

C1 Curriculum consistent

The curriculum framework is the Principles/Ngā Kaupapa Whakahaere and Strands/Ngā Taumata Whakahirahira of Te Whāriki.

Te Whāriki continues to provide the basis for consistent high-quality curriculum delivery in the diverse range of early childhood services in Aotearoa/NewZealand. As such, it is the best guidance to meet this criterion. In this document, curriculum is described as "the sum total of the experiences, activities, and events, whether direct or indirect, which occur within an environment designed to foster children's learning and development." (p. 10).

The ways in which each early childhood education service works with the curriculum framework will vary. Each service will continue to develop its own curriculum and programmes that reflect the things that are important to the children, their families, the staff, the community and the philosophy of the specific setting. It is important for services to be able to identify how everything we do in an early childhood setting works towards meeting the curriculum framework for the children and families that attend.

Other guidance, like Kei Tua o te Pae, build from Te Whāriki to provide more detail about ways to do this.

Curriculum Policy

Rationale:

All children will be given the opportunity to develop knowledge, skills and attitudes to enable them to grow up as competent and confident learners and communicators.

Purpose:

To ensure formal and informal opportunities are provided for teachers to notice, recognise and respond to individuals and groups of children, and for parents/caregivers/whānau to have authentic and meaningful opportunities to contribute to this process.

PROCEDURES :

- Teachers will actively use the Principles, Goals, and Strands of Te Whāriki (the Early Childhood Curriculum) to guide their teaching and planning practices.
- Relationships are the key to providing a responsive learning environment for children. Interactions between teachers and children will be encouraging, warm and respectful.
- On enrolment, all parents/caregivers will be encouraged to be partners in their child's learning as a way of building a relationship between the home and the Centre.
- Infants will have one-on-one regular gentle interactions throughout the day that are responsive to their world, and help establish strong connection, trust and loving relationships.
- Children's preferences will be valued, and the programme is structured to give opportunities for free choice of activities and who they will play/work with.
- Teachers will use language that supports and extends children's learning.
- Teachers will guide, empower and support children, by being in close physical proximity, and providing verbal encouragement when appropriate.
- The routines are developed so that children can play together for sustained periods in groups of their own choosing.
- Children will be given the opportunity to maintain relationships with the wider community around the childcare centre.
- Teachers will focus on settling children into the programme. Once a child's sense of well-being and belonging is established, teachers will then begin the formal assessment process.
- Teachers will encourage parents and children to contribute to assessment data and will use this in planning and documenting children's ongoing learning.
- Documentation will take a variety of forms including wall displays, artwork, photos, online story park etc.

- Documentation systems will ensure that all children are assessed and planned for on a regular basis.
- Regular informal communication with parents about their child's learning and development will ensure that their aspirations for their child are taken into account in all aspects of curriculum planning.
- Planning meetings provide opportunities for teachers to engage in collegial dialogue in relation to what they are noticing about individual children's learning. Also discussed will be possible lines of direction for the environment and specific teaching strategies to add value to children's learning. Meetings also provide opportunities to evaluate planning and teaching and identify learning outcomes for children.
- Clear documentation will ensure that links are visible between assessment, planning, and evaluation.
- Regular opportunities for both formal and informal communication with parents will ensure that they are actively involved in decision-making concerning their child's learning.
- All practices related to assessment, planning and evaluation are conducted confidentially and ethically.
- On-going professional learning and development will ensure teachers have an understanding of relevant theories and practice in early childhood education and that they apply these in practice.
- The environment will be set up by teachers at the beginning of each day, based on their knowledge of the learning interests of the children attending and to ensure opportunities are provided for children to access further resources to meet their learning preferences.
- Teachers will respond to the children learning interests by accessing resources and further information to extend their understanding of their interest. •

As language is a key to children's learning, teachers will support language development through positive interactions with children. The Centre programme will emphasise the importance of teachers working alongside children interacting with them to enhance and extend their learning through language.

- A print rich environment will be provided to introduce children to written words and printed language.
- A wide range of resources will be provided to challenge and extend children's thinking. Resources will include activities for individuals and those that require collaboration and co-operation with others to complete. Group activities will support children's language development as they negotiate and strategies with others to achieve goals.
- Centre will provide a language rich environment where children will use a variety of ways to communicate, including non-verbal mediums such as art, dance and music.
- The environment will enable a free flow between indoor and outdoor learning experiences.

Ako Tahi Preschool-Curriculum Criteria

- The outdoor environment will provide resources that are flexible and able to be manipulated by children to be more or less challenging for them.
- Where possible and if required, translations of key documents in the first language of the family will be provided.
- Centre will practise positive reinforcement methods. When managing children's behaviour, teachers will emphasis on what to do, rather than what not to do.

C2 Assessment

Guidance

Any examples in the guidance are provided as a starting point to show how services can meet (or exceed) the requirement. Services may choose to use other approaches better suited to their needs as long as they comply with the criteria.

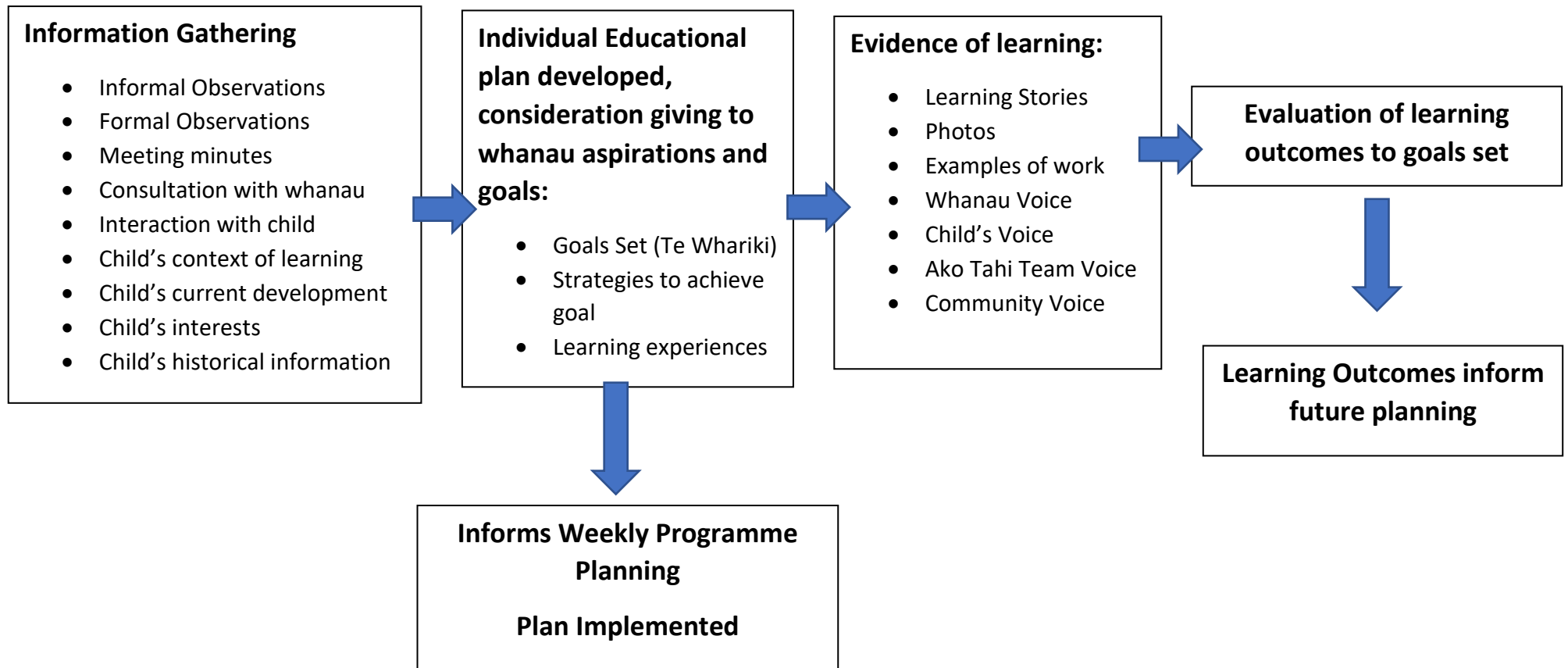
A service curriculum that is informed by assessment, planning, and evaluation will notice, recognise, and respond to the contributions made to the programme by the children, their families, staff, and community. Experiences planned to support and enhance children's learning will be purposeful and meaningful to them.

A service will develop a process to assist them to meet this criterion, taking into consideration the beliefs, values, knowledge, and aspirations of children, their families, staff, and community.

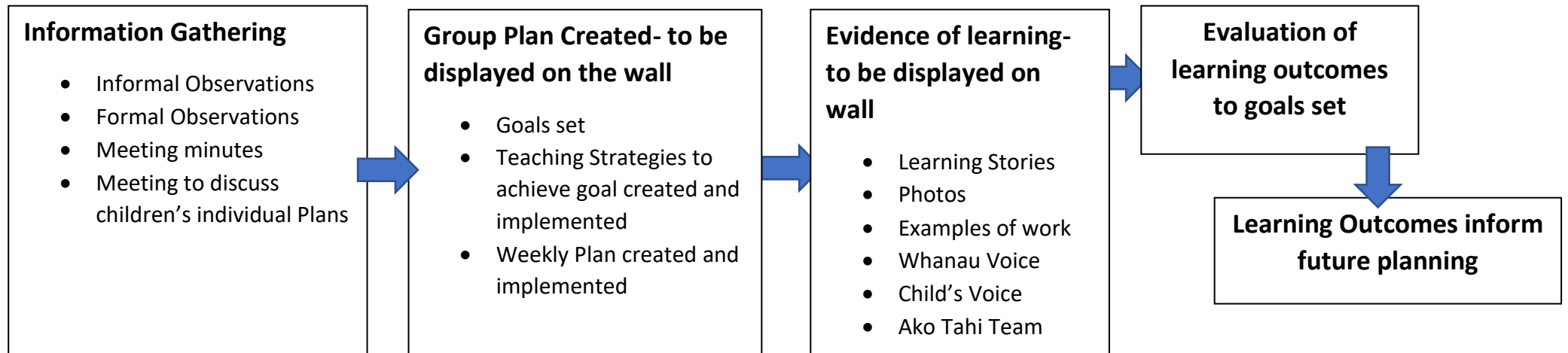
Documentation and evidence gathered during this process may take a variety of forms to suit the service's operation, and can include: minutes of meetings; observations and learning stories; examples of children's work; posters and wall displays; recorded discussions; policies and procedures. Children, their families, staff, and community, should all contribute to this process. How information is gathered is not important – how it is used to inform the service curriculum and educator practice is important.

Further information about Planning, Evaluation, and Assessment can be found on pages 28-29 of [Te Whāriki](#).

Individual Planning for Children



Group Programme Planning



All documentation to be filed together, this includes Information Gathering, Group Plan, evidence of learning, Evaluation

Information Gathering (IEP)

Date:

Child:

Kaiako:

Historical Information:

Cultural Inclusion:

Whanau Aspirations:

Whanau Goals:

Date	Observation	Source/Evidence

Information Gathering (Group Plan)

Date:

Group:

Kaiako:

Historical Information:

Cultural Inclusion:

Date	Observation	Source/Evidence

Individual Educational Plan

Date:

Kaiako:

Child's Name:

DOB:

Goal	Linked to Te Whariki	Linked to Research	Teaching Strategies	Experiences to meet Goal

Group Plan

Date:

Kaiako:

Group:

Age Range:

Goal	Linked to Te Whariki	Linked to Research	Teaching Strategies	Experiences to meet Goal

Weekly Planning

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Comments
AM						
PM						

Evaluation

Date:

Childs Name:

Kaiako:

Goal	Evidence	Learning Outcomes	Notes

Evaluation

Date:

Group Name:

Kaiako:

Goal	Evidence	Learning Outcomes	Notes

C3 Interactions

Guidance

Any examples in the guidance are provided as a starting point to show how services can meet (or exceed) the requirement. Services may choose to use other approaches better suited to their needs as long as they comply with the criteria.

Relationships are a source of learning, empowerment, and identity for all of us. As educators, if we believe everything we do has an impact on learning and teaching, we have a responsibility to engage in responsive and respectful relationships with children, families/whānau, and each other.

Interaction provides a rich social world for children to make sense of and understand. Educators provide encouragement, warmth, acceptance, and challenges to help children extend their ideas and understanding of the world.

How services support and organise staff, to ensure that children experience stable and predictable relationships with educators, is important to enhance learning and care experiences for children.

C4 Adults' knowledge

Guidance

Any examples in the guidance are provided as a starting point to show how services can meet (or exceed) the requirement. Services may choose to use other approaches better suited to their needs as long as they comply with the criteria.

Our understanding of children's learning and development underpins what we do, and why we do it. A range of theories in learning and development support and influence early childhood education. It is important that we understand what influences our teaching practice and can articulate and put into action the knowledge that we have.

The early childhood education knowledge-base is constantly being revised and developed. Professional learning helps us to keep up-to-date with these changes. Participating in professional development opportunities (formal and informal) and professional reading helps us to continuously build on our understanding. Educators should take opportunities to discuss and debate ideas and theories, and identify meaningful ways to put their new knowledge into practice.

Self-review practices also play an integral role in assisting us to explore our understanding of children's learning and development, and identify what we do not know and what we need to learn more about.

Professional Development Record- C4 Adults Knowledge

Adults Name	Date	Course	Article	Other	Knowledge shared

Professional Development

Name:

Date:

Professional Development

Workshop/Seminar *(Please attach copy to this document):*

Research Article *(Please attach copy to this document):*

Notes for discussion (Philosophy, current theories, child development, Governance, Leadership etc).

Outcomes for noted from discussions with others (staff/team meetings, forums, leadership etc)

Outcomes for practice, tamariki and whanau

Qualification Record

Name	Qualification	Training Institution	Date Achieved	Certified copy attached Y/N

C5 Acknowledgement of tangata whenua

Guidance

Any examples in the guidance are provided as a starting point to show how services can meet (or exceed) the requirement. Services may choose to use other approaches better suited to their needs as long as they comply with the criteria.

Te Tiriti o Waitangi plays a significant role in the revitalisation of Māori language and culture, an important part of Aotearoa/New Zealand culture. Early childhood services are a vital link to ensuring all New Zealand children, regardless of ethnicity, are given the opportunity to learn about and experience, in a very real way, both Pākehā and Māori culture.

Te Whāriki is a bilingual, bicultural document which reflects Māori views of children's learning and development, and includes many strategies for implementing bicultural programmes.

The service curriculum will be developed in partnership with Māori to provide genuine opportunities for participation in programme development, enhancing outcomes for Māori children. Programmes will support the revitalisation of te reo and tikanga Māori.

Māori as Tangata Whenua Policy

Rationale

We respect the unique position of Māori as tangata whenua in Aotearoa / New Zealand. Our centre encourages an awareness and appreciation of the bicultural heritage of our country. We support Te Tiriti o Waitangi and the use of Te Reo Māori as a living language.

Te Whariki

Communication - Goal 3. Children experience an environment where they experience the stories and symbols of their own and other cultures.

Procedures

- Teachers are encouraged to use Te Reo Māori phrases and words.
- Teachers will discuss and inform others of appropriate practise with regard to tikanga Māori to increase awareness of the partnership inherent with Te Tiriti O Waitangi.
- Visual aids and language prompts are displayed throughout the centre encouraging teachers to extend their knowledge of Te Reo Māori.
- Teachers greet children, parents, colleagues and phone enquiries in both Māori and English.
- Te Reo Māori is incorporated into all areas of the curriculum.
- Professional development funds and time are made available for teachers to extend their Tikanga and Te Reo knowledge.
- Teachers and management endeavour to make, find and provide Māori and natural teaching resources.

At Ako Tahi preschool we practice the following Maori values in our daily curriculum:

- Kotahitanga – Oneness/Unity
- Kaitiakitanga – Guardianship
- Mauritanga – Life Essence
- Wairuatanga – Spiritual Connection
- Oranga - Health
- Manaakitanga – Hospitality/Care
- Whanaungatanga - Relationships and Connections
- Mātauranga – Knowledge
- Rangatiratanga - Leadership
- Akonga – Reciprocal Learning
- Tuakana/Teina Relationship – Reciprocal Learning
- Mahi Tahi – Collaboration and Participation

ERO Examples of Good Bicultural Practice

Example 1

What does this service do to provide for Māori children and their whānau?

Recent professional development has been vital in building the commitment of all teachers to bicultural development. At the start of the professional development programme teachers were not competent in te reo Māori and they knew they wanted to build their knowledge. Initially they lacked confidence but their commitment to supporting Māori children at their centre was a strong motivator. Teachers accessed professional development was through a local provider.

Staff were excited about increasing their capacity to implement a curriculum that recognised Māori language, culture and values. One parent, fluent in te reo Māori, supported their development. Teachers acknowledged that, as Pākehā, they saw things from a Pākehā perspective, so it was important to seek knowledge from Māori whānau.

Bicultural development involved teachers becoming aware of what it meant for Māori to be Māori, being responsive, and understanding Māori perspectives. Teachers' appraisal goals and the centre's strategic goals focused on extending the bicultural programme.

Building our knowledge was about building our children's knowledge.

Work to strengthen relationships with parents, whānau and the wider community was a catalyst for development. Teachers consulted the parents and whānau of Māori children on their aspirations. The responses were a trigger for teachers to further develop the service's bicultural curriculum.

As a result of professional development looking at bicultural practice, the centre established links with two nearby schools. Children from the centre have visited the nearby secondary school to watch a kapahaka performance, and the kapahaka group has reciprocated with a visit to the centre. Whānau events in the centre bring people together.

Teachers have created a welcoming environment for Māori children and their whānau that strongly reflects the centre's bicultural focus. Māori perspectives are woven through the programme. Teachers naturally integrate te reo Māori through the use of short phrases, waiata routines and in children's art work. Children take turns in leading waiata and karakia. The centre environment includes children's work completed as a part of recent projects. For example, a recent project with a building focus included looking at whare on a marae. Children and teachers also made kowhaiwhai patterns and displayed reo Māori prompts. A whānau board was set up to show children's ancestral links.

Children's portfolios reflect their learning experiences in a bicultural programme. Management is currently redeveloping the outside area to reflect Māori perspectives, and has sought advice at the planning stage.

From the moment parents and whānau step in the door of the centre they can see this is a place where Māori language and culture is valued.

Staff have documented their development in the form of a data show so it can be shared with others and revisited. It helps them to reflect on what they are doing, where they have come from and where they are going. Staff want to continue to build their capacity to implement a bicultural curriculum that recognises Māori language, culture and values.

There are a lot of things to do - we need ongoing professional development support.

What might help other services?

When asked what might help other services to be more responsive to whānau and to support Māori children, teachers highlighted the following:

- seeking long term professional development;
- strengthening relationships with families;
- involving the whole team; and
- including bicultural development as part of the staff appraisal process.

Although there are no teachers who are Māori employed at the centre, management and educators' are committed to bicultural development. Staff are genuine advocates for the concept of Te Ao Māori, and continue to actively seek support to build their capacity and capability in this area.

Example 2

What does this service do to provide for Māori children and their whānau?

When the centre was first set up it was yet to develop a philosophy statement. The manager used questionnaires and brainstormed with teachers and parents, asking "what is important for you and your child?" From the discussions a philosophy was developed which strongly reflected Te Ao Māori and emphasised shared responsibilities for the education and care of the children at the centre.

Māori whānau and their children come to the centre because its small size and mixed-age grouping that sustains tuakana-teina relationships where older children support the younger ones.

Our children take care of one another.

Tikanga Māori guides teaching practices. Teachers demonstrate respect and humility in all areas of their work. They are respectful of whānau and listen to their ideas or requests. Teachers embrace Māori ways of knowing, being and doing and care for children and their whānau. Their enthusiasm and passion for Te Ao Māori is reflected in how they freely share knowledge and information with whānau and their children.

We treat children like they are our own.

Whanaungatanga is important in this centre. Relationships with each other as a team of teachers, and with children and their whānau, matter. Support is given where needed, and caring for each other in a trusting and respectful environment is valued. The whakapapa of

children and their whānau is acknowledged, helping to strengthen connections with everyone involved in the centre and with those who have gone before them.

Teachers work collaboratively in ways that are true to their philosophy, empowering children and their whānau to share in the responsibility for teaching and learning. They embrace the concepts of tuakana/teina where it is common for siblings to attend this centre. The younger children learn from the older ones and the older children learn perseverance. In the context of this centre, the teachers, whānau and children learn from one another.

The centre curriculum embraces Te Ao Māori through teachers' interaction with children and their whānau, and centre activities and events. Te reo Māori is used as part of all interactions with children. Excursions outside the centre have included a visit to a local marae. Such events are documented through photographs, and revisiting these generates a sense of pride for children. Teachers create opportunities in the programme for children to learn and use karakia and waiata. Children demonstrate their knowledge of karakia and behave appropriately at these times.

Children's identity as Māori is acknowledged and teachers focus on helping them to be confident in who they are. Teachers acknowledge whakamā, accepting that children (and their whānau) may feel shy or embarrassed.

Children are allowed to be Māori and are confident in who they are.

Whānau are asked about their aspirations for the education of their children. Whānau views are encouraged and their ideas and contributions are evident in centre activities and planning. Celebrating Matariki, for example, was an opportunity for parents to explore their whakapapa, with some whānau finding out that they shared the same iwi.

Whānau evenings are regular events and are valuable for exchanging information, sharing kai and developing and strengthening relationships with whānau. The centre recently held a cultural evening where the cultures of children attending the centre were shared through song and dance. This event was well supported by parents and whānau.

What might help other services?

When asked what might help other services to be more responsive to whānau and to support Māori children, the manager highlighted the need to:

- keep building bridges with whānau through open, trusting and respectful relationships; and
- value and support staff.

Māori whānau and children experience a sense of wellbeing and belonging at Bright Stars. Te Ao Māori perspectives are a significant feature of this centre and are reflected in the commitment and passion of the manager and staff to building on and enhancing their practices related to the kaupapa.

Example 3

What does this service do to provide for Māori children and their whānau?

Many families are related and the Playcentre provides a social, as well as educational, environment for children and their whānau. There is a lot of networking in the community and it is generally the relationships that bring new parents to the centre. First impressions are important for whānau. When parents visit for the first time, the welcome they receive is often what makes them decide to come back again.

If you feel comfortable you want to come.

Parents and whānau of Māori children are encouraged and supported, fostering a real sense of belonging. Everyone involved has a task or job to do. Responsibility for running the Playcentre is shared. Extended whānau are welcome and often join in sessions. For example, a nanny came along with her mokopuna when the child's mother was unable to attend the session.

Everyone is responsible for something - I do returns for funding - something I thought I could never do.

Playcentre training is accessible to all parents. Each course includes a bicultural component that acknowledges Māori as tangata whenua, and recognises the importance of honouring Te Tiriti o Waitangi by weaving Māori protocols, traditions and te reo Māori into sessions.

A feature of this Playcentre is the balance of informal and formal sharing of information among parents. Formal processes include monthly hui, timely introductory information, and a buddy system for new parents. The aspirations of parents and whānau for their children are acknowledged as part of introductory information sessions, held at times that suit whānau. End-of-session discussions give parents an opportunity to talk about the session, and their children's learning, including a focus on what is happening for Māori children. These discussions are open to all and are a valued time for reflection and future planning. All children are greeted and acknowledged at the start of a session.

Everyone planning together is really good. It gets you buzzing about the next session; activities, resources and trips. It's also a nice way to all get together to know each other -to celebrate what's been happening and to become a part of the group.

Māori perspectives are an integral part of the Playcentre programme and parents are supported in developing their understanding of te reo Māori and tikanga. Māori culture is respected and visible in practice.

Parents encourage each other to speak te reo Māori during sessions. Importance is placed on the correct pronunciation of children's names. Māori history is incorporated into children's play. For example, parents talk with children about 'Putauaki - our maunga'. Playcentre training modules include aspects of te reo Māori and tikanga. Parents' confidence grows along with their own learning.

The more it's done the more natural it becomes.

Children explore and participate in cultural customs and waiata, and use natural resources in their play. The learning environment includes posters and learning resources that reflect Māori culture and are used to help parents integrate a Māori perspective in learning areas. There is a sense of enjoyment as Māori children's culture and language is valued and

respected. Māori children are confident in expressing their ideas and becoming competent learners in an environment that acknowledges their cultural heritage.

The children get on well - because we get on well.

What might help other services?

When asked what might help other services to be more responsive to whānau and to support Māori children, parents highlighted the importance of:

- making learning fun for children and for whānau;
- welcoming everyone in the whānau, (older children, Mum, Dad, Nanny, Koro, aunts, uncles, cousins) to sessions, trips and social activities;
- making opportunities for whānau to play and learn together; parent together, contribute and develop a sense of belonging; and
- having discussions at the end of each session.

Edgecumbe Playcentre makes an important contribution to its community. Māori children and their parents are well supported in an environment that recognises and embraces Te Ao Māori.

Example 4

What does this service (association) do to provide for Māori children and their whānau?

The association is clear about its role as an active advocate for Māori children and their whānau. This is evident in its commitment to ongoing bicultural development. There are high expectations at association level that teaching teams in individual kindergartens will improve their practice, and they acknowledge this needs support.

The association's strategic plan is deliberately based on the principles of the early childhood curriculum, Te Whāriki. Woven through the plan is a commitment to working with parents, whānau and the wider community. Te Tiriti o Waitangi provides the foundation for association-led bicultural development. Board members and teachers have been involved in Te Tiriti o Waitangi workshops.

The association has developed a bicultural plan as part of its strategic direction. This plan expresses a commitment to Te Ao Māori. Strategies have been developed relating to kindergarten programmes, consultation, assessment practice, professional learning and development for teachers, building partnerships with whānau, and self review. Planning also includes a focus on improving transition to school for Māori children by supporting whānau and their children during this time. The bicultural plan has explicit links to Ka Hikitia,¹ and the association is also looking at how to use the recently published Te Whatu Pōkeka: Kaupapa Māori Assessment for Learning Early Childhood Exemplars.²

Bicultural development is seen as a collective venture involving the association board, kindergarten teachers, parents, whānau and community. Professional learning and development, along with leadership and a commitment from the association board, has been crucial to development. Stability on the association board and in kindergartens has helped to consolidate and improve practice.

There is trust between us so we can do the work.

Ongoing professional learning and development supports the work of all involved in the association. Various professional development opportunities have been taken up enabling association personnel and teachers to increase their knowledge and understanding of Te Ao Māori knowledge and theory. Built into this development are opportunities for sharing along the way. Kindergarten teams are documenting their journeys as a useful tool for reflection and self review. A plan is being developed for the provision of future professional development.

The association has a strong focus on supporting whānau, and teachers in kindergartens have an important role in assisting parents to access relevant services. Relationships with key agencies are also being strengthened further.

Strengthening self review to include regular, systematic feedback from parents, whānau, children and teachers is an association priority. The focus is on gathering reliable evidence about the impact of learning programmes for Māori children. A set of questions has been developed to be used as a basis for self review. These were drawn from ERO's pilot study report Māori Children in Early Childhood: Pilot Study, July 2008. A statement of what good practice 'looks like' provides a sound basis for evaluating progress and improvement. It includes:

- having high expectations;
- the inclusion of the aspirations of parents and whānau;
- embedding te reo Māori in all programmes; and
- strengthening children's sense of identity through pēpeha, whakapapa, karakia and waiata.

If you can't see the benefits for the children then what you are doing is not working.

What might help other services?

When asked what might help other services wanting to be more responsive to whānau and to support Māori children, association personnel highlighted the following:

- relationships are essential to working in partnership with whānau; and
- non-contact time for teachers is necessary for bicultural development.

Management plays a key role in advocating for bicultural development across the association. Leadership at the association level is supporting and guiding development for each individual kindergarten in a way that acknowledges and celebrates successes and helps to overcome the difficulties along the way.

Example 5

What does this service do to provide for Māori children and their whānau?

The centre's philosophy statement, Te Tiriti o Waitangi policy and various planning documents reflect a commitment to forming partnerships with parents and whānau and acknowledge the unique place of Māori as tangata whenua. This commitment is strongly

evident in practice. Underlying practice is a belief in tino rangitiratanga – supporting children to be self sufficient, confident and competent learners.

A Māori teacher who has now left the centre (due to promotion) advocated for, and modelled te reo Māori and tikanga. The centre manager speaks te reo Māori and continues to provide leadership for other staff. A Māori parent also gives support in use of te reo Māori in the centre.

As new teachers have been employed they have developed an understanding of the centre's philosophy. Initial teacher education programmes helped some staff gain an understanding of Te Tiriti o Waitangi and what it meant for practice. Teachers are encouraged to listen to and respect each other. Staff meetings begin and end with karakia. Te Tiriti o Waitangi provides a basis for everyone to work in partnership.

The centre has access to the family support service that operates as part of Manuka Community House. A social worker and a counsellor working in the family support service have a close professional relationship with centre staff and give priority to supporting parents and whānau whose children attend the early childhood centre.

Having this support makes our work easier.

For this centre, being bicultural is about being a whānau centre. According to centre staff and management, Māori children are more likely to achieve success if staff have good relationships with whānau. Through its good relationships the centre acknowledges the diversity of families and is sensitive to children's home situation. Staff get to know each child, their whānau and their life outside the centre. They embrace everyone, and acknowledge that not everyone is the same.

The special place of whānau is what we treasure here. Parents know we are all whānau - makes them comfortable to leave their children with us.

Māori children who attend this centre are highly engaged in learning. Their profile books give an insight into their learning and development. The programme is based on their interests and reflects learning experiences that reinforce their identity as Māori. For example, one child's interest in dance led to her being part of a local kapahaka group and she brought her experience in this group back to the centre. Numeracy and literacy learning is a big part of the programme, especially for the older children. Staff take an active interest in children's transition to school.

When I come to the centre everyone is busy and happy and you don't hear children crying.

What might help other services?

When asked what might help other services to be more responsive to whānau and to support Māori children, the manager and teachers highlighted the importance of:

- having a greater understanding and acceptance of Te Tiriti O Waitangi – identifying what this means for your service, how it relates to your philosophy and how it is incorporated into all areas of your curriculum and programme;

- working cross-culturally with whānau, local marae, tangata whenua, families, other early childhood services and local agencies;
- working closely with Māori children and their whānau towards a successful and smooth transition from early childhood service to school;
- understanding Māori concepts of wellbeing; and
- whānau and whānau development and wellbeing.

This involves understanding Part B of Te Whāriki which is specific to Māori immersion programmes and therefore Māori children.

The manager's leadership is a key factor in the centre's responsiveness to whānau and its focus on Māori children developing as competent and confident learners. Through her leadership, bicultural perspectives in the curriculum are honoured and Māori children's cultural identity is valued and strengthened. Te reo Māori and tikanga are seen as integral to the curriculum. Leadership, team coherence and commitment to Te Tiriti O Waitangi makes a difference to what happens for Māori children and their whānau.

Example 6

What does this service do to provide for Māori children and their whānau?

The leadership capabilities of children, whānau and teachers are nurtured. Māori children know they are valued as competent learners and demonstrate confidence to lead others in a range of activities. Many kindergarten practices are initiated by children or the community. Mihimihi at the beginning of the day gives children opportunities to lead haka, pēpeha, waiata, and karakia.

Teachers take on leadership roles with team members and with whānau. They help each other to increase their confidence in using te reo Māori. Their passion for using te reo Māori is passed on when new teachers join the team. Parents address teachers as 'whaea'.

Parents and whānau also have leadership opportunities in this kindergarten. As well as involvement on the committee, daily help in the kindergarten and help with maintenance activities, they are encouraged to get involved in their child's learning. They read and contribute to their child's portfolio, and more recently some parents have taken a lead in planning the programme.

Everyone contributes one way or another.

Relationships are integral to everything that happens in the kindergarten. Developing and maintaining positive, professional relationships between staff is seen as a necessary starting point for developing relationships with children and their whānau. Good staff relationships also influence relationships between children. The kindergarten has an open door policy, and parents and whānau are welcome at any time. First impressions for parents are crucial to laying foundations on which to build meaningful partnerships. Whānau feel confident when teachers accept them for who they are without imposing expectations or demands on them.

This centre has developed a strong whānau base which is reflected in practice across all areas of centre operation. Qualities of whanaungatanga such as manaaki, tautoko, tiaki and awhi are reflected in interactions among teachers, whānau and children. This enables everyone to

engage in meaningful and purposeful relationships. Kai time, when children have their lunch at kindergarten, is important as it is a family time. Parents come to pick up their young children who finish at 12.30pm, many stopping to have lunch or sit alongside their children while they eat with the older ones.

Not what's on the wall but what is in your heart.

Māori perspectives are woven through all that happens in the programme. Children and adults use te reo Māori comfortably and confidently as part of daily interaction. Learning stories show how the curriculum offers culturally rich learning experiences that affirm children's identity as Māori. An integral part of the kindergarten curriculum is a "virtues" programme that is tightly linked to the values and beliefs expressed in the philosophy statement. The virtues are expressed in te reo Māori and in English. Children are gaining understanding of these, especially when used as Māori concepts.

For the teachers, implementing a bicultural curriculum is about being committed to ongoing development. They have respect for tikanga Māori and a love for te reo Māori. Teachers acknowledge that initial teacher education programmes have influenced what they bring to their teaching. They have a genuine interest in Māori children and their learning and get excited about their work and celebrate their successes.

Implementing a bicultural curriculum is more about tikanga around what you do.

A reflective culture in the centre supports self review and goal setting. Te reo Māori is included as part of ongoing review. Parents and whānau are actively involved in self review through a thorough consultation process. For example, parents were invited to give their ideas about what 'aroha' means to them and a sheet on the noticeboard invited comments from parents. Teachers also check with people in the community about the correct phrases to use in mihimihi.

You need to know, accept and appreciate your own culture - looking inward first before you can tell others.

Teachers and families are presently involved in some action research about 'Diverse Families Shaping Early Childhood Curricula.' Families use the kindergarten video camera to record significant events in their homes. This provides a 'window' into what happens for children outside the kindergarten. Information gathered through this process is being used to create an inclusive learning environment for children. Teachers acknowledge the need to strengthen relationships with whānau and recognise that this involves establishing a two-way path between the kindergarten and its community. They are working on ways to tap into the 'funds of knowledge' that children and their whānau bring with them to kindergarten.

We are always in a place where we are teachable.

The kindergarten has a very special 'feel' for all who attend and visit. There is a strong emphasis on ensuring that the wairua of the children and whānau is nurtured. This is evident through many comments by teachers to children about their manaaki of other children and direct reference to their wairua being very settled or happy that day.

Parents are treated with respect and dignity. They hear teachers using te reo Māori phrases and experience a programme that affirms and validates aspects of Te Ao Māori. They know their children are participating in a programme that strengthens their identity as tangata whenua.

Staff are active in promoting and enhancing the bicultural nature of their programme. They are open to learning te reo Māori and gaining knowledge of the Māori world. Learning about differences enables them to easily accept everyone for who they are.

Development is not a race-we progress at our own rate.

What might help other services?

When asked what might help other services to be more responsive to whānau and to support Māori children, teachers highlighted that:

- you need to know, accept and appreciate your own culture before you can appreciate others' cultures;
- your attitude determines how you see others;
- building relationships is a key;
- it is important to 'not be afraid,' to be open to taking some risks;
- it is important to value everyone's contributions to the centre, in whatever way that might be; and
- it's not what's on the wall but what's in your heart that counts.

Teachers at Takaro Kindergarten advocate for Māori children to develop strong learning foundations and a sense of themselves as learners. The head teacher provides effective leadership to advance bicultural development in this kindergarten.

What does our service do to provide for Māori children and their whānau?

Date:	Observation/practise	Notes: <i>(Please attach any evidence)</i>

Criteria 6 Guidance

Any examples in the guidance are provided as a starting point to show how services can meet (or exceed) the requirement. Services may choose to use other approaches better suited to their needs as long as they comply with the criteria.

Children's learning and development is enhanced if the well-being of their family and community is supported; if their family, culture, knowledge and community are respected; and if there is a strong connection and consistency between all aspects of the child's world. When all families are welcomed it supports a child's sense of connection and connectedness. The service curriculum supports the cultural identity of all children, affirms and celebrates cultural differences, and aims to help children gain a positive awareness of their own and other cultures.

Providing culturally competent care in early childhood services in New Zealand

Considering culture

Lisa Terreni with Judi McCallum

New Zealand, an island nation once relatively isolated from the rest of the world, is experiencing, like many nations, increasing immigration and resettlement by peoples from around the globe.

Statistics from the Ministry of Education show that the percentages of children attending early childhood services from different ethnic backgrounds have increased over the past 10 years. It is very likely that early childhood practitioners will, during the course of their teaching careers, work with children and families who come from different ethnic backgrounds and who bring with them the different experiences, customs and values embedded in their particular cultures.

Increasingly, early childhood practitioners are considering theories that address issues of bicultural and multi-cultural education. However, in my experience as a professional development facilitator, practitioners often skip the debate on what culture actually 'is', in their efforts to try and deal with the 'what should be done'.

This paper addresses some of the current theories that attempt to understand 'culture' and examines some of the concepts underlying theories of inter-cultural communication. It examines how understanding ideas about culture and inter-cultural communication has implications for early childhood education practitioners from the dominant culture.

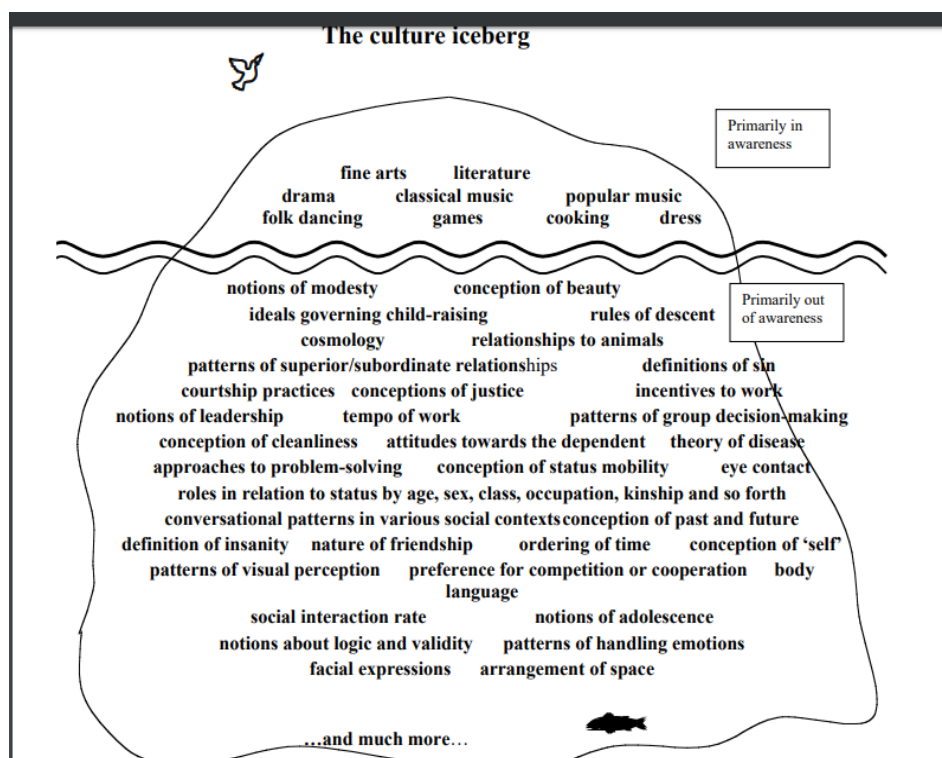
What is culture?

"Culture can be a set of fundamental ideas, practices and experiences of a group of people that are symbolically transmitted generation to generation through a learning process. Culture may as well refer to the beliefs, norms, and attitudes that are used to guide our behaviours and solve problems." (Chen and Starosta, 1998, p 25).

Culture is multi-layered. Overt signs of culture manifest themselves in symbols or phenomena that are concrete and explicit e.g. language, festivals, food, and dress. It is often these overt signs that are most easily identifiable and which can be more easily shared with others. However, the implicit and subconscious assumptions individuals hold about existence determine the beliefs, norms and attitudes of a culture. These lie beneath the concrete and explicit manifestations of the culture and are often more difficult to identify or be aware of.

Early childhood practitioners, in their efforts to be culturally inclusive, often explore with children the concrete and explicit aspects of different cultures. For example by including a wide variety of different cultural objects in the family area, providing a range of culturally diverse dress-ups, preparing, cooking and eating different types of food, presenting photographs and art objects from different cultures in the environment. It is also in these areas that parents often make valid contributions to the programme, e.g. by teaching a song or telling a story from their culture, or preparing food.

However, increasing one’s knowledge of the implicit beliefs and orientations that inform the practices of a culture can lead to deeper understanding of cultural difference and increase the possibility of quality inter-cultural communication.



Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1998) provide a framework for unpacking the implicit assumptions about culture that are more difficult to access. They do this by identifying three issues common to all cultures: relationships with people, relationships with time and relationships with nature. These three issues are universals, however the way cultures resolve these three issues is where cultural difference lies. It is useful to examine these three dimensions more closely.

Relationships with people

The way in which human beings deal with each other depends very much on the way their culture determines their 'relational orientation' (Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 1998).

These orientations can be described as:

- Individualism or communitarianism
- Neutral or emotional
- Achievement or ascription
- Specific or diffuse
- Universalism or particularism

The orientations need to be viewed as being on continuums rather than polarised. Very often a culture will fall somewhere in the middle of the continuum rather than at one end or the other.

Individualism or communitarianism (the individual or the group)

A culture that has its prime orientation to the self (individualism) places the needs and wants of the individual first. Underlying this cultural orientation is the belief that once individual needs are met, the individual is then better able to contribute to the group.

A culture that has a prime orientation to common goals and objectives (communitarianism) will consider these first. This cultural orientation perceives that the community must be strong to adequately meet the needs of individuals.

The following procedures in a work place may be threatening to staff, parents or children coming from one or other of these orientations:

- Encouraging independence rather than dependence
- Singling out an individual for praise or special attention
- Seeking consensus rather than majority rule
- Prioritising individual goals rather than family goals

Janet Gonzalez-Mena (2002) describes a conflict between a parent and caregiver over the amount of assistance given to a child attempting to dress herself. The caregiver's perception of infancy is framed by her culture in which she views infants as needing to be taught independent self-help skills so they will develop as individuals. The parent, coming from a culture which values personal connectedness sees dependency in childhood as an important way of maintaining the ties that bind family.

As a kindergarten teacher once working in a predominantly Pakeha community in New Zealand, I was alerted to this cultural difference when I approached a Chinese mother who was staying at kindergarten with her child every day. I was curious to find out why the mother wanted to stay and felt it was important to let this mother know her child would develop some independence by being left at kindergarten on her own. Despite my good intentions the mother was rather taken back by my approach and told me that her time with her child was very precious, and she wanted to be with her child as much as she could before the child went to school.

Caring for the young and the elderly in communitarian cultures is often something that is shared by the wider family. Early childhood practitioners should be aware that the parenting of children from a communitarian culture might not be the sole responsibility of the biological parents.

Neutral or emotional (the range of feelings expressed)

Reason and emotion both play a role in relationships between people. A culture in which members do not overtly communicate their feelings and keep them more controlled and subdued is described as being affectively (emotionally) neutral. There is an emphasis on 'rational' rather than 'emotional' processes.

A culture which is much more expressive emotionally uses a more expressive style of communicating. There is more overt 'laughing, smiling, grimacing, scowling, gesturing' (Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 1998) as people attempt to find outlets for their emotions. Neutral cultures tend to use humour, understatement and irony rather than emoting overtly. The tolerance of silence, tone, use of words, and the amount of non-verbal communication, such as eye contact, distance, touch and gesture, also depend on cultural orientation.

Recently, a Pakeha friend flew home after visiting her father who had just had a major stroke. She sat next to a Māori woman and in the course of the flight they began to converse. After my friend described the reason for her trip, her companion remarked that she thought Pakeha people really didn't express their emotions very much. Slightly taken aback by this analysis, my friend replied that actually her family had been in tears all weekend. However, it had been her controlled description of the reason for her visit that had prompted her companion's remark.

In early childhood contexts it is important to consider the cultural background of children and their parents in relation to how feelings and emotions are expressed. Knowing that different cultures emote differently can reduce negative judgments about people.

Achievement or ascription (how status is accorded)

How status is assigned to people differs significantly from culture to culture. In some cultures individuals are accorded higher status on the basis of their achievements (achieved status). This differs greatly from cultures that give individuals higher status due to their age, class, gender, profession or education (ascribed status). For example, in Pakeha society it is not unusual to find young educated women in positions of responsibility and leadership whose age, appearance and gender would not be accorded the same status in a culture that ascribes status.

It is important for early childhood educators to find out how status is determined in the particular ethnic communities using their service. This can help make the most effective and appropriate links with communities. For example, in Pacific Islands communities ministers of the church and their wives have high status and influence. Consequently, developing relationship with local ministers can be beneficial. There may some circumstances where it is more appropriate for initial meetings with parents to be conducted by the head teacher, supervisor, or a staff member who is older and more experienced.

Specific or diffuse (the range of personal involvement)

Cultures that perceive relationships as being specific tend to keep relationships in separate areas. This means that the status associated with a relationship will be likely to remain within the context of that relationship. For example, the status of a teacher tends to be confined to the specific context of the school and does not necessarily flow on into other relationships outside of this context.

Diffuse cultures tend to have relationships that are less segregated. This means the status accompanying a person's occupation, for example, is carried with them into other areas of their life rather than being confined to the work context.

It is useful for early childhood practitioners to be aware of the specific/diffuse orientation of different cultures they are working with. The status of teachers is often very high in some cultures, and the respect (mana) that accompanies this, extends beyond the classroom door into the wider community. It is important, I believe, for practitioners to acknowledge this deference to their position and to be aware that there may be an expectation of formality in this relationship.

Another aspect of specific or diffuse orientations involves personal space and public space. In a 'specific' culture the public space tends to be large and segregated into many sections, which means that a member of this culture may have a relationship with someone in a particular context but not in another. For example, a person may have a relationship with someone at work but this relationship may not carry over into a social context. People from specific cultures are often

perceived as very friendly, relaxed and accessible because admitting someone into one area of their public lives is not necessarily a big commitment.

In contrast, in a diffuse culture a person's life space is harder to enter and permission is needed to 'come in'. The public space is relatively small and the private space large and diffuse, which means that once admitted as a friend, admission is granted into many aspects of the person's private life. International students often comment that although Pakeha New Zealanders are extremely friendly people you may never be invited into their houses.

I recently worked with a group of parents from Latin America who wanted to start a Spanish speaking playgroup. Developing and building a personal relationship with the group was important in terms of establishing respect for and trust in my expertise, but most importantly for developing a level of friendship that extended beyond the usual professional relationship with playgroups.

Universalism or particularism (rules or relationships)

Cultures that share an obligation to adhere to standards universally agreed upon (the laws and rules of a culture) are described as universalist cultures. There is a belief that, by applying set rules to everybody, all people are treated as equals.

Cultures that have a primary focus on people and focus on the exceptional circumstances of a situation can be described as particularist cultures. Particularist cultures focus on 'the exceptional nature of a present circumstance' (Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 1998: 31). Rules can, at times, be disregarded as the importance of a relationship takes precedence.

Although these two positions seem polarised, the reality of the situation is that often both kinds of judgements are used. For example, in early childhood contexts the particular circumstances of a family or child may involve a bending of the rules. As a kindergarten teacher I was occasionally requested by a parent, who had particular difficulties in arranging for a child to be collected on time, to care for the child a little longer. To me, these particular circumstances often warranted a change in the rules.

Relationships with time

How cultures orient themselves to the past, present and future differs. Cultures that place a high value on tradition, relationships with ancestors and strong family ties generally have an orientation to the past, e.g. Māori and Japanese cultures. Successes, achievements, knowledge and wisdom gained from the past have a place in guiding behaviour in the present and future.

However, some cultures have an orientation to the present. As the past is seen as unimportant and the future vague and unpredictable, only the here and now is deemed important.

Cultures that have a future orientation tend to view change as highly important and the future as being potentially bolder, brighter and better than the past or present.

Time management

Whether time is managed sequentially or synchronically can also depend on cultural orientation. Time can be viewed as a social construct that enables members of a culture to coordinate their activities.

Time can be seen as sequential, i.e. a line of events that happen in sequence and pass at regular intervals. Those who think sequentially view everything as having a time and a place, and changes to this can create levels of uncertainty. For sequential people, schedules and time slots are of prime importance. Punctuality is important, and lateness can cause great anxiety. "Time is viewed as a commodity to be used up and lateness deprives the other of precious minutes in a world where 'time is money'" (Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 1998: 128).

Conversely, synchronic methods of time management usually involve activities happening in parallel. Ways of reaching particular goals may involve a more circuitous route. Synchronic cultures are less concerned with people being servants of time; rather time is seen as the servant of people. Less concerned with punctuality and schedules, synchronic people consider their relationships with others as having higher priority and consequently needing more time.

For early childhood practitioners an understanding about orientation to time is important particularly when entering into cultural contexts that are different from their own. For example, when attending hui on a marae, it is useful to know that a great deal of time will be spent on protocol and establishing links with the past. The actual getting down to business may also take some time due to the need to establish relationships within the group e.g. through use of mihi - where everyone has a formal opportunity to introduce themselves to the group.

Awareness about different orientations to time can help foster understanding about time management behaviours that might appear rude or discourteous. It has been my experience that those involved in the parenting and education of young children often manage time sequentially and synchronically. For example, I recently met with the playgroup coordinator of a rural playgroup. I needed to sit with her to check administrative details and discuss the progress of the group. She was able to meet with me and discuss the business, breast feed her baby and support her other child's creative endeavour all at the same time!

Relationships with nature

How cultures relate to nature and the different forces created by natural events also determine certain beliefs and behaviours. Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1998) describe two main orientations to nature: societies that believe nature can be controlled by humans through the imposition of human 'will' or societies which believe that humans are part of nature and must abide by the directions and forces of nature .

In highly industrialised societies, like the United States, Australia and the United Kingdom, the mastery-over-nature view is quite dominant. Physical control of the environment by machines and technology are ways of controlling nature, but so too are advances in medicine which control illness and disease. This view sees nature as something that can be controlled and subjugated by the individual and extols the belief that humans control their own destinies.

A cultural orientation that sees society as a product of nature emphasises its relationship to the environment and the need to respond to external circumstances. It is not seen as weakness to accept the arbitrary nature of events that can occur beyond the control of human beings.

According to Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1998: 153) western business managers are often surprised at their 'success' in imposing their procedures and methods on other cultures. This occurs because some of these cultures "are accustomed to being heavily influenced from external sources and taking their cue from the environment." But they caution that it is a mistake to assume that "accepting guidance from outside is the same as internalising it or using it successfully." They add

that these cultures do not like to debate or confront, and directives that seem to be accepted may not actually be considered appropriate. Similar situations arise in an early childhood context. Many early childhood educators have expressed frustration with parents from different cultural groups who appear to have acknowledged and understood information or directives given to them by staff but later their actions reveal that this information has not been taken on board.

Conclusion

Political policies such as integration and assimilation, that have been part of New Zealand's history, have resulted in the domination of white, European culture over indigenous Māori culture and other minority cultures living in New Zealand. As a consequence, mainstream early childhood pedagogy in New Zealand is essentially a product of the majority culture's underlying value base and beliefs about the education of young children (Canella, 1997). It is vital that practitioners do not assume that the values and philosophies embedded in mainstream early childhood services are shared by all the families who attend.

Although there is a degree of diversity in early childhood pedagogies being implemented in New Zealand such as Te Kohanga Reo and Aoga Amata, practitioners in mainstream early childhood services have a responsibility to ensure that families from different cultures understand the assumptions upon which their early childhood programmes are based. In other words, practitioners need to consciously 'unpack' underlying theories and philosophies for families so the cultural messages inherent in the programme are made as explicit as possible. The framework outlined in this paper may help in this process.

Developing good relationships with parents and families so that practitioners can begin to engage in meaningful dialogue with parents is the most successful way for teachers to begin the process. This dialogue enables practitioners to discover the beliefs and experiences parents and children from different cultural backgrounds bring to the early childhood centre. The next article in this series *Creating culturally competent care in early childhood services in New Zealand - Part 2: Developing dialogue* examines ways in which teachers can engage in and develop meaningful dialogue with parents from diverse cultures.

Providing culturally competent care in early childhood services in New Zealand

‘Developing dialogue’

Lisa Terreni

The first paper in this series Providing culturally competent care in early childhood services in New Zealand - Part 1: Considering culture examined some current theory on ‘culture’, some of the concepts underlying successful inter-cultural communication, and their implications for early childhood education practitioners. The paper concluded with a call for mainstream early childhood practitioners to ensure that families from different cultures understand the premises upon which early childhood education programmes in New Zealand are based, by consciously ‘unpacking’ underlying theories and philosophies for families.

Developing good relationships with parents and families so that practitioners can begin to engage in meaningful dialogue with parents is the most successful way for teachers to begin to ‘unpack’ the early childhood education programme for parents. Dialogue enables practitioners to discover the beliefs and experiences that parents and children from different cultural backgrounds bring to their new experiences with early childhood programmes in New Zealand. This paper examines ways in which teachers can engage and develop meaningful dialogue with parents from diverse cultures. It presents ideas for developing meaningful dialogue by drawing from my own teaching experiences, both as teacher and early childhood professional development facilitator, the writings and experiences of other early childhood educators working in diverse communities, and interviews with parents themselves. Janet Gonzalez-Mena in her book *Multicultural issues in child care states*, ‘It’s good for children to receive culturally competent care that is sensitive and has a global, multiethnic view’ (2001, p17). An experienced childcare provider and an advocate for increased awareness of multicultural issues in early childhood education services, Gonzalez-Mena describes the essential requirements for providing culturally competent care as:

- respect – for children, parents and teachers;
- parents and teachers understanding that each may have different perspectives on early childhood education;
- parents, teachers and caregivers understanding that the values embedded in an early childhood education programme may differ from family values;
- parents and teachers finding ways to accommodate differences, and for teachers and parents to create ‘ongoing dialogues’ with each other.

Teachers and caregivers working in early childhood services are regularly talking to the parents of the children who attend their service. However, it has been my observation that often these conversations and discussions are snatched during a busy teaching session or as

parents drop off or collect their children. Sustained conversations where shared points of view are established, and different points of view and experiences are clarified, can be something of luxury in a busy teaching schedule. I became aware that developing dialogue with parents can be problematic for a variety of reasons. For example, some parents are very shy and are not confident enough to stay at the centre. Conversely, sometimes parents believe that their children must learn to get along without them and fend for themselves in the new cultural environment. Sometimes talking to the children can be easier than talking to their parents as children often have a greater command of English than their parents.

For parents using full day childcare services as opposed to sessional services, time constraints and parents' commitment to paid employment may create even less opportunities for dialogue.

However, there are two ways of engaging in dialogue that I believe can deepen and extend the relationship between practitioners and parents.

Spontaneous dialogue

For many years I was the head teacher of a kindergarten in a multi-ethnic, low socio-economic community in Wellington, New Zealand. It was a rich and vibrant community but one which constantly challenged the kindergarten staff. How was it possible to meet the needs of all these different children? How could we make every parent and child feel welcome and included in the programme? How could we adequately communicate the theory underpinning our teaching practice and the early childhood curriculum? And most importantly, how was it possible to create meaningful relationships with parents when so many of them spoke little or no English? I believe that one of the greatest strengths of my kindergarten teaching team was genuine interest that each staff member had about the families who used the kindergarten. Consequently, staff regularly engaged in spontaneous dialogues with parents because they really were interested in finding out about aspects of different cultures, as well as a family's previous experiences in their country of origin. These dialogues often provided insights into children's strengths and interests, and sometimes had interesting spin-offs into the kindergarten programme, e.g. awareness of significant festivals that were then celebrated at the kindergarten. Staff understood that they were both teachers and learners and recognised that the parents who came to the kindergarten were an invaluable source of information about their children, their child-rearing and cultural practices. Spontaneous dialogue often develops between teachers and parents/caregivers when parents/caregivers are given the opportunity to spend time at a centre with their children. One of the key responsibilities of teachers who wish to provide culturally competent care for children is to ensure that the centre is welcoming to all parents. Inviting parents to stay with their children, spending time developing a relationship with them by demonstrating an interest in their culture, and encouraging them to participate and contribute to the programme creates opportunities for spontaneous dialogue to occur between parents and teachers during a session. Although this sounds like an easy thing to do, it sometimes takes effort and persistence to develop trusting relationships that enable parents to feel comfortable staying at the centre.

Key ingredients for successful spontaneous dialogue:

- Provide an environment that welcomes all families - by talking to parents, showing an interest in their culture, finding resources that reflect the cultures of the children attending and including them in the programme.
- Actively encourage parents to stay and spend time with children in the centre whenever they can, and formally invite parents to stay for certain activities – workshops, breakfasts or lunches working bees (Ramsey, 1998, p103).

Providing culturally competent care in early childhood services in New Zealand

‘Parents’ experiences of different pedagogies’

Lisa Terreni

In Providing culturally competent care in early childhood services in New Zealand -Part 2: Developing dialogues, strategies were presented for practitioners to engage in meaningful dialogue with parents and families. It was argued that on-going dialogue is the most successful way for teachers to begin to ‘unpack’ the early childhood programme for parents, as well as helping early childhood practitioners discover the beliefs and experiences that parents from different cultural backgrounds bring to their new encounter with early childhood programmes in New Zealand.

Families who migrate to New Zealand have often had experiences of early childhood education programmes in their countries of origin. Their previous experiences of early childhood pedagogy are sometimes quite different from that practiced in New Zealand. Discovering these differences by talking with parents can be illuminating and can highlight areas of potential discomfort for both parents and practitioners.

For the purposes of this paper I interviewed three parents from different cultural backgrounds who have had experience of early childhood services in their countries of origin and whose children have also attended early childhood services in New Zealand. At the end of each interview there is an analysis of points of difference that practitioners may want to consider as topics for discussion with parents.

An early childhood experience in Jordan Mohammed Shubair, his wife and three children came to New Zealand in 1996 from Jordan. Mohammed, a trained medical doctor who had practiced medicine in Jordan for many years, came to New Zealand because of job opportunities and the volatile political situation in the Middle East.

Was the kindergarten your children went to in Jordan significantly different from the educational environment you found when you came to New Zealand?

“Yes it was! Of course the first big thing was the language difference. The kindergarten in Jordan did not have the freedom as the kindergartens do here. In the kindergarten in Jordan the kids cannot draw and spoil their clothes, get wet and dirty with the sand and everything. In Jordan they are not

allowed to do this. The other thing is going on trips and to museums. In Jordan we don't have those facilities available... At the kindergarten they used to teach the children English words...In our country we teach Arabic and English."

You described how the kindergarten in Jordan did not have messy activities. How was it for you coming into a kindergarten in New Zealand that allowed these activities?

"We were so surprised actually because in Jordan when I finished my work and I would go and pick them [the children] up from the kindergarten and I would wait five or ten minutes outside because maybe Lana's hair is not brushed well or she has some food or stains on her so the teachers would not allow me to take Lana home in this way!

When we arrived in New Zealand and our children started kindergarten my wife was so surprised and said, "Look they are wet all over, and all stained!". We asked our friends "why are they allowing this?", especially as you know how my kids they love the water, especially Hala! Everyday when she came home from the kindy she was all wet and we had to change all her clothes. Well, in our country they are not allowed to do those things!

" Did this upset you?

"Yes, because we have to change their clothes and at home we try to keep them tidy and clean. But when we find that all the other people do the same thing then it was a problem just for us...but not any more!

I think it the programme should be explored with the family and it's a good idea to interview the family... not just to enrol like I did. It is very important to sit with the family and say well we do this and this...so the family knows what to expect from the programme and for you to know what we expect...how our child should be taught."

The interview with Mohammed highlights some of the areas that and he and his wife found challenging when his children started attending kindergarten in New Zealand.

Mohammed and his family's experience of early childhood education in Jordan was of a formal and structured system. Their expectations were framed by this experience and they found some things challenging when they first started their children at a New Zealand kindergarten. State funded New Zealand kindergartens tend to be informal and operate with a child-centred pedagogy that encourages and allows active, hands-on learning experiences in a relatively unstructured environment.

Mohammed raises the issue of the children 'spoiling their clothes' and identifies this as a problem for him and his wife. It is unlikely that a New Zealand kindergarten teacher would anticipate that children getting dirty during the course of their creative engagement in the programme would be a problem!

Mohammed and his family would have preferred a formal interview with teachers about the programme before the children started at the kindergarten. Introduction to the New Zealand kindergarten system is often a more informal process, generally taking place when a child starts and over a period of time as teachers get to know parents and children better.

An early childhood experience in India

Usha Khanna came to New Zealand from Bombay, one of the largest cities in India, with her husband and two children in 1993. Her youngest daughter, Risha, was then four years old and started kindergarten soon after they arrived in New Zealand.

You told me that Risha went to preschool in India for one year... what is pre-school like in India?

Well, it is completely different from here...quite the opposite! Risha started kindy there at the age of three. There they teach them to learn to read and write. There she learned 1-20 - to count, and she could write A – Z in capital letters and small letters and she knew many poems, in our language as well as in English.

So was it like a school with desks?

Yes, it had benches and desks and they had to go and sit in one place...they couldn't move around here and there in the class. They have some swings outside and when there is a break they can play outside but not inside the class. They have charts all around the walls of the food and animals to teach them but nothing to play with in the class. It is all sitting down and the teacher is there at the blackboard, she'll say 'apple' and children will repeat after her.

It sounds as if it was very different from New Zealand kindergartens?

Yes, but now Risha likes it here! There are lots of things to play with and I was amazed at how many things there are for children to do!

We started kindergarten [in New Zealand] after the holidays and I was with Risha all the time because Risha had language problems and we were new to the place and I was not happy to leave her alone. I wanted to stay with her so I was there all the time with her and slowly, slowly she was happy there...she was very attached to her teachers! And I also got friendly with them and I was happy to come there because the teachers were very good to me.

It is interesting because I think you said the kindergarten teachers were some of the first people that you met here. Is this correct?

Yes, and at the kindergarten I met other parents. The first friend you can say I made was at kindergarten - the teacher Jo. She was very good to me, and she used to talk to me about India, and how I feel here and if I had any problems. She would say 'don't worry we will help you!' She was very good and she helped me a lot...so I was very happy to come to kindergarten.

You stayed at kindergarten with Risha for about six months didn't you?

Yes, all the time I would stay there...then slowly, slowly she would want me to go back so I would stay for one hour and then I would go back [home] and then I would come back early... I felt I should stay with her...she was very small and very attached to me so she wanted me all the time so I was there with her.

How would you have felt if the teachers had told you to go?

I would not have been happy because that's the thing in India, they don't allow you to stay in the class. Once the child is there in the classroom they tell you to go out...and there in India I would wait

outside the class till Risha had calmed down! So here when they said I could stay here I was so surprised and so happy. The first time I asked if I could stay the teacher said 'Yes! As long as you want!'

I loved to do cooking there...I was happy that you liked Indian food! All the children came to me and got to know me...everybody used to come to me and say 'Usha can you help me!' It was very good and I was very happy. It was very good for me.

Did some activities at the kindergarten made you anxious?

I was happy with all the things...I counted one day, there were more than 20 things - like play-dough, dressing and painting and colouring...and the paint and they can do what ever they like with the paint! In India, first of all there is no paint for kids and they are very careful about what children do with their clothes but here it's free! What ever they want they can do! The only thing I was worried about was the carpentry section, they have got hammers and all, and I was worried someone would come and hit my Risha with a hammer...I was not happy with that section but the rest was fantastic!

Here I think children enjoy their childhood. They get their childhood! Like playing with the sand, and paints and colouring...it's what the children need and what they want they can do...like get messy or whatever. First I was worried Risha was getting paint on her clothes but they love playing with water, and the sand and the mud and everything...and that's very good...now I realise it was all very good for Risha!"

The interview with Usha Khanna illustrates some areas that she appreciated in the New Zealand system.

Usha had experienced a very structured and formal early childhood education system in India. Hand-on learning opportunities were minimal and the teacher dictated the range of activities children engaged in. Usha appreciated the range of different activities provided at the New Zealand kindergarten, however, some of the hands-on activities, e.g. the carpentry area, she felt were dangerous for children. She was initially worried about her daughter getting paint on her clothes, but came to appreciate that 'messy' experiences were good for her daughter's learning.

Usha had experienced a system in India that excluded parental involvement and was relieved to discover that the New Zealand system accommodated her need to stay with her child. She was able to settle her child at the child's own pace, and become familiar with the kindergarten environment. This was important for both child and parent.

Usha made friends by attending the kindergarten with her child. She made friends with the teachers who valued her input and who spent time with her discussing her feelings about being in the new country. She also met other parents through the kindergarten.

It is important to add that by regularly attending the kindergarten with her daughter, Usha participated in the kindergarten programme as a parent-helper and, eventually, as a paid reliever. This experience later gave Usha the confidence to get paid employment as a caregiver at a daycare centre and then later as a Barnardos family caregiver.

Kindergarten teaching in China

Mandy and her husband came to New Zealand in 1996 from Guangzhou City in south China. Mandy was a trained kindergarten teacher who taught for 6 years at a kindergarten in Guangzhou. Mandy

now has a two and a half year old son, Raymond, and she teaches at Yau Yih Yun, a Cantonese speaking pre-school in Wellington.

Mandy describes kindergarten teaching in China as 'very hard work'. Because parents have to go to work, children start attending early childhood facilities at a very young age, usually starting at an early childhood service at 6 months old. Some children stay at the early childhood service during the week and go home with their parents at weekends. Kindergarten programmes are only provided for 3, 4 and 5 year old children.

Kindergartens are typically provided and supported by a company or business for the children of its employees. Children usually arrive at the kindergarten around 7.30 am and domestic staff give children their breakfast. Teachers use this time to talk to parents about the children. The kindergarten programme begins at 9.00 am and is very structured, with sessions in the mornings dedicated to teaching curriculum subjects such as maths, science, language etc. Lunch break is from 12.00 – 2.30 pm and children usually have a sleep before recommencing the programme at 2.30 pm.

In the afternoon children play teacher-directed games 'to calm the children down' until parents come to collect their children at 4.30 pm. Mandy said the New Zealand idea of 'child-directed, free play' does not exist in the Chinese early childhood context. She said that if teachers in China introduced free-play into their programmes they would be seen as 'not doing their jobs properly.' An average kindergarten class has about 40 children and is taught by one teacher and a teacher aide – teacher aides are often first year teachers.

Teachers need to do a lot of preparation and lesson planning before each class. Kindergartens have a Director who oversees the teachers' work and checks their lesson planning. Much of what is taught in the programme is determined by the Ministry of Education. Mandy found kindergarten teaching quite stressful due to the amount of work teachers were required to do and the pressure from their Directors.

Other differences Mandy described were:

- Kindergarten children wear uniforms.
- Kindergartens often enter competitions with each other, e.g. performance of nationalistic songs and dances.
- Some activities found in early childhood services in New Zealand, such as carpentry, would be considered too dangerous for children in China.
- Children never sit on the floor in Chinese kindergartens as the floors are concrete and it is considered that the floor is too dirty to sit on. Children always sit on chairs.
- Water play and sand play are very slowly being introduced into kindergarten programmes in China but children do not have the same freedom to play with these activities as children do in New Zealand.

The interview with Mandy illustrates a very formal, structured and teacher directed teaching system, where the content of kindergarten programmes is carefully controlled. Concepts about play and the types of play opportunities experienced at a Chinese kindergarten are teacher directed rather than child-centred and some activities that would be found in a New Zealand early childhood service are considered inappropriate, e.g. carpentry.

Mandy's experiences of early childhood services in New Zealand, as a teacher, and a playgroup parent, have been very positive. She enjoys the more relaxed attitude to running an early childhood programme and likes getting feedback from parents. However, Mandy has decided that when her son Raymond is old enough she will send him to a Montessori preschool because she likes their more structured approach.

Conclusion

Canella (1997, p135) challenges proponents of child-centred early childhood pedagogy to be aware that "child-centred pedagogy and play, as central tenets within educational practice, have been created in a particular culture with particular values and biases. Applying the notion of play to all peoples in all situations denies the multiple value structures, knowledges, and views of the world which are created by people in diverse contexts." It is important when discussing different early childhood pedagogies to remember that they are culturally determined and are likely to be valid and appropriate in their specific cultural context. These three examples of parents' experiences of early childhood pedagogies in their countries of origin illustrate some quite fundamental differences to early childhood services in New Zealand. It is important to consider that although some parents may not have had their children attend early childhood services in their country of origin, their own experiences of early childhood may also colour their expectations. It is also important not to assume that parents who have come to New Zealand from countries that have similar early childhood systems in place, e.g. Australia, Britain and the US, will be immediately au fait with the New Zealand curriculum. Allowing time for discussion with parents about their experiences will enable both parents and practitioners to develop dialogue and increase their understanding.

Evidence of our culturally responsive programme in action

Date	Teacher	Evidence	Supporting information <i>(Please attach copies to this document)</i>

C7 Curriculum responsive

Guidance

Any examples in the guidance are provided as a starting point to show how services can meet (or exceed) the requirement. Services may choose to use other approaches better suited to their needs as long as they comply with the criteria.

A service curriculum that is inclusive ensures all children know that the early childhood service they attend is a place where they belong and where they feel valued for who they are.

The service curriculum treats all children, regardless of their age, gender, ethnicity, and abilities, as competent and confident learners who are active participants in their own learning. Supportive, responsive educators guide children to make choices in, and contribute to the planning of, the programme in an early childhood service.

The curriculum will enable children with special needs to be actively engaged in learning with and alongside the other children in the service.

Equity Policy

Rationale

We are committed to recognising children as individuals and valuing their contributions. Each child is ensured the same care and education regardless of ability, gender, ethnicity, culture or socio-economic background.

The needs of the individual child are of paramount importance. Our programme is flexible and offers a positive learning environment that meets the individual needs of all children in our care.

Te Whariki

Contribution - Goal 1. Children experience an environment in which there are equitable opportunities for learning, irrespective of gender, disability, age, ethnicity or background.

Belonging - Goal 2. Children experience an environment where they know that they have a place.

Procedures

- All children regardless of gender, ability, culture or background can be enrolled at our centre(s).
- Teachers at our centre(s) will encourage all children to:
 1. Develop good relationships with other people.
 2. Appreciate other points of view.
 3. Show consideration, thoughtfulness and care for others.
 4. Develop an awareness of right and wrong, fairness and justice.
 5. Develop a positive self-concept.
 6. Begin to understand the cultures and religions of other people.
- Teachers are made aware of and respect individual and cultural needs through the parent information that is required on each child's enrolment form.
- Teachers respect cultural diversity and individual needs by supporting and including them in our programme.
- Teachers are aware of their language and behaviour when interacting with children, ensuring it is non-discriminatory and positive.
- When purchasing equipment, care is taken to ensure the diversity of people and groups in New Zealand are being portrayed in posters, puzzles, books, music, etc.
- Consideration will be fostered by encouraging co-operative play. The children will be helped to share and take turns in a supportive and meaningful way.
- Thankfulness too, comes from experience – children must first have feelings of appreciation before they can have feelings of thankfulness.
- Teachers at our Early Learning Centre support the Te Tiriti o Waitangi and provide opportunities for children to explore and experience the Māori culture.
- Children with special rights will not be excluded from any area of our programme unless this is their parents' wish.
- The teachers will work with parents and outside agencies to ensure a smooth transition for any child with special rights who is beginning or ceasing attendance.

- Any records concerning children with special rights are kept confidential.
- If we do not have the equipment necessary to enhance a particular child's development, we will seek advice to ensure we acquire the appropriate resources.
- If we do not have the expertise required to enhance a particular child's development, the matter will be discussed with parents and management and left to the Manager's discretion to recommend a more specialist service better able to read and meet the needs of the particular child.

C8 Language-rich environment

Guidance

Any examples in the guidance are provided as a starting point to show how services can meet (or exceed) the requirement. Services may choose to use other approaches better suited to their needs as long as they comply with the criteria.

Language is a vital part of communication and cultural transmission. If children are competent communicators, they are well-placed to enjoy their relationships with others and to be successful learners. Language does not consist only of words, sentences, and stories though; it includes the language of images, art, dance, drama, mathematics, technology, movement, rhythm, print, and music.

The ‘languages’ used in the environment will depend on the make-up of the children and families that attend, and the community that the service serves - for example a language-rich environment in an infant and toddler setting may look, feel, and sound different from a setting for older children.

In early childhood services in Aotearoa/New Zealand it is important that educators understand the significance of te reo Māori and that it is heard, seen, and used throughout the day and integrated throughout the service curriculum.

All children will enter an early childhood service with a first language. Sometimes this language is different to the language or languages used in the centre. It is important that educators work in collaboration with the parents/whānau of the child to ensure that the child’s first language is integrated into the service curriculum in real and meaningful ways.

STRATEGIES AKO TAHI KAI AKO WILL IMPLEMENT TO SUPPORT A LANGUAGE RICH ENVIRONMENT

CREATING A LANGUAGE RICH ENVIRONMENT

It is amazing watching children learn to talk. They start out with babbles that morph into single words that they soon learn to string together to form sentences. By age three, we can actually have conversations with these little people! And the more amazing thing is that these children are learning language in the everyday moments of life! I'm talking about meal times, diaper changes, dressing in the mornings, and in their everyday play. These sometimes boring and mundane activities for us adults are actually the ones that matter *most*. Here are some tips on making those everyday moments count, especially with little ones. Click on the link to read more tip in more detail.

1. Slow down and be truly present in your interactions as much as possible. Put down the phone, close the computer, and be present with your body and mind, as much as possible.

2. Talk to your child throughout everyday activities

3. Follow your child's lead in everyday activities. Believe it or not, this can be challenging sometimes!

4. Whenever possible, get down at your child's level to communicate with him/her.

5. Don't just focus on your child's words; watch your child (especially pre or non verbal) for his nonverbal communication cues. This is especially important for children who are not yet communicating with any/many words.

6. Interpret your child's messages (both verbal and nonverbal).

7. Respond meaningfully to your child's communication attempts within your child's Zone of Proximal Development.

8. Try to keep your language positive. Balance the inevitable "no's" "stop's" and the "don'ts" with LOT'S of positive talk! I suggest 5-6 positive comments for every negative.

9. Talk about what you are doing and what he is doing during your everyday routines. During diaper changes, meal times, bath times, etc.

10. Ask questions, but not too many. Balance your comments to questions at around 4 or 5 comments to each question.

- 11. Expand on what he/she says. If your toddler says “car!” expand his words and tell him “Yes! A blue car!” Stress those new words.*
- 12. Provide your little ones with opportunities to communicate throughout their day.*
- 13. Read, read, and read some more! Ask questions, talk about the pictures, stress new words and have FUN.*
- 14. Play. Children learn through their play and play is your perfect opportunity to jump in and follow their lead to respond meaningfully!*
- 15. Stop counting and start communicating! Sure, incorporate letters and numbers into your daily life but don’t make those the focus of those early years (especially the first three years).*
- 16. SINGING! Singing is awesome for speech and language. Itsy Bitsy Spider, Wheels on the Bus, even Let it Go (ha...if you aren’t sick of it yet!)*
- 17. Stay active! Play outdoors as children often learn language while on the move.*
- 18. Limit screen time. For two reasons: 1) research shows vocabulary is best learned through direct conversation and 2) time spent on the screen is time spent NOT doing other things, that are better for their development.*

Guidance on how Ako Tahi will provide a Language Rich Environment

This article written by Speech and Language Therapists about how children learn language, how to provide a language-rich environment, what can go wrong and what you can do to help.

We are surrounded by vast amounts of research which clearly show the importance of good early language skills, without which children and young people are at risk of social, emotional, educational and economic disadvantage.

Here, we begin with normal development and how to make the very best of those crucial early years. Next time, we'll look in more detail at those children who, despite the very best of efforts on your part, are falling behind. There will be more about what you can do and when to seek specialist help later.



Rising to the challenge

What we want to tell you is that by understanding how children develop language you are best-placed to maximise what is essentially a normal process. By recognising that opportunities for language development don't just happen at certain parts of the day. By simply making small changes to what you already do and adding in some new strategies, you will be giving every child the best possible chance.

How children develop speech and language skills

Babies emerge into the world innately programmed to develop language. Right from the beginning they are learning to listen, to discriminate sounds and to gradually begin to make sense of what they see and hear.

'Noise' becomes a babble from which the young child learns, remarkably quickly, to extract the sounds of their mother tongue and to discard those not needed. As their knowledge store grows, words will begin to emerge, quickly followed by the joining of words into two and then three-word phrases.

At the same time, as physical skills develop, children begin to make sense of their environment through the power of exploration and play. Through play, children practise, they rehearse, they mirror what they see in the world. Imagination is developing and language with it. All this time the child is providing a running commentary – initially just for themselves and then later with language that invites the attention and involvement of others

to participate and enjoy.



The key components

As therapists, we talk about the three puzzle parts which must come together if a child is to lay solid foundations for the future. They are:

1. Means

Has the child got the skills to communicate? This involves understanding, vocabulary, a developed speech sound system, and the skills to use language for lots of different things. In the beginning, language is used for very basic things like labelling and requesting. Gradually language usage becomes more varied (describing, explaining, commenting) and increasingly sophisticated (reasoning, hypothesising, debating).

All of these skills are necessary if a child is to become a skilled communicator. They rely on meaning conveyed by a broad and rich vocabulary of nouns, verbs, adjectives, structures, tenses, and nuances.

2. Reasons

Is language motivating & rewarding? Initially, language gets a child's needs met. Later, it grows in sophistication and satisfies social and emotional needs.

3. Opportunities

It's important to help children make choices, provide them with a variety of play situations, create opportunities to describe and explain, and to begin to develop narrative skills.

Crucial to all three of these components is you.

You are the model as a child's means, either as a means to communicate or a means to develop their language. You are the facilitator, making sure there are reasons for the child to want to communicate. You are the developer, using every opportunity for broadening and enriching language.



Nature versus nurture

The idea of nature versus nurture isn't new. Although the terminology might have changed over the years, it is accepted that being born 'innately programmed' – the 'nature' part – is only half the story.

The other half is 'nurture'. Nurture is all about the environment surrounding the child. The optimum environment that will nurture successful talkers.

Knowing what is involved allows us to make changes as we recognise the importance of what we provide, what we do, and what we say.

The optimum environment

As therapists, we spend time with our Early Years colleagues looking in detail at every aspect of the environment. The question in everyone's mind is 'Are we making the most of our space, our activities and ourselves to create a language-rich environment for our children?'

Here are some examples of things which are covered in much more detail in our checklist – where you will also find examples under these same broad headings.

1. Using your space as a language-rich environment

- The physical environment
- Organisation
- Displays
- Visual support
- Books
- Play

2. The opportunities you create to support language development

- Adult-facilitated activities
- Small group work
- Interactive book reading
- Structured conversation

3. The ways in which adults in your setting talk with children

- Gaining attention
- Use of visual supports
- Pacing & pausing
- Gestures & intonation
- Offering choices
- Modelling
- Repetition
- Don't overwhelm with too much talk!

This is not only about the physical space you provide but is also about managing the dynamic aspects of that space, such as controlling volume to make sure there are opportunities for developing attention skills or introducing 'communication rules'. Most importantly, you need to understand the impact adult interaction skills have on child language development – both yours and those of other significant adults.

If you are genuinely committed to offering the very best start to the children in your care, it's worth looking at all three areas described above.



A language-rich enabling environment

In terms of the physical space: there are lots of ideas out there and checklists to help you rate where you think you are now and to help to measure progress as you put things in place.

[You can take a look here at Soundswell's checklist](#) that we've adapted from the Communication Supporting Classrooms Observation Tool by Better Communication Research Programme 2012.

Controlling volume

As we've already mentioned, controlling volume is a great place to start. But what do we mean by 'controlling volume'?

Well, a busy setting with lots happening and children moving between a variety of activities creates volume, much of which will (hopefully!) be children talking.

On the one hand, this is good because it shows a general ‘busyness’ and engagement. But on the other hand, it can prove to be too much for some children who haven’t yet learnt to abstract the priorities for whatever they are focusing on and ‘tune out’ the rest. It’s also worth bearing in mind that the louder the hubbub, the more the adults find themselves having to shout – not great for the vocal cords but also not great as an example to children. Raised voices tend to convey less positive aspects such as displeasure or stress.

Factoring in both loud and quiet times is ideal then. Outdoor play, for example, is a great opportunity to be ‘loud’. Children can let off steam, shout and squeal as much as they want. This might then be contrasted with the calm and order inside, where the space is still fun but it is an environment for a different type of learning. You could even develop a signal, a sound, symbol or both, which children learn to associate with returning to the ‘quiet’ indoors

Surprisingly, the best way to control the volume is to reduce your own volume. Children will soon learn that they must be quiet if they are to hear what you say. I am sure you already know this – but what might be new is that this technique works best in tandem with several other strategies which you’ll find in the checklist on the final page.



Communication rules

‘Communication rules’ are things like turn-taking and learning not to interrupt. Despite being important social niceties, these ideas are about more than just ‘being polite’. The point here is that if everybody is talking, nobody is listening, and without listening, there can be no learning.

As adults, we understand speaker-listener roles (or most of us do, most of the time...). We all understand the idea that ‘You’re talking and I’m listening. When it’s my turn I might talk about what you were saying and then I might contribute some of my own ideas. Then we’ll swap and I’ll be the listener again.’ On an individual level, as children develop conversational skills, they need to learn this too. As with pretty much everything, they learn by example.

As a group, children need to learn that when the adult is talking by explaining what will happen or giving instructions, they are listeners. This is not only to make sure they themselves don’t miss anything but also to ensure that the learning experience for everyone is not disrupted.

It’s pretty certain that every setting will have some children whose attention and listening skills are immature. These children are easy to spot, perhaps fidgeting on the carpet, poking the child next in line, chattering, or even getting up and moving around when all others are sitting down.

The first thing is to be aware that attention and listening are learned skills. They don't just 'happen'. Remember nature versus nurture? We are programmed to be able to develop these skills but it's the environment which allows them to develop and mature. Attention skills develop in a particular order and children need to go through every stage to get there.

The levels are broadly age-related and once we know that it becomes immediately obvious that, by a certain age, hoping that the wrigglers and chatterers will just stop of their own accord is unrealistic.



Positive relationships and adult interaction

Now we come to the most crucial area – this is where the impact can be enormous and it is entirely in your hands. It doesn't depend on your budget for equipment or modifications to your space – it just depends on you.

Children learn from us and through us – that's a fact. The better we are, the better they will be. The better we are, the easier and more enjoyable their learning will be.

The good news is there is no mystery and no magic to this. Take on board these top tips and you'll see the difference they can make.

What will help... ...and the reasons why

<p>Ako Tahi Preschool-Curriculum Criteria</p> <p>Speak slowly</p>	<p>Sound travels fast but it isn't instantaneous! Children need time to process the information you're giving them.</p>
<p>Use short sentences</p>	<p>Less information means the child has more chance to remember what they hear long enough to be able to process it.</p>
<p>Pause between sentences</p>	<p>Pauses can also be very powerful. They allow a child to reflect, develop anticipation and attention. 'Less ' can definitely be 'more'. Children who are exposed to talk 'for the sake of it' learn to switch off. So – make every word count and don't be afraid of silence! On a practical basis, if one sentence follows another too quickly, the child may be processing the first one when along comes the next - and lose the thread of both.</p>
<p>Use lively intonation</p>	<p>You are much more likely to capture and hold the child's interest and attention. Also – it's worth remembering that gathering meaning from intonation is a normal developmental stage of language acquisition.</p>
<p>Support what you say with non-verbal communication</p>	<p>Makaton signs and/or more informal gesture, body movement, and eye-pointing really help to convey meaning.</p>
<p>Use plenty of repetition</p>	<p>Repetition leads to familiarity, familiarity leads to confidence, and both help children to learn.</p>
<p>Make long sounds long</p>	<p>Long sounds stay in the auditory channel (i.e. they are heard) longer so the child is more likely to pick up and learn from them. It also helps later too, with blending phonics.</p>

What will help...	...and the reasons why
<p>Make sure the ends of your words don't "drop away"</p>	<p>We know that there is a "s" on the end of hats for example, but a child may be less familiar with the rules for plurals and needs to hear the "s" in order to know it's there.</p>
<p>Be positive</p>	<p>Try hard to avoid using the word "no". Imagine how we would feel if our best efforts were met with a negative! A good way to help move a child on is to always start with "well done/yes" and then follow up with the right structure. For example: Child - "Him got 2 car." Practitioner: "Yes, he's got 2 cars."</p>
<p>Model the right pronunciation and phrase/sentence structure</p>	<p>You give the child the right structure, word order, and sounds. It's always good to start with some praise! For example: Child - "Man sleep bed." Practitioner - "Good try! The man is sleeping on the bed."</p>
<p>Expand by adding a word or two</p>	<p>This means exactly what it says – if a child is using one word, expand that to two. Adding a "routine" word like 'more' helps them to put two words together – and there are lots of opportunities to practise these. Then, when a child is using two words, you will expand to three. For example "car" becomes "Yes, red car." or "juice" becomes "More juice." Equally "Ball gone" can become "Yes, the ball's gone in the pond."</p>

C9

Criteria C9- Range of experience

Guidance

Any examples in the guidance are provided as a starting point to show how services can meet (or exceed) the requirement. Services may choose to use other approaches better suited to their needs as long as they comply with the criteria.

The range of experiences and opportunities provided to enhance children's learning and development will be heavily influenced by the outcomes of assessment, planning, and evaluation practices. Along with providing a range of resources and equipment, extending children's learning and development involves using these resources in purposeful and meaningful ways, relevant to the children's lives.

Resources take many forms and will include people, places, and things. The resources provided to support the service curriculum should reflect the service's philosophy of learning, and will be responsive to the preferences of children, their families, the staff, and community.

The experiences and opportunities available should enable children to make choices about their learning. This could be individual or group learning, happen indoors or outdoors, and should offer challenge and familiarity.

Through their interactions with children, educators have a key role in extending children's learning and development. They create opportunities for children to expand their thinking and learning within friendly, nurturing relationships.

C10 Behaviour management

- Guidance

Any examples in the guidance are provided as a starting point to show how services can meet (or exceed) the requirement. Services may choose to use other approaches better suited to their needs as long as they comply with the criteria.

As children learn to make sense of their world and develop working theories they develop an understanding of themselves in social contexts, including the early childhood service.

What is viewed as social competence and appropriate behaviour may vary from setting to setting and will depend on the values that families, educators, and communities hold. It is therefore vital that educators, parents, the community, and children share with each other their understandings of social competence.

The environment, our expectations, and our teaching practices will be strong indicators of what we consider as socially appropriate and competent behaviours.

A service curriculum that supports social competence and understanding of appropriate behaviour will provide ongoing opportunities for children to practise, through actions, words, and behaviours, their growing competence.

Behaviour Guidance Policy

Rationale

At Ako Tahi Preschool, adults are always required to model pro-social skills . Respect, affection, acceptance and self-confidence are our daily goals for empowering each child. Our philosophy is that each child has unique individual potential which requires nurturing through effective and gentle guidance.

Te Whariki

Belonging - Goal 4. Children experience an environment where they know the limits and boundaries of acceptable behaviour.

Procedures

Strategies for guiding behaviour:

- Re-direction of behaviour, i.e., guide the child towards more appropriate activity.
- Promotion of peaceful problem-solving strategies which empower children.
- Always offer the child an explanation of why certain behaviour is unacceptable and inform the child of the desired behaviour.
- Allowing the child time to correct his or her behaviour, i.e., by approaching the situation and asking “what’s happening here?” then offering choices to the child on how to try things differently.
- Depending on the situation and the age of the child, teachers may remove the toy, activity or object that is central to the inappropriate behaviour after a warning has been given.
- Extremely inappropriate behaviour may result in one-on-one time i.e., if behaviour is distracting or upsetting other children, a teacher will go with the child and together they will have some time away from the other children to regulate their behaviour.
- Teachers will always talk calmly in terms of behaviour, i.e., ‘I love the way you are exploring your play’ or ‘can we have a chat about another way you can express your feelings.’ In this way, behaviour and not the child will be rejected or put in ‘shame’.
- Teachers will work together with parents to individualise behaviour guidance plans where appropriate.
- Parents and teachers are encouraged to avoid unnecessary and baseless rules or limits which may cause friction in adult-child partnerships.
- Parents are always notified of the occurrence of any extremely inappropriate behaviour and the strategies used to modify it.
- Teachers recognise the need for consistency in dealing with all inappropriate behaviour.
- We are a “no hitting and no shouting” zone. This applies to children, teachers, parents, and visitors to the centre.
- A calm and peaceful manner will be used by the teachers as much as possible to ensure children’s dignity is upheld and respected.
- Developmental understandings and expectations will be taken into consideration when dealing with behaviour guidance issues.

C11 Parents' aspirations

Guidance

Any examples in the guidance are provided as a starting point to show how services can meet (or exceed) the requirement. Services may choose to use other approaches better suited to their needs as long as they comply with the criteria.

Children are a taonga of their families/whānau. All parents have goals and dreams for their children. These aspirations may be about the individual child and/or may be about the child within the context of their collective group.

Educators need to listen carefully and respectfully to the aspirations shared by parents. Sometimes the goals parents identify for their children may not fit comfortably with the service philosophy or what you understand about children's learning and development. In these situations, it is important to discuss this with the parents, articulating your understanding and finding a way to meet the parents' aspirations that is appropriate to your service.

C12 Opportunities for parents

Partnerships involving regular consultation with parents, guardians, and whānau are a crucial part of quality early childhood education. Parental presence and engagement have been found to support improved outcomes for children and develop a greater sense of belonging for families and whānau.

Where parents are welcomed, and educators use a range of strategies to develop genuine partnerships built on mutual trust and respect, parents feel more able to participate in decision-making about their child's learning.

Educators need to consider the time, place, and space to develop these relationships through informal and formal opportunities. Formal opportunities will include times where communication is planned and may involve preparation, for example a whānau hui or interview evening. Informal opportunities are likely to occur each day, often at the drop-off and pick-up times.

It is important to remember that not all children will be dropped-off or picked-up by their parents, therefore you will need to develop opportunities to engage with parents of these children at another time.

Collaboration with Parents Policy

Rationale

We aim to make communication with parents as open, regular and informative as possible. We recognise that while parents are interested in all aspects of the centre, they are often restricted by time. We have therefore instigated a variety of communication means.

Te Whāriki

Belonging - Goal 2. Children and their families experience an environment where they know that they have a place.

Procedures

- Teachers aim to communicate verbally with parents daily.
- Whiteboards or notices are located near main entranceways to communicate necessary information to all parents. These boards are updated daily.
- Programming information is displayed prominently in the centre.
- Regular newsletters specific to our Early Learning Centre are written. These are made available to parents both by e-mail and in hard copy.
- There is a noticeboard for recording and communicating relevant information to parents. Likewise, parents can leave messages or information with the teachers to record in the diary.
- Parents can meet with teachers each term at the planned parent interviews to discuss their child's development and any issues of importance. Teachers also invite individual meetings/discussions to take place as required.
- Parents are invited to meet with Leadership and teachers to share in annual policy meetings.
- Group Discovery Projects are displayed prominently and updated regularly to show learning and development following the children's interests.
- Email is used as a tool for positive communication.
- All policies are available to parents to view – please ask the centre manager for a copy.
- Parent education evenings are offered on an ad hoc basis throughout the year. We welcome suggestions for proposed topics.
- Nappy changes, toileting and sleep times are recorded in information books or on the record charts.
- A portfolio is kept for each individual child. This portfolio documents the child's learning and development, and parents are encouraged to contribute to these portfolios.
- Parents are encouraged to add to their child's portfolio using "Celebrating an interest at home" forms and through the 'whanau voice' in the portfolio books.
- Parents are encouraged to communicate with teachers and management freely and we greatly value their contributions.
- Teachers are bound by confidentiality and are not permitted to release any information concerning another child's health or behaviour.

Aspiration and Goal Setting

At Ako Tahi preschool we believe in working in partnership with whanau to achieve the best outcomes for children. We value your contribution and together we want to provide experiences that empower your child to be successful in all areas of their development.

Aspirations for your child

Date:

Goals for your child

Date:

Goal 1:

Goal 2:

Opportunity to Share Information

Please feel free to share information that you believe can assist us to support your child to flourish at Ako Tahi.

C12 Opportunities for Parents

Regular Opportunities (formal and Informal) are provided for parents to:

- Communicate with adults providing education and care about their child and share specific evidence of the child's learning; and be involved in decision-making concerning their child's learning.

Procedure:

Informal Opportunities

- Relationships are prioritised at Ako Tahī allowing for the ease of exchange of information from Kaiako to parents/whanau. This will include information sharing of the child's day and invitation to share in their child's learning for that day/week. This can be done through informal communication, photos and evidence of work (such as pictures and creations etc). Through these informal interaction's parents/whanau will be empowered to share information about their child that can be later documented by Kaiako to inform planning for the child or group.

Formal Opportunities

- Each Term parents/whanau will be invited to attend a formal meeting with either a Kaiako or Leadership team member.
- Open day/evenings will be scheduled throughout the year inviting parents/whanau to come and celebrate their child/children's work.
- Children's learning will be formally shared with whanau as the child takes home their 'Learning Journal'. Within the 'Learning Journal' there are opportunities for whanau to contribute their thoughts, experiences and observations of their child's learning outside of the preschool environment.

Aspiration and Goal Setting

At Ako Tahi preschool we believe in working in partnership with whanau to achieve the best outcomes for children. We value your contribution and together we want to provide experiences that empower your child to be successful in all areas of their development.

Whanau Meeting

Aspirations for your child

Date:

Goals for your child

Date:

Goal 1:

Goal 2:

Opportunity to Share Information

Please feel free to share information that you believe can assist us to support your child to flourish at Ako Tahi.

At Ako Tahi we value opportunities to learn more about your child and whanau, working together in partnership is important to foster the best outcomes for your child. We can understand during pickup/drop off times are busy for everyone, as a result we would like to invite you to a meeting with one of our team members to share information regarding your child's learning and development. This meeting provides a platform for information sharing to enable the Ako Tahi team to best support you as whanau and your child.

Could you please complete the form below with a time that best suits you and any concerns that you may wish to prioritise.

Child's Name:

Whanau attending meeting:

Time allocated:

Meeting place: Ako Tahi Office or Onsite at Ako Tahi School

Topics to discuss:

Date/Time											

Signed:

C13 Seeking information

• Guidance

Any examples in the guidance are provided as a starting point to show how services can meet (or exceed) the requirement. Services may choose to use other approaches better suited to their needs as long as they comply with the criteria.

There are a range of situations where information and guidance from outside agencies and specialist services can enhance the ability of a child to fully access the curriculum and therefore improve their educational outcomes. Support and assistance may be focused on an individual child and family/whānau or on the wider group of children, management, and educators.

Building stronger links between ECE services, parents and whānau, parenting programmes, schools, health, social services, and other specialists allow children's learning and development needs to be met more holistically. It is useful for an early childhood service to establish these links within their community before they are needed, to ensure timely assistance.

Before educators approach a specialist service, it is important to consult with the parents to ensure that the process is appropriate. Confidentiality issues must always be taken into consideration.

Curriculum criteria documentation required

Documentation that provides evidence of the service's compliance with criteria C1-C13. Documentation may take a variety of forms to suit the service's operation (such as portfolios, wall displays, policies and procedures) but must include:

1. A process for providing positive guidance to encourage social competence in children (C10);
2. A process for providing formal and informal opportunities for parents to:
 - communicate with adults providing education and care about their child, and share specific evidence of the child's learning; and
 - be involved in decision-making concerning their child's learning (C12); and
3. A record of information and guidance sought from agencies and/or services (C13).

Ako Tahi Preschool-Curriculum Criteria

Guidance Sought from Organisations

Date	Childs name	Behaviours Observed	Parents Consulted Date/Method/ Outcome	Organisation Recommended /contacted	Comments	Outcomes for child and Whanau

