

Kei Tua o te Pae
Assessment for Learning:
Early Childhood Exemplars

The Strands of Te Whāriki: Belonging
Ngā Taumata Whakahirahira ki
Te Whāriki: Mana Whenua

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Introduction

He kupu whakataki

[W]hen a child moves from a family to a classroom, when an immigrant moves from one culture to another, or when an employee moves from the ranks to a management position, learning involves more than appropriating new pieces of information. Learners must often deal with conflicting forms of individuality and competence as defined in different communities ... I am suggesting that the maintenance of an identity across boundaries requires work and ...[t]his work ... is at the core of what it means to be a person.¹

This book collects together early childhood exemplars that illustrate the assessment of learning that is valued within the curriculum strand of Belonging/Mana Whenua, keeping in mind that:

Exemplars are examples of assessments that make visible learning that is valued so that the learning community (children, families, whānau, teachers, and beyond) can foster ongoing and diverse learning pathways.²

Although these exemplars have been annotated with a Belonging/Mana Whenua lens, in many cases, the lens of another strand could have been used. The principle of Holistic Development or Kotahitanga set out in *Te Whāriki* is a reminder that the curriculum “strands” are a construction, and in any episode of a child’s learning, these areas are inextricably intertwined and interconnected.

Assessment for Belonging

Aromatawai mō te Mana Whenua

The exemplars in this book illustrate some ways in which assessing, documenting, and revisiting children’s learning will contribute to educational outcomes in the curriculum strand Belonging/Mana Whenua.

- Assessment contexts and tasks are “varied in interest, offer reasonable challenge, help [learners] develop short-term, self-referenced goals, focus on meaningful aspects of learning and support the development and use of effective learning strategies.” Tasks/activities/projects as sites for assessment encourage learning goals that allow children to understand and “own” the questions and problems.³
- Portfolios can become an artefact of belonging, signifying the relationship between the learner and the setting.
- Documented assessments contribute to a positive transition for children, families, and whānau into the early childhood setting and invite their ongoing participation in the community of the early childhood service.⁴
- Assessment collections document the interests and funds of knowledge⁵ that children bring from home, as well as the interests that they develop in the early childhood setting.
- Opportunities for children to discuss rights, responsibilities, rules, and fairness are provided by revisiting assessment episodes that relate to these topics.
- Teaching about the environs of the early childhood setting and the history of the local area, if included in the assessment record, enhances the reader’s knowledge in this area.
- Portfolios document children’s belonging journeys and suggest possible ways forward for teachers, families, whānau, and children.

The four domains of Belonging

Ngā rohe e whā o te Mana Whenua

Te Whāriki elaborates on the Belonging/Mana Whenua strand as follows:

Ko te whakatipuranga tēnei o te mana motuhake, te mana tūrangawaewae, me te mana toi whenua o te tangata ... ngā tūmanako mō te mokopuna. Kia mōhio ia ki ōna tūrangawaewae, ki ōna marae, ki ngā pepeha hoki o ōna iwi ... ki te mana o te whenua ... Kia mōhio ia ki te manaaki, ki te tiaki i te whenua, nō te mea i ahu mai te oranga i te whenua ...⁶

Children and their families feel a sense of belonging ... [They] experience an environment where:

- connecting links with the family and the wider world are affirmed and extended;
- they know that they have a place;
- they feel comfortable with the routines, customs, and regular events;
- they know the limits and boundaries of acceptable behaviour.⁷

The four interwoven domains of Belonging/Mana Whenua are described (as goals) in the English text of *Te Whāriki*, and each domain includes indicative learning outcomes.

The exemplars presented in this book can each be allocated to one of these four domains.

Belonging to wider learning communities beyond the early childhood setting

Children are developing a wider horizon of interest beyond the early childhood setting and beyond their home settings.

Learning dispositions and working theories include developing an interest in and a recognition of new learning identities or “possible selves”⁸ and a capacity to “read” the environment and therefore to navigate between different forms of individuality and competence as defined in different communities. For some children, this involves navigating between te ao Māori and te ao whānui.⁹

Mason Durie commented that “of the many determinants of educational success, the factor that is uniquely relevant to Māori is the way in which Māori world views and the world views of wider society, impact on each other.”¹⁰ Children can be helped to make connections across learning communities, and often they bring interests and “funds of knowledge” that may provide an anchor for them.¹¹

[T]he child’s interests often represent an anchor that helps in managing the critical transition from home life to preschool or kindergarten. The child’s interests delineate the types of objects and possibilities of action with which the child is familiar and feels competent ... Childhood interests, therefore, may be described as independent variables that help to explain a more or less successful adaptation to a new life situation.¹²

Learning includes knowing stories of local places that have been handed down through the generations. In the exemplar “Te Tuhi a Manawatere”, the children are learning about the history of the local area around the early childhood centre. The legend of Te Tuhi a Manawatere had been passed down through the generations and was finally written up in a local historical society publication, which the teachers have accessed. The children revisit the legend, and their efforts to represent it in a range of media have been recorded.

In “Tyler’s day at the office”, Tyler, his teachers, and his parents use the fax machine to connect a workplace, the home, and two early childhood centres. The fax messages that made these connections have been collected together in Tyler’s portfolio, mapping out the progression of Tyler’s belonging journey.

In “Tāwhirimatea”, Tia’s grandmother adds a story to Tia’s portfolio that makes connections between the early childhood centre’s community and the “figured world”¹³ important to the home community.

Assessment for learning can assist learners to make connections with their families and to participate in communities in the wider world. These communities might be built around connecting ties of interest, kinship, social role, occupation, history, or place as, for example, in the excerpt from an early childhood centre’s group learning story provided below.



From a group learning story in an early childhood centre

Today was our bus trip to the Roger Hamon Bush. We’ve been counting the sleeps. We have also been practising our mihi and waiata and looking at posters, books, and photos so we would know what to look for.

Our kindergarten mihi acknowledges Pirongia te Maunga, Waikato te Awa, Kirikiriroa te Papa e. So we talked about Hamilton as we rode along in the bus. We saw the river as we rode next to and over it, *and* best of all, we saw Pirongia as we got off the bus. We sang our mihi to Pirongia, which helped make our mihi more meaningful to us all.

Belonging in a particular early childhood setting

Children bring interests to their early childhood settings, and they also develop an interest in a range of the tasks, activities, cultural artefacts, languages, and ways of doing and knowing that are features of their early childhood setting. This domain is important because it supports a developing disposition towards lifelong learning and a commitment to an educational setting beyond the home.

An OECD report by Jon Willms suggests that engagement with education, defined as participating and having a sense of belonging in a particular learning community, can set up a developing disposition towards lifelong learning.¹⁴

Assessments give value to children being ready, willing, and able to find a point of connection in a topic, an activity, a person, or an object. Working theories for making sense of the world include children’s understanding that they have a place here. “Jedd’s increasing participation” is an account of Jedd’s learning strategies and dispositions in relation to participation. It demonstrates how these strategies and dispositions become more frequent, more connected, more distributed, and more mindful, a view of continuity outlined in Book 10. In this exemplar, Jedd’s teachers revisit the documentation in order to recognise and build on the continuity.

In “Suelisa’s sense of belonging”, Suelisa’s assessment portfolio is an artefact of belonging, apparently signifying for Suelisa the relationship between herself, her family, and the early childhood setting.



Belonging situated in routines, customs, and regular events

Routines, customs, and regular events from a range of contexts enrich children's learning. Children learn that routines, customs, and regular events will be different in different places. They also learn that these routines can be considered and sometimes changed. Children learn strategies for coping with a moderate amount of change and transition.

The exemplar "Farewell to a taonga" documents a centre's development of practices and customs around the departure of a staff member and her "being gifted" to another centre.



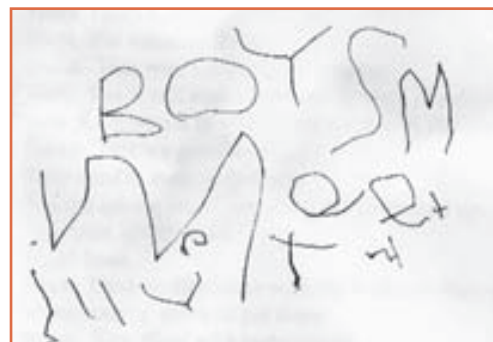
Belonging situated within rules, rights, and responsibilities

Experiences in early childhood settings can encourage children to puzzle over questions of responsible behaviour, the rights of others, and fairness. (Aspects of this domain are also found in Goal 1 of the Contribution/Mana Tangata strand.)

Documented assessment can have a role to play here, especially if the assessments are accessible to children, families, and whānau. Opportunities to reflect on these topics are frequently provided by revisiting events with other people and considering a range of viewpoints.

The exemplar "The meeting" records just such an opportunity for reflection. Working theories for making sense of the world include a recognition that playing and working in a group includes considering the interests and rights of others. Having a sense of belonging also includes children recognising the right of all children to have a say in matters that concern them.¹⁵

In "Fergus and William take their folders outside", the teacher offers her own opinion about whether the two boys should take their portfolios outside, but she acknowledges the two boys' right to have a say in the matter.



Exemplars in other books

Ngā tauaromahi kei pukapuka kē

There are a number of exemplars from other books in the *Kei Tua o te Pae* series that could also be useful in considering assessment within the Belonging/Mana Whenua strand. These exemplars are as follows:

Book 2: Becoming a friend, becoming a learner; Zahra and the donkey; Letters from the teacher, letters from the parent; Assessments in two languages

Book 3: Making jam; Te Aranga responds to a photograph; Jace and the taiaha; A bilingual “parent’s voice”

Book 4: Emptying the supervisor’s bag; Tayla and “what next?”

Book 5: All seven exemplars

Book 6: Growing potatoes; Readers, carers, and friends; “Did they have alarms at your centre?”; Alex the writer

Book 7: Greer’s increasing confidence; “Like something real”

Book 8: Adam determines the routine; Haere mai, Sam; Michael: A helper, friend, and brother

Book 9: Fred’s stories

These additional exemplars provide teachers who wish to reflect on the analysis and assessment of learning outcomes within the Belonging/Mana Whenua strand with a comprehensive collection of exemplars for discussion.