

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

**Oral, Visual, and Written Literacy  
Te Kōrero, te Titiro, me te Pānui-Tuhi**

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## Introduction

The exemplars in this book should be considered in conjunction with the discussion in Book 16. The concept of literacy described in that introduction informs this book of exemplars. Literacy assessment in early childhood settings has tended to focus on a ledger of skills and conventions to do with the mechanics of reading and writing, for example: the identification of letters of the alphabet, being able to recognise and/or write one's name, and knowledge of print directionality. Being literate is much wider than this.<sup>1</sup> The qualifiers “oral, visual, and written” not only reflect a broader view of literacy but also acknowledge the importance in the early years of establishing a sound oral foundation, particularly in the realms of conversation and storytelling. This foundation is integral to reading and writing enterprises.

The exemplars in this book are viewed through one or more of the three lenses outlined in Book 16:

- a lens focused on assessment practices, referring to the definition of assessment as “noticing, recognising, and responding”, from Book 1 of *Kei Tua o te Pae*;
- a *Te Whāriki* lens;
- a lens that focuses on the symbol systems and technologies for oral, visual, and written literacy.

## A lens focused on assessment practices

In practice, assessment for learning – noticing, recognising, and responding – may be non-verbal (a gesture, a frown, a smile), verbal (a comment, a conversation), or documented (written down, photographed, displayed). These three modes of communicating and representing can be described as languages. The language of teaching contributes to the assessment culture of the setting in at least three ways. Firstly, discourses of identity and achievement describe a particular view about what it is to be a learner. A very different view is developed from discourses of deficit and failure. Secondly, interactive conventions differ across cultures. Margie Hohepa and Stuart McNaughton, for instance, comment that different patterns of exchanges between book readers and listeners have been identified in the activity of reading to children and that features of these patterns can be related to core cultural values.

Studies have found that families across different cultures can show a marked preference for particular sorts of interactional styles (McNaughton 1995). One such style has the identification and negotiation of narrative meanings as a major feature. Another has been termed a performance or recitation style of reading, the central feature being an adult or more expert reader reading part of the text, and the less expert child repeating that part of the text or completing a missing section.<sup>2</sup>

Thirdly, the languages used may describe a bicultural or multicultural setting. It is widely acknowledged that although being bilingual or multilingual is known to have many linguistic and intellectual benefits, support for children's first language in early childhood settings that are not immersion centres is often overlooked.<sup>3</sup> At the very least, one of the learning outcomes in *Te Whāriki* is that children develop “confidence that their first language is valued”.<sup>4</sup> Instances of children using literacy conventions associated with scripts and languages of their mother tongue can be documented for their families, illustrating that these activities are valued aspects of their child's participation in centre life. Where teachers are bilingual themselves, documenting assessment in the child's first language presents an opportunity to assure families that bilingualism and biliteracy are actively supported in that setting. *Kei Tua o te Pae* includes a number of exemplars in which the children's home languages are included.

## He kupu whakataki

## He āta titiro ki ngā mahi aromatawai

Many of the early childhood settings contributing to this book make their documented narrative assessments available to the children themselves. This is a particularly powerful way of building children's identities as literate beings. In many cases, the children's portfolios have become books that they can "read", contribute to, revisit, and retell. These portfolios are meaningful literacy artefacts for children, who find it compelling and engaging to be able to contribute to and revisit stories of personal achievement. They provide natural opportunities for children to assess their own literacy knowledge and skills. When teachers also draw children's attention to some of the literacy conventions that exist within such documented assessments, their value for literacy learning is noticeably strengthened.

Book 16 provides some guidelines about what assessment to look for. Teachers might make connections between each of these guidelines and the topic in this book by ensuring that assessments:

- include clear goals (Book 1, page 9);
- are in everyday contexts (Book 1, page 12);
- protect and enhance the motivation to learn (Book 1, page 13);
- acknowledge uncertainty (Book 1, page 14);
- include the documentation of collective and individual enterprises (Book 1, page 16);
- keep a view of learning as complex (Book 1, page 18);
- follow the four principles of *Te Whāriki* (Book 2);
- are on the pathway towards bicultural assessment (Book 3);
- provide opportunities for the children to contribute to their own assessment (Book 4);
- provide opportunities for family and whānau to participate in the assessment process (Book 5);
- make a difference to: community, competence, and continuity (Books 5, 6, and 7);
- include infants and toddlers (Book 8);
- reflect and strengthen inclusion (Book 9).

## A lens based on *Te Whāriki* – He tirohanga mai i *Te Whāriki*

Literacy goals in *Te Whāriki* are woven throughout the strands, although they are predominantly in the Communication/Mana Reo strand, where the goals are that children experience an environment where:

- they develop non-verbal communication skills for a range of purposes;
- they develop verbal communication skills for a range of purposes;
- they experience the stories and symbols of their own and other cultures;
- they discover and develop different ways to be creative and expressive.<sup>5</sup>

At the same time, there will be "a commitment to the recognition of Māori language – stories, symbols, arts, and crafts – in the programme",<sup>6</sup> and outcomes include an appreciation of te reo Māori as a living and relevant language.

The Belonging/Mana Whenua strand includes the learning outcomes:

- Children develop awareness of connections between events and experiences within and beyond the early childhood education setting.
- Children develop connecting links between the early childhood education setting and other settings that relate to the child ...
- Children develop the confidence and ability to express their ideas and to assist others.
- Children develop the ability to disagree and state a conflicting opinion assertively and appropriately.<sup>7</sup>



The Contribution/Mana Tangata strand includes the learning outcome:

- Children develop an increasing ability to take another’s point of view and to empathise with others.<sup>8</sup>

The Exploration/Mana Aotūroa strand includes the learning outcomes:

- Children develop increasing confidence and a repertoire for symbolic, pretend, or dramatic play.
- Children develop the ability to identify and use information from a range of sources, including using books for reference.
- Children develop familiarity with stories from different cultures about the living world, including myths and legends and oral, non-fictional, and fictional forms.<sup>9</sup>

The *Te Whāriki* perspective is that children will participate in the symbol systems and tools of literacy for personal, social, and cultural purposes: for becoming confident and competent in culturally valued enterprises, expressing emotion, making connections across place and time, contributing their own abilities and viewpoints to the community, communicating with others (including appreciating the ways in which the available cultures communicate and represent), and making sense of their worlds.

At the same time, the possible pathways for learning that derive from the four principles in *Te Whāriki* (see Books 10 and 16), can provide a guide for identifying dimensions of strength as children become more interested in and involved with literacy. Learning episodes associated with literacy practices become:

- more strongly integrated as recognised patterns, regular events, and social practices over time. In the exemplar “Looking back through your portfolio”, Alice is participating in a routine literacy practice in this early childhood setting. She is “reading” her portfolio. She comments on how her name writing has now become more secure: on one page is an early story of her beginning to write her name and she comments, “I do it now ... I know how to do it.” At the same time, she is recognising continuity or progress in her learning from past to present – and perhaps this rereading will introduce a challenge for Alice to achieve in the future.
- distributed or stretched across a widening network of helpful people and enabling resources. In the exemplar “Hikurangi”, the meaning-making illustrates relationships with a wide range of people, places, things, and enterprises, and a range of literacy: karanga, waiata, whaikōrero, pōwhiri and visual literacy forms.
- connected to a greater diversity of purposes, places, and social communities. In “The Snipe and the Clam”, a complex process and outcome are illustrated: Samuel and his mother reconstruct a traditional Chinese story with drawings and in both English and Mandarin. When the story is told to the other children, Samuel provides the Mandarin words and the gestures.
- more mindful, as children begin to take responsibility and make up their own minds. In the exemplar “Shai-Li makes a friend”, the children are experts in their own home languages: sharing vocabulary and teaching each other.



## A lens focused on the symbol systems and technologies for making meaning: Oral, visual, and written literacy

## He tirohanga ki ngā tohu whakahaere me ngā momo hangarau hei whakamārama atu: Te kōrero, te titiro, me te pānui-tuhi

The following are some aspects of participating in the domain of literacy (oral, visual, and written) that might be noticed, recognised, responded to, recorded, and revisited.<sup>10</sup> Not all of these aspects are represented in the exemplars, but teachers may be able to locate them in their own settings and write their own exemplars. In particular, when episodes are documented and revisited, children will be able to recognise their own literacy competencies.

### A repertoire of literacy practices

An indicative repertoire of practices is set out here, using the four practices outlined in Book 16.<sup>11</sup> These four practices also intersect and interconnect.

#### *Observing and listening in to literacy practices*

Observing and listening in to literacy practices includes enjoying stories, either told or read by others, in a range of styles. It also includes noticing cultural conventions, such as making a shopping list, or local conventions, such as writing down valued learning episodes.

In the exemplar “Tiari wants to draw”, her mother reports:

Whenever I sit down to work at the table Tiari always wants to be included. She sees me and my husband working at the computer. Tiari can turn on the computer by herself and immediately moves the mouse (as she has seen us doing) ... Tiari also loves writing with pens. She sits beside me at the table and quite happily writes away for quite a length of time.



#### *Playing with language and literacy practices*

Playing with language and literacy practices includes playing with the units (the sounds, images, letters, and words); and playing with the cultural tools associated with oral, visual, and written literacy (making marks, copying writers and readers).

The exemplar “Flopsy and Mopsy” includes Aimee playing with words. The teacher recognises that Aimee is, on this occasion, perhaps more interested in the words than in the story, and she encourages her playfulness with words.



### Using literacy for a purpose

Using literacy for a purpose includes a wide range of practices. Some of these are:

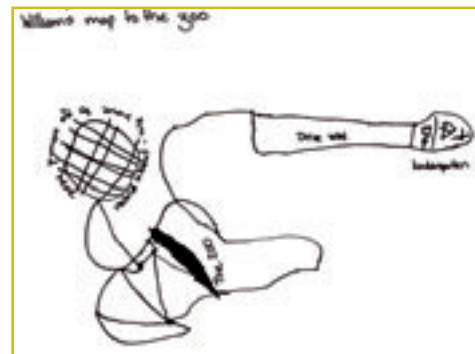
- retelling the stories of others, demonstrating an awareness of how stories work (story grammar);
- connecting stories – oral, visual, or written – to their own lives;
- listening to and constructing poems, songs, and waiata;
- “reading” pictures, photographs, and culturally significant symbols;
- recognising the significance and place of cultural patterns (tapa, kōwhaiwhai, and tukutuku) and oral traditions (karanga, waiata, and whaikōrero);
- connecting with a range of ways in which family and whānau “do” literacy by making links with their “funds of knowledge” from home;
- being aware of culturally and socially significant intonation and oral forms;
- using the conventions of the script and vocabulary of their first language;
- being aware of concepts about print and letter–sound relationships (phonemic awareness);
- being aware of some conventions of different text forms or genres – lists, stories, advertisements;
- using literacy for a range of purposes – entertainment, information, maintaining social contacts;
- using texts from popular culture as a context for literacy learning;
- using texts from traditional culture as a context for literacy learning;
- using literacy to teach others.

In the exemplar “Zachary’s proof-reading”, Zachary has observed the teachers writing learning stories and he participates in the proof-reading part of the process.

### Critically questioning or transforming

Critically questioning or transforming includes:

- critiquing oral, visual, and written accounts, formats, stories, symbols, and books;
- inventing oral, visual, and written accounts, stories, symbols, and books;
- choosing from a range of possible and appropriate tools;
- questioning conventions or suggesting alternatives.



In the exemplar “A sticky end”, Joshua critiques the ending to the story and devises an ending that he finds more satisfactory.

