

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

The Strands of Te Whāriki: Contribution

Ngā Taumata Whakahirahira ki
Te Whāriki: Mana Tangata

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Introduction

He kupu whakataki

How does one maintain standards of accountability – to students, teachers, and parents, to school officials who are responsible for the students’ progress ... while at the same time keeping the social contract with students, who are encouraged to view themselves as co-equal participants in a community of sharing? This is a difficult tightrope to walk, and our approach has been to be honest with the children and to allow them to participate in the assessment process as much as possible.¹

This book collects together early childhood exemplars that illustrate the assessment of learning that is valued within the curriculum strand of Contribution/Mana Tangata, 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 are viewed through a Contribution/Mana Tangata 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 Contribution

Aromatawai mō te Mana Tangata

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

- Children are provided with opportunities to contribute to their own assessments.
- Children have formative assessments that they can “read” and comment on.
- Group assessments illustrate children’s developing skills and dispositions to initiate, maintain, and enjoy relationships with other children.
- Continuity of assessments over time illustrates individual and personalised learning trajectories or journeys that have developed from the children’s particular interests and intentions, the teachers’ interests and intentions (including *Te Whāriki*), the available resources and activities, the opportunities that children are given to take responsibility for their own learning, the expectations of competence for all learners, the community of learners that exists at the early childhood setting, and the funds of knowledge and dispositions that the children bring from home and elsewhere.
- The curriculum and the assessment documentation include funds of knowledge³ about difference and diversity, with the goal of children learning to relate positively in diverse groups.
- Teachers note, recognise as valuable, record, respond to, and revisit episodes in which children question the status quo and offer thoughtful alternatives.

The three domains of Contribution

Ngā rohe e toru o te Mana Tangata

Te Whāriki elaborates on the Contribution/Mana Tangata strand as follows:

Ko te whakatipuranga tēnei o te kiritau tangata i roto i te mokopuna kia tū māia ai ia ki te manaaki, ki te tuku whakaaro ki te ao ... Kia mōhio ia ki ōna whakapapa, ki te pātahi o ōna whānau, ki ōna kaumatua me ōna pakeke ... Kia mōhio hoki ki a Ranginui rāua ko Papatūānuku, ā rāua tamariki, me ngā kōrero mō rātou.⁴

Opportunities for learning are equitable and each child's contribution is valued.

Children experience an environment where:

- there are equitable opportunities for learning, irrespective of gender, ability, age, ethnicity, or background;
- they are affirmed as individuals;
- they are encouraged to learn with and alongside others.⁵

The three interwoven domains of Contribution/Mana Tangata 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 three domains.

Equitable opportunities for learning

In this domain of Contribution/Mana Tangata, the emphasis is on the recognition of (and action towards) children's rights and responsibilities, together with early perceptions of and responses to diversity, inclusion, and fairness. Assessments give value to and record actions that are associated with children's increasing confidence to stand up for themselves and for others when they perceive that justice is threatened. Creating an environment that is characterised by mutual respect supports children to take on this role. Such an environment goes hand in hand with assessments that show children developing attitudes and social skills in these areas.



Communicating and teaching with the support of anti-bias principles creates educational communities where individuals and groups can contribute their perspectives to the whole to make their educational experiences inclusive, equitable and empowering.⁶

In the exemplar “Becoming part of the group”, Hamish is developing a number of strategies for achieving inclusion in the group. The annotation notes that, in New Zealand, where early childhood transitions often occur on birthdays and result in close companions being left behind, there are many opportunities for children to develop useful strategies to help them adjust to and fit in with new situations. In “Stevie and the pirate ship”, the teacher helps the children to learn to stand up for themselves. “Whakapai kai” is about a child taking responsibility for ensuring that his culture is included in the routines of the centre, and in “Osmana's view”, the teacher is puzzling over how to respond to cultural differences in ways of expressing thanks for food.

Affirmation as individuals

Working theories about the self as capable and competent are the core of this domain. Children are developing an awareness of some of their strengths and a perception of themselves as capable of developing new interests and abilities.

Assessments are specific about children's strengths and suggest ways forward for their development.



Perceived differently by different cultural groups, respect for all human beings is not simple or easily definable. However, within the context of social justice and care, respect would require appreciation of the value of all other beings, acceptance of multiple ways of thinking and being in the world, and a willingness to fight for an equitable and just community for everyone.⁷

“Zachary dancing” is an exemplar that affirms Zachary’s special interest in dancing, an interest that he is comfortable to develop both at home and at the early childhood centre. “A grandfather’s letter” lists the valued learning that a grandfather identifies in his grandson’s profile book. In “Teaching others”, Bianca takes responsibility for helping others learn and sees herself as a competent teacher and learner.

Learning with and alongside others

This domain of Contribution/Mana Tangata is about children’s growing capacity to develop relationships with other people who are different from them in diverse ways. Relationships between teachers and children, and between teachers, provide models for the social skills and attitudes that support this capacity.



In her book *You Can't Say You Can't Play*, Vivian Gussin Paley begins by discussing children in the process of developing an understanding of relationships and of dealing with rejection:

“Are you my friend?” the little ones ask in nursery school, not knowing. The responses are also questions. If yes, then what? And if I push you away, how does it feel?

By kindergarten, however, a structure begins to be revealed and will soon be carved in stone. Certain children will have the right to limit the social experiences of their classmates. Henceforth a ruling class will notify others of their acceptability, and the outsiders learn to accept the sting of rejection. Long after hitting and name-calling have been outlawed by the teachers, a more damaging phenomenon is allowed to take root, spreading like a weed from grade to grade.

Must it be so? This year I am compelled to find out. Posting a sign that reads YOU CAN'T SAY YOU CAN'T PLAY, I announce the new social order and, from the start, it is greeted with disbelief.⁸

Assessments give value to relationships and highlight successful strategies for initiating and maintaining episodes of social interaction and for coping with conflict in peaceful ways. Indicative outcomes for this domain also include children developing “a sense of responsibility and respect for the needs and well-being of the group, including taking responsibility for group decisions”, an outcome that is woven across all the domains of Contribution/Mana Tangata and indeed across all the strands of *Te Whāriki*.

In the exemplar “Developing friendships”, three boys whose home languages and cultures are different – one from Malaysia, one from Afghanistan, and one from Kosovo – are good friends. “Mahdia’s story” is about an early childhood centre where the children demonstrate a caring attitude, and “Blocks and beads” describes the social interactions of two children building collaboratively. “The three friends” is an example of a group’s involvement in a sewing project (begun by the grandmother of one of the children) that extends from children to their peers, their teachers, and their families. “A business venture” is an example of another collaborative project. Toddlers paint together and learn from watching each other in “The artists”. Finally, an amalgamation of two stories, a year apart, in “Issy’s new role” illustrates the power of documentation in describing continuity.

Exemplars in other books

Ngā tauaromahi kei pukapuka kē

The following exemplars in other books can also be viewed from a Contribution/Mana Tangata perspective.

Note: Almost all of the exemplars in *Kei Tua o te Pae* are affirmations of the children as learners, so no additions have been made for the domain to do with affirmation as individuals.

Book 2: Becoming a friend, becoming a learner; The mosaic project; Assessments in two languages; Toddlers as teachers

Book 3: Making jam; Hatupatu and the birdwoman

Book 4: Your brain is for thinking; Tayla and “what next?”

Book 5: Nanny’s story; Rangiātea; Growing trees

Book 6: Growing potatoes; Readers, carers, and friends; Skye in a box

Book 7: Te rakiraki; Greer’s increasing confidence; George makes music; “Like something real”; Fe’ao

Book 8: Adam determines the routine; James pursues a friendship; Ruby and the supermarket; Copy cats; Michael: a helper, friend, and brother

Book 9: Elaine’s stories; Eating at kindergarten; Fred’s stories

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