

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

**The Arts  
Ngā Toi**

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## Introduction

## He kupu whakataki

The exemplars in this book should be considered in conjunction with the discussion in Book 16. Opportunities for children to be creative and imaginative through the arts are woven throughout *Te Whāriki*. The 2007 New Zealand school curriculum identifies four disciplines of the arts. These are: dance, drama, music – sound arts, and visual arts. The curriculum reminds us that:

The arts are powerful forms of expression that recognise, value, and contribute to the unique bicultural and multicultural character of Aotearoa New Zealand, enriching the lives of all New Zealanders. The arts have their own distinct languages that use both verbal and non-verbal conventions, mediated by selected processes and technologies. Through movement, sound, and image, the arts transform people’s creative ideas into expressive works that communicate layered meanings.

Arts education explores, challenges, affirms, and celebrates unique artistic expressions of self, community, and culture. It embraces *toi Māori*, valuing the forms and practices of customary and contemporary Māori performing, musical, and visual arts.<sup>1</sup>

In international early childhood literature, the best-known examples of learning through the visual and the dramatic arts come from Reggio Emilia and the work of Vivian Gussin Paley. Paley’s books are studies of imagination, caring, and thoughtfulness. In her book *Bad Guys Don’t Have Birthdays: Fantasy Play at Four*, Paley writes:

This year three themes dominate the stage: bad guys, birthdays, and babies. What does it all mean? The magical rhythm that bounces back and forth between this odd triad is just beyond my reach; I can feel its presence but am hard put to identify the tune or carry the melody. One must be able to see through the disarray and concentrate on the drama.

Yet it is not simply a matter of concentration. When I care more about what the children say and think than about my own conventionality, those are the times I sense the beat and hear the unspoken lines. As I try to measure my responses to the forms and ideas of this emerging society that inhabits my classroom, it becomes necessary to grasp its point of view:

I pretend, therefore I am.

I pretend, therefore I know.<sup>2</sup>

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

- a lens that focuses 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 described as “the arts”.

## A lens focused on assessment practices

## He āta titiro ki ngā mahi aromatawai

Documentation and assessment practices will themselves contribute to opportunities for children to be creative and imaginative. Carlina Rinaldi from Reggio Emilia has explored the topic of documentation and assessment. She writes about the role of documentation:

In Reggio Emilia, where we have explored this methodology for many years, we place the emphasis on documentation as an integral part of the procedures aimed at fostering learning and for modifying

the learning–teaching relationship ... I believe that documentation is a substantial part of the goal that has always characterised our experience: the search for meaning – to find the meaning of school, or rather, to construct the meaning of school, as a place that plays an active role in the children’s search for meaning and our own search for meaning (and shared meanings).<sup>3</sup>

In Book 1 of *Kei Tua o te Pae*, assessment for learning is described as “noticing, recognising, and responding”.<sup>4</sup> In Book 10, this definition of assessment is expanded by the statement that “learning will be strengthened ... if teachers notice, recognise, respond to, record, revisit, and reflect on multiple learning pathways”.<sup>5</sup> The first nine books of *Kei Tua o te Pae* provide some guidelines about what assessments to look for, and a list of these criteria is included in Book 16. In Book 1, the following four major evaluative criteria for assessment, based on the principles of *Te Whāriki*, are set out.<sup>6</sup> Connections can be made between these principles and the development of confidence and competence in the arts.

- *Is the identity of the child as a competent and confident learner protected and enhanced by the assessments?* Assessment practices will encourage multiple perspectives and imaginative responses.
- *Do the assessment practices take account of the whole child?* The New Zealand school curriculum states:

Through the development of arts literacies, students, as creators, presenters, viewers, and listeners, are able to participate in, interpret, value, and enjoy the arts throughout their lives.<sup>7</sup>

Assessment practices will contribute to the disposition for children to enjoy the arts throughout their lives.

- *Do the assessment practices invite the involvement of family and whānau?* Assessment practices will recognise that children bring ways of being creative and imaginative from their homes and their communities.
- *Are the assessments embedded in reciprocal and responsive relationships?* The arts have their own distinct languages, and the documentation of children’s learning in the context of the arts will recognise the strengthening of these arts languages along a range of dimensions.

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

Learning outcomes in *Te Whāriki* that are associated with symbol systems and technologies in the arts are distributed throughout the strands. The Wellbeing/Mana Atua strand includes the outcome that children develop:

- an ability to identify their own emotional responses and those of others.<sup>8</sup> This includes the representation and expression of emotion that is central to the arts.

The Belonging/Mana Whenua strand includes the outcomes that children develop:

- an understanding of the links between the early childhood education setting and the known and familiar wider world through people, images, objects, languages, sounds ...;
- interest and pleasure in discovering an unfamiliar wider world where the people, images, objects, languages, sounds, smells, and tastes are different from those at home.<sup>9</sup>

The Contribution/Mana Tangata strand includes the outcome that children develop:

- abilities and interests in a range of domains – spatial, visual, linguistic, physical, musical, logical or mathematical, personal, and social – which build on the children’s strengths.<sup>10</sup>

The Communication/Mana Reo strand includes two major goals:

- Children experience an environment where they experience the stories and symbols of their own and other cultures.
- Children experience an environment where they discover and develop different ways to be creative and expressive.<sup>11</sup>

These two goals are annotated in *Te Whāriki* to suggest eighteen indicative learning outcomes, including an appreciation of te reo Māori as a living and relevant language. This strand also indicates that there should be “a commitment to the recognition of Māori language – stories, symbols, arts, and crafts – in the programme”.<sup>12</sup>

The Exploration/Mana Aotūroa strand includes the learning outcomes that children develop:

- increasing confidence and a repertoire for symbolic, pretend, or dramatic play;<sup>13</sup>
- strategies for actively exploring and making sense of the world by using their bodies, including active exploration with all the senses, and the use of tools, materials, and equipment to extend skills;
- confidence with moving in space, moving to rhythm, and playing near and with others;<sup>14</sup>
- the ability to represent their discoveries, using creative and expressive media and the technology associated with them.<sup>15</sup>

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

- more strongly integrated as recognised patterns, regular events, and social practices over time. The exemplar “Looking closely” results from a regular opportunity in this early childhood setting, where a vase of flowers or an interesting object placed on a table is frequently a part of the environment. Children such as Ethan, who choose to draw or to paint at this table, are encouraged “to look closely at flowers and other objects before painting and drawing them”. Ethan later looked closely at the centre’s coat hooks, “re-cognised”, and drew them.
- distributed or stretched across a widening network of helpful people and enabling resources. In the exemplar “From costume designer to movie director”, Conor participates in the arts through a wide range of practices (drawing a plan, sewing capes, and making masks) as he takes on the roles of script writer, costume designer, movie director, and actor. (Through these roles, Conor also makes connections to the professional communities of film and the theatre.)
- connected to a greater diversity of purposes, places, and social communities. In the exemplar “Vanessa’s dog, Trent”, Vanessa’s paintings of her dog develop over several months as she adds new elements from the environment to her images. Later she adds details to her paintings to indicate different breeds of dog. The teachers invite a police dog handler and his dog to visit, introducing a community in which dogs have special purposes. Vanessa “sat transfixed, right up the front”. She then paints the police dog.
- more mindful (as children begin to take responsibility and make up their own minds). In the exemplar “Emily’s song”, Emily composes a song and sings it to the class at mat time. The song is a composite of new material about princesses interwoven with snippets of kindergarten songs.



## A lens focused on the symbol systems and technologies for making meaning: The arts

## He tirohanga ki ngā tohu whakahaere me ngā momo hangarau hei whakamārama atu: Ngā toi

The following are some aspects of participating in the domain of the arts that might be noticed, recognised, responded to, recorded, revisited, and reflected on. 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 competence and the way it has developed over time along the four dimensions of strength described in the previous section. In early childhood settings, as in school, the four disciplines of the arts – dance, drama, music – sound arts, and visual arts – are frequently integrated within the curriculum.



### A repertoire of practices in the arts

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

#### *Observing and listening in to practices in the arts*

Observing and listening in to practices in the arts includes watching and listening in to adults and other children participating in the arts for a range of purposes. It also includes noticing the cultural conventions – what you can do – with the symbol systems and technologies of the arts.

In the exemplar “The dancing cats”, the photographs reveal that observing and listening in is a feature of this project. The teachers comment that the children are improving their techniques “through observation and practice”. Watching the video of the musical *Cats*, watching their peers, and watching video clips of their own work enable the development of a common project, one that the children can revisit, discuss, and reflect on as they develop their dance techniques over time.

#### *Playing with technologies and practices in the arts*

The technologies and symbol systems associated with the arts are inviting contexts for play with no purpose in mind. Experiencing pleasure and enjoyment and “trying out” activities are examples of exploration through play.

In the exemplar “Painting tastes good!”, Jack explores some apparently “strange looking stuff” called paint. In the exemplar “Greta responds to music”, Greta tries out a range of movements to music.

### Using the arts for a purpose

Using the arts for a purpose includes:

- expressing emotion and interpreting experiences and ideas through dance, drama, music, and the visual arts;
- telling a story through dance, drama, music – sound arts, and visual arts;
- composing a song, completing a picture, developing a dance, or constructing a drama about a topic or theme of interest;
- recognising the significance, history, and place of cultural traditions in the arts;
- noticing, recognising, and drawing on “traditional Māori forms such as poi, whare whakairo, and mōteatea, to create distinctive, contemporary art works”;<sup>17</sup>
- connecting with the range of ways in which family and whānau participate in the arts;
- collaborating on the development of artistic enterprises and environments;
- using the conventions of film-making to make a film that expresses an idea or tells a story.

In the exemplar “Rangitoto”, the children learning the traditional story about Rangitoto and painting the mountain contribute to the design and construction of a mosaic sign for the front of the centre. Comments on the photographs include “Jimmy looked through a catalogue and saw some ‘glass bubbles’ that he suggested we use for the mosaic. He showed us where he wanted them to go and George carried them on all the way across the sky.”

Loris Malaguzzi, commenting as children at a Reggio Emilia school worked together on a large fresco, used a music metaphor when he said:

*It’s not just the images that come from the hands and the imagination of the children that count, but also the fruit of the harmony of all their ideas. To place the colors, to find the right balance in a symphony of colors, means for the child to become the extraordinary instrument of an orchestra.*<sup>18</sup>

### Critically questioning or transforming

Critically questioning or transforming includes: critiquing arts formats, symbols, and conventions; inventing and redesigning formats, symbols, and conventions; creatively combining different arts disciplines, perhaps with other symbol systems and technologies; and choosing from a range of possible and appropriate tools and suggesting alternatives.

In the exemplar “Tegan plays for the birds”, Tegan finds a creative and imaginative purpose for playing the guitar, transforming the conventional purpose of guitar playing in this early childhood setting.



Ethan transforms the coat hook.