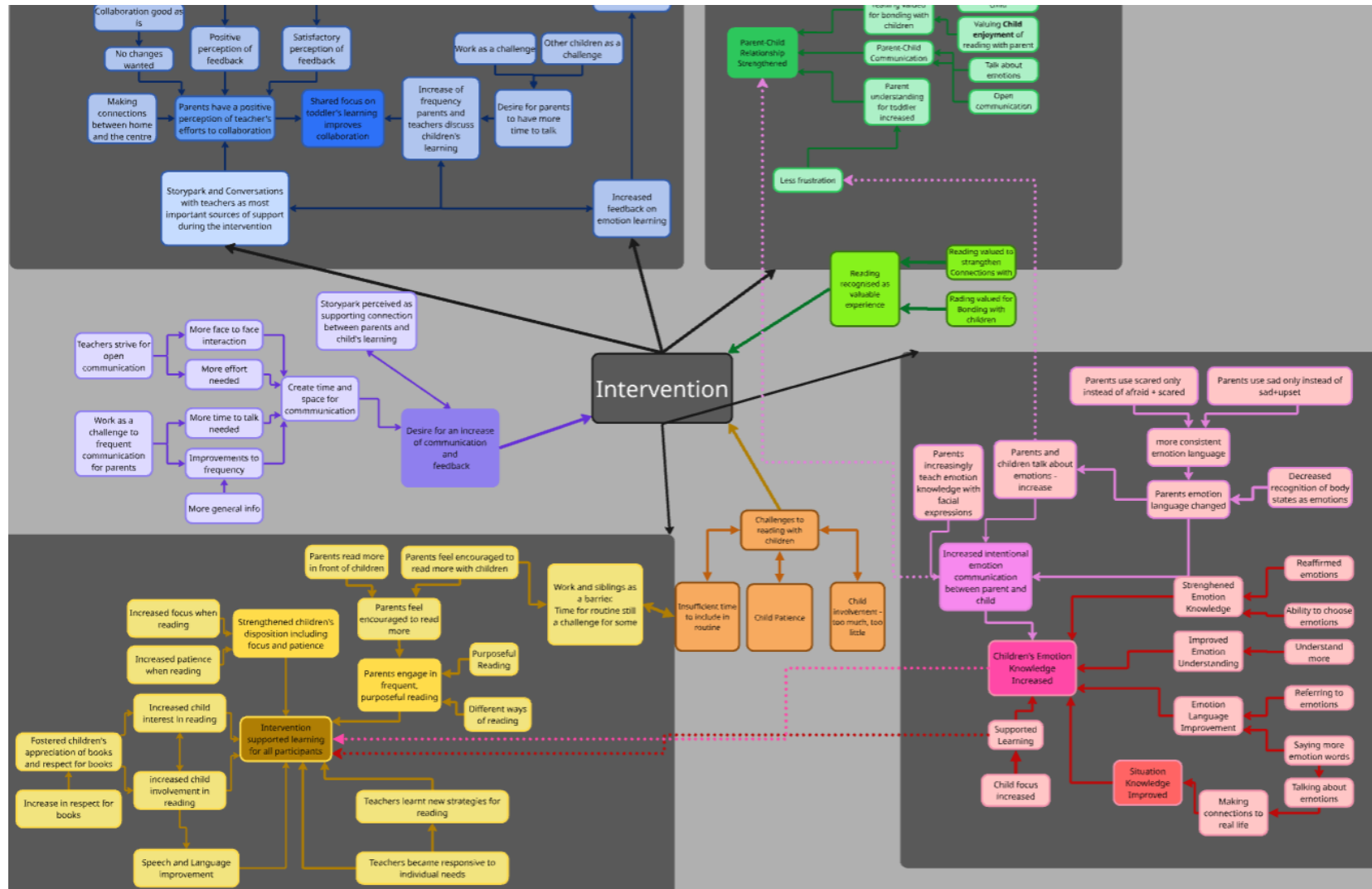
Braun and Clarke (2022) suggest that the presentation of the findings tells the story of a study and should capture readers’ attention. Step six in the present study includes the

presentation of mixed data, thus the story is based on the integration of quantitative and qualitative findings and is presented in Chapter Four — Findings.

3.11 Chapter Summary

This chapter outlined the methodology, introducing the single group pre-test post-test design that featured a mixed methods approach. The socio-cultural underpinnings and *He Pikorua* (MoE, 2026a), the conceptual framework of the study, were described. *He Pikorua* not only provides a framework for the intervention but a set of guiding principles for the research. An overview of the ethical considerations, the research setting and participant recruitment was shared. The tiered storybook intervention that was available to all toddlers and whānau at the setting, was described. The data collection materials and methods and the data analysis processes were described. The next chapter will introduce the participants in more detail and present the findings which include four themes identified through the reflexive thematic analysis.

Figure 7. Thematic map



Chapter Four — Findings

4.1 Introduction

Chapter Four reports the implementation context and findings of the study. The chapter is organised into seven sections, followed by a chapter summary. The intervention context, including the participants and intervention implementation are described in sections 4.2 and 4.3. The remaining sections focus on the findings in relation to the research question: In what ways does a ten-week storybook reading intervention support toddlers' emotion knowledge and influence parent–teacher collaboration?

Section 4.4 presents findings related to toddlers' emotion knowledge and learning, encompassing the theme — *Toddlers' emotion knowledge is supported through tiers of storybook reading*.

Section 4.5 presents findings related to learning that occurred for participants and whānau, encompassing the theme — *Learning for all — A tiered storybook reading intervention promotes benefits beyond toddlers' emotion knowledge*.

Section 4.6 presents findings related to parent–teacher communication, collaboration, encompassing the theme — *Strengthening collaboration through dialogue and shared focus on learning* and identifying how the intervention may have influenced collaborative relationships between parents and teachers.

Section 4.7 presents findings relating to parents and toddlers reading together, through the theme — *Reading storybooks together brings a shift to toddler–parent relationships* and giving insights into the impacts of storybook reading as a shared experience on the dynamic in toddler–parent dyads.

Throughout each section, quantitative and qualitative findings are reported and integrated into a summary to answer the research question. Findings that were not gathered

by design but identified during the research process are also reported. Questionnaire statements and questions are presented in italics, and direct quotes are in quotation marks. Finally, a summary (Section 4.8) concludes the chapter before leading into Chapter Five — Discussion and Conclusion.

4.2 The Participants

Toddlers, parents, teachers, and whānau participated in the study. The initial recruitment number for parents and toddlers was N=13, however one parent and toddler (n=1) withdrew from the study due to relocation, and their data are not shared in the findings. Table 2 provides an overview of the participants, including demographic information. The table is divided into three sections, one for each participant category, including toddlers, parents, and teachers, while whānau are included in the parent category.

Table 2. *Participants – Overview and demographic information*

	Participant Characteristics				
	English as first language	Bi-lingual	Whānau involved	Qualification	Years of experience
Toddlers N=12	n=11	n=6 ^a	N/A	N/A	N/A
Parent-Participants N=12	n=10	n=6 ^a	n=7	N/A	N/A
Teacher-Participants N=2	n=1	n=1	N/A	Qualified n=1 Unqualified n=1	5-10 years n=1 10 years+ n=1

Note: Because some participants met criteria for more than one category, the summed totals in Table 2 exceed the number of individual toddlers and parents.

^a The bi-lingual category encompasses participants for whom English is not the first or dominant language as well as participants for whom English is the first or dominant language.

Table 2 illustrates the final recruitment number for toddlers and parents, at twelve (N=12) and teachers at two (N=2), while seven parents (n=7) indicated that other members of their whānau participated in the reading intervention. In addition to one qualified (n=1) teacher and one unqualified (n=1) teacher, the researcher participated as a teacher-researcher. Table 2 further shows that participants from each category reported speaking languages in addition to English. Specifically, 6 toddlers (n=6), 6 parent-participants (n=6) and one teacher-participant (n=1) reported being bilingual.

Each participant was allocated a code. Toddler codes included a letter followed by the number two, for example A2. Parent codes included a letter followed by the number one, for example A1. Toddlers' codes were matched with their parents' codes by using the same letter, for example participant A2 is the toddler of parent-participant A1. Teacher-participants received the codes XT and YT.

The study distinguishes the three main categories of participants, including toddlers, parents, and teachers. From here on, participating toddlers are referred to as toddlers; parents are referred to as parent-participants, and teachers are referred to as teacher-participants.

4.3 Implementation of the Storybook Reading Intervention

This section outlines how the tiered storybook reading intervention was implemented across the 10-week period and the extent to which each component—shared reading, dialogic reading, and social stories—was used in practice. The tracking sheets, teacher reflections, and parent interactions together provide insight into how the intervention unfolded. The intention of the intervention was to embed reading interactions naturally within daily play and routines while fostering collaboration between teachers, parents, and whānau. Reading opportunities were available for all toddlers in the room, regardless of their participation in the research.

4.3.1 Training

Prior to the intervention, the researcher facilitated two identical workshops to share information to introduce the different reading strategies (Appendix 10). Each workshop was 30 minutes long. A key intention was to build whānau confidence to read with their toddlers and to try a range of reading strategies. Four of the twelve participating parents attended the workshops, as well as teacher participant XT. Additionally, the researcher shared the information on the communication platform Storypark and a printed flyer, to make the information available to all parents (Appendix 10). Teachers received training in the reading approaches and strategies from the researcher during a scheduled staff meeting. The teacher training was approximately twenty minutes.

4.3.2 Intervention Implementation

Teachers were encouraged to integrate shared reading into everyday practice throughout the full 10-week intervention. Shared reading was implemented for all toddlers during the entire 10-week intervention, with all toddlers in the room having opportunities to join in shared reading, even though not all toddlers joined every shared reading session.

Dialogic reading was introduced from Week 5, with eight toddlers participating. As planned, dialogic reading involved a structured approach, with parents and teachers using questions and prompts to invite toddlers' contributions, as well as responding and expanding on these contributions. Parents and teachers were asked to use prompts that focus on emotions, to scaffold emotion learning with the toddlers.

Social stories were implemented from Week 8, for six toddlers. For these six toddlers, decisions to offer social stories were based on assessment, professional judgment and parents' wishes. Teachers integrated the stories during individual interactions, selecting moments where toddlers' emerging emotional responses aligned with the content of their

personalised stories. As intended, each story included photographs of the toddler and accompanying third person narrative sentences; however, in keeping with ethical requirements, these photographs are not reproduced in this thesis. Two bound copies of each story were available: one in the ECE setting and one for families. Teachers reported that having a centre copy allowed them to draw on the stories flexibly during play and daily routines, while families indicated that the home copy supported continued conversations about emotions. The frequency of social story use varied across toddlers, influenced by attendance patterns, and the individualised nature of this tier of the intervention (see Table 4).

The social stories were crafted based on the guidelines published by Gifkins and McLaughlin (2023) and were composed of photos of the respective toddlers during emotion-eliciting situations. These photos were taken by the researcher in their capacity as a teacher and in accordance with procedures and policies of the ECE setting. Each photograph was accompanied by a sentence written in third person to provide situational context. Two A5-sized, bound copies of each story were created: one was kept at the early childhood centre; one was given to the toddlers' parent for use at home.

Reading sessions that occurred at the ECE setting over the 10-week intervention:

Teachers recorded reading interactions using the intervention tracking sheets. Each tier of the intervention was implemented mostly as planned (see Chapter Three, Section 3.8), with some variation as is expected to be responsive to the needs of toddlers and the dynamics of an ECE setting (see Tables 3 and 4). Several contextual factors influenced the frequency of recorded reading, including varied attendance, disruptions due to illness or holidays, and the realities of busy teaching days. Teachers also noted that some reading sessions were brief, sometimes involving only a few pages, and acknowledge that some reading sessions were not recorded. Reading that occurred with non-participating teachers was not captured in the tracking.

Table 3. *Number of recorded shared reading interactions in groups*

Group	Total sessions (10 Weeks)
Small (2–4 toddlers)	47
Large (5+ toddlers)	6

Table 3 shows the shared reading interactions that occurred between a teacher and a group of toddlers. Shared reading was the only intervention tier that was recorded in group situations, as it is less structured than dialogic reading and not individualised like social stories.

Table 4. *Number of recorded reading interactions with individual toddlers*

Toddler N=12	Number of Reading Interactions Recorded per Toddler		
	Shared Reading 10 Weeks	Dialogic Reading 6 Weeks	Social Story Reading 3 Weeks
A2	6	Not planned	Not planned
B2	8	2	3
C2	13	5	17
D2	28	Not planned	Not planned
E2	2	1	8
F2	10	13	Not planned
G2	3	1	4
H2	12	Not planned	Not planned
L2	7	Not planned	Not planned
M2	17	11	7
N2	0	0	3
O2	5	2	Not planned

Table 4 summarises the frequency with which each reading approach was implemented with individual toddlers, outlining how often shared reading, dialogic reading, and social stories occurred over the intervention period for each toddler. Shared reading was implemented for the entire duration of the 10-week intervention for every toddler. Dialogic reading was implemented for six weeks and recorded for toddlers B2, C2, E2, F2, G2, M2, N2 and O2. Social story reading was implemented for three weeks and recorded for toddlers B2, C2, E2, G2, M2 and N2.

4.3.3 Use of the Parent Library

Parents and whānau were also supported to engage in reading at home through access to the parent library. Multiple copies of the intervention books were made available, with the exception of two titles that could not be included due to budget constraints. Overall, the library was well utilised by parents. When asked post-intervention, one parent-participant reported the library was not useful in supporting home reading; one did not respond to the question; and the remaining ten parent-participants found the library to be a supportive resource.

4.3.4 Overall Implementation

Overall, the intervention was implemented flexibly and responsively, reflecting the realities of a dynamic ECE environment. While frequency varied due to attendance patterns and the rhythm of the day, teachers reported that the reading approaches were readily woven into their practice. The remaining sections of this chapter focus on the findings in relation to the research question: In what ways does a ten-week storybook reading intervention support toddlers' emotion knowledge and influence parent-teacher collaboration?

4.4 Theme One — Toddlers’ Emotion Knowledge is Supported Through Tiers of Storybook Reading

Theme one — *Toddlers’ emotion knowledge is supported through tiers of storybook reading*, illustrates the effects of the storybook reading on toddlers’ emotion knowledge learning. It includes quantitative data from the AKT and Likert items from the questionnaires, as well as qualitative data from open-ended questionnaire items and teacher-participants’ reports. The findings from the quantitative and the qualitative data are presented separately before being merged in a summary and connected to the research question.

4.4.1 Quantitative Findings

The quantitative findings of the theme *Toddlers’ emotion knowledge is supported through tiers of storybook reading* include results from the AKT and Likert item responses. The findings are presented with tables and/or narrative descriptions, in the sub-categories:

- *Affect Knowledge Test Findings*
- *Emotion Knowledge Learning in Numbers and Likert Items Findings*
- *Changes in Parent-Participants’ and Teacher-Participants’ Views on Toddlers’ Emotion Knowledge*

4.4.1.1 Affect Knowledge Test Findings

The Affect Knowledge Test (AKT) is a summative assessment that measures the emotion knowledge of toddlers and young children and consists of an expressive/receptive part and a situation knowledge part. It was the purpose of the AKT to measure toddlers’ emotion knowledge pre-and post-intervention. The AKT, in combination with the consideration of other factors that influence toddlers’ emotion knowledge learning, enables teachers to ensure responsivity when designing the level of support for toddlers’ learning. In this study, the AKT in combination with input from parents and teachers supported the

designing of an intervention that was individualised to the diverse needs of the toddlers for universal, targeted and tailored support, emphasising the combination of AKT scores and teacher judgement as complementing factors when designing responsive interventions.

The results from each toddler, divided into the four test sections and listed pre- and post-intervention are depicted in Table 5. The four sections include the subgroups expressive/receptive and stereotypical -/non-stereotypical situation knowledge. These two parts are closely connected, as the development of situation knowledge requires the ability to recognise and label emotions (receptive/expressive knowledge) as a foundation.

Table 5 shows the changes between pre-and post-intervention results. Column one lists the toddlers, followed by column two, which shows the tiers of intervention assigned to individual toddlers, including tier 1, shared reading as a universal strategy, tier 2, dialogic reading as a targeted strategy, and tier 3, social story reading as a tailored strategy. The next four columns show the pre- and post-scores for each individual task, followed by a total score column. The far column *Change per toddler (+/-)* shows the overall changes for each toddler. Changes showing an increase are highlighted in green, changes showing a decrease are highlighted in red, and unchanged scores are highlighted yellow.

Table 5. Changes between pre- and post-intervention AKT results for each toddler

Toddler N=12	Intervention Tier	Pre→Post					Change per toddler (+/-)
		Expressive	Receptive	Stereotypical Situations	Non-Stereotypical Situations	Total Score	
A2	1	7→6	7→8	2→8	3→6	19→28	+9 ↗
B2	1, 2, 3	3→4	0→4	2→2	Incomplete	5→10	+5 ↗
C2	1, 2, 3	2→4	3→8	1→4	0→6	6→22	+16 ↗
D2	1	7→4	8→8	6→7	3→7	24→26	+2 ↗
E2	1, 2, 3	0→0	8→6	Incomplete	Incomplete	8→6	-2 ↘
F2	1, 2	2→7	3→8	5→8	3→6	13→29	+16 ↗
G2	1, 2, 3	0→1	3→3	Incomplete	Incomplete	3→4	+1 ↗
H2	1	4→6	5→8	1→5	6→7	16→24	+8 ↗
L2	1	6→8	8→8	4→8	6→8	24→32	+8 ↗
M2	1, 2, 3	0→3	0→4	0→4	0→6	0→17	+17 ↗
N2	1, 2, 3	0→0	No Participation	No Participation	0→0	0→0	=
O2	1, 2	1→1	4→8	4→5	5→7	14→21	+7 ↗

In alignment with ethical considerations seeking assent from toddlers, not all AKT were completed. One toddler (N2) declined to participate in the AKT, two toddlers completed the expressive/receptive tasks only (E2 and G2), one toddler (B2) completed the expressive/receptive tasks and part of the situation knowledge tasks. Eight toddlers completed the entire AKT. The toddlers who partially completed, or did not engage in the AKT, were assigned to all three intervention tiers.

A range of factors may have contributed to the mixed results and incomplete tests.

These include but are not limited to:

- Expressive/receptive knowledge precedes the development of situation knowledge; hence two participants did not engage in the situation knowledge part (E1, G1) and one participant only completed the situation part partially (B1)
- Toddlers' wellbeing and body states: Sickness, tiredness, and hunger can influence toddlers' engagement (Steyer et al., 2023).
- A range of environmental stressors can temporarily influence toddlers' emotional wellbeing and regulation (Masarik & Conger, 2017), which can influence their engagement with the AKT. In this study, they included but were not limited to family illness, moving house, renovations, new pregnancies, parental separation, the birth of a new sibling.
- Early identification of additional learning needs is challenging (Council on children with Disabilities, 2006), and in this inclusive study, unidentified additional learning needs may have influenced toddlers' engagement with the AKT.
- Scores of zero in the expressive task could relate to toddlers' oral language learning, especially for English language learners (M2).

As evident in Table 5, eight toddlers (N=8) completed the AKT, and all demonstrated increases in their total scores from pre- to post-intervention. Of these eight toddlers four participated in tier 1 only (A2, D2, H2, L2); two participated in tiers 1 and 2 (F2, O2); and two participated in all three tiers (C2, M2). Notably, toddlers M2 (0→17 points, +17), C2 (6→22 points, +16), and F2 (13→29 points, +16) showed the largest gains. Toddler L2 achieved the maximum possible score of 32 points post-intervention, representing an 8-point improvement from their pre-test score of 24.

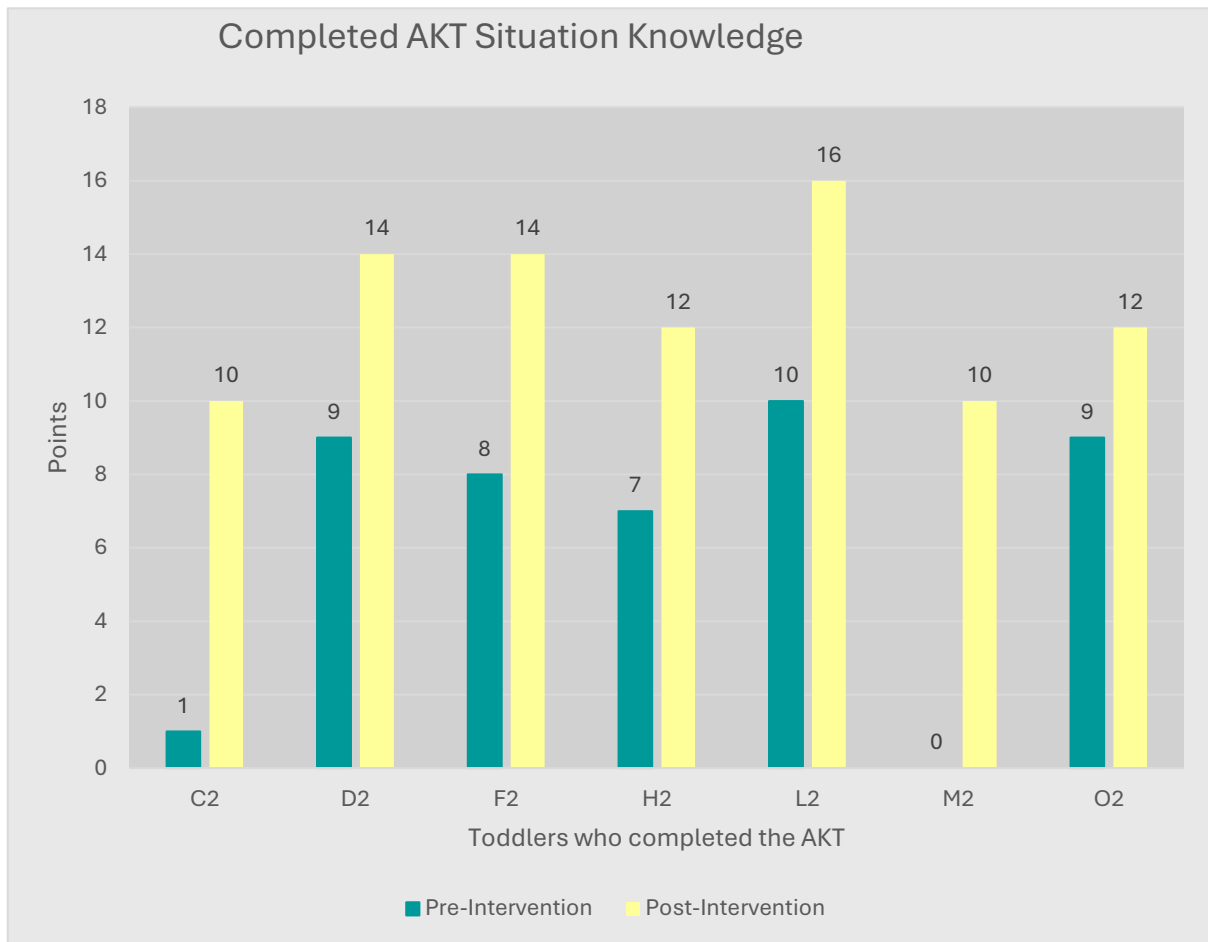
The post-test scores also show reduced gaps between toddlers who received different tiers of support. For example, the preintervention difference between M2 (tiers 1–3) and L2 (tier 1) was 24 points, decreasing to 15 points postintervention. Similarly, the difference between F2 (tiers 1–2) and L2 reduced from 11 points preintervention to 3 points postintervention. These reductions suggest that the tiered intervention may have helped promote more equitable learning outcomes for these toddlers.

In contrast, toddlers with incomplete AKT data showed less consistent patterns. Two toddlers (B2, G2) showed small improvements, while one (E2) showed a slight decline of two points. Additionally, for these toddlers, the score gaps relative to peers with complete AKT results increased from pre- to postintervention, regardless of the intervention tier they had been assigned. This pattern limits the conclusions that can be drawn about the intervention's effects for this group. Furthermore, it is important to note that this exploratory design was not intended to measure effect size, and improvements in toddlers' emotion knowledge may also reflect a range of uncontrolled variables rather than the intervention alone.

A focus on the situation knowledge, including *Stereotypical Situation Pre→Post* and *Non-Stereotypical situations Pre→Post*, in Table 5 highlights the strong situation knowledge improvements recorded by toddlers who completed this section of the AKT. The bar graph in

Figure 8 provides a more detailed overview of the situation knowledge between pre- and post- intervention scores of all completed AKTs.

Figure 8. Bar graph depicting changes of toddlers' situation knowledge pre-and post-intervention



A maximum of 16 points were achievable in the situation knowledge part. Figure 7 shows that post-intervention, all participants who completed this part achieved a high score ranging from 10 points to 16 points. Particularly toddlers A2 (5→14 points, +9), C2 (1→10 points, +9) and M2 (0→10, +10 points) show a strong improvement of situation knowledge. An overview of the score summary of all participants is provided in Table 6.

Table 6. *AKT score summary*

Measure	Value
Toddlers with complete data	8 of 12 (66.6%)
Toddlers showing improvement	10 of 12 (83.3%)
Toddlers with complete data showing improvements	8 of 8 (100%)
Mean pre-test total score	11 (34.4%)
Mean post-test total score	18.08 (56.5%)
Mean improvement	7.08 (22.1%)
Range of individual improvements	1 – 17
Largest improvements	M2 (+17), C2 & F2 (+16)

As depicted in Table 6, 66.7% or 8 of 12 toddlers completed the AKT, and 100% of completed AKTs showed improvements, while 83.3% of the entire toddler population showed improvements.

4.4.1.2 Likert Items Findings: Changes in Parent Participants' and Teacher-Participants' Perceptions on Toddlers' Emotion Knowledge

The parent-participants' and teacher-participants' questionnaires included a range of ordinal questions in the form of Likert statements. Findings from Likert statements relating to the theme *Toddlers' emotion knowledge is supported through tiers of storybook reading* are shared in this section.

Parent-participants were asked if the three different tiers of storybook reading were helpful in supporting their toddlers' emotion knowledge learning. Table 7 depicts the responses from parents about each reading strategy.

Table 7. *Parent-participants’ perceptions of the storybook reading strategies*

Shared reading was helpful in supporting their toddlers’ emotion knowledge learning (N=12)					
Strongly Disagree n=0	Disagree n=0	Neutral n=1	Agree n=5	Strongly agree n=6	No answer n=0
Dialogic reading was helpful in supporting their toddlers’ emotion knowledge learning (N=8)					
Strongly Disagree n=0	Disagree n=0	Neutral n=0	Agree n=4	Strongly agree n=4	No answer n=0
Social story reading was helpful in supporting their toddlers’ emotion knowledge learning (N=6)					
Strongly Disagree n=0	Disagree n=0	Neutral n=1	Agree n=2	Strongly agree n=2	No answer n=1

Table 7 illustrates that overall, parent-participants perceived the different reading strategies, including shared reading (tier 1), dialogic reading (tier 2), and social story reading (tier 3) as helpful in supporting toddlers’ emotion knowledge learning. Most notably, the responses to dialogic reading show that all participants who engaged in this reading strategy with their toddler agreed (n=4) or strongly agreed (n=4) to this being a helpful strategy. Both shared reading and social story reading, show one neutral response each. The remaining responses to shared reading range from agree (n=5) to strongly agree (n=6) while the responses to social story reading include agree (n=2), strongly agree (n=2) and no answer (n=1). No ‘disagree’ or ‘strongly disagree’ response was reported.

Responses to the statement ‘*The storybook reading has supported my child’s emotion learning*’ indicate 100% agreement from the 12 parent-participants (N=12) (n=6 agreed, n=6 strongly agreed) and the 2 teacher-participants (N=2) (n=2 strongly agreed). However, pre- and post-intervention responses to the statement *My child uses emotion words* varied. Five parent-participants’ agreement to the statement increased in the post-intervention survey.

Two parent-participants' (H1 and N1) decreased. Looking at the AKT for these two toddlers, toddler H2 showed an increase in the AKT scores while toddler N2 did not participate. Five parent-participants maintained their initial 'strongly agree' response, highlighting little room for change in their responses. Overall, all parent-participants (N=12) and both teacher-participants (N=2) agreed that toddlers' emotion knowledge increased, and ten parent-participants (N=10) agreed that their toddlers' use of emotion words increased.

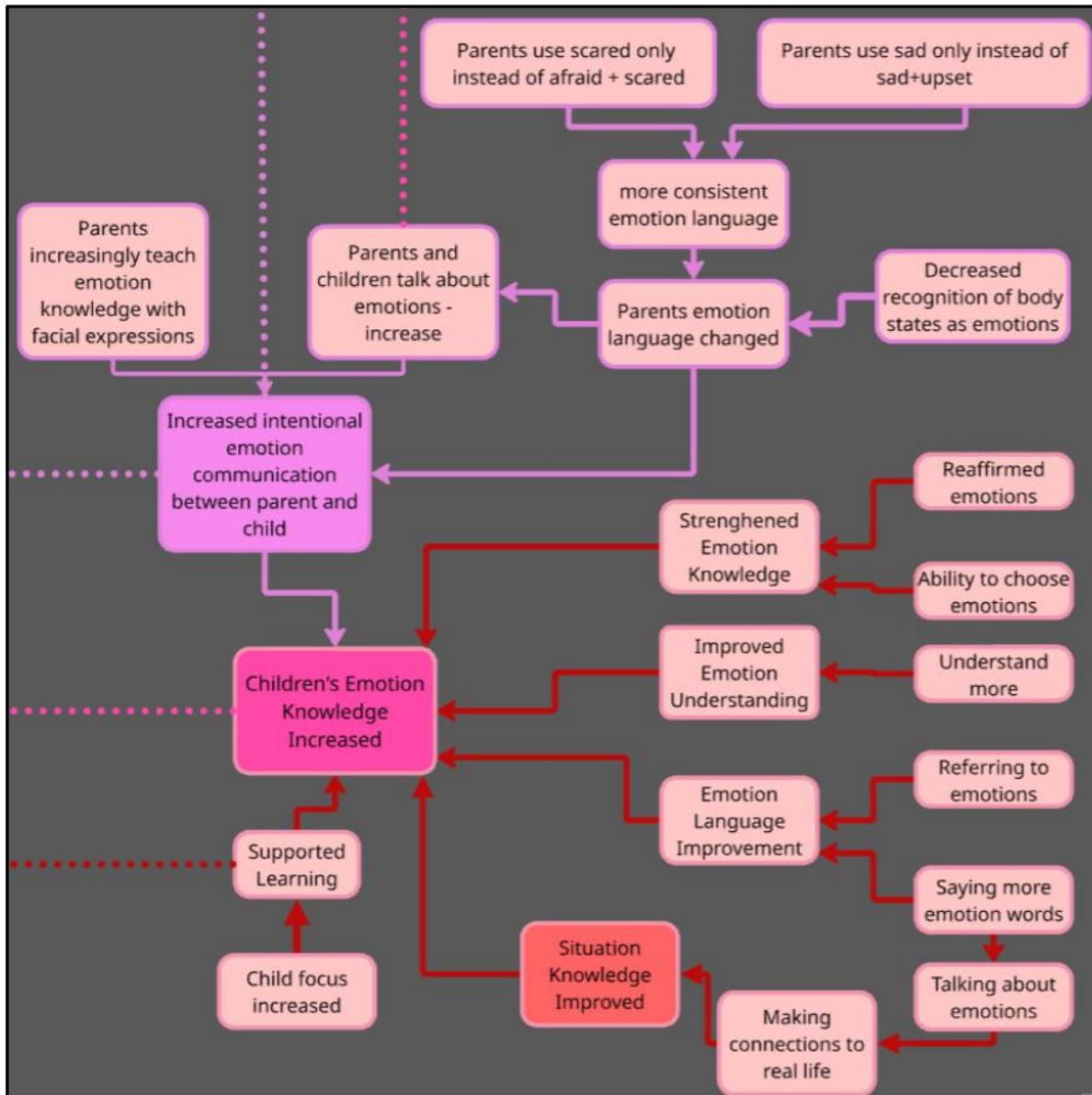
4.4.2 Qualitative Findings

The qualitative findings include parent-participants' and teacher-participants' responses to open-ended questions and documented teacher-participant reports.

4.4.2.1 Questionnaire Responses: Perspectives of Toddlers' Emotion Learning

Based on a reflexive thematic analysis of the responses to open-ended questions, a thematic map was created including all of the themes. The thematic map in Figure 9 zooms into the development of Theme One — *Toddlers' emotion knowledge is supported through tiers of storybook reading.*

Figure 9. Thematic map: Questionnaire data supporting theme one



As illustrated in Figure 9, a range of data from the questionnaires contributed to the development of this theme. The codes supported the development of two sub-themes ‘*Increased intentional emotion communication between parent and child*’ and ‘*Situation knowledge improved*’. These are highlighted in bright backgrounds, and lead to the theme ‘*Children’s emotion knowledge increased*’. Next, statements from parent-participants and teacher-participants that influenced the thematic map are shared.

The post-intervention question *How has the storybook reading intervention changed the ways you and your child communicate about emotions?* revealed that four parent-participants perceived an increase in their toddlers’ emotion understanding, as depicted in Figure 7 with the code ‘*understand more*’ and shown in Table 8. The four responses shared in Table 8 suggest a shift in emotion-based communication between parent-participants and toddlers following the intervention.

Table 8. *‘More understanding’: Parent responses*

Participant	Answers to the question: How has the storybook reading intervention changed the ways you and your child communicate about emotions?
A1	She is <i>more understanding</i> of the words and when I ask she can say or choose which emotion she is feeling
B1	<i>More of an understanding</i>
M1	He <i>understands me more</i> when I talk about it.
N1	<i>More understanding</i>

Parent-participant A1 further elaborates on their toddlers’ emotion knowledge learning, emphasising that the increased emotion understanding enables their toddler to label feelings: “She is more understanding of the words and when I ask, she can say or choose which emotion she is feeling”. This link to emotion words being used by A2 echoes a statement made by D1 about the development of the emotion language of toddler D2: “She can say or choose which emotion she is feeling”, while G1 shared that G2 “expresses her feelings more”. Additionally, these observations align with a statement shared in the questionnaire by teacher-participant YT who observed that toddlers’ awareness of emotions has increased: “There’s an increase of children’s engagement and awareness of their own emotions”.

Parent-participants and teacher-participants reported that the reading strategies helped them support toddlers' emotion knowledge learning during reading interactions. While parent-participant F1 shared that she felt supported to "... guide some of my prompts/questioning while reading together", teacher participant XT felt that dialogic reading has empowered toddlers to be active contributors to their own learning.

4.4.2.2 Teacher Reports

During the ten-week intervention, as part of documented teacher-participant reports, the researcher documented interactions with toddlers and parent-participants that related to toddlers' emotion knowledge development. The interactions shared in this section provide an insight into toddlers' emotion knowledge learning, including their expressive/receptive emotion learning and their situation knowledge development as they make connections between emotions and real-life situations.

Expressive/receptive emotion learning: The following reports from teacher-participants provide an insight into toddlers' emotion knowledge learning, including their emotion language, during the intervention. The reports highlight toddlers' engagement with emotions as they shared observations they made and interactions they initiated with their teachers.

During an everyday care moment, toddler F2 shared that he could see a lot of happy faces. The comment was unprompted, and the participant was referring to stickers of animals and vehicles hanging above the nappy change mat. While the stickers have been there for a long time, this was the first time that F2 made connections between the pictures and their emotions.

Toddler L2 was helping her teacher tidy up, when she initiated a spontaneous conversation, inquiring about the wellbeing of her teacher. The conversation ended with participant L2 sharing that she is happy.

These reports demonstrate how toddlers' emotion knowledge learning transpired during everyday experiences at the centre. Toddler F2 expressed his understanding and recognition of emotions as he noticed emotional expressions on images. Toddler L2 initiated an interaction about emotions, demonstrating understanding and curiosity.

Situation knowledge: The following reports refer to toddlers' developing situation knowledge. The reports demonstrate connections toddlers' made between the learning that occurred during the storybook reading and their own experiences.

During the time of the storybook intervention, the outdoor environment of the research setting was covered in pōhutukawa flower prickles. Toddler B2 had several in his foot. While reading a book about a sad bunny, B2 explained that he (the bunny in the book) has got prickles (pointing to a sad bunny in grass). B2 is making connections between the book illustrations and his own experiences.

During an excursion to the aquarium, toddler D2 engaged in a conversation with another toddler about a sea urchin. D2 suggested that a sea urchin was a hedgehog, like the one in the *'I need a hug'* book. The hedgehog in the book needs a hug, but his friends refuse to hug him because he is prickly. D2 made a connection between the hedgehog in the book and the sea urchin as she stated that she would be happy to give 'him' a hug. This observation is in alignment with a statement shared by parent-participant D1, who

expressed that “my child (D2) refers to them [emotions] outside of story time, too”.

And F1 who suggests that their toddler was “... making connections to home and daycare”.

4.4.3 Key Findings Summary — Emotion Knowledge Learning is Supported

The results from the AKT, the responses in the questionnaires, and teacher reports during the research supported the development of theme one, *Toddlers’ emotion knowledge is supported through tiers of storybook reading*. Data indicate that for most toddlers, emotion knowledge learning accelerated during the storybook reading intervention. Quantitative and qualitative results, including perspectives of parent-participants and teacher-participants support this finding. There were consistently positive responses to the Likert item: *The storybook reading has supported my child’s emotion learning*. While this result is not unexpected, given the nature of the intervention, it is important to acknowledge that this apparent acceleration could also be influenced by other factors, such as natural developmental progression or maturation over time.

The storybook reading intervention influenced the emotion knowledge learning of most toddlers across all areas. Importantly, while improvements in toddlers’ emotion language, expressive knowledge and receptive knowledge were documented, the most significant increase was recorded in the situation knowledge of the toddlers who completed this part of the AKT. This increase was also reflected in the teacher-participants’ reports, which illustrate how toddlers made connections between the emotion knowledge learning through the storybook reading intervention and their experiences in real life.

Parent-participants and teacher-participants alike reported that the storybook reading intervention supported toddlers’ emotion knowledge learning. Quantitative data show that parent-participants who engaged in dialogic reading with their toddlers unanimously agreed

to it being a helpful strategy to support toddlers' emotion knowledge learning. Convergently, qualitative data show that dialogic reading was perceived especially helpful as a responsive method by teacher-participant XT who noticed that this strategy empowered toddlers as active contributors to their own learning. Toddlers' active involvement in their own emotion knowledge learning was further reflected in teacher reports, which share toddler-initiated conversations about emotions. This indicates that toddlers were engaged in their learning as 'meaning makers' and demonstrates their confidence in engaging others to further their learning and understanding.

The results from the completed AKTs (n=8) suggest that the tiered intervention was effective in creating more equitable outcomes and narrowing the gaps between toddlers across different intervention tiers. In contrast, the four (n=4) incomplete AKTs from toddlers B2, E2, G2, and N2, showed widening score differences from pre- to post-intervention when compared to toddlers who completed the AKT. In other words, the toddlers with incomplete data fell further behind those with complete data. This pattern was evident even when toddlers with incomplete AKTs had participated in the same tiers as their peers who had completed the full AKTs, indicating that incomplete participation limited observable gains.

The quantitative data from the AKT and the qualitative data from open-ended questions indicate divergence within the findings. The completed AKTs (n=8) showed strong and consistent gains in toddlers' emotion knowledge, whereas the incomplete AKTs (n=4) showed lower levels of improvement (B2, G2), no improvement (N2) or a decrease in scores (E2). In contrast, the qualitative data from all parent-participants, including parents of toddlers with incomplete AKTs (B1, E1, G1, and N1) presented uniformly positive perceptions of the toddlers' learning. Every parent reported that the intervention had improved their toddlers' emotion knowledge, even when this was not reflected in the quantitative AKT scores.

A range of factors may explain these mixed patterns across quantitative and qualitative data. Toddlers' emotional expression can be influenced by their wellbeing, including sickness, tiredness and hunger, which can influence parent perceptions. Additionally, survey response behaviour can change over time (Pudney, 2008), impacting the measurement of change. Parent-participant responses may have been influenced by mood, stress, and other factors that affected their interpretations of their toddlers' behaviours.

It should be noted that mixed methods research frequently produces this type of divergence, where quantitative and qualitative findings do not align perfectly (Pluye et al., 2019). This occurs because each method captures different aspects of learning: standardised tasks like the AKT measure performance within a controlled moment, whereas parent perceptions reflect broader, everyday observations influenced by context, expectations, and family dynamics. Therefore, the qualitative reports of improvement from all parents may reflect perceived gains in toddlers' emotional expression and behaviour that were not fully captured by the AKT, particularly for toddlers with incomplete assessments.

4.5 Theme Two Learning for All — A Tiered Storybook Reading Intervention Promotes Benefits Beyond Toddlers' Emotion Knowledge

Theme two *Learning for all — A tiered storybook reading intervention promotes benefits beyond toddlers' emotion knowledge*, encapsulates findings that suggest valuable learning that extends beyond toddlers' growth in emotion knowledge occurred. The findings in this theme include quantitative and qualitative data and show a shift in behaviours, perceptions and attitudes that occurred for toddlers, parents, whānau and teachers. Quantitative data are reported before qualitative data and sectioned into the three participant categories: toddlers; parent-participants; and teacher-participants. The findings from the

quantitative and the qualitative data are presented separately before being merged in a summary and connected to the research question.

4.5.1 Quantitative Findings

The quantitative findings of theme two include results from the Likert statement responses. They are presented by participant category and include the categories *changes for toddlers*, *changes for parent-participants*, and *changes for teacher-participants*.

Changes for toddlers: Likert statement responses from parent-participants and teacher-participants indicate that many have observed changes in toddlers beyond their growth in emotion knowledge, specifically in toddlers' reading behaviours and attitudes. From eleven (n=11) parent-participants' responses, six (n=6) reported an increase in their toddler asking to read books, while four (n=4) reported no change, and one (n=1) reported a decrease.

Eleven (n=11) parent-participants and two teacher-participants (N=2) answered a Likert statement exploring toddlers' independent book reading. Three parent-participants (n=3) and one teacher-participant (n=1) reported an increase in toddlers' independent book reading, while five parent-participants' (n=5) responses remained unchanged at 'agree' and two parent-participants. (n=2) and one teacher-participant (n=1) responses remained unchanged at 'strongly agree'. These results indicate a high level of toddler independent engagement in books, with small increases observed by some parents and teachers.

Changes for parent-participants: Likert statement results indicate that learning for parents occurred in their attitude toward reading behaviours, specifically through modelling independent reading to toddlers, through learning new ways to read with toddlers, and through using emotion language when reading. A statement exploring parent-participants' reading habits shows that of eleven participants (N=11) who provided sufficient data, five

(n=5) reported increased agreement to their toddler seeing them reading for enjoyment at home. One participant (parent-participant O1) reported a decrease.

Some parent-participants reported a change in the way they read to their toddlers. Four parent-participants (n=4) reported an increase in conversations with their toddler about illustrations during storybook reading. The most notable shift was from parent-participant E1, who shifted from ‘strongly disagree’ pre- intervention to ‘agree’ post-intervention, indicating they were now engaging in conversations with their toddler during reading. Seven parent-participants (n=7) reported no change, and one parent-participant (n=1) indicated a decrease. The decrease was reported by parent-participant H1, whose perception of their toddlers’ emotion language use also showed a decline, as reported in theme one.

Changes that occurred in the use of emotion language between parent-participants and toddlers are reported in the Likert statement *My child and I talk about emotions*. Five parent-participants (n=5) reported an increase in agreement to this statement after the intervention. The biggest change occurred for F1, whose pre-intervention response ‘disagree’ shifted to ‘strongly agree’ post-intervention. The six parent-participants (n=6) who reported no change selected ‘agree’ or ‘strongly agree’ in both, the pre- and post-intervention statements. Only N1 reported a decrease from a ‘neutral’ response pre-intervention to ‘disagree’ post-intervention. The perception of a decrease of reciprocal conversations about emotions between N1 and N2, aligns with the choice of toddler N2 of not participating in the AKT, as reported in theme one.

Changes for teacher-participants: Responses to Likert statements indicate that the reading intervention has supported pedagogy and a shift in teacher-participants’ communication about toddlers’ learning. Both teacher-participants (N=2) ‘strongly agreed’ that the storybook reading intervention has supported their intentional teaching of emotions.

Likert statement *The teachers provide feedback on my child's emotion learning* elicited an increase in agreement from four parent-participants (n=4), with three responses (n=3) shifting from 'neutral' pre-intervention to various levels of agreement post-intervention. Six (n=6) of eight (n=8) participants' whose response remained unchanged reported 'strongly agree' to the statements before the intervention, while two (n=2) reported 'agree' both pre- and post-intervention. This aligns with teacher-participants' responses, with YT responding 'agree' pre- and post-intervention while the agreement from participant XT increased from 'agree' to 'strongly agree' that teachers provide feedback on toddlers' emotion learning. Overall, findings show that the intentional teaching of emotion knowledge has supported teachers to share information with parents. This suggests that having a specific focus empowers teachers to engage in high-quality conversations with parents.

4.5.2 Qualitative Findings

The qualitative findings include responses from the parent-participants' and teacher-participants' questionnaires and teacher reports. The section begins with an overview of the theme development with a thematic map, before participant responses are shared. These are followed by the teacher-participant reports.

4.5.2.1 Questionnaire Responses: Changes in Behaviours, Perceptions and Attitudes for Toddlers, Parents and Teachers

Figure 10 illustrates a thematic map that supported the development of theme two, *Learning for all — A tiered storybook reading intervention promotes benefits beyond toddlers' emotion knowledge*. The thematic map was constructed from parent- and teacher-participants' responses to open-ended questions. These provided the codes that led to the development of sub-themes and themes.

Figure 10. Thematic map: Questionnaire data supporting theme two

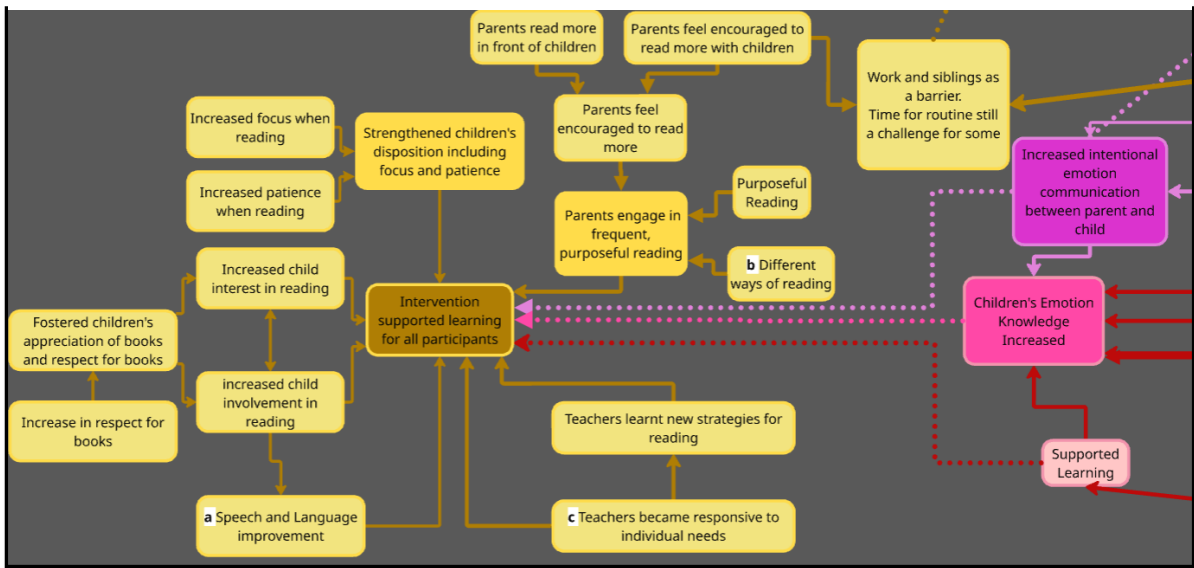


Figure 10 illustrates how theme two was supported from a range of codes, including data that are relevant to theme one. However, following the refined analysis, data aligned with theme one have been reported in that section. This ensures each theme is grounded in the most relevant evidence while acknowledging the interconnected nature of the findings and ensuring a validity check to ensure that each theme has its own focus (Braun & Clarke, 2022). In Figure 8, text boxes depicted in yellow represent codes that indicate a range of different learning for toddlers, parents and teachers. For example, text box **a** shows learning for toddlers: *Speech and language improvement*. Text box **b** shows learning for parent-participants: *Different ways of reading*. Text box **c** shows learning for teacher-participants: *Teacher-participants became responsive to individual needs*.

The pink coloured text boxes correspond to changes in emotion knowledge for toddlers and changes in emotion communication for parent participants. All codes support the development of the theme — *Intervention supported learning for all participants*.

Learning for toddlers: Parent-participants and teacher-participants reported a range of changes that they have observed within the toddlers during the intervention. Aside from

emotion knowledge learning, the changes include engagement with books, dispositions, and language learning.

Toddlers' engagement with books: Parent-participants and teacher-participants have shared changes they have observed with toddlers' engagement with books. Parent-participants C1, E1, M1 recognised changes in their toddlers' attitudes towards books and reading as a valuable effect of the intervention. This is expressed in participant M1's response to the question *What did you enjoy most about the storybook reading intervention?* "To see how my child changed in showing more interest in reading, while participant G1 shared that "She (G2) loves reading books and (expresses her feelings more)".

Teacher-participant XT noticed toddlers in the ECE setting started to read independently or with peers, stating "many tamariki began reading on their own or in small groups", while teacher-participant YT observed that toddlers' reading stamina was increasing. Additionally, the teacher-participants have observed changes in the way toddlers engage with books, as stated by XT: "There was definitely an increase in interest and also respect for books and resources."

Language learning: Parent-participants L1 and M1 also noted other changes in their toddlers' oral language. While L1 reported general improvements about the oral language of L2 "It helped greatly, I feel her speech and how she puts sentences together has improved so much" M1 noticed "how his (M2) second language improved", referring to English as his second language.

Dispositions: Parent-participants' responses to questions enquiring about benefits and challenges of storybook reading indicate a shift for some toddlers with dispositions including patience and concentration following the intervention. H1 cited the "timeframe they sit" as a challenge to reading with their toddler before the intervention and "nothing" as challenging after the intervention. This is echoed in post-intervention statements shared by A1, who

shared that their toddler "... is more patient and actually listens to the story" and M1 stated that their toddler "does sit still for longer and want to show me what is happening on the pictures". This aligns with statements made by L1, who shared that "L2 has become so much more engaged instead of me just reading and using my imagination to create scenarios she also wants a turn describing how she sees each page", and D1, who stated "My child gives regular input about her thoughts when reading stories". Concurrently, teacher-participant YT stated that toddlers' reading stamina has been increasing.

In contrast, responses to a question inquiring about challenges parent-participants experience when reading with their toddlers showed that for parent-participants C1, L1, N1 and O1 patience and concentration were perceived as an ongoing difficulty. As reported by L1 "She (L2) likes to skip pages and go straight to the end so we can read other books." Additionally, parent-participant N1 provided nuanced data regarding their toddlers' patience. While citing patience as a challenge to reading with their toddler, N1 added that the intervention has been supporting their toddlers' patience, also. Additionally, both teacher-participants reported that it was challenging to engage some toddlers in reading. They attributed this to the toddlers' insufficient patience and concentration. These views reflect the teacher-participants' perceptions, and it should be noted that other teachers may perceive this differently.

Learning for parent-participants: Learning for parent-participants included changes to the way they engage in reading with their toddlers and changes in attitudes towards their toddlers' emotion knowledge. Parent-participants overtly shared learning in reference to acquiring new ways of reading with their toddlers, such as F1 who stated that the intervention "... helped guide some of my prompts/questions while reading together" while N1 said that the intervention helped her find ways to read with N2, and O1 reported that the intervention supported "more purposeful reading". One parent-participant indicated a change in their

patience. G1 said the intervention taught her to read unhurriedly and give her toddler time to “... sound words out”.

Parent-participants reported that their awareness of and attitudes towards toddlers’ emotion knowledge has shifted. E1 reported feeling less frustrated when communicating with their toddler “... finding more understanding with how we communicate”. C1 reported finding it easier to understand how their toddler feels, indicating that emotion knowledge learning was not limited to toddlers’ increasing knowledge, but also valuable for parent-participants as they learned to interpret and accept their toddlers’ emotions. Additionally, D1 and G1 reported increased conversations with their toddlers about emotions and F1 noted that they are using more emotion vocabulary.

Learning for teacher-participants: Learning different ways to read with toddlers and engaging in pedagogy that is responsive to the individual needs of toddlers were identified as valuable by the teacher-participants. XT reported on both learnings in one comment: “I understand better the various ways to read, such as shared and dialogic reading and adapting to the children’s level” while teacher YT shared that the reading intervention “... helped to relate the book to what is currently happening”, indicating that the reading strategies supported teacher YT in strengthening toddlers’ situation knowledge by creating links between the storybooks and their real life experiences.

A change in responsiveness when reading to toddlers to adapt to individual needs was also emphasised by YT, who reported: “I learnt to adjust to children’s needs.” Teacher-participant YT’s comment indicates an increased understanding of responsive pedagogy during reading experiences. Similarly, teacher-participant XT noted that often toddlers do not want to read a book to the end and further commented that the reading experience should not be about finishing books.

4.5.2.2 Teacher Reports

Based on reports from teacher-participants, the intervention benefited the wider whānau and led to a shift in parent-participants' perceptions on their toddlers' learning and abilities. Parent-participant C1 told teachers that, in their whānau, the intervention was adapted to meet multiple learning needs. Rather than reading the books to her toddler herself, C1 arranged for the older sibling to read to her toddler, as the sibling needed practice with reading. E1, F1, and M1 also reported the involvement in the reading experiences of their toddlers' siblings. These examples illustrate how interventions can create ripple effects that extend beyond the original focus. The flexible and relational nature of storybook reading within whānau contexts suggests that interventions can foster family-wide learning opportunities, strengthening literacy practices and relationships.

4.5.3 Key Findings Summary — Benefits Beyond Toddlers' Emotion Learning

The results from Likert statements, open-ended questions and teacher-participant reports indicate that the benefits from the storybook reading intervention extended beyond toddlers' emotion knowledge learning. Theme two, *Learning for all — A tiered storybook reading intervention promotes benefits beyond toddlers' emotion knowledge*, illustrates a range of distinct learning for the diverse range of participants and their whānau. This section integrates the quantitative and qualitative data to provide a comprehensive understanding of theme two and to answer the research question. This section does not report on divergent findings as the qualitative and the quantitative data show similarities exclusively.

Aside from emotion learning, there were reported improvements in toddlers' engagement in reading, and speech and language learning. Parent-participants learned new ways to read with their toddlers and showed a positive shift in perception of their toddlers' communication and learning. Similarly, teacher-participants reported learning new reading

methods and strengthening their responsive pedagogical practice. Additionally, theme two highlights the broad reach of the intervention by fostering learning for other whānau involved.

Toddlers: A change in toddlers' engagement with books and reading has been reported by parent-participants and teacher-participants in the Likert statements. This has been further supported by statements from the open-ended questions, as parent-participants shared that their toddlers are more engaged during reading experiences; for example, D2 and L2 who make active contributions when reading with parents.

Qualitative data reveal learning regarding language development and dispositions. Parent-participant L1 observed that the intervention supported general language learning, and M1 made a connection between the intervention and improvements to her toddlers' learning of English as his second language. Mixed results from parent-participants' reports indicate that the storybook reading intervention has influenced dispositions for some toddlers. Parent-participant A1 reported improvements to their toddlers' patience and parent-participant H1 reported patience as the only challenge pre-intervention but not post-intervention. However, parent-participants C1, L1, N1 and O1 shared that patience and concentration remained a challenge post-intervention.

Parent-participants: Two major areas of learning have occurred for parent-participants, including changes in reading behaviours and a shift in perceptions towards and engagement with their toddlers' emotion knowledge learning. Quantitative data illustrate increased occasions of reading for enjoyment in their toddlers' presence from five (n=5) parent-participants, and parent-participants enabling an increase of toddlers' engagement when reading together. This aligns with qualitative findings, as parent participants reported having learnt new ways of reading with their toddlers.

Parent-participants' engagement with their toddlers' emotion knowledge learning illustrates that parent-participants use more emotion language and engage their toddlers in communication about emotions. Additionally, participants E1 and C1 report shifts in attitude, as they indicate their toddlers have increased understanding and they feel less frustration when communicating with their toddlers.

Parent-participants' changing perceptions of their toddlers as capable and competent learners have been observed in the qualitative data. These include a strengthened image of their toddlers as capable and competent learners, as observed in a teacher report, and parent participants expressing more understanding for their toddlers, coupled with less frustration and more patience. This finding shows parallels to changes in toddlers' dispositions and indicates reciprocal changes to patience as an effect of the storybook reading intervention.

Teacher-participants: The apparent impact of the intervention on teacher-participants' pedagogy was multifaceted. The intervention appeared to support increased communication about toddlers' learning with parent-participants, increase their repertoire of reading strategies and foster responsive pedagogy that supports equitable outcomes among toddlers. While quantitative data revealed an increase in parent-teacher communication about emotions post-intervention, qualitative data provided insight about changes in reading and responsiveness. Teacher-participant XT reported learning new ways of reading with toddlers as a positive outcome of the intervention, and both teacher-participants identified learning to be responsive to toddlers' individual needs during reading experiences as valuable.

Whānau: Reports from teachers illustrate that the intervention reached beyond the primary participants by supporting learning for other whānau, specifically siblings. Four parent-participants (n=4) shared that their older and/or younger children joined the reading interactions, with C1 intentionally using the intervention to support their older child's learning.

Overall, qualitative and quantitative data reveal that learning from the intervention extended beyond toddlers' emotion knowledge and benefited toddlers, parents, whānau and teachers. As stated by teacher-participant YT: "The study was beneficial for child, parents and teachers."

4.6 Theme Three — Strengthening Collaboration Through Dialogue and a Shared Focus on Learning

Theme Three — *Strengthening collaboration through dialogue and a shared focus on learning*, illustrates the evolution of perspectives from parent-participants and teacher-participants on collaborative relationships following the storybook reading intervention. The theme developed from quantitative and qualitative data collected with the pre- and post-intervention questionnaires and teacher-participants' reports. The findings from the quantitative and the qualitative data are presented separately before being merged in a summary and connected to the research question.

4.6.1 Quantitative Findings

The quantitative findings of theme three were collected through Likert statements and closed questions that explored parents' and teachers' perspectives of feedback and communication pre- and post-intervention.

Feedback: Likert item '*parents ask for feedback*' explored teacher-participants' perceptions on parents' desire to receive general feedback about their toddlers' learning. While both teacher-participants agreed to this statement pre-intervention, the response from XT post-intervention shifted to 'neutral'. This suggests that XT observed fewer requests for feedback from parents after the intervention. An insight into parent-participants' perceptions on feedback is provided in Table 9 which shows responses to two different Likert statements.

The response choices listed in Table 9 are limited to ‘neutral’, ‘agree’, and ‘strongly agree’ as the response choices ‘disagree’ and ‘strongly disagree’ were not reported by a parent-participant.

Table 9. *Likert items – Parent-participants perceptions of collaborations pre-intervention*

Intervention	Statement 1: The feedback that I receive is helpful		Statement 2: Teachers provide feedback on my toddlers’ emotion learning	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Strongly Agree	8	7	6	8
Agree	1	4	3	4
Neutral	3	1	3	0

Table 9 illustrates the results for two Likert statements concerned with feedback and collaboration between parent-participants and teacher-participants: Statement 1: *The feedback that I receive is helpful* and Statement 2: *Teachers provide feedback on my toddlers’ emotion learning*. With all responses ranging from ‘neutral’ to ‘strongly agree’ in the pre- and post-questionnaire, the findings indicate a sustained level of satisfaction from parent-participants regarding feedback from teachers.

Based on statement 1, which explored the perceived helpfulness of general feedback, a shift from ‘neutral’ toward agreement was observed from parent-participants C1, G1, and O1. Seven responses (n=7) remained unchanged at ‘strongly agree’ while the response from parent-participant B1 remained unchanged at ‘agree’. One parent-participant (H1) reported a decline from ‘strongly agree’ to ‘neutral’ post-intervention. The mixed findings suggest potentially varied participant experiences.

Statement 2, which explored teachers’ feedback on toddlers’ emotion knowledge, illustrates an increase in ‘strongly agree’ responses from six (n=6) pre-intervention to eight

(n=8) post-intervention, an increase of ‘agree’ responses from three (n=3) to four (4) in favour of a decrease of ‘neutral responses from three (n=3) to zero (n=0) between pre- and post-intervention responses. Teacher-participant responses to the statement *I provide feedback on emotion learning* reflect the parent-participant responses. While both teacher-participants agreed to the statement pre-intervention, the post-intervention response from teacher-participant YT shows increased agreement with a shift to ‘strongly agree’. These data highlight that parent-participants and teacher-participants reported a shift in their perception of feedback about emotion knowledge.

Communication: Parent-participants were asked about the frequency of their communication with teacher-participants regarding their toddlers’ learning. Of twelve parent-participants (N=12), eleven (n=11) provided sufficient data. Seven (n=7) reported that the frequency of conversations with teachers about their toddlers’ learning increased across the intervention. Three parent-participants (n=3) reported an increase from termly to weekly discussions with teacher-participants. Three parent-participants (n=3) reported no change to the frequency of discussions with their toddlers’ teacher, and one (n=1) reported a change from weekly to irregular.

The post-intervention Likert statement *I discussed books we read with my child’s teachers* explored communication between parent-participants and teacher-participants about the intervention as a shared focus on toddlers’ learning. Of eleven (n=11) responses, six (n=6) ranged from agree to strongly agree, four (n=4) provided a neutral response, and one parent-participant (O1) disagreed. This aligns with O1’s perception of the parent library not being useful, as indicated with a ‘strongly disagree’ response to the post-intervention Likert Statement *The parent library has supported our home reading*. While one parent-participant did not respond to this statement, the remaining ten (n=10) agreed (n=3) or strongly agreed (n=7) to the library being a supportive resource.

4.6.2 Qualitative Findings

The qualitative findings include open-ended questionnaire responses from parent-participants and teacher-participants, and teacher reports. The presentation of the qualitative findings begins with a thematic map that shows an overview of the qualitative data that supports theme three.

4.6.2.1 Questionnaire Responses — Perceptions on Feedback and Collaboration Between Parents and Teachers

The thematic map in Figure 11 depicts codes from parent-participants' and teacher-participants' responses to open-ended questions about collaboration and communication. The purple boxes illustrate codes that were collected with pre-intervention data only. The intervention is depicted as a central point that contributed to changes in parent-participants' and teacher-participants' perceptions in the post-intervention questionnaire. The blue boxes depict codes that were developed from post-intervention responses.

said, “It can be nice to have more time to talk, but because we work it’s sometimes hard” and H1 said, “... as parents working full-time does often make you feel bad for missing out, but we have to for their future”. While M1 and H1 identified the busyness of being working parents as a barrier to communication, H1 further expressed a desire to get more updates about their toddlers’ daily experiences, suggesting a need for increased communication from teachers.

This desire was shared by B1 who responded to the question *How could the feedback you receive on your child’s development be improved?* pre-intervention with “A more regular update at the end of the day” and C1 who suggested that “Regular check-ins to see how she’s progressing” would be beneficial. Both parent-participants expressed a desire for increased communication but did not indicate any preference for the content of the communication. This is reflected also in a statement shared by participant H1, who asks for teachers to “Just tell us things she [toddler H2] is up to and what she’s doing during the day”.

Responses to the same question in the post-intervention questionnaire revealed that having the storybook reading as a shared focus between parent-participants and teacher-participants strengthened communication about toddlers’ learning. Of twelve parent-participants (N=12), six (n=6) responded to the question post-intervention by stating that no improvements are desired, including B1, C1 and H1, who desired increased feedback pre-intervention. As stated by H1 “... it’s pretty good ...!”

A satisfactory view on the collaboration has also been shared by teacher-participant YT who stated that “seeing parent participants during pick-ups and drop offs help a lot”. Notably, Storypark, the research setting’s most frequently used online communication platform, has been identified to support the communication between parents and teachers, as a statement from H1 highlights: “... just love the Storypark stories especially the ones with her as it makes us feel connected to her during the daycare.”

Parent-participants D1 and E1 provided responses to feedback specific to the intervention, emphasising that the shared focus has supported the quality and quantity of teacher feedback. E1 reported “No improvement needed. Feedback has been super supportive” and D1 stated “... good feedback which was reassuring to our reading efforts at home”. Concurrently, F1 expressed gratitude for the collaboration with the teachers during the intervention, stating "Thank you for the awesome opportunity" as a final comment.

Interestingly, data on learning areas parent-participants and teacher-participants discuss reveal that a broader range and higher number of different areas were discussed pre-intervention than post-intervention. An overview of learning areas discussed between parents and teachers is depicted in Table 10. The learning areas are listed in order of frequency.

Table 10. *Learning areas discussed by parent-participants and teacher-participants*

Learning Areas	Parent-Participant Responses		Teacher-Participant Responses	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Social	5	3	2	1
Emotional	4	2	2	1
Communication	4	2	1	1
Belonging	2	2	0	0
Physical skills	1	1	0	0
Dispositions	1	1	0	0
General Development	1	1	0	0
Reading	0	1	0	1
Wellbeing	1	0	0	0
Self-Care Skills	1	0	0	0
Total	20	13	5	5

As illustrated in Table 10, the learning areas listed by parent-participants declined from 20 pre-intervention to 13 post-intervention. Parent-participants and teacher-participants identified social learning, emotional learning and communication as the most frequently

discussed learning areas. This is supported by B1, who shared that “emotions, social communication” are the most discussed learning areas with teachers, and E1, whose response “building relationships” encompasses social and emotional learning. Overall, the range of learning areas listed by parent-participants and teacher-participants in Table 10 suggests that the learning areas discussed provide a holistic overview of toddlers’ learning. The reduction in the number of learning areas noted by parent-participants from pre to postintervention may reflect natural shifts in communication over time. As parents and teachers develop shared understandings and focus more closely on particular aspects of toddlers’ learning, discussions could tend to become more targeted rather than broad.

4.6.2.2 Teacher Reports

Teacher-participants reported on feedback about and use of the library by parent-participants. Parent-participant A1 showed gratitude “Thank you for letting us borrow these lovely books, great experience” further elucidating that the library has inspired their toddler to try out different books at home. Parent-participant E1 showed initial hesitation about using the parent library, showing concern that their toddler might damage the books. Following reassurance from the researcher that their use of the library is welcome, they decided to use it. One parent-participant (O1) declined the use of the library repeatedly, sharing that they have a range of books at home.

4.6.3 Key Findings Summary — Scope to Strengthen Collaboration Through Dialogue

The data from Likert statements, closed- and open-ended questions and teacher reports reveal evolving perceptions from parent-participants and teacher-participants about their reciprocal communication and collaboration leading to the development of theme three, *Strengthening collaboration through dialogue and a shared focus on learning*. The findings

indicate that having a shared focus on toddlers' learning creates opportunities for dialogue. This section will merge the quantitative and the qualitative findings to report on similarities and divergent findings.

Quantitative and qualitative data highlight that the intervention has created a platform for dialogue about storybook reading and toddlers' emotion knowledge. Quantitative data reveal that six parent-participants (n=6), reported discussing the storybook reading intervention with the teachers. Parent-participants and teacher-participants alike reported an increase in receiving and respectively providing feedback about toddlers' emotion knowledge post-intervention. Simultaneously, changes from 'neutral' to 'agree' responses regarding parent-participants' perceptions of feedback from teachers being helpful were reported by three parent-participants (n=3; parent-participants C1, G1 and O1). This is in alignment with teacher-participants' perception of parents-participants' demand for feedback declining and suggests that an increase in communication through the storybook intervention, which provided a platform for dialogue, led to higher parent satisfaction. Further, these data align with qualitative findings, where parent-participants B1 and C1 desired more frequent feedback pre-intervention, but not post-intervention.

Qualitative data also show that challenges to maintaining a satisfactory frequency of communication between parent-participants and teacher-participants were expressed by H1, M1 and XT pre-intervention. Both H1 and M1 identified work constraints as a challenge to frequent communication with teachers. These concerns were not repeated post-intervention, potentially reflecting an increase in frequency and quality of communication through a focus on teacher-parent dialogue.

Divergent findings were observed for parent-participant H1, whose quantitative responses did not align with their qualitative responses. Quantitatively, H1's rating of the helpfulness of teachers' feedback decreased from 'strongly agree' to 'neutral' post-

intervention. However, H1's qualitative responses showed increased satisfaction, shifting from requesting more daily feedback pre-intervention to stating that "... it's pretty good..." post-intervention. Such inconsistencies may relate to changes in questionnaire response behaviours (Pudney, 2008).

In considering that the range and number of learning areas discussed with teacher-participants declined post-intervention according to parent-participant responses, the findings about parent-participants perception of the helpfulness of feedback improving post-intervention is somewhat surprising. This may indicate that sharing a focus strengthens the meaningfulness and the quality of the communication and feedback, thus supporting collaborative relationships.

In summary, the quantitative and the qualitative findings provide data suggesting that both parent-participants and teacher-participants value frequent communication and helpful feedback. Findings suggest that sharing a focus on toddlers' learning through the storybook reading intervention has created a shared platform for dialogue, increasing positive perceptions on feedback and parent-teacher collaboration.

4.7 Theme Four — Reading Storybooks Together Brings a Shift to Toddler-Parent Relationships

The presentation of the findings that contributed to the development of theme four — *Reading stories together brings a shift to toddler-parent relationships*, includes Likert statements as quantitative data and responses to open-ended questions exclusively from parent-participants' questionnaires as qualitative data. The findings from the quantitative and the qualitative data are presented separately before being merged in a summary and connected to the research question.

4.7.1 Quantitative Findings — Participants’ Responses to Likert Statements

The quantitative findings that supported the development of theme four — *Reading stories together brings a shift to toddler–parent relationships* were collected through Likert statements. All data in this section were collected in parent-participants’ questionnaires.

The responses to Likert statement *We read as part of our everyday routine* show increased agreement from seven parent-participants (n=7), while five (n=5) responses remained unchanged. Of the unchanged responses, three parent-participants (D1, F1, and O1) reported strong agreement to the statement in the pre-intervention questionnaire, indicating that daily reading interactions were already an intrinsic part of their routine. The responses from B1, which was unchanged at ‘agree’ and N1, who responded ‘neutral’ in both the pre- and post- questionnaire, indicate that the storybook reading intervention did not inspire an increase in daily reading interactions for those participants. A range of factors may contribute to this finding, including but not limited to:

- Busy lives of working parents that make changes to routines challenging (this has been reported by B1 “Fitting it into a routine after daycare”).
- Toddlers’ desire to engage in storybook reading daily.
- Environmental factors, including but not limited to a new pregnancy, parental separation and moving house.

Increased frequency of reading interactions is further supported by Likert item *We have lots of children’s books at home* with the agreement of four parent-participants (n=4) increasing to this statement post-intervention. Most notably the response from participant E1 changed from ‘disagree’ to ‘agree’.

Parent-participants reported high levels of agreement to Likert statement *It is important that my child can identify their emotions* in both questionnaires with ten (n=10)

‘strongly agree’ and two (n=2) ‘agree’ responses pre-, respectively nine (n=9) ‘strongly agree’ and three (n=3) ‘agree’ response post-intervention. However, the three responses (n=3) that changed between the pre- and post-intervention questionnaires ranged from an increase from ‘agree’ to ‘strongly agree’ (parent-participant N1) to a slight decrease from ‘strongly agree’ to ‘agree’ (parent-participants C1 and E1) while nine (n=9) remained unchanged.

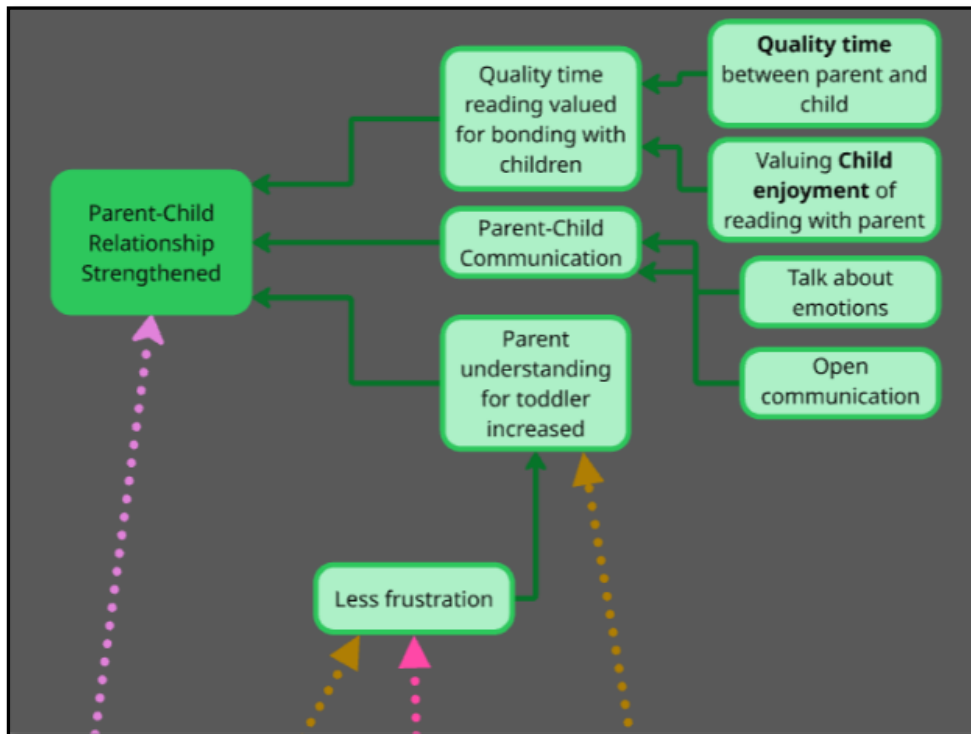
4.7.2 Qualitative Findings

The qualitative findings include parent-participants’ responses to open-ended questions and teacher reports. The presentation of the qualitative findings begins with a thematic map that shows an overview the qualitative data that supports theme three.

4.7.2.1 Questionnaire Responses — Parent Perceptions

An overview of the codes from the questionnaire responses to open-ended questions is depicted in the thematic map in Figure 12, before more detailed findings are shared as figures and narratives. Figure 12 illustrates the contribution from parent-participants’ responses to open-ended questions to the development of theme four — *Reading storybooks together brings a shift to toddler–parent relationships*. The theme of this thematic map, ‘*Parent-Child Relationship Strengthened*’ is highlighted in bright green.

Figure 12. Thematic map: Questionnaire data supporting theme four



The thematic map in Figure 12 illustrates the codes and sub-themes that support the theme — *Reading stories together brings a shift to toddler–parent relationships*. The codes and sub-themes depict parent-participants’ perceptions of reading as a way to strengthen bonds with their toddlers and changes in attitudes about emotion communication, which affected parent-toddler relationships.

Storybook reading: Parents reported valuing storybook reading as a way to enjoy quality time with their toddlers both pre- and post-intervention. As expressed by O1 in the pre-intervention question *What do you most enjoy about reading with your toddler?* “Time together”. Similarly, post-intervention responses from parent-participants A1, B1, D1, and E1 suggest that the storybook reading intervention was valued for promoting quality time between toddlers and their parents. A1 shared that “*Spending nice time bonding with her*” was the most enjoyable aspect of the reading intervention, while also acknowledging challenges because “She (A2) only wanted to read with me, not Dad”. Additionally, parents

reported an increase in storybook reading interactions during the intervention with their toddlers, expressed by O1 “It has encouraged us to read more”.

In recognising storybook reading as quality time with their children, the final comment made by E1, “Book reading has created a much closer bond and connection with my kids. I don't understand why I stopped. I love reading different stories with all my kids” indicates that the storybook reading intervention had a positive effect on E1's relationship with all their children.

Parents' views on toddler engagement: Parent responses indicate that they value changes to toddlers' engagement during storybook reading post-intervention. Parent-participant L1 shared that “L2 has become so much more engaged. Instead of just me reading and using my imagination she also wants a turn describing *how* she sees each page”. This statement suggests that beyond inviting L2 to share *what* she sees, L1 is creating space for L2 to share her own perceptions and interpret *how* she sees the story. Similarly, parent-participant D1 reported enjoying interactive storybook reading with their toddler, suggesting that they valued contributions made by D2 during storybook reading.

Changes in emotion communication: The responses from parent-participants E1 and C1 to the question “*How has the storybook reading intervention changed the ways you and your child communicate about emotions?*”, highlighted how their own learning about their toddlers' emotions has affected their relationships with their toddler. While participant C1 stated that it is “*Easy to understand how she feels*”, indicating communication about emotions between them and C2 has become clearer, the response from E1 “*I am finding more understanding with how we communicate and not getting frustrated when I cannot understand her*” indicates positive shift in their communication with toddler E2.

4.7.2.2 Teacher Reports

One teacher-participant reported a conversation with a parent of toddler D2. During their evening reading routine, D2 corrected her parent who made a mistake while reading. The parent expressed disbelief about being corrected by a 2-year-old but admitted that the toddler was right. The parent's comment suggests that the storybook reading intervention has supported the parent's perception of their toddler as a capable and competent learner.

4.7.2.3 Key Findings Summary — Emotion Knowledge Learning and Shared Reading as a Catalyst for Enriched Toddler–Parent Relationships

Theme four — *Reading stories together brings a shift to toddler–parent relationships*, indicates changes in parent-toddler relationships. This finding was somewhat unexpected, as the focus was on the parent–teacher relationships. Two main factors support this finding, including changes to reading habits and communication about emotions. Quantitative data and qualitative data supported similarities within the findings.

The quantitative data highlight that the reading intervention supported seven (n=7) parent-participants to spend more time reading with their toddlers, embedding storybook reading as part of the daily routine. Two parent-participants (B1 and N1), however, did not report an increase while three parent-participants (D1, F1, and O1) reported daily reading interactions with their toddlers as part of their daily routine previous to the intervention. The increase reported by more than half of the parent-participants was echoed in qualitative findings, which highlight that parent-participants enjoyed time spend reading with their toddler to strengthen toddler–parent relationships.

With nine (n=9) unchanged responses, quantitative data showed minimal changes in parent-participants' values regarding their toddlers' ability to identify their own emotions, which overall, was highly valued pre- and post-intervention. However, N1 shared increased

agreement about the value of emotion communication, while C1 and E1 shared a slight decrease in agreement from 'strongly agree' to 'agree'. This shift from C1 and E1 corresponds with qualitative findings, which suggests that C1 and E1 developed better understanding of their toddlers' emotions, possibly placing less value on their toddlers' communication about their emotions. Parent-participant E1 shared feeling less frustrated when the communication with toddler E2 is challenging. The data suggest a minor change in priority for C1 and E1, who both report on their own skills of understanding their toddler' post-intervention, as opposed to their toddlers' communication skills.

Information shared by the parents from toddlers L2 and D2 provide insight into a potential perceptual shift regarding their image of their toddlers as learners. The parents of both toddlers reported an increased appreciation for their toddlers' active participation during shared reading. Notably, a parent of D2 expressed surprise at being corrected by their toddler, indicating a new recognition of their toddlers' competence. This suggests that the storybook reading intervention strengthened the parents' image of their toddlers as a capable and competent learner who makes meaningful contributions during storybook reading.

4.8 Chapter Summary

In summary, the findings in Chapter Four show a range of changes that occurred for toddlers, parents, whānau and teachers following a ten-week tiered storybook reading intervention. Data highlight that a tiered storybook reading intervention has the potential to support toddlers' emotion knowledge learning and reveal that responsiveness is paramount. It is important to note that AKT results represent only one measure of emotion knowledge and should be considered alongside other data sources, such as parent and teacher perspectives. Teachers' professional judgement is always important to ensure responsiveness to toddlers' varying developmental stages and environmental influences.

Beyond toddlers' emotion knowledge learning, a storybook reading intervention can benefit a range of ECE stakeholders, including toddlers, parents, whānau and teachers.

Potential outcomes, highlighted through the findings, include: language learning; strengthening toddlers' affinity for books; learning new reading strategies and changing attitudes towards toddlers' emotion knowledge (for parent-participants); strengthening reading skills of siblings; enjoying storybook reading as quality time for whānau; promoting responsive pedagogy; and increasing the repertoire of reading strategies for teachers.

The findings suggest that the storybook reading intervention impacted relationships, both between toddlers and parents and between parents and teachers. The mutual focus on supporting toddlers' emotion knowledge learning through storybook reading appeared to strengthen collaborative relationships between parent-participants and teacher-participants, improve the frequency and quality of teacher feedback on toddlers' learning and development, and benefit parent–teacher communication and collaboration. An increase in daily storybook reading time combined with the perception of storybook reading as a bonding experience between toddlers and parent-participants, as well as shifting values regarding emotion communication between toddlers and parents, suggests potential influences of the intervention on toddler–parent relationships.

Next, Chapter Five — Discussion and Conclusion, will provide a detailed discussion about the findings from this chapter. The findings will be discussed in relation to the conceptual framework *He Pikorua* and connections to local and international literature will be made. An overview of implications will be provided, and recommendations for future research will be outlined. Finally, a summary will conclude this thesis.

Chapter Five — Discussion and Conclusion

5.1 Introduction

The findings in Chapter Four suggest the tiered storybook reading intervention supported toddlers' emotion knowledge and parent–teacher collaboration in a range of ways. Chapter Five examines these findings and the mechanisms through which toddlers' emotion knowledge and parent–teacher collaboration were influenced. Further, the practical and theoretical contributions of this thesis are discussed and examined in relation to other empirical research and the Aotearoa New Zealand ECE sector. The research question: In what ways does a ten-week storybook reading intervention support toddlers' emotion knowledge and influence parent–teacher collaboration? is answered by identifying and evaluating the mechanisms through which the participants' engagement with the storybook reading intervention shaped the study's results.

Chapter Five is divided into seven sections. After the introduction in 5.1, section 5.2 discusses the mechanisms that influenced toddlers' emotion knowledge and other benefits for toddlers. Section 5.3 discusses the mechanisms that influenced the collaborative relationships between parents and teachers through a shared focus. Section 5.4 explores how participating whānau perceived the influences of reading together, and relationships within whānau. Section 5.5 identifies limitations and delimitations before implications and insights are highlighted in section 5.6. Section 5.7 draws a conclusion to the thesis.

5.2 Mechanisms that Supported Toddlers' Emotion Knowledge and Learning

Several mechanisms have been identified that contributed to toddlers' emotion knowledge learning and created other benefits for toddlers following their engagement with the storybook reading intervention. The mechanisms include the structured yet flexible

approach to intervention through *Te Tūāpapa o He Pikorua* (MoE, 2026c) to include universal, targeted and tailored support; integrating professional knowledge with responsive pedagogy; empowering environments (physical, social, temporal); and fostering a community of learners by facilitating ako. This section will discuss all contributing mechanisms and make connections to *Te Whāriki* (MoE, 2017), relevant local and international literature, and *He Pikorua* (MoE, 2026a), specifically *He Pikorua in Action* (MoE, 2026e).

5.2.1 A Structured Yet Flexible Approach Grounded in *He Pikorua*.

The intervention's structured and systematic approach combined with flexibility across home and ECE settings created conditions for universal, targeted and tailored support consistent with *He Pikorua*'s mokopuna- and whānau-centred, ecological and strengths-based principles.

***Te Tūāpapa o He Pikorua* — Responsive intervention:** While some literature propose that intentional, systematic, and targeted interventions are paramount to successful interventions (Giménez-Dasí et al. 2015), other literature suggests that flexibility is essential for successful interventions (MoE, 2026a). The present study demonstrates that positive outcomes from interventions can be achieved with an intentional intervention that balances systematic structure and flexibility. In this study the intervention was systematically planned, and included a clearly defined timeline, teacher training and parent information. Critically, this systematic approach was balanced by flexibility that spanned across toddlers' multiple learning environments, including their homes and their ECE setting. This flexibility within a structured intervention accommodated toddlers' individual needs through *He Pikorua*, which uses a flexible approach that considers participants' diverse ecological systems.

The flexible approach may be considered as a contributing factor to four incomplete post-intervention AKT results, of which one showed a decreased score between the pre-and post-intervention results as reported in the findings of the present study. Specifically, toddlers' engagement in the storybook reading intervention was driven by toddlers' motivation to read with parents and teachers. Some toddlers chose to engage in reading interactions frequently, while others did not, resulting in less exposure to the storybook reading. Similarly, some toddlers chose to not complete the Affect Knowledge Test (AKT).

Having a clearly defined approach and well-articulated strategies for implementing an intervention is paramount to ensure effective implementation, while concurrently allowing flexibility for those involved in the intervention to respond to varying needs and challenges. This enables for the intervention to respond to a diverse demographic, such as the participants of the present study.

5.2.2 Flexible Use of Assessment Practices Supports Responsive and Tiered Support

ECE teachers use assessment to capture toddlers' learning and plan their pedagogical practice. Assessment can be used as a tool by teachers to identify children who may benefit from targeted and/or tailored learning support, thus supporting responsive pedagogy. In Aotearoa New Zealand, formative assessments through learning stories are the most dominant form of assessment in ECE (Cameron, 2018). While formative assessment is intended to capture and enhance learning from a credit-based lens to build on prior knowledge, summative assessment is primarily recognised as a report that focuses on what toddlers can or cannot do (Cameron, 2018). However, the dominant use of learning stories as an assessment method has been critiqued, as many teachers write 'doing stories' that fail to capture actual learning (Cameron, 2018; Zhang, 2017) or use a credit-based only lens that leaves out challenges which can limit the learning motivation and hinder effective

and responsive planning (Wanoa & Johnston, 2019). This is addressed in *He Pikorua*, where the mana-enhanced support is paramount by using a strengths-based approach while balanced by a focus on potential challenges that should be addressed.

In the present study, the summative scores from the AKT, in combination with teacher and parent expertise, were instrumental in designing an intervention that responded to individual toddlers. The present study provided evidence that summative assessment can be used to inform formative decisions that enhance curriculum planning and pedagogy and strengthen teachers' responsive pedagogy. This emphasises the importance of teachers being receptive to a variety of assessment methods, to ensure pedagogical practice that is responsive to diverse needs of toddlers, while demonstrating the benefits of summative assessment in identifying those needs.

Specifically, in considering the two separate points of assessment through the AKT—once before and once after the intervention—the assessment in the present study aligns with an ipsative approach. In this ipsative approach, the summative AKT scores of toddlers' emotion knowledge were compared between their own past and present performance, instead of a comparison to external expectations (McLachlan et al., 2023). These assessment data supported pedagogy that is responsive to individual needs. The emphasis is on how the assessment was used over what type of assessment was used. McLachlan and colleagues (2023) suggest that teachers in Aotearoa New Zealand frequently fail to define and recognise the different types of assessment. Formative assessment is often viewed as the only right way to assess learning, which limits the intentional use of summative assessment and contributes to teachers' reluctance to use summative assessment tools, like the AKT.

The findings of the present study highlight that when teachers have knowledge of different forms of assessment and the ability to skilfully use assessment tools, they are enabled to engage in the suitable assessment in response to toddlers' needs. Given the

dominance of formative assessment in ECE in Aotearoa New Zealand, a paradigm shift across the ECE sector may be needed to ensure that assessment is best utilised to inform practice in a way that achieves equitable outcomes for all.

5.2.3 Integrating Professional Knowledge with Responsive Pedagogy

Teachers' pedagogy was enhanced through their engagement with the storybook reading intervention. The enhancements include increased responsive practice through the integration of different reading strategies and intentional emotion teaching.

Responsive practice through tiers of different reading strategies: In the present study, teachers' responsive pedagogy was supported through the introduction and modelling of different reading strategies by the researcher. This provided context for teachers when implementing the reading strategies, highlighting which toddlers would benefit from more targeted or tailored support and modelling how teachers could offer such support. Subsequently, teachers created space and encouragement for every toddler to make contributions based on their individual needs. For example, teacher YT acknowledged that by offering different reading strategies, they were supported to help toddlers' in making connections between the storybooks and their own, real-life experiences. Thus, the different reading strategies supported the teachers to adapt their pedagogy to the knowledge and experiences of individual toddlers. Importantly, in the inclusive learning environment teachers were encouraged to invite all toddlers to join in with every reading strategy, while balancing toddlers' interests with their needs.

Teacher XT reported gaining a better understanding of various storybook reading strategies and further emphasising their understanding that storybook reading goes beyond finishing books. Both teachers highlighted that learning these new storybook reading strategies supported their responsive practice, enabling them to adapt to toddlers' diverse

needs. This aligns their pedagogy with *Te Whāriki*, which emphasises teachers' commitment to ongoing learning and their use of inclusive, alternative approaches to support all toddlers. In *He Pikorua in Action*, teachers' continuous learning is reflected in the final stage of the intervention cycle, *mana motuhake*, which emphasise that supporting everyone, including teachers, to confidently learn and implement strategies is important to acknowledge and empowers everyone's contributions.

Teachers' positive perceptions of their pedagogical practice following the storybook intervention suggest that teachers' openness to learning about and integrating frameworks like *He Pikorua* (MoE, 2026a) and models like *Te Tūāpapa o he Pikorua* (MoE, 2026c) are important mechanisms that support equitable outcomes. In considering that *He Pikorua* and *Te Tūāpapa o he Pikorua* were developed by the Ministry of Education and tailored to the ECE context of Aotearoa New Zealand, it is therefore important that the introduction of such frameworks and models includes adequate training for ECE teachers to ensure they can successfully bridge the gap between theory and practice. Consistent with Clarke's (2021) findings that teachers require support to successfully implement resources like *He Māpuna te Tamaiti*, (MoE, 2019a) the present study suggests that providing practical strategies for teachers is important for the successful integration of resources and frameworks in pedagogical practice.

Intentional emotion teaching: The findings suggest that teachers engaged more intentionally in teaching about emotions and in collaborating with parents during the storybook reading intervention. This includes teachers' intentional and increased use of emotion language as a mechanism that enhanced toddlers' learning. In considering McLaughlin and colleagues (2016) description of intentional teaching as purposeful and deliberate pedagogy where teachers use their professional knowledge and skills to support learning, this finding emphasises that when teachers continuously reflect on what they teach

and how they teach, they are enabled to balance play-based learning with intentional teaching. In the present study, intentional teaching enabled teachers to recognise and maximise teachable moments by responding to toddlers with professional knowledge. An example is recognising the potential of learning through play by also creating time and space for toddlers to internalise their learning during independent reading interactions.

In Aotearoa New Zealand, *Te Whāriki*, which promotes a holistic approach to education, ensures that (social and) emotional teaching is an intrinsic part of the pedagogy of ECE teachers. This implies that teachers' pedagogy extends beyond the transmission of content knowledge, to ensure toddlers' social and emotional learning are supported. While the present study focused on teaching toddlers' emotion knowledge, the findings illustrate that teachers can successfully combine both content knowledge and (social and) emotion knowledge learning. For example, the conversation initiated by toddler D2 about the hedgehog/sea urchin created an opportunity to support D2's understanding of the natural world, while also engaging supporting D2's emotion knowledge by scaffolding learning that supported D2's non-stereotypical emotion knowledge. (In this example, D2 implied that hedgehogs are always sad, like the book [stereotypical emotion knowledge], thus the teacher had an opportunity to support D2's understanding that the same situation can elicit different emotions in different people [non-stereotypical emotion knowledge], while also fostering learning about nature. This finding reflects the empowerment strand in *Te Whāriki*, specifically the learning outcome "Over time and with guidance and encouragement, toddlers become increasingly capable of expressing their feelings and ideas using a wide range of materials and modes | he kōrero auaha" (p. 25) and the socio-cultural theory of learning by Lev Vygotsky, as it demonstrates that learning and knowledge are practiced through social interactions with others (Vajcner, 2015). A key implication is

that intentional teaching of emotions can occur alongside other learning: holistic learning can be strengthened when teaching is intentional and focused.

5.2.4 Empowering Environments (Physical, Social, Temporal)

Empowering environments to support toddlers as active contributors to their learning. *Te Whāriki* (MoE, 2017) states “Children learn through responsive and reciprocal relationships with people, places and things” (p.21), indicating the importance of holistic environments on children’s learning. Adjustments to the environment made during the research include changes to the social environments, which describes people, relationships and cultures; changes to the physical environment, which describes objects and spaces within the environment; and changes to the temporal environment, which describes routines, rituals, and experiences (vanAken, 2020). The physical, social, and temporal environments are explicitly incorporated into *He Pikorua* (MoE, 2026a) through the ecological approach which recognises the interconnectedness of toddlers’ multiple environments and focuses on identifying and addressing barriers and mismatches between environments. Additionally, *He Pikorua* emphasises the importance of adapting the environment, not the child, to ensure inclusive interventions.

In the present study, the physical environment was adjusted through the intentional positioning of books. Books were placed within easy reach in a central area of the room. A library was provided, where toddlers could select books to read with their parents. These adjustments align with research from Lee (2011), who suggests that with a focus on supporting toddlers’ engagement in reading, common and recurring set ups that invite toddlers to read are important. The adjustments to the physical environment empowered toddlers to initiate reading interactions, engage in independent or group reading, and choose the books they wanted to read.

Adaptations to the social environment included creating time and space for toddlers to engage in reading and to make contributions during reading interactions. Adjustments to the social environments also included supporting parents and teachers to engage in cohesive, intentional and collaborative implementation of a range of storybook reading strategies. These adaptations helped toddlers extend on their learning at the setting when they were at home and vice versa, while also supporting parent–teacher collaborative relationships. The approach aligns with *Te Whāriki* and supporting literature (Blackburn, 2016; Purola, 2025), which emphasise that collaborative relationships between parents and teachers are crucial for fostering an empowering social environment. Intention in parenting requires purposeful engagement with children (Maxwell & Vincent, 2016). Like teachers, parents are important facilitators of empowering environments. Importantly, the modifications enabled parents and teachers to implement universal, targeted and tailored support in alignment with *Te Tūāpapa o he Pikorua* (MoE, 2026c), which emphasises the necessity of promoting positive relationships and enabling environments where toddlers thrive.

Adjustments to the temporal environment included supporting toddlers’ engagement with storybooks as part of a daily routine. Teachers developed a reading routine as part of the intervention plan. Changes to the physical environment meant that toddlers often settled at the newly set-up storybook table during the morning transition, so this became a new routine at the centre.

A wider implication for teachers is that consideration of the physical, social, and temporal environments is an important pedagogical practice. In the physical environment, this study demonstrated that provision of a carefully selected range of storybooks in a place easily available to toddlers is key to empower toddlers as readers. In the temporal environment, this study supported routines and structures through intentional daily engagement of toddlers with storybook reading. In the social environment, the study showed

how supporting parents' and teachers' cohesive collaboration supports empowering environments for toddlers. Additionally, the physical and the social environments are enhanced by the provision of resources that are shared across toddlers' learning environments; for example, the storybooks in the present study, supported continuity of learning for toddlers and cohesion.

5.2.5 A Community of Learners and Ako

Reading together facilitated reciprocal knowledge sharing as toddlers connected storybooks and emotions to personal experiences and peers' ideas, strengthening meaning making. In Aotearoa New Zealand, encouraging toddlers' involvement and understanding their perspectives can be understood through the lens of ako. Ako describes a Māori concept that recognises the reciprocity of expressing, sharing and exchanging knowledge and truths (Edwards, 2013). In the present study, parents and teachers engaged in ako with the toddlers through interactive storybook reading, by inviting toddlers to share their thoughts, ideas and interpretations of the stories. Teachers also used toddlers' contributions as prompts to extend on their learning. For example, toddler F2 commented on an observation made in the environment, as he shared that he sees 'lots of happy faces' in reference to animal stickers in the bathroom. When teachers and parents intentionally design and facilitate learning environments, toddlers can feel encouraged as confident contributors. This sense of agency supports toddlers in making meaning and engaging in learning.

Within the intervention, toddlers were recognised as initiators of interactions that supported their ongoing emotion knowledge learning. The intervention empowered toddlers and positioned them as capable and competent learners, honouring *He Pikorua* (mokopuna and whānau-centred). Additionally, toddlers demonstrated agency by driving their own learning and including others in their meaning-making (strengths-based).

A community of learners and connections to personal experiences: Teachers reported an increase of toddlers reading in small groups and shared reports of toddlers' conversations about emotions amongst each other, where connections to personal experiences were made. This extends ako to toddlers' interactions with each other, as their active involvement in the storybook reading intervention supported a community of learners where toddlers shared their emotion knowledge learning.

For example, the conversation toddler D2 had with a peer, who inquired about a sea creature, provided a platform for D2 to connect the story of a book, specifically the emotions of a book character, with her own personal experience. Thus, D2 created an opportunity to share her observations with a peer and include them in the meaning-making process. Similarly, toddler B2 demonstrated his growing situation knowledge by making connections between books and personal experiences. B2 connected a sad expression in a book with his recent experience of sadness which he experienced when having prickles in his foot.

These interactions demonstrate how toddlers made connections between their engagement with storybooks and their personal, real-life experiences. This reflects the inclusive and strength-based principles of *He Pikorua*, as toddlers' meaningful interactions with peers are valued, and they are supported to extend on their personal experiences and prior knowledge. These interactions demonstrate how the storybook reading supported toddlers' understanding and interpretations of emotions by providing situational contexts, which the toddlers transferred to real life situations in a process of meaning-making.

Ako supported toddlers to share their thoughts and knowledge in a community of learners that enabled shared meaning-making. This highlights that a collaborative intervention can support a positive learning environment where communal learning is facilitated. An implication for curriculum planning is that a shared, setting-wide focus can

create a positive, communal learning trajectory, where teachers are still enabled to make adaptations for individual needs and interests.

5.2.6 Summary

In summary, a combination of mechanisms have been identified that influenced toddlers' emotion knowledge learning during the tiered storybook reading intervention. These mechanisms reflect the *He Pikorua* principles and *Te Whāriki* and align with a range of literature. The mechanisms include a structured yet flexible approach to enable intervention implementation across toddlers' multiple learning environments. Structure and flexibility supported parents' and teachers' responsiveness to diverse needs and the continuously evolving ecological landscapes toddlers navigate. Through this responsive approach, which was supported by the integration of summative assessment practices and parent and teacher knowledge, parents and teachers facilitated cohesion in toddlers' learning environments. Toddlers' learning was supported through *ako* which empowered them as valued contributors to their own learning and the learning of their peers.

5.3 Mechanisms that Strengthen Parent–Teacher Collaboration

This section discusses mechanisms that strengthened the collaboration between parents and teachers. The mechanisms include bridging learning between toddlers' homes and ECE settings; sharing a focus on learning as a lever for dialogue; and parent–teacher relationships as foundations for shared responsibility by recognising parents' expertise and practical realities. These mechanisms are discussed separately followed by a brief summary.

5.3.1 Bridging Home and ECE Settings

Shared strategies and routines across homes and the ECE setting created continuity, enabling parents and teachers to align goals and practices. To support cohesion and intention during the storybook reading intervention, perspectives from parents and teachers were sought and the researcher provided information to parents and teachers about different reading strategies to support the implementation of the intervention.

Parents and teachers learn cohesively: The support parents and teachers received modified their behaviour during storybook reading interactions with the toddlers. Consequently, parents reported an increased tendency to actively invite toddlers' participation during storybook reading experiences. This behavioural shift was exemplified by parent G1, who reported allowing time for her toddler to respond and comment during storybook reading as an outcome of the intervention. Teachers reported a shift in their pedagogical focus during storybook reading experiences by prioritising interactions with and engagement of toddlers over completing the reading of the book.

In alignment with the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child, which emphasises that children (and toddlers) have the right to express themselves and have their opinions welcomed (Ministry of Social Development, 2024), the parents and teachers facilitated environments where toddlers' views, opinions, reflections and ideas were invited, thus empowering toddlers as drivers of their learning and maximising the potential for learning. Furthermore, this reflects *Te Whāriki*'s contribution strand and *He Pikorua*'s strengths-based principle through the modification parents and teachers made during storybook reading interactions. These affirmed toddlers as individuals who recognised their own special abilities and enabled the sharing of power between all participants.

Toddlers' language learning is supported: The present study exemplifies how the bridged learning spaces between toddlers' homes and their ECE setting supported

toddlers' language learning. Toddlers' active engagement during storybook reading, which created opportunities for toddlers to practice language learning, was empowered both, in their homes when reading with parents and at their setting, when reading with teachers. Reading as a teaching technique is recognised as a frequently implemented, pleasurable experience for those involved (MacNaughton & Williams, 2008). In alignment with *He Pikorua*'s evidence-based principle, in the present study, evidence-informed strategies encouraged teachers and parents to engage toddlers as active contributors, creating opportunities for oral language development and learning through conversational turn-taking and meaning-making.

Findings relating to toddlers' language learning were reported by two participants and include benefits to speech, grammar and, for bi-lingual toddlers, improvements to use of English. Specifically, two participants reported changes they observed in their toddlers' oral language. L1, who also reported that her toddler became increasingly animated and eager to share her thoughts and ideas during the storybook reading intervention, reported improvement to L2's speech and grammar. M1 reported notable improvements her toddler made in English as a positive outcome of the intervention. This finding is not surprising, as a range of empirical literature has established that storybook reading supports language learning. Shared reading (Brodin & Renblad, 2020; Karousou & Economacou, 2024; Murray et al., 2024) and dialogic reading (Whitehurst et al., 1994) were originally designed to support language learning. Specifically, dialogic reading, which scaffolds conversations using PEER (Prompt, Evaluate, Expand, Recall) to support oral language learning, prompted parents and teachers to focus on using language that elicited responses from toddlers. This is supported by research conducted in Greece, which emphasises the potential of accelerated oral language through storybook reading including conversational turn-taking and grammatical development (Karousou & Economacou, 2024). The opportunities to support language learning further affirm the suitability of the storybook

reading intervention as a universal support for learning, that has the potential to respond to toddlers' different needs and support social-emotional and oral language learning. Beyond merely reading with toddlers, the quality and the frequency of the reading interactions were likely to be instrumental in fostering oral language learning.

Implications for wider teaching contexts include the value of professional learning that enables teachers to integrate theory and frameworks (such as *He Pikorua*) into everyday pedagogy through practical strategies like dialogic reading. A whole-team approach, combined with collaboration with parents, can strengthen meaning-making and foster continuity of learning across home and early childhood settings. ECE leaders play a critical role in creating opportunities for shared learning and supporting teachers to embed dialogic and other reading approaches reading as every day, intentional practice. Furthermore, beyond merely promoting reading as a teaching technique, the findings of the present study suggest that teachers' knowledge of, and skills to implement, different reading strategies can strengthen their pedagogical practice.

Role-modelling an affinity for books: A key factor that has likely to have contributed to toddlers' increased interest and engagement in storybook reading is an increase in reading interactions offered by parents and teachers. These modelled a positive attitude towards storybook reading to toddlers, and easy access to books for toddlers through the intentional positioning of books. This aligns with research conducted in China, that focused on parents' impact on children's literacy and numeracy learning (Chen et al., 2023). The study found parent attitudes towards their own learning was indirectly correlated to their children's learning, and parents' attitudes towards children's learning directly influenced children's learning. In the present study, learning new strategies for reading with toddlers was identified as a key benefit for parents, who valued the guidance and more purposeful ways to interact with toddlers during storybook reading experiences. For instance, F1 stated that the

intervention “helped guide some of my prompts/questioning while reading together”.

Additionally, a final comment made by F1, expressing gratitude for the opportunity to engage in the intervention, suggests that parents were receptive to learning new strategies.

Acknowledging that fostering toddlers’ affinity for books and strengthening toddler–parent bonds were two of the most reported benefits of the storybook reading intervention, parental motivation to participate and to learn new reading strategies are important in supporting these benefits. Parents’ desire for information and guidance as a key motivation is supported by Krneta and colleagues (2023) who suggest that ECE settings are opportune places for parents to ask for and receive advice, and that parents preferably ask ECE teachers for advice. This is further supported by a USA study conducted by Sonnenschein and colleagues (2021), which revealed that parents desire information and guidance to support their children's reading. These findings indicate that parental motivations to support toddlers’ learning create opportunities for teachers to support parents in their intentional interactions with toddlers through responsiveness and willingness to share professional knowledge. The present study found that when teachers identify parental motivations and respond to them by sharing professional knowledge, their reciprocal collaborative relationships can be strengthened.

In addition to reports from many parents who observed an increased interest in storybook reading by their toddlers, teachers observed toddlers’ greater sustained engagement in reading activities and noticed toddlers reading storybooks independently or in small groups, without direct teacher support. Although participants used the term *reading stamina*, this was understood to refer to toddlers’ growing capacity to remain engaged in shared and independent book-related activities rather than conventional decoding. As teacher-participant YT explained, “The reading stamina of the child is increasing” was a frequent topic of conversation with parents, while teacher XT similarly reported that “Many tamariki began

‘reading’ on their own or in small groups ...” This indicates that an attitudinal change has occurred for some toddlers during the storybook reading intervention and was exemplified by a response from parent M1, who stated “To see how my child changed in showing more interest in reading ...” was the most enjoyable aspect of the intervention. Toddlers’ interest in storybook reading and their autonomous engagement in reading reflects *He Pikorua*’s strengths-based principle, which emphasises how empowerment through a mokopuna-centred intervention supports learning.

Independent storybook reading, where toddlers engage in reading without an adult, also supports toddlers’ emergent literacy skills through interactions with print (Lee, 2011). Lee emphasises that the learning of independent reading is maximised if toddlers have an opportunity to read storybooks with an adult prior to independent engagement. This aligns with Vygotsky’s socio-cultural learning theory, where scaffolding, which describes the support a learner receives from a more knowledgeable individual (inter-psychological learning), in order to ultimately master a skill independently (intra-psychological learning) (Reunamo & Nurmilaakso, 2007) is recognised as an essential component of the learning process.

In the present study, teachers and parents actively engaged in the storybook reading intervention with the toddlers, while the access to a consistent range of books through the library and the intentional positioning of the storybooks enabled toddlers to choose freely between engaging in reading experiences with adults, peers or independently. The autonomy and empowerment in the storybook reading intervention subsequently supported toddlers to show interest in engaging with storybooks. This highlights how parents and teachers can support toddlers’ interest in storybook reading by role-modelling a positive attitude towards storybook reading through frequent reading interactions with toddlers. Intentionality is important to ensure that parents and teachers create space and time for reading experiences.

5.3.2 Shared Focus as a Lever for Dialogue

A shared focus between parents and teachers: The findings of the present study suggest that the shared focus between parents and teachers on specific learning content, such as storybook reading and emotion knowledge, can enhance the quality and increase the quantity of parent–teacher communication and collaboration. This is evidenced by parents' desire for more frequent communication pre-intervention, which was no longer expressed post-intervention. It is important to note here that, pre-intervention, participants reported that communication was limited by parental work commitments, sibling care, and insufficient teacher-initiated contact. This means that teachers are not the only factor impacting on parent–teacher communication and aligns with other literature that identified the balancing act between work and life as a challenge for parents (Chistruga-Sînchevici, 2025).

Interestingly, the desire for more frequent communication decreased post-intervention, despite the range of learning areas discussed between parents and teachers narrowing. Concurrently, an increase in communication about toddlers' emotion knowledge was evidenced, indicating a positive shift towards intentional and meaningful interactions over quantity of interactions. Feedback from parents further confirmed the quality of interactions was valued. D1 stated "... good feedback which was reassuring to our reading efforts at home" regarding communication with teachers about the intervention. This finding supports the notion of quality over quantity, as parents value dialogue with substance that offers them an insight into their toddlers' learning and development. Meaningful dialogues between parents and teachers can be fostered through a shared focus on toddlers' learning. Thereby, a setting-wide focus on learning and experiences, such as emotion knowledge and storybook reading, can be useful in the busy environments of ECE settings.

5.3.3 Recognising Parents' Expertise and Practical Realities as Foundations for Shared Responsibility

The intervention created opportunities for collaboration that went beyond information exchange, enabling parents and teachers to co-construct strategies and align goals, consistent with *He Pikorua's* (MoE, 2026a) collaborative and ecological principles. Additionally, in Aotearoa New Zealand, *Te Whāriki* (MoE, 2017) encourages a spirit of sharing between parents and teachers as valued by many cultures. This was evidenced in the present study by the continuous sharing of information as recorded in the teacher reports, which further supported the reciprocal collaborative relationships.

He Pikorua in Action (MoE, 2026d) emphasises that adults in the lives of mokopuna must be recognised as 'key agents of change'. Reganit (2025) suggests that cohesive collaboration recognises parents as an extended part of the educational team to ensure that educational practices are implemented with consistency and goals are shared. Furthermore, cohesive collaboration enables parents and teacher to exchange and negotiate ideas. Overall, the parent–teacher relationship is a significant foundation for shared responsibility in toddlers' learning.

In accordance with the present study, research conducted in the South African ECE context (Connelly et al., 2024), which also used a library for parents to foster collaboration, highlighted that when everyone's contributions are valued, everyone is encouraged to share ideas. The research, which intended to educate parents on interactions with their children in a Montessori approach, found that parents value knowing how teachers interact with their children. The study recognised benefits from the consistency that is created when parents' and teachers' engagement with children is in alignment, such as by using the same strategies. Creating consistency through collaboration further supports equitable

outcomes, as learners thrive when the gap between their home culture and their setting culture is bridged through collaboration (Ališauskiene & Kairiene, 2016).

This finding highlights that while parents' engagement with the storybook reading intervention did not create more time, the storybook acted as a tool of empowerment. Parents were supported by the teachers and the researcher to create opportunities to spend time with their toddlers. The shared time between toddlers and parents was intentional, thus the experiences supported reciprocal interactions that fostered toddlers' emotion knowledge learning and positively impacted toddler–parent bonds.

There is value in a credit-based view of parent participation, to empower parents as partners, recognising their expertise and creating opportunities for parents to contribute in ways that fit in with busy lifestyles and multiple commitments. This suggests that responsive pedagogy extends beyond meeting toddlers' individual needs to include attentiveness to parents' varied circumstances and the sharing of professional expertise, creating conditions for a collaborative learning community.

5.3.4 Summary

The findings, in conjunction with *He Pikorua* (MoE, 2026a), *Te Whāriki* (MoE, 2017) and a range of literature, show that a range of mechanisms can support collaborative relationships between parents and teachers, which can be beneficial for all stakeholders. Parents' and teachers' joint engagement in the storybook reading intervention, which was enabled by the teaching of reading strategies by the researcher, created a ripple effect of mechanisms that supported toddlers' learning. This highlights the value of a credit-based view of parent participation, empowering parents as partners in teaching toddlers by recognising their expertise and creating opportunities for parents to contribute in ways that fit in with busy lifestyles and multiple commitments. Furthermore, the shared focus on toddlers'

emotion knowledge through storybook reading created a common interest that strengthened parent–teacher communications by supporting meaningful dialogue focused on toddlers’ learning. Responsive pedagogy extends beyond meeting toddlers’ individual needs to include attentiveness to parents’ varied circumstances and the sharing of professional expertise, creating conditions for a collaborative learning environment.

5.4 Reading Together and Toddler–Whānau Relationships

An unanticipated finding of the study identifies mechanisms that influence the toddler–parent dynamics and create a ripple effect that extends beyond the target participants to include the wider whānau through family engagement in the storybook reading intervention. The mechanisms include the ritualising of storybook reading experiences, the engagement of whānau, including siblings, and parents’ perceptions of toddlers as active contributors to their learning.

5.4.1 Ritualising Storybook Reading Experiences

When reading is embedded as an intentional ritual, routine time becomes shared, purposeful time, supporting wellbeing and connection. The use of storybook reading as reciprocal time spent between parents and toddlers to support toddlers’ emotion knowledge acted as a mechanism that supported quality interactions between toddler and parent dyads. This was expressed by parent E1: “Book reading has created a much closer bond and connection with my kids ...” This suggests parents are well-positioned to strengthen their bonds with their toddlers by extending routines to engage in purposeful and intentional rituals that are valued by everyone.

The present study found that parents who perceived storybook reading as another layer of daily routines reported challenges to finding time for storybook reading, such as B1,

who stated that “Fitting it (storybook reading) into a routine after daycare was challenging”. Given that routines are predictable, necessary, regular (Lyon & Christie, 2019) but potentially mundane occurrences, this study proposes that a shift in parents’ perception is important to move from devaluing necessary routines to implement high quality rituals. Rituals are predictable like routines, but also collaborative, intentional and purposeful (Lyon & Christie, 2010). This shift might help toddlers and parents find enjoyment in shared experiences, including potentially mundane everyday occurrences.

To facilitate a shift in parental perceptions from perceiving daily occurrences as necessary routines to valuing them as purposeful rituals, it is important to consider preventative factors. Consistent with existing literature (Milkie et al., 2010), many parents in the present study reported that balancing busy lives, work commitments, and navigating the needs of multiple children restricted their time, posing challenges to fully engage in all aspects of the intervention, including storybook reading.

The present study recognises the challenges of parents to balance family life with work as they navigate those two competing spheres, while identifying the value of storybook reading as a valuable ritual for toddler–parent bonding. Therefore, it advocates for teachers to harness the unique position they have within families ecosystems, to leverage their professional knowledge with parents. Ultimately, this can support parents to understand and maximise the potential of daily interactions with their toddlers on their toddler–parent bond. This is recognised in *He Pikorua in Action* (MoE, 2026d), specifically through the mana motuhake, empower others step, which highlights that everyone who supports toddlers must be strengthened by promoting positive relationships and environments.

5.4.2 Whānau Engagement, Including Siblings

Storybook reading routines created spaces for siblings to participate, encouraging conversation, turn taking, and family wide meaning making. Through these shared routines, family members were able to connect with each other and with the stories, fostering a sense of belonging and strengthening relationships within the whānau. The process of reading together also supported learning by creating informal spaces for language use and comprehension in a relaxed, enjoyable context.

Teacher reports highlighted that involvement from other whānau in the storybook reading intervention enabled a ripple effect, creating opportunities for other stakeholders. Specifically, the increase of regular reading parents' implemented at home extended to siblings, who benefited from increased opportunities to read with their parents. As reported by C1, the storybook reading was adapted to support different learning needs, by empowering C2's brother to read to her. This is also exemplified in a final comment shared by E1 who stated "... I love reading different stories with all my kids". The storybook reading intervention has value as a flexible strategy to foster family-wide learning that strengthens literacy practices and relationships.

In the present study, while whānau engagement was promoted, no specific attention was given to siblings, and this finding was not anticipated. This aligns with research from Beffel and colleagues (2022), who propose that sibling involvement should be considered in interventions, as siblings are connected to a range of positive influences and are uniquely positioned to positively influence healthy family functioning, social and emotional competencies and prevent risk behaviours. In reflection of *He Pikorua*, this strongly reflects the mokopuna and whānau-centred principles, which emphasise the importance of drawing on the strengths of a toddlers' learning community, thus including their siblings.

5.4.3 Parents' Perceptions of Toddlers as Active Contributors

Storybook reading interactions revealed toddlers' agency and competence, reinforcing a strengths-based, mana enhancing stance. Parents and teachers reported a notable increase in toddlers' active participation in emotion knowledge learning, which strengthened toddlers as capable and competent learners. While no participant reports directly relate to shared reading, teachers reported positive outcomes from dialogic and social story reading. Dialogic reading was reported to empower toddlers to serve as active contributors. Dialogic reading supports adults to engage learners through a structured approach, providing helpful prompts such as PEER (Prompt, Evaluate, Expand, Recall) and CROWD (Completion, Recall, Open-ended, Wh-questions, Distancing), which corresponds to the letter P in PEER. This suggests that the structured approach to inviting toddlers' contributions through dialogic reading supported toddlers' engagement during reading interactions.

Similarly, social story reading was observed to support toddlers' learning by being successfully used to support valued behaviours. The teachers extended on the social story reading by using the third-person narrative style in interactions with toddlers. In the present study, as outlined in a teacher report, the third person narrative style was successfully implemented to redirect a toddler when he engaged in challenging behaviours, such as standing on tables. This highlights that a creative adaption to teachers' pedagogical practice, that is based on observation and established teaching practices and responsive to individual toddlers can extend beyond that targeted learning to support toddlers through a range of situations.

Parents' perceptions of toddlers: Toddlers' active engagement during storybook reading experiences shifted the parental perceptions of toddlers from passive participants to capable and competent contributors for some participants, as evidenced by the reports of increased toddler engagement during storybook reading. Additionally, a comment made by

the father of toddler D2 — “I was corrected by a two-year-old!”— following an interaction in which his toddler corrected him during storybook reading, suggesting that toddlers’ increased engagement in storybook reading supported parents to recognise their toddlers’ developing autonomy, agency and competence. Beyond scaffolding toddler knowledge through storybook reading, when toddlers’ independent engagement with books and conversations with others is facilitated, toddlers are supported to internalise their learning, which reinforces their self-perceptions as capable and competent contributors. In the bi-cultural ECE landscape of Aotearoa New Zealand, adults’ perceptions of children as inherently capable, competent and gifted, regardless of their age (MoE, 2017), aligns with the Māori worldview and is actively promoted through *Te Whāriki*. Additionally, in supporting toddlers’ internalisation of their learning and reinforcing their self-perception as capable and competent learners, the strengths-based *He Pikorua* principle is reflected, by engaging with toddlers in a mana-enhancing way, drawing on their strengths and sharing power.

Valuing toddlers’ active participation in storybook reading as a key contributor to their learning requires a shift in how parents and teachers perceive toddlers—from passive recipients to active partners in the learning process. Encouraging this participation means teachers must reflect on their pedagogical practices from the toddlers’ perspective, recognising involvement as an ongoing, collaborative process in which the power of interpretation is shared (Kanga, 2016). Within the intervention, and specifically through the different reading strategies, toddlers were recognised as initiators of interactions that supported their ongoing emotion learning. This suggests that the study empowered toddlers to be at the centre of the intervention and positioned them as capable and competent learners, honouring *He Pikorua* (MoE, 2026c) (mokopuna and whānau-centred). Additionally, toddlers demonstrated agency by driving their own learning and including others in their meaning-making (strengths-based). Active engagement in emotion knowledge learning

was also evidenced through spontaneous conversations some toddlers initiated as they shared their ideas and observations.

Enhanced parental responsiveness: For parents E1 and C1 their engagement in the storybook reading intervention enhanced their responsiveness to their toddlers' emotion communication. Specifically, the findings suggest that emotion learning happened for parents, also. This learning was evidenced in their receptive knowledge as their interpretation of their toddlers' emotions became easier. As reported by E1, these changes in emotion communication subsequently decreased their feeling of frustration when the communication was challenging. Parents' engagement with, perceptions of, and attitudes towards their toddlers' learning and development likely influenced outcomes for toddlers. Additionally, parents' openness and attitudes toward their own learning influenced their personal benefits from the intervention. This aligns with a report published by the Ministry of Social Development (Praat, 2011), which identified positive changes in parents' attitudes following a collaborative intervention between parents and educators. The report further identified parents' positive attitudes as a success indicator in supporting positive outcomes for children. The implication of this finding is that strategies teachers employ to support toddlers' learning have the potential to create a ripple effect that benefits their parents also. Supporting toddlers' learning can positively impact toddler–parent dynamics.

The findings reveal that the opportunities created by the storybook reading intervention for parents to learn about emotion knowledge supported a high overall use of emotion language by parents, however, one parent reported a decrease in this area. Concurrently, N1 reported finding the intervention helpful in learning new reading strategies. Overall, this demonstrates a responsive form of engagement from the parent, possibly with the intention of prioritising their toddlers' individual needs or their aspirations as a parent.

To maximise learning opportunities for toddlers, parents' motivation to learn about different ways of intentionally engaging with toddlers is valuable. For teachers, supporting parents can involve being responsive to parents' motivations and providing professional guidance. At a foundational level, this requires relationship building and information gathering, areas at the core of *He Pikorua in Action*.

5.4.4 Summary

In summary, this section has outlined the mechanisms that influenced the toddler–parent dynamics and created a ripple effect that extended beyond the target participants. These mechanisms include: the ritualising of storybook reading experiences; the engagement of whānau; parents' reinforced perceptions of toddlers as active contributors; and emotion learning for some parents. The increased focus on emotion language supported enhanced understanding of their toddlers' emotions leading to decreased frustration for two parents. This finding emphasises the importance of providing professional guidance to parents, to enable their intentional support of toddlers.

Many parents perceived storybook reading time with their toddlers as an opportunity to strengthen toddler–parent bonds. Parent and whānau engagement in the intervention increased the time they spent bonding with their toddlers, which is valuable for wellbeing and appreciated by some parents. Conversely, some parents perceived storybook reading as a challenge and found it difficult to create time to engage in reading experiences with their toddler. For some participants, quality reading time was extended to wider whānau, including siblings, which supported family wide relationships, meaning-making, connections and siblings' learning.

By recognising the time spent reading storybooks with toddlers as valuable to foster toddlers' engagement in their own learning, some participants noted a shift in their

perceptions of their toddlers, from passive participants to active, knowledgeable contributors. This shift is important to strengthen toddlers' self-perceptions as capable and competent learners. In Aotearoa New Zealand, this is especially important to honour the Māori worldviews and recognise toddlers as inherently capable and competent (MoE, 2017).

5.5 Limitations and Delimitations

This study presents limitations and delimitations which should be considered when interpreting the results. It is important to consider the study focus, which was centred around the ways the storybook reading intervention supported toddlers' emotion learning and parent–teacher collaboration and relationships, as opposed to measuring the effects of the intervention.

The study was of limited size and scope with a small participant population that enabled the collection of in-depth data for descriptive and exploratory interpretations, without intending for the findings to be generalised. The exploratory interpretations through the integration of the reflexive thematic analysis enabled the researcher to develop findings that reflect the differing experiences of the participants and explore these further, instead of making assumptions about a whole-group experiences. This further supported the exploration of findings that were beyond the initial scope of the research and included ways that the intervention created opportunities for participants' whānau, most notably siblings.

While teacher reports provided a small insight into what happened during the research, the findings did not include participant observation, therefore there may be a gap between subjective participant perceptions and what an objective observer would report. The results are representative of the experiences of the participant population; however, they may not represent the experiences and perspectives of parents and teachers at other ECE settings.

In this study, the results of the Affect Knowledge Test as a summative assessment of toddlers' emotion knowledge were used to inform the processes. It is important that the interpretation of the AKT results are considered in light of limitations of the single group pre-test post-test design and the subsequent absence of a control group. With the absence of a control group, changes between pre-and post-test results may be affected by variables other than the one measured (Marsden & Togerson, 2012). It is also important to emphasise that the results were used in an ipsative approach with view of supporting equitable outcomes.

The researcher had a dual role in this study through their employment at the research setting as head teacher of the toddler room. This supported the design of the study by responding to the challenges and needs at the setting, while also creating challenges through the researcher's immersed involvement, which enabled the observation of the unfolding of the intervention beyond the data collection. Therefore, a reflexive thematic analysis, which, beyond recognising researcher subjectivity values it as a unique way of making meaning of data, was employed.

Nevertheless, the study provides unique insight into the practical application of *Te Tūāpapa o He Pikorua* in the environment of a typical ECE setting in Aotearoa New Zealand. It demonstrates how a range of mechanisms can support toddlers' emotion knowledge learning and influence parent-teacher collaboration. The thesis makes a valuable contribution by providing a clearly outlined intervention with accessible strategies that are flexible to be adapted to the diverse landscape of ECE in Aotearoa New Zealand.

5.6 Implications

A range of implications have been identified for ECE stakeholders and for further research. The key implications for parents, teachers and the ECE sector are reiterated in this section, leading up to the conclusion of the thesis. A caveat is that the findings of the present

study describe the experiences and perspectives of the participants, rather than being generalisable to other ECE communities. That said, the implications build on practical ways for teachers to honour the principles in their pedagogical practice, providing insight for other ECE communities and for further research and policy.

5.6.1 Implications for Teachers

Structure and flexibility: Having a clearly defined approach and well-articulated strategies for implementing an intervention while maintaining flexibility to respond to diverse needs and challenges is essential for effective practice. Employing a systematic approach to interventions ensures the implementation occurs with integrity and intention, while flexibility ensures responsiveness to diverse demographics and environments. This can be achieved by the balance of a clear outline, including a timeline and intervention strategies, while collaboration and communication with all involved enables continuous adaptations based on individual needs.

Assessment knowledge and practice: Teachers' knowledge of different forms of assessment and skill in using a range of assessment tools enables responsive assessment practices that meet diverse learners' needs. By combining a range of assessments, including formative, summative and ipsative, teachers are enabled to respond to individual needs while also incorporating setting-wide foci and curriculum inquiries. It is essential therefore that teachers have awareness of different types of assessment and can confidently and competently implement those. This may require support during initial teacher training and ongoing learning for experienced teachers.

Openness to learning: Positive perceptions of pedagogical practice following the intervention suggest that openness to learning and integrating frameworks like *He Pikorua* and models such as *Te Tūāpapa o He Pikorua* are key to supporting equitable outcomes. The

present study demonstrates how teachers feel supported in their pedagogical practice through their learning and implementation of different strategies. By bridging the theoretical framework with the practical application of specific strategies, teachers' learning and success was fostered. This process established a positive pedagogical cycle where teachers' willingness to engage with theory and implement practical interventions led to self-identified successes and responsive practices, which further motivated their ongoing participation and promoted equitable outcomes.

Reading strategies: Teachers' knowledge and skills in implementing diverse reading strategies enhance pedagogical practice. Teachers responded to toddlers' individual needs by creating space and encouraging toddlers to make contributions. Having a repertoire of reading strategies supports teachers' responsive pedagogy by adapting to individual toddlers.

Intentional emotion teaching: Intentional teaching of emotions can occur alongside other learning, strengthening holistic approaches when teaching is focused and deliberate. Intentional emotion teaching is supported through the deliberate and consistent use of emotion terms and by creating space for toddlers to make active contributions and is suitable for play based environments. Thereby, a consistent approach across the teaching team is of value.

Learning environments: Consideration of physical, social, and temporal environments is vital. For example, physical includes accessible, carefully selected and positioned storybooks empower toddlers as readers. Temporal includes structured routines support everyday learning. Social includes shared resources, coherent strategies, and collaboration to connect toddlers' home and ECE settings foster continuity, cohesion and a synergy between home and setting environments. Thus, through minor but intentional adjustments to the physical, temporal, and social environments opportunities for learning are enhanced.

Team and parent/whānau collaboration: A whole-team approach, combined with collaboration with parents, strengthens meaning-making and continuity of learning across settings. ECE leaders play a critical role in supporting inclusive communities where learning and teaching are shared. As Reganit (2025) suggests, cohesive collaboration recognises parents as an extended part of the educational team to ensure that educational practices are implemented with consistency and goals are shared. By identifying parents' motivations, teachers are well positioned to support families by sharing professional knowledge in ways that parents can meaningfully use to enhance their engagement with their toddlers, thereby extending a collaborative, team-based approach to include the wider community.

5.6.2 Implications for ECE Research

Collaborative interventions: The study highlights the need for research into collaborative interventions and how this influence both child learning and adult relationships in ECE settings. The present study shows that parents seek ways to be actively engaged in their toddlers' learning. Further research may explore parents be active and effective engagement in toddlers' learning by viewing ECE settings as learning communities for all stakeholders or by investigating a range of shared learning foci. Such research may hold the potential to strengthen ECE in Aotearoa New Zealand as an equitable phase for learning for all toddlers and can be supported through ako to create a positive learning trajectory for ECE communities.

Shared curriculum focus: Investigating how shared, setting-wide foci (e.g., emotion knowledge and storybook reading) affect communal learning trajectories would be beneficial. The present study extends on a range of intervention practices by demonstrating how collaborative relationships can be supported through a shared focus on toddlers' learning between parents and teachers. A shared focus supports teachers to get an insight into parents'

values, beliefs, aspirations, and, as established, identify parental motivations for involvement in their toddlers' learning. Furthermore, a shared focus supports the quality of the communication between parents and teachers through a purposeful and intentional exchange of information, strengthening the continuity of toddlers' learning in different microsystems.

Professional learning models: This study highlights gaps between existing theoretical frameworks and their practical application in ECE and purposes research into effective ways to support teachers to embed frameworks like *He Pikorua* into everyday practice. In Aotearoa New Zealand a range of frameworks and models that provide theoretical guidance for teachers and are tailored to the local context are available. Additionally, *He Pikorua* offers some practical guidance to teachers, most evidently through *Te Tūāpapa o he Pikorua*. However, research investigating effective ways that support teachers with the integration of theoretical resources in their pedagogy could be beneficial to ensure that teachers' are competent in the knowledge and implementation of the most appropriate resources for the appropriate situation. The present study demonstrates how specific, evidence-informed strategies (such as different reading strategies) that are accessible for diverse ECE communities can support the embedding of professional learning models in practice.

Ripple effect on families: Research examining the ripple effect of teacher strategies on parent engagement and family dynamics could provide deeper insights into collaborative learning communities. While the ripple effect on toddler–parent dynamics and family-wide learning as a result of the intervention was not anticipated in the present study, this finding suggests a range of opportunities to explore how pedagogical strategies employed in ECE can impact a range of stakeholders.

5.6.3 Implications for Policy

Assessment paradigm shift: A paradigm shift may be valuable in assessment practices across the ECE sector to ensure assessment informs pedagogy and achieves equitable outcomes. Given the dominant use of formative assessment, a paradigm shift and training in a range of assessment methods is paramount for teachers. The benefits of combining a range of assessments, including formative, summative and ipsative through an open-minded approach enables curriculum planning based on children's individualised needs while incorporating a setting-wide focus, thus supporting equity in education.

Professional learning opportunities: There is value in policies promoting professional learning opportunities that enable teachers to integrate frameworks and evidence-based strategies into practice. The present study builds on existing research that indicates a need for professional learning and development (PLD) for toddler teachers (Clarke, 2016), and PLD that bridges gaps between theory and practice (Clarke, 2021) in a sustainable way (Liu et al., 2024) to support teachers in providing pedagogy that is responsive to the diverse needs of learners to ensure equitable outcome.

Collaboration: Support for interventions that encourage collaboration between teachers and parents should be embedded in ECE policy, recognising parents as partners in learning. A prerequisite is teachers' credit-based view of parents and whānau that recognises parents' expertise and values parental contributions. Thereby, policy should recognise that responsive pedagogy extends beyond responding to children's needs to understanding and responding to parents' diverse needs and situations, also. Describing this as a 'family pedagogy' Jacobs and colleagues (2021) discuss a 'funds of knowledge lens' as a credit-based angle through which teachers in Aotearoa New Zealand are well positioned to weave the knowledge of parents as experts in toddlers' lives into their practice. Such a perception

supports the exchange of knowledge and insights with parents, creating a ripple effect of mechanisms that supported parent–teacher collaborative relationships and children’s learning.

5.7 Thesis Conclusion

This study explored how a tiered storybook reading intervention supported toddlers’ emotion knowledge learning and influenced parents’ and teachers’ collaborative relationships. The study included an intervention, involving universal (shared reading), targeted (dialogic reading) and tailored (social story reading) support through three different tiers of storybook reading across toddlers’ homes and ECE setting. *He Pikorua* (2026a) supported the implementation and understanding of the intervention. Mixed methods were used, consisting of a single group pre-test post-test design that collected data through an emotion knowledge assessment (AKT), parent and teacher questionnaires, and teacher reports. Overall, findings suggest the intervention supported toddlers’ emotion knowledge learning, fostered equitable outcomes and improved parent–teacher collaboration. This thesis has identified key mechanisms that influenced toddlers’ learning and parent–teacher collaboration, addressing the research question: In what ways does a ten-week storybook reading intervention support toddlers’ emotion knowledge and influence parent–teacher collaboration?

Specifically, mechanisms included the structured yet flexible approach to intervention drawing on *Te Tūāpapa o He Pikorua* to include universal, targeted and tailored support; integrating professional knowledge with responsive pedagogy; fostering empowering environments and fostering a community of learners. The tiered design provided multiple entry points and supported assessment-informed decision-making, with AKT information and teacher/parent knowledge guiding who received universal, targeted, or tailored supports and how scaffolding was adjusted across home and ECE.

A synchronised approach to intervention across the entire ECE system is essential to support toddlers' learning and equitable outcomes. This can be further supported through teachers' ongoing learning, changes to policy and further research. In alignment with *He Pikorua*, which states that the knowledge, experience, perspectives and insights of all stakeholders must be considered (collaborative) and an ecological approach to intervention is essential, this study highlights the importance of responsive interventions that balance structure with flexibility, support authentic, cohesive collaboration with parents as partners and respect (and as necessary responsively adjust) environmental factors that influence learning, as universal approaches fail to support every child (NSCDC, 2004). Ultimately, as demonstrated in this study, such an approach has the potential to create a ripple effect that reaches beyond the targeted outcome and the target population.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 — Ethics Approval



7/01/2025

Dear: Andrea Saladin

Re: Ethics Application - OM2 24/60 - Fostering Children's Emotion Knowledge through Story Book Reading and Collaboration with Whānau

Thank you for the above application that was considered by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee:

Ohu Matatika 2 at their meeting held on **Thursday, 28 November 2024**

On behalf of the Committee I am pleased to advise you that the ethics of your application are approved.

Approval is for three years. If this project has not been completed within three years from the date of this letter, reapproval must be requested.

If the nature, content, location, procedures or personnel of your approved application change, please advise the Secretary of the Committee.

Yours sincerely

Professor Tracy Riley,
Acting Chair, Research Ethics Chair's Committee

Research Ethics, Graduate Research School and Ethics
Massey University, Private Bag 11 222, Palmerston North, 4442, New Zealand
E humanethics@massey.ac.nz; animaethics@massey.ac.nz
www.massey.ac.nz/research/ethics

Appendix 2 — Information Setting

(The Document has been redacted to remove the name of the ECE setting and staff)

Research Project Request: **Fostering Toddlers' Emotion Knowledge Through Story Book Reading and Collaboration with Whānau: Exploring Dialogic Reading and use of Social Stories to Support Toddlers.**

Dear [REDACTED]

Dear [REDACTED]

Greetings. In my role as a Master Thesis student at Massey University, I am undertaking a research project entitled, *Fostering Toddlers' Emotion Knowledge Through Story Book Reading and Collaboration with Whānau: Exploring Dialogic Reading and use of Social stories to Support Toddlers* to fulfil the requirements of a Master of Education (Early Years). This study aims to explore the influence of a tiered storybook reading intervention that includes shared reading, dialogic reading and social story reading, on toddlers' emotional learning and on whānau–teacher collaboration.

I would like to undertake the research at [REDACTED] and invite the community at [REDACTED] to participate in the research project.

Should you agree, participation would involve the distribution of an invitation to this research through Storypark. The research is designed to flow with the regular program as to not cause disruptions. The research will provide teachers and families with an opportunity to share their views and experiences about shared reading and collaboration.

There are no expected harms or discomforts for participants, but there may be possible benefits in terms of learning for all participants and enhanced collaboration between teachers and families.

The participation of [REDACTED] in the project is voluntary. If you are interested in the project or would like to discuss this project further, please let me know and I will follow up with you. If I do not hear from you, I will assume you prefer to decline my invitation.

Project Contacts

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Ohu Matatika 2, Application OM2 24/60. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact the Chairperson, Massey University Human Ethics Ohu Matatika 2, email humanethics2@massey.ac.nz

Yours sincerely,

Andrea Saladin, Student Researcher

Andrea.Saladin.2@uni.massey.ac.nz

Supervisors:

Dr. Tara MacLaughlin, Associate Professor in Early Years,

T.W.McLaughlin@massey.ac.nz

Dr. Linda Clarke, Senior Tutor,

L.Clarke1@massey.ac.nz

Appendix 3 — Information Parents

(The Document has been redacted to remove the name of the ECE setting)



Fostering Toddlers' Emotion Knowledge Through Story Book Reading and Collaboration with Whānau

Information Sheet for Families and Whānau

Invitation to Participate in Research Study

Greetings. As you may know, I have been studying for my Master's degree through Massey University, in addition to my role as head teacher in the [REDACTED] Room. I am undertaking a research project titled *Fostering Toddlers' Emotion Knowledge Through Story Book Reading and Collaboration with Whānau*. Fostering emotion knowledge includes helping children learn about and communicate their feelings, as well as learning how to notice how others are feeling. A key aim of the research is to explore how a story book reading project fosters toddlers' emotion knowledge and how the project influences collaboration between parents/caregivers and teachers in the [REDACTED] Room. I am excited to let you know that participation in the research is available to the [REDACTED] Community. The purpose of this letter is to provide you with information and invite you be part of my research.

Participant Recruitment

This project invites the participations of all families and their children who are enrolled [REDACTED] attend the [REDACTED] Room and are born between October 2021 and January 2023.

Participant Involvement and Project Procedures

Voluntary Participation: Families from the [REDACTED] room are invited to participate in the research by giving voluntary consent. Participants may withdraw from the research at any time should they choose to do so.

Data Collection: Data will only be collected from participating families who have given consent to taking part in this research. The project involves the collection of information from participating families through two short questionnaires, one before and one after the ten-week reading project. This data collection will take approximately 2 x 20 minutes. Parents/caregivers are also asked for permission for information to be collected about their child's emotion knowledge, so we can see what difference the reading project might have made. The information will be collected using a simple and fun test, called the Affect Knowledge Test. The test involves a teacher showing toddlers pictures of faces that show different feelings and asking what the feeling is. This happens during play as a natural part of toddlers' daily activities. If you agree, there might be some information you share through informal conversations or comments that could be used as research data. If so, you would always be asked first.

Reading Project

Reading is recognised as a valuable teaching technique and spontaneous reading with children is part of the everyday curriculum in the [REDACTED] Room. The reading project may lead to an increase in reading experiences offered to the toddlers. Changes to the reading techniques used for all children in the [REDACTED] Room, including participants and non-participants, may occur as part of this research. Participation in reading will continue to remain optional to the children. Additionally, participating families will have access to a small library of books which they are welcome to take home and read to their children over a period of ten weeks – from 3 February 2025 to 11 April 2025. Reading at home might take 15 to 60 minutes per week and is optional. Due to the limited number of books available, the book library will not be available to non-participating families.



Shared Reading, Dialogic Reading, Social Stories

You will be invited to attend an information evening during which three story reading techniques, *shared reading*, *dialogic reading* and *social story reading*, are introduced. You will learn about different techniques you can use when reading with children. The information evening will take approximately 60 minutes.

Participants' Rights

You and your child are under no obligation to accept this invitation. Should you choose to participate, you have the right to:

- Withdraw yourself and your child from the study at any time, up until the end of the data collection
- Ask any questions about the project at any time during participation
- Provide information on the understanding that your name, your child's name, or your child's recorded image will not be used unless you give permission to the research team
- Be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded
- Hardcopy data from surveys will be kept in a safe location and destroyed following the data analysis.

Participant Expectations and Potential Benefits

Should you give consent for you and your child to participate in this study, you can expect no disruption or alteration to the typical everyday experiences and activities. Your child can freely choose if they wish to participate in the reading experiences offered by the teachers. It is not expected that you or your child will experience any harm or discomfort as a result of participating in this project. The collected information will not include any identifiable information about you, your family or your child and that information will be securely stored on a password protected device and on a password protected Massey University One Drive. Publication or dissemination activities will not include identifying information.

It is expected the project will foster toddlers' learning and development. You will have opportunities to extend your story reading techniques and take books home to read. The project is expected to enhance collaboration between teachers and families.

Project Contacts

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Ohu Matatika 2 Application OM2 24/60. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact the Chairperson, Massey University Human Ethics Ohu Matatika 2, email humanethics2@massey.ac.nz

For further questions, please contact

Andrea Saladin
Student Researcher and Head Teacher
Andrea.Saladin.2@uni.massey.ac.nz

Dr Tara McLaughlin
First Supervisor, Associate Professor, Institute of Education, Massey University
(06) 356 9099 ext. 84312; t.w.mclaughlin@massey.ac.nz
Dr Linda Clarke
Second Supervisor, Senior Tutor, Institute of Education, Massey University
(06) 356 9099 L.Clarke1@massey.ac.nz

Appendix 4 — Information Teachers

(The Document has been redacted to remove the name of the ECE setting)



Fostering Toddlers' Emotion Knowledge Through Story Book Reading and Collaboration with Whānau

Information Sheet for Teachers

Invitation to Participate in Research Study

Greetings. As you know, I have been studying for my [Master's](#) degree through Massey University, in addition to my role as head teacher in the [REDACTED] Room. I am undertaking a research project titled *Fostering Toddlers' Emotion Knowledge Through Story Book Reading and Collaboration with Whānau*. The research seeks to answer the following questions:

- In what ways does [shared](#) story book reading foster emotion knowledge in toddlers and influence collaboration between parents/caregivers and teachers?
- How do parents/caregivers and teachers believe the story book reading project impacted on parent/caregiver-teacher collaboration?

I am excited to let you know that participation in the research is available to the [REDACTED] Community, where participating teachers will be working alongside myself (my role is teacher-researcher). The purpose of this letter is to provide you with information and invite you be part of my research.

Participant Recruitment

This project invites the participations of all teachers employed at [REDACTED] Road who are working in the [REDACTED] Room. The project involves sharing information about experiences and perceptions through brief questionnaires and engaging in a ten-week story book reading intervention as part of your everyday pedagogical practice. Participation is voluntary and participants may withdraw from the research at any time should they choose to do so.

Project Procedures and Participant Involvement

Data Collection: The project involves the collection of data from participating teachers through [a two short questionnaires](#), one before and one after the ten-week reading project. This will approximately take 2 x 20 minutes.

Reading Intervention

A library of books will be available for everyday story book reading with the children. Teachers are asked to engage in story book reading with the children as part of their everyday pedagogical practice.

Shared Reading, Dialogic Reading, Social Stories

A training event for participating teachers will be offered. This event is designed to introduce three story reading techniques, *shared reading*, *dialogic reading* and *social story reading* and will take approximately 45 minutes. This event will be outside of your regular teaching hours.

Participants' Rights

You are under no obligation to accept this invitation. Should you choose to participate, you have the right to:

- Withdraw from the study at any time, up until the end of the data collection
- Ask any questions about the project at any time during participation
- Provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used unless you give permission to the research team
- Be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded
- Hardcopy data from surveys will be kept in a safe location and destroyed following the data analysis.

Participant Expectations and Potential Benefits

Should you give your permission to participate in this study, you can expect no disruption or alteration to the typical everyday experiences. The research is aligned with ongoing professional learning. It is not expected that you will experience any harm or discomfort as a result of participating in this project. The collected data will not include any identifiable information about you and that data will be securely stored on a password protected device and on a password protected Massey University One Drive. Any resulting publication or dissemination activities will not include identifying information. It is anticipated that participation will enhance your knowledge about story book reading techniques and support collaboration between teachers and families.

Project Contacts

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Ohu Matatika 2 Application OM2 24/60. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact the Chairperson, Massey University Human Ethics Ohu Matatika 2, email humanethics2@massey.ac.nz

For further questions, please contact

Andrea Saladin
Student Researcher and Head Teacher
Andrea.Saladin.2@uni.massey.ac.nz

Dr Tara McLaughlin
First Supervisor
Associate Professor, Institute of Education, Massey University
(06) 356 9099 ext. 84312; t.w.mclaughlin@massey.ac.nz

Dr Linda Clarke
Second Supervisor
Senior Tutor, Institute of Education, Massey University
(06) 356 9099 L.Clarke1@massey.ac.nz

Appendix 5 — Consent Form Setting

(The Document has been redacted to remove the name of the ECE setting)



Fostering Toddlers' Emotion Knowledge through Story Book Reading and Collaboration with Whānau

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM – RESEARCH SETTING

I have read and understood the Information Sheet. I have had the details of the study explained to me. Any questions I had have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time. I have been given sufficient time to consider whether to participate in this study. I understand participation is voluntary and agree to the following terms:

- I agree/do not agree for the research to be conducted at [REDACTED]

I hereby consent to take part in this study.

Signature: Date:

Full Name –
printed
.....

Appendix 6 — Consent Form Parents



Fostering Toddlers| Emotion Knowledge through Story Book Reading and Collaboration with Whānau

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM – INDIVIDUAL PARENTS

I have read and understood the Information Sheet. I have had the details of the study explained to me. Any questions I had have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time. I have been given sufficient time to consider whether to participate in this study. I understand participation is voluntary and agree to the following terms:

- I agree/do not agree to complete the questionnaire.
- I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.
- I agree for the Affective Knowledge Test to be administered to my child.

I hereby consent to take part in this study.

Signature: Date:

Full Name – printed

Appendix 7 — Consent Form Teachers



Fostering Toddlers | Emotion Knowledge through Story Book Reading and Collaboration with Whānau

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM – INDIVIDUAL TEACHER

I have read and understood the Information Sheet. I have had the details of the study explained to me. Any questions I had have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time. I have been given sufficient time to consider whether to participate in this study. I understand participation is voluntary and agree to the following terms:

- I agree/do not agree to complete the questionnaire.
- I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

I hereby consent to take part in this study.

Signature: Date:


Full Name – printed

Appendix 8 — Information Flyer

(The Document has been redacted to remove the name of the ECE setting)

Supporting Toddler's Emotional Literacy

Through Storybook Reading and Whānau Collaboration




Dear [redacted]

Reading has a positive impact on children's learning and at [redacted] we read with our ākonga every day. This term there is an opportunity for us to **extend on reading interactions** through a research study titled: ***Building Toddler's Emotional Literacy Through Storybook Reading and Whānau Collaboration***. Reading with children is a fun and enjoyable experience for everyone and supports children's learning.

While this study will explore different reading styles to support children's emotion learning, it is anticipated that it will positively impact

- language learning,
- relationships
- other learning domains, also.

Keep an eye out on Storypark for more information and to find out how you and your toddler can get involved



This study will be conducted in the [redacted] Room as part of my Master's degree and has been approved by the Massey University Human Ethics committee

If you have any questions, please get in touch with Andrea

Appendix 9 — Workshop Flyer




(The Document has been redacted to remove the name of the ECE setting)

Invitation

Dear [REDACTED] Whānau,

We would like to invite you to join us for a brief and fun afternoon / evening that is all about storybook reading with your toddlers. **Did you know that there are many different reading styles that you can use to make reading a fun and interactive experience for everyone?**

This event is presented in conjunction with the upcoming research titled “Supporting Toddlers’ Emotional Literacy Through Storybook Reading and Whānau Collaboration”. It will provide a brief overview of the study and introduce different storybook reading styles including:

-  Shared Reading
-  Interactive (Dialogic) Reading
-  Social Story Reading

Wednesday, 19 February 2025 @ 4pm or

Thursday, 20 February 2025 @ 5.30pm in the [REDACTED] Room

Everyone is Welcome!

Appendix 10 — Workshop



Fostering Toddlers' Emotional Literacy through Story Book Reading and Whānau Collaboration

A RESEARCH PROJECT IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR A MASTER IN EDUCATION (EARLY YEARS)

1

Karakia Timatanga

Ka tuku mihi atu	Thanks are given
Mō nga Manaakitanga	For the support
O te wa	At this time
Ki runga i a tatou katoa	Tātai bestowed upon us all
Tīhei mauri ora!	Celebrate life

2

Tonight's meeting

We will talk about how we can support your toddler's emotional learning through storybook reading and whānau-teacher collaboration.

We will talk about my research study, which aims to foster toddlers' learning and whānau-teacher collaboration.

We will talk about how I will know what your toddler learns and if our teacher-whānau collaboration has improved.

3



What do we want to achieve?

We want to help toddlers learn about emotions through different types of storybook reading and by working closely with whānau.

To begin this presentation, tonight I will discuss:


- toddlers' emotion knowledge
- teachers' collaboration with whānau
- three types of reading

4

Emotion knowledge is an important part of the social and emotional competencies that support a healthy foundation for positive holistic development and a successful life.

5


- Children learn about emotions from birth, but around the age of 2, when language starts to develop, they learn to label emotions.
- The first emotion words usually include happy, sad, scared and angry.



6

Emotion learning happens both at home and at the centre

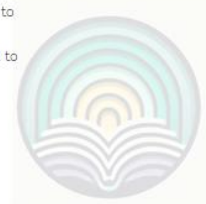
Children's home environment, and their ECE environment are two important spaces where learning occurs.



7

Story book reading has the potential to help toddlers learn about emotions. There are different ways we can read to toddlers, at home and at centre, including:

- shared reading
- interactive or dialogic reading
- and reading social stories.



8

Shared Reading
Te Mātau - The Universal Strategy for every learner

Shared Reading describes unstructured, reciprocal reading – children are active participants.

9

SHARED READING – Implementation

- Comment** Comment on the page of a book
- Invite** Invite participation, ask open ended questions
- Keep** Keep it interactive, do not quiz
- Remember** Remember to comment and question with a focus on emotions
- Model** Model language – use consistent language (e.g. don't, change angry to mad, sad to upset...)

10

Interactive (or Dialogic) Reading
Te Kāiua - Targeted Support through structured book reading

Interactive reading is based on three principles:

- encouraging children's **extended thinking** and articulation of their thoughts,
- giving feedback**
- adjusting questions** and feedback to the child's development to extend their learning through evocative techniques

11

Interactive Reading – PEER

- Prompt** – ask a question such as "How does the mouse feel about the big red strawberry?"
- Evaluate** – Respond to the child's answer. E.g. child "Happy", Adult: "I think so, too. The mouse is happy to have found the big red ripe strawberry"
- Expand** – That strawberry is bigger than the mouse – I would feel a little scared to pick a strawberry that is bigger than I am!"
- Repeat** – A big red ripe strawberry can make you feel lots of feelings!

12

Social Stories
Te Arotahi - Tailored Support

Social Stories – short, individualised stories

- Social stories aim to support young children to navigate a specific challenge or situation, learn a specific skill or achieve a desired outcome.
- Social stories are custom made, personalised for individuals or small groups of children and often contain photos.
- Social stories are short and they are quick and easy to read.

13

How will I know that we are achieving what we set out to do?
We want to help students learn about emotions through different types of storybook reading and by working closely with adults.

- Questionnaires
- Affective Knowledge Test

14

Questionnaires

You are invited to complete two short questionnaires: One at the beginning and one at the end of the research.

15

The Affective Knowledge Test (AKT)

- The AKT can be performed during play
- The AKT explores emotion recognition in stereotypical and non-stereotypical situations with the use of images and puppets

16

In Review

What we are doing here

- Have picture books available to toddlers, always
- Provide a library for parents
- Invite toddlers to read frequently, in small or larger groups
- Ensure a regular storybook time is available before lunch
- Use consistent language (Happy, Sad, Angry, Scared)
- Engage in dialogic and social story reading experiences
- Track the reading experiences with a chart
- Fostering collaboration and conversations with whānau

What you can do at home.

- Invite your toddler to read books with you, possibly establishing a storybook reading ritual
- Have picture books available at your toddler's level - they may initiate a reading experience!
- Let your toddler choose books he / she likes
- Do not worry about reading every word on every page or 'making it to the end' let your toddler 'take the lead'. This is supposed to be a fun experience for everyone!
- Be consistent with your language
- You might also engage in dialogic and social story reading experiences with your child.

17

Ngā pātai ? Questions?



18

Karakia Whakamutunga

Kia tau te Rangimārie

O te Rangi-nui e tā iho nei

O Papatūānuku e takoto nei

O te Tai Ao e awhi nei

Ki runga i ā tātou

Tīhei Mauri Ora!

May the Peace

Of the Sky above

Of the Earth below

And of the all-embracing

Universe Rest upon us all

Behold it is life!

19

Appendix 11 — Information Booklet

(Additionally, pages 8 and 9 contained an example social story)

Fostering Toddlers' Emotional Literacy through Story Book Reading and Whānau Collaboration



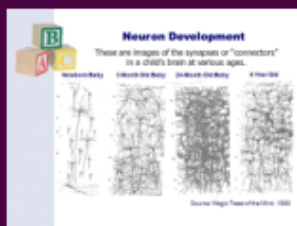
Information Booklet

p.1

Emotion knowledge is an important part of the social and emotional competencies that support a healthy foundation for positive holistic development and a successful life.

p.2

Children learn about emotions from birth, but around the age of 2, when language starts to develop, they learn to label emotions

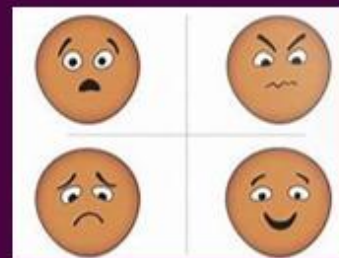


The busy brain of a two-year old: Why this is such a valuable time for learning and development.

p.3

The first emotion words usually include:

- Happy
- Sad
- Scared
- Angry.



p.4

Shared Reading

... describes unstructured, reciprocal reading - children are active participants.

Comment on the page of a book:

"Oh no, the bear has a tear rolling down his cheeks"

Invite participation

"What is the bear frowning at I wonder..?"

Keep it interactive, do not quiz your child

Remember to comment and question **with a focus on emotions**

Model language - use consistent language (e.g. don't change angry to mad, sad to upset...)

p.5

Interactive Reading

Also known as dialogic reading describes a more structured interactive reading style. PEER is the acronym used to follow the reading structure:

Prompt: ask an open-ended question such as "How does the mouse feel about the big red strawberry?"

Evaluate: Respond to the child's answer. E.g. the child replies "Happy" the adult responds "I think so, too. The mouse does feel happy about to have found the big red ripe strawberry"

Expand: "That strawberry is bigger than the mouse. I would feel a little scared to big a strawberry that is bigger than I am!"

Repeat: "A big red ripe strawberry can make you feel lots of feelings, happy, scared..."

p.6

Appendix 12 — Reading Intervention Tracking Sheet: Weeks 1–4

Week 1 Shared Reading	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Large Group					
Small Group					
Individual Child (Names)					
Week 2 Shared Reading	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Large Group					
Small Group					
Individual Child (Names)					
Week 3 Shared Reading	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Large Group					
Small Group					
Individual Child (Names)					
Week 4 Shared Reading	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Large Group					
Small Group					
Individual Child (Names)					

Appendix 13 — Reading Intervention Tracking Sheet: Weeks 5–7

Shared Reading	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Large Group					
Small Group					
Individual Child (Names)					

Dialogic Reading	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Name of participant B2					
Name of participant C2					
Name of participant E2					
Name of participant F2					
Name of participant G2					
Name of participant M2					
Name of participant N2					
Name of participant O2					

Appendix 14 — Reading Intervention Tracking Sheet: Weeks 8–10

Shared Reading	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Large Group					
Small Group					
Individual Child (Names)					

Dialogic Reading	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Name of participant B2					
Name of participant C2					
Name of participant E2					
Name of participant F2					
Name of participant G2					
Name of participant M2					
Name of participant N2					
Name of participant O2					

Social Story Reading	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Name of participant B2					
Name of participant C2					
Name of participant E2					
Name of participant G2					
Name of participant M2					
Name of participant N2					

Appendix 15 — Parent Questionnaire Pre-Intervention

Questionnaire One - Parents / Whānau

Thank you for contributing to my research via this questionnaire. This questionnaire is part of my Master Thesis study titled:

Fostering Children’s Emotion Knowledge Through Story Book Reading and Collaboration with Whānau

Parent / Family / Whānau insights are important to early childhood education and your contribution is valued. The questionnaire is short and information you share will only be used for the purpose of this study.

Project Contacts:

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Ohu Matatika 2, Application OM2 24/60. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact the Chairperson, Massey University Human Ethics Ohu Matatika 2, email humanethics2@massey.ac.nz

For further questions, please contact

Andrea Saladin, Student Researcher and Head Teacher, Andrea.Saladin.2@uni.massey.ac.nz

There are questions about reading, emotions and parent–teacher relationships and questions that will provide me with information about you. At the end of the survey, there is an option for you to contribute additional information if you wish to do so.

Reading

1. Please tick the answer that fits best with your perception. One answer per statement.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
a. We have a range of children’s books to choose from at home.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. My child sees me reading for enjoyment.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. My child asks to read books with me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. My child looks at books by themselves.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
e. We read as part of our everyday routine.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
f. We don’t read often.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

g. I talk about the book illustrations with my child.

2. What do you enjoy most about reading with your child?

3. What is difficult about reading with your child?

Emotions

4. Please tick the answer that best fits with your perception. One answer per statement.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
a. My child and I talk about emotions.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. It is important that my child can identify their emotions.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. I frequently use emotion words with my child.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. My child uses emotion words.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

5. Which emotion words do you use most frequently with your child?

6. What other emotion words do you use with your child, including those in languages that are not English?

7. What other emotion words do you hear your child use, including those in languages that are not English?

8. What other ways do you help your child learn about emotions?

9. Are there any other ways you and your child communicate about emotions, apart from words?

Parent – Teacher Relationship

10. How frequently do you discuss your child’s learning with their teacher?

Daily Weekly Monthly Termly Infrequent

11. What areas of learning are most relevant to your child at the moment?

12. Please tick the answer that best fits with your perception. One answer per statement.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
a. The communication between me and the teacher(s) is satisfactory.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. The feedback that I receive is helpful.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. The teachers provide feedback on my child’s emotion learning.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

d. The teachers share the strategies they use to support my child's learning and development.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
e. I can ask my child's teacher(s) for advice / support.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
f. My child's teachers are approachable.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

13. What areas of learning do you most commonly discuss with your child's teacher(s)?

14. How could the feedback you receive on your child's development be improved?

Information about you

Information about you will only be used to describe the group of participants and won't be used to identify you or connected to the other information you provide.

What is your age?

15. 20-25 years 26-30 years 31-35 years 36-40 years 41+ years.

What is your gender?

16. Male Female Other Don't want to say

17. What is your ethnicity?

18. What language(s) do you speak at home?

19. What language is your child's first language?

20. Anything else that you wish to share?

Thank you for completing the questionnaire!

Appendix 16 — Parent Questionnaire Post-Intervention

Questionnaire Two - Parents / Whānau

Thank you for contributing to my research via this questionnaire. This questionnaire is part of my Master Thesis study titled:

Fostering Children’s Emotion Knowledge Through Story Book Reading and Collaboration with Whānau

Parent / Family / Whānau insights are important to early childhood education and your contribution is valued. The questionnaire is short and the information you share will only be used for the purpose of this study.

Project Contacts:

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Ohu Matatika 2, Application OM2 24/60. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact the Chairperson, Massey University Human Ethics Ohu Matatika 2, email humanethics2@massey.ac.nz

For further questions, please contact Andrea Saladin, Student Researcher and Head Teacher, Andrea.Saladin.2@uni.massey.ac.nz

Welcome to the survey. This is a follow-up survey from the one you completed at the beginning of the research and includes questions about emotions, reading, collaboration with teachers and the storybook reading intervention. At the end of the survey, there is an option for you to contribute additional information if you wish to do so.

Reading

Please tick the answer that most precisely aligns with your perception. One answer per statement

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
We have a range of children’s books to choose from at home.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My child sees me reading for enjoyment.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My child asks to read books with me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My child looks at books by themselves.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
We read as part of our everyday routine.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
We don’t read often.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I talk about the book illustrations with my child.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

The story book reading intervention supported my child's interest in reading.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The story book reading intervention has supported the ways I read with my child at home	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

What did you enjoy most about the story book reading intervention?

What has been difficult about reading with your child?

How has the story book reading intervention changed the ways you and your child read?

Emotions

Please tick the answer that most precisely aligns with your perception. One answer per statement					
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
My child and I talk about emotions.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It is important that my child can identify their emotions.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I frequently use emotion words with my child.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My child uses emotion words.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The story book reading has supported my child's emotion learning.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Which emotion words do you use most frequently with your child?

What emotion words do you use with your child in languages that are not English?

Are there any other ways you and your child communicate about emotions, apart from words?

How has the story book reading intervention changed the ways you and your child communicate about emotions?

Parent – Teacher Relationship

How frequently do you discuss your child’s learning with their teacher?

Daily Weekly Monthly Termly Infrequent

Please tick the answer that most precisely aligns with your perception. One answer per statement

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
The communication between me and the teacher(s) is satisfactory.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

The frequency of feedback on my child's learning is satisfactory.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The feedback that I receive is helpful.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The teachers provide feedback on my child's emotion learning.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I can ask my child's teacher(s) for advice / support.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My child's teachers are approachable.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The story book reading intervention has supported my collaboration with my child's teachers.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The story book reading intervention has supported my relationships with my child's teachers.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

What areas of learning do you most commonly discuss with your child's teacher(s)?

Have you talked about your child's learning and progress with teachers during the story book reading intervention? If so, please describe or comment on the discussion, and if it was useful for you or not.

How could the feedback you receive on your child's development be improved?

How can the collaboration between you and your child's teacher(s) be improved?

Research Project Reading

Information	Flyers/ Info	Storypark	Conversations	I searched	Other
Evening	Booklets	Messages	with teachers	information	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	online	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>				<input type="checkbox"/>	

Please tick the answer that most precisely aligns with your perception. One answer per statement

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Shared reading helped me read more often with my child.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Interactive reading helped me to support my child to learn about emotions.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Social Story reading helped me to support my child's learning about emotions.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The parent library has supported our home reading.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I discussed the books we read with my child's teachers.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Do you have any additional information that you wish to share?

Thank you for completing the questionnaire!

Appendix 17 — Teacher Questionnaire Pre-Intervention

Questionnaire One - Teachers / Kaiako

Thank you for contributing to my research via this questionnaire. This questionnaire is part of my Master Thesis study titled:

Fostering Children’s Emotion Knowledge Through Story Book Reading and Collaboration with Whānau

Your participation will enable me to get a better understanding of parent perceptions in their children’s emotion learning and their collaboration with parents / whānau. Teacher insights are important to early childhood education and your contribution is valued.

Project Contacts:

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Ohu Matatika 2, Application OM2 24/60. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact the Chairperson, Massey University Human Ethics Ohu Matatika 2, email humanethics2@massey.ac.nz

For further questions, please contact

Andrea Saladin, Student Researcher and Head Teacher, Andrea.Saladin.2@uni.massey.ac.nz

Welcome to the survey. After a few questions that will provide me with information about you, the questionnaire will ask you about three subjects, including reading, emotions and parent–teacher relationships. At the end of the survey, there is an option for you to contribute additional information if you wish to do so.

How many years of experience do you have teaching in Early Childhood Education

0-2 years 3-5 years 5-10 years 10 years+

Do you hold a New Zealand Teaching qualification? If so, please specify.

Reading

How frequently do you read with children?

What are your book conversations most likely about?

Please tick the answer that most precisely aligns with your perception. One answer per statement

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
We have a book collection that covers children's interests.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I use reading as a teaching technique with specific learning foci.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I talk about illustrations with the children.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I frequently see children engaging with books by themselves.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
We read as part of our everyday routine	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

What do you enjoy most about reading interactions with children?

What challenges do you experience when reading with children?

Emotions

Please tick the answer that most precisely aligns with your perception. One answer per statement

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I talk about emotions.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I hear children using emotion words.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

It is important that children can identify their emotions.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I frequently use emotion words in my practice.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Which emotion words do you use most frequently in your pedagogical practice, including emotion words in languages other than English?

Which emotion words do you hear children use most frequently?

Describe a typical situation during which you use emotion words with children:

Parent / Whānau – Teacher Relationship

How frequently do you discuss your children’s learning with their parents?

Daily Weekly Monthly Termly Infrequent

Please tick the answer that most precisely aligns with your perception. One answer per statement					
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
The communication between me and the parent / whānau is satisfactory.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I provide feedback on children’s emotion learning.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I share the strategies I use to support children’s learning and development.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Parents / whānau ask me for support / advice.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Parents / whānau ask me for feedback.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

What areas of learning do you most commonly discuss with parents / whānau?

How can the collaboration between you and parents / whānau be improved?

Do you have any additional information about the subject area that you wish to share with the researcher?

Thank you for completing the questionnaire!

Appendix 18 — Teacher Questionnaire Post-Intervention

Questionnaire Two - Teachers / Kaiako

Thank you for contributing to my research via this questionnaire. This questionnaire is part of my Master Thesis study titled:

Fostering Children’s Emotion Knowledge Through Story Book Reading and Collaboration with Whānau

Your participation will enable me to get a better understanding of parent perceptions in their children’s emotion learning and their collaboration with parents / whānau. Teacher insights are important to early childhood education and your contribution is valued.

Project Contacts:

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Ohu Matatika 2, Application OM2 24/60. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact the Chairperson, Massey University Human Ethics Ohu Matatika 2, email humanethics2@massey.ac.nz

For further questions, please contact

Andrea Saladin, Student Researcher and Head Teacher, Andrea.Saladin.2@uni.massey.ac.nz

Welcome to the survey. This is a follow-up survey from the one you completed at the beginning of the research and includes questions about emotions, reading, collaboration with teachers and the storybook reading intervention. At the end of the survey, there is an option for you to contribute additional information if you wish to do so.

Reading

How frequently do you read with children?

What are your book conversations most likely about?

Please tick the answer that most precisely aligns with your perception. One answer per statement

Strongly Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly
Disagree Agree

We have a book collection that covers children's interests.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I use reading as a teaching technique with specific learning foci.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I talk about illustrations with the children.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I frequently see children engaging with books by themselves.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
We read as part of our everyday routine	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Weaving the shared reading intervention into my everyday pedagogical practice was achievable.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Weaving the dialogic reading intervention into my everyday pedagogical practice was achievable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Weaving the social story reading intervention into my everyday pedagogical practice was achievable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Having the same books in our reading collection as children had access to at home was beneficial.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Thinking about the statements you have just answered and thinking back to before the intervention, overall do you tend to agree less, the same or more now the intervention is complete?

Please share any comments you have related to how achievable the intervention was, from your perspective.

What do you enjoy most about reading interactions with children?

What challenges do you experience when reading with children?

Please describe any changes in the ways you read with children, since the intervention.

Emotions

Please tick the answer that most precisely aligns with your perception. One answer per statement

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I talk about emotions.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I hear children using emotion words.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It is important that children can identify their emotions.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I frequently use emotion words in my practice.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The story book reading intervention supported the intentional teaching of emotions.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Which emotion words do you use most frequently in your pedagogical practice, including emotion words in languages other than English?

Which emotion words do you hear children use most frequently?

Describe a typical situation during which you use emotion words with children:

Please describe how you teach children about emotions during story book reading.

What difference has the intervention made to the ways you teach children about emotions?

Parent / Whānau – Teacher Relationship

How frequently do you discuss children’s learning with their parents?

Daily Weekly Monthly Termly Infrequent

Please tick the answer that most precisely aligns with your perception. One answer per statement

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
The communication between me and the parent / whānau is satisfactory.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I provide feedback on children’s emotion learning.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I share the strategies I use to support children’s learning and development.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Parents / whānau ask me for support / advice.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Parents / whānau ask me for feedback.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I discussed the books I read with parents and whānau.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The reading intervention has supported my collaboration with parents / whānau.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The reading intervention has supported my relationships with parents / whānau	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

What areas of learning do you most commonly discuss with parents / whānau?

Have changes occurred in the ways you collaborate or talk with parents / whānau since the intervention? If yes, please describe.

Please tick the answer that most precisely aligns with your perception. One answer per statement

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Shared reading helped me teach children about emotions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Interactive reading helped me teach children about emotions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Social stories helped me teach a child/children about emotions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The books provided for the intervention were suitable.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I discussed the books we read with children’s parents.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Has the intervention helped you support all children in your room as they learn about emotions? Comment please.

Has the intervention helped you provide more tailored and relevant support to some children? Comment please.

Do you have any additional information about the subject area that you wish to share?

Thank you for completing the questionnaire!