



STUDENT PROFILE

STUDENT NAME

Iris Zhou

NATIONALITY

China

PROGRAMME

Graduate Diploma in
Teaching (ECE) (Level 7)

STUDY YEAR

2025

CAMPUS

NZTC Online



IRIS'S STORY

NZTC Student Success Story

Background

Hi everyone, my name is Iris. I came to New Zealand when I was 16 and finished both high school and university here. I studied statistics at the University of Auckland, but after graduation I decided I wanted to do something more meaningful—so I chose to become an early childhood teacher.

Why I Chose NZTC

When I searched for ECE programmes, NZTC stood out because of the balance between theory and practice. I believe being a good teacher comes from experience, not just academic learning. ***NZTC offers plenty of practicum hours and hands-on opportunities, which is what I was looking for.***

Study Experience

The Graduate Diploma takes one year and three months to complete. ***We had nine courses and four practicums.*** It was quite intense—we needed to do essays, full-day practicum, and 16 weekly centre hours. It was a lot of pressure, but very rewarding in the end.

Practicum and Home Centre

I had two home centres during my study—Little People and Takapuna Kids. Both were great in their own ways. I changed because my AT was away on holiday. Each centre had different philosophies and teaching styles, and I learnt a lot from experiencing both.

Challenges and Support

Academic writing was hard for me. I even failed two courses at first. But the lecturers, my assistant teachers, and visiting teachers always told me, “You’re a good teacher.” That support meant a lot. NZTC also gave us helpful guidance—like how to find home centres and prepare for interviews.

Creating Teaching Resources

One thing I really enjoy is making teaching resources. I love origami, so I created a “forest box” using a tissue box and animal figures. The children loved it! They’d sing songs and pick animals from the box. It made learning fun and meaningful.

From Student to Staff

Being a student teacher and being staff are very different. As a student, you just follow the routine and play with children. But as a staff member, you need to cooperate with colleagues, talk to parents, and make sure everything runs smoothly. It’s a big step, but it’s worth it.

The Importance of Practicum

When I first started practicum, I was so nervous—my brain went totally blank! But after one year of practice, I felt confident and natural working with children. Practicum helped me grow a lot more than any textbook ever could.



New Zealand
Tertiary College



Finding a Home Centre

Finding a home centre wasn’t easy. I lived in an area with few ECE centres and many student teachers. But I followed NZTC’s guidance, wrote a good survey, and eventually found a place. It taught me persistence and self-management.

Career and Visa Plans

I’m still on a student visa, but after graduation I’ll apply for a post-study work visa. I’ve already started applying for jobs. Once I get a job, I plan to apply for residency and bring my family to New Zealand in the future. That’s a big goal for me.

My Dream

My dream is simple—to be a good teacher. I want to support children to become better people, to grow with confidence and kindness. For now, I just want to enjoy working with little kids every day. They always make me happy, even when things go wrong.

Final Advice

Find a good home centre, and look after yourself. Working with children is beautiful, but also very physical. Staying healthy is important. This job is like a dream: even when it’s hard, the children’s smiles make everything better.

“My lecturers and teachers said, ‘You’re a good teacher.’ That gave me the strength to keep going—and now I believe it too.”

IRIS IS SHAPING HER FUTURE.

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