

Partnership with Whānau Māori
in Early Childhood Services

February 2012



Ko te Tamaiti te Pūtake o te Kaupapa

The Child – the Heart of the Matter

Published 2012

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Education Evaluation Reports

978-0-478-38914-2 (pbk)

978-0-478-38915-9 (html)

978-0-478-38916-6 (pdf)

978-0-478-38917-3 (MSWord)

ERO reports are published on the ERO web site – www.ero.govt.nz – and are available from the Education Review Office National Office, Box 2799, Wellington 6140.

We welcome comments and suggestions on the issues raised in these reports.



Foreword

The whakataukī of the Education Review Office (ERO) demonstrates the importance we place on the educational achievement of our children and young people:

Ko te Tamaiti te Pūtake o te Kaupapa
The Child – the Heart of the Matter

In our daily work we have the privilege of going into early childhood services and schools, giving us a current picture of what is happening throughout the country. We collate and analyse this information so that it can be used to benefit the education sector and, therefore, the children in our education system. ERO's reports contribute sound information for work undertaken to support the Government's policies.

The Government is committed to improving learning experiences for Māori and their whānau. Working in partnership with Māori is an essential part of this process, one that starts in the early years through early childhood education. This report highlights the need for early childhood services to move beyond building relationships to establishing culturally responsive partnerships with Māori children and their whānau.

Successful education relies on many people and organisations across the community working together for the benefit of children and young people. We trust the information in ERO's evaluations will help them in their task.

Dr Graham Stoop
Chief Review Officer
February 2012

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Overview

In May 2010 ERO's report *Success for Māori Children in Early Childhood Services* identified that:

One of the biggest challenges for early childhood managers and educators is to understand, review and develop processes that enable them to listen, respect and respond to what parents and whānau of Māori children expect of the service. To make such a commitment, early childhood services have to find out about parents' aspirations and expectations, and acknowledge and respond to these in authentic ways.¹

In this evaluation *Partnership with Whānau Māori in Early Childhood Services*, ERO focussed on the extent to which:

- services understood and valued the identity, language and culture of Māori children and their whānau, particularly when the child and whānau enter the service
- managers and educators built positive relationships with the whānau of Māori children
- each service worked in partnership with the whānau of Māori children.

Partnership with whānau Māori in early childhood education (ECE) means going beyond welcoming whānau and building relationships. Informal 'chats over a cup of tea' and catching up with whānau are not partnership. ERO found that while a significant proportion of early childhood services built positive relationships (78 percent) with whānau, only 10 percent had built effective and culturally responsive partnerships. The difference between a good relationship and a culturally responsive partnership is substantial for whānau. Conversely the view held by many educators that '*all children should be treated the same*' typically fails to acknowledge the culture of Māori children.

Culturally responsive partnership is characterised by the ability of managers and educators to:

- listen to whānau Māori and respond appropriately to their aspirations
- recognise and respect the diverse and unique perspectives of whānau Māori
- involve whānau Māori in all aspects of management, programme planning, implementation and evaluation
- recognise that Māori culture is an advantage for children and their whānau
- use the knowledge of Māori children and whānau to develop rich learning
- appreciate that New Zealand's early childhood curriculum, *Te Whāriki* is a document based upon the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi and partnership with whānau
- use the skills and expertise that whānau Māori bring to the service.

¹ Education Review Office. (2010). *Success for Māori Children in Early Childhood Services*. p.32.

ERO found that when a high level of partnership is achieved early childhood educators place themselves in the position of learner:

If I am responsive to Māori culture, I don't have to be an expert ...[being] culturally responsive is not being an expert but listening to experts (Goren 2009, p. 54).²

Strong partnerships with whānau were evident when early childhood services had well articulated philosophies of working with whānau. They were evident when professional leaders understood whānau aspirations and worked with whānau to achieve their goals. ECE staff drew on Māori experts and their knowledge to improve their teaching strategies for Māori children. Some also effectively included whānau in self-review processes that examined the impact of the learning programme for Māori children and the quality of the service's policies and procedures for whānau Māori.

Based on the findings of this evaluation, there needs to be considerable improvement in the way most services work with whānau Māori. Early childhood services need systematic self review to provide managers and educators with information about their relationships with whānau Māori and to develop respectful, collaborative and reciprocal partnerships. Professional development is also needed for most early childhood educators so that they can build partnerships with whānau, give full effect to *Te Whāriki* and help Māori children achieve their potential.

NEXT STEPS

ERO recommends that early childhood services:

- work in partnership with whānau to ensure programmes appropriately promote children's language, culture and identity
- use the report's findings, self- review questions and Best Practice Indicators to review the quality of their partnerships with whānau
- identify and respond to the professional development educators require to improve partnerships with whānau.

ERO recommends that the Ministry of Education identify ways to:

- further professional learning and development and support so that early childhood managers and leaders build genuine partnerships with Māori whānau, hapū and iwi
- assist ECE services to practise partnership with whānau Māori to design and deliver a culturally responsive curriculum.

² Goren, P. (2009). How policy travels: making sense of *Ka Hikitia – Managing for Success: The Education Strategy 2008–2012*. Fullbright New Zealand.

Introduction

ERO is committed to improving the quality of Māori learners' educational outcomes. ERO's report *Success for Māori Children in Early Childhood Services (2010)* identified that more work was required in early childhood services to strengthen partnerships with Māori children's parents and whānau. This evaluation builds on that report's findings. It identifies how services are developing partnerships between whānau and educators and using these partnerships to improve the participation in, and quality of, early childhood education for Māori children and their whānau.

Early childhood education has a key role in building strong learning foundations as referred to in *Ka Hikitia-Managing for Success*.³ The Government strategy gives priority in the foundation years to continuing to increase Māori children's participation in early childhood education and improving the quality of learning experiences for them and their whānau. The strategy includes a focus on improving how the system supports Māori learners to realise their potential. Promoting 'Māori cultural distinctiveness is an expected outcome of *Ka Hikitia-Managing for Success* where particular recognition is given to:

- the potential of every Māori child
- that 'being Māori' is an advantage
- all Māori learners are inherently capable.

Ka Hikitia – Managing for Success proposes that 'better outcomes' for Māori learners is likely when the language, culture and identity of Māori children is acknowledged and 'productive partnership' between Māori learners, whānau, iwi and educators is characterised by working together and sharing power.

PARTNERSHIP AND TE WHĀRIKI

The partnership principle expressed in Te Tiriti o Waitangi guides early education in Aotearoa New Zealand. The analogy of a whāriki⁴ to illustrate the interconnectedness of the four principles and five strands of the early childhood curriculum (*Te Whāriki*)⁵ reflects an inherently Māori way to conceptualise a curriculum and promotes the notion of a culturally responsive partnership between whānau and educators for the benefit of Māori children.

Partnership is especially important for Māori children because of the central role of whānau in building children's sense of identity. Through whānau children develop their understanding of the world and their place in te ao Māori. The aspirations whānau have for their children are a starting point for educators when developing teaching and learning programmes.

3 Ministry of Education. (2007). *Ka Hikitia – Managing for Success. The Māori Education Strategy 2008–2012*.

4 whāriki – woven mat

5 Ministry of Education. (1996). *Te Whāriki: He whāriki mō ngā mokopuna o Aotearoa. Early Childhood Curriculum*. Learning Media. Wellington.

From this basis, genuine partnership enables early childhood services and whānau to work together to create a culturally responsive curriculum and a high quality teaching and learning environment for Māori children. Such partnership requires a significant shift in thinking and practice for many early childhood services. In their research Ritchie and Rau describe the change in the following way:

[Partnership] requires teachers to shift from their traditional role of ‘expert’ and become collaborators alongside children. In this paradigm, collaboration with whānau/parents extends throughout the entire early childhood programme.⁶

Partnership with whānau Māori in an early childhood education setting means going beyond welcoming whānau and building relationships. It extends well beyond informal ‘chats over a cup of tea’ and catching up with whānau. Partnership requires early childhood service educators and whānau to develop a shared understanding of how to work together to design a curriculum that is responsive to the needs of Māori children and aspirations of their whānau.

To engage Māori learners and accelerate their progress, educators must consciously plan and use teaching and learning strategies and contexts that are linked to whānau contexts. Learning environments are engaging, responsive and relevant when Māori children can see, hear and feel their culture around them. Improving the proficiency of educators to use te reo Māori and practise tikanga appropriately is critical to achieving a learning environment that is responsive to Māori. Whānau Māori can help educators understand these in relation to the diverse needs of Māori in their centre. When this occurs, educators validate the knowledge Māori children and whānau bring to the centre and develop richer learning contexts.

PREVIOUS EVALUATION AND RESEARCH STUDIES

The report, *Success for Māori Children in Early Childhood Services 2010*, stated that a key challenge for early childhood services was responding appropriately to the aspirations and expectations of parents and whānau of Māori children. Shifting managers’ and educators’ understanding of the need to listen, respect and respond to what parents and whānau of Māori children expect of the service was one of the biggest challenges.⁷

The report recommended that early childhood services review their processes for consulting and communicating with whānau Māori so they can be more responsive to their aspirations and expectations. Building managers’ and educators’ capabilities to improve the quality of partnership with Māori parents and whānau Māori was identified as a challenge for the sector.

6 Ritchie, J., & Rau, C. (2006). Whakawhanaungatanga-Partnerships in bicultural development in early childhood care and education. Retrieved from <http://www.tlri.org.nz/whakawhanaungatanga-partnership-in-bicultural-development>

7 Education Review Office. (May 2010). *Success for Māori Children in Early Childhood Services*. New Zealand Government. p.2.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF IDENTITY, LANGUAGE AND CULTURE IN TERMS OF PARTNERSHIP

Understanding the significance of identity, language and culture for Māori children and their whānau is critical to develop practices that will support successful participation for them. Ritchie and Rau report that:

...if we are able to honour the cultural specificities that Māori children bring with them, this affirmation of their unique identities, or 'being-ness' will nurture their sense of belonging, providing both affirmation of their contributions and support for their transitioning within and between educational settings. Reciprocal collaboration with tamariki and whānau Māori enacts our commitment to honouring the particularities of cultural differences, inviting us into a dialogue in which we may find ourselves in a privileged position as we are entrusted with new and deeper understanding.⁸

An exemplar case study included in the Ministry of Education publication *Te Whatu Pōkeka*⁹ identified whānau/whānaungatanga as a key to developing an assessment framework and practice in early childhood education settings. It states:

The child is part of the whānau and the whānau is part of the child. One cannot be separated from the other. The child learns within the context of whānau, which is a real life context. It is not a socially contrived environment such as the early childhood service. Learning occurs first in the whānau and it is the whānau that determines the learning that is valued. It does this sometimes in association with the early childhood centre, and sometimes not.¹⁰

Educators who understand a Māori worldview of the child surrounded by whānau, hapū and iwi have a platform to acknowledge, appreciate and celebrate the unique skills, knowledge and expertise that Māori children and their whānau bring to the service. Developing partnerships should therefore involve welcoming, transition and relationship building. Transition into the service is a critical time for both services and whānau to practise partnership. Research indicates that:

Whānau Māori will begin to feel comfortable about contributing to the centre's programme when the environment and practices give visibility and positive status to Māori values, language and culture.¹¹

During the writing of this report the Ministry of Education published *Tātaiako: Cultural Competencies for Teachers of Māori Learners*.¹² This document describes related behaviours for teachers at different stages of their teaching career, and what results

- 8 Ritchie, J., & Rau, C. (2010). *Poipoia te tamaiti kia tū Tangata: Identity, Belonging and Transition*. The First Years: Ngā Tau Tuatahi. New Zealand Journal of Infant and Toddler Education. 12(1). p.16
- 9 Ministry of Education. (2009). *Te Whatu Pōkeka: Kaupapa Māori Assessment for Learning Early Childhood Exemplars*. Learning Media. Wellington.
- 10 Ministry of Education. (2009). *Te Whatu Pōkeka: Kaupapa Māori Assessment for Learning Early Childhood Exemplars*. Learning Media. Wellington. p. 65
- 11 Nuttall, J. (2003). *Weaving Te Whāriki: Aotearoa New Zealand's early childhood curriculum document in theory and practice*. Wellington: New Zealand Council for Educational Research.
- 12 Ministry of Education. (2011). *Tātaiako: Cultural Competencies for Teachers of Māori Learners*. Wellington.

could look like for Māori learners and their whānau. The competencies are about knowing, respecting, and working with Māori learners and their whānau and iwi so their worldview, aspirations and knowledge are an integral part of teaching and learning and of the culture of the early childhood service (or school).¹³ Early childhood educators may use *Tātaiako* as a starting point to develop culturally appropriate and responsive practice, including partnership with whānau Māori.

13 Ministry of Education. (2011). *Tātaiako: Cultural Competencies for Teachers of Māori Learners*. Wellington. p. 4.

Methodology

ERO evaluated how ECE services work in partnership with whānau of Māori children in 374 early childhood services. The sample was representative of the national profile of service types.¹⁴ The data was gathered during each service's regular education review in Term 4, 2010 and Term 1, 2011.

ERO'S FRAMEWORK FOR THIS EVALUATION

The evaluation focussed on three questions:

- To what extent does the service understand and value the identity, language and culture of Māori children and their whānau, particularly when they transition to the service?
- To what extent have managers and educators built relationships with whānau Māori?
- To what extent does the service work in partnership with whānau Māori?

APPROACH TO THIS EVALUATION

Evidence was gathered during scheduled education reviews of early childhood services and included:

- meetings with teachers/educators at the service
- meetings with the manager(s) of the service
- conversations with whānau of Māori children
- observations of interactions between Māori whānau and teachers/educators, and between teachers/educators and Māori children
- observations of the programme in action
- documentation related to the service's operation and to the learning of individuals and groups of Māori children.

Review officers provided descriptive information for each key question. A framework with best practice indicators¹⁵ was used to support reviewers' judgements for each service.

14 See Appendix 1 for information on service types.

15 See Appendix 3 Partnership with Whānau in Early Childhood Services Evaluative Framework

Findings

The findings of this evaluation are divided into two parts. Part one presents the summary findings in terms of each evaluation question. This section provides an overview of the proportion of early childhood services that showed effective, welcoming relationships and overall partnership with whānau.

Part two discusses the themes that have emerged in this evaluation. It focuses on the nature of effective partnerships with whānau and provides more descriptive detail of early childhood education practice, especially effective practice.

PART ONE – FINDINGS SUMMARY

Valuing identity, language and culture – what did ERO ask?

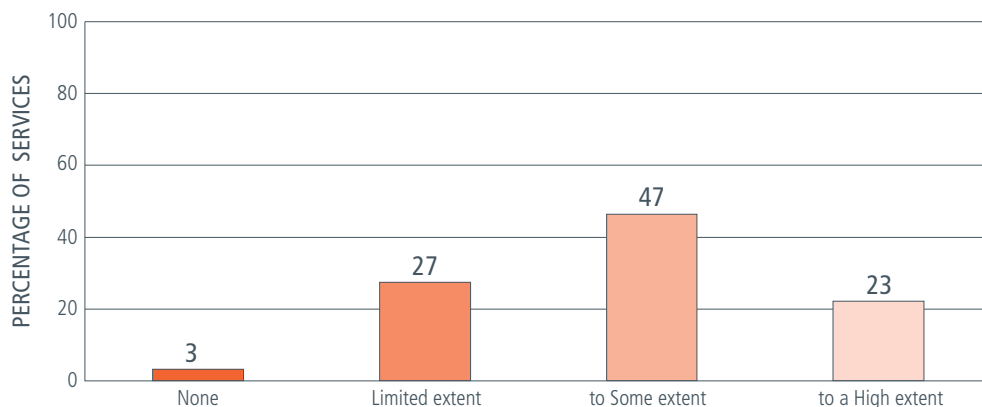
To what extent does this service understand and value the identity, language and culture of Māori children and their whānau, particularly when they transition to the service?

ERO examined:

- welcoming protocols and practices of services for Māori children and their whānau
- how well the service understood the concept of whānau in a Māori context
- what the service knew about the success of its transition practices for Māori
- what the service knew about the identity of Māori children and their whānau including whakapapa, whānau, hapū and iwi connections.

What did ERO find?

Figure 1: The percentage of services that valued the language, culture and identity of Māori children.



Just under a quarter of services had a high level of understanding of Māori children's language, culture and identity. While most services were welcoming and warm to all children and parents entering the service, Māori were not acknowledged in a way that promoted their unique place as tangata whenua. Few services practised mihimihi for whānau Māori or invited extended members of whānau to participate in the service's welcoming and settling protocols.

Opportunities to make meaningful connections with whānau Māori were limited to the completion of enrolment forms rather than making time for educators or other members of the service to share their whānau, hapū or iwi connections. This process of whakawhanaungatanga was not well understood by most early childhood educators. Māori children and whānau were generally subsumed into the service's generic culture and identity.

Relationships – what did ERO ask?

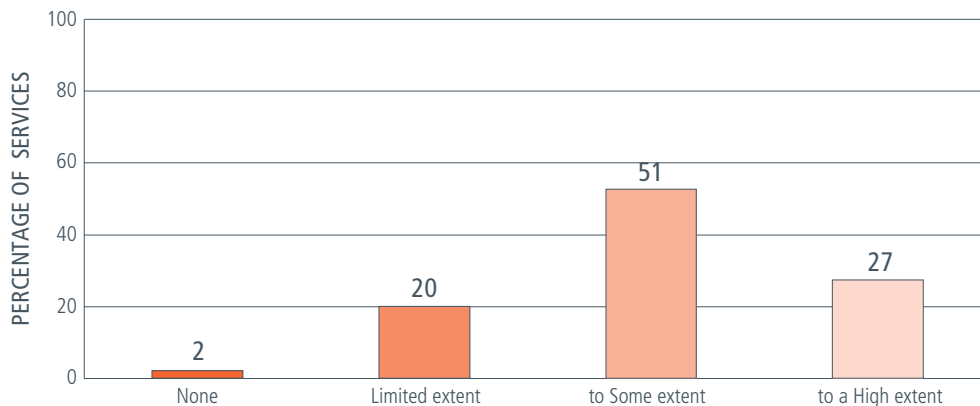
To what extent have managers and educators built relationships with whānau of Māori children?

ERO examined how educators at each early childhood service:

- demonstrated responsive and reciprocal relationships with whānau Māori
- included whānau in decisions about children's learning programme
- knew and understood the local Māori community
- encouraged and supported whānau Māori participation.

What did ERO find?

Figure 2: The percentage to which managers and educators have built positive relationships with whānau of Māori children



Early childhood services were slightly better at building relationships with whānau Māori than they were at recognising and supporting Māori language, culture and identity.

Figure 2 shows that just over a quarter of services had well developed relationships with whānau Māori. Educators had achieved this through:

- developing an understanding of their local context, as well as whānau and iwi histories
- sharing responsibility with whānau for the education and care of children
- practicing a consultative approach to decision-making with whānau.

A significant feature of these services was their success at building trust and confidence with whānau. Intergenerational involvement was strong where kuia, kaumatua, aunties and uncles, as well as parents of Māori children, were visible and present in the centre's life. Whānau expressed a strong sense of belonging and inclusion when they were invited to share their skills and knowledge.

Most services had not developed strong relationships with whānau Māori. While services valued and sought to provide warm and welcoming environments for children and whānau, most did not attempt to build mutually beneficial relationships with whānau. Educators were yet to move beyond 'Pākehā' ways of engaging with whānau Māori. Some educators assumed that when Māori whānau had 'not told them otherwise' they were happy with the service. When this occurred the service was less likely to be responsive to the needs and aspirations of whānau Māori.

Partnership – what did ERO ask?

To what extent does the service work in partnership with whānau of Māori children?

When investigating ECE services' partnerships with whānau Māori ERO considered how:

- partnership was evident in self-review processes and practice
- the service responded to whānau aspirations
- whānau were included in conversations about children's learning and development
- the programme reflects Māori language, culture, history, values and practices.

What did ERO find?

Figure 3: The percentage to which a service works in partnership with whānau of Māori children

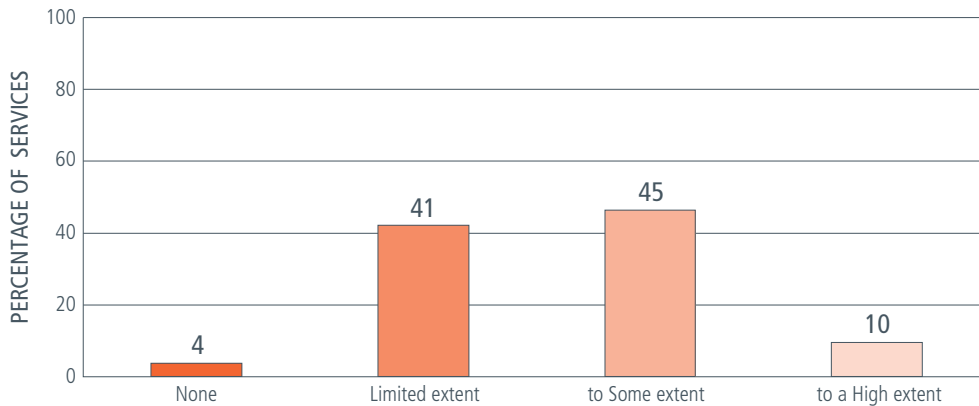


Figure 3 shows that only 10 percent of services built a high level of partnership with whānau Māori. These services demonstrated a level of partnership that included the sharing of expertise. In these services, roles for whānau were well defined and understood. In many cases these roles were negotiated between the whānau and the service. Whānau participated in goal setting and self-review processes, as well as decision-making at all levels of the service. Services used Māori knowledge to inform decisions rather than trying to align decisions to Māori knowledge after they were made. For example, whānau reported that their perspectives were sought during the development of policy and procedure.

A significant feature of effective partnership involved managers and educators listening to whānau and responding to their needs and aspirations. Self review of the services was robust and reflected a desire to improve outcomes for Māori children and whānau. In some cases the service provided opportunities for whānau Māori to meet and develop plans for supporting the service.

In contrast, while most services demonstrated a desire to support Māori children and whānau they lacked the necessary knowledge and skill to move beyond welcoming relationships. Most early childhood services did not build significant partnerships with whānau Māori where educators and whānau make decisions together about the management of the service or the teaching and learning programme.

An important factor that prevented partnership with whānau was the belief that all children and whānau should be ‘treated the same’. This view was prevalent across most early childhood services, but what it means can be unclear. While it ostensibly values all children having high quality education, it is often accompanied by the assumption that Māori children and their whānau do not need to be treated outside the ‘normal’ (Pākehā) modes of operating.

As a result many services chose to inform parents about aspects of the programme rather than seek their advice. Some services demonstrated little understanding of the importance of a child’s whakapapa, or of the significance of making connections through whakapapa for Māori. Most educators subsequently maintained a position of education expert rather than sharing responsibility for children’s learning with whānau and giving full effect to the partnership ideals of *Te Whāriki*.

PART TWO – THE THEMES OF EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIP

This section discusses the key themes that have emerged from the data gathered for each of the evaluative questions. These themes help to describe highly effective practice. The themes are:

- Culture of the service
- Philosophy
- Self review
- Professional leadership
- Te ao Māori and the programme
- Whānau connections
- Utilising Māori expertise.

Culture of the service

Where the early childhood service or parent organisation was committed to biculturalism as expressed in *Te Whāriki* and Te Tiriti o Waitangi, practice was more likely to promote partnerships with whānau Māori. These services acknowledged the skills and expertise whānau brought to the service, demonstrated a desire to make connections based on the Māori concepts of whanaungatanga and whakapapa and showed a willingness to be guided by Māori in developing teaching and learning programmes about Māori. Ritchie, who describes ‘Tiriti-based’ practice in early childhood education settings, supports ERO’s finding:

... *Tiriti-based enactment that honours the relationships between educators and whānau/families as central to the learning process and educational programme.*¹⁶

Self-review question for your service

To what extent does the service recognise and build on the knowledge and expertise Māori children and their whānau bring to the service?

Philosophy

The importance of biculturalism and Te Tiriti o Waitangi were at the forefront of early childhood education philosophies that articulated a high level of commitment to Māori children and their whānau. These values and beliefs underpinned the centre philosophy and informed strategic planning including targeted professional development and learning for educators, and programme planning for children.

Well developed philosophies that support bicultural practice in early childhood services:

- acknowledge the importance of Te Tiriti o Waitangi
- reflect a clear commitment to the bicultural heritage of Aotearoa/New Zealand
- seek to realise the potential of Māori children and their whānau
- aim to work in partnership with whānau Māori.

A handful of services had a clearly articulated philosophy with a commitment to Māori children. Whānau aspirations were reflected in the service philosophy and Māori values and beliefs promoted. Many had attempted to acknowledge Māori as tangata whenua and understood their responsibility to ensure that all children benefit from a bicultural programme as expressed in *Te Whāriki*.

However, most early childhood services were either at the beginning stages or had not begun developing plans and actions. These services showed limited evidence of plans aligned to a well articulated philosophy to guide practice.

Self-review questions for your service

How well are the aspirations and goals of whānau understood by educators and reflected in the learning of Māori children?

To what extent does the service value and implement Te Tiriti o Waitangi principles?

Self Review

In the 2010 report *Success for Māori Children in Early Childhood Services* ERO recommended that early childhood services:

- develop or review their processes for consulting and communicating with whānau Māori to be more responsive to their aspirations and expectations
- strengthen self review to enable robust evaluation of learning programmes' impact for Māori children.

¹⁶ Ritchie, J. (2008). *Enacting Tiriti-based practice in early childhood education in Aotearoa*. Paper presented at the TEFANZ conference, Hamilton, 2008.

In the few services where self review with whānau was a strength, managers and educators:

- actively sought whānau aspirations and were guided by these when planning
- carefully considered how the services could appropriately reflect and acknowledge the children's culture
- were responsive to the need for diverse learning pathways to meet Māori children and their whānau aspirations.

Self review that provided evidence of initiatives' impact on Māori children and whānau, and included whānau voice in findings' analysis, continued to be a challenge for services:

Teachers review centre practices and challenge their own assumptions regarding how to build ongoing partnerships with whānau. They also review the impact of teaching strategies on Māori children and their whānau, and make changes as a result. They advocate in the community to ensure that whānau have equitable opportunities to be involved in the service. Teachers make time to talk with whānau to find out about aspirations and expectations and how their parents want their children to do well.

Self review regarding the extent of partnership with whānau was an area for development in most services. While services gathered information from whānau, most self review focussed on te reo and tikanga Māori practices in the programme, developing relationships and establishing a sense of belonging for Māori children and whānau. Partnership was not evident during self review as few services included whānau in the analysis of findings and development of plans.

Self-review question for your service

To what extent are whānau involved in the self review of the service?

How responsive is the service to the diverse aspirations and goals of Māori children and their whānau?

Professional Leadership

Professional leadership in an early childhood service that builds relationships and partnership is critical for improving the quality of early childhood education for Māori children and whānau. In the context of partnerships, effective leaders know about collaborative approaches to working with whānau and involve them in meaningful and appropriate decision-making processes. This is a significant shift from gathering whānau ideas to sharing decision-making with them.

Where professional leadership was most effective, educators actively encouraged whānau members to take a lead in a range of initiatives. Some included whānau in self review and policy development. Whānau have supported educators to implement the principles of *Te Tiriti o Waitangi*, and guided the centre on including te reo and tikanga Māori in the programme.

Managers and educators with links to Māori in the local community benefitted from a relationship founded on reciprocity and respect. They modelled positive relationships and partnership with whānau Māori. The programme and professional knowledge of educators was enhanced because of the contributions that whānau made and children benefitted from a programme that reflected their culture, values and beliefs.

Professional learning and development for educators was a priority in highly effective services. Educators were encouraged to examine their own practice and to identify ways to improve their work with Māori children and whānau. They challenged their assumptions about children and learning. They also worked hard to see learning from a Māori view. Educators were open and receptive to feedback from Māori whānau, Māori educators and Māori from the local community.

Unfortunately most centres demonstrated limited partnership with whānau Māori. Ninety percent did not work in partnership with whānau Māori and expected that Māori children and their whānau would '*fit in*' to the centre's culture. Some made deficit assumptions about why Māori were not involved, such as claiming that Māori did not value education. Others expressed views that demonstrated their lack of understanding of whānau skill, knowledge and expertise such as '*whānau are incapable of helping with learning*'. The professional leaders in these services were driven by the notion that all children and families must be '*treated the same*'.

The view of partnership held by these services was limited and did not extend past good relationships. Most professional leaders in early childhood services had yet to realise the potential of partnership to provide a bicultural programme that fully supported the language, culture and identity of Māori children and their whānau, and to increase Māori in early childhood education. Many interactions and relationships established with Māori failed to reflect Māori ways of interacting and relationship building. Educators and managers waited for Māori to come to them, and face-to-face communication was limited so services assumed that Māori whānau were uninterested in developing relationships.

Self-review questions for your service

How confident is the service's leadership in building and maintaining effective partnerships with whānau?

What professional learning and development would support the service's leaders and educators to build effective partnerships with whānau?

Te Ao Māori and the programme

ERO evaluated how well educators understood the identity, language and culture of Māori children and their whānau and used partnership with whānau to improve the programme and physical environment.

Services that demonstrated a clear commitment to the *Te Tiriti o Waitangi* principle of partnership:

- provided a programme and environment with a range of tikanga practices such as mihimihi, pōwhiri, tuakana and teina
- ensured learning programmes linked to te ao Māori
- used Māori experts from within the centre and the local community.

A quarter of services valued Māori children's language, culture and identity to a high extent. One way they did this was through using te reo Māori in a meaningful and contextual way throughout the day. Educators in these services integrated te reo Māori as a natural part of their language when interacting with children and whānau. These services recognised competent users of te reo Māori as a significant resource. Educators who confidently used words and phrases in the context of children's play also demonstrated a commitment to ongoing learning of te reo Māori. These centres understood and practised partnership with whānau Māori.

Most service's physical environments had some reflection of Māori including basic words or phrases, charts, waiata and karakia. These are described by Ritchie and Rau¹⁷ as “*superficial icons*” in that they can easily become token gestures of inclusiveness. In this evaluation they lacked the integration of te ao Māori in everyday interactions and the deeper valuing of tangata whenua, whānau aspirations and the partnership relationship implicit in *Te Tiriti o Waitangi*. The extent to which the physical environment reflects Māori beyond the superficial icons is linked to the managers', leaders' and educators' commitment to a bicultural programme.

Most practices ERO observed reflect a surface level understanding of te reo and tikanga Māori. To demonstrate the special place of te reo Māori educators must speak it throughout the day in the context of children's learning and play. Services must also promote with whānau the benefits of a programme that positively reflects the language, culture and identity of Māori children.

A significant number of early childhood services had little or no expression of te ao Māori in the programme. Limited te reo Māori was found when educators could not go beyond basic greetings, commands and Māori terms for colours and counting. No attempt to learn from whānau or use whānau knowledge and skill was evident in these services.

17 Ritchie, J. & Rau, C. (2005). *Whakawhanaungatanga-Partnerships in bicultural development in early childhood care and education*. Retrieved from <http://www.tlri.org.nz/whakawhanaungatanga-partnership-in-bicultural-development>

Self-review question for your service

To what extent is Māori language, culture and identity integrated in daily interactions?

Whānau connections

Some service documents and practice were beginning to reflect te ao Māori. These services valued and respected whānau as repositories of knowledge of te reo and tikanga Māori. They acknowledged children's whakapapa and practised whakawhanaungatanga during the welcoming and initial engagement process with whānau. Whānau reported that when a service's culture was welcoming and inclusive they felt like valued members of its community.

One service had established a Māori parents' group where whānau actively helped increase educators and teachers' knowledge of tikanga. Where Māori educators were also members in the teaching and/or management teams, their skills and knowledge were effectively used to improve non-Māori educator's knowledge of te reo and tikanga Māori. In some cases, Māori educators were significant leaders in a whole service's overall approach to Māori language, culture and the identity of Māori children and their whānau.

In many services, managers and educators had little understanding of the significance of whakapapa for Māori children and their whānau. Consequently they were not able to use whakapapa to make connections between themselves and whānau or build relationships grounded in mutual respect for identity, language and culture. Relationships with whānau were limited as whānau saw no connection to their identity, language and culture.

Self-review question for your service

What do services know about how whānau view the effectiveness of the service in supporting their aspirations for language, culture and identity?

Utilising Māori expertise

Māori educators with a strong sense of identity and culture as Māori made a positive impact on a service's ability to work in partnership with whānau Māori. Māori educators significantly supported, modelled and promoted a bicultural programme. They facilitated strong relationships with whānau Māori that are collaborative and reflect partnership. In these services the identity, language and culture of Māori children and whānau was valued to a high extent. One of the biggest challenges for early childhood managers and educators was to move beyond '*normal*' (Pākehā) ways of engaging with whānau and to listen and work with whānau.

Māori teachers, whānau members and iwi representatives who the service identified as having a significant impact on the programme were used for their strong knowledge of te reo and tikanga Māori. Māori educators effectively showed non-Māori colleagues how to engage in responsive and genuine conversations with whānau Māori. They demonstrated how to make and build on whakapapa connections and the day-to-day practice of whanaungatanga and manaakitanga throughout the centre's life. They were able to make the voice of heard and understood in a Māori way. Māori educators were also skilled at drawing on whānau and iwi members' knowledge, skill and expertise to enhance the programme and promote inclusive, collective responsibility for children's teaching and learning. Services with Māori teachers said that all educators benefitted professionally from the support and guidance they provided.

Self-review questions for your service

How well does the service access and use expertise on Māori language, culture and identity?

How well are non-Māori educators developing the skills to effectively engage with different whānau?

Example of an effective partnership

This early childhood service is a branch of a community trust and operates on a holistic model of care and education for children. The service philosophy is centred on tikanga Māori and is underpinned by the centre goals and the principles of Te Whāriki. It clearly articulates a commitment to “provide ongoing learning opportunities for all” through whānau participation and in the “dual cultures of Aotearoa.” Educators have strong relationships with the three local iwi with whom they meet regularly.

Educators are regularly challenged and motivated to provide a positive learning environment for Māori children and their whānau. An annual symposium where eminent Māori educators and academics present their ideas is organised by the trust and all teachers from the early childhood education service attend. Presenters have included Mason Durie, Wally Penetito, Russell Bishop, Rose Pere and Bentham Ohia. Educators at the centre report high levels of motivation and interest from the symposium.

The physical environment strongly reflects traditional Māori teaching styles where everyone is considered both a learner and a teacher regardless of age or position in the service. Māori contexts are used appropriately in the programme as the basis for learning. The educational programme draws on and makes connections to whakapapa, waiata, whakatauki, kōrero tāwhito and whaikōrero.

Partnership with whānau is meaningfully enhanced by educators who:

- *are visible members of the local community and have a strong understanding of the historical and current context*
- *actively understand and value the diverse aspirations of whānau for their children*
- *practise high levels of cultural confidence and competence in te reo me ngā tikanga Māori*
- *seek whānau advice and guidance about how to appropriately practise tikanga in the context of the early childhood programme*
- *engage in regular formal and informal discussions with whānau about what they want for their children and collaboratively develop individual learning plans with whānau*
- *ensure educators from the service visit and encourage whānau to participate in the programme*
- *include all members of a child's extended whānau in the programme, utilising the skills and knowledge of all generations*
- *help whānau who may have difficulty engaging with school personnel and support them to adjust when children are transitioning to school.*

Conclusion

Partnership with whānau Māori needs to be reconsidered by those in early childhood education. Māori have a growing expectation of an education system that promotes partnership with whānau that is culturally responsive, as Penetito explains:

“If there is an emerging educational vision among Māori, it is the desire for an education system that enhances what it means to be Māori.”¹⁸

This evaluation shows that there is a lack of understanding in early childhood education about the nature and importance of culturally responsive partnerships with Māori. ERO found that educators were yet to move beyond good relationships with Māori and ‘Pākehā’ ways of engaging with whānau. ECE educators were limited in their ability to develop genuine partnerships and often deferred to the view that ‘all children should be treated the same’. While claiming to be concerned with high quality education, this position fails to acknowledge the importance of the culture brought by Māori children.

Only genuine partnership can give full effect to the curriculum. Partnership between whānau Māori and educators in early childhood services enhances what it means to be Māori and to succeed as Māori. The partnership principle of *Te Tiriti o Waitangi* is evident in *Te Whāriki* which encourages early childhood services to:

...include Māori people, places, and artefacts and opportunities to learn and use the Māori language through social interaction.¹⁹

ERO found that a high percentage of services do not do enough to value and acknowledge children’s language, culture and identity particularly when Māori children and their whānau transition to the service. While most services were welcoming and warm to all children and parents, Māori were not visibly acknowledged or reflected in a way that promotes the unique place of Māori as tangata whenua in Aotearoa New Zealand. Many services displayed superficial te reo and tikanga but few did this within a framework of whānau partnership and to the depth that suitably valued te ao Māori.

18 Penetito (2002) cited in Ministry of Education. (2009). *Ka Hikitia: Managing for Success Māori Education Strategy*. p.18.

19 Ministry of Education. (1996). *Te Whāriki: He whāriki mō ngā mokopuna o Aotearoa. Early childhood curriculum*. Learning Media. Wellington. p 43.

Next steps

ERO recommends that early childhood services:

- work in partnership with whānau to ensure programmes appropriately promote children's language, culture and identity
- use the report's findings, self-review questions and Best Practice Indicators to review the quality of their partnerships with whānau
- identify and respond to the professional development educators require to improve partnerships with whānau.

ERO recommends that the Ministry of Education identify ways to:

- develop professional learning and development and support so that early childhood managers and leaders build genuine partnerships with Māori whānau, hapū and iwi
- assist ECE services to practise partnership with whānau Māori to design and deliver a culturally responsive curriculum.

Appendix 1: Service Types

ERO evaluated partnership with whānau in all services that had a regular ERO education review in Term 4, 2010 and Term 1, 2011.

The table shows that the sample has slightly less kindergartens than the national percentage, half the number of playcentres and greater number of education and care services.

The difference between the sample and national figures is not statistically significant.²⁰

Service type	Number in study	Percentage of sample	National percentage ²¹
Kindergartens	44	12	16
Playcentres	18	5	12
Education and Care	276	74	64
Home-based Networks	36	9	8
	374	100	100

²⁰ The difference between observed and expected values was tested using a Chi-square test.

²¹ The national percentage of each service type is based on the total population of early childhood services as at 1 July 2011. For this study it excludes casual education & care, hospital based services and Te Kōhanga Reo.

Appendix 2: Partnership with Whānau in Early Childhood Services Evaluative Framework

EVALUATIVE QUESTION 1	Investigative Prompts	Best Practice Indicators
<p>To what extent does this service understand and value the identity, language and culture of Māori children and their whānau particularly when the child and whānau transition to the service?</p> <p>4=to a great extent 3= to some extent 2= limited extent 1 = none</p>	<p>How does the service ensure that children and whānau feel welcome? Consider transition practices</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – How does the service welcome Māori children and their whānau? – How well does the service understand the concept of whānau in a Māori context? 	<p>First impressions are welcoming. Māori language and culture is highly and meaningfully visible in the physical environment.</p> <p>Welcoming protocols are decided upon with whānau Māori and practised in a Māori appropriate way.</p> <p>Educators spend significant time talking with and listening to whānau.</p> <p>There is a space in the centre where whānau can sit and talk, be with their child and be with adults.</p> <p>Educators listen (deeply) to what whānau are saying.</p> <p>Educators give whānau time to feel comfortable to want to talk about their child.</p> <p>Educators understand that transition is a process.</p> <p>Educators and managers review and reflect on their transition practices and seek to make improvements for the benefit of whānau and their child/children. They gather narrative evidence to evaluate the effectiveness of transition procedures for Māori children and their whānau. Identifying and removing barriers to successful transition is evident.</p> <p>The service has documented expectations and systems for managing positive transition processes.</p>
<p>4=to a great extent 3= to some extent 2= limited extent 1 = none</p>	<p>What does the service know about the success of its transition practices?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – How have they responded? <p>What does the service know about the child's pepeha, whakapapa, hapū and iwi connections?</p>	<p>Educators demonstrate warm, respectful relationships with Māori children and their whānau.</p> <p>Educators suspend judgement about whānau engagement.</p> <p>Educators recognise that their role is to ensure that the mana/prestige of the child is maintained.</p> <p>Educators seek to build relationships with whānau Māori and their child/children.</p> <p>Whānau express a strong sense of belonging and feel valued for their contributions to the service.</p> <p>Whānau report that there is a good match between the values in Māori homes and the ECE setting.</p> <p>Educators find out about the Māori child (whakapapa, context and connections).</p> <p>Educators know, understand and acknowledge what is important for Māori.</p> <p>Educators share their whakapapa, context and connections with whānau.</p> <p>Educators value and respect what Māori children and whānau bring to the service.</p> <p>Educators understand the place of the Māori child within his/her wider whānau.</p> <p>Educators understand that Māori children come from diverse backgrounds and contexts.</p> <p>Educators maintain an holistic view of the Māori child and his/her whānau.</p>

APPENDIX 2

EVALUATIVE QUESTION 2	Investigative Prompts	Best Practice Indicators
<p>To what extent have managers and educators built relationships with whānau of Māori children?</p>	<p>How does the service demonstrate responsive and reciprocal relationships?</p>	<p>Educators allow time and space for Māori children and their whānau to develop good relationships with educators.</p> <p>Educators are building their understanding and awareness of biculturalism and strategies for developing reciprocal relationships.</p> <p>Educators use self review to examine and improve their practice for building and sustaining responsive and reciprocal relationships with whānau Māori. They know what the barriers are to building relationships with whānau Māori and address them. They recognise how relationships are negotiated and developed ('power' concept is understood).</p> <p>There is an absence of deficit thinking among educators.</p> <p>Educators do not trivialise or demonstrate tokenism.</p> <p>Educators have a good understanding of local contexts, whānau and iwi histories.</p> <p>Educators and whānau express a shared responsibility for education and care.</p> <p>Educators relate to Māori children and their whānau in consistent, constant and constructive ways.</p>
	<p>How does the service include whānau in making decisions about children's learning and the programme?</p>	<p>Educators use a diverse range of communication strategies.</p> <p>Educators find ways to include and involve whānau in planning for and assessing children's learning and development.</p> <p>Educators move beyond 'Pakehā' ways to engage with whānau Māori in ways that foster a climate of collaboration and genuine power sharing.</p> <p>Educators plan and implement programmes that respond to the needs and aspirations of whānau Māori.</p> <p>Whānau are visibly present in the service. There is mutual trust and confidence between whānau and educators.</p> <p>Intergenerational involvement of whānau is evident. For example Nanny, Koro, Aunties, Uncles etc.</p> <p>An atmosphere of mutual respect and valuing of Māori is present in the service.</p>
<p>What does the service know about its community?</p> <p>How well positioned is the service to encourage and support Māori participation in the service?</p>		<p>Managers and educators have a good knowledge of their community.</p> <p>They have well developed policy and procedure for appropriately supporting the induction and orientation of Māori children and their whānau into the service.</p>

	Investigative Prompts	Best Practice Indicators
<p>EVALUATIVE QUESTION 3</p> <p>To what extent does the service work in partnership with whānau of Māori children?</p>	<p>How has self review been used to enhance partnership with whānau Māori?</p>	<p>Managers and educators regularly review centre practices and challenge their own assumptions. They also review the impact of strategies on Māori children and their whānau, and make changes as a result.</p> <p>Educators ensure that whānau have equitable opportunities to be involved in the service.</p> <p>Educators involve whānau in meaningful and appropriate decision-making processes. Māori aspirations and expectations are evident in the guiding document of the service eg, philosophy, strategic and annual planning, self review.</p>
	<p>What does the service know about whānau aspirations for their child/children?</p>	<p>Educators make time to talk with whānau to find out about aspirations and expectations.</p> <p>Educators understand that whānau aspirations are personal and they suspend judgements.</p> <p>Educators know about and value the aspirations of whānau Māori.</p> <p>Educators demonstrate knowledge that meaningful relationships embedded are at the heart of pedagogical practice.</p>
	<p>What does the service know about the attendance of Māori children?</p> <p>What does the service know about Māori children who leave the service before turning five?</p> <p>How has the service responded to the information?</p>	<p>Managers and educators analyse and review attendance data for Māori children. They identify trends and patterns and seek to understand these.</p> <p>Managers and educators use attendance data analysis to inform their self review of their relationships and partnership with whānau Māori.</p>

	Investigative Prompts	Best Practice Indicators
<p>EVALUATIVE QUESTION 3</p> <p>To what extent does the service work in partnership with whānau of Māori children?</p>	<p>What opportunities do whānau have to participate in conversations about their child's learning and development?</p>	<p>Educators involve whānau in assessment in meaningful ways; co-construction of learning outcomes is evident.</p> <p>Educators reflect on Māori children's cultural identity when assessing learning and development.</p> <p>Educators demonstrate that they know about and use Māori pedagogy.</p> <p>Educators involve teachers, whānau and the child in assessment.</p> <p>Educators develop collaborative approaches to working with whānau.</p> <p>Educators value what whānau bring in meaningful ways.</p> <p>Educators provide a variety of entry points for whānau to participate in assessment, they minimise barriers.</p>
<p>How does the service include whānau in the programme?</p> <p>How does the programme reflect Māori language, culture, history, values and practices?</p>	<p>How does the service include whānau in the programme?</p> <p>How does the programme reflect Māori language, culture, history, values and practices?</p>	<p>Educators involve whānau (eg. Kaumātua) in the programme.</p> <p>Educators are open to the expertise of others and value listening and face-to-face communication.</p> <p>Educators and whānau decide on appropriate contexts for learning together.</p> <p>Educators support whānau to contribute their skills and knowledge.</p> <p>Educators demonstrate a good understanding of Māori values, beliefs and practices.</p> <p>Educators are aware of and value the specific language, identity, roles and responsibilities of the tangata whenua in their area.</p> <p>Educators listen and accept Māori children as they are – non-judgemental. They are respectful of what whānau Māori want for their children and respond accordingly.</p> <p>Educators encourage whānau to take leadership roles where appropriate.</p> <p>Whānau have a strong sense of belonging and contribution to the service.</p>

Resources used to inform indicators

1. *The Philosophy of Te Whatu Pōkeka* – Rita Walker (Ministry of Education, 2009)
2. *Whakawhanaungatanga: partnerships in bicultural development in early childhood education and care* – Jenny Ritchie and Cheryl Rau (Ritchie & Rau, 2005b)
3. *Te Puawaitanga: Partnerships with tamariki and whānau in bicultural early childhood education and care* – Jenny Ritchie and Cheryl Rau (Ritchie & Rau, 2005a)
4. *Strengthening responsive and reciprocal relationships in a whānau tangata centre* – Jeanette Clarkin-Phillips and Margaret Carr (Phillips & Carr, 2006)
5. Pages 5–27 *Success for Māori children in Early Childhood Services* May 2010 (Good practice) (Ministry of Education, 2009)
6. Pages 45–49 and 55–58 of *Success for Māori children in Early Childhood Services* May 2010
7. Pages 40–43 and 54–63 *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996)
8. *Poipoia te tamaiti kia tū tangata: identity, belonging and transition* (Ritchie & Rau, 2010)
9. *Weaving Te Whāriki* (Nuttall, 2003)

References for Indicators

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Ritchie, J., & Rau, C. (2010). Poipoia te tamaiti kia tū tangata: Identity, belonging and transition. *The first years: Ngā tau tuatahi. New Zealand Journal of Infant and Toddler Education*, 12 (1), 22.

Appendix 3: Self-review tool for Partnership with Whānau

Theme	Self-review questions
Culture of the service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent does the service recognise and build on the knowledge and expertise Māori children and their whānau bring to the service?
Service philosophy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How well are the aspirations and goals of whānau understood by educators and reflected in the learning of Māori children? To what extent does the service value and implement Te Tiriti o Waitangi principles?
Self-review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent are whānau involved in the self review of the service? How responsive is the service to the diverse aspirations and goals of Māori children and their whānau?
Professional leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How confident is the service's leadership in building and maintaining effective partnerships with whānau? What professional learning and development would support the service's leaders and educators to build effective partnerships with whānau?
Te Ao Māori	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent is Māori language, culture and identity integrated in daily interactions?
Whānau connections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What do services know about how whānau view the effectiveness of the service in supporting their aspirations for language, culture and identity?
Utilising Māori expertise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How well does the service access and use expertise on Māori language, culture and identity? How well are non-Māori educators developing the skills to effectively engage with different whānau?

Appendix 4: Glossary

Te Reo Māori	English Meaning
iwi	wider kinship group
manaakitanga	show respect or kindness, an ethic of care
tangata whenua	indigenous people, Māori
te Ao Māori	the Māori world
Te reo Māori	Māori language
Te Tiriti o Waitangi	Treaty of Waitangi
tikanga	customary practices
waiata	songs
whakapapa	genealogy
whakawhanaungatanga	creating relationships
whānau	nuclear or extended family
whanaungatanga	relationships, sense of family
whariki	woven mat

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