



# Helen Mason

*Healthy, thriving communities, Kia Momoho Te Hāpori Ōranga.*



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A few weeks ago I had a great visit to Papamoa Primary School, when I was invited to attend a Kiwi Can session there.

Papamoa Primary is one of 10 primary schools in the Bay of Plenty partnering with the Graeme Dingle Foundation on the Kiwi Can life skills and values programme. It aims to give pupils a sense of self-worth and self-confidence; the ability to take responsibility and be accountable for their actions; develop a 'can do' attitude and a positive approach to the challenges of life.

The focus of the session I attended had a class of children exploring "accountability". I have to say I was a bit surprised to see primary school children talking and learning about accountability, which seemed like a pretty grown up topic to me!

They started with a game of opposites. All of them were standing. If the leader said "forward", they had to step back. If the leader said "left" they had to move right. If they got it wrong, they had to sit down. Last one standing wins. The rules were: don't worry about what someone else is doing; don't call other people out; focus on what you've done right or wrong and if you didn't get it right, then it's up to you to sit yourself down. It was fascinating to watch these young children taking responsibility for their own actions. There were one or two who I saw struggling with the decision and maybe delaying it for a couple of seconds, before sitting themselves down, with a bit of a sigh. In three rounds of the game, only one child had a leader ask them if they were sure they'd made the right decision?

Next the children worked in groups to discuss a scenario, which demonstrated accountability. They then did a role play of the scenario. One scenario had a child drinking some juice on the new couch after her mum told her not to. They then got bumped by their sister. When mum came back in, what did they do? Say "it wasn't me", say "she bumped me, or say "I'm sorry mum, I broke the rules". It was so interesting to see them playing out these different scenarios, and learning these skills so early on in life.

The Foundation has done research which shows that Kiwi Can has made a difference to kids who have done the course by helping them build confidence, improving their listening, communication skills and playing more cooperatively and resolving their own behavioural issues.

It was a lot of fun and I came away feeling very positive about the great skills these children are learning which will serve them well throughout life.

It got me thinking about accountability in teams and at work. How important it is for each of us to focus on our job, to focus on our contribution, and do it as well as we can.



*Helen Mason, with pupils from Papamoa Primary School.*

It also reminded me of a great book by Robert Fulghum: All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten:

1. Share everything.
2. Play fair.
3. Don't hit people.
4. Put things back where you found them.
5. Clean up your own mess.
6. Don't take things that aren't yours.
7. Say you're sorry when you hurt somebody.
8. Wash your hands before you eat.
9. Flush.
10. Warm cookies and cold milk are good for you (Toi Te Ora would say in moderation!).
11. Live a balanced life - learn some and drink some and draw some and paint some and sing and dance and play and work every day some.
12. Take a nap every afternoon. (Wouldn't that be nice?)
13. When you go out into the world, watch out for traffic, hold hands, and stick together.
14. Be aware of wonder. Remember the little seed in the Styrofoam cup: The roots go down and the plant goes up and nobody really knows how or why.
15. Goldfish and hamsters and white mice and even the little seed in the Styrofoam cup - they all die. So do we.
16. And then remember the Dick-and-Jane books and the first word you learned - the biggest word of all - LOOK."

## Accountability breeds response-ability.

*Stephen Covey 1932-2012 American educator, author, businessman, and keynote speaker.*

*His most popular book was The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People.*