

Engaging with *Te Whāriki* (2017)

November 2018



Ko te Tamaiti te Pūtake o te Kaupapa

The Child – the Heart of the Matter

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Introduction

New Zealand's early childhood curriculum, *Te Whāriki*, was updated in April, 2017. *Te Whāriki (2017)* reflects the changes in theory, practice and early learning contexts that have occurred over the last 20 years. This includes updated context, language, examples and implementation advice. Other key changes in the updated *Te Whāriki* are described on [Te Whāriki online](#) as follows:

A stronger focus on bicultural practice, the importance of language, culture, and identity, and the inclusion of all children.

The learning outcomes have been reviewed and condensed to twenty to enable a greater focus on "what matters here" when designing local curriculum.

Links to The New Zealand Curriculum and Te Marautanga o Aotearoa have been set out to support children's transition pathways and learning continuity. The overall structure has been streamlined for easier navigation.

The aspiration for children, bicultural structure, principles, strands and goals remain the same. In this way Te Whāriki remains a unique and visionary framework for lifelong learning.

Since July 2017 early learning services have been supported to implement *Te Whāriki* through a [programme of professional learning and development](#) (PLD) starting with workshops, and [online resources](#) and webinars. The Ministry of Education (the Ministry) contracted a PLD provider who appointed [curriculum champions](#) to work with pedagogical leaders in over 700 services across a variety of service types, with a focus on improving curriculum implementation practice through professional inquiry and internal evaluation. This PLD was undertaken between July 2017 and June 2018.

ERO is undertaking a series of evaluations focused on the implementation of *Te Whāriki* from mid-2017 until the end of 2019.



ERO's planned series of *Te Whāriki* evaluations

PHASE 1A

Awareness & confidence to work with *Te Whāriki*

TERMS 3-4, 2017

How is the implementation of *Te Whāriki (2017)* going?

- » awareness of update
- » accessibility/usefulness of PLD
- » awareness of online information and other resources to support
- » barriers and challenges to implementation.

PUBLISHED
JULY 2018

PHASE 1B

Engaging with *Te Whāriki*

TERM 1, 2018

How is the implementation of *Te Whāriki (2017)* going?

- » awareness of update
- » accessibility/usefulness of PLD and resources
- » how services are starting to think about reviewing and planning their local curriculum
- » usefulness and use of learning outcomes
- » barriers and challenges to implementation.

PUBLISHED
NOVEMBER 2018

PHASE 2

Preparedness to implement

TERMS 2-3, 2018

How well prepared are services to implement *Te Whāriki (2017)*?

- » engagement in PLD
- » steps being taken by leaders and kaiako to:
 - decide 'what matters here'
 - review and design their local curriculum
 - work with the learning outcomes to determine their priorities for children's learning
 - determine their next steps.
- » confidence to implement *Te Whāriki*.

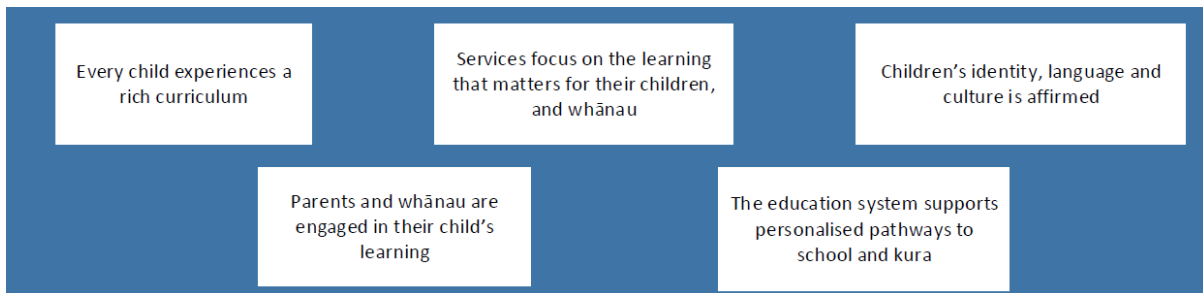
PHASES 3A-E

TERM 4, 2018 AND
TERMS 1-4 2019

How well are services implementing *Te Whāriki (2017)* to strengthen the following areas:

- » services focus on the learning that matters here
- » parents and whānau are engaged in their child's learning
- » children's identity, language and culture is affirmed
- » every child experiences a rich curriculum
- » pathways to school and kura are personalised.

As noted in ERO's first report [Awareness and confidence to work with Te Whāriki \(2017\)](#) the Ministry has identified the following areas that need to be strengthened. These are the focus for Phase 3a-e.



The first report in the series [Awareness and confidence to work with Te Whāriki \(2017\)](#), published in July 2018 was based on data from 290 early learning services. In this report ERO found:

- leaders and kaiako reported a high degree of awareness of, and growing confidence to begin to work with, *Te Whāriki*
- confidence to work with *Te Whāriki* to support Māori children to enjoy educational success as Māori was not as high with 31 percent of services indicating they were not at all confident, or somewhat confident to work with *Te Whāriki* to support Māori learners
- uptake of PLD was high with 81 percent of services having accessed PLD
- barriers to services beginning to implement *Te Whāriki* were time and leader/kaiako knowledge and understanding of the curriculum.

Next steps for services included opportunities to meet and engage in professional discussion, unpacking and making sense of *Te Whāriki*, ongoing and targeted PLD, and revisiting their curriculum through in-depth internal evaluation and inquiry.

This second evaluation report focuses more specifically on the steps leaders and kaiako were taking to decide 'what matters here', review and design their local curriculum, and work with the learning outcomes to determine their priorities for children's learning. *Te Whāriki* notes:

Te Whāriki provides a framework of principles, goals and learning outcomes that foregrounds the mana of the child and the importance of reciprocal and responsive relationships. This framework provides the basis for each setting to weave a local curriculum that reflects its own distinctive character and values. p.7



What ERO did

In early learning services¹ having an ERO review in Term 1, 2018 we asked leaders and kaiako to complete a questionnaire before the onsite stage of their review. ERO review teams discussed the responses to the questionnaire with leaders and/or kaiako while onsite, and added additional comments to the questionnaire. The responses from leaders and/or kaiako and the comments from ERO review teams make up the sources of data used for this evaluation report. Where there was a governing organisation² ERO also sought information from professional leaders in the governing organisation via a questionnaire.

In **early learning services** ERO was interested in:

- their awareness of *Te Whāriki* (2017)
- any professional learning and development they had accessed to support them to implement *Te Whāriki* (2017)
- steps they were taking to review and design their local curriculum
- steps they were taking to identify what learning matters and is valued in their service
- how they were working with *Te Whāriki* (2017) to support Māori children to experience educational success as Māori
- any perceived barriers and challenges they were facing in beginning to work with the updated curriculum.

In **governing organisations** ERO was interested in:

- what professional leaders (governing organisation) knew about the level of awareness of *Te Whāriki* (2017) in their services
- any professional learning and development the organisation had provided to support service leaders and kaiako to implement *Te Whāriki* (2017)
- steps their services were taking to review and design their local curriculum
- steps their services were taking to identify what learning matters and is valued in their service
- how their services were working with *Te Whāriki* (2017) to support Māori children to experience educational success as Māori
- any perceived barriers and challenges faced by their services as they began to implement *Te Whāriki* (2017).

ERO gathered information from 167 early learning services and six governing organisations. Further information about the services in this evaluation is in Appendix 1. Appendix 2 outlines ERO's evaluation framework including the questions we asked.

Key findings

In this second evaluation report we have continued to focus on awareness of *Te Whāriki* (2017) and what leaders and kaiako in early learning services were doing as they began to engage with the updated curriculum. We gathered the data for this report when services were six to nine months into accessing professional learning and development (PLD) to support implementation.

We continue to see a high level of awareness, with most services reporting they are aware of the updated *Te Whāriki*, however less than half of the 167 services had begun to engage with it. Leaders and kaiako reported a high level of uptake of PLD with 82 percent of the services having

¹ Excluding Ngā Kōhanga Reo.

² Governing organisations include kindergarten and Playcentre associations and organisations that have oversight of 30 or more services.

accessed some form of PLD. This high level of engagement in PLD and commitment to becoming familiar with *Te Whāriki* is commendable. ERO will be interested in how PLD is supporting implementation over the next 18 months. Future evaluations will focus on how PLD is supporting leaders and kaiako to engage more deeply with *Te Whāriki* and respond positively to the expectations in the updated curriculum. ERO will be interested in the impact of this PLD in improving quality and achieving equitable outcomes for all children.

ERO found variability in the extent to which leaders and kaiako understood the concept of reviewing and designing (weaving) their local curriculum based on their decisions about 'what matters here'. While some were beginning with a review of their philosophy, many leaders and kaiako were unsure about what to do and where to start. Reviewing and designing a local curriculum requires leaders and kaiako to work collaboratively with parents and whānau and the wider community to determine their curriculum priorities.

The findings also highlight wide variability in understanding and practice in working with the 20 learning outcomes as part of assessment, planning and evaluation. At a basic level, leaders and kaiako were using the learning outcomes as an additional component in documentation. In assessment they were often added, ticked off or tagged as an end point. *Te Whāriki* sets out the learning that is valued as part of the curriculum framework through the 20 learning outcomes. Working with these learning outcomes requires a shift in thinking and practice from working with the goals in *Te Whāriki* (now positioned as goals for kaiako), to unpacking these outcomes in terms of what they mean for the children at their service and for their local curriculum.

As we reported in [Awareness and confidence to work with Te Whāriki \(2017\)](#) confidence to work with *Te Whāriki* to support Māori children to enjoy success as Māori was and continues to be an area where services were needing further support. Leaders and kaiako need to explore and discuss their understanding of, and commitment to, supporting Māori children to experience success as Māori. *Te Whāriki* provides useful guidance to do this.

The barriers and challenges in this evaluation largely reflect those reported previously, with the main barriers to implementation related to time and variable levels of kaiako understanding within a service. The findings also highlight other barriers that include PLD challenges, lack of leadership capability, changes to teaching teams, getting parents and whānau involved, and internal evaluation capability and capacity.

We recommend that leaders and kaiako in early learning services use the findings of this report as a catalyst to:

- engage more deeply with *Te Whāriki* to build a shared understanding of expectations associated with reviewing and designing their local curriculum
"What are our curriculum priorities? What really matters for the children in our service?"
- unpack and discuss the learning outcomes in *Te Whāriki* as part of their planning, assessment and evaluation processes
"What do these learning outcomes look like in terms of children's progress and learning in our service?"
- explore and discuss their understanding of, and commitment to, supporting Māori children to experience success as Māori

“What do we know and understand about kaupapa Māori theory?” What expertise do we have to increase our understanding of practices that enable Māori children to experience success as Māori?

- identify their next steps and priorities for PLD

“What are our next steps as we engage with Te Whāriki? What support do we need to take these steps?”

Appendix 3 has a table summarising the key findings.

ERO is continuing to evaluate the implementation of *Te Whāriki* with the next report focusing on preparedness to implement. This will be published in early 2019.

Awareness and confidence

Leaders and kaiako continue to report a high level of awareness of *Te Whāriki*, with 92 percent of the 167 services indicating they were aware of the updated document and nearly half of these services already considering how to implement it. This reflects the findings in [ERO's previous report](#).

Leaders and kaiako were unpacking and becoming familiar with the updated curriculum document, and reading and talking about various aspects of the contents. They were updating relevant documents to incorporate the language of *Te Whāriki*, with many services changing their approach to planning, assessment and evaluation. Changes included shifting from planning for groups of children to planning for individuals, identifying teaching strategies, and reflecting on teaching practice using the ‘examples of practice’ and the ‘reflective questions’ in *Te Whāriki* as a guide. In some services, leaders and kaiako were engaging in more professional discussions about children’s learning and strengthening relationships with local schools. A few have found the principles of *Te Whāriki* a useful lens to reflect on practice. In other services, leaders and kaiako were considering how to use the goals of *Te Whāriki* to explore the role of kaiako and the learning environment.

Te Whāriki notes “the goals are for kaiako. They describe characteristics of facilitating environments and pedagogies that are consistent with the principles and that will support children’s learning and development across the strands of the curriculum. p.16.

Te Whāriki is also helping leaders and kaiako to strengthen engagement with parents and whānau. This included asking about their aspirations for their child, providing information about the updated curriculum, increasing their voice in assessment, and involving them in planning for their child’s learning.

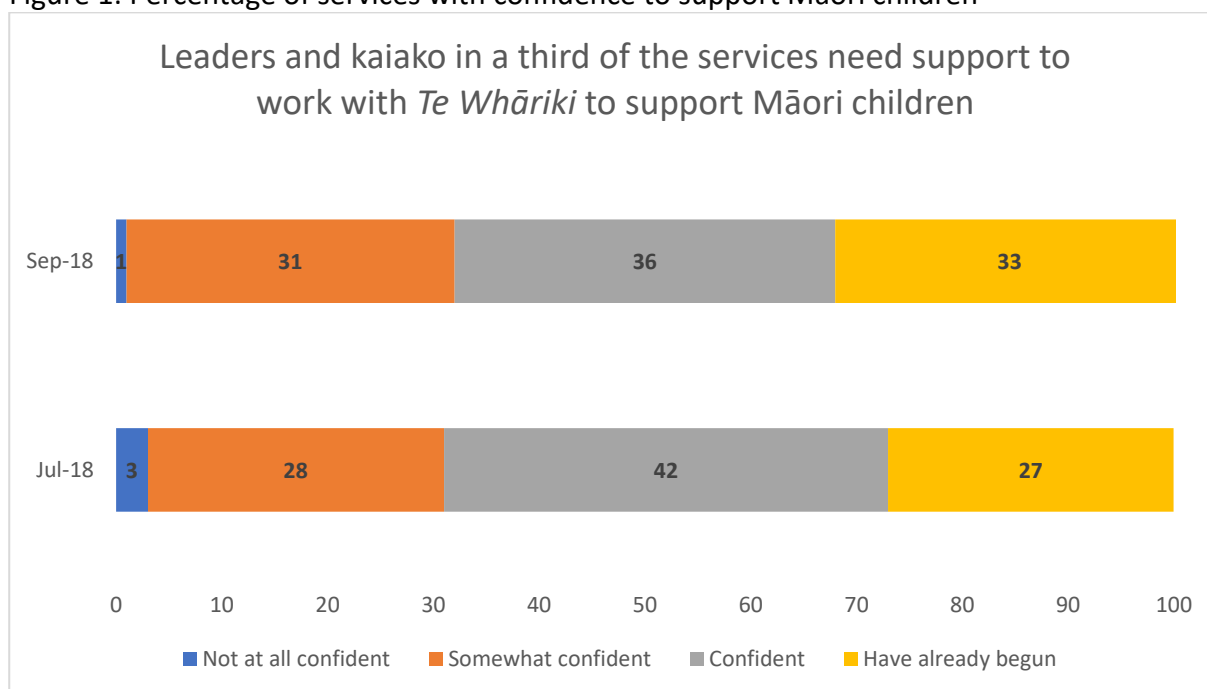
The challenge for leaders and kaiako as they began to work with *Te Whāriki* was to go beyond the surface aspects and the things that are easy to change to thinking more deeply about ‘what the updated *Te Whāriki* means for our service, our practice, and our children and their parents and whānau’.

Confidence to support Māori children

Leaders and kaiako reported varying levels of confidence in working with *Te Whāriki* to support Māori children to experience success as Māori. As shown in Figure 1 this is an aspect of practice

leaders and kaiako in a third of the services reported they were somewhat or not confident to address. This reflects a similar finding in ERO's July, 2018 report.

Figure 1: Percentage of services with confidence to support Māori children



In the services that were confident (or had already begun) leaders and kaiako were at an early stage in working with *Te Whāriki* to support Māori children to experience success as Māori and to realise their potential. It was an area of focus for PLD for some services, with a strong emphasis on bicultural curriculum or bicultural practice. PLD also focused on strengthening use of te reo Māori and tikanga, working with [Te Whatu Pōkeka](#), and implementing culturally responsive practices.

As noted in ERO's July 2018 report, supporting educational success for Māori children needs to move beyond a sole focus on bicultural practice or curriculum as the default response to such support. Leaders and kaiako need to think deeply about their understanding of, and commitment to, kaupapa Māori.

Te Whāriki notes:

Kaupapa Māori theory is drawn from Māori ways of knowing and being and assumes the normalcy of Māori knowledge, language and culture. It gives voice to Māori aspirations and expresses the ways in which Māori aspirations, ideas and learning practices can be framed and organised. The implementation of kaupapa Māori theory emphasises practices that enable Māori to achieve educational success as Māori. At its core is the retention of Māori language and culture. p.61

The following example shows how one service was building on their bicultural curriculum by thinking about what more they could do to promote success for Māori children.

The centre has a strong bicultural curriculum and is well placed to work with Te Whāriki to promote success for Māori. The service has explored some Māori teaching and learning theories and assessment practices, and are working on developing stronger place-based learning. Partnerships with whānau are developing and they have many opportunities to define what educational success looks like to them. The upcoming philosophy review will utilise this voice to identify the valued learning outcomes from Te Whāriki for Māori children.

Engaging with Te Whāriki

In this second evaluation report, ERO wanted to find out how leaders and kaiako in early learning services were starting to engage with Te Whāriki beyond becoming familiar with the content and using the language of Te Whāriki in documents. We were particularly interested in the steps leaders and kaiako were taking to review and design their local curriculum, decide what matters for children in their service and work with the 20 learning outcomes in Te Whāriki.

Reviewing and designing local curriculum and deciding ‘what matters here’ are not discrete activities. Guidance information on [Te Whāriki online](#) notes:

Te Whāriki sets out the principles, strands, goals, and learning outcomes for young children’s learning. The learning outcomes are broad statements of valued learning, which encompass knowledge, skills, attitudes, and dispositions that grow and strengthen over time. This broad framework enables early childhood services to weave their own distinctive, culturally responsive, and contextually relevant curriculum, based on what they believe is important for the children in their setting.

Reviewing and designing local curriculum- deciding what matters here

What does Te Whāriki expect?

The expectation is that each ECE service will use Te Whāriki as a basis for weaving its own local curriculum of valued learning taking into consideration also the aspirations and learning priorities of hāpu, iwi and community. p.7.

When designing curriculum, kaiako will be influenced by a range of educational philosophies. This is consistent with the diversity of early learning services in New Zealand and will give rise to distinctive features in each local curriculum. p.60.

Kaiako need to be able to explain Te Whāriki as the overarching curriculum framework and articulate what this means for children in the setting. From this dialogue a shared understanding of ‘what matters here’ will emerge, and local curriculum priorities can be negotiated within the Te Whāriki framework. These priorities will be reflected in long- and medium-term planning as well as in day-to-day practice. p.65.

What did ERO find?

Services were at a very early stage in terms of reviewing and designing their local curriculum. A barrier for many was that the concept of a ‘local curriculum’ was not well understood by leaders and kaiako or they had not considered that they needed to do this.

Reviewing philosophy was a starting point for leaders and kaiako who were thinking about what really matters in their service. While some did this in consultation with parents and whānau, seeking their aspirations for their children, others were more limited in their consultation involving only leaders and/or kaiako in the review process. The outcome of such review varied as shown in the following examples from ERO review officers:

The centre philosophy review has guided the kindergarten to really think about and unpack what learning matters here and their valued outcomes for children. This review is ongoing in consultation with parents and whānau.

A recent review of the centre's philosophy is the starting point to further explore how the programme reflects the local community. The centre's curriculum strongly reflects the local rural context. Teachers are at the beginning stages of exploring place-based learning and making links to local iwi to further develop the curriculum, with support from association personnel.

The philosophy has been reviewed to better define a local curriculum of valued learning. This is now being used as a 'filter' for all decisions at the service. Strategic planning and evaluations align to these valued outcomes.

Some services were very clear about 'what matters here' with priorities for children's learning clearly identified as shown in this example from a service leader.

We have a strong focus on what's happening here for our children and families. We have a clear and deliberate focus on oral language, social competency and being culturally responsive to Māori and Pacific children and families. Our curriculum priorities are based on Māori values including whanaungatanga and ukaipotanga.

In one service, leaders and kaiako commented on the work they were doing to determine a local curriculum as part of a Kāhui Ako|Community of Learning.

We are part of the local Kāhui Ako and as such have just finished a two-day visioning wananga with local schools, early learning services, social services and iwi to discuss how a local curriculum would look for us. The lens with which we are looking at Te Whāriki is that of whānau and iwi Māori. We believe that by using this lens we will be able to design and implement a place-based curriculum that has real value to our whānau and community.



In a few services, leaders and kaiako were delving deeper into their practice as part of reviewing and designing their local curriculum. They sought to understand the responsiveness of their curriculum, including teaching practices, and evaluate the alignment of practice to *Te Whāriki*. The following two examples show the kinds of questions used to guide their internal evaluation.

How effectively does our curriculum respond to the strengths, interests and needs of our infants, toddlers and young children?

How effective is our curriculum (design and planning) in supporting our priorities for children's learning?

It was too early in the process, however, for leaders and kaiako to know about the impact of such inquiry and evaluation.

Focus on the learning outcomes

What does *Te Whāriki* expect?

The learning outcomes in each strand are broad statements that encompass valued knowledge, skills, attitudes and dispositions that children develop over time. They are designed to inform curriculum planning and evaluation and support the assessment of children's progress. p.22

The expectation is that kaiako will work with colleagues, children, parents and whānau to unpack the strands, goals and learning outcomes, interpreting these and setting priorities for their particular ECE setting. p.23.

What did ERO find?

ERO's findings highlight the range of understanding about how to work with the learning outcomes in *Te Whāriki* as part of assessment, planning (including teaching strategies) and evaluation. As with other aspects of implementation, most were at an early stage of working with the learning outcomes to identify the learning valued in their service.

We found a range of practice - from services in which leaders and kaiako had not yet considered the learning outcomes, or did not see that they needed to change practice - to services in which leaders and kaiako were starting to discuss, explore and unpack the learning outcomes for the children in their service.

In some services, leaders and kaiako were adding the learning outcomes to their narrative assessments. This was particularly evident where services were using online assessment software that makes it easy to 'tag' the learning outcomes in relation to the documented assessment information. Often this resulted in kaiako 'tagging' all of the possible outcomes rather than unpacking the outcomes and being clear about the most relevant to the child's progress and learning. ERO is concerned that tagging or referencing multiple outcomes, without any alignment between the analysis of learning and the tagged learning outcome. Such practice does not make children's progress and learning explicit.

Where services were taking an inquiry or evaluation approach to working with the learning outcomes and their valued learning, they were asking questions such as:

How effectively do our assessment practices make our valued learning visible?

Leaders and kaiako were also using the learning outcomes as part of their planning for individuals and for groups of children. In a few services the outcomes were being used to guide intentional teaching. In others kaiako just added the outcomes as an additional component to their planning rather than being deliberate and intentional about unpacking the outcomes, aligning them to their learning priorities and making them relevant and meaningful for the children in their service.

Supporting engagement and implementation

At the time of the data gathering for this evaluation report (Term 1, 2018) leaders and kaiako in early learning services had (or had had) access to workshops, webinars, online guidance and resources. Some services were also drawing on internal expertise and support from their governing organisation. A few services were also accessing PLD from other providers in the sector.

Leaders and kaiako in 82 percent of the services reported that they had accessed some form of PLD. Many leaders and/or kaiako had further discussions about *Te Whāriki* in their teams following PLD. Some were engaged in formal conversations (such as in meetings or hui) and for others, discussions were more informal. Leaders and kaiako talked about what has changed in *Te Whāriki*, with some focusing on what these changes meant for their practice.

Some services had their whole teams attend PLD and others only had the leader(s) and/or a few kaiako attend. While most services had those that did attend share their new learnings with others in their teaching team, ERO was concerned that in some services leaders or kaiako were not subsequently sharing with their teams. Consequently, leaders and kaiako in these services did not have a shared understanding of *Te Whāriki*.

Leaders and kaiako in 18 percent of services did not attend PLD for a variety of reasons. These included:

- a lack of places in the PLD workshops
- other commitments when PLD was being offered
- negative feedback on PLD from association or other service leaders.

Some of the leaders and kaiako of these services intended to access the online webinars but had not yet done so.

As noted earlier, early learning services have been supported to implement *Te Whāriki* through workshops, webinars and other online resources. About half the kaiako and leaders in services found the [workshops](#) useful to develop their understanding of the updated *Te Whāriki*, clarifying differences between the previous and the updated document. Following the workshops, kaiako reflected on the changes to the curriculum, and the implications for their practice. Leaders and kaiako who did not find the workshops useful felt these did not provide enough detail on how to integrate *Te Whāriki* into their practice. They also felt the workshop was too general as an introduction to *Te Whāriki*.

Leaders and kaiako appreciated being able to watch the webinars in their own time. They, as a team or individually, could learn at their own pace and relate learnings from the webinars to their own practice. Leaders and kaiako also appreciated that webinars included topics such as mathematics and self review through a bicultural lens.

In a few services, leaders and kaiako did not find the webinars useful. They felt the content did not expand their knowledge of *Te Whāriki*, they experienced technical issues with the website, or they did not like the video format as a medium for learning.

ERO asked leaders and kaiako what expertise and resources they already had to support them to implement *Te Whāriki*. The most common resource to support implementation was having a hard copy of *Te Whāriki* and the [poster](#). Leaders and kaiako also used [Te Whāriki online](#) (including the learning outcomes and kaiako [cards](#) and [webinars](#)).

Leaders and kaiako recognised that within their teams they are at different stages of their journey in working with *Te Whāriki*. They valued the existing expertise within their service which included those with knowledge of the previous 1996 version of *Te Whāriki* and those in training who brought their insights and learning to share with teaching teams.

Leaders and kaiako acknowledged it was important to be open and passionate to learn, and willing to consider the implications of *Te Whāriki* for their practice.

Governing organisations supporting implementation

ERO was interested in finding out what governing organisations were doing to support their services to begin to implement *Te Whāriki* – what was working well and what some of the challenges were. Across six governing organisations we found variability in the capability and capacity of professional leaders to support their individual services to build their confidence and understanding to work with the updated curriculum. Two Playcentre associations and a home-based education and care provider have considerable work to do at all levels of the organisation to support engagement with *Te Whāriki*.

Three of the governing organisations were kindergarten associations with a total of 18 kindergartens reviewed by ERO in Term 1, 2018. The findings in these associations, in which professional leaders completed the questionnaire for governing organisations, offer some useful insights into how professional leaders were supporting leaders and kaiako in individual kindergartens to engage with *Te Whāriki*.

Leaders and kaiako in these kindergartens were involved in a variety of PLD opportunities including initial workshops, webinars and some in the PLD where curriculum champions were supporting pedagogical leaders. In all the kindergartens, leaders and kaiako were highly aware of, and engaged with, the updated curriculum document. Kaiako were well supported by professional leaders who were tapping into, and utilising, the collective knowledge, expertise and resources across the association. One association was working with an external PLD provider to support kaiako in kindergartens with the PLD targeted to their needs.

ERO found most professional leaders had participated in the workshops and engaged with the webinars. However in one association professional leaders were concerned they were not able to participate in PLD where pedagogical leaders in their individual kindergartens were working with a curriculum champion. They saw this as a missed opportunity to work alongside the teaching teams and learn together.

A positive feature of these three kindergarten associations was the way in which governance boards were engaging with *Te Whāriki*, and thinking strategically about implementation as a priority in their kindergartens. In one association, each kindergarten had a goal about implementing *Te Whāriki* in their annual plan.

The following examples show how the implementation of *Te Whāriki* was being prioritised at the governance level.

Implementing Te Whāriki is a key strategic goal for the association and the kindergartens. The association education manager is supporting the development of initial understandings. The association is actively developing the PLD programmes and processes including webinars to build capability and capacity to successfully implement Te Whāriki (2017).

A head teacher and education services manager attended a board meeting in November to inform the board of the changes to the document, the key areas, the work undertaken at the kindergartens to date as well as the work planned going forward. At this meeting board members were able to ask questions and gain a clearer understanding of the new document and of course the commitment to the document from the kindergartens.

Appraisal processes were also focused on supporting kaiako development in relation to implementing *Te Whāriki*. Professional leaders used kaiako reflections and inquiries to respond to, and support, teaching teams as they started to engage with *Te Whāriki*.

In these associations, leaders and kaiako in the individual kindergartens were beginning to review and/or design their local curriculum. Many were starting with their philosophy and discussions about 'what matters here'. Starting in this way helped them think about their local curriculum with some drawing on the expertise in their community.

The following example shows how kindergartens in one association were approaching the review of their curriculum:

The evaluation of any curriculum starts with the kindergarten philosophy at its foundation. Many teams are looking at 'Deciding what matters here?' as the focus for their philosophy review. They are using questions such as...

How do we decide what matters here?

How do we ensure a shared understanding about what matters in our kindergarten?

How are these priorities reflected in practice and evidenced in documentation?

This inquiry has led to many teams focusing on 'place-based learning', where learning is relevant for the community in which each kindergarten is located and to the attending children from that community.

In two of the three associations, a leadership position was dedicated to strengthening kaiako practice in supporting Māori children and their whānau.

Challenges and/or barriers to implementation in these kindergarten associations included:

- finding time and space to engage more deeply with *Te Whāriki*
- communicating the changes in *Te Whāriki* to parents and whānau and to teachers in schools
- shifting kaiako thinking from the 1996 version of *Te Whāriki* to the 2017 document
- professional leaders at the association level and leaders in kindergartens having the knowledge to lead their teams.

Thinking ahead and planning future steps was evident in these kindergartens (and at the association level). A strong sense of being on a journey prevailed as they engaged with *Te Whāriki* with a high level of commitment to shifting thinking and practice.

The following example shows the thinking about next steps in one of the kindergartens.

We are just about at the end of the webinar series, once we have completed this we will pull together the knowledge from that. Next we will revisit the learning outcomes during our weekly staff hui and brainstorm as a team, identifying what we are doing well and areas for improvement. We will continue to consider learning outcomes and our curriculum design to ensure we are 'walking the talk'.

Barriers and challenges

The barriers and challenges in this evaluation largely reflect those reported by ERO in [July 2018](#), with the main barriers to implementation related to time and variable levels of kaiako understanding within a service.

Time to engage with *Te Whāriki* and in PLD is a significant barrier to implementation for leaders and kaiako in many services as they begin to work with the updated curriculum document.

Getting everyone on 'the same page' was a recurring theme in the findings of this evaluation. Leaders and kaiako were at different stages of their own learning and understanding about *Te Whāriki* and how to engage with it. They also have different experiences of working with *Te Whāriki*. This variability was impacting negatively on the consistency of assessment, planning and teaching practice in some of the services.

We also found different levels of enthusiasm and commitment to ongoing learning in some of the services. For example, some leaders and kaiako were finding it difficult to move from the familiarity and comfort they had with the 1996 version of *Te Whāriki* to the updated 2017 document. PLD providers were needing to change mind-sets of some leaders and kaiako and shift quite fixed ways of working with *Te Whāriki*. Turnover of leaders and kaiako and changes to service ownership were also factors negatively impacting on engagement with *Te Whāriki*.

Leadership (or lack of it) was a challenge, especially where leaders did not have the knowledge, enthusiasm or commitment to lead engagement with *Te Whāriki*. Where services had their pedagogical leader involved in Ministry of Education-funded PLD, concern was expressed that the PLD was too focused on the online component rather than face to face.

Barriers also included issues of access to PLD and the quality of PLD available, especially in relation to the workshops. For some services, PLD needed to be better tailored for teams with different strengths, knowledge and understanding. In other services leaders and kaiako were waiting for

PLD to be advertised rather than being proactive and seeking out what was available, for example online. Other barriers included isolation and access to PLD for unqualified staff.

Challenges for services included finding ways to familiarise parents and whānau with *Te Whāriki* and encouraging them to contribute to their child's assessment and learning. Leaders and kaiako commented that it wasn't easy to help parents and whānau understand what's different in *Te Whāriki* and they wanted more resources for parents and whānau. In a few services, leaders and kaiako commented that shifting thinking and practice from self review to internal evaluation and what that meant for practice was quite challenging and an area for further support.



Conclusion

Leaders and kaiako in the 167 services reported their high level of awareness and active engagement in a variety of PLD opportunities to support them to unpack and become familiar with the updated curriculum. This is commendable given that services were six to nine months into working with *Te Whāriki (2017)* when the data for this evaluation report was gathered.

ERO's findings give an early indication of some of the challenges for leaders and kaiako in engaging with *Te Whāriki*. They highlight the need for more in-depth engagement with *Te Whāriki* to increase understanding of the expectation to 'weave' a local curriculum based on 'what really matters' in their service for their children. Such engagement includes unpacking and working with the learning outcomes in ways that make visible children's progress and learning over time.

While there are no recipes or templates for implementation, there are some clear messages in *Te Whāriki* that convey expectations beyond those required by the [prescribed curriculum framework](#). These expectations are included in this report as a catalyst for leaders and kaiako to dig deeper into *Te Whāriki* and ask questions about what it means for their children and whānau and for their professional knowledge and pedagogical practice.

A core theme in the findings of this report is the variability of understanding and practice associated with implementing *Te Whāriki*. ERO's [Early Learning Curriculum](#) evaluation report published in 2016 noted:

Variability in curriculum understanding and practice impacts on the extent to which children are provided with equitable opportunities to learn in meaningful contexts and through rich and challenging experiences.

So how do we close the 'quality' gap? What will it take to reduce the variability of understanding and practice, both within early learning services as well as between services? While we know that the uptake of PLD was high, we do not know the impact that PLD is having in terms of addressing this variability. Future evaluations will focus on how PLD is supporting leaders and kaiako to engage more deeply with *Te Whāriki* and what this engagement means for improved quality and achieving equitable outcomes for children.

We also know from ERO's previous national evaluation reports that PLD on its own will not bring about improved understanding and practice. Strong pedagogical leadership is a necessary factor in curriculum implementation, as noted in our [2016 report](#):

Our findings highlight the critical role of pedagogical leadership in effective curriculum implementation that promotes positive outcomes for children. Pedagogical leadership plays a significant role in promoting and enhancing the quality of curriculum implementation, teaching practice, assessment and internal evaluation in early learning services. This particular aspect of leadership is essential to implement the service's priorities and guide teachers to implement a curriculum that is responsive to children and their language, culture and identity.

Recommendations

ERO recommends that leaders and kaiako in early learning services use the findings of this report as a catalyst to:

- engage more deeply with *Te Whāriki* to build a shared understanding of expectations associated with reviewing and designing their local curriculum
“What are our curriculum priorities? What really matters for the children in our service?”
- unpack and discuss the learning outcomes in *Te Whāriki* as part of their planning, assessment and evaluation processes
“What do these learning outcomes look like in terms of children’s progress and learning in our service?”
- explore and discuss their understanding of, and commitment to, supporting Māori children to experience success as Māori
“What do we know and understand about kaupapa Māori theory?” What expertise do we have to increase our understanding of practices that enable Māori children to experience success as Māori?
- identify their next steps and priorities for PLD
“What are our next steps as we engage with Te Whāriki? What support do we need to take these steps?”

ERO is continuing to evaluate what is happening in early learning services as leaders and kaiako engage with the updated curriculum. We will report early in 2019 on how well prepared services are to implement *Te Whāriki*.



Appendix 1: Sample of early learning services

Table 1: Service type

Service Type	Number of services in sample	Percentage of services in sample	National percentage of services
Education and Care Service	112	67%	62%
Playcentre	22	13%	10%
Kindergarten	22	13%	15%
Home-based	10	6%	12%
Hospital-based	1	1%	1%
Total	167	100%	100%

As shown in Table 1 this sample was closely representative of national figures. Education and care services and Playcentres are over-represented. Kindergartens and home-based education and care services are under-represented. These differences are not statistically significant.³

Table 2: Location

Location	Number of services in sample	Percentage of services in sample	National percentage of services
Main Urban Area	113	68%	75%
Minor Urban Area	15	9%	11%
Secondary Urban Area	20	12%	6%
Rural Area	19	11%	8%
Total	167	100%	100%

As shown in Table 2 this sample was closely representative of national figures. Main urban area and minor urban area are under-represented. Secondary urban area and rural area are over-represented. These differences are statistically significant.

³ The differences between observed and expected values in Tables 1 and 2 were tested using a Chi square test. The level of statistical significance for all statistical tests in this report was $p < 0.05$.

Appendix 2: Evaluation framework – questions we asked

Questions for service leaders and kaiako

1. How aware are you/your team of *Te Whāriki* (2017)?
2. Have or are you/your team attended any professional learning and development sessions about *Te Whāriki* (2017)?

If yes, what was the PLD and how useful was it in helping you/your team develop your knowledge and understanding of *Te Whāriki* (2017)?
3. What steps are you taking to review and design your local curriculum?
4. What steps are you taking to use the learning outcomes in *Te Whāriki* (2017) to determine/identify what learning matters and is valued in your service?
5. How confident are you/your team to work with *Te Whāriki* (2017) to support Māori to experience educational success as Māori?
6. What are you/your team doing differently as you begin to work with *Te Whāriki* (2017)? What will you do differently?
7. What do you see as the barriers or challenges as you/your team begin to work with *Te Whāriki* (2017)?
8. What expertise and resources do you already have to support your service to implement *Te Whāriki* (2017)?
9. Is there anything further you/your team need to help implement *Te Whāriki* (2017) in your service?

Questions for Governing organisations (for professional leaders)

1. How have your services responded to *Te Whāriki* (2017)?
2. How are your services working with *Te Whāriki* (2017)? How do you know this? How are you responding?
3. Have leaders and kaiako from your services attended any professional learning and development sessions about *Te Whāriki* (2017)? If yes, what PLD and what do you know about the impact of this PLD?
4. Have you (as leaders in your organisation) attended any professional learning and development sessions about *Te Whāriki* (2017)? If yes, what PLD?
5. What steps are your services taking to review and design their local curriculum?
6. What steps are your services taking to use the learning outcomes in *Te Whāriki* (2017) to determine/identify what learning matters and is valued in their service?
7. How are your services working with *Te Whāriki* (2017) to support Māori children to experience educational success as Māori?
8. What do you see as the barriers or challenges for your services as they begin to work with *Te Whāriki* (2017)?

9. What expertise and resources do you already have to support your services to implement *Te Whāriki* (2017)?
10. Is there anything further your services need to help implement *Te Whāriki* (2017) in your service?
11. How will you address those needs?



Appendix 3: Summary of key findings

Table 3 provides a summary of the key findings to help you identify your PLD needs, next steps and support you to engage more deeply with some of the expectations in *Te Whāriki*.

Table 3: Summary of findings

ERO was interested in	What does <i>Te Whāriki</i> expect?	What did ERO find?	Questions to think about?
What you were doing to review and design your local curriculum.	<i>[That you] will use Te Whāriki as a basis for weaving its own local curriculum of valued learning taking into consideration also the aspirations and learning priorities of hāpu, iwi and community.</i> PAGE 7	Services were at a very early stage in terms of reviewing and designing their local curriculum. A barrier for many was that the concept of a 'local curriculum' was not well understood by leaders and kaiako or they had not considered that they needed to do this.	How do we use <i>Te Whāriki</i> as the basis for our local curriculum? What do we need to consider as we 'weave' our local curriculum? What are our curriculum priorities for children's learning? What really matters for the children in our service?
How you were working with the 20 learning outcomes in <i>Te Whāriki</i> .	<i>[That you] will work with colleagues, children, parents and whānau to unpack the strands, goals and learning outcomes, interpreting these and setting priorities for their particular ECE setting.</i> PAGE 23	Variability in understanding about how to work with the learning outcomes in <i>Te Whāriki</i> as part of assessment, planning (including teaching strategies) and evaluation. Most services were at an early stage of working with the learning outcomes to identify the learning valued in their service.	How do we work with the 20 learning outcomes as part of our local curriculum and associated assessment and teaching practices? What do the 20 learning outcomes look like in terms of children's progress and learning in our service? What do we know about children's progress and developing capabilities in relation to the 20 learning outcomes?
How confident you are to support Māori children to experience educational success as Māori.	That leaders and kaiako will draw on Kaupapa Māori theory in supporting Māori children to achieve educational success as Māori. <i>Te Whāriki states: The implementation of kaupapa Māori theory emphasises practices that enable Māori to achieve educational success as Māori. At its core is the retention of Māori language and culture.</i> PAGE 61	In the services that were confident (or had already begun) leaders and kaiako were at an early stage in working with <i>Te Whāriki</i> to support Māori children to experience success as Māori and to realise their potential.	What do we know and understand about kaupapa Māori theory? What expertise do we have to help us increase our understanding of practices that enable Māori children to experience success as Māori?

