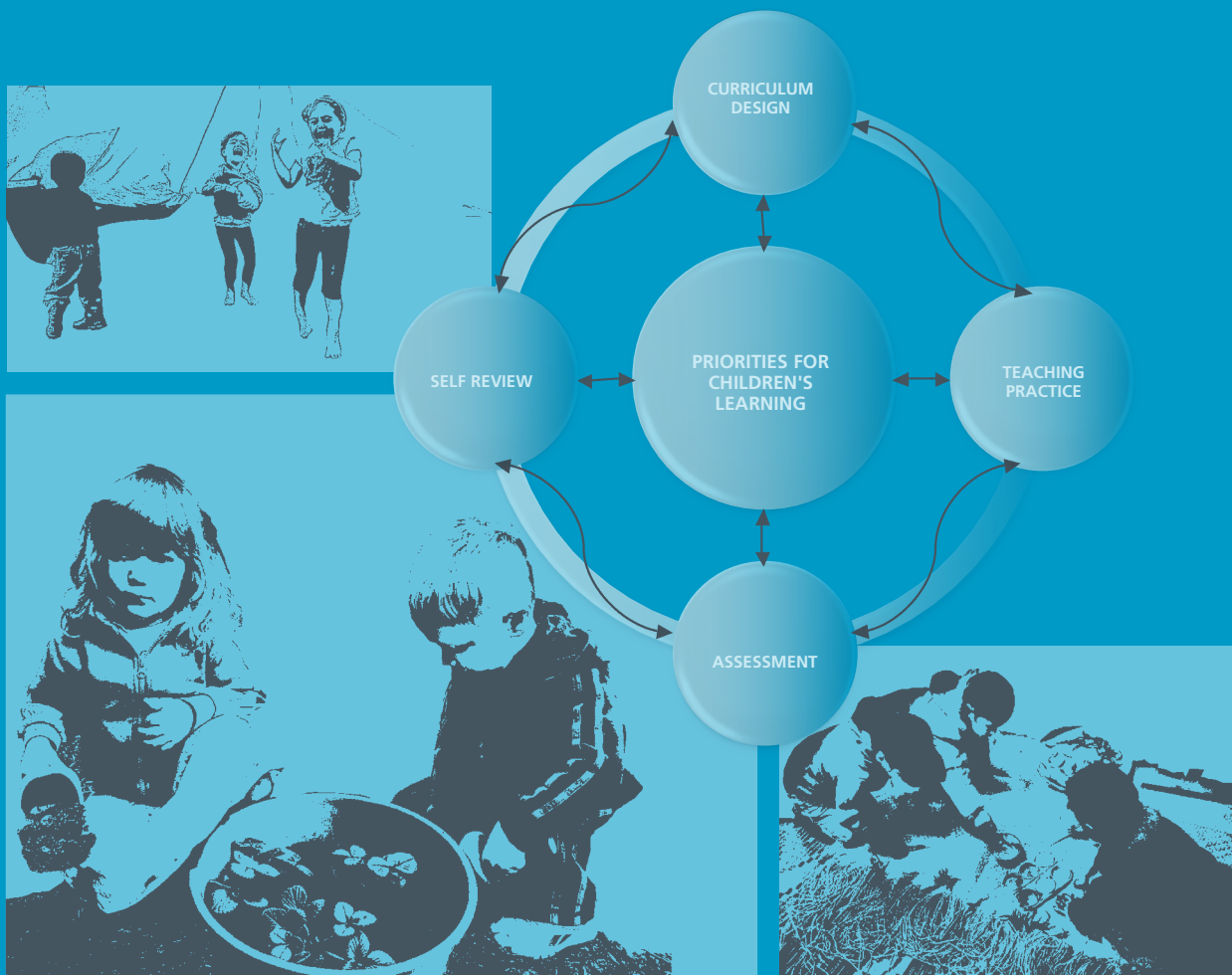


# Priorities for Children's Learning in Early Childhood Services: Good Practice

November 2013



# Ko te Tamaiti te Pūtake o te Kaupapa

## The Child – the Heart of the Matter



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



## Foreword

The Education Review Office (ERO) is an independent government department that reviews the performance of New Zealand's schools and early childhood services, and reports publicly on what it finds.

The whakataukī of 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.

This report presents examples of good practice from five early childhood services, focusing on priorities for children's learning. In these services the priorities were clear, they reflected the context and philosophy of each service, and they were strongly influenced by the principles and strands of *Te Whāriki*. The services were part of a national evaluation that ERO undertook in 2012 and were subsequently chosen to feature in this good practice report.

Successful delivery in 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 work.

Diana Anderson  
Chief Review Officer (Acting)  
Education Review Office

November 2013

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## Overview

In 2012, the Education Review Office (ERO) undertook a national evaluation that investigated:

*How effectively are early childhood services across New Zealand determining, enacting and reviewing their curriculum priorities to support education success for every learner?*

ERO reported its findings from this evaluation in two reports in May 2013 - *Priorities for Children's Learning in Early Childhood Services* and *Working with Te Whāriki*.<sup>1</sup>

This latest report, *Priorities for Children's Learning in Early Childhood Services: Good Practice*, complements these earlier reports. It highlights examples of good practice from five early childhood services included in the 2012 evaluation.

In these five early childhood services, the identified priorities for children's learning were clear and reflected the context and philosophy of each individual service. The priorities were all strongly influenced by the principles and strands of *Te Whāriki*. In addition, parents and whānau had input into the priorities for their children's learning.

Common themes were evident in the services' priorities for children's learning. They included a focus on belonging, literacy and numeracy, social and emotional competence, communication, and fostering children's language, culture and identity. These priorities were visible in the services' practices relating to curriculum, teaching, assessment and self review.

## ALIGNING PRACTICES

The priorities for children's learning in these five services anchored and informed curriculum design, teaching and assessment practice, and self review. Identified priorities were strongly reflected in each service's curriculum, giving teachers a clear direction for teaching and learning. Each service's environment and interactions with children also supported their identified priorities.

### Teaching practices

Teaching practices at these five services included effective:

- questioning of children
- modelling of conversations and desired behaviours
- integration of literacy and numeracy learning into meaningful experiences
- support and extension of children's learning
- strengthening of links with family and home life.

1 Available at [www.ero.govt.nz](http://www.ero.govt.nz).

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Teachers fostered children's strengths and interests, and aspects of their learning and development such as:

- oral language
- thinking
- social and emotional competence
- language, culture and identity
- independence.

**Assessment**

Priorities for children's learning informed assessment practice in these services.

Assessment records had a strong focus on children's knowledge, skills, attitudes and dispositions, and the learning taking place was clear to parents, whānau and children.

The learning that was valued in each service was noticed and responded to, through teaching strategies, in assessment records and through conversations with parents, whānau and children. Children's progress and next learning steps, as well as continuity of learning, were evident in assessment records.

**Self review**

The services' self review was well integrated into practices. Self review informed, and was informed by, identified priorities for children's learning. Self review included changes to the curriculum, ways of working with *Te Whāriki*, teaching and assessment practices, and the environment to support learning.

When curriculum design, teaching and assessment practices, and self review are aligned to, and anchored by, identified priorities for children's learning, then services are better placed to promote positive outcomes for children.

## Why are curriculum priorities and emphases important?

*Te Whāriki*<sup>2</sup> states that each service will develop its own emphases and priorities for children's learning. These priorities will vary in each service, with programmes being developed in response to the children enrolled in the service, the aspirations of their parents and whānau, and the service's particular setting.

Parents often choose a service for their child because of its identified curriculum priorities. Each service's curriculum priorities and emphases – the learning valued in their service – should guide curriculum planning and implementation, inform assessment practices, be visible in assessment documentation, and provide a focus for self review.

### A RESPONSIVE CURRICULUM

*Te Whāriki* (p.11) describes each service's curriculum as distinctive and dependent on a number of influences, including:

- cultural perspectives
- structural differences
- organisational differences
- different environments
- philosophical emphases
- different resources dependent on setting
- local community participation
- age range of children.

*Te Whāriki* places the child at the centre of the curriculum – as the learner engaged with the learning environment, surrounded by various levels of learning: home, family, and the service; the adult environment and networks; and the nation's beliefs and values about children and their learning and development (p.19). A strong emphasis is placed on each service's curriculum being responsive to the development and changing capabilities of the children at the service:

*The curriculum builds on a child's current needs, strengths, and interests by allowing children choices and by encouraging them to take responsibility for their learning. (p.20)*

The five services highlighted in this report had clearly identified priorities for children's learning.

# WHY ARE CURRICULUM PRIORITIES AND EMPHASES IMPORTANT?

<sup>2</sup> Ministry of Education (1996)  
*Te Whāriki, He Whāriki Mātauranga  
mō ngā Mokopuna o Aotearoa.*  
Wellington: Ministry of Education.

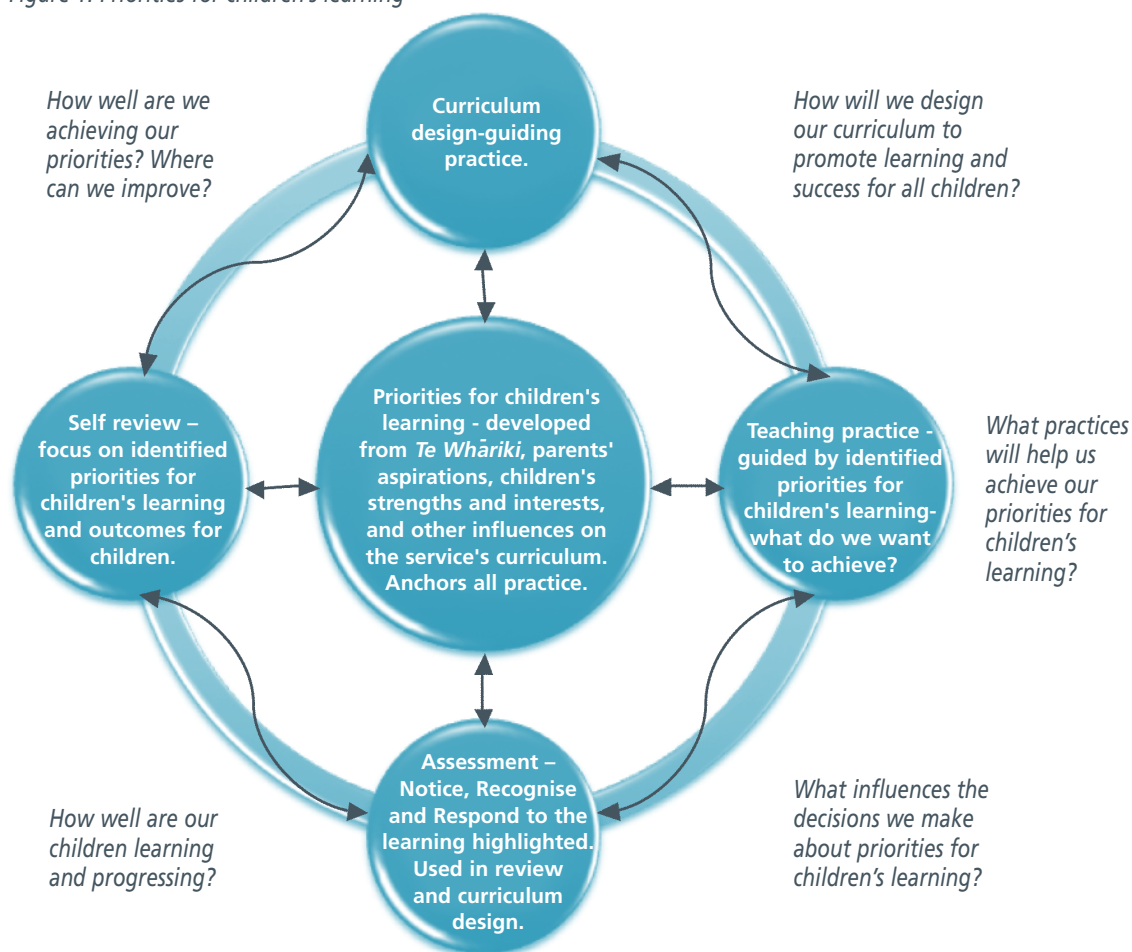
## Aligning practices

ERO's report *Priorities for Children's Learning in Early Childhood Services* (May 2013) shows that in services where the curriculum was highly reflective of their priorities for children's learning, the processes associated with curriculum design, teaching and assessment practices, and self review were well aligned.

Although many services in the 2012 evaluation were implementing the various processes associated with curriculum, assessment and self review, the alignment between these was often lacking. Some services had the processes in place, but had not identified their priorities for learning.

Figure 1 shows the alignment between the processes and suggests some questions that services can consider when determining and responding to priorities for children's learning.

Figure 1: Priorities for children's learning





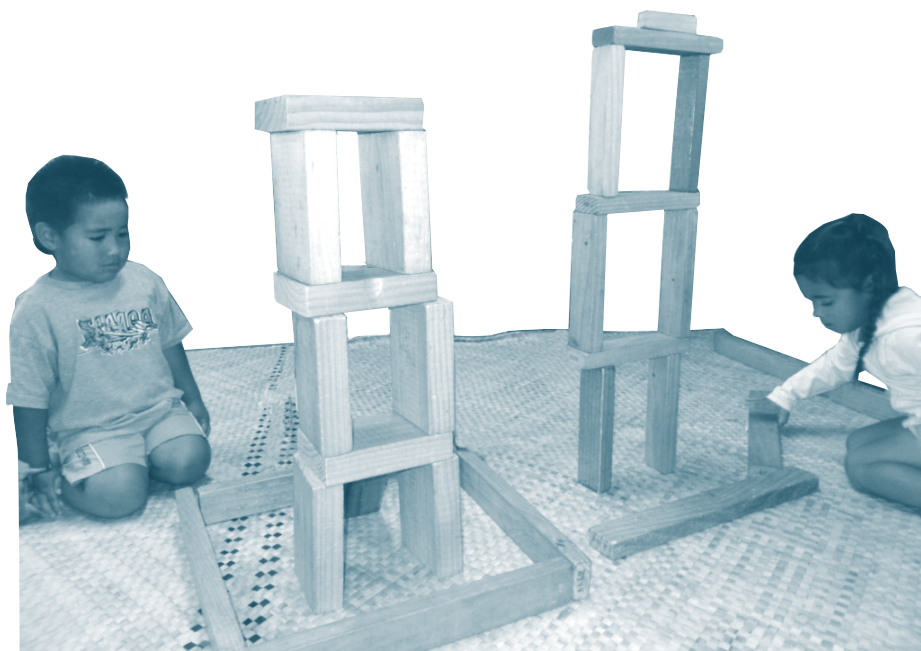
## Methodology

ERO identified examples of good practice in some of the 387 early childhood services reviewed in Terms 1 and 2, 2012. The five services selected for this report had good practices for developing and responding to priorities for children's learning.

The services include an education and care service, a Pacific early childhood service, a Māori immersion centre, a kindergarten and a playcentre. Each example highlights the priorities that teachers have identified for the children at their service, how their assessment practices reflected these priorities, and how their priorities were evident in their curriculum design and self review.

The five selected early childhood services are:

- The Kids Club, Hamilton
- Fetu Taiala Aoga Amata, Mangere, Auckland
- Te Puna Reo o Puhi Kaiti, Gisborne
- Holborn Kindergarten, Lower Hutt
- Kaniere Playcentre, Hokitika.



## Examples of good practice

This section describes how each of the five selected services uses good practice to identify and respond to their curriculum priorities and emphases.

Each example of a service outlines:

- the service's priorities for children's learning and the influences considered when determining these
- the teaching practices that support these priorities
- what teachers know about children's learning in relation to their priorities and the strands of *Te Whāriki*, and how they share this information
- how priorities for children's learning inform curriculum design and self review, and are informed by self review.

A glossary with the meanings of Māori and Pacific words used in this report is included in Appendix 1.

### THE KIDS CLUB

#### Context

The Kids Club is a privately owned education and care service in Hamilton catering for children aged between two and three and a half years of age. Two percent of the children enrolled identify as Māori, and four percent as Asian, with the remaining 94 percent identifying as New Zealand European/Pākehā.

The centre manager provides effective professional leadership for the team of qualified and registered teachers. The leadership model promotes leadership opportunities for all staff members and helps the team engage in reflective professional discussions. Teachers are supported to lead in their areas of interest or strength. The centre is focused on building a culture of 'teacher leadership'.

#### What are The Kids Club's priorities for children's learning?

The service has clearly defined and embedded priorities for children's learning that reflect the principles and strands of *Te Whāriki*, underpin the curriculum, and maintain a clear focus on the child. The priorities for learning relate to:

- belonging
- literacy and numeracy

- independence
- communication
- participation
- socialisation.

As well as reflecting *Te Whāriki*, the priorities for children's learning are also influenced by the work of Urie Brofenbrenner.<sup>3</sup>

Teachers recognise that children work within several environment frameworks or contexts. For them to design a curriculum that leads to positive outcomes for children, teachers acknowledge that it is important for them to know each child.

The team actively seeks parental input and considers their aspirations and expectations, as well as thinking about children's strengths and interests. This knowledge informs planning and how they respond to individual children.

#### What teaching practices help The Kids Club achieve its priorities for children's learning?

Teaching practices consistently reflect the centre's priorities for children's learning. Strengths include:

- effectively questioning and extending children's oral language and thinking skills
- positively encouraging children to play independently and cooperatively
- meaningfully integrating literacy and numeracy into teaching and learning
- positively guiding children to develop social skills such as sharing and taking turns.

#### What does The Kids Club know about children's learning and how is this information shared?

Teachers undertake both formal and informal observations of children to assess their learning and development in relation to the service's priorities and the principles and strands of *Te Whāriki*. Similarly, information about learning is shared both formally and informally with parents, whānau and children.

Learning is visible to parents, whānau and children. Narrative learning stories are written for the children, outlining what happened, how the children were involved, and what learning occurred. Assessment information describes how teachers will support ongoing learning and development, and makes links to learning happening at home. Learning stories include the perspectives of children and their parents.

<sup>3</sup> See Ministry of Education, (1996). *Te Whāriki, He Whāriki Mātauranga mō ngā Mokopuna o Aotearoa*. Wellington, New Zealand: Learning Media, page 19 for an explanation of Brofenbrenner and how it provides a context for *Te Whāriki*. For further information see: [www.enotes.com/soc/q-and-a/can-use-some-help-starting-this-paper-175243](http://www.enotes.com/soc/q-and-a/can-use-some-help-starting-this-paper-175243)

<sup>4</sup> For example, their immediate setting (family, service), relationships and connections (family and service, family and church).

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Connections are made between home and the service, and the learning stories show how knowledge of home life is used to strengthen children's sense of belonging. A group learning story showed children in conversation about their shared experiences, developing not only their sense of belonging, but also their literacy, communication and socialisation capabilities.

Children's learning is also shared through a daily diary that is developed with children and informs parents of day-to-day learning and, more formally, through parents and whānau evenings. The daily diary includes photographs of happenings during the day that can be shared with parents.

**How does The Kids Club use this information for curriculum decisions and self review?**

The service has an emergent curriculum that integrates its priorities for children's learning, particularly in literacy and numeracy. The curriculum places the child at the centre with their dispositions, interests and learning at the heart of planning, and subsequent practice.

Teachers use the planning wall and learning journals to inform the curriculum, as well as information about children's dispositions and interests. Reflections about children's learning are captured in the daily diary. Teachers actively seek parent input into planning through their notice board, parent information evenings, and policy reviews. They are also trialling the use of cloud-based document storage and social media to encourage more parent input.

Teachers are very reflective about their practices, including thinking about how they can better respond to children's interests, and questioning whether their assessment practices support children's learning.

Self review is a strength of the service and is closely linked to the principles and strands of *Te Whāriki* and the service's identified priorities for children's learning. Self review is both planned and spontaneous and results in change. A recent review focused on how well assessment practices reflected current teaching practice and supported children's learning. The review highlighted strengths related to:

- parent and whānau input into assessment and planning, both written and verbally
- analysis of learning to evaluate and re-plan the curriculum in relation to the service's priorities
- the use of the planning wall and profile books by children to revisit and evaluate their learning.

The review also highlighted the need to capture children's perspectives in teachers' assessment of learning. It has led to teachers recording in profile books what children were saying about their learning.

## FETU TAIALA AOGA AMATA

### Context

Fetu Taiala Aoga Amata is located on the Southern Cross Campus in Mangere, Auckland, alongside four other Pacific centres managed by the Mangere Pacific Early Childhood Education Trust.

Fetu Taiala is governed by the Tava'esina Trust, which is made up of two parents and four other representatives from the local community. These two trusts work in partnership to ensure the aoga (centre) is well placed to provide high quality education and care.

The aoga is a full immersion Samoan language (gagana Samoa) service that caters for children aged from under two years to school age.

There are 36 children at the service, predominantly of Samoan descent. Four of the five teachers, all Samoan, are qualified teachers. The manager provides opportunities for staff professional development and leadership. Teachers' knowledge of the Samoan language, culture and values influences the aoga's curriculum and this is reflected in their philosophy:

*O la matou Aoga Amata e faatauaina le Gagana Samoa ma aganuu ae maise ole aoaoina o alo ma fanau ile olaga kerisiano.*

*Our Aoga value the Samoan language, culture, family and community and the Christian faith which we practise every day within our programme and activities.*

### What are Fetu Taiala's priorities for children's learning?

Teachers at the aoga believe in providing high quality education for children through the Samoan language. Their key priorities for children's learning are to maintain the Samoan language, culture and values (fa'a Samoa).

Fa'a Samoa values are integrated into all aspects of the aoga: the curriculum, interactions and environment support the children to develop abilities linked to their priorities and the philosophy of the aoga. These priorities were



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developed through ongoing discussions with parents and aiga. Parents share their goals, aspirations and expectations with teachers both formally and informally.

The priorities for learning were evident in:

- children's confidence and competence in Samoan language and understanding of Samoan culture and values
- children's strong sense of identity and pride as young Samoan learners
- teachers' encouragement and value of child-initiated play and learning
- teachers' support for children's emerging interests.

**What teaching practices help Fetu Taiala achieve its priorities for children's learning?**

Teaching practice is focused on eight areas that develop knowledge, skills and attitudes linked to the service's identified priorities for children's learning. The eight areas are:

- active play
- creative activities
- arts and crafts
- literacy
- numeracy
- science and exploratory play
- culture and identity
- holistic development, including spiritual.

Effective teaching practices which ERO observed include:

- recognising and responding to children's strengths and extending their interests
- modelling good use of the Samoan language
- modelling positive social and emotional competencies
- identifying children's interests and extending their learning through child-initiated play
- meaningfully integrating numeracy and literacy concepts in conversations with children
- supporting imaginative and cooperative play to promote oral language and social skills.

**What does Fetu Taiala know about children's learning and how is this information shared?**

Relationships and communication are central to children's learning and there is a strong sense of belonging and community. Conversations between and among adults and children are rich in Samoan language, helping children to become confident and capable

in the language. Formal and informal conversations with parents enable teachers to find out about parents' aspirations for their child and make links with learning at home.

Teachers work together to ensure clear links are made between planning, assessment and evaluation processes for individuals and groups of children. Planning is mostly done in Samoan to reflect the emphasis on Samoan language, culture and values.

Assessment records, mostly written in Samoan language, include learning stories and anecdotal observations that highlight children's sense of identity as Samoan learners. Assessment portfolios are a record of children's learning and development, and have a strong focus on next steps to improve outcomes for children.

Children are active, confident participants in activities that foster Samoan language, culture and values. For example, a group learning story showed children welcoming aiga to the centre. When prompted by teachers, the children assembled quickly and showed great confidence and pride in performing the Samoan traditional welcome and song. The younger children sat with their teachers, playing traditional drums and other instruments. During the following meal, the older children continued to sing Māori waiata, perform the Manu Samoa war dance and haka, and recite bible verses. Another learning story showed a child leading the lotu (prayer) when families were welcomed to the centre.

**How does Fetu Taiala use this information for curriculum decisions and self review?**

The curriculum reflects the aoga focus on developing partnerships with parents and aiga.

*The curriculum is designed to promote a feeling of partnership between Fetu Taiala, parents and children to provide an educational environment that helps the holistic development of all children.*

To plan for this holistic development, teachers implement a curriculum that aims to:

- enhance children's sense of themselves as capable and competent learners
- help children learn through play
- help children learn through interacting with adults and other children, and having opportunities to manipulate and experiment creatively.

An emergent curriculum integrates children's interests and play with the centre's identified priorities for the children's learning. Teachers listen to children's ideas and work with them to extend their learning and development by encouraging further exploration of children's emerging interests. Weekly planning shows how teachers plan to extend children's interests. This is evaluated to see where future learning can be optimised.

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Self review is well integrated into all aspects of management and teaching practice. Teachers follow a self-review process that includes planning the focus, gathering and documenting evidence, reflecting and evaluating, and revisiting to acknowledge improvements needed to address issues. Spontaneous review also occurs from teachers' regular reflection on their practice, the environment, and their relationships.

Examples of recent self review include:

- children's development of Samoan language
- children's knowledge of song lyrics and actions, and bible verses
- children's understanding that books are interesting and stimulating
- teachers' use of open-ended questions to develop literacy and numeracy concepts when engaging children in conversation.

Self review has led to changes in the learning environment to better respond to children's strengths and interests, and their holistic and spiritual development.

## TE PUNA REO O PUHI KAITI

### Context

Te Puna Reo o Puhi Kaiti is a Māori immersion early childhood centre in Gisborne. The puna reo caters for children aged from under two years to school age.

The majority of the staff are of Ngāti Porou descent and are a mix of registered and qualified, and unqualified personnel. Staff knowledge and commitment to their Ngāti Poroutanga is evident in the kaupapa of the puna reo:

*Te oranga o te reo me ōna tikanga ake o Ngāti Porou, kia tū mana ai ā tātou tamariki, mokopuna.*

*To ensure the survival of the language and traditions of Ngāti Porou, so that our children and grandchildren may stand proud.*

### What are Puhi Kaiti's priorities for children's learning?

The child is at the centre of the curriculum at the puna reo:

*Kia tipu ora ai ā-tinana, ā-wairua, ā-hinengaro, ā-whatumanawa, ā, kia mōhio mārika ai, ko wai ia, nā wai hoki ia.*

*Our service exists to support the regeneration of te reo me ōna tikanga so that our children grow up strong as caring, confident, competent Māori children, healthy in mind, body and spirit, secure in the sense of who they are, and to whom they belong.*



Te ao Māori concepts are embedded in all aspects of the puna reo. The curriculum supports children's learning in relation to the centre's priorities. It has links to the principles and strands of *Te Whāriki*, and acknowledges that the child is the focus of *Te Whāriki*:

*Ko Te Whāriki te mātauranga me whai e tātou. Ko te pūtake o Te Whāriki ko te mokopuna. Ko ēnei ngā whāinga mō ā tātou mokopuna.*

*Te Whāriki is the curriculum and knowledge that we will follow. The purpose of Te Whāriki is the mokopuna. These are the aims for our mokopuna.*

Te reo, tikanga and protocols of Ngāti Porou underpin all areas of the curriculum and the focus on Māori children realising their potential:

*Kia whāngaihia te reo ki ngā mokopuna*

*Kia whakamanahia te mana āhua ake o ia mokopuna*

*Kia ū pai te oranga nui o te mokopuna ā-tinana, ā-hinengaro, ā-wairua, ā-whatumanawa*

*To feed the language to our mokopuna*

*To acknowledge the uniqueness of each mokopuna*

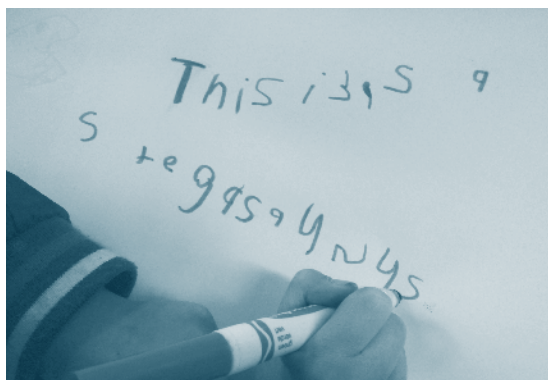
*To ensure the physical, intellectual, spiritual and emotional wellbeing of mokopuna*

Priorities for children's learning are determined in consultation with whānau. Planning hui are held where staff and whānau plan the focus of the curriculum.

What teaching practices help Puhi Kaiti achieve its priorities for children's learning?

Teaching practice actively promotes the centre's priorities for learning.

Strengths include:



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- effectively nurturing children's emotional, intellectual, physical and social confidence and competence
- promoting children's identity by actively encouraging their participation in tikanga and protocols for welcoming visitors
- modelling the reo, tikanga and protocols of Ngāti Porou
- fostering children's connections with their marae
- engaging children in meaningful conversations and extending their thinking and learning
- confidently using te reo Māori throughout and across the curriculum.

#### What does Puhi Kaiti know about children's learning and how is this information shared?

Teachers assess children within a kaupapa Māori framework based on *Te Whatu Pōkeka*.<sup>5</sup> Each child has an individual programme linked to the strands of *Te Whāriki* that identifies their strengths and interests, as well as the dispositions and skills they are developing.

Assessment records reflect children's sense of identity, documented in a holistic way to cover physical, spiritual, emotional and intellectual development. Children are supported to develop a strong sense of identity through pepeha and whakapapa.

Assessment information shows that children actively participate in protocols for welcoming and hosting visitors to the puna reo. A learning story for one child focused on swinging poi – showing that she was developing both fine and gross motor skills, and her confidence in performing. A group learning story showed children visiting their marae and discussing the traditional patterns of the carvings. Following the visit, children built and talked about their own wharehau (meeting house), practising drawing traditional designs, and singing about the parts of their wharehau.

Another group learning story about children performing at the Gisborne Cultural Festival identified multiple learning outcomes for the children, including the following knowledge, skills and dispositions:

- physical – kapa haka – coordination of body and performing with vigour
- spiritual – children immersed in a cultural atmosphere and context
- intellectual – children know the words and actions of waiata and the connections to their tribal history
- emotional – standing confidently and performing on stage.

Children are encouraged to show their parents what they have been learning, and enjoy reading their portfolios, which are a focus of discussions among the children. Whānau

5 Ministry of Education. (2009). *Te Whatu Pōkeka Kaupapa Māori Assessment for Learning Early Childhood Exemplars*. Wellington, New Zealand: Author.

have access to portfolios and they have daily conversations with teachers about the children's engagement with tikanga, mātauranga Māori, and te reo Māori.

The puna reo provides clear information to whānau about the expectations and purpose of assessment. Whānau also attend meetings and have input into the centre's curriculum based on what they know about their child's learning.

#### How does Puhi Kaiti use this information for curriculum decisions and self review?

Teachers use assessment information to contribute to curriculum decisions. Each week they review assessment information and children's emerging interests. The curriculum focuses on empowering children, and follows their interests as a starting point for all learning. Planning makes clear links to the principles and strands of *Te Whāriki*. A long-term plan includes strategies to implement learning programmes.

Self review at the puna reo is very comprehensive and it has a major focus on their priorities for children's learning. Self-review information includes documented goals related to the curriculum and children's learning. Previous reviews at the puna reo resulted in the development of learning centres – Kaupapa Ako – to best use teacher strengths to develop children's interests and strengths in relation to their identified priorities for learning.

These learning centres include:

- Toi Pūoro and Ngā Mahi a Rēhia – music and physical activities
- Toi Hangarau, Te Reo, Toi Whakaari – science and technology, literacy, performing arts and drama
- Toi Auahatanga – creativity
- Toi Mātātoa – adventure, exploration
- Pīpī Paopao – children up to the age of two years
- Toi Hauora – healthy food, healthy bodies and active movement.

As a result of self review, teachers took more ownership of, and responsibility for, the teaching programme and their own individual plans for their learning centres and children. More learning opportunities were provided to help children create, problem solve, think and explore for themselves.

## HOLBORN KINDERGARTEN

### Context

Holborn Kindergarten in Lower Hutt caters for children aged between three years and school age. Fourteen percent of the children enrolled identify as Māori, 14 percent as Pacific, 66 percent as New Zealand European/Pākehā, and the remaining six percent as Other European.

The kindergarten is administered by Hutt City Kindergartens, which provides policy direction and guides self review and professional development. The qualified and registered teachers are improvement focused and aware of new learning and good practice in early childhood education. Parents contribute to the curriculum and have a strong sense of belonging to the kindergarten.

### What are Holborn Kindergarten's priorities for children's learning?

The identified priorities for children's learning are highly evident in practice and closely align to the principles of *Te Whāriki*. Specific priorities for children's learning include:

- a bicultural programme – tamariki walk with mana
- whanaungatanga – close collaboration with parents and whānau
- social competence – initiate and sustain relationships
- literacy and numeracy
- active movement – physical challenges and mastering movement skills.

The social competence and active movement priorities were influenced by the Incredible Years programme<sup>6</sup> and professional development with Sport and Recreation New Zealand (SPARC – now Sport New Zealand), respectively.

Through daily discussion and ongoing reflection, the service ensures it is responsive to children's interests and parents' aspirations. In recent years, the kindergarten has improved their collaboration with parents and whānau. Parents' aspirations are proactively sought, valued and respected. Teachers work in partnership with parents and whānau to achieve these aspirations.



6 [www.minedu.govt.nz/NZEducation/EducationPolicies/SpecialEducation/OurWorkProgramme/PositiveBehaviourForLearning/ProgrammesForTeachers.aspx](http://www.minedu.govt.nz/NZEducation/EducationPolicies/SpecialEducation/OurWorkProgramme/PositiveBehaviourForLearning/ProgrammesForTeachers.aspx)

### What teaching practices help Holborn Kindergarten achieve its priorities for children's learning?

Teaching practices at the kindergarten reflect its identified priorities for children's learning, and include:

- integrating literacy and mathematical understandings in meaningful ways
- modelling and positively reinforcing respectful behaviours
- fostering children's social competence, such as sharing and taking turns
- supporting children to lead their own learning and explore their own working theories
- having meaningful conversations with children that make good links with family and home life
- fostering tuakana teina roles among children.

### What does Holborn Kindergarten know about children's learning and how is this information shared?

Assessment for learning is well developed. Portfolios show children's interests, and celebrate their progress. Portfolios include regular input from teachers and whānau. Children's perspectives are included, with evidence of them assessing their own learning.

Assessment information is analysed, showing continuity of learning over time, and how planned experiences will support later learning. Learning stories are also emailed to parents, often giving them real-time knowledge of their children's learning.

A collaborative approach to assessment is evident, with teachers and parents working together well to support children's learning. Parents are informed about their child's learning through portfolios and formal and informal conversations with teachers. Teachers also share information through newsletters, wall displays, Smilebox videos<sup>7</sup> and slideshows, and community events.

Parents' views and aspirations are sought and valued. This sharing and seeking of information contributes to a sense of belonging for children and their whānau.

Priorities for learning are very visible in teaching and assessment practice, so parents are very aware of their child's learning in relation to these. One child's portfolio included a pepeha at the beginning, reflecting her culture as well as the service's emphasis on bicultural practices. The emphasis on whanaungatanga was also strongly evident in this portfolio, with numerous examples of whānau contributing their response to her learning at kindergarten, and linking to events at home. The child's portfolio also included a page establishing whānau aspirations for her to learn numbers and letters through meaningful experiences. Later in the portfolio, assessment information showed

7 [www.smilebox.com/](http://www.smilebox.com/)

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progress towards this goal, which was aligned with the kindergarten's priority for numeracy and literacy learning.

The kindergarten is part of a cluster group, organised by Hutt City Kindergartens, where teachers and local new entrant teachers meet twice a term. This group has focused on literacy and numeracy learning. Involvement in the group has helped teachers to share information about children's learning during transitions to school.

#### How does Holborn Kindergarten use this information for curriculum decisions and self review?

The curriculum reflects the kindergarten's philosophy and is well aligned to the principles of *Te Whāriki* and parents' aspirations for their children to be competent and successful learners.

Curriculum design reflects teachers' assessment of children's individual and group interests. The curriculum is flexible with children learning through their curiosity and enthusiasm. Teachers support children to set challenges for themselves, helping them to explore their working theories – their hypotheses, predictions, creative thinking and problem solving – and adding complexity and risk.

Literacy and numeracy is integrated in meaningful ways, with children exploring print and literacy tools (such as books, pens, chalk), and exploring mathematical concepts through activities such as making dough, building with blocks, and sand play.

Self review is closely linked to the identified priorities for children's learning, especially focusing on bicultural practices and whanaungatanga. In 2009, comprehensive self review was undertaken to determine how well teachers were recognising and responding to the aspirations of Māori children and their whānau. Learning stories and a whānau questionnaire were used as sources of evidence for this review. Teachers concluded that while whānau were largely content with how they were supporting Māori children, teachers would continue to participate in professional development to build their capacity.

The review also highlighted teachers' commitment to supporting Māori children to succeed as Māori. Building on this, subsequent self review focused on how well teachers used teaching strategies to engage and support Māori children in becoming competent and confident learners. This was facilitated by Hutt City Kindergartens. Teachers recognised that they had made progress and renewed their commitment using te reo Māori in assessment and in the daily life of the kindergarten.

In 2012, a strategic goal of promoting children's social and emotional competence was added. Teachers worked in partnership with whānau to develop positive behaviour plans that included proactive strategies for use at home and at the service. These included strategies for interacting with each other, positive role modelling, planned ignoring, redirecting, clear and specific praise, motivational incentives and positive encouragement.

The kindergarten's self review highlighted outcomes such as a reduction in children's challenging behaviours and a visible improvement in their social behaviour, which included:

- strengthened tuakana teina relationships
- self regulation
- increased self esteem
- children ignoring other's challenging behaviours
- children's awareness of their peers' wellbeing.

## KANIERE PLAYCENTRE

### Context

Kaniere Playcentre is located on the outskirts of Hokitika, and caters for children aged from under two years to school age. Just over three-quarters of the children enrolled are New Zealand European/Pākehā (76 percent), with the remaining children identifying as Māori (six percent) or other ethnicities (18 percent).

All parent educators have at least one Playcentre qualification, with many having two or more. The service also has six parents with extra training who are paid as team leaders.

### What are Kaniere Playcentre's priorities for children's learning?

The Playcentre philosophy values learning through play, and the children's interests and next learning steps determine curriculum direction. The strands of *Te Whāriki* and the development of dispositions strongly influence the curriculum, as does the Playcentre philosophy. Parents identified the following priorities for children's learning:

- to grow and develop positive and useful skills, knowledge and attitudes
- to be affirmed as individuals
- to develop generosity of spirit, respect, endeavour, aroha and integrity.

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### What teaching practices help Kaniere Playcentre achieve their priorities for children's learning?

Teaching practices at the Playcentre reflect its identified priorities for children's learning, and include:

- approaches that value and promote child-led learning
- promotion of Playcentre's core values
- integration of individual children's home contexts into learning at the Playcentre
- experiences that meaningfully incorporate literacy and numeracy concepts
- fostering children's independence through appropriately challenging activities and through providing choice for children
- promoting a cooperative and caring culture
- sustaining child-initiated conversations and supporting and extending children's learning by asking open-ended questions.

### What does Kaniere Playcentre know about children's learning and how is this information shared?

Assessment of children's learning shows the nature of children's involvement in the curriculum, identifies the learning that is occurring, and highlights next steps. Links to the principles and strands of *Te Whāriki* and dispositions such as courage and curiosity, trust and playfulness, responsibility, confidence and perseverance are included, along with notes about how these are being supported.

Parents observe and record learning stories for all children. Extensive displays show children's learning and allow parents to see different ways to make this learning visible. All parents contribute to profiles and openly discuss children's learning experiences with other parents.

Programmes for individual children focus on a relevant strand and a related goal from *Te Whāriki*, and also identify dispositions to be developed. Individual programmes align with curriculum planning sheets that bring together a range of information from parents. These include photos, post-its, learning stories, daily diary notes, and information from home. These are developed into a *Te Whāriki* goal, a dispositional goal, and specific suggestions about how to support each child's further learning and development.



### How does Kaniere Playcentre use this information for curriculum decisions and self review?

Parents have a well-established culture of reflecting on their curriculum after each session. They discuss assessment information to determine learning threads, and next steps to inform following sessions. Termly planning meetings focus on children's needs and interests, and decisions about resourcing the programme. The Playcentre's curriculum review identified the positive learning outcomes for children. These included:

- wellbeing - paying attention, maintaining concentration, being involved
- belonging - playing an active role
- contribution - learning alongside others
- communication - discovering books can illuminate and excite
- exploration - courage and curiosity.

Self review includes both planned reviews and informal reflective discussions.

Information gathered from parents is used to reflect on and revise their priorities for children's learning.

A recent parent survey about how well parents thought the service was meeting the principles of *Te Whāriki* resulted in a greater acknowledgment and celebration of children's cultural backgrounds. The survey asked parents to rate and comment on how well the centre was developing children's wellbeing and sense of belonging; developing whānau sense of belonging; and encouraging children to contribute, explore, and express themselves. These aspects of *Te Whāriki* were reflected in the Playcentre's curriculum and in assessment records of children's learning.



## Appendix 1: Glossary

aiga	family (Samoan)
ako	to learn
aoga	full immersion Samoan education and care service
aroha	love
fa'a Samoa	the Samoan way
haka	Māori ceremonial dance
hui	meeting, forum for discussion which is usually underpinned by Māori values, protocols and practices
kapa haka	Māori cultural group within the performing arts
kaupapa	Māori topics, themes, foci underpinned by a Māori world view
lotu	prayer (Samoan)
mana	power, prestige, authority, respect
marae	tribal gathering place where ceremonial events are held and issues debated; a tribal-based complex where ancestral history, genealogy and identity reaffirm the connections of Māori to a particular tribe and sub-tribe.
mātauranga Māori	Māori knowledge
mokopuna	grandchild
pepeha	a statement that identifies the ancestral links of Māori
poi	a performing arts item made of ball and string
puna reo	full immersion Māori education and care service
tamariki	children
te ao Māori	the Māori world
te reo Māori	the Māori language
tikanga	customary practices
tuakana teina	to foster relationships and interactions between older and younger children
waiata	song(s)
whakapapa	genealogy
whānau	family
whanaungatanga	relationship, kinship
wharehau	meeting house, ancestral house

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