

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

Te Tāhuhu o te Mātauranga

Sociocultural Assessment

He Aromatawai Ahurea Pāpori

2

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

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

What is sociocultural assessment?
He aha te aromatawai ahurea pāpori?

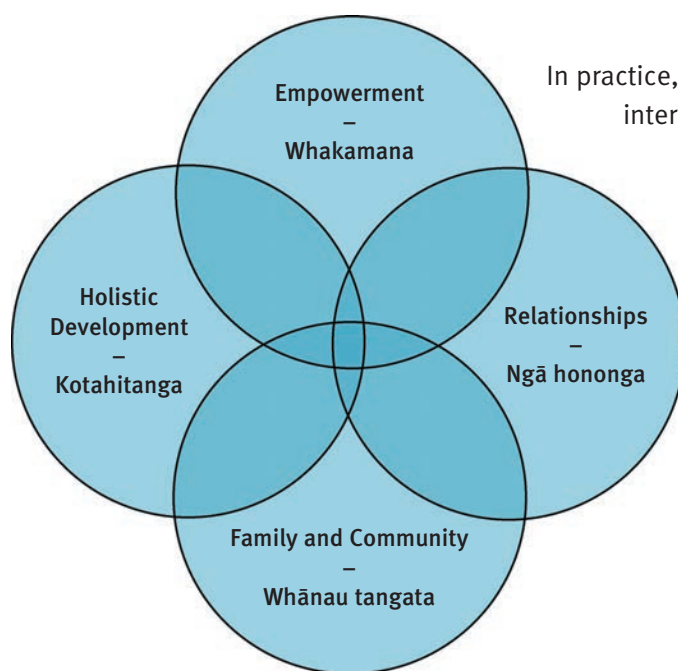
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Introduction

The principles in *Te Whāriki* reflect a sociocultural approach to learning (see *Te Whāriki*, page 19). This approach is informed by Urie Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological-contextual model, which provides a framework for understanding the contexts in which humans develop. It is an approach that emphasises the importance of relationships and whanaungatanga.

Quality in Action: Te Mahi Whai Hua (pages 37–40) includes ideas about assessment practice that are consistent with the principles of *Te Whāriki*.

He kupu whakataki



Empowerment

Feedback to children on their learning and development should enhance their sense of themselves as capable people and competent learners.

Whakamana

Te Whāriki, page 30

Sociocultural approaches to assessment:

- include the children's viewpoint when possible;
- take account of the powerful influence of assessments on children's sense of themselves as learners;
- ensure that assessments of children's learning within a Māori context are situated within a Māori pedagogical framework;
- recognise that assessment is one of the features of a learning community: it influences the quality of children's engagement in learning.

Caroline Gipps (2002) cites research that supports sociocultural perspectives on assessment in schools (perspectives that are equally applicable to early childhood settings). She writes that, from a sociocultural perspective, "assessment becomes a more collaborative enterprise, in which the pupil has some input" (page 77). She also states that assessment plays a key role in identity formation. "The language of assessment and evaluation is one of the routes by which the identity of young persons is formed ..." (page 80).

Research by Simone Shivan in a mainstream ECE centre in Waikato concluded that the empowerment of Māori families was associated with legitimisation in the ECE centre of Māori knowledge, values, and language in ways that contributed positively to the children's sense of identity. She argues that empowerment is therefore much more complex than simply enabling parents to have a "voice". It involves an effective and sustaining partnership that is culturally and contextually specific (Biddulph et al., 2003, page 151).

Carole Ames (1992) describes the influence of assessment on the quality of children's engagement in learning:

The ways in which students are evaluated [that is, assessed] is one of the most salient classroom factors that can affect student motivation ... Students' perceptions of their ability appear to be especially responsive to social comparison information ... Many students not only come to believe that they lack ability but this perception becomes shared among peers. This external evaluative pressure and emphasis on social comparison also appears to have negative consequences for children's interest, their pursuit of challenging tasks and their use of learning strategies ... The learning strategies that are jeopardised are effort-based strategies that require deeper levels of information processing.

pages 264–265

Holistic development

Kotahitanga

Assessing or observing children should take place in the same contexts of meaningful activities and relationships that have provided the focus for the holistic curriculum ... Assessment of children should encompass all dimensions of children's learning and development and should see the child as a whole.

Te Whāriki, page 30

Sociocultural approaches to assessment:

- construct "communities of learners";
- support the ongoing development of learning communities with a philosophy of whanaungatanga that values the contribution each individual brings to the collective process;
- keep the complexity of learning in mind and are particularly mindful of the context.

A number of researchers argue that curriculum (and assessment) practices should construct "communities of learners" (for example, Jerome Bruner, 1996, page 84 and Barbara Rogoff, 2003, page 361).

(Book 1 defines a "learning community" as "children, families, whānau, teachers, and beyond", fostering ongoing and diverse learning.)

Marilyn Fler (2002) emphasises that what is lost in simple assessment measures is the "authenticity of complexity". She states that it is exactly "the complexity of teaching-learning contexts, with differing interaction patterns, historical contexts and dynamics specific to classrooms" that provides that authenticity (page 115).

The complexity of children's learning is increased where there are opportunities to participate in learning experiences that are authentic in the wider community.

Family and community

Whānau tangata

Families should be part of the assessment and evaluation of the curriculum as well as of children's learning and development.

Te Whāriki, page 30

Sociocultural approaches to assessment:

- reflect the interconnecting social and cultural worlds of children;
- recognise that a bicultural approach is necessary when assessing children's learning within bicultural and bilingual programmes;
- acknowledge multiple cultural lenses on assessment and learning.

Urie Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological-contextual model is founded on the idea that all the social worlds of children and their families are intimately connected in a number of ways. Learning is enhanced when there are connections and relationships between early childhood settings away from home and other places and spaces in children's lives.

The developmental potential of a child rearing setting is increased as a function of the number of supportive links between that setting and other contexts involving the child or persons responsible for his or her care. Such interconnections may take the form of shared activities, two way communication, and information provided in each setting about the others.

page 847

Reminding us of cultural perspectives, Lisa Delpit (1995) warns:

We all interpret behaviors, information, and situations through our own cultural lenses; these lenses operate involuntarily, below the level of conscious awareness, making it seem that our own view is simply "the way it is".

page 151

Lesieli I. Kupu MacIntyre (2001) highlights this point in a paper in which she offers a Pasifika perspective on assessment in early childhood education. She points out, for instance, that there is no one word in Tongan for the word "assessment". Instead there are three words – "sivi", "tesi", and "fe'auhi". When translated into English, these words become "examination", "test", and "competition".

Quality in Action: Te Mahi Whai Hua (page 57) points out that, for many Māori, the ways in which information is shared with whānau can be as important as the information itself.

Relationships

Ngā hononga

Assessment is influenced by the relationships between adults and children, just as children's learning and development are influenced by the relationships they form with others. This influence should be taken into consideration during all assessment practice.

Te Whāriki, page 30

Sociocultural approaches to assessment:

- are reciprocal and responsive: they can be shared, negotiated, revisited, and changed;
- are situated within the context of whanaungatanga;
- are about assessment for learning: they inform and form teaching responses.

Anne Smith (1999) explains:

Sociocultural perspectives emphasise that children's higher mental processes are formed through the scaffolding of children's developing understanding through social interactions with skilled partners. If children are to acquire knowledge about their world it is crucial that they engage in shared experiences with relevant scripts, events, and objects with adults (and peers).

page 86

The "relevant scripts, events, and objects" Smith refers to include assessments.

Gipps (2002) argues for assessment opportunities and relationships that are based on power with, rather than power over, children. Rose Pere (1997) points out that assessment within a Māori context is closely linked to the teacher-child relationship. Teachers and learners working closely together are in the best position to jointly evaluate the ongoing process.

Exemplars

Ngā tauaromahi

The exemplars are set out under the four principles in Te Whāriki. For each principle, there is an illustrative, but not comprehensive, list of criteria to look for. However, each setting will develop its own criteria that reflect its unique context and community.

Empowerment – Whakamana

Effective assessment practices enhance children’s sense of themselves as capable and competent learners.

What to look for

- Assessments that refer to children setting their own goals
- Children developing their own criteria for assessing achievement
- Teachers’ criteria for assessment that are transparent and accessible (and that may be negotiated by older children)
- Children being consulted about what they will do next
- Children being consulted about what will be recorded or collected.

Reflecting on our practice

- Discuss the occasions when, in our setting, assessments have referred to children setting their own goals. (For example, see “George gets to where he wants to be”.)
- Have there been any occasions in our setting when children set a new goal because they were involved with an assessment? (For example, see “Aminiasi sets himself a goal”.)
- How can children initiate or take a role in deciding what will be recorded or collected for their portfolio? (For example, see “Write about my moves!”)
- What strategies within our programme enable teachers to document children’s words? (For example, see “Those are the exact words I said, Mum!”)
- What opportunities are there in our setting for children to revisit their assessments?

"Those are the exact words I said, Mum!"

Parent's voice

Damien loves to "read" his portfolio. He is so enthusiastic in searching out the stories he loves the most that I have to hide away on my own to read the stories carefully and thoroughly. That way I can make sure that I am not constantly interrupted and asked to look at the next one. When we look at it together, he turns the pages over and over until he gets to his favourite story about the dinosaurs T Rex and Long Neck. He reads out the words that are written about T Rex eating Long Neck, and he says, "Those are the exact words I said, Mum! That's exactly what I said!"

Five weeks after Damien left for school, his mother commented that his portfolio is still one of his most loved books.

Robyn (ECE teacher)

What's happening here?

Damien's mother adds a comment to his assessment portfolio, describing her own interest and his response.

What aspects of empowerment does this assessment exemplify?

Damien perceives that his exact words were valued enough to be written down by the teacher at the time.

Damien can read the words back to his mother. A number of assessments have become literacy artefacts that the children can revisit to read stories about themselves. Damien's early childhood teacher adds to this record by commenting that even five weeks after starting school, his portfolio is still one of his most loved books.

How might this documented assessment contribute to developing empowerment?

Portfolios are available for families to take home.

Damien's mother's contribution to his assessment portfolio is another illustration of how valued the collection of assessments can be for the family. Damien's mother likes to read it "carefully and thoroughly" and in her own time.

What might this tell us about informal noticing, recognising, and responding in this place?

The teachers listen to the children and write down their "exact words" when stories are dictated.

The teachers have relationships with families that may continue after the child goes to school. (In this case, the teacher can make a comment five weeks after Damien left for school.)

Aminiasi sets himself a goal

Today, Aminiasi came to me and said, "I want to make a kite."

"You can," I replied.

"I can't," Aminiasi replied.

"You can," I replied.

"I can't," said Aminiasi.

"Shall we look at some books and see how to make a kite?" I asked.

"Yes," Aminiasi agreed.

We read the story "The Wind Blew". We talked about the shape of the kite and what kites need to help them fly.

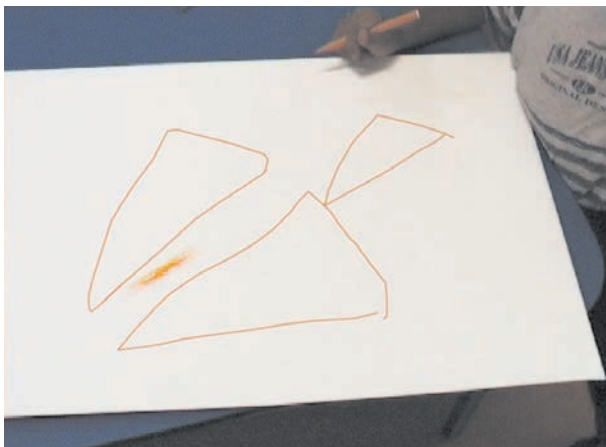
Aminiasi then chose his materials and set about creating his kite, working independently. The pictures below tell the story about the process Aminiasi worked through to reach the goal he had set himself: to make a kite.



2. Aminiasi sticky-taped each corner into place.



3. Aminiasi stopped folding the cardboard kite and went to the shelf to choose some paper to use. He then set about folding each corner in to form a diamond shape.



1. Aminiasi drew triangle shapes for his kite and then folded the corner of the kite into a triangle shape.



4. He attached yellow crepe paper for the tail and wrapped the end around a cylinder, which was the handle.



5. As Aminiasi was walking outside, the tail broke. He returned to the table and reattached the tail.



8. Oh, no! The tail broke again! Aminiasi headed back inside to fix his kite.



6. Aminiasi gave the tail a pull to test that it was attached.



9. More sticky tape was needed to fix the tail into place.



7. Aminiasi flew his kite.



10. Aminiasi Kissed his Kite.



11. The wind blew, and Aminiasi flew his kite. The kite ducked and dived as Aminiasi ran around the playground with it trailing behind him.

Child's voice

Aminiasi talked to Heather about his kite:
 "I want to go and fly it! ... The tail is to fly ... Paper for making the kite ... Sticky-tape to stick it ... More sticky-tape ... The tail is yellow."

Short-term review

Today, Aminiasi set his own task and was able to ask for help when he needed it. At first, he doubted his own ability, but after reading a book about kites and discussing shapes, Aminiasi began his project. This story shows incredible persistence (a very important disposition for learning) as Aminiasi had to mend his kite many times but didn't give up until he had some success! During Aminiasi's kite-making project, he was also exploring which shapes and materials are best for kites (for example, he changed from cardboard to paper). ["Te Whāriki", Exploration, goal 3.4]

What next?

I read Aminiasi's story with him, and then we printed it. Together, we put it in his file. I asked Aminiasi, "What do you think your next project will be?"

"A butterfly kite," came the reply.

We will support Aminiasi in his next project by:

- exploring more books about kites;
- encouraging Aminiasi to plan his project, going through each stage – drawing plans, collecting resources, and trialling the final product;
- involving Aminiasi in constructing the Chinese butterfly kite we have just purchased;
- fostering Aminiasi's disposition of persistence.



Aminiasi watched his story come off the printer, looking at each page with delight as he discovered each picture.

Aminiasi was able to retell his own story to me from reading the pictures.

What's happening here?

Aminiasi decides to make a kite. While Aminiasi's criterion for success was that the kite would fly, the teacher notes in the short-term review other aspects of valued learning during this activity. For example, Aminiasi:

- set his own task;
- asked her for help when he needed it;
- doubted his ability but began his project after reading a book and discussing the process;
- persisted when the kite broke;
- explored which shapes and materials are best for kites. (She adds as evidence of this the fact that he changed from cardboard to paper.)

What aspects of empowerment does this assessment exemplify?

In this exemplar, Aminiasi sets his own goal: to make a kite.

In his discussion with one of the teachers (see the Child's voice section), Aminiasi indicates his criterion for success: "I want to go and fly it!"

The centre provides a range of materials, including alternatives such as paper and card, and this encourages the children to make their own choices when they make things.

After he makes the kite, the teacher asks him, "What do you think your next project will be?", and he replies, "A butterfly kite." The teachers draft a plan to support Aminiasi in his self-chosen follow-on project.

How might this documented assessment contribute to developing empowerment?

The pictures tell a detailed story about the process Aminiasi worked through to reach the goal he had set himself. The process is also recorded in Aminiasi's words (the Child's voice). The record includes documentation of his response each time the tail broke: he fixed it.

The teacher notes that "Aminiasi was able to retell his own story to me from reading the pictures".

What might this tell us about informal noticing, recognising, and responding in this place?

When Aminiasi says he wants to make a kite, the teacher assures him that he has the ability to do it, disagreeing with him when he says, "I can't."

The teacher responds to Aminiasi's uncertainty and provides an entry into the self-chosen but daunting task by reading a relevant story (*The Wind Blew*, by Pat Hutchins) and talking about the shape of the kite and what kites need to help them fly.

George gets to where he wants to be

We have observed that George (twelve months old) has a long concentration span. He will continue trying out a new skill he has developed over and over. If he is having difficulty with a toy, he will persevere until he succeeds, taking just a few goes or days or months to achieve his goals.

George's parents, Fiona and Chris, also notice this perseverance. The attached message was written by Fiona in George's home-centre notebook and illustrates their recognition of George's strong desire to walk, how he "didn't give up", and how achieving his goals has changed George's experiences.

George has had a wonderful summer break. Just before Xmas, he started to walk and never looked back. He tried, and tried, and tried, and didn't give up. Walking has given him a new angle on life that has been really exciting for him. Lots of games of chasing and hide and seek around the house. His interactions with other people – especially children – have been wonderful to watch. George loves to be with other children.

Another example of George's perseverance was evident when he was trying to crawl up the slide. From the time George started crawling at eight months old and he discovered the slide, he attempted to crawl up it. After nearly five months of persevering, it finally paid off when he crawled all the way up the slide.

When I told Fiona the story of George climbing the slide, she said that during the weekend, George and his family had visited a family who had a slide. George had managed to crawl up the slide there.



Two days after George climbed the slide at the centre, he climbed into the swing on his own. As with the slide, George got into the swing independently after months of attempts. He would regularly walk over to the swing and put half his body on it, rocking back and forth, either because he liked the movement or to indicate to the teachers that he wanted a swing. The swings at the centre are low to the ground, but it takes a certain amount of co-ordination and balance to climb into this moving object. Gradually, George overcame the difficulties and managed this tricky task.

As we watched this event unfold, we soon realised he could probably conquer the challenge by himself, so we deliberately kept our distance and observed George, not wanting to interfere.

George displays this task persistence and long concentration span in several different aspects of his play. Examples are when he is playing with blocks or when he dismantles a suction toy off the window, putting the toy together again before putting it back on the window and repeating this several times.

What's happening here?

This assessment describes George climbing a slide and then into a swing on his own at the early childhood centre.

It took months of attempts for George to complete these self-chosen and “tricky” tasks.

What aspects of empowerment does this assessment exemplify?

This is an example of an assessment that follows from a child setting his own goals. The teachers describe two goals: George's desire to crawl up the slide and to climb into one of the early childhood centre's swings. These were difficult tasks for George and, in both cases, took several months of perseverance and practice. The assessment looks back in time and provides information about the strategies that George mastered in order to climb into a moving swing.

The criteria for achievement were embedded in the self-chosen tasks: getting to the top of the slide and getting into the swing facing the right way around. This is an example of feedback provided by the material or the activity. George does not need praise from an adult to tell him that he has achieved a goal.

How might this documented assessment contribute to developing empowerment?

The teachers' annotations provide evidence for the family and other teachers of George's perseverance over a range of self-chosen tasks. In the annotations, the teachers link three enterprises (walking, crawling up the slide, and climbing into the swing) to illustrate what they see as George's long concentration span.

They add other examples of George setting his own goals and persevering (playing with blocks and dismantling and putting back together a suction toy). This perseverance is a teachers' goal, highlighted here in the context of George's own goals. The teachers' criteria for perseverance are clear.

This exemplar includes comments from George's mother, who adds another perspective to the story. Together, the three perspectives articulated in this record demonstrate the view that setting and pursuing one's own goals are a valued aspect of learning.

Photos with commentaries make this story accessible for George to revisit during his time at the centre. It looks back over time, provides information about how long this achievement has taken, and includes some detail about earlier attempts, illustrating for George and the community what perseverance means in the context of George's own goals.

What might this tell us about informal noticing, recognising, and responding in this place?

The teachers gave George the opportunity (time, space, and accessible equipment) to master his own goals. They may well have had some safety concerns about crawling up slides but decided to accommodate George's focus.

They commented: “As we watched this event [getting into the swing] unfold, we soon realised he could probably conquer the challenge by himself, so we deliberately kept our distance and observed George, not wanting to interfere.” The teachers knew George well; they decided that this challenge was at the right level of difficulty for him and that he could solve the problem himself.

One of the teachers told George's mother the story about him climbing up the slide. During this conversation, the mother added more information.

"Write about my moves!"



"Write about my moves! I keep wriggling to keep it moving ...

When it goes low, I have to go faster – see?"

Lachlan shows me how fast he has to go to keep the hula hoop turning.

"See, it's on my hips? When you start moving, it

goes faster. Sometimes it goes slow when I move my body fast, and the hula hoop goes down."



Short-term review

Lachlan is so good at using the hula hoop, I can see why you've got one at home, Moira. It takes a lot of skill to get a hula hoop to move, and I think Lachlan would have to be the "King of the hula hoop" at Kindergarten! And just look at the interest that was sparked in other children when Lachlan started to move!

What's happening here?

Lachlan is practising hula hooping. He asks the teacher to "write about my moves".

What aspects of empowerment does this assessment exemplify?

Lachlan is specifying what he wants to go into his assessment record: the process of keeping the hula hoop spinning. He has worked out that to keep it moving, "I keep wriggling" and "When it goes low, I have to go faster – see?"

How might this documented assessment contribute to developing empowerment?

Lachlan's instruction and the teacher's response (writing down his moves) are key features of this documentation. In analysing the learning, the teacher also makes the observation, supported by a photograph, that he had sparked the interest of the other children. His initiative and its consequences are on record for revisiting.

The teacher addresses the parent in this assessment as part of a continuing conversation with the family. (The teacher already knows that the family has a hula hoop at home.) She adds an evaluation of the difficulty of this task: "It takes a lot of skill to get a hula hoop to move." The record includes Lachlan's explanation of the process. Because it is written down in detail, readers can discuss this with Lachlan and he can add to it if he wants to.

What might this tell us about informal noticing, recognising, and responding in this place?

The teacher listens to the child and responds positively to his request for a documented assessment.

The parent is also invited to be part of this discussion.

Holistic Development – Kotahitanga

Effective assessment practices reflect the holistic way that children learn.

What to look for

- The integration of children’s physical, intellectual, emotional, social, and spiritual development as they learn within the strands of well-being, belonging, communication, contribution, and exploration and “as reflected in their working theories and learning dispositions” (see *Te Whāriki*, page 44)
- Assessments that connect what is being learned to meaningful situations and purposes, in many cases, through using narrative forms of assessment
- Multiple perspectives that enhance the interpretation and analysis of the learning
- Assessments that recognise that learning is multidimensional, for example, “science” exploration may include a sense of belonging to the world of the scientist, collaborating with others, and calling on the language of mathematics.

Reflecting on our practice

How can we use assessment documentation to draw attention to the integrated nature of children’s learning?

Many exemplars provide a picture of a complex learning experience. For example, read “The mosaic project” and identify the learning that might be going on here, considering a variety of goals for learning and development (for example, problem solving, involvement, creativity, mathematics, and persistence).

Discuss the occasions when, in our setting, assessments have illustrated learning that is integrated within the strands of well-being, belonging, communication, contribution, and exploration.

Discuss the documentation of a project in our setting and list the variety of ways our centre has recorded noticing, recognising, and responding.

Becoming a friend, becoming a learner

Learning story

Becky usually chooses to play by herself at our centre. We have noticed that another child at the centre, Lauren, who also chooses to play by herself, has taken an interest in Becky.

We have tried to support this interest by sitting the two of them next to each other at lunchtimes and pairing them up in music activities.

Becky appears to be responding to Lauren's interest in developing a friendship. When she arrives in the morning, she first settles by herself in the book corner and before long moves on to see Lauren.

Short-term review

Becky is responding to Lauren's interest in developing a friendship. She is becoming involved in Lauren's play and is developing trust in her.

Becky obviously still feels more secure with starting her day with something that is familiar to her but is beginning to enjoy the unfamiliar that is evolving with Lauren.

What next?

Continue to encourage this friendship by pairing Becky and Lauren up in group activities and sitting them beside each other.

Observe their play, and tune in on an interest that the two may share and extend on this.

Learning story (three months later)

Becky and Lauren spent the morning playing in the family corner. They were involved in a lovely game of mother and baby. Lauren was the mother and Becky was the baby.

They played their roles beautifully. Becky would cry and Lauren would become the nurturing mother and pat her back and tell her she was all right.

At one stage, Lauren tried to pretend to feed Becky, but Becky told her she was not hungry. Becky would then pretend to cry again. "Put me to bed," she said to Lauren.

Becky then climbed into the dolls' cot and curled herself up to fit in. Lauren tucked in the blankets over her. Lauren then began to rub Becky, and Becky pretended to fall asleep.

Later that morning, I noticed they were still in the family corner, but this time Lauren was in the cot and Becky was the mother.

Short-term review

Great example of co-operative play and turn taking, using knowledge Becky and Lauren have of babies and mothers to act out their roles.

Demonstrates high levels of interest and involvement by (Becky) being playful with Lauren and being involved for a sustained period. Becky developed her ideas and interests by using different equipment and materials. Becky often carries on playing in the family corner after Lauren goes home. She then becomes the mother to the dolls. She feeds them, dresses them and tucks them into the cot for a sleep. This is a huge area where we can extend for Becky by providing her with different props in different areas of play.

In music, they will often pair up together and dance around holding hands. Both girls have really opened up and become a lot more confident in their abilities. This friendship has been great for their self-esteem and security within the centre environment.

What's happening here?

The teachers recognise an opportunity to encourage the friendship of two children who often play by themselves.

What aspects of holistic development does this assessment exemplify?

This exemplar illustrates the integration of children's social development with other aspects of their learning. In the first story, the teacher notes "Becky obviously still feels more secure with starting her day with something that is familiar to her but is beginning to enjoy the unfamiliar that is evolving with Lauren." The friendship appears to provide an entry to more complex learning in wider contexts, such as communicating with adults, joining in group discussions, collaborative role play, and music.

How might this documented assessment contribute to holistic development?

The learning here is documented by one teacher, but other teachers will also support Becky and Lauren in their learning. Having this developing relationship on record means that the other teachers can read this record and may consider other ways to nurture Becky and Lauren's friendship. The other teachers may add to the record.

Families read the assessment record, too, and this entry provides reassuring evidence that Becky is making progress in a number of areas.

What might this tell us about informal noticing, recognising, and responding in this place?

This teacher is responding to a perceived opportunity to extend Becky and Lauren's learning by encouraging their friendship. The initial plan is very specific: to observe their play and encourage an interest that the two may share and to pair the children in group activities.

The teacher acknowledges Becky's right to be by herself but perceives the advantages of the growing friendship between the two children.

Monarch Butterfly Adventure

A child brought along a dead monarch butterfly from home to the kindergarten one morning to show Dawn and Helen. The monarch caught the attention of a number of other children, leading to a lot of questioning from the children and discussion about the dead butterfly. "What is it?" "Where did it come from?" "Why did it die?" The conversations between the children and the teachers continued and led to some of the children and teachers discussing together the life cycle of a butterfly. They searched out a book from the science box that illustrated and described this life cycle. As they discussed the pictures and read the words, some of the children obviously made a connection between what they saw in the book and what was familiar from home because it wasn't long before several children announced that they had monarch caterpillars at home on swan plants.

More talking followed between the teachers and the children, and the children decided they wanted to find out more about monarch butterflies. More books were found at the kindergarten showing other types of butterflies and moths. Together with a teacher, the children compared the size, colour, and features of the different species. They also revisited a favourite storybook, *Maisey the Monarch* by Sue Galbraith.

Though the children were interested in the other butterflies and moths, Dawn and Helen realised that it was the monarch in particular that really captured their interest. So they decided to follow through on the interest of the children – monarch butterflies.

Helen and Dawn organised a small group brainstorm with the interested children, based around what the children thought they would like to do to help them learn more about monarch butterflies. Because the children's brainstorm related mainly to the life cycle of the monarch, Dawn and Helen decided to focus on this first. They drew up a plan from the ideas generated and set about resourcing the kindergarten environment.

Helen visited a friend who had a lot of swan plants at her house. She gathered some of the chrysalises and brought these to the kindergarten for the children.

A child offered to bring in a caterpillar from home and, after this was suggested, several of the children decided to bring in their caterpillars from home too. The caterpillars started arriving the very next day. Some children brought eggs on leaves and on the pods of swan plants.



A special area was set up to house the swan plants, eggs, and chrysalises. One feature of the kindergarten environment is a huge branch from a tree (with plastic leaves attached) that looks like a small tree growing inside the kindergarten. This "tree" became the centre of the area, and many chrysalises and eggs were housed on it. The children were really interested in the way the caterpillars twisted their bodies in an effort to construct their chrysalises. Sometimes, the caterpillars crawled onto the tree from the swan plants to build their chrysalises. In fact, soon chrysalises could be found all over the kindergarten.

Dawn comments: "The children were going home and talking about the butterflies. This prompted interest from their siblings, and there were two children in particular who would come along after school to check on the progress. They spotted some of the butterflies up on the high window sills and were worried about whether they would be able to find their way outside, so they offered to help. So out came the stepladder, and up they went."

After a few days, the children found out how hungry the caterpillars were. They soon realised that we didn't have enough food for them to eat, so they had to find out what else they ate. The children were worried the caterpillars would die without food. They theorised about the types of things caterpillars would like to eat. One or two of them were very knowledgeable about what was considered good caterpillar food, informing the group that pumpkin was a good alternative to swan plants. The teachers and children looked this idea up in one of their books and, sure enough, pumpkin was recommended. The children brought pumpkin from home, but soon noticed that the pumpkin wasn't really being eaten by the caterpillars. After a rethink, the children decided more swan plants were needed.

The children's artwork was dominated by their interest in the butterflies.



Georgia brought in her own chrysalis from home on a lettuce leaf. We hung it in the tree. Some children noticed that the chrysalis was moving. We went and called in as many children as we could to come and look. We were lucky enough to witness the hatching process. This took a long, long time, but the children stayed engaged. We noticed that the

butterfly came out head first and then turned around and quickly grabbed the leaf with its legs to hold on. We had to wait for its wings to dry. We watched it spread its wings out and exercise them. We were surprised to find out that, just like in the birth of a baby, the butterfly had an "afterbirth". This led to all sorts of discussion about whether it was a boy butterfly or a girl butterfly.

Over the following days and weeks, the butterflies continued to emerge from their chrysalises in a steady stream. The children were able to watch this transformation many times over.

Miles: I saw ...

Nick: I can see some more.

Miles: There's one.

Nick: There's one.

Miles: Here ... here's one. A chrysalis.

Nick: Miles, you're a good finder.

Miles: I've got binoculars. Let's look for babies. I saw one with kind of sparkly things on it. Hey, look! When I saw that one, it was wriggling around.

Nick: Hey, look! Don't touch it.



A significant feature of this project was the way the children learned to care for the caterpillars and butterflies. They showed incredible care for the protection of these tiny living things as they grew and changed. The teachers took special care in helping the children to find out how to care for the caterpillars and butterflies.

As each butterfly got out of the chrysalis and had dried and rested, we talked to the children about how they had to be released into the natural environment. The children would carry the butterflies out on their fingers to the playground to release them. Sam tried to carry a butterfly outside, but the butterfly wouldn't fly away, so he carried the butterfly on his finger throughout the rest of the session, including mat time.

When Nana arrived to pick him up, the butterfly was still on his finger, refusing to move! So he got into the car and drove all the way home, where Sam released it in his own garden.

Toy monarch butterflies were bought for the children to play with to help fulfil part of their initial desire to play with the monarchs.

Some of the children chose to make butterflies, caterpillars, and so on out of baker's clay, and they hung these in the tree with the real caterpillars, chrysalises, and butterflies.



Helen visited the library to get some books for the project, but these were all out due to the butterfly season. Not to be put off, though, the children had the idea of making a book together about the life cycle of the monarch butterfly for the kindergarten.

By the end of the term, fifty-two butterflies had been raised and released by the children.

Reflecting on the project, Helen says: "We, as teachers, have learned through this project how important it is to record every step of the learning process, not just the products, as this tells us about the depth of learning that goes on. One of the other most significant things to us was the number of children involved here. There was a real sense of belonging evident. All of us learned together, teachers included. There were several times when Dawn and I said: 'I don't know. How could we find out?'"

Dawn adds: "Of course, the interest is still there, months on. If the children spy a butterfly flying over the neighbour's fence, it always leads to questions and discussion. 'Is it one of ours?' 'Where is it going to?' 'Where has it come from?'"



What's happening here?

A child brings a monarch butterfly to kindergarten, inspiring a project that involves the whole kindergarten community. This project includes brainstorming ideas, using books as references and for additional interest, exploring the life cycle by observing eggs and chrysalises, doing artwork, making a book, and having discussions.

What aspects of holistic development does this assessment exemplify?

This exemplar illustrates the children's development of working theories as they listen to each other's ideas, try them out, and then perhaps reject them. For example, they work out what to feed the caterpillars and they watch the hatching of a butterfly and wonder whether it is a boy or a girl.

Two teachers, Dawn and Helen, contribute to this record, each adding their own perspective to the analysis.

Dawn comments: "A significant feature of this project was the way the children learned to care for the caterpillars and butterflies." She tells a story about Sam, whose butterfly wouldn't fly away when he carried it outside, so he carried it all the way home and released it in his own garden. She also writes about how older siblings became interested and how two in particular came along after school to check on progress. "They spotted some of the butterflies up on the high window sills and were worried about whether they would be able to find their way outside, so they offered to help. So out came the stepladder, and up they went."

In her reflection at the end, Helen comments: "There was a real sense of belonging evident. All of us learned together, teachers included. There were several times when Dawn and I said, 'I don't know. How could we find out?'"

How might this documented assessment contribute to holistic development?

This documentation describes a project that started with one child's interest and in which many others became involved.

The documentation includes the children's ideas and the details of the group story over some time. It is made accessible through wall displays and a book developed by the children and the teachers. Its accessibility means that it can be revisited. The book can be a resource for another butterfly project with another cohort of children.

What might this tell us about informal noticing, recognising, and responding in this place?

The teachers followed through on the children's interest when they:

- conducted a brainstorm with a small group of interested children, asking them what they would like to do to help them learn more about monarch butterflies;
- drew up a plan from the ideas generated;
- set about getting the resources (for example, collecting swan plants and chrysalises, visiting the library, and making their own book with the children when all the relevant books were out);
- devised ways in which the children could play with monarch butterflies without endangering them;
- encouraged artwork to represent the learning.

The teachers valued the process of learning and saw learning as a collaborative process between teachers and children (for example, "All of us learned together, teachers included").

THE MOSAIC PROJECT



The mosaic project began in term 2, with a group of children working together on mosaicking the concrete pavers for the outdoor environment. To continue and extend this interest, an ongoing project was planned for term 3. Sarah's parents, Anne and Ian, provided their support and ongoing expertise – mosaic work is a real interest for their family.

The children could choose to make a pot, a tile, or a picture frame. They were encouraged to sketch their design first to focus their thinking. The children had a range of coloured pre-cut tiles to choose from as well as old china, which they broke into pieces using a hammer. They used tile adhesive to attach the tiles to their objects. The process took some time as the children worked on the project at their leisure. When each child had finished the tiling process, they left their object to dry for twenty-four hours.

Grout was mixed to a thick paste and applied over the entire object. The grout filled in the gaps between the tiles. A clean cloth was used to clean the excess grout off.

The mosaic constructions have enabled children to work at their own pace, developing and creating an original piece of work.

The interest from parents has also been immense, so we have planned a mosaic workshop for parents in week 9.





What's happening here?

This is a story about a group of children working together on mosaicking concrete pavers for the outdoor environment at their early childhood centre. Some of them went on to mosaic a pot, tile, or picture frame to take home. The teachers described this project, including the process and the resources accessed within the community, in documentation that they displayed on the walls for the children, families, and whānau to view. This activity has continued for more than two years. The latest project is a mosaic table.

What aspects of holistic development does this assessment exemplify?

This exemplar illustrates learning that is multidimensional. The children learned about and were actively involved in the process of using tile adhesive and grouting, and an adult expert taught them about the need to wear gloves to

stay safe when working with chemicals. The task integrated well-being (considering safety when being a mosaic-tile maker), belonging (making tiles for the environment), contribution (working together on a common enterprise), communication (sketching designs and translating them into mosaics), and exploration (learning about the properties of a range of materials and gaining spatial understandings).

The tiles they made were added to a new playground construction, so this documentation was about learning in the context of a purposeful activity. The value of the activity was extended to the wider community as the families took an interest and the early childhood centre staff planned a workshop for parents.

How might this documented assessment contribute to holistic development?

This record of a group enterprise and of learning the process of mosaicking went into every participating child's portfolio. Frequently these were accompanied by additional photographs of the child who owned the portfolio. In some cases, the child's parents had also participated in the workshop and could contribute their own experience to discussions about the process and the product (and the playground design) that this documentation invited.

What might this tell us about informal noticing, recognising, and responding in this place?

At least two aspects of pedagogy for noticing, recognising, and responding are apparent here. The teachers involved the children in contributing to the new playground environment, recognising an opportunity to learn. They also responded to the interest of the parents, organising a workshop for them and extending participation in the curriculum into the wider world of family and community.

An important aspect of pedagogy is the revisiting of previous documentation around these projects. The teachers took the rich documentation from earlier mosaic projects down from the wall displays and placed it in folders that were easy for everyone to access.

Family and Community – Whānau tangata

Effective assessment practices involve whānau and community.

What to look for

- Assessment practices that are accessible to families and whānau
- Assessments that invite families and whānau into the curriculum
- Families and whānau participating in assessment
- Assessments that encompass participation by the teachers and children in community activities outside the early childhood setting.

Reflecting on our practice

Assessments can provide an opportunity to engage families in their children's learning in a shared and meaningful way. Discuss an occasion where a parent has initiated curriculum ideas in our setting.

The use of a home language in children's assessments can play an important role in supporting the families' contribution and their sense of belonging to our setting. What strategies would enable us to enrich children's documentation in this way? (For example, see "Jet's mother contributes to the assessment".)

Are there any opportunities in our programme for the documentation to be shared with the wider community? (For example, see "The mosaic project".)

Describe the ways in which learning is made visible and documented for individual families and whānau in our setting.

Jet's mother contributes to the assessment

Child's name: Jet
Date: 15/06

Parent's Voice

	Examples or cues	A LEARNING STORY
belonging mana whenua	TAKING AN INTEREST Finding an interest here – a topic, an activity, a role. Recognising the familiar, enjoying the unfamiliar. Coping with change.	Sometimes it doesn't matter how hard you try, but the fish can get away from you in the bath.
well-being mana atua	BEING INVOLVED Paying attention for a sustained period, feeling safe, trusting others. Being playful with others and/or materials.	Jet spent 20 minutes trying to herd the red, blue and yellow plastic fish into his hands. He patiently followed the fish from one side of the bath to the other & sighed heavily after trying for so long.
exploration mana aotua	PERSISTING WITH DIFFICULTY Setting and choosing difficult tasks. Using a range of strategies to solve problems when 'stuck' (be specific).	
communication mana reo	EXPRESSING AN IDEA OR A FEELING In a range of ways (specify). For example: oral language, gesture, music, art, writing, using numbers and patterns, telling stories.	
contribution mana tangata	TAKING RESPONSIBILITY Responding to others, to stories, and imagined events, ensuring that things are fair, self-evaluating, helping others, contributing to programme.	Ahaka te aha e kore e taea te hōpu ika i te kaumanga 20 mineti, tel rāroga i whiri ika a Jet. He ngakau iti toa, ka whai atu i nga ika ki nga tahataha a te kaumanga, aa ka aue atu i tana mahi.

Kupu hōu
kaumanga = bath tub
whiri = herd, throw
ngakau iti = humble, patient
whai atu = chase
tahataha = sides
aue = sigh

What's happening here?

Jet's mother tells a story about bath time at home and uses it as an opportunity to provide the staff at the childcare centre with some vocabulary in te reo Māori.

What aspects of family and community involvement does this assessment exemplify?

The documented assessments at this centre provide a site and an invitation for families and whānau to participate in the curriculum and the assessment practice. Jet's mother is participating in both of these by contributing a story from home that can be read back to Jet in Māori (encouraging the use of te reo Māori with him at the centre and supporting the staff's developing competence with te reo Māori).

How might this documented assessment contribute to participation by family and community?

The staff can share the story from home with Jet in both Māori and English. Having it written down ensures that they use te reo Māori correctly. A written story also encourages the use of te reo Māori in narrative rather than just the occasional word.

Jet's mother is assisting the staff to learn te reo Māori and to use it confidently. She is using stories from home as a context for this, adding vocabulary that the teachers may find unfamiliar.

What might this tell us about informal noticing, recognising, and responding in this place?

This exemplar illustrates that the teachers are willing to share the teacher role with family and whānau.

Zahra and the donkey

Date:	June	A LEARNING STORY	
belonging mana whenua	TAKING AN INTEREST	First donkey day: Zahra is two years old. One morning during her second week in the country, she arrived at the Centre with her mother and 3 year old brother. She suddenly spotted the rocking horse and climbed on - rocking it herself. It was wonderful to observe her enthusiasm and excitement	
well-being mana atua	BEING INVOLVED	when she saw the donkey.	
exploration mana aotiora	PERSISTING WITH DIFFICULTY	Next day: Today Zahra raced into the centre exclaiming loudly. A staff member who spoke her	
communication manareo	EXPRESSING AN IDEA OR A FEELING	language told me she was looking for her donkey. "My donkey," she exclaimed.	
contribution mana tangata	TAKING RESPONSIBILITY	I brought the donkey out from the sleep room. She jumped on - rocking back and forth. The donkey ride became a daily ritual for Zahra!!	



Short-term review
Zahra has found something of interest, a link to her past in actual fact. She wanted to return to the centre to ensure the rocking horse was still there. When she discovered it was not in the same place she confidently expressed herself in order to solve her problem. Zahra played this ritual out every day.
What next?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff will build on her donkey interest. Songs, stories, pictures, games and discussions. • Staff will ensure the donkey is prominently available daily for Zahra.
Zahra and her brother - settled, relaxed and enjoying a story


Child's name: Zahra
Date: June 2001

Parent's Voice

	A LEARNING STORY
TAKING AN INTEREST	Zahra's mother tells us Zahra asks each night:
BEING INVOLVED	"Is the donkey warm?"
PERSISTING WITH DIFFICULTY	"Is the donkey sleeping?"
EXPRESSING AN IDEA OR A FEELING	"Will donkey be there in the morning?"
TAKING RESPONSIBILITY	Zahra's brother Zachana (3 years old) explained that they had many donkeys in the Refugee camp. His family were the "Donkey Traders". The children were very much involved in their care.

What's happening here?

Two-year-old Zahra is in an early childhood centre for refugee children and their families. Families spend six weeks in the centre before they are resettled elsewhere. The teacher writes learning stories about the children, and they are translated for the families. This story is about a rocking horse at the centre and incorporates different family perspectives on Zahra's response to it: hers, her mother's, and her brother's.

What aspects of family and community involvement does this assessment exemplify?

Zahra's family participates in this assessment. Her mother reports that Zahra asks each evening if the "donkey" at the centre is warm and asleep. Her brother explains that there were many donkeys at the refugee camp. Her grandmother spends considerable time at the centre and explains that the family have been donkey traders for two generations.

The assessments are translated for the family, making them accessible.

How might this documented assessment contribute to participation by family and community?

The family's contributions are also translated for the record, making them accessible to the teachers. Zahra's story, and its retelling, will go with her to her next early childhood centre to form the basis for conversations, understandings, and curriculum.

One of the teachers wrote this series of contributions with the help of a translator. Learning the meaning that the rocking horse has for Zahra contributes to the teachers' understanding of her background and to their ability to recognise opportunities for communicating with Zahra and her family. It also helps their teaching: they find songs and stories about donkeys and pictures of them.

The photographs make the record in English partly accessible for the family. (In many of the centre's records, there is a written version in the home language.)

What might this tell us about informal noticing, recognising, and responding in this place?

In spite of the fact that children are in this centre for only six weeks, the basis of the pedagogy is to find something of interest or significance to the child and the family. This forms a foundation for the development of appropriate resources and opportunities to communicate with non-English speakers in a range of ways.

Letters from the teacher, letters from the parent

3 August – Teacher's letter to mother

... You mentioned that Angel loves to read the books by herself, by looking at and interpreting the pictures, and she loves to role-play many of the stories. Today, I have sent you our information sheet, Let's Pretend. You will see that dramatic or pretend play is an important part of development at this age. Angel must be able to act out situations that she is familiar with and feels comfortable with and those that she does not understand. Sit and watch as she plays, and you will find out a lot about what she is thinking and feeling. Do you have a box of dress-up clothes, some hats, some blankets or sheets, and some large cardboard boxes for Angel to play with? All these items and anything else you may find will add to Angel's games and her development.

11 August – Mother's comments – Let's Pretend

We built a house with the couch and blankets, and Mummy didn't pull it down until bedtime. It was resurrected a lot. She pretended to bake with her play dough and her toy oven. She also used old grocery boxes for a train, and her dress-up stuff was cargo. She didn't play dress-ups much, only putting a fairy dress on her head for fun.

The other day, she tried to pick some flowers and leaned on a branch, which snapped. She first pretended the branch was a Christmas tree. When she got bored with that, she tried to plant it again. It's still there because I'm not allowed to touch it, even though it will not grow.

She pretended to be a puppy and tried to get the adults to have turns, too. She carried a soft toy in her mouth and barked. She's got a good imagination. Sometimes she pretends her little sister is a tiger and runs away from her screaming, "It's a tiger! Oh no, a tiger!"

21 September – Teacher's letter to mother

Thank you for all the helpful and informative feedback. I can see that you are observant, aware, and involved in all Angel's learning. What a lot of fun Angel has with pretend dramatic play, and I can see that you have included some of the ideas and information from the Let's Pretend leaflet to help further develop her characters and games. I see that she also loves art activities and working with collage. Thank you for the pieces you have sent in.

29 October – Mother's letter to teacher

Well, it's been an interesting few weeks. We've had strange weather – hot one minute, thunderstorms the next. The sunflower (only one remaining) is doing well and getting very tall. Angel has been pretending more. She becomes different characters – "running girl", "walking girl", and "raining girl" – and after I've hung towels on the washing line, she'll pretend they are doors and say, "Knock, knock, knock." Then she'll have a pretend drink – water, juice, or a cup of tea, depending on how she feels – and a biscuit, also pretend, and she'll go and come back as someone else. It's a lot of fun.

Angel is also looking forward to Christmas and is helping make chocolate truffles and papier mâché photo frames. I have found that she is very good at papier mâché, so we will do another junk construction using papier mâché as well.

Oh, well, that's about all I can think of. Thank you for sending the packs. I can see Angel changing and getting more enthusiastic and outgoing each time. It's marvellous.

10 December – Teacher’s letter to mother

Wow! Another posting returned full of exciting and interesting information about Angel and her development. I do love reading all about you all, and I can see that Angel is full of life and imagination and wonderful dramatic play. I loved her different characters and her pretend doors with the clothes on the line. How neat to have a baby duckling to watch grow and care for. Yes, Christmas is not far away, and it is fun and helpful for Angel to be helping with the preparations.

What’s happening here?

This is part of a lengthy correspondence in which the teacher and mother are developing curriculum ideas that will be appropriate for Angel and her family. In this case, the assessment conversation is in the form of letters between a teacher at The Correspondence School and Angel’s mother, and the topic is pretend play.

What aspects of family and community involvement does this assessment exemplify?

In distance education, teachers use letters, emails, and other forms of correspondence to ensure that:

- assessment practices are accessible to families and whānau;
- assessments invite families and whānau into the curriculum (the parent here describing her involvement in Angel’s play);
- families and whānau participate in assessment. (The mother describes an episode and adds, “She’s got a good imagination.” Later she comments, “I can see Angel changing and getting more enthusiastic and outgoing each time [there is a posting]. It’s marvellous.”)

How might this documented assessment contribute to participation by family and community?

Documented assessments can take the form of conversations about assessment and curriculum between teachers and families who do not have the time or the opportunity to talk together. The resources and the discussion, as well as the parent’s observations and intuition, inform a continual cycle of noticing, recognising, and responding.

The comments that are included here about the development of Angel’s pretend play cover a span of five months and provide a record over time for all three participants (Angel, her mother, and her teacher) to refer to. They can pick up ideas from earlier events.

What might this tell us about informal noticing, recognising, and responding in this place?

In this case, both the teacher and the parent are teaching, and the letters record their mutual noticing, recognising, and responding. In these examples, the parent comments on one of Angel’s interests (she loves to role-play), and the teacher responds with a pack of ideas (Let’s Pretend). The parent then responds to these resources. In the October letter, Angel’s mother describes Angel’s pretend play during an everyday activity (hanging out the washing). She records her own pleasure in seeing this: “It’s a lot of fun.”

Assessments in two languages

How your child is progressing at the centre.....

Madalena loves solitary play, sometimes does her own thing whether inside or at the sand pit. She doesn't like going outside the gate much unless we go for a walk in the push chair. Loves to be cuddled. She loves singing and doing action to familiar songs. Loves climbing up the tables and couch. Participates in group activities and seems to communicate with other children well. Knows what she wants. Understands simple instructions and matches and imitates other children. Developing well physically.

Parent comments

Madalena's favourite things to do at home are to climb and to sing. I find the information/photos in this book so rewarding and valuable, as it highlights her developmental milestones from a trained perspective, and shows that her interests and nature are the same as in her home life. Thank you all very much for your skills and care - Madalena is excited in the mornings when we park outside Aoga and immediately sings! fiafetai lava, Lynda.

Faafetai lava. Malo le galuaga.
E amio faasamoa Madalena. E iloa e gaia faalogo ile gagana. Ua amata na fiafia e asiiasi i lona grandparents ona ua ia tau iloa le gagana e tantala ai latou. E fiafia e usu pese ma siva. Ua fiafia tele ~~lona~~ i le aoga.



Trying to figure out how to get up there. Madalena managed to climb up then. Had a lie down on her stomach for 2 minutes before carrying on to the top.

18.3



Patipati lina ua fiafia ua taunu i luga.
Hooray! I made it.

What's happening here?

In this exemplar, the parent and the teachers use two languages – Sāmoan and English – when they contribute to Madalena's file.

What aspects of family and community involvement does this assessment exemplify?

By writing comments in the home language, the teachers at this ā'oga ensure that their assessment practices are accessible to the children's families and encourage them to participate. Madalena's mother participates in the assessment record, indicating that she finds it rewarding and valuable to see the information and photos recording Madalena's development. She is interested that the book shows that Madalena's "interests and nature are the same [at the centre] as in her home life".

How might this documented assessment contribute to participation by family and community?

The teachers comment on the photographs in Sāmoan and English, and the parent includes Sāmoan and English in her contribution. This record invites the family to contribute in whichever language they prefer.

The record will be read back to Madalena in English or Sāmoan or both, adding another context for language development.

What might this tell us about informal noticing, recognising, and responding in this place?

The exemplar reflects the value placed on communication in this centre, particularly between teachers and families.

Relationships – Ngā hononga

Effective assessment practices reflect reciprocal and responsive relationships with people, places, and things.

What to look for

- Assessments that are conversations between learner, peers, teachers, and families about the learning in progress
- Adult assistance and teaching as part of assessments
- Peer assistance and teaching as part of assessments
- Documented assessments that reflect opportunities to learn what is valued (the roles of people, places, and things)
- Documented assessments that build on and construct informal everyday interactions and vice versa.

Reflecting on our practice

How can teachers make space and time for reciprocal assessment “conversations” with families and whānau in our setting? How might some of these be documented?

Discuss the occasions when, in our setting, assessments have made visible instances of children assisting each other. (For example, see “Toddlers as teachers” and “Bella and Nina dancing”.)

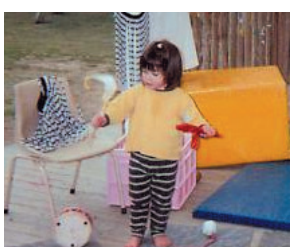
Assessments will document what is valued in our setting. Discuss some assessments and record the learning that is valued in them.

Do the assessments in our setting give details of the opportunities to learn? (For example, the learning contexts in “Mana reo” are very clearly described.)

Bella and Nina dancing



Bella has been dancing with her friends at playcentre. Her little sister, Nina, approaches the dancing. She seems very interested in the poi. Nina picks up the poi and begins to explore its movement.



In this photo, Nina has dropped the poi and is working with a flag and castanets. The older children are dancing behind her. She seems very involved.



Nina swings the poi from a small height. The older children continue to dance around the deck.



Nina decides that she will participate in the dancing. She waves her flag to the music. The older children wave their streamers.

The family connection is very important here. Nina may not have chosen to participate as readily if her older sister had not been close by. Bella has played a role in inducting Nina into the playcentre by being a safe and known person who could help Nina become involved. Bella and Nina have a new sibling on the way. Next it will be Nina's turn to nurture and create a sense of belonging for another.

What's happening here?

Nina approaches a group of children dancing that includes her older sister. After exploring movement with some of the resources nearby, Nina finally decides to join in.

What aspects of reciprocal and responsive relationships does this assessment exemplify?

This assessment emphasises that Nina is willing to participate in dancing with Bella's support.

A programme in which children can participate with younger siblings – the family connection – is cited here as “very important”. The teacher notes that this is an important aspect of the opportunity to learn and that “Nina may not have chosen to participate as readily if her older sister had not been close by.”

How might this documented assessment contribute to developing reciprocal and responsive relationships?

The writer of the assessment recognises that learning is built on responsive and reciprocal relationships. She adds, “Bella and Nina have a new sibling on the way. Next it will be Nina's turn to nurture and create a sense of belonging for another.” Because this episode has been documented with photos as well as in writing, it can be read to Nina and Bella. This will help them to construct the view that older children provide support for younger children at this centre (and that Nina will have a turn at taking on the role of an older child).

What might this tell us about informal noticing, recognising, and responding in this place?

Older children helping younger children appears to be a valued aspect of the pedagogy here, particularly for nurturing and developing a sense of belonging. In this case, the role of the older child is to model participation.

A shadow came creeping

Story one (written by Caroline)

Jo was settling a child by reading to him. Jo's expressive language caught Bede's attention. He moved over to sit beside Jo and Charlie. He began to point to the pictures with "oohs" and "ahs" and saying "cat", "mouse", and "shadows". When Jo had finished reading, Bede brought the book over to me. We sat together and read. Whenever I said "a shadow came creeping", Bede would go "Ooh, shadow!" and laugh.

I saw Bede with the book several times during the morning.

Review

Bede's interest in books is shown in this story. He chooses to sit with Jo, then continues the exploration of this particular story with me.

[Reference: Judy Waite (1998). "Mouse, Look Out!" Mascot, NSW: Koala Books.]

Story two (written by Kim)

Bede walked up to me today with a book called *Mouse, Look Out!* He handed it to me, saying, "Shadows, shadows." I assumed that someone during the week had read this book to Bede. We sat down together and read the book, looking for the cat and the mouse. I would ask Bede where the shadows were. "Shadows, shadows," he would say.

During the day, on a number of occasions, I heard Bede saying, "Shadows, shadows," and saw him sitting down reading the book to himself. When Darren, Bede's dad, came to collect him, I asked him if he'd like to take the book home as Bede had shown a real interest in this story and in shadows.

The next day, Bede and Tania brought the book back, sat down, and read it together. Tania said that they had read it many times and were going to explore shadows in the weekend.

Review

Over the day, Bede showed a fascination with a new concept, "shadows". The interest was sparked by an expressive story. We should look for some more books based on similar concepts. In everyday activities, we can extend Bede's understanding of shadows.

Bede's Parent's Voice

Child's name: Bede
Date: 27/02/02
Teacher: Caroline

Te Whāriki	Examples or Cues	Whānau voice
Taking an interest	Finding an interest here. A topic, an activity, a role. Recognising the familiar. Enjoying the unfamiliar. Coping with change	Just Bede and Mum went to Memorial Park for some quality time together. We discussed our shadows and waved and chased them. When Bede first discovered his shadow a few weeks ago he got quite a fright and tried to run away from it saying "no shadow, go away". He is now happy to show you where his shadow is and says "goodbye shadow" when he has had enough of the game.
Belonging Mana whenua	Paying attention for a sustained period, feeling safe, trusting others. Being playful with others and/or materials	We also discovered that if you talk, and in Bede's case, yell, down a long tunnel you get an echo. He loves this and we spent ages going to all the tunnels and yelling down them.
Being Involved	In a range of ways (specify) for example: oral language, gesture, music, art, writing, using numbers and patterns, telling stories.	He is still grasping the concept that there needs to be a tunnel and every now and then he just yells and says "echo". I have to remind him that he is just shouting rather than creating an echo.
Well-Being Mana atua	Responding to others, to stories, imagined events, ensuring that things are fair, self-evaluating, helping others, contributing to the programme.	Our next stage is to go to the library and get some books on both subjects, talk about them some more and find new ways of exploring them.
Expressing an idea or feeling	Setting and choosing difficult tasks. Using a range of strategies to solve problems when 'stuck'. Be specific.	
Communication Mana reo		
Taking Responsibility		
Contribution Mana tangata		
Persisting with difficulty		
Exploration Mana aotūroa		

What's happening here?

There are several assessments in this exemplar: Caroline writes about Bede listening to Jo read a story. Caroline reads Bede the same story. Kim also reads the same story to Bede and suggests to his father that they take it home because of his interest in it.

Bede and his mother go to the park and play a game that involves his shadow. She writes about this for Bede's portfolio, explaining that he used to be frightened of his shadow. She adds some information about how Bede discovered echoes, notes his confusion between what the words "echo" and "yell" mean, and decides that the next stage is to go to the library.

What aspects of reciprocal and responsive relationships does this assessment exemplify?

Three teachers and two parents play parts in this series of stories that include Bede's words in response to the book. The documented record is a fragment of ongoing conversations that include the family, a number of teachers in the childcare centre, and Bede.

The documented assessments are part of "learning in progress" as Bede makes meaning of things such as shadows. They record Bede's participation in a number of activities. Each contributor to the record suggests ways in which the learning might be continued, such as reading more books, including books about shadows and echoes, extending Bede's understanding of "shadows" through everyday activities, and using the library. Bede's teachers and his parents are listening to and observing his shifting focus and interests and sharing what they learn.

The documented part of this ongoing "conversation" informs the everyday conversations among teachers and between family and teachers. Several lenses are valued here: Caroline notes Bede's interest in books; on separate occasions, Jo and Kim note Bede's fascination with the concept of "shadows"; and Bede's mother suggests that this is not a new concept for him and that he has also become interested in "echoes".

What is exemplified here is the interplay between books, experiences, and conversations in two places as Bede makes sense of "shadows" and "echoes".

How might this documented assessment contribute to developing reciprocal and responsive relationships?

At the end of a long day in a childcare centre, there often isn't time for extended conversations about the day. Because pieces of the whole "jigsaw" were recorded, all the players become reciprocal and responsive participants in Bede's learning. Kim finds out that Jo has read *Mouse, Look Out!* to Bede and what his reaction was. Bede's parents can make connections between Bede's experiences at the childcare centre and at home and so can the teachers.

The documented assessment invites the parents to be involved in this "conversation". The stories go home for the family to read, and the book is lent to the family.

What might this tell us about informal noticing, recognising, and responding in this place?

In this place, the informal and the formal (recorded) conversations are of a similar kind: the teachers describe events during the child's day to the parents, and the parents describe events at home. Here the conversations build together on the same topic to help Bede to explore the concepts of "shadows" and "echoes". Informal, unrecorded conversations will have added to this.

Toddlers as Teachers

Story One

Tenaya (twenty months) is sitting in a high chair with her lunchbox on the table beside her. Tyler-Jackson (twenty-seven months) opens Tenaya's lunchbox and offers her raisins. She shakes her head. He offers her yoghurt. She nods and reaches out with both hands.

Tyler-Jackson struggles but takes off the foil top and puts it on the high chair tray. He then walks towards the cupboard, saying, "Soon, soon."

"Tyler, do you want a spoon?" He nods and points to Tenaya. I give Tyler the spoon and say, "Did you give Tenaya her yoghurt and open it for her?" He nods, walks towards Tenaya and says, "No figas" (fingers), takes the yoghurt off the tray, gives the spoon to Tenaya, and then puts the yoghurt back on the tray and says "Soon, soon."

Short-term review

- taking responsibility for others;
- met the needs of another before his own;
- followed a sequence of events: opened the lunchbox, offered choices, opened the yoghurt, and got a spoon.

What next?

- Allow older children to assist Tyler and Tyler to assist them.
- Encourage Tyler to follow requests and offer plenty of reinforcement for any efforts.

Story Two

Tenaya walks over to Sean in the high chair and "gabbles" at him. She then gives him his lunchbox, opens it, and takes out the raisins. Sean holds out his hands. Tenaya says, "Raisins?" Tenaya opens the box and takes out three raisins and puts them on the tray in front of Sean. (She has some difficulty, but she succeeds.)

When Sean has taken the three raisins, she gives him more, puts the box of raisins back in Sean's lunchbox, and pulls out the sandwiches wrapped in plastic wrap.

She rips open the plastic wrap. She separates one sandwich and gives it to him.

Short-term review

- Tenaya is responding to the needs of another.
- She selects items for Sean and gives more when he is finished.
- She problem-solves by ripping the plastic wrap.

What next?

- Encourage this interdependency by allowing Tenaya to assist others and by encouraging others to assist her.
- Acknowledge all acts of kindness among babies and toddlers.
- Include games with choices.

What's happening here?

These two assessments, three weeks apart, record occasions when two children (aged twenty-seven and twenty months) assist others with lunch. On the first occasion, Tyler-Jackson assists Tenaya. Then, three weeks later, Tenaya assists Sean.

What aspects of reciprocal and responsive relationships does this assessment exemplify?

Each of these assessments is about learning as a joint activity: to be a helper, it is necessary to have someone willing to be helped and a situation in which helping is appropriate. Learning is distributed across other people, places, and things. Assessment includes and reflects that surrounding support.

How might this documented assessment contribute to developing reciprocal and responsive relationships?

In this centre, everyday routines like eating lunch are valued as opportunities for children to learn with each other. The assessments document these learning opportunities.

The teacher comments on kindness, a valued goal for babies and toddlers in this centre and one that is linked to the value of joint activity. It is also linked with evidence that acts of kindness are a feature of the learning of babies and toddlers. The teacher puts on public record that “acts of kindness” among babies and toddlers ought to be acknowledged.

What might this tell us about informal noticing, recognising, and responding in this place?

Even very young children are encouraged to take responsibility for helping the younger children. In these two cases, the teacher stands back to allow the child to take the responsibility but monitors the process and provides assistance when necessary.

Mana Reo

Assessment One

- Amokura is now using two-word sentences and is on the verge of extending them to three or four. Her favourite sentence at the moment is “He inu māku.”
- When she is given simple instructions in Māori, Amokura has a great understanding of what is being said: “Tangohia ōu hū ki waho” and “Horoia ōu ringaringa.”



Amokura enjoys karakia each morning. She will stand up patiently and listen as a whaea runs through her pepeha.



Amokura enjoys either having a book read to her or sitting on the cushions reading through a book on her own.



Amokura loves waiata, her favourite songs being “Hei Tira Tira”, “Pūrerehua”, “Kei raro i te Moana” and “Tita Tita”. Her best performance is with the award-winning haka stance in “Ka Mate”.

- Amokura has learned the other children’s names very well and can put the name to a face. Mimicking the other children has helped her pronunciation. Her favourites are “Koouuuu” (Kohu), “Kawakawa”, “Poowai” (Te Puawai), and “Baea” for the attention of the closest whaea. And she has finally learned how to say “Whaea Bernie”. YEAH BABY!!!!

- Amokura has a great sense of humour and can often be heard having a giggle with either the staff or other children.

Links to Te Whāriki

“Toddlers have plenty of opportunities to talk with other children, to play verbal games, and to encounter a widening range of books, songs, poems, and chants.” (page 71)

Needs identified

Amokura needs to maintain and extend her current language level.

Strategies

1. Read a book to her at least once a day.
2. Encourage her to kōrero as much as possible.
3. Use repetition and try to encourage her to repeat after us where appropriate.
4. Introduce new waiata.

Assessment Two

Tohenga tuarua

“Children experience an environment where they develop verbal communication skills for a range of purposes.” (Te Whāriki, page 72)

- Amokura can say her pepeha almost right through without assistance.
- She has a good understanding of te reo Māori, showing us by either attending to the task asked of her or answering the question, often using a mix of bilingual sentences and full sentences in Māori. (Her preference is Māori.)
- Amokura is also starting to use more complex sentence structures, such as “Ka taea e koe ki te hua” (huakina) as she was passing me her chippies to open.
- She recognises the names of body parts or items in books.
- Amokura is able to express her feelings or needs verbally – and non-verbally, I might add, by stamping her feet and giving you her look of disapproval!
- She enjoys singing and doing all the actions, her favourite songs being “Pūrerehua” and “Te Tereina”.

Developing skills

Increasing language skills: repeating patterns, practising different vowel and consonant sounds.

Pre-reading skills: recognition, pointing, naming, telling the story from the pictures she sees, holding the book up the right way, often reading from the middle to the front then back to the end.

Responding to and recognising rhythm: remembering the actions to the waiata ā ringa or stamping to the beat of the drum.

It has really been awesome to see and hear Amokura's reo develop over the past few months, an area which I feel that she has excelled in.

Needs identified

To continue to encourage and enhance Amokura's current language level.

Strategies

1. To encourage Amokura to use as much Māori as she can, providing the kupu and/or phrases where needed.
2. To encourage her to repeat the kupu and/or phrases after us.
3. To continue to read to Amokura as often as possible throughout the day, prompting questions that require a detailed answer (not "yes" or "no" ones).
4. To continue to encourage her interest in music by going over our latest waiata and introducing a few new waiata.
5. To continue to encourage her to say her own pepeha all the way through without assistance.

What's happening here?

These two assessments document Amokura's progress in te reo Māori over several months, including, in some detail, the contexts in which she has been learning and her favourite waiata.

What aspects of reciprocal and responsive relationships does this assessment exemplify?

This exemplar is an example of an assessment that makes a close link between achievement and the opportunity to learn within reciprocal and responsive relationships with people, places, and things. It provides details of the activities and relationships that form the context in which Amokura's facility with te reo Māori is developing. These include the use of simple instructions (two of which are included), the repetition of karakia and pepeha, mimicking the other children, having books read to her, and singing songs. (Her favourites are included.)

How might this documented assessment contribute to developing reciprocal and responsive relationships?

Documenting Amokura's ability with te reo Māori in such detail alerts all involved, including those at home, when she progresses further.

Documenting the contexts in which Amokura's facility with te reo Māori is developing is very helpful for others building relationships with her and teaching her.

What might this tell us about informal noticing, recognising, and responding in this place?

These assessments demonstrate the multiple ways in which Amokura is being taught. These include:

- modelling (for example, karakia, pepeha, and conversations in te reo Māori);
- orchestrating situations in which understanding te reo is useful (for example, giving simple instructions and using people's names in order to get their attention);
- inviting language (for example, by playing verbal games);
- setting up other interesting contexts in which Amokura and others can participate together using te reo Māori (for example, books, waiata, poems, and chants).

Reflective questions

He pātai hei whakaaro iho

How do our assessments take account of the context (relationships with people, places, and things) in which learning is occurring? What are some recent examples from our early childhood setting?

How do our assessment practices motivate and empower learners and enhance the children's sense of themselves as capable people and competent learners? What are some recent examples from our early childhood setting?

How do we use assessment information to draw attention to the integrated nature of the children's learning?

How do we make learning visible for families and whānau?

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