

Verbal communication skills for a range of purposes

Leo and te reo Māori

Child: Leo

Date: April

Teacher: Janine

A Learning Story

Today, at changing time, Leo put his legs up in the air. I said, “Tō waewae ki runga” then followed this sentence with “Tō waewae ki raro” (Put your legs down). Leo did not respond, so I gently pushed his legs down. I repeated, “Tō waewae ki runga” and he lifted his legs up, smiled and waited for the next command, “Tō waewae ki raro”, and down Leo’s legs went. Leo initiated this game later in the week and repeated the last two words of the sentence.

Short-term review

I was impressed with how quickly Leo picked up te reo Māori. Over the last 10 weeks I have observed Leo and his language in te reo Māori, which has been pronounced clearly and confidently. Ka pai Leo!

What next?

Encourage Leo’s understanding of te reo Māori.

Parent’s voice

Child’s name: Leo

Parent’s name: Andrea

Date: May

We are very interested in Leo learning Māori language and culture and are pleased to see it being introduced at pre-school. We believe that learning another language at this age makes later language studies easier.

We live in a community that is racially and culturally mixed and Leo has already shown interest in kapa haka because of its relationship to music and dance.

We believe NZ, though becoming multicultural, is a country (traditionally and legally) centred around a dialogue taking place between Māori and Pākehā and that the language of people strongly illustrates the ideologies and ways of viewing/understanding the world by a culture. Understanding these different views allows Leo to begin to understand and be comfortable with difference.

Introducing Leo to Māori language and ideas at this age will help widen the options available to him to understand and position himself in the world and to understand there are different ways to do this.

What’s happening here?

Leo is being introduced to te reo Māori. In this learning story, he is on the changing table, and the teacher is introducing the phrases “Tō waewae ki runga” and “Tō waewae ki raro”.

What does this assessment tell us about the learning (using a Communication/Mana Reo lens)?

This observation takes place over a week. The teacher adds that Leo “initiated this game later in the week and repeated the last two words of the sentence”. She is very specific about what Leo is learning. Leo’s mother, Andrea, adds a comment, offering a wider view of Leo’s learning: “Introducing Leo to Māori language and ideas at this age will help widen the options available to him to understand and position himself in the world and to understand there are different ways to do this.”

How might this documented assessment contribute to Communication/Mana Reo?

A Parent’s voice has already been written in response to the documented assessment of Leo’s learning, setting out a community-wide view of the implications of this episode. No doubt, other examples and discussions about Leo’s learning of te reo Māori will be added to Leo’s portfolio as a result of the teachers’ and parents’ awareness of Leo’s developing language skills.

What other strands of Te Whāriki are exemplified here?

The Parent’s voice recognises how this episode links to Leo’s sense of Belonging/Mana Whenua and his development in the areas of Exploration/Mana Aotūroa and Contribution/Mana Tangata. The parent writes about the wider community dialogue between Māori and Pākehā, about different ways of knowing, and about being comfortable with difference, and she explains this in relation to Leo’s development: “Understanding these different views allows Leo to begin to understand and be comfortable with difference.”