

EXTENDING THEIR LANGUAGE – EXPANDING THEIR WORLD

Children's oral language (birth-8 years)



February 2017

Extending their language – expanding their world: Children’s oral language (birth-8 years)

Published 2017

© Crown copyright

ISBN 978-0-478-43854-3



Except for the Education Review Office’s logo used throughout this report, this copyright work is licensed under Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 New Zealand licence. In essence, you are free to copy, distribute and adapt the work, as long as you attribute the work to the Education Review Office and abide by the other licence terms. In your attribution, use the wording ‘Education Review Office’, not the Education Review Office logo or the New Zealand Government logo.

This report contains references to the 1996 version of *Te Whāriki*, New Zealand’s early childhood curriculum. While ERO’s work was undertaken prior to the current refresh of *Te Whāriki*, we are confident that our findings and recommendations remain pertinent and relevant to all who work with children aged 0-8.

Contents

Overview of ERO’s findings: effective practice and challenges in early learning services and schools	2
Next steps	5
Introduction	6
Responding to linguistically diverse learners	16
ERO’s findings in early learning services and schools	18
Oral language learning and development: birth to eight years of age	21
Examples of effective practice	35
Topkids Motutaiko	35
Raumanga Kindergarten	38
Ranzau School	40
Whitikahu School	42
Conclusion	44
Next Steps	45
Appendix 1: Methodology	46
Appendix 2: Sample of early learning services and schools	47
Appendix 3: Supporting oral language learning and development in early learning services	48
Appendix 4: Supporting oral language learning and development in schools	49
Appendix 5: Relevant learning outcomes from Te Whāriki	50

Overview of ERO's findings: effective practice and challenges in early learning services and schools

This evaluation investigated how effectively young children's oral language learning and development were supported in their early years of education. ERO asked the question: *What is the early learning service or school doing in response to children's oral language learning and development, including concerns about and needs of particular children?*¹

ERO undertook this evaluation in early learning services and schools (with a focus on students in Years 1 to 3), having an education review between July and October 2015. ERO's findings are based on the analysis of data gathered from 167 early learning services and 104 schools.²

The findings highlight the importance of supporting oral language learning and development from a very early age. Research evidence shows the early years are a critical time in terms of the rapid language development that takes place, particularly the first 2-3 years.

*Language is a vital part of communication. In early childhood, one of the major cultural tasks for children is to develop competence in, and understanding of, language. Language does not consist only of words, sentences, and stories: it includes the language of images, art, dance, drama, mathematics, movement, rhythm, and music. During these early years, children are learning to communicate their experience in many ways, and they are also learning to interpret the ways in which others communicate and represent experience. They are developing increasing competence in symbolic, abstract, imaginative, and creative thinking. Language grows and develops in meaningful contexts when children have a need to know and a reason to communicate. Adults should understand and encourage both verbal and non-verbal communication styles.*³

1 See Appendix 1 for the methodology used in this evaluation.

2 See Appendix 2 for information about the sample of services and schools.

3 Ministry of Education. (1996). *Te Whāriki, He Whāriki Mātauranga mō ngā Mokopuna o Aotearoa*. Wellington: The Ministry: p. 72.

Key findings: early learning services

In order to support oral language learning and development, leaders and teachers in early learning services need to know how children's oral language develops, recognise the fundamental ways the curriculum can promote rich oral language learning and use deliberate teaching strategies.

Professional and pedagogical leadership was critical in building the capability and capacity of teachers to promote and support children's oral language learning and development. In the services that were strongly focused on supporting children's learning:

- > teachers had in-depth knowledge of every child and a shared understanding of, and expectations for, their oral language learning and development
- > leaders and teachers worked in partnership with parents and whānau, and with external agencies and specialist support where necessary
- > their curriculum was highly supportive of children's oral language learning and development
- > evaluation, inquiry and monitoring processes were driven by the need to promote and support children's oral language learning and development.

Improvements were needed in many early learning services to support oral language learning and development. These included:

- > leadership capability to support teachers to design and implement a curriculum that:
 - gives priority to oral language and recognises oral language as an integral part of early literacy learning
 - is based on a shared and explicit understanding of children's oral language development
 - includes deliberate teaching strategies to support all learners, making children's oral language learning and development visible in assessment information
- > evaluating the impact of practices and strategies on improving oral language outcomes
- > capitalising on 'home languages' as a foundation for other language learning
- > being prompt and proactive where concerns are identified about children's oral language learning and development.

Key findings: the first three years of primary school

Similarly, there were common themes in the way the most effective primary schools supported students' oral language learning and development. These included:

- > transition-to-school programmes through which information was shared about oral language learning and development (including any strengths and needs)
- > both formal assessment and informal daily monitoring of oral language progress of all learners, particularly in the early months after starting school
- > explicit oral language learning expectations were developed as part of school-wide progressions
- > daily literacy programmes with a strong oral language focus
- > identifying students needing additional support early and responding appropriately.

Improvements were needed in many schools to support oral learning and development. These included:

- > giving greater attention to the oral language learning of new entrants (within a rich curriculum)
- > developing formal expectations for monitoring oral language progress or development across Years 1 to 3 and beyond, across all key learning areas
- > taking a formalised approach to identifying students' oral language strengths (including capabilities in languages other than English), needs and concerns, rather than relying on informal observation and 'gut feeling'
- > systematically planning for interventions, where particular concerns or needs for oral language learning and development are identified
- > teachers building on the advantage linguistically-diverse learners bring to language learning
- > building and strengthening teacher capability to support oral language teaching and learning.

Next steps

ERO recommends that leaders and teachers in early learning services and schools:

- > use resources such as *Effective School Evaluation: how to do and use internal evaluation for improvement*⁴ and those about teaching as inquiry⁵ to evaluate the extent to which their curriculum strengthens oral language learning and provides evidence of children's progress and achievement
- > make better use of existing resources, such as *Much More Than Words*⁶ and *Learning Through Talk*⁷ to promote and support children's oral language learning
- > use assessment approaches and tools, based on shared understandings and expectations for oral language learning, to notice, recognise and respond to the linguistic strengths and needs of all learners
- > offer rich, broad learning opportunities to support children's oral language learning and enable them to develop oral language capabilities foundational to their learning across the curriculum.

ERO recommends that the Ministry of Education develops a more coherent and systematic set of curriculum expectations, assessment tools and resources for oral language in the early years (0-8 years) to support children's learning across the curriculum.

This report is structured as follows:

Introduction – *Why responsive oral language teaching and learning is important* gives an overview of the guidance available to early learning services and schools to support oral language teaching and learning. It includes a summary of some of the key research evidence about the importance of oral language learning and development in the early years.

Responding to linguistically diverse learners provides a snapshot of recent findings from ERO's evaluation looking at language diversity in early learning services and schools in Auckland.

ERO's findings in services and schools provides an overview of the key findings.

Oral language learning and development: birth to eight years of age

ERO's findings, particularly in relation to what well-focused early learning services and schools were doing to support children's oral language learning and development, described and presented in a way that shows a learner pathway from infancy through to eight years of age.

4 <http://www.ero.govt.nz/publications/effective-school-evaluation/>

5 <http://nzcurriculum.tki.org.nz/Curriculum-stories/Case-studies/Teachers-as-learners-Inquiry/Teaching-as-inquiry>

6 Ministry of Education. (2011). *Much More Than Words*. Wellington: The Ministry.

7 Ministry of Education. (2009). *Learning Through Talk: Oral Language in Years 1 to 3*. Wellington: The Ministry.

Introduction

Why responsive oral language teaching and learning is important

Oral language and social interaction

Oral language is the basis of most social interaction in life. We use oral language to convey information to other people, develop mutual understanding, express ideas and identity, and define our belonging to a particular social group. Our ability to use oral language in social situations allows us to build relationships with others and manage a variety of different forms of social exchange. For example, people who interact effectively know when to lead, when to follow and when to act independently. They know when it is appropriate to compete and when it is appropriate to cooperate. They achieve results when working in groups.

Oral language and life chances

To succeed in school and society, young learners need to be able to use the spoken and written languages of the curriculum to become proficient thinkers and communicators. Their ability to communicate using oral language helps them learn more effectively, apply their learning through problem solving, and address intellectual challenges using abstract symbols, analysis and synthesis. Using language, symbols and texts is a central competency in 21st century life.

Oral language and accessing the curriculum

Oral language is the medium through which most of the curriculum in early learning services and schools is conveyed and discussed. What the teacher says and how it is said gives both intellectual and social messages to children about the importance of oral language learning. Teachers should plan and manage their use of oral language, so that it supports oral language learning for all learners.

Talk is the central tool of any teacher's trade. With it they mediate children's activity and help them make sense of learning, literacy, life and themselves.⁸

Both international and New Zealand research indicates that the range of children's oral language capabilities widens, and is especially noticeable, when they start school. For example, in the United States, Pondiscio estimates that more children than ever are entering elementary school with a vocabulary of under 2,000 English words.

8 Ministry of Education. (2009). *Learning Through Talk: Oral Language in Years 1 to 3*. Wellington: The Ministry: p. 23.

It is no exaggeration to say that the increasing numbers of children with early disadvantages in language – both the volume of words and the way in which they are employed – establishes a kind of educational inertia that is immensely difficult for early schooling to address.⁹

In New Zealand, Van Hees reports that an increasing number of five and six year olds have difficulty expressing ideas fluently and coherently in oral English. This impacts on their ability to participate fully in the classroom.¹⁰ Her research showed that teachers improved the quality and quantity of students' oral expression by changing the interactional and language patterns used in their classrooms.

When the students were given some control of the topic and the space for spontaneous comments they were more engaged and participatory. Expression became a partnership rather than one dominated and controlled solely by the teacher. When students' spontaneous dialogue alongside collaboratively constructing an oral text, the students made more sense of the topic in hand and this enhanced their potential to acquire language.¹¹

Oral language as a precursor and extension of wider learning.

Oral language interactions build children's understanding of the meaning of a larger number of words, and of the world around them. This understanding is crucial to their later reading comprehension, and literacy in general. Early language skills also predict later academic achievement and success in adult life. For example, recent longitudinal research shows that two-year-old children with larger vocabularies display greater academic and behavioural functioning at age five and beyond than children with smaller vocabularies. Moreover, children at age six with greater academic achievement in oral language, literacy and mathematics are more likely to undertake tertiary study, earn a higher income during their working life, and live to a healthier and more secure old age than other children.¹²

9 Pondiscio, R. (2014). *Education for Upward Mobility: Vocabulary Development*. Washington DC: Fordham Institute of Education: p. 4.

10 Van Hees, J. (2011). *Focus on Developing Language*. SET 3, 2011. Wellington: NZCER: p. 47.

11 Van Hees, J. (2011). *Focus on Developing Language*. SET 3, 2011. Wellington: NZCER: p. 52.

12 Morgan, P. et al. (2015). 24-month old children with larger vocabularies display greater academic and behavioural functioning at age five. *Child Development*. Vol 86. No 5: pp. 1351-1370.

How should rich oral language learning and development be supported in the early years?

Shared conversations: talking with young children matters

Early learning starts at home and early childhood teachers should aim to build on this foundation for successful future learning. Parents and teachers can help build stronger early language skills both through their planned language interactions with young children, and by setting up an environment that gives children many opportunities to talk with each other, and with adults.

One of the best ways that parents and teachers can help young children develop their oral language skills is through shared conversations.¹³ To help young children develop their oral language skills, both parents and teachers should make sure their conversations give children practice with:

- > hearing, listening to, and using a rich and abstract vocabulary
- > hearing and constructing increasingly complex sentences
- > using words to express ideas and feelings and asking questions about things they do not understand
- > using words to answer questions about things that are just not in the here and now.

Shared storybook reading provides an especially good platform for planned conversations with young children.¹⁴ Other experiences of daily life can also provide a source of rich conversation if adults are attentive and deliberately seek opportunities to enrich and extend children's vocabulary and understanding.



¹³ National Institute of Literacy. (2009). *Learning to Talk and Listen: An oral language resource for early childhood caregivers*. Washington DC: RMC Research Corporation: p. 5.

¹⁴ National Institute of Literacy. (2009). *Learning to Talk and Listen: An oral language resource for early childhood caregivers*. Washington DC: RMC Research Corporation: p. 10.

Oral language in the early childhood curriculum

In New Zealand early learning services, the national curriculum statement, *Te Whāriki*,¹⁵ provides a framework for strengthening young children's oral communication knowledge, dispositions and skills. The framework of principles and strands, and associated goals and learning outcomes, encourages each service to design and implement a curriculum that promotes and responds to children's oral language learning and development.

Te Whāriki promotes a socio-cultural perspective in learning and teaching, intended to inform early literacy practices, including oral language development in early learning services. While *Te Whāriki* does not specifically advise early childhood teachers how to promote or teach early literacy, Strand 4, Communication-Mana Reo states that the languages and symbols of children's own and other cultures should be promoted and protected in an environment where children:

- > develop non-verbal communication skills for a range of purposes
- > develop verbal communication skills for a range of purposes
- > experience the stories and symbols (pictures, numbers and words) of their own and other cultures
- > discover and develop different ways to be creative and expressive.¹⁶

Supporting and responding to oral language learning and development in early learning services

Children begin early childhood education with varying literacy skills. Not all children have language-rich experiences prior to starting at an early learning service, and the role of the service is critical in responding to and supporting their early oral language development. Teachers need to be able to identify and respond quickly where children need additional support with their oral language learning and development. Early recognition and response to learning needs can have a huge impact on children's future learning success.

Effective teaching practices recognise the sophistication and complexity of early learning and development and the integral place of oral language in early literacy. A socio-cultural approach to literacy includes not only reading and writing but also listening, talking, viewing, drawing and critiquing. Teachers need to be knowledgeable about the socio-cultural processes involved in listening, speaking, writing and viewing, as well as the pathways that children take as their literacy skills develop.

¹⁵ See: <http://www.education.govt.nz/early-childhood/teaching-and-learning/ece-curriculum/te-whariki/>

¹⁶ Ministry of Education. (1996). *Te Whāriki, He Whāriki Mātauranga mō ngā Mokopuna o Aotearoa*. Wellington: The Ministry: p. 16.

Key aspects of oral language learning and development are grouped as follows:¹⁷

- > *Vocabulary development.* By the end of the first year of life young children are approaching their first use of words. By two most have acquired a fairly extensive spoken vocabulary. During their third year they make a significant linguistic leap. Their vocabulary increases substantially and they can argue and ask lots of questions. By the age of five, their working vocabulary typically includes between 3,000 and 5,000 words.
- > *Speech sound development.* Children's speech usually gets easier to understand by more people between ages one to five. By two years old, most children's speech can be understood by familiar adults. By three years of age, it can be understood by unfamiliar adults most of the time, and by four years of age by unfamiliar adults almost all of the time.
- > *Hearing.* This is a critical part of a young child's communication development. Any degree of hearing loss in the early years makes every aspect of language acquisition harder. Even a mild or fluctuating hearing loss can affect a child's communication development. Identifying any hearing loss as early as possible is critical.
- > *Early literacy.* Children (ages one to four) learn best when early literacy is integrated into everyday activities, rather than taught at isolated learning times. Through such activities, young children can be supported to combine conversation, vocabulary development, print knowledge, sound awareness and story comprehension.



17 Ministry of Education. (2011). *Much More Than Words*. Wellington: The Ministry: pp. 6-12.

Early literacy teaching practices that support strong learning foundations

Particular literacy practices may help children in early learning services strengthen their literacy competency so they can make a successful transition to formal schooling. Table 1 shows the literacy knowledge and abilities that are enhanced through appropriate early literacy teaching and learning activities. The table clearly shows how oral language learning is an integral part of early literacy.

Table 1: Literacy knowledge and early literacy activities

Literacy knowledge and abilities of learners:	Early literacy activities that provide rich oral language experiences:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > alphabet knowledge > letter-sound knowledge > concepts about print > concepts about books > phonological awareness > vocabulary knowledge (unusual words) > story comprehension > narrative competence (story telling) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > nursery rhymes and poems > language play > sustained conversations > introducing new vocabulary, ideas and concepts > informal phonemic awareness activities > shared storybook reading > songs/waiata and chants > scribbling letters, numbers, and letter-like forms

Source: Adapted from *Literacy in Early Childhood Services: Teaching and Learning* (2011)¹⁸

Supporting and responding to oral language learning and development in the early years of school

Once young children start school, rapid oral language development usually continues over the next few years. However, the use of oral language in schools has a number of specific characteristics that most new entrants need to adjust to.¹⁹ Spoken language in junior school classrooms is constantly moving on a continuum between informal and formal expression and between spontaneous and planned opportunities and experiences. Oral language learning shifts from single word comments in simple exchanges to sequences of interactions, lengthy explanations or instructions, and in-depth discussions. The Ministry of Education (the Ministry) suggests that four kinds of oral language usage and development underpin curriculum access and students' ability to learn in later years.²⁰

18 Education Review Office. (2011). *Literacy in Early Childhood Services: Teaching and Learning*. Wellington: The Office: p. 9.

19 Ministry of Education. (2009). *Learning Through Talk: Oral Language in Years 1 to 3*. Wellington: The Ministry: p. 28.

20 Ministry of Education. (2009). *Learning Through Talk: Oral Language in Years 1 to 3*. Wellington: The Ministry: p. 25.

These developments are in the following areas:

- > *Independent listening.* This includes the ability to listen to extended talk (such as stories, factual accounts, or presentations) and to retain the information so that it can be recalled. The kind of listening students are expected to do at school (especially where the teacher is talking to the whole class) often differs from the listening they are used to doing at home, where talk is mainly about familiar events and experiences, involving just a few people who know each other well.
- > *Independent speaking.* This includes the ability to use extended talk (for example when recounting news, retelling a story, or explaining an idea) without the support of immediate feedback. Independent speaking of this kind requires learners to use increasingly precise and sophisticated language that is tailored and communicated clearly to the audience.
- > *Using social language.* This is about developing conversational skills in small groups, such as greeting others, sharing stories, or offering entertainment. There are often group norms for initiating, joining and ending conversations, and introducing new topics in particular social situations that may have to be learned.
- > *Applying discussion skills.* This is about the ability to interpret specific language (especially academic language) to carry out structured learning tasks. This involves students in thinking about abstract concepts, reasoning about possible and probable causes, and reflecting and talking about their own learning. Discussion skills also involve the use of focused talk in a small group for a particular purpose, generally to clarify or explore ideas, make decisions or reach consensus about the best option. During a discussion, students build knowledge and understanding, expand vocabulary, learn new ways of expressing ideas, and develop their listening and critical thinking skills.

Key concepts underpinning the teaching of oral language skills (Years 1 to 3)

Further development of oral language skills in the first three years of school provides the foundation the remainder of their schooling. This includes the literacies students use to develop their knowledge and experiences in the English learning area, other learning areas and the key competencies of *The New Zealand Curriculum*.²¹

21 Ministry of Education. (2007). *The New Zealand Curriculum*. Wellington: The Ministry: pp. 12-13.

Responding to oral language capabilities

Children (whether English is their first or additional language) come to school with a wide range of early oral language experiences. Their ability to engage in classroom talk can be affected by factors apart from their home language and early childhood background. These include:

- > the typical variations in the overall rates of development of young children
- > differences in personality such as degree of extroversion
- > differences between what happens in the early learning service and school
- > different cultural expectations and protocols regarding speaking and respect
- > specific events and experiences in students' lives outside of school
- > additional needs that affect oral language, such as hearing impairment or difficulty with generating intelligible speech.

To respond to these factors, teachers need to engage all students in general classroom talk and in activities that require specific listening and talking skills. Teachers also need to be aware of, and incorporate, the cultural practices and perspectives of all their students where possible.²² When students feel that the talk and activities in the classroom are meaningful, purposeful and meet their needs, they are likely to better engage in learning.

Teachers in schools face a challenge when planning oral language learning activities that respond to the unique strengths and needs of every student, and for the groups of students with particular needs. Such groups include:

- > students who need help to develop their phonological or phonemic awareness
- > new learners of English
- > students from backgrounds with language practices that differ from the conventional practices of the school
- > students who experience specific difficulties with one or more aspect of their oral language learning
- > students who use alternative methods to communicate, for example students who use picture software programs to generate sentences.

Curriculum frameworks and guidance

The following tables provide an overview of the curriculum frameworks and guidance for oral language teaching and learning for both early learning services and schools.

²² Ministry of Education. (2009). *Learning Through Talk: Oral Language in Years 1 to 3*. Wellington: The Ministry: p. 51.

Table 2: Curriculum and Assessment Guidelines for Oral Language Development, birth to eight years

	Curriculum framework	Assessment framework
<p>Early Learning Services:</p> <p><i>Te Whāriki</i> (1996)</p> <p><i>Kei Tua o te Pae</i> (2009)</p>	<p>In <i>Te Whāriki</i>, the communication strand includes goals for: children developing non-verbal and verbal communication skills; experiencing stories and symbols of their own and other cultures; and discovering or developing different ways to be creative and expressive.</p>	<p><i>Kei Tua o te Pae</i>, Book 17. Oral, Visual and Written Literacy.</p> <p>Provides a lens focused on assessment practices, a lens based on <i>Te Whāriki</i>, and a lens focused on the symbol systems and technologies for making meaning using oral, visual and written literacy.</p>
<p>Schools:</p> <p><i>The New Zealand Curriculum</i> (2007)</p> <p><i>Learning Through Talk</i> (2009)</p> <p><i>The English Language Learning Progressions</i> (2008)</p> <p><i>Sound Sense: Ready to Read</i> (2003)</p>	<p>In <i>The New Zealand Curriculum</i>, the English learning area <i>Speaking, Writing and Presenting</i> strand provides opportunities for students to recognise how to shape texts for a purpose and an audience; form and express ideas on a range of topics; use language features showing recognition of their effects; and organise texts using simple structures.</p>	<p><i>Learning Through Talk</i>, has sections on priorities for oral language assessment, the assessment process and expectations for oral language learning (for English as a first language learners).</p> <p><i>The English Language Learning Progressions</i>, has progressions describing patterns of language learning (oral language, reading, writing and vocabulary) for ESOL (English as a second or other language) learners.</p> <p>Sound Sense: Ready to Read http://literacyonline.tki.org.nz</p> <p>Web resources http://literacyonline.tki.org.nz/Literacy-Online/Teacher-needs/Sounds-and-words</p> <p>ESOLonline http://esolonline.tki.org.nz/</p>

Table 3: Guidance for Oral Language Learning and Development, birth to eight years

	Guidance for learning:	Guidance for teaching:
<p>Early childhood:</p> <p><i>Much More Than Words. Communication Development in Young Children (2011)</i></p>	<p>Help on knowing the learner – lists examples of typical communication skills by development ages and stages: at 1 year; 18 months; 2 years; 3 years; 4 years.</p>	<p>Tips for encouraging communication development – lists four or five key tips of activities for parents/caregivers at each age and stage, ages 1 to 4 years. <i>(Note – not targeted at teachers).</i></p>
<p>Schools:</p> <p><i>Learning Through Talk. Oral Language in Years 1 to 3 (2009)</i></p>	<p>Help on knowing the learner – lists indicators for common patterns of progress: at school entry; the end of the first year of schooling; the end of the third year of schooling.</p>	<p>Instructional strategies for teachers – has separate sections of research-based advice on scaffolding students' learning; using deliberate acts of teaching; using classroom talk; and linking oral language and literacy.</p>
<p><i>Learning Through Talk. Oral language in Years 4 to 8 (2010)</i></p>	<p>Advice and guidance for learners in Years 4-8.</p>	

Responding to linguistically diverse learners

Most people in the world speak two or more languages. Although New Zealand has three official languages, including New Zealand Sign Language, many children do not have the opportunity to develop competency in more than one language.

Two or more languages are learned relatively easily in the first three years of life, which is a sensitive period for language learning. Babies are born with the innate ability to recognise every sound in any language, but this ability declines after about the age of six or seven years. This provides a window of opportunity for every child to become bilingual or multilingual, by supporting their exposure to and use of more than one language between the ages of eighteen months and six years.

Speaking two or more languages is a proven advantage in any language learning. Research has established that being bilingual promotes key aspects of children's cognitive development.²³ There are also other educational advantages from planned bilingual development in early learning services and early schooling. For example, being bilingual at an early age:

- > allows the young bilingual learner to communicate with people in their families and communities, as well as in their service or school
- > gives children access to additional literatures, traditions and ideas to enrich their later learning
- > makes it easier for them to learn further additional languages.

Children learn an additional language best when they are able to draw on prior knowledge of their first language/s. Cummins describes this as the principle of language interdependence: knowledge of one language inevitably informs knowledge of another.²⁴ Teachers in services and schools can support the English language learning of speakers of other languages by:

- > understanding children's linguistic background and capabilities
- > encouraging use of children's first language/s, for example by creating opportunities for children with the same first language to work together, or having adults who speak the same language using it in the classroom
- > helping children to make links between their first language/s and new English words and structures
- > making first language print and audio materials available where possible.

Diversity of first languages is rapidly increasing, particularly in Auckland. This provides us with new and exciting opportunities to extend the range of languages spoken by all children. As New Zealand's international population continues to grow, there is a need for greater responsiveness to language diversity.

²³ Refer to LEAP <http://pasifika.tki.org.nz/LEAP>

²⁴ Cummins, J. (2000). *Language, Power and Pedagogy*. Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters.

ERO has been concurrently undertaking a separate evaluation in Auckland²⁵ focusing on how well schools and early learning services responded to the diversity of languages in their learning communities. ERO will publish a separate report on its full findings from this evaluation, but we include here some of what we found in those services and schools that were most responsive in supporting early bilingual learning.

There are approximately 160 languages spoken in Auckland. Thirty-nine percent of Auckland residents were born outside of New Zealand. The city continues to attract new migrants and its demographic is increasingly diverse. This provides significant opportunities and challenges for the education sector to ensure that all learners are effectively supported to reach their potential, enjoy success and recognise themselves as capable and confident learners, in a multilingual context.

ERO found that the more responsive early learning services in Auckland made strategic appointment decisions and appointed staff who either spoke the home language of the children or more than one language. Children's home language was valued and acknowledged through cultural celebrations, sharing of food and stories, and the teachers' commitment to learn about and share each other's languages and cultures. Teachers created a learning environment that supported children's home language through strong relationships with parents, whānau and communities, regular reflections about their practice, development of progressions in assessment information, and accessing professional learning and resources to further support teaching practice.

In the more responsive primary schools, leaders understood the changing nature of the demographics of the school community and had good knowledge of networks to support the language diversity of the community. Teachers used multiple sources of information to get to know their learners, and had established processes for identifying their interests, strengths and needs. Teachers were expected to have, or were supported to attain, an appropriate qualification such as a Teaching English in Schools to Speakers of Other Languages (TESSOL) Graduate Diploma, and Boards of Trustees employed bilingual staff. Schools valued learners' home language and culture by celebrating cultural events and by providing some learning opportunities in the learner's home language. Teachers used relevant tools and resources to support the programme such as English Language Learning Progressions (ELLP).²⁶ Home-school partnerships were a priority, parent workshops such as Reading Together²⁷ were held, as were regular parent fono/hui/meetings in their language. Important school information was provided in more than one language.

25 Data for this second ERO evaluation was being gathered in the Auckland region at the same time as the data for this oral language report was being collected in services and schools outside Auckland.

26 See <http://esolonline.tki.org.nz/ESOL-Online/Student-needs/English-Language-Learning-Progressions>

27 See <https://www.readingtogether.net.nz/reading-together.html>

ERO's findings in early learning services and schools

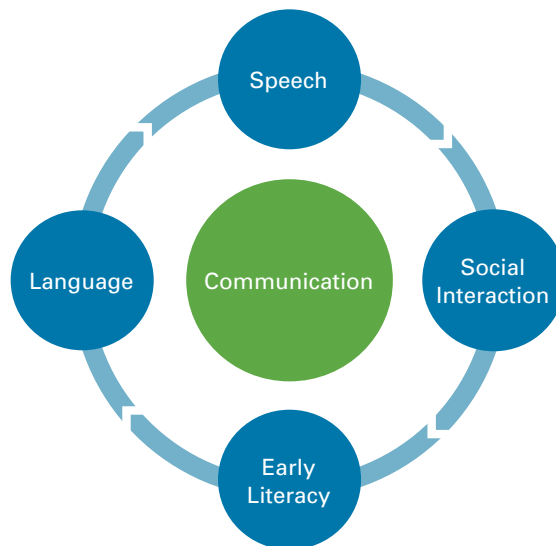
Early learning – birth to school age

ERO found variability in how well early learning services and schools were supporting children's oral language learning and development.²⁸

The early childhood curriculum includes goals that are specific to children's oral language learning and development. Most of these goals are expressed in relation to the communication strand of *Te Whāriki*. However, the other strands of *Te Whāriki* also include reference to children's oral language learning. This is not surprising given that oral language is pivotal to children's learning across all aspects of the curriculum.

The Ministry publication *Much More Than Words: Manuka takoto, kawea ake*²⁹ is a resource developed for families and whānau, early childhood teachers, and health professionals. It includes information about typical communication development in young children and ideas for supporting them. ERO found that some of the services in this evaluation were using this resource to help them identify children needing additional oral language support. The 'parts of communication' framework of this resource (see Figure 2) provides a useful framework for discussing the findings of this evaluation in early learning services.

Figure 1: The parts of communication



Source: *Much More Than Words: Manuka takoto, kawea ake*. p.5

This framework highlights communication as being much more than words, noting that "speech, language, social interaction and early literacy skills are all parts of a child's communication".³⁰

²⁸ See Appendix 3 for a matrix of practice.

²⁹ See <http://seonline.tki.org.nz/Educator-tools/Much-More-than-Words>

³⁰ See <http://seonline.tki.org.nz/Educator-tools/Much-More-than-Words>

ERO's findings are framed in relation to these parts of communication

Speech

In most services, where teachers noticed concerns with speech, they or the parents sought specialist support to work with children and their families.

Social interaction

In some of the services, leaders and teachers understood the connections between oral language and social competence. This was often the alert to an oral language delay or other concerns. Participation by some teachers in *Incredible Years*³¹ professional learning helped with strategies that promoted social competence and oral language learning and development.

Early literacy

ERO found considerable variability in the extent to which services in the sample designed and implemented a curriculum that gave priority to oral language as an integral part of early literacy learning. Leaders and teachers in many services need to strengthen their understanding of the connections between oral, written and visual literacy, especially because eighteen months to three years of age is a critical period for oral language development.

Language

ERO found very few services where teachers had a clear and shared understanding of expectations for children's oral language learning and development. This lack of understanding impacted on the quality of their curriculum, including the quality of interactions, resources available in the environment, and the priority given to oral language in planning, assessment and evaluation processes. Often the main focus of the service was limited to issues or concerns related to speech.

These findings suggest that further guidance, in addition to *Much More Than Words*,³² is needed for services to increase awareness of the importance of oral language in the wider context of the curriculum and expectations for children's learning progression. Leaders and teachers need to know how children's oral language develops, provide meaningful experiences and use teaching strategies that are effective in supporting children's oral language learning.

Internal evaluation, done well, is key to improving the quality of each service's curriculum to support oral language learning and development for all children. However, internal evaluation was not a strength across many of the services.

31 See <http://pb4l.tki.org.nz/Incredible-Years-Teacher>

32 Ministry of Education. (2011). *Much More Than Words*. Wellington: The Ministry.

The first three years of school

Most schools in this evaluation focused on getting to know children's oral language strengths and needs in their first year at school. Some schools continued to respond appropriately to the range of oral language learning needs across Years 2 and 3 by providing a suitably resourced language/arts curriculum, implemented by capable staff and suitably monitored and evaluated.³³

The 'well-focused' schools identified key needs and provided a variety of planned speaking and listening activities for students across Years 1, 2 and 3. Teachers in these schools linked early literacy developments (reading and writing) with a rich oral language programme and developed the language capability of staff and students. They applied this to learning and teaching across the curriculum.

Schools with 'some focus' tended to focus on oral language in Year 1, with more attention paid to reading and writing in Years 2 and 3 than to oral language. These schools also gave less attention to systematically building capability of staff and students than the well-focused schools.

The schools rated as having 'limited' or 'no focus' paid little attention to oral language learning needs or developmental possibilities after school entry.



³³ See Appendix 4 for a matrix of practice.

Oral language learning and development: birth to eight years of age

ERO's findings, particularly in relation to what well-focused early learning services and schools were doing to support children's oral language learning and development, are described in this next section. The findings are presented in a way that shows a learner pathway from infancy through to eight years of age. They include some broad expectations for oral language learning and development for each group of learners, as well as examples of practice from the well-focused services and schools. The examples of practice from early learning services are supported by information about the kinds of experiences adults (teachers) can provide for the different age groups of children drawn from *Te Whāriki*. The examples for schools include some expectations for learners' oral language learning and development.

Infants (birth-12 months)

One of the most powerful ways in which humans share emotions, experiences and thoughts is through oral language; from very early on infants show interest in faces and sounds and practise their own voices. Caregivers who are sensitive to the 'tunes and rhythms' of a baby are able to join in with her expressions and vocalisations. These intimate conversations lay the foundations for developing language skills. They provide children with opportunities to extend their range of vocalisations, experiment with an extending range of words and learn about the rules of conversation, which include turn taking, sensitive timing, responsiveness to others' behaviour and facial expressions, and an ability to listen and respond.³⁴

By the time they are 1 most children:³⁵

- > respond to common words such as "no!", "bye bye"
- > know the names of familiar things
- > will show you objects to get your attention
- > are starting to use some single words and enjoy repetitive games with others
- > take turns in conversations with adults by babbling
- > use their words and gestures to be social, to ask questions and to start to show an interest in looking at pictures in books
- > enjoy listening to songs and nursery rhymes.

³⁴ See <http://www.suttontrust.com/researcharchive/sound-foundations/>

³⁵ See <http://seonline.tki.org.nz/Educator-tools/Much-More-than-Words>

What does <i>Te Whāriki</i> say about the practices/experiences that support infants? ³⁶	What was happening for infants in the well-focused services?
<p>Adults communicate with infants through eye and body contact and through the use of gestures, such as waving, or pointing.</p> <p>Adults respond positively to infants' gestures and expressions, which can include infants turning their heads away from food, stretching out hands, or screwing up faces.</p> <p>Adults respond to infants' early attempts at verbalisation by, for example, repeating or expanding infants' attempts and by offering sounds to imitate.</p> <p>Simple words are used to make consistent connections with objects and people who are meaningful to the infant.</p> <p>Adults interpret infants' sounds and gestures, including crying and babbling, as attempts to communicate and respond accordingly.</p> <p>Adults read books to infants, tell them simple stories, and talk to them about objects and pictures.</p>	<p>Teachers talked about what the infants were doing, and gave them words for their environment and what was happening around them.</p> <p>Quiet conversation, gentle touch and prompt reactions to body language and children's demeanour combined to give children confidence.</p> <p>Teachers skilfully provided opportunities to develop infants' language by responding to their early attempts at verbalisation and using language to soothe and comfort. Storytelling and reading, and songs formed an important part of the programme.</p> <p>Teachers responded to children's attempts to talk by elaborating their single words and providing words for what children were doing. They read regularly to children and looked at books together.</p>

³⁶ Ministry of Education. (1996). *Te Whāriki, He Whāriki Mātauranga mō ngā Mokopuna o Aotearoa*. Wellington: The Ministry: pp. 88-96.

Toddlers (1-3 years)

The period between 24 and 36 months is marked by advances in communication and language, co-operation and social competence, and thinking and memory. Children's development can be supported by adults through sharing and enriching children's narratives, creative games, storytelling, teaching of early literacy skills and encouragement to play imaginatively with other children, allowing children to take the lead and providing structure or guidance when needed. Throughout their first years, children learn best through playful interactions, rather than formal activities.³⁷

By 18 months, most children:³⁸

- > understand simple phrases
- > will give a toy to an adult on request
- > repeat actions to make someone laugh
- > are starting to use more than 20 common words
- > are starting to turn pages in books and pointing at pictures.

By 2 years, most children:³⁹

- > understand instructions containing two key words
- > can listen to a simple story
- > use over 50 single words
- > are starting to combine words
- > ask simple questions
- > talk about what they can see and hear right now
- > enjoy pretend play with their toys
- > join in with songs/waiata and nursery rhymes with actions
- > enjoy interactive books
- > can be understood by familiar adults most of the time.

³⁷ See www.suttontrust.com/researcharchive/sound-foundations/

³⁸ See <http://seonline.tki.org.nz/Educator-tools/Much-More-than-Words>

³⁹ See <http://seonline.tki.org.nz/Educator-tools/Much-More-than-Words>

What does <i>Te Whāriki</i> say about the practices/experiences that support toddlers? ⁴⁰	What was happening for toddlers in the well-focused services?
<p>The programme includes action games, listening games and dancing, all of which use the body as a means of communication.</p> <p>Adults help to extend toddlers' verbal ability by accepting and supporting early words in their first language, modelling new words and phrases, allowing toddlers to initiate conversation, and giving them time to respond and converse.</p> <p>Toddlers have plenty of opportunities to talk with other children, play verbal games, and encounter a widening range of books, songs, poems, and chants.</p> <p>Books are available for toddlers to read and carry about. Reading books and telling stories are frequent, pleasurable, intimate, and interactive experiences.</p>	<p>Teachers valued children's voices, followed their cues and interests and used strategies such as explaining, describing, recalling, questioning, sustained conversations, and commenting. They maximised teachable moments across a range of meaningful contexts and experiences. Repetition was the key.</p> <p>Teachers recognised the importance of supporting children to communicate to build their social skills, relationships and friendships. They provided opportunities for group play and offered a language-rich environment that included rhymes and songs, reading stories, retelling them in different ways, repeating rhymes and waiata, action songs, and sound games.</p> <p>Toddlers had access to a wide and varied range of resources and activities that promoted language learning and communication through real, play, and problem-solving contexts. Teachers promoted imaginative play by setting up the dramatic play area to reflect toddlers' emerging interests.</p>

40 Ministry of Education. (1996). *Te Whāriki, He Whāriki Mātauranga mō ngā Mokopuna o Aotearoa*. Wellington: The Ministry: pp. 88-96.

Young children (3 and 4 year olds)

Young children have increasing capacities for language and inquiry, increasing ability to understand another point of view, and are developing interests in representation and symbols, such as pictures, numbers and words. An early childhood programme for young children should provide a rich bank of experiences from which the children can learn to make sense of their world and the world around them. Children in this older age group are still likely to swing back and forth in development, depending on their moods and the context, but they have a growing capacity for coping with unpredictability and change, especially if they are anchored by emotional support, respect, and acceptance. The children's increasing abilities to plan and monitor their activities are evident in their developing awareness of themselves as learners.⁴¹

By 3 years, most children:⁴²

- > understand instructions containing three key words
- > use a vocabulary of several hundred words, including describing words, such as 'fast' and 'small'
- > can combine three or more words into a sentence
- > play imaginative games
- > can talk about things that are not present
- > take an interest in other children's play and sometimes join in
- > take an interest in playing with words
- > are starting to recognise a few letters
- > can be understood by unfamiliar adults most of the time.

By 4 years, most children:⁴³

- > understand more complex language structures
- > ask lots of 'what', 'where' and 'why' questions to find out new information
- > take part in longer and more complicated make-believe play sequences with peers
- > enjoy simple jokes – even though their jokes may not make sense!
- > can recognise their own written name
- > know some letter names
- > can recognise some printed words in the environment
- > are attempting to write their name
- > are starting to use talking to make friends and solve problems
- > can talk about what they have done and what they might do
- > can be understood by unfamiliar adults almost all of the time.

41 Ministry of Education. (1996). *Te Whāriki, He Whāriki Mātauranga mō ngā Mokopuna o Aotearoa*. Wellington: The Ministry: p. 25.

42 See <http://seonline.tki.org.nz/Educator-tools/Much-More-than-Words>

43 See <http://seonline.tki.org.nz/Educator-tools/Much-More-than-Words>

What does <i>Te Whāriki</i> say about the practices/experiences that support young children? ⁴⁴	What was happening for young children in the well-focused services?
<p>Young children use a creative range of non-verbal communication, which may include signing.</p> <p>Children experience the communicative potential of the whole body through dance, gesture, and pretend play.</p> <p>Children have opportunities to 'read' pictures for meaning.</p> <p>The programme includes action songs and action rhymes in Māori and Pacific Island languages as well as English.</p> <p>Opportunities are provided for young children to have sustained conversations, ask questions, and to take the initiative in conversations.</p> <p>The programme includes frequent and varied opportunities for playing and having fun with words and also for sequenced activities, experiences, problems, and topics that encourage complex language.</p> <p>Children are able to have private conversations together.</p> <p>Māori phrases and sentences are included as a natural part of the programme.</p> <p>Children experience a wide range of stories and hear and practise story-telling.</p>	<p>Teachers worked collaboratively to provide a high quality, language-rich curriculum that promoted oral language and positive outcomes for children. They gave priority to modelling new language and complex conversations before using questioning techniques.</p> <p>Teachers used children's interests and abilities to encourage and extend oral language. For example, they knew which children were interested in music or those who enjoyed playing with words and worked with these children through their interests to extend vocabulary and understanding.</p> <p>Children who were highly verbal were also a focus for teachers. Teachers encouraged these children to share stories, write and illustrate their stories.</p> <p>Teachers had a sound knowledge and appreciation that, for English Language Learners, understanding comes before articulation. They were deliberate in the way they introduced rich vocabulary with children in the context of the curriculum. Teachers engaged children in experiences such as gardening, composting, cooking, technological processes and small group excursions that built on children's strengths and interests and added depth and richness to their learning.</p>

44 Ministry of Education. (1996). *Te Whāriki, He Whāriki Mātauranga mō ngā Mokopuna o Aotearoa*. Wellington: The Ministry: pp. 88-96.

In New Zealand, most children start school at five years of age. The goals and indicative learning outcomes in *Te Whāriki* highlight what is valued learning for children in early learning services.⁴⁵

At 5 years of age

All students who enter the school environment need to learn about a variety of conventions and routines of talking and listening (discourses) in a context that is unfamiliar to most of them. Students' oral language improves through practice, that is, when students talk regularly for different purposes and with different partners. Classroom talk (apart from talk that is purely social) is usually directed towards a goal. To be effective, the teacher and students must know why the discussion is being held and what the desired outcome should be. Students are likely to engage in such talk in a classroom climate that values diversity of students' cultural experiences and language expertise.⁴⁶



⁴⁵ See Appendix 5 for a description of some of the relevant learning outcomes from *Te Whāriki*.

⁴⁶ Ministry of Education. (2009). *Learning Through Talk: Oral Language in Years 1 to 3*. Wellington: The Ministry. (Note: These are a selection of the expectations from this resource and not the full list.)

At school entry	Examples of expectations ⁴⁷
A 5 year old:	
Vocabulary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > has a wide vocabulary of nouns and verbs; can name familiar items and actions; and can state their purpose > is curious about language and is willing to experiment.
Grammar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > uses correct grammar to talk about past, present and future > uses irregular past tense verbs > asks questions using a range of question forms.
Independent speaking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > can describe and ask questions about a picture > put pictures into a sequence to tell a story > can retell a simple story; and can talk about recent events in some detail.
Social language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > can use language for a range of purposes, for example, to play with others, ask questions or make comments > is aware of the need to speak differently for different purposes in familiar situations.
Independent listening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > can follow simple directions and instructions; listens with interest to stories > can answer simple follow up questions.
Discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > is beginning to develop ideas with peers, but may need support to do this consistently > can seek or give clarification in conversation > can talk about what might happen.

⁴⁷ Ministry of Education. (2009). *Learning Through Talk: Oral Language in Years 1 to 3*. Wellington: The Ministry: p. 42.

What was happening for learners as they started school in well-focused schools?

Schools maintained close contact with early learning services and liaised with early childhood teachers about the learning strengths and needs of each new entrant, well before they actually started school. This included meeting and talking with the child, their parents and whānau.

Key information about oral language strengths and needs, identified during the child's time in their early learning service, was shared with the new entrant teacher, to help provide some continuity for children when they started school.

Schools worked with early learning services to develop a shared framework of oral language and early literacy indicators, that early childhood teachers used as a way of showing the child's learning. This information was shared when the child started school. The school maintained and updated the learner profile over Years 1 and 2.



What was happening for learners in their first few months in well-focused schools?

Students had many opportunities to further develop their oral language skills. Teachers provided opportunities to speak, usually with a peer, and listen in a small group, to display the skills they brought with them. Oral language development was incorporated into the daily programme. Each student's oral language capabilities and needs were noted by the teacher, and discussed during an early meeting with parents. Students of concern were referred to a senior staff member for more formal assessment or diagnosis. This usually resulted in an individual learning plan for those with high needs. English Language Learners' (ELLs) entry skills were identified and a plan put in place to encourage their use of a first language, as well as for them to strengthen their competence in English. Learners targeted for support often needed a boost in conceptual/vocabulary development.



At end of first year at school	Some examples of expectations ⁴⁸ A 6 year old:
Vocabulary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > understands and uses a range of concepts > understands and uses some Māori words and phrases.
Grammar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > uses verb forms “could”, “should”, and “would” to express possibilities or uncertainty.
Independent speaking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > presents simple spoken texts using basic structures in a logical sequence, for example for description, instruction or recount.
Social language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > uses a range of social courtesies including strategies for coping with disagreement > can express own feelings and needs clearly > is beginning to use humour and participate in role plays.
Independent listening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > follows class talk with ease > can remember instructions with three to five actions.
Discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > participates in group tasks and uses talk to clarify ideas or understand simple causes and effects.

⁴⁸ Ministry of Education. (2009). *Learning Through Talk: Oral Language in Years 1 to 3*. Wellington: The Ministry: p. 43. (Note: These are a selection of the expectations from this resource and not the full list.)

What was happening for learners in their second year at school in well-focused schools?

Teachers typically incorporated oral language into their planning and assessment for literacy, based on high interest topics and using discovery or experiential learning. In most cases, opportunities for structured discussions were built into these experiences.

Oral language skill developmental and learning progressions were known by teachers and shared with students, so that they could set their own goals and monitor their progress. The class teacher used small group teaching where necessary to increase phonological awareness or vocabulary development. Home-school partnerships also supplemented classroom learning in many of these schools.

After further diagnostic assessment, students with identified needs were grouped for more focused teaching. Assistive technology or listening posts supported learning for some. Support from Speech Language Therapists or Resource Teachers: Learning and Behaviour were accessed to help teachers support students with specific learning needs. This also included utilising teacher aide support where appropriate.

English Language Learners (ELLs) were typically buddied or grouped with other speakers of their home language/s. They had ongoing opportunities to use their strongest language. Planned opportunities were used to share their language/s and culture with other students and parents. An English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) programme for ELLs typically continued for their second and third year at school.

At end of third year at school	Some examples of expectations ⁴⁹ A 7 and 8 year old:
Vocabulary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > uses increasingly specific language, for example, adjectives and adverbs > appreciates humour and wordplay.
Grammar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > is confident in using a range of complex sentences in both speaking and writing.
Independent speaking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > can compose spoken texts designed appropriately for a range of different audiences; to create a variety of effects; and in response to feedback.
Social language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > confidently uses a wide range of strategies and social courtesies adapted for various settings > uses verbal and non-verbal features to convey thoughts and feelings > asks appropriate questions.
Independent listening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > can follow a set of instructions requiring six or more responses on paper or with e-device > can follow reasonably long stories.
Discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > participates well in pair or group work > can adapt to different roles within a group.

⁴⁹ Ministry of Education. (2009). *Learning Through Talk: Oral Language in Years 1 to 3*. Wellington: The Ministry: p. 44. (Note: These are a selection of the expectations from this resource and not the full list.)

What was happening for learners in their third year at school in well-focused schools?

Teachers regarded student learning as a social and communicative process, with oral language at its centre. They encouraged students to share their ideas and support each other. Teachers understood that oral language competence underpins all learning and so they ensured that opportunities for oral language learning occurred in a variety of cross-curricular contexts, as well as in English. They deliberately linked learning activities to students' cultural and linguistic identities.

Teachers did not rely on students' oral language skills being extended just through exposure to classroom talk. Instead, they used explicit teaching strategies and modelling when necessary to show what competent oral communicators know and do. Many teachers also used instructional strategies to ensure that new oral language learning was reinforced, and to let students know how they were doing with this new learning.

Teachers used question-and-answer sequences, not just to test knowledge, but also to develop conceptual understanding. They regularly asked 'why' questions and explained the meaning and purpose of classroom activities. When necessary, students were taught procedures for solving problems and for making sense of their new experiences.



Examples of effective practice

The following four examples (two early learning services and two schools) describe what was happening to support children's oral language learning and development. The descriptions of practice are supported by evaluation findings from the ERO education review reports for the services and schools.

Topkids Motutaiko

Context:

Topkids Motutaiko is a purpose-built early childhood education and care service that opened in 2009, catering for children from three months to five years. It is located in central Taupō and the centre's name originates from the island in the centre of Lake Taupō. At the time of the most recent ERO review in 2015, 78 children were enrolled: 38 of Māori descent, many of whom have whakapapa links to Ngāti Tūwharetoa; 32 Pākeha; 4 South East Asian; 2 Asian and 2 whose ethnicity was not identified. There are two age groupings of children in this centre. Babies from three months to toddlers (up to about two years of age) and the older group for children up to five years old.

The centre operates under the umbrella of BestStart Educare Limited, which provides policy guidelines, strategic direction, financial and business management.

Prioritising and supporting oral language learning and development

Teachers are experienced and have a shared understanding about oral language expectations and children's language acquisition. Through observations they recognise children's oral language capability. They skilfully respond to individual children and acknowledge children's different levels of confidence and engagement. Teachers work closely with parents in this centre, sharing their early observations, what this might mean for their child and possible strategies for support.

Teachers initiate regular, formal interviews with parents of all children in addition to informal day-to-day interactions. Interviews are a key time for conversations, sharing observations and discussing concerns. Children identified as needing additional support with oral language are discussed at staff meetings. Teachers identify strategies and techniques and modify responses for each child.

Individual plans for children include next steps for learning based on their oral language ability and teachers decide learning outcomes based on this. A primary caregiver approach for children up to two years of age means that teachers know children and their whānau well.

The local speech language therapist (SLT) works with individual children and their families. The SLT also works with teachers, providing modelling and coaching for the implementation of strategies, and for them to provide ongoing support for individual children and their family. The early intervention teacher supports a child with behavioural learning needs and oral language delay.

English Language Learners are well supported by staff in this centre who between them speak Tokelau, Hindi, Punjabi, French, Portuguese and Samoan. Children from other language backgrounds and cultures are also supported. Teachers find out basic words from families, especially words associated with care routines to use with children. Centre assessment documentation strongly reflects each child's languages, culture and identity. Teachers are developing connections with the Thai community, in response to the increasing number of Thai families moving into the area.

Shared understanding, expectations and professional learning opportunities

The area manager and teachers are proactive in accessing and discussing current readings. A recent BestStart conference included a strong emphasis on oral language, informed by teachers' appraisal goals.

The appraisal process in this centre is robust and regular. This includes teachers engaging in monthly one-on-one meetings with the centre manager to discuss appraisal goals, progress and next steps. This process is reflective and focused on improving teacher practice and outcomes for children.

Role of the service's curriculum

The curriculum provides children with opportunities to use language in different contexts such as music and creative expression. Impromptu mat times occur regularly throughout the day and often these are child initiated. They are a good opportunity for children to share and grow their confidence to talk in a group. Teachers view and support children as leaders of their own learning within these group times. There are many aspects that enhance oral language such as storytelling where children have the opportunity to share their interests and role model from teachers and peers alike. Children are supported to develop their confidence to read from books or share spontaneous learning experiences that are of current interest individually or centre wide. Waiata is a strong medium that supports children's expressive language and is again often child directed. These group times are evident in all areas of the environment and across all age groups within the centre. There is a focus on reflecting the mixed cultural diversity and richness of languages at the centre.

In the baby room, oral language is consistently modelled by teachers. They use English, te reo Māori, Tokelau and Hindi. Teachers provide appropriate language models including the use of grammatically correct sentences and increasingly complex vocabulary.

Children needing additional support with their oral language development are identified early. Teachers respond with strategies such as commenting, modelling, questioning, explaining, and fostering tuakana/teina relationships.

Children's progress is regularly monitored through individual assessment records, individual development plans, discussions at team meetings, monthly appraisal meetings and parent teacher interviews.

Our reflective questions allow us as practitioners to reflect on the effectiveness of the teaching strategies we are implementing and to share this with the team. (Teaching team)

Teachers are developing their capability to engage in internal evaluation (self review) that impacts directly on their teaching practice. Evaluations have focused on teaching practice and the extent to which intended outcomes for children are being realised.



Raumanga Kindergarten

Context:

Raumanga Kindergarten in Whangarei provides four and six hour sessions for 40 children between two and six years of age. Approximately 90 percent of children enrolled identify as Māori. The kindergarten operates as part of the Northland Kindergarten Association.

The kindergarten's philosophy emphasises relationships and family participation. A team of four qualified teachers works very effectively together to ensure the programme reflects *Te Whāriki*, and a commitment to New Zealand's bicultural heritage.

The Association employs a fulltime Speech Language Therapist (SLT) who is available to support all 22 kindergartens if a teaching team has concerns about a child's language. Teachers talk with families and the SLT, then visits children at the kindergarten to assess their language before deciding if a referral needs to be made to Special Education for further support. The Association's SLT also works with individual children at the Association office if they require 1:1 support.

The kindergarten's 2009 ERO report identified oral language as an area for the (then) teaching team to focus on. In response, teachers developed an oral language procedure to support children's oral language development. This procedure is regularly re-visited by the current team to ensure they are meeting their intentions and to make any additions based on new knowledge they have gained. In 2012, ERO acknowledged teachers' progress in supporting children's oral language and recommended teachers continue to develop strategies to extend children's language development. The recent 2015 ERO review acknowledged ongoing progress in this area.

Prioritising and supporting oral language learning and development

In 2015, teachers saw the need to give more attention to oral language and decided to engage in an action research project. Their action research question was "*How do teachers extend children's leadership through the development of oral language?*" As part of the research teachers identified how the project could contribute to:

- > valuing languages, cultures and identities through oral languages
- > improving outcomes for children, families and teachers, based on identifying desired outcomes and progress indicators through oral language.

This research involves teachers discussing and planning learning experiences rich in opportunities for the development of oral language. It also focuses on helping Māori children to achieve success through developing friendships, being able to express their needs and wants, and having the confidence and the skills to speak the language of their heritage.

The SLT provides teachers and whānau with strategies to support children's oral language learning and development. Teachers have opportunities to observe the SLT's practice when she works with children at the kindergarten. They use this guidance and their own professional knowledge to identify areas of oral language concern.

The teaching team has developed the following oral language goals for children.

1. Children can express their feelings, thoughts and ideas confidently.
2. Children can initiate, negotiate and form relationships easily with adults and peers.

Shared understanding, expectations and professional learning opportunities

A stable teaching team for the last two years benefits from a sustained commitment to professional learning and development. All teachers have undertaken Incredible Years professional development, a course that provides teachers with strategies to promote children's independence and competence in social situations. The strategies they have learned help them to promote children's oral language.

Relevant strategies implemented as a result of this PLD include:

- > descriptive commenting, particularly related to children's interests
- > questioning to encourage thinking
- > integrating new words into conversations to extend language, including in te reo Māori
- > implementing kai routines in a relaxed environment where teachers can model language and engage in meaningful conversations with children
- > valuing tukana/teina approaches, so children are modelling language with each other
- > providing opportunities for children to re-visit experiences and practise new language.

Role of the service's curriculum

Teachers work collaboratively to provide a high quality, language-rich curriculum that promotes oral language and positive outcomes for children. They integrate te reo me ngā tikanga Māori to make meaningful connections with children and whānau and for tamariki to hear te reo Māori spoken at kindergarten. Teachers recognise that modelling new language and complex conversations are priorities before they use questioning techniques. The curriculum is responsive to children's interests so new words and complex language are often used in the context of meaningful play. The kindergarten's art programme provides a meaningful context for supporting children's oral language. Teachers use video to capture children talking about their creations and art work and compare this to earlier videos to show progress and development.

Evaluation, inquiry and monitoring

The teaching team is highly reflective and constantly discussing their practice. Teachers have very clear assessment information and strategies to inform their practice in promoting oral language. Teachers are committed to the current PLD project and have initiated recent internal evaluation of the impact of changes in their practice. They recognise the need to keep communicating with families, seek external advice where applicable and keep reviewing their practice. Teachers are also involved in an emergent internal evaluation to find out how well they are achieving the expectations of their oral language procedure – and how they go about measuring progress. The teaching team acknowledge the benefits for all stakeholders when early childhood settings undertake a long term research project. Teachers reflect and celebrate on the successful results and outcomes that came from having a long term focus on oral language learning and development.

Ranzau School

Context:

Ranzau School is situated in a rural setting near Nelson. The school has seven classrooms and caters for 143 students from Years 1 to 6. Eleven percent of the students identify as Māori.

Transition process and school entry

Teachers know the children and their families well. The new entrant teacher spends time with each child in their early learning service. The teacher finds out from the child what they like, is interested in, is good at, does at home, and does with other children.

The teacher meets with the parents to share information about the child. This includes information about the child's likes, interests, abilities and needs. If additional support is needed, the teacher works with the parents to decide on what programmes, support or intervention could be put in place to help the child, particularly with oral language development. The concentrated effort on the development of oral language reflects the school's strong belief that confidence in oral language is paramount to a student's learning and holistic development. Children who are able to converse confidently, are better placed to have their needs and interests met. This lessens frustration and negative behaviours.

Oral language assessment and interventions

Teachers discuss students' needs at team meetings and draw on the ideas, knowledge and experiences of other teachers to plan any intervention or learning support programmes. Sometimes the expertise of the Resource Teacher of Literacy or the Speech and Language Therapist is sought to provide specialist support.

Students identified with specific oral language needs are placed on the school's Booster Programme Register where their progress is monitored by the school's Special Education Needs Coordinator (SENCO). Parents are consulted by teachers before designing a programme or intervention. Teachers continue to maintain contact with the parents, offering feedback and exchanging ideas to support their child's oral language development.

Oral language in the literacy programme and the wider curriculum

Teachers know that students need to be able to communicate through mathematics, science, and music as well as literacy. Providing them with appropriate language is very important. Students learn the language of mathematics to share their learning strategies, and the language of science to describe their learning through experimentation, trial and error.

Teachers learn some of the students' home languages to support those who do not have English as their first language. This helps students to feel respected and valued and gives them a sense of belonging that helps them to settle and to learn English more confidently. Students have an older buddy who supports them in their socialisation into school life and in their learning. Playing and learning in a group supports students to increase their oral language development, as they learn from the communication skills of other students.

Students learn through storytelling, listening to stories, singing and poetry. They extend their vocabulary, hear their correct pronunciation and with the help of the teacher, learn how to use the words and make them part of their everyday learning.

Students have a variety of opportunities to become confident speakers. They are encouraged to share their news from home, and their knowledge, experiences, ideas and views. These experiences support their acquisition of language in order to communicate well with their peers. Teachers plan experiences that support students to achieve the oral language development goals of speaking with clarity, confidence, fluency and at an acceptable volume. These opportunities go across all key learning areas.

Building teacher capability to support oral language learning

The SENCO provides leadership to build teacher capability in oral language teaching across the school. Staff meetings are used for professional sharing, including the discussion of strategies that work, curriculum adaptation and differentiation, and resources that have proven effective.

School-wide professional development focused on oral language is supporting teachers to develop a shared understanding of the importance of students building competence in communication skills, especially oral language. Teachers are aware of the progressions students are expected to achieve, and there is a concerted effort to support students' progress in oral language.

Whitikahu School

Context:

Whitikahu School is located northeast of Hamilton and caters for students in Years 1 to 8. At the time of the most recent ERO review, there were 81 students enrolled, 21 of whom identify as Māori.

Transition process and school entry

The new entrant teacher works closely with children in her class beginning with a well-planned transition into the school. Many children starting school are younger siblings of children already at the school and they are familiar with the school.

Oral language assessment and interventions

The teacher values and recognises each child's language and talks extensively with students, modelling correct language and rephrasing sentences to help them communicate more clearly.

The teacher uses the School Entry Assessment for each child on entry, as well as the Record of Oral Language (ROL), combined with observations in the classroom. Children scoring under 20 in this test are closely monitored and those scoring very low receive additional support. Other assessment tools such as the Junior Oral Language Screening Tool (JOST) are also used as a diagnostic tool as needed. Students with poor language skills often need support for behaviour and conflict resolution as well.

The school works with specialist agencies and professional providers as well as parents to continue to support children with oral language. Teachers have identified a trend that shows more children are arriving at school with lower levels of oral language capabilities than in the past. Scores in ROL have dropped on average by five to 10 marks in the last three years at this school.

The school has reviewed the way teacher aides are used to support teachers in order to better use teacher expertise to work with children needing additional support.

Oral language in the literacy programme and the wider curriculum

The curriculum is well designed in Years 1 to 3 to include many opportunities for students to share and build their oral language skills. This includes the use of shared books, poems, novels, picture books, internet research and learning conversations with teachers. Teachers introduce new vocabulary and encourage the sharing of ideas and opinions in class. Parents described conversations around the evening dinner table where the recent experience of following the Waikato River from its source to the sea was shared by both of their children attending the school, even though they were in different classes.

Teachers have developed interesting resources that link to children's experiences on local farms and provide many opportunities for children to talk amongst themselves and with teachers.

Building capability to support oral language teaching and learning

Teachers regularly discuss and reflect on student learning and teaching practice to support and motivate students.

Professional learning has included an ongoing, whole staff focus on literacy.

As a result of the professional learning:

- > teachers have an increased focus on improving their learning conversations with children
- > assessment tools used were reviewed following an audit by the PLD facilitator
- > students are kept in class rather than being withdrawn for special programmes.

Student outcomes

Focused interventions and focused teaching strategies are resulting in an improvement in students' oral language ability as they move through the school.



Conclusion

The findings of this evaluation highlight what some early learning services and schools were doing to support oral language learning and development in the early years. They highlight the need for additional guidance for services and schools to increase awareness of the importance of oral language in the wider context of the curriculum and children's learning.

Services and schools varied in their positioning of oral language as a formal and intentional part of their curriculum and teaching programmes. In some, it was a central thread and a priority for teaching and learning. In others, it was not given sufficient formal consideration. Both national curriculum statements (*Te Whāriki*⁵⁰ and *The New Zealand Curriculum*⁵¹) provide a framework for oral language teaching and learning. However, there is a lack of specific guidance supporting these frameworks to help teachers implement a responsive and well-articulated curriculum that promotes oral language learning and development for children from birth to eight years of age. For services, there are few guidelines in the early childhood curriculum around the importance of both home language maintenance and second language acquisition. In schools, the guidelines and principles for oral language in *Learning Through Talk*⁵² are not visible in *The Literacy Learning Progressions*.⁵³

ERO found that assessment of oral language learning varied across services and schools. A systematic approach to evaluating oral language teaching and learning in many of the services and schools was also lacking.

In some of the services and schools, teachers did not have regular opportunities for professional learning and development related to oral language. ERO also identified issues in services and schools in several regions with access to special education services, and speech language therapy in particular. The early intervention specialists in some areas tended not to work with children with oral language concerns under the age of three, and some specialists (such as Resource Teachers of Learning and Behaviour) worked only to support learners in schools.

50 Ministry of Education. (1996). *Te Whāriki, He Whāriki Mātauranga mō ngā Mokopuna o Aotearoa*. Wellington: The Ministry.

51 Ministry of Education. (2007). *The New Zealand Curriculum*. Wellington: The Ministry.

52 Ministry of Education. (2009). *Learning Through Talk: Oral Language in Years 1 to 3*. Wellington: The Ministry.

53 Ministry of Education. (2010). *The Literacy Learning Progressions: Meeting the reading and writing demands of the curriculum*. Wellington: The Ministry.

Next Steps

ERO recommends that leaders and teachers in early learning services and schools:

- > use resources such as *Effective School Evaluation: how to do and use internal evaluation for improvement*⁵⁴ and those about teaching as inquiry⁵⁵ evaluate the extent to which their curriculum strengthens oral language learning and provides evidence of children’s progress and achievement
- > make better use of existing resources, such as *Much More Than Words*⁵⁶ and *Learning Through Talk*⁵⁷ to promote and support children’s oral language learning
- > use assessment approaches and tools, based on shared understandings and expectations for oral language learning, to notice, recognise and respond to the linguistic strengths and needs of all learners
- > offer rich, broad learning opportunities to support children’s oral language learning and enable them to develop oral language capabilities foundational to their learning across the curriculum.

ERO recommends that the Ministry of Education develops a more coherent and systematic set of curriculum expectations, assessment tools and resources for oral language in the early years (0-8 years) to support children’s learning across the curriculum.



54 <http://www.ero.govt.nz/publications/effective-school-evaluation/>

55 <http://nzcurriculum.tki.org.nz/Curriculum-stories/Case-studies/Teachers-as-learners-Inquiry/Teaching-as-inquiry>

56 Ministry of Education. (2011). *Much More Than Words*. Wellington: The Ministry.

57 Ministry of Education. (2009). *Learning Through Talk: Oral Language in Years 1 to 3*. Wellington: The Ministry.

Appendix 1: Methodology

Evaluation framework

The purpose of this evaluation was to gather data about:

- > how services and schools were supporting young children’s oral language learning and development
- > the capacity within the education system (early learning services and primary schools) to respond to the oral language strengths and needs of young children
- > the effective practices (at the teacher, service or school leader and wider education system levels) that promote and support children’s oral language and respond appropriately.

ERO investigated using the following questions and prompts:

How do the teachers know the learners?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > How do they know children’s oral language capability; identify oral language as an area of concern for particular children; link with and use the expertise of parents/agencies/MoE/earlier education services to know about the learners? > What are their expectations about oral language development? > What are their <i>beliefs about the strengths and needs for individual learners</i> and their expectations for learning (ELL learning, maintenance/retaining first language/ako - learning with others)?
How do teachers respond?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > <i>How do they identify oral language priorities</i>; design and orchestrate a curriculum recognising the complexity required that benefits all learners; link to parents/agencies/trained teacher aides and other support people/resources; resource strategically (role of the board/management/Association)? > <i>How do teachers and leaders keep a focus on providing a rich oral language environment, interactions and learning?</i>
How do leaders ensure teachers have the capacity to respond?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > How do teachers and leaders keep a focus on providing a rich oral language environment, interactions and learning? PLD that includes the use of assessment tools; support from relevant external agency/expertise; resources used to build capability; employment (reflection of learners’ cultures); Board/manager/association reflection of community they support
How do teachers monitor outcomes and review practices?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > What were/are the expected outcomes? (look for urgency about being able to access the curriculum and not just vocabulary) Is it the same for all children? > What are the actual outcomes? > <i>How do they monitor progress</i>; review (teacher, leader, Board/governance levels); respond to any review – improvements in practices, professional learning, support, resources etc (by teacher, leaders, board/governance)? > <i>What do they think would help them to improve their practice?</i>

Appendix 2: Sample of early learning services and schools

ERO's findings about oral language responsiveness are based on the analysis of data gathered from 167 early learning services and 104 schools. The sample of services and schools (according to type) is detailed in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1. Sample of early learning services in this evaluation⁵⁸

Early learning services (by type)	Number	Percentage of sample	National percentage of services as at 31 March 2016
Education and care services	87	52	62
Kindergartens	65	39	16
Playcentres	9	5	11
Home-based education and care services	6	4	11
Total	167	100	100

This sample is not representative of national figures. Kindergartens are overrepresented, and Playcentres and home-based education and care services are under-represented. These differences are statistically significant.⁵⁹

Table 2. Sample of schools in this evaluation⁶⁰

Schools (by type)	Number	Percentage of sample	National percentage of schools as at 31 March 2016
Contributing primary	63	60	54
Full primary	35	34	38
Composite	6	6	8
Total	104	100	100

This sample is representative of national figures for school type.

⁵⁸ Ngā Kōhanga Reo were not included in the sample for this evaluation.

⁵⁹ 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 $p < 0.05$.

⁶⁰ Kura and wharekura were not included in this evaluation.

Appendix 3: Supporting oral language learning and development in early learning services

Table 1: Matrix of practice in early learning services

Well-focused early learning services (19 percent)	Early learning services with some focus (50 percent)	Early learning services with limited or no focus (31 percent)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Multiple ways of knowing children. > Ongoing and systematic gathering and recording of information about children's oral language learning and development. > Developing and maintaining relationships with parents and whānau. > Valuing children's home language. > Having shared expectations for oral language development with some services using milestones, progressions or indicators. > Oral language often a curriculum priority – as part of a literacy focus. > Implementing a responsive curriculum that includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – a language-rich core connected to children's and teachers' strengths and interests – opportunities for small group and 1-1 experiences – routines that are valued as a way to support oral language development – sustained rich vocabulary experiences – planned strategies targeted to individuals and groups. > Good awareness of research, readings and resources to support teacher practice. > Professional learning and development, both internally and externally facilitated, accessed in many forms and on a variety of topics related to oral language. <p>ERO found that across all the early learning services in this evaluation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > internal evaluation, research and reflective practice related to oral language was not strong > few were building a picture of oral language progress over time in assessment information. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > A strong focus on relationships with parents and whānau. > Teachers knowing children through regular observations and listening to them. > Valuing children's home language. > Variable understanding about oral language development (expectations) with reliance on individual teacher knowledge in some of these services. > Oral language promoted as part of the curriculum through language-rich experiences and a mix of group and 1-1 interactions. > In some of these services the main oral language focus was at 'mat time' rather than the multiple opportunities afforded by the rich curriculum. > Some PLD in many of these services but it varied in the extent to which it focused specifically on oral language. > Common for Speech Language Therapists to be working with individual children, offering workshops and providing resources. > Some teacher discussion about children with oral language concerns. > Some monitoring where children have Individual Development Plans (IDPs). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Relationships with parents and whānau a key means to get information about individual children – mostly when child starts at service and often quite informal. > Yet to develop clear and shared expectations and understanding about oral language development. > In many of these services the focus is largely on speech concerns rather than broader language development, early literacy and social interactions. > Oral language is not an intentional part of the curriculum. > Some inappropriate responses in these services that include activity-based and overly teacher-directed activities. > Large group 'mat times' a feature of some services where ERO found children were disengaged or passive learners. > Poor quality interactions were an issue in some services with a lack of rich conversations between children and between children and teachers. > Limited or no PLD related to oral language. > In a few of these services there was recent change of ownership or ongoing staff turnover or instability. > Discussions about children's oral language largely informal. > Assessment practices not well developed.

Appendix 4: Supporting oral language learning and development in schools

Table 1: Matrix of practice in schools

Well-focused schools (35 percent)	Schools with some focus (36 percent)	School with limited or no focus (29 percent)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > There were effective transition-to-school programmes in these schools, often starting several weeks prior to the new entrant beginning school. > There was both formal assessment and informal daily monitoring of oral language practices in the early months at school. > Class teachers observed, talked with and listened to children during the regular class programme in order to see who might need additional support. > Schoolwide progressions made oral language learning expectations clear. > Oral language progress was regularly shared with students and parents. > Levels or indicators guided teacher monitoring and planning for next steps. > Teachers were expected to have an oral language component in their planning, as part of their daily literacy programme. > Teachers were also expected to use these regular teaching sessions to identify students with oral language learning difficulties requiring a specific response. They received PLD as needed. > School leaders ensured that all children had exposure to planned oral language teaching daily and across learning areas. > Students identified as having higher level oral language difficulties were referred to senior teachers and might be assessed by a Speech Language Therapist. They might then be assisted by specially trained teachers or teacher aides. If necessary, external support sought. > School leaders promoted the importance of oral language, monitored progress for targeted learners and refined interventions where necessary. 	<p>The oral language responsiveness of this group of schools included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > some transfer of information to the new entrant teacher at the point of school entry, but not always checked with early learning service or parental viewpoints > attention to oral language learning needs at the point of entry (or shortly thereafter), but less systematically organised than in the schools in the well-focused group > some interventions in areas of high need and some addressing specific concerns in the new entrants' class > some monitoring of oral language progress in the first year, but typically not continued in any systematic way into Years 2 and 3, except for individuals of particular concern > some literacy (including aspects of oral language) expertise and leadership available as supports for teachers, but typically no specific oral language PLD for teachers, and no specific early literacy training for teacher aides > less well-defined oral language progressions than the well-focused schools > literacy programmes were not as rich as those in the well-focused schools > little or no internal evaluation of oral language interventions and their impact. 	<p>There was little evidence of responsiveness to oral language learning needs in these schools, or attempt to create coherence in approach. Features of the lack of responsiveness of schools in this group included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – little attention to oral language learning at the point of school entry – no or few formal expectations for oral language development over Years 1 to 3 – little or no monitoring or assessment of student progress in oral language learning – few helpful resources or supports for either teachers or students that related specifically to oral language. <p>> When students with particular difficulties in speaking or listening were identified in these schools, some took action, including use of external specialists, but there was no specific follow through by class teachers.</p> <p>> Internal evaluation was weak or non-existent across schools in this group.</p>

Appendix 5: Relevant learning outcomes from *Te Whāriki*

The following information draws on the information from *Te Whāriki*⁶¹ to describe some of the outcomes in the communication strand that early learning services can use to develop their curriculum priorities for children's oral language learning and development. These are set out in terms of the goals of the communication strands and provide a useful framework for thinking about the knowledge, skills and attitudes children take with them as they transition to school. The outcomes usefully describe what a rich language curriculum needs to focus on to support children in becoming confident and competent communicators.

Mana Reo – Communication

Goal 1

Children experience an environment where they develop non-verbal communication skills for a range of purposes.

Learning outcomes

Children develop:

- > responsive and reciprocal skills, such as turn-taking and offering
- > non-verbal ways of expressing and communicating imaginative ideas
- > an increasingly elaborate repertoire of gesture and expressive body movement for communication, including ways to make requests non-verbally and appropriately
- > an increasing understanding of non-verbal messages, including an ability to attend to the non-verbal requests and suggestions of others
- > an ability to express their feelings and emotions in a range of appropriate non-verbal ways.

61 Ministry of Education. (1996). *Te Whāriki, He Whāriki Mātauranga mō ngā Mokopuna o Aotearoa*. Wellington: The Ministry: pp. 74-80.

Goal 2

Children experience an environment where they develop verbal communication skills for a range of purposes.

Learning outcomes

Children develop:

- > language skills in real play and problem-solving contexts, as well as in more structured language contexts, for example, through books
- > language skills for increasingly complex purposes, such as stating and asking others about intentions; expressing feelings and attitudes and asking others about feelings and attitudes
- > negotiating, predicting, planning, reasoning, guessing, story-telling; and using the language of probability, including words such as “might”, “can’t”, “always”, “never”, and “sometimes”
- > a playful interest in repetitive sounds and words, aspects of language such as rhythm, rhyme, and alliteration; and an enjoyment of nonsense stories and rhymes
- > an increasing knowledge and skill, in both syntax and meaning in at least one language
- > an appreciation of te reo Māori as a living and relevant language
- > confidence that their first language is valued
- > the expectation that verbal communication will be a source of delight, comfort, and amusement and that it can be used to effectively communicate ideas and information and solve problems
- > the inclination and ability to listen attentively and respond appropriately to speakers.

Goal 3:

Children encounter an environment where they experience the stories and symbols of their own and other cultures.

Learning outcomes

Children develop:

- > an understanding that symbols can be “read” by others and that thoughts, experiences, and ideas can be represented through words, pictures, print, numbers, sounds, shapes, models, and photographs
- > familiarity with print and its uses by exploring and observing the use of print in activities that have meaning and purpose for children
- > familiarity with an appropriate selection of the stories and literature valued by the cultures in their community
- > an expectation that words and books can amuse, delight, comfort, illuminate, inform, and excite
- > experience with creating stories and symbols.

Goal 4:

Children experience an environment where they discover and develop different ways to be creative and expressive.

Learning outcomes

Children develop:

- > familiarity with the properties and character of the materials and technology used in the creative and expressive arts
- > skills with media that can be used for expressing a mood or a feeling or for representing information, such as crayons, pencils, paint, blocks, wood, musical instruments, and movement skills
- > an ability to be creative and expressive through a variety of activities, such as pretend play, carpentry, story-telling, drama, and making music
- > confidence to sing songs, including songs of their own, and to experiment with chants and pitch patterns.

