

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

Te Tāhuhu o te Mātauranga

Children Contributing to Their Own Assessment

Ngā Huanga Tamariki ki Tō
Rātou Aromatawai

4

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

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Project Co-directors: Margaret Carr, University of Waikato, and Wendy Lee, Educational Leadership Project;
Project Administrator: Carolyn Jones;
Project Co-ordinators: Keryn Davis, Lesley Dunn, Stuart Guyton, Maggie Haggerty, Ann Hatherly, Anita Mortlock, Lesley Rameka, Vicki Sonnenberg, and Sarah Te One;
Project Advisory Committee: Lynne Bruce, Jeanette Clarkin-Phillips, Bronwen Cowie, Lester Flockton, Doreen Launder, Linda Mitchell, Rosina Merry, Jean Rockel, Mere Skerrett-White, and Rita Walker;
Te Rōpū Kaiwhakangungu: Mini McKenzie, Colleen Morehu, Kura Paul, Lesley Rameka, Mere Skerrett-White, Vicki Sonnenberg, Rita Walker, and Melody Witehira.

Authors of text and compilers of books: Margaret Carr, Wendy Lee, and Carolyn Jones, advised and assisted by Rita Walker and Bronwen Cowie
Publication Project Manager: Tania Cotter
Series Editor: Simon Chiaroni
Editor: Kate Dreaver

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

How can children contribute to their own assessments?

He aha ngā hua a ngā tamariki ki tō rātou aromatawai?

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Introduction

Te Whāriki affirms the view of Urie Bronfenbrenner (1979) that “Learning and development are facilitated by the participation of the developing person in progressively more complex patterns of reciprocal activity” (page 60) and by gradual “shifts in the balance of power” (page 212) from the teacher to the learner. These shifts reflect children’s increasing ability and inclination to steer their own course, set their own goals, assess their own achievements, and take on some of the responsibility for learning.

Traditionally, the balance of power between teacher and child during assessment has been very one-sided. The teacher writes the assessment, makes an interpretation, and perhaps discusses it with other teachers and the family, but the child has not usually been part of the process. The exemplars in this book show how a number of early childhood settings in Aotearoa New Zealand are now finding ways to include children’s voices in assessment.

Why should children contribute to assessments?

There are two main reasons for teachers to encourage children and give them opportunities to contribute to assessment.

Firstly, research on assessment and motivation indicates that *settings that encourage children to set and assess their own goals are rich sites for learning*. Part of the reason is that children who contribute to their own (and others’) assessments are perceived as “competent and confident learners and communicators” (*Te Whāriki*, page 9).

The research of Carol Dweck (1999), Paul Black and Dylan Wiliam (1998), and Bishop et al. (2001) indicates that when children contribute to their own assessments, they learn more effectively. Such contributions also help teachers to learn about children’s working theories about learning – knowledge that helps them to teach more effectively.

The Māori word “ako”, which means both teaching and learning, captures the way in which the two processes are woven together. “Ako” reminds us that teachers are also learners. Neil Mercer (2001) points out that one of the strengths of a sociocultural approach to education (see Book 2) is that it explains education in terms of the interactive process of teaching and learning and that Vygotsky used the Russian word “obuchenie”, which means both teaching and learning.

Secondly, *seeking children’s perspectives about their learning is about viewing children as social actors with opinions and views of their own*.

In a paper presented to the Commissioner of Social Policy outlining fundamental changes that need to be considered in order to achieve a more just society, Wally Penetito (1988) states:

There ought to be no doubt in the minds of teachers ... that children need to acquire in the first instance the relevant knowledge for their well-being. For children who wish to shape their own reality ... who wish to have control over their own learning, teachers must facilitate and empower them ...

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He kupu whakataki

He aha tā ngā tamariki ki ngā aromatawai?

Encouraging children to set and assess goals

A central feature of effective pedagogy and learning is involving the learner in the meaning making and goal setting that are part of the assessment process.

In a review of the research literature on assessment, Paul Black and Dylan Wiliam (1998) conclude that any strategy to improve learning through formative assessment should include a commitment to involving students in the processes of self-assessment and peer assessment.

Guy Claxton (1995) suggests that assessment should:

- reflect those occasions when the goal is not clearly specified in advance;
- include “all the situations in which learners are developing their sense of what counts as ‘good work’ for themselves – where it is some inner sense of satisfaction which is the touchstone of ‘quality’” (page 340).

The terms “whakamātau” (to enable one to learn and to test oneself) and “whakamātautau” (to test oneself and thus to evaluate oneself) illustrate the close connection between learning and self-evaluation (Pere, 1982, page 74).

Patricia Smiley and Carol Dweck (1994) write:

The results of our research and some related studies suggest that by 4 or 5 years of age children will have internalized an investment either in the evaluation of their achievement products or in the process of learning.

page 1741

Reporting on her research in the United States, Carol Dweck (1999) explains that children (including four-year-olds) develop orientations towards either performance goals or learning goals. When children are oriented towards learning goals, they strive to increase their competence, to understand or master something new, to attempt hard tasks, and to persist after failure or setback. When children are oriented towards performance goals, they strive to gain favourable judgments or to avoid negative judgments of their competence.

Most children approach problems, people, and places with an orientation towards both performance and learning goals. However, assessment practices have an important influence on the type of goals to which they are oriented (Ames, 1992). Assessments that include the “child’s voice” or children making a contribution to their assessments encourage an orientation towards learning goals. Assessments that call on reference levels or standards that children and families have not understood or legitimised are likely to shift this orientation towards performance goals.

Seeking children's perspectives

Where assessments take a narrative approach in context, the assessments – and the notions of valuable knowledge and competence that they take as reference points – can be legitimised by calling on multiple perspectives.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which New Zealand signed in 1993, includes the child's right to have a voice and to have it listened to and respected (Article 12). Respecting children's views means that their views can make a difference.

Teachers who pay careful attention to children's voices gain windows into their world views and assumptions. Detailed observations in context help adults to better understand children's perspectives, using the children's non-verbal expressions of self-assessment and their recognition of achievement (or lack of it).

A number of researchers have explored ways of seeking out children's perspectives. For example, Alison Clark and Peter Moss (2001) adopted what they called a "mosaic" approach (using a number of methods) to seek children's views on the quality of their childcare programmes. One piece of the "mosaic" was to give the children cameras to photograph their favourite things in the early childhood setting. Arapera Royal Tangaere (1997) analysed transcripts of a young child's dialogue in te reo Māori to reveal ways that Māori cultural values were expressed and learned.

Seeking children's perspectives enables researchers – and teachers – to make useful discoveries about children's learning. Margaret Carr (2000) describes research that sought young children's viewpoints about their learning. She found that, for many children, the learning that they perceived as challenging or difficult was not at the early childhood centre but at home or elsewhere in the community. Margie Hohepa et al. (1992) carried out an in-depth observational study of three children within a kōhanga reo context. This research revealed that the children valued both individualised and collective contexts for learning. Research by Bishop et al. (2003) affirms that when teachers seek learners' perspectives, learning is enhanced.

How can children contribute to assessments?

Me pēhea ngā tamariki e āwhina ai i ngā aromatawai?

Teachers can help children to contribute to their assessment in two ways: *through encouraging self-assessment* (which can be carried out in a variety of ways) and *by including the child's voice* in assessments that include multiple perspectives.

Different kinds of “self-assessment”

Children develop many goals for their learning, goals that are often hidden from the adult observer. Children frequently appear to “change track” as they work, and on many occasions, their goal is only apparent to adults in retrospect (and not always then). We have to find ways in which children can tell their own stories or be their own assessors without involvement in formal assessment. Not all children can do this, so we have to get to know the children well in order to notice and recognise their particular interests and goals – and we have to be open to changing our minds.

What to look for

- Children making their own judgments about their achievements, developing their sense of what counts as good work for themselves as learners.
- Children self-regulating, that is, self-assessing and giving themselves instructions about what to do. This includes seeing mistakes as part of the process of learning.
- Children deciding what should be recorded in their assessment portfolios.
- Occasions when the resources being used by children, for example, a completed puzzle, provide feedback about their performance.
- Evidence of “some inner sense of satisfaction” as the “touchstone” of quality (see Guy Claxton’s comments on page 3). Teachers who know children well can often identify that evidence.
- Children using materials to provide reference points against which to assess their achievements.
- Children using earlier work in their own assessment portfolios to judge current success or progress.
- Children revisiting their assessment portfolios, with or without the teacher.
- Children correcting their assessment portfolios.

Multiple perspectives that include the child's voice

Alison James and Alan Prout (1997), writing about constructing and reconstructing childhood, comment that:

it is now much more common to find acknowledgement that childhood should be regarded as a part of society and culture rather than a precursor to it; and that children should be seen as already social actors, not beings in the process of becoming such.

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If we want to recognise and respond to the learning that is taking place, we will seek multiple perspectives, one of which will be the child's.

Sometimes, the whānau will speak on behalf of the child, reflecting the aspirations and knowledge of the family and wider community. The 2003 *Hui Taumata Mātauranga Report Back* included a number of recommendations for whānau to be involved in and have a say in education (Ministry of Education, 2003). When considering Māori or bicultural models of assessment, adults need to ensure that they have an in-depth understanding of what Mason Durie (2003, page 1) describes as “working at the interface between te ao Māori (the Māori world) and te ao whānui (the wider global society)”. (See Book 3.)

What to look for

- Assessments that include a number of perspectives. One might be the child’s.
- Teachers or families taking on the perspective of a child, for example, by speaking on behalf of a child who cannot speak for themselves or trying to work out what is important for the child and what they would say if they were assessing for themselves.
- Teachers puzzling over the meaning of an observation as they try to decide how to assist the child with the next step. This, implicitly or explicitly, invites the child and family to have a say in the assessment, to contribute some more information or an opinion.
- Children assessing each other’s learning.
- Families contributing to the assessment record with or for the child. These contributions may reflect aspirations and knowledge from the community.

Links to *Te Whāriki*

Ngā hononga ki *Te Whāriki*

The principles of *Te Whāriki* as they apply to assessment are set out on page 30 of the curriculum. They include the following statement:

Assessment should be a two-way process. Children’s self-assessment can inform adults’ assessment of learning, development, and the environment by providing insights that adults may not have identified and by highlighting areas that could be included or focused on for assessment. Children may also help to decide what should be included in the process of assessing the programme and the curriculum.

The section on evaluation and assessment includes this statement:

The learning environment should enable children to set and pursue their own goals within the boundaries necessary for safety and to reflect on whether they have achieved their goals.

Te Whāriki, page 29

The learning environment can be more powerful than “enabling”. It can invite, stimulate, provoke, and encourage (literally, by inspiring children with the courage to set and pursue their own goals and to reflect on whether they have achieved them). Assessment practices that contribute to children’s views of themselves as competent and confident learners and communicators within a bicultural context are part of just such an enabling, inviting, stimulating, provoking, and encouraging learning environment.

Exemplars

Dom rebuilds



23 July: "Dom, will you be able to make this again?"



12 August: Remaking the construction

I captured this photo of Dom today. He was using a photograph of a construction in his portfolio to make another one just the same! Dom has done this a number of times and said to me that it made it easier having the picture there to remake his construction.

Ngā tauaromahi

What's happening here?

Dom makes a construction, copying from a photograph in his assessment portfolio of an earlier construction.

What aspects of children's contribution to assessments does this exemplify?

Dom is using earlier work in his portfolio to judge the success of a later construction. Although children can use their assessment record to improve on work they have done in the past, Dom enjoys making "another one just the same". The comment on the earlier entry cues him in to try this: "Dom, will you be able to make this again?"

How might this assessment develop children's capacity to contribute to assessments?

Dom uses the documentation to provide a model for his construction. This example indicates that he has taken up the challenge to repeat a former achievement. The same process (using his own work as a reference point) provides the opportunity for him to make changes to earlier work.

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

At Dom's early childhood centre, the children's portfolios are readily available for them to read and to compare old work with new work.

"Oh, no! That's not right!"

Child: Lauren
Date: 21 February
Observer: Julie

Learning Stories



I invited Lauren to do an overprint on the cat screenprint she did the other day.

"What else would you like to have in this picture, Lauren?"

"A basket! With blankets that go there and there!"

"Fantastic!" I said and watched as she drew her cat basket and cut it out.

Once the print was made, she looked at it and said, "Oh, no! That's not right! The cat needs to be in the basket – not up there!"

"You could draw another one if you like – you have another cat print you could use."



"That's a good idea!" she said.

She drew the basket. She then overprinted her screenprint. "Oh, no! It's too big! Never mind, I'll put some toys in it."

She drew a mouse, a cat's drink bottle – with milk in it – and a ball. As she was drawing, she said, almost to herself, "I'll have to concentrate!"

And she did, and we were both delighted with what she produced. Lauren cut the basket and handle out and most of the mouse toy. I helped with the drink bottle and tiny ball.

The second print met with a far more favourable reception. "I like that!" Lauren said. It was so wonderful being part of Lauren's project today, and I'm glad she was happy with the result.

Short-term review

Lauren is far more comfortable and confident with the screenprinting process.

Lauren was really focused and involved with what she was doing. She had a clear idea of how she wanted her basket to be and was prepared to have another go to achieve what she wanted. Great persistence! It's fantastic that Lauren can express how she feels and is so articulate.

What next?

More screenprinting.

I believe that "cats" is a subject dear to Lauren's heart. How can we extend her knowledge and interest? Books, factual books, different sorts of cats, making cats out of material.

What's happening here?

Lauren tries to print a picture of a basket over a screen-printed picture she has made of a cat. She is not pleased with the result ("Oh, no! That's not right!"), and she tries again. The teacher writes down some of the comments she and Lauren made during the process.

What aspects of children's contribution to assessments does this exemplify?

This exemplar includes examples of self-assessment. The teacher records an occasion when Lauren appears to be developing her own sense of what is right. When she aligns a second template (a basket) over an earlier print (a cat) and makes a second print, she looks at it and says, "Oh, no! That's not right! The cat needs to be in the basket – not up there!" She tries again and, when she has aligned the basket and cat to her satisfaction and added a few more items to the picture, she comments, "I like that!"

Lauren also appears to be talking herself through the process, self-regulating her learning. The teacher notes, "As she was drawing, she said, almost to herself, 'I'll have to concentrate!' And she did ...".

The assessment records Lauren's apparent view that if something is not right, you either redo it or take a creative approach and readjust your goal. She sees mistakes as part of learning. Her response to an unacceptable amount of space in her second attempt to develop the original design was "Never mind, I'll put some toys in it." On this occasion, she appears to interpret mistakes as part of the process of completing a task, and she is developing strategies in response to that belief.

How might this assessment develop children's capacity to contribute to assessments?

Lauren's art work has changed a great deal during her time at the early childhood centre, and her folio records a shift in interest from "splodge" paintings to elaborate screen prints. (A parent contribution to her portfolio, not shown, notes the progress in her art work.) This pathway of learning, together with the teacher's commentary, has been of considerable interest to her family.

The teacher chose to take notice of Lauren's self-evaluative comments: "Oh, no! That's not right! The cat needs to be in the basket – not up there!" "Oh, no! It's too big!" "I like that!" Lauren is making her own decisions about what is right. The documentation means that this process can become a model for her later work. It is also available for other teachers to refer back to when they work with Lauren.

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

Lauren's strategies for responding to making a mistake are noticed and recognised as important learning. Lauren and her family are hearing the teacher's voice about what is valued here: perseverance, learning goals (see the reference to Dweck [1999] on page 3), creative responses to error, and self-evaluation.

The teachers made it possible for Lauren to redo her screen print when they encouraged her to make several copies of the first screen print. (If something goes wrong with the second overlay, there is another foundation screen print to use.) The teacher reminds her, "You could draw another one if you like – you have another cat print you could use." In this way, the teacher is providing some scaffolding for Lauren's persistence.

In this episode, the teacher's feedback and scaffolding also emphasise Lauren's interest in the potential complexity of this art medium.

Louie going out the door

Child's name: Louie
Date: 21 September
Teacher: Nic

Learning Story

Louie lay on his tummy on the floor. The door to the outside had just been opened. As soon as he spotted this, he was off! The floor was scattered with many toys as children had just been playing inside, but this did not bother Louie as he made his way to the outside world, using his arms to pull himself along as he slid on his tummy. He pushed each toy away as he came to it and finally made it to the door. The door has a slight rise and step down to the deck. With much courage and determination, slowly but surely, Louie pulled himself over this and out onto the deck! Louie smiled with great delight about being outside and made his way to the railing, where he managed to pull himself up and peer through the holes to see what was going on!



Short-term review

What great determination – Louie had to get outside that door! He knew what he wanted and went for it, moving whatever got in his way! It was very rewarding to be able to get out there amongst it all and be part of the action!! It just goes to show how important it is for young babies to be able to make decisions about where they want to be and that access (albeit with some obstacles this time) to the outdoors is generally freely available.

What's happening here?

This contribution to Louie's portfolio records his determination to move from inside the centre to the veranda outside as soon as he spots an open door. He manoeuvres himself across a floor scattered with toys, using his arms to pull himself along as he slides on his tummy.

What aspects of children's contribution to assessments does this exemplify?

Louie sets his own goal, and the teacher recognises his way of indicating that he has achieved it (his display of "great delight"). Being outside and "part of the action" was its own reward.

How might this assessment develop children's capacity to contribute to assessments?

The teacher's commentary may be for both Louie's family and the other staff, reminding them of the significant decision making that is possible when very young children have access to both inside and outside play. She may be making the point that, in her view, the complexities of supervision are more than balanced by the opportunities for very young children to make some important decisions about where they want to be.

She also notes Louie's courage and determination in carrying out his self-set goal: getting outside onto the veranda and pulling himself up onto the trellis. Louie cannot crawl, and there were a number of obstacles in his way. Such interpretations form baseline data for documenting development and change in how Louie sets himself goals and indicates that he has assessed his own achievement.

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

The teacher attempts to take on Louie's perspective, to imagine what he might tell her if he could talk. Teachers who work with very young children are likely to get to know them well enough to recognise what the children want noticed and responded to. In documenting this event, the teacher attempts to see the world through the child's eyes.

Louie is making his own decisions about the programme, and this assessment indicates that the teacher values this. The comment in the Short-term review summarises this view: "It just goes to show how important it is for young babies to be able to make decisions about where they want to be ...". For Louie, access to the outdoors was an important opportunity for his learning.

"I know, you could write all this down!"

Child's voice

Child: Olivia

3 September

Teacher: Judy

Olivia has just moved into a new home, which the family has been building up to for a few months. Olivia sat down next to me on the edge of the sandpit and told me all about her new house. After a while, she looked at me and said thoughtfully, "I know, you could write all this down!"

I went inside to get paper, pen, and clipboard. On my return, Olivia continued her story: "I've got one bed in my room and it is all white, and Tim has got two beds, and Mum and Dad have got one big double bed. Grandad's room is downstairs. We are all upstairs.

"We have stairs, you know, and lots of colours in the bathroom. Why don't you write while I go and play with the girls?" Off she went to play with her friends.

Short-term review

Olivia has known for quite some time about her move to her new home, and her excitement and joy was evident in the way she was describing the house to me.

Olivia is confident and articulate when expressing herself and thinks carefully before sharing her information.

Skills, knowledge, and dispositions Olivia is demonstrating in relation to literacy:

- What is said can also be written to read later.
- It is a good idea to record important events and information.
- Information about Olivia's life can be shared with her teachers in a way that they will understand and appreciate.

What's happening here?

Olivia sits down on the edge of the sandpit to tell the teacher all about the new house she has just moved into. After a while, she suggests that the teacher write it all down. The teacher gets writing materials and writes down Olivia's words.

What aspects of children's contribution to assessments does this exemplify?

Olivia is deciding what should be recorded. She tells the teacher information about an event of value that interests her (her move to a new house), and she instructs the teacher to write down the details.

The teacher has recorded two perspectives here, Olivia's and her own. The features that Olivia finds worthy of note are the beds in the bedrooms, the whereabouts of Grandad's room, the stairs, and the colours in the bathroom. The features of the storytelling that the teacher finds worthy of note are Olivia's understandings that what is said can be written to read later and that important events and information are usefully recorded (both features of early literacy). The positive relationship between Olivia and her teachers is also noted.

How might this assessment develop children's capacity to contribute to assessments?

Olivia's family will probably be interested in both these perspectives. The recording of Olivia's story informs them of Olivia's viewpoint and of the teacher's willingness to follow Olivia's request to contribute to her own assessment portfolio. When Olivia revisits this assessment, she will be encouraged to continue contributing to her assessments.


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

It is Olivia who is noticing, recognising, and responding, with the assistance of a writer. Olivia expects the teacher to follow her instructions – and she does. We can assume that the teacher values the children taking a leadership role in what is noticed, recognised, and responded to and that she also values children having a voice in their own assessment records.

Brittany and Hayley compare records

Learning Story

Child's name: Brittany
Date: 17 October
Teacher: Shelley

		Examples or cues	A LEARNING STORY
belonging mana whenua	TAKING AN INTEREST	Finding an interest <i>here</i> – a topic, an activity, a role. Recognising the familiar, enjoying the unfamiliar. Coping with change.	<p>Brittany came to the swings. She started to tell me about the trapeze swing she was on.</p> <p>Brittany told me the story of how her sister, Hayley, had a photo taken on this swing when she was at kindergarten. Hayley has a photo in her portfolio of being upside down on the trapeze swing. You can see all her tummy.</p>  <p>I was holding the digital camera and Brittany asked me if I would take a photo of her, just the same as Hayley, so she could have it in her folder. Brittany arranged herself and I took the photo.</p>
well-being mana atua	BEING INVOLVED	Paying attention for a sustained period, feeling safe, trusting others. Being playful with others and/or materials.	
exploration mana aotiroa	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.	

Short-term review	What next?
Hayley is nearly eight. I realised the link the portfolios have for children, siblings and the whole family. Brittany was exact in her description of Hayley's photo and wanted hers to be the same.	A reminder, as a teacher, to listen and support children in their need to make sense of their world through recall and revisiting important happenings / achievements over and over.

Learning Story

Child's name: Brittany
Date: 4 November
Teacher: Shelley

A LEARNING STORY

Last week, Brittany was chatting about the swings. She said she had had another look at Hayley's portfolio and the picture was not quite the same. In Hayley's, she had both hands released from the trapeze bar. Brittany was still holding onto the bar. Brittany explained that she could only let one hand go. But in a photo Brittany has in her portfolio, she is releasing a leg. Hayley did not have that in her portfolio.

Later in the session, Brittany was on the slippery pole. She asked if this was new, as Hayley did not have this photo.

As a teacher, I find this a fascinating exploration of connections. It is a natural progression for Brittany to measure her skills against Hayley at the same age. When Hayley visited on Friday, they went straight to the book and Brittany was reminded. "My jumper was over my face." You could only recognise Hayley by her tummy and clothes. Brittany knows we share her interest in her explorations. This is ongoing and such a positive form of competition.

Brittany asked me to take another photo of her on the swing. "I was upside down. One was hanging on, one wasn't. It's hard. Hayley can't do this. Her photo was just upside down. She was letting go. I can do one hand letting go."



What's happening here?

This is the story of two sisters, aged four and eight, who use their early childhood centre portfolios as reference points for discussions about achievement. Their parent has described elsewhere how Hayley (aged eight) has continued to add special things to her portfolio and how she and Brittany (aged four) often sit down and go through Hayley's kindergarten portfolio.

What aspects of children's contribution to assessments does this exemplify?

Brittany uses a photo in her older sister's early childhood assessment folder (taken four years earlier) as a reference point for judging her own achievement. She asks the teacher to take a photo of her "just the same as Hayley". Brittany carefully compares the two photos of swinging upside down from a trapeze bar at age four. She points out that Hayley has both hands free, whereas she, Brittany, has one leg free. She also adds that she can do it with one hand free.

How might this assessment develop children's capacity to contribute to assessments?

This exemplar includes a number of voices. Brittany requests the photo for her assessment record and makes the comparison (adding information about what she can do), and the teacher tells the story, recalling background information provided by a parent. All voices combine to provide a rich picture of Brittany's achievement in one area and of her perspective on this. When Brittany revisits this assessment, it can reinforce for her the importance of her own contribution.




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

The teacher comments that "I realised the link the portfolios have for children, siblings, and the whole family". She also comments on the children making "sense of their world through recall and revisiting important happenings achievements, over and over".

Alexandra corrects the record

Child: Alexandra
Date: 30 November
Observer: Helen

Learning Stories

		A Learning Story
belonging mana whenua	TAKING AN INTEREST	<p>Alex brought her portfolio to me and asked if we could look at it together. She had rushed off to get it after observing me checking through Corey's portfolio, which he was taking home with him today after celebrating his fifth birthday.</p> <p>We turned to the first page, and Alex pointed out her name in a learning story and then ran her finger in a straight line down the page, pointing out her name again and again and saying, "That's my name." She did this with the next learning story, too.</p> <p>We slowly worked our way through a few more pages, looking at photos and trying to remember the names of children who had left some time ago. I read out two short learning stories to Alex. One included Michelle, and Alex pointed to her in the photo and said, "That's Michelle. She's coming to my party." I read the Child's voice on the next page, and she looked closely at the photo and decided she would build the block construction displayed. I suggested that she take her portfolio with her to the block corner so that she could copy it.</p> <p>Alex built it quickly, but while she was away getting some paper and a felt pen, her construction got knocked over. I sat down near her to help protect her work and hold her portfolio for her as she rebuilt it. She moved closer to me, bringing the paper and felt pen with her. We looked closely at the photo and, after we had discussed the size of the blocks used previously, Alex chose some different blocks. She rebuilt her construction, and we discussed it, comparing it to the photo. She noticed that in the photo she was holding a block in each hand and immediately went back to her building and added the same blocks to her construction. I asked her if the blocks shown in her hands in the photo were later added to that building, and she said they were.</p> <p>Alex was then satisfied and turned her attention to copying down on her piece of paper the first line and a half of the Child's voice.</p>
well-being mana atua	BEING INVOLVED	
exploration mana aotūroa	PERSISTING WITH DIFFICULTY	
communication mana reo	EXPRESSING AN IDEA OR A FEELING	
contribution mana tangata	TAKING RESPONSIBILITY	
		Short-term review
		<p>Alex enjoyed revisiting the work in her portfolio and reproducing it. Alex showed great perception of detail by noticing the blocks in her hands in the photo.</p> <p>She pictured the finished construction in her mind and built it from the unfinished building in the photo.</p>
  		

Child: Alexandra
Date: 30 November
Observer: Robyn and Helen
Subject: Tower building and literacy

A Learning Story

Alex appeared with her portfolio and began to look at it with Helen in the back room where the blocks are. She decided to rebuild a tower that was documented in May. Helen's learning story records the narrative in more detail. There was a lot of discussion as Alex chose the exact blocks needed to replicate the original tower. I could feel the excitement and enjoyment Alex was experiencing as the tower took shape.



Alex announced that she would write the story and began to carefully copy the story written in her portfolio.



She worked in a very relaxed manner, discussing progress with Helen. It was obviously a very enjoyable situation.



As I watched and photographed, I felt very excited. Alex had initiated the whole exercise, and she was actively pursuing the opportunity to write. She not only connected the narrative in the story to her current block building but also wanted to be the story writer. This has been one of those wonderful moments!

What's happening here?

Alexandra and a teacher revisit her assessment portfolio. She then reproduces an earlier block construction.

What aspects of children's contribution to assessments does this exemplify?

This is an example of a child revisiting her portfolio with a teacher. Alex picks out and reads her name throughout, and the teacher reads some earlier learning stories to her.

Alex then "corrects" the record, using the documentation to rebuild one of her earlier constructions. (The photograph had been taken before the construction was completed.)

How might this assessment develop children's capacity to contribute to assessments?

Social sharing of episodes assists children to become familiar with the structure of stories and storying. In this case, Alex also understands that she can add to the record.

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

Alex and her peers in this centre have ready access to their portfolios. This teacher is willing to read stories back to the children as a way of helping them to develop their views of themselves as competent learners. It also encourages their emergent reading skills and interests and provides a catalyst for self-assessment and planning.

Jak builds a wharenuui

Child: Jak
25 June
Observer: Maya

Learning Stories

Jak approached me in the back room and asked if I could help him build something. We sat down together and talked about what he would like to build. Jak started to put a base down. "What could this be, Maya?" Jak asked me. "I'm not sure, but maybe it's the floor of a building," I replied. "Look around you, Jak. What could this be?"

Jak carefully looked at the pictures on the wall.

"I know, it can be a Māori house," he said.

"Do you mean a wharenuui?" I asked.

"Yes," he said, pointing to the photos on the wall.

I brought out my book *New Zealand Aotearoa* by Bob McCree.

Jak looked through the book. "My wharenuui has lots of people, like the picture." Jak used the tall rounded blocks as people. "Why does it have a triangle pointy roof?" Jak asked.

I explained to Jak that the wharenuui was like a person and the posts on the roof were its back and spine, with lots of bones so it's strong and can stand.

Jak continued to ask, "So it's like a skeleton?"

Jak did a lot of problem solving during this learning experience as he had to work out how he was going to balance the "ribs" so they could stand up and be pointed. Jak tried all sorts of blocks and decided to build a tall pile in the middle so that the ribs could lean on them.

Short-term review

While building this, Jak stopped and looked through the book *New Zealand Aotearoa*. He was fascinated by a picture of a snowy mountain: "It doesn't snow where we live. We have to go far away to see snow."

Jak, you are a book full of knowledge. I really enjoyed working with you building your fantastic wharenuui.

Jak has a real sense of belonging in the centre and loves the opportunity to share his play with the teachers. Maybe next we can extend his knowledge about Aotearoa New Zealand.



What's happening here?

Jak consults the teacher about what he might make with blocks. Inspired by pictures on the wall at the early childhood centre and guided by pictures in a book provided by the teacher, he decides to make a wharenuī.

What aspects of children's contribution to assessments does this exemplify?

Jak is using pictures and imagery as standards or reference points against which to assess his construction for himself. He has been assisted by the teacher to assess his own achievement in building a wharenuī by using pictures on the wall and an illustrated book. The teacher also provides the appropriate imagery to remind Jak of the symmetry of the construction.

How might this assessment develop children's capacity to contribute to assessments?

Revisiting this story, Jak might be reminded that he is able to share the responsibility for assessing his achievement in specific ways. On many occasions, an inner sense of achievement is the touchstone of success (see the quote from Claxton on page 3), but children can learn other strategies for self-assessment as well.

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

The documentation here records for Jak and his family the strategies that he and the teacher are using to share responsibility for both Jak's learning and the assessment of its success. These strategies included consultation, using the pictures on the wall, using the illustrations in the book, and discussing a relevant image (a skeleton).

A story about clouds

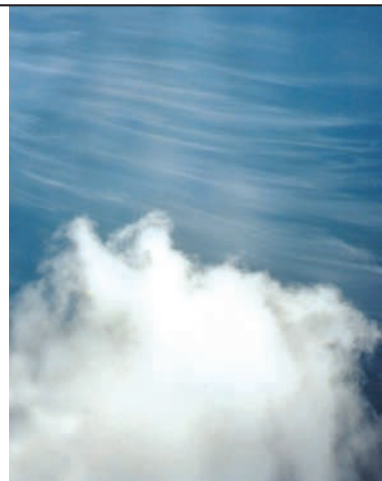
Sandra's story

"Look, look, look, look!" shouted Joey, excitedly waving his hands in front of my face. "What? What? What?" I jumped up to see just what was so amazing. "Look!" exclaimed Joey, pointing up to the sky. Well, what a sight! The most amazing cloud formation had formed. Stripey clouds were whizzing in the opposite direction to large, white, fluffy ones. Spectacular! "Quick, go and tell Jill – she'll love them," I told Joey. I then called the children to the hill, and we all lay on the hill to observe nature in action.

Jill's story

Joey was playing outside. He raced inside, excitedly telling us about the clouds. We all went outside to see the two different types of clouds in the sky going in opposite directions.

The children lay on the hill, looking up, while Veronica informed us that they were stratus and cumulus clouds. Stratus clouds from the west and cumulus from the east. Lots of joy and wonder. Great observation, Joey!



Mum's reaction

Joey's father is a science teacher, but Lottie (his mother) feels this doesn't necessarily direct Joey's behaviour. She said, however, that Joey does tend to notice things in nature, especially things in the sky. If there is a full moon, Joey will spend time gazing at it. He loves choosing factual books from the library, and his latest choice includes one about poisonous animals.

What's happening here?

Joey notices an unusual cloud formation. In Sandra's words, "Stripey clouds were whizzing in the opposite direction to large, white, fluffy ones." The children and the adults lie on the ground to watch them. This story is noticed and commented on in three different ways by Sandra, Jill, and Joey's mother.

What aspects of children's contribution to assessments does this exemplify?

The format of this assessment item encourages a sense of multiple viewpoints on every event and that all contributions (including the children's) are valued. Although Joey doesn't have his own story in this example, he is given credit for starting the stories ("Great observation, Joey!") and for contributing to the sense of "joy and wonder".

How might this assessment develop children's capacity to contribute to assessments?

Joey started this story. This exemplar can demonstrate to the readers (including Joey) that

the same story about an event can be told or interpreted in different ways, depending on the storytellers' perspectives, knowledge, and experience. The "spectacular" sight amazes Sandra. Jill includes some scientific information (an explanation from Veronica) about stratus and cumulus clouds. Lottie (Joey's mother) adds information about Joey's interest in the sky.

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

An assessment exemplar that describes or interprets the same event from multiple perspectives is unusual. Because the cloud story is written in this way, differing perspectives appear to be valued in this setting. For example, the teachers invited a third voice from Joey's mother.

The adults in the early childhood setting have written up this story using words such as "amazing", "spectacular", "excitedly", "joy", and "wonder". There is a sense of the enjoyment of the spontaneous and an appreciation of children's initiatives.

Emptying the supervisor's bag

Child's name: Campbell
Date: 28 June
Teacher: Carol

A LEARNING STORY		
belonging mana whenua	TAKING AN INTEREST	Campbell delights in pulling objects out of the supervisor's bag (rolls, verification forms, and so on). He opens the books carefully for an eighteen-month-old. He scans pages and, if he manages to find a pen (crayons are of little interest), he will hold the pen correctly and write small precise symbols. So as not to deter Campbell's interest in books and pens, the staff replaced the supervisor's bag with another bag. Campbell investigated that bag ONCE, then set about climbing over the small fence and searching around until he found the original bag and proceeded to pull out the much-coveted books. Squealing and chuckling, he proceeded to turn the pages.
well-being mana atua	BEING INVOLVED	
exploration mana aotūroa	PERSISTING WITH DIFFICULTY	
communication manareo	EXPRESSING AN IDEA OR A FEELING	<p>Short-term review</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has a specific interest and will persist to fulfil his desires. • Has precise skills and takes care with books. <p>Campbell's mother says he loves "reading" the junk mail.</p>
contribution manatungata	TAKING RESPONSIBILITY	<p>What next?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Find an old roll book. • Give Campbell opportunities to use pens and other media for writing.

What's happening here?

Campbell has a particular interest in pulling objects out of the supervisor's bag. The staff replaced the supervisor's bag with another, but Campbell is interested in the real world of current roll books and verification forms. The teachers suggest that they might find an old roll book that looks the same.

What aspects of children's contribution to assessments does this exemplify?

The staff and family are commenting on Campbell's behalf. The teachers are identifying Campbell's goals (and value them enough to try to accommodate his determination to pursue this goal). Campbell's "squealing and chuckling" indicate his satisfaction at having achieved his goal.

The family is assisting with this attempt to understand what is important for Campbell. The staff have picked up on a comment by Campbell's mother that he loves "reading" the junk mail, and they use this information to plan for him.

How might this assessment develop children's capacity to contribute to assessments?

The topic of this item in Campbell's portfolio is his pursuit of two particular interests: "reading" books

that are valued by adults and using a pen to write symbols. The documentation, an attempt to see the world through Campbell's eyes, has contributed to ongoing planning for Campbell's learning.

A comment from Campbell's mother indicates that he also likes to "read" the junk mail that comes into the house. This comment is written down, and this interest will be pursued later at the early childhood centre. (It is the topic of another story in Campbell's portfolio six weeks later.)

Campbell's particular interests in "real" books, pens, and writing are documented here, together with some of the planning that followed. Through this planning, the staff will help Campbell to continue to pursue his goals and reinforce his sense of what counts as "good work" for himself (see Guy Claxton's comments on page 3).

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

The staff searched for ways to develop Campbell's interests in appropriate contexts. They appear to value the focused attention and delight that this example illustrates.

Parents' comments on the children's interests are valued, too, and written down to become a consideration for planning.

Your brain is for thinking

Names: Koasigan and Cameron

18 November

Teacher: Lee

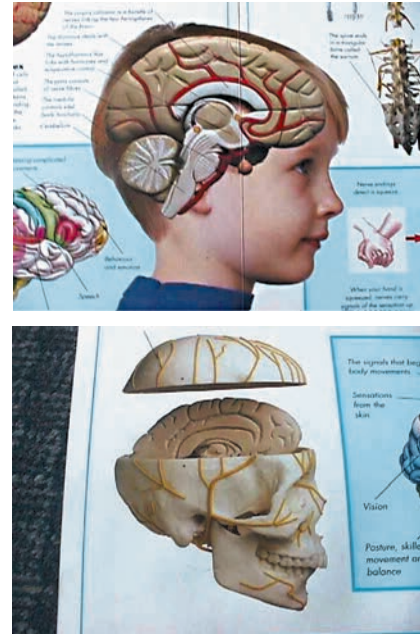
I found Koasigan and Cameron sitting on the floor together, viewing a book titled “How Your Body Works”. Cameron was turning the pages.

“Look at the funny hat,” said Cameron.

“Oh! That’s not a funny hat. It’s your brain. Your brain is for thinking,” said Koasigan in an informative manner.

“Look at this funny hat, too,” said Cameron.

“No, that’s your skull. It protects your brain. Stops it from being sandwiched,” said Koasigan.



Short-term review

Children are great teachers. Koasigan, with his kind manner, shared his knowledge and experience with Cameron. And Cameron, delighted with Koasigan’s informative manner, soaked up the learning experience.

A very treasurable moment!

What’s happening here?

Koasigan is teaching Cameron about the brain.

What aspects of children’s contribution to assessments does this exemplify?

This is an example of peer assessment. Koasigan is assessing Cameron’s knowledge of the brain and is correcting his misunderstandings. The children discuss what they know about the brain as they look at a book about how the body works. It is the children’s words that tell the story. This is a transcript of them (as remembered by the teacher or written down at the time).

The teacher’s comment about Cameron’s response suggests that, on this occasion, having a misunderstanding corrected by a peer was enjoyable learning.

How might this assessment develop children’s capacity to contribute to assessments?

One of the reasons for documenting this episode may have been to celebrate in writing a moment of negotiation about meaning and an amicable discussion about what is “right”.

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

The teacher attempted to write down the children’s exact words. It appears from this that the teacher notices, recognises, and values episodes in which the children teach each other. A library of non-fiction books that the children can read enables this kind of peer teaching and discussion.

Tayla and “what next?”

Child's name: Tayla
Date: August
Teacher: Vicki

		Examples or cues	A LEARNING STORY
belonging mana whenua	TAKING AN INTEREST	Finding an interest <i>here</i> – a topic, an activity, a role. Recognising the familiar, enjoying the unfamiliar. Coping with change.	<p><i>While we were sitting at the collage table busily pasting and cutting, Kupu calls out “mat-time”. Tayla quickly gets up and walks to the entrance of the door and calls:</i></p> <p><i>“Haere mai ki te Whāriki”</i></p> <p><i>She turns back to me and gives me the biggest grin, and walks back to the collage table.</i></p>
well-being mana atua	BEING INVOLVED	Paying attention for a sustained period, feeling safe, trusting others. Being playful with others and/or materials.	
exploration mana aotūroa	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.	

Short-term review	What next?
<p><i>Tayla is so quick to respond to situations without any prompting. Every day I am learning about Tayla’s many skills and interests. She has beautiful reo and obviously knows her reo. Ka pai Tayla.</i></p>	<p><i>I’m just going to ask Tayla what next after I read this story to her!</i></p>

What’s happening here?

Tayla assists with the early childhood centre’s schedule: the call to mat time. She decides to call in te reo Māori.

What aspects of children’s contribution to assessments does this exemplify?

In this example, the teacher plans for the child to contribute to the record. The “What next?” section of the assessment will be written or completed by the child: “I’m just going to ask Tayla ‘What next?’ after I read this story to her!”

How might this assessment develop children’s capacity to contribute to assessments?

This written story is a catalyst for a later discussion. The teacher clearly plans to read this

story back to Tayla and to invite her contribution. The discussion that follows this reading may not be recorded. It could include discussions about routines, use of te reo Māori, What next? for Tayla, and perhaps the programme schedule in general.

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

There is a feeling of partnership here between the teacher and the child: the teacher appreciates Tayla’s use of te reo Māori, her taking responsibility, and her “biggest grin”. She is also anticipating Tayla’s contribution to the planning that will follow from the episode recorded here.

Jack's interest in puzzles

Jack enjoys doing puzzles. He will search them out until he finds them and will spend relatively long periods of time working at completing them. The stacker puzzle remains Jack's favourite puzzle.



The stacker puzzle

Jack searched out the stacker puzzle, which was on the middle shelf. He took it down and made a noise to get attention.

Jack took the puzzle pieces off. He looked up to see if anyone was watching. He smiled and continued to put the puzzle pieces on the baseboard.

Jack shows great concentration. When he concentrates, he usually lies on the floor with his tongue out.



What's happening here?

This entry is one of many observations of Jack's sustained interest in a range of things, including play materials, as well as his growing interest in playing with other toddlers. This item describes Jack's enjoyment of puzzles. The photographs show him working with a flat puzzle, placing pieces into the holes in the board. The teacher comments that his favourite is the stacker puzzle, and there is a photograph of him with this.

What aspects of children's contribution to assessments does this exemplify?

This is an example of an activity in which the material provides the assessment. Although the commentary says that Jack "looked up to see if anyone was watching", it may be that the satisfaction of completing these tasks comes from the materials themselves. They "tell" him that he has succeeded. It is a particular kind of self-assessment, in which the child does not need the adult to tell him that he has done well.

How might this assessment develop children's capacity to contribute to assessments?

Some of the "autotelic" activities and tasks (in which the materials do the "teaching") that children enjoy will encourage them to at least occasionally evaluate their own achievement and not to depend on adult praise to assess their performance. Recording Jack's activities over time

will enable the teachers to keep this possible development in mind.

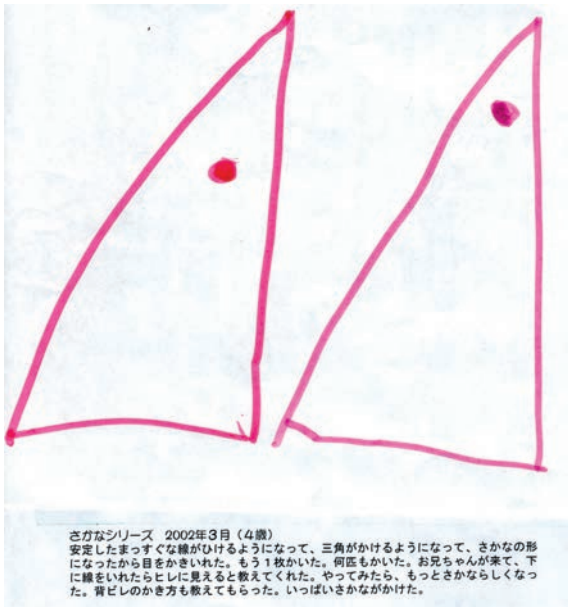
What might this tell us about informal noticing, recognising, and responding in this place?

These activities are standard fare in early childhood settings. Montessori programmes are particularly characterised by materials that do the teaching. They provide children with clear goals and criteria for success (as well as fine motor, spatial, and colour- and picture-matching skills).

The teacher notes that "Jack shows great concentration" and suggests that the staff know when he is concentrating because he "lies on the floor with his tongue out". The teacher attempts to write the assessment as if from his viewpoint.

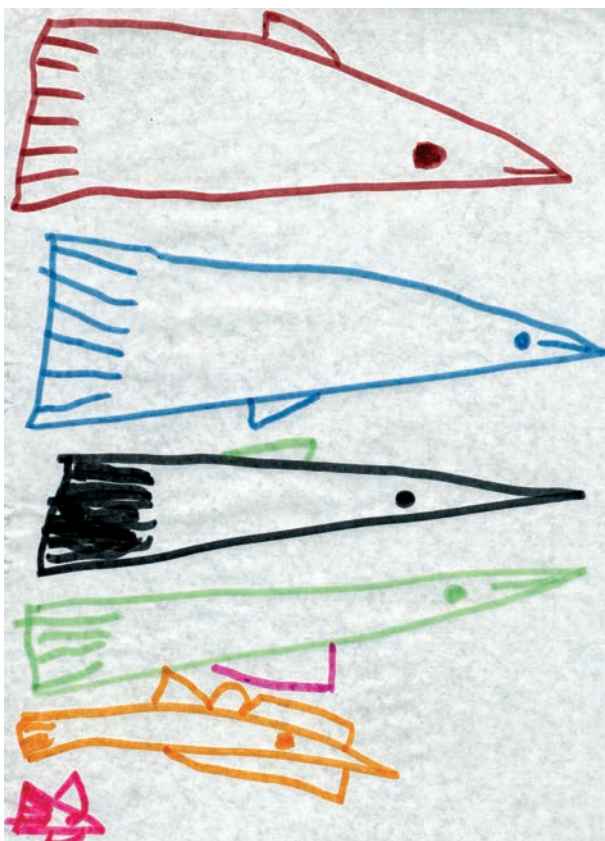
In this commentary, the teacher appears to know Jack's special interests and to read his body language. Knowing children well enables staff to notice, recognise, and respond intuitively as well as deliberately, recognising learning opportunities for particular children. Deliberate responses on some occasions might include: inviting a child to attempt a more difficult puzzle, drawing a child's attention to features of the puzzle that he or she should attend to, and providing encouragement for the child to stay involved. (See the commentary on interactions between an adult and a child doing a jigsaw in Wood et al., 1980, pages 111–112.)

Ray learns to draw fish



Fish March (4 years)

Ray has learned to draw nice, straight lines and nice triangles. He drew two triangles first and they looked like fish, so he drew in eyes. He drew another one and another one. Fish, fish, fish. Ben came along and said, "If you draw lines here, it will look more like fish." Ray tried, and it did look better. He added fins and a lot more fish.



What's happening here?

Ray's family has contributed a story about Ray's drawing at home. It includes his older brother Ben giving advice. The commentary is written in the family's home language of Japanese as well as in English.

What aspects of children's contribution to assessments does this exemplify?

Ray's family is contributing to the assessment record with and for Ray. Ray's primary identity belongs with the family and the home language. Therefore, this exemplar can be seen as a child's contribution to the centre's record.

How might this assessment develop children's capacity to contribute to assessments?

The family's contributions to this portfolio over time reflect a partnership between the family (including Ray) and the teachers in the compilation of evidence of Ray's learning at home and at the early childhood centre. It is a joint enterprise, and no doubt Ray feels part of this process and encouraged to contribute.

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

This family contributes to Ray's assessment record by documenting some of the noticing, recognising, and responding to Ray's learning at home. In this case, it was his brother Ben who responded to his initial drawing with a suggestion for improvement. Ray takes up this suggestion. The parent responds by documenting the process and adding it to Ray's early childhood centre portfolio.

Reflective questions

He pātai hei whakaaro iho

Why should children contribute to their own assessments?

What examples do we have of the children contributing to their own assessment records?

What examples do we have that show the children having a say in the description and discussion of their work or their learning? How else might we encourage this?

What examples do we have in our assessments that show the child, family, or whānau taking part in deciding what learning is important for the child's well-being?

What evidence do we have of multiple voices contributing to assessments and making a difference to children's learning?

Is there a dilemma in balancing the child's voice, the teachers' voice, and the whānau's voice in our assessments?

How can we find out what path the child is on and how the children can contribute to planning what they will do next in assessments?

In what ways can infants and toddlers contribute to their own assessments?

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