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Te Tāhuhu o te Mātauranga

Assessment and Learning: Competence

Te Aromatawai me te Ako: Kaiaka

6

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 difference does assessment
 make to children's learning?**
Competence

**He aha ngā hua o te aromatawai mō
 te ako tamariki? Kaiaka**

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Introduction

He kupu whakataki

Exemplars are examples of assessments that *make visible learning that is valued* so that the learning community (children, families, whānau, teachers, and beyond) can foster ongoing and diverse learning pathways.

Early Childhood Learning and Assessment Exemplar Project Advisory Committee and Co-ordinators, 2002 (Emphasis added)

This is the second of three books of exemplars that ask the question “What difference does assessment make to children’s learning?” Assessments can make learning visible and foster learning that is valued. The learning is described as competence in line with the aspiration for children “to grow up as competent and confident learners and communicators” in *Te Whāriki* (1996, page 9). It is also consistent with the statement that educators should implement curriculum and assessment practices that “enhance their [the children’s] sense of themselves as capable people and competent learners” (*Te Whāriki*, 1996, page 30).

Book 1 in this series defines assessment for learning as “noticing, recognising, and responding”. The commentaries in documented assessments can make visible the identity of the child as a competent, confident learner. Children, families, whānau, and teachers can revisit the assessments to discuss the learning that they value, what they regard as “competence”, and how competence is enhanced.

One of the parents at an early childhood centre, interviewed by the teacher about her experience of writing learning stories for her son Tom’s folder, said:

Cause you just get on with ordinary everyday life, and you start taking things for granted about them, whereas this sort of thing [being invited to contribute to the assessment folder] makes you stop and really look, and think about, “oh ... yes that’s really interesting”. Or that’s quite a big learning step for them, by doing what they did, or what they said.

Radford, 2001, page 24

One of the stories she wrote was about Tom’s perseverance as he made a card for his nan in which he wanted to draw a “gust of wind”. As such stories are read back to Tom, he is likely to develop a sense of himself as a capable person and a competent learner. This awareness will impact on his learning.

Te Whāriki upholds the right for Māori to have a voice and be visible in early childhood education. At the 2001 Hui Taumata Mātauranga, Mason Durie introduced a framework for Māori educational achievement. He explained that:

In order to reach the three goals: to live as Māori, to participate as citizens of the world, and to enjoy good health and a high standard of living, education must be guided by sound principles. Some principles go almost without saying – treating students with respect, establishing good relationships between school and home, acknowledging the dignity and uniqueness of all learners.

Mason Durie identified three overarching principles for education: the principle of best outcomes, the principle of integrated action, and the principle of indigeneity. His goals and principles also reinforce the importance of children developing a sense of themselves as capable people and competent learners. Research supports this claim: in a comprehensive survey of research on assessment for learning, Paul Black and Dylan Wiliam (1998) state that “There is evidence from many studies that learners’ beliefs about their capacity as learners can affect their achievement” (page 24).

The New Zealand Competent Children project used the following criteria to describe competence:

We called this the Competent Children project because we wanted to look at outcomes for children as broadly as we could. We included ten ‘competencies’ – particular combinations of knowledge, skills and dispositions – that seemed to underpin successful learning, growth to adulthood, and adulthood itself, and which were consistent with *Te Whāriki*, the New Zealand ECE curriculum, then in draft form. These are: literacy (reading, writing), mathematics, logical problem solving, communication (receptive and expressive language use), perseverance, social skills with peers, social skills with adults, individual responsibility (self-management), curiosity and motor skills.

Wylie and Thompson, 2003, pages 70–71

Three aspects of competence

Teachers and other adults who work with children are invited to explore the following three aspects of competence:

- personal goals, interests, and working theories;
- learning strategies and dispositions;
- social roles and culturally valued literacies.

Ngā aronga e toru o te kaiaka



Each of these three aspects involves knowledge, skills, and attitudes. The aspects overlap, and the purposes of them will often be in opposition to each other. For example, personal goals and the smooth running of a centre may be at odds with each other. Māori aspirations for Māori children and the implementation of bicultural goals may also pose some major challenges. Tension between personal goals and social roles can raise issues of inclusion and exclusion, as illustrated in Vivian Paley’s book *You Can’t Say You Can’t Play* (1992).

Personal goals, interests, and working theories

Children develop competence as they pursue their personal interests and goals. They develop working theories about themselves as learners and about the world around them. Their goals, interests, and working theories may not be immediately apparent, and many will change during the learning itself.

The longitudinal New Zealand Competent Children project (Wylie and Thompson, 2003, page 74) concluded that a number of items that described early childhood settings continued to show positive associations with children’s competencies at age ten, after taking family income and maternal qualification levels into account. Three of these were: “Children can select from a variety of activities”, “Children can complete activities”, and “Staff are responsive to individual children.”

Suzanne Hidi (1990) summarised the research on interest and its contribution to learning. She found that:

Individual interests have a profound effect on cognitive functioning and performance (individuals interested in a task or an activity have been shown to pay more attention, persist for longer periods of time, and acquire more and qualitatively different knowledge than individuals without such interest) ...

page 554

Learning strategies and dispositions

In documented assessments, teachers consider children's culture, skills, inclinations, and intentions in relation to participation in learning and educational settings. Participation may be described differently in different settings. In any early childhood setting, children will have opportunities to explore and participate in a variety of ways.

Strategies and dispositions develop best in the context of whanaungatanga or reciprocal and responsive relationships with people, places, and things in the early childhood setting and beyond. Assessments are part of these reciprocal and responsive relationships.

Joy Cullen (1991) studied sixteen four- and five-year-olds at two pre-primary centres in Perth, Australia. She identified the following effective learning strategies: task persistence, use of resources, use of peers as a resource, use of adults as a resource, seeing self as a resource for others, directing self, and directing others. One year later, she reported, "Children whose approach to learning at pre-school was characterised by a range of strategic behaviours and reflective skills maintained a strategic approach to learning in their first year at school" (page 44).

Arapera Royal Tangaere (1997) refers to a strategy of learning that is significant to Māori: that of tuakana and teina, where the more skilled peer, or tuakana, scaffolds the less competent child, or teina, to a higher level of understanding and knowing.

Liz Brooker (2002) researched the experience of the first year of school of sixteen four-year-olds. One of her conclusions was that "learning dispositions" were "an important indicator of their future school success" (page 148).

Social roles and culturally valued literacies

As children learn, they explore a variety of roles and literacies and the skills and understandings that are allied to them. These roles and literacies may be valued nationally, or they may be specific to certain social or cultural groups.

In learning communities, children will have the opportunity to try out a range of sociocultural roles and their associated competencies, for example, tuakana, teina, friend, measurer, jam maker, tower builder, kaimahi, observer of insects, reader, citizen of the world, and member of hapū and iwi.

Children will also have opportunities to develop skills and understandings within a range of literacies, including reading, writing, mathematics, information technology, and the arts. (Future books will describe how assessments can contribute to these particular literacies.)

In her research study of children learning in home-based settings, Lyn Wright (2003) includes a chapter entitled Learning Outcomes for Children: Meaning-making and Multiple Identities. She comments:

Whilst the identities being explored at times were clearly on topics such as mathematics, or gaining mastery over their bodies, or becoming independent, identities relating to being social participants in a setting were also being explored.

page 157

She describes, for instance, Alice "being a teacher".

Links to *Te Whāriki*

Ngā hononga ki *Te Whāriki*

The metaphor of weaving in *Te Whāriki* illustrates that “each early childhood service can weave the particular pattern that makes its programme different and distinctive” (page 28). In the same way, multiple meanings of competence and multiple ongoing learning pathways will develop. However, all assessments should take a considered approach to competence, with *Te Whāriki* in mind. *Te Whāriki* also emphasises Māori perspectives within the curriculum framework:

In early childhood education settings, all children should be given the opportunity to develop knowledge and an understanding of the cultural heritages of both partners to Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

Te Whāriki, page 9

The three aspects of competence discussed in this book are intrinsic to *Te Whāriki*.

Personal goals, interests, and working theories

In *Te Whāriki*, learning outcomes (knowledge, skills, and attitudes) are summarised in the following comment.

In early childhood, children are developing more elaborate and useful working theories about themselves and about the people, places, and things in their lives. These working theories contain a combination of knowledge about the world, skills and strategies, attitudes, and expectations.

Te Whāriki, page 44

The principle of empowerment emphasises children’s rights and their need to pursue their own *goals* and *interests* as a base for developing working theories.

The early childhood curriculum builds on the child’s own experiences, knowledge, skills, attitudes, needs, interests, and views of the world within each particular setting. Children will have the opportunity to create and act on their own ideas, to develop knowledge and skills in areas that interest them, and to make an increasing number of their own decisions and judgments.

Te Whāriki, page 40

Empowerment is also about providing children with bicultural tools to extend the complexity of their learning. The curriculum can provide authentic opportunities for children to engage in learning experiences that allow them to understand Māori language, values, beliefs, and practices.

Ka ako i ngā tikanga e tuku kaha nei ki te hinengaro Ka ako i ngā whakamārama o te Ao Māori Tawhito mō te Taiao, mō Te Pō, me Te Kore. Ka ako i ngā whakamārama o Te Ao Hou mō ngā Whakangaromanga Ao, mō te āhua o ngā wā o mua, me muri nei, ā, mō ngā wānanga hoki mō tōna āhua ake, me te take i whānau mai ai ia ki tēnei ao.

Te Whāriki, page 34

Many personal interests and goals come from the family and are fostered through relationships that are significant to children.

Learning strategies and dispositions

Te Whāriki also summarises learning outcomes “as dispositions – ‘habits of mind’ or ‘patterns of learning’” (page 44).

Dispositions to learn develop when children are immersed in an environment that is characterised by well-being and trust, belonging and purposeful activity, contributing and collaborating, communicating and representing, and exploring and guided participation.

Te Whāriki, page 45

Relationships are a key factor in helping children to develop dispositions to learn.

This curriculum emphasises the critical role of socially and culturally mediated learning and of reciprocal and responsive relationships for children with people, places, and things.

Te Whāriki, page 9

Kia mōhio ia ki ngā kārangaranga whānau Kia mōhio hoki ki a Ranginui rāua ko Papatūānuku, ā rāua tamariki, me ngā kōrero mō rātou.

Te Whāriki, page 35

Social roles and culturally valued literacies

Te Whāriki also suggests learning outcomes that relate to children’s need to explore social roles and literacies that are culturally valued. It reminds us that:

Language does not consist only of words, sentences, and stories: it includes the language of images, art, dance, drama, mathematics, movement, rhythm, and music.

Te Whāriki, page 72

For example, language also includes the signs and symbols of kapa haka, waiata and mahi toi. In addition, *Te Whāriki* emphasises the importance of encouraging children to explore a variety of roles regardless of gender, ethnicity, age, ability, or background. (See pages 66–67.) *Te Whāriki* also helps us to understand that children belong to different communities and that these communities are sources of learning.

Each community to which a child belongs, whether it is a family home or an early childhood setting outside the home, provides opportunities for new learning to be fostered: for children to reflect on alternative ways of doing things; make connections across time and place; establish different kinds of relationship; and encounter different points of view.

Te Whāriki, page 9

These relationships may refer back to the past to seek the roles and literacies that earlier generations have developed. Culturally valued roles and literacies are a major aspect of competence in *Te Whāriki*. For example,

- kia mōhio ia ... ki ōna marae, ki ngā pepeha hoki o ōna iwi.

Te Whāriki, page 36

- ka mōhio rātou ki tō rātou reo, ki ā rātou tikanga Māori, ki ō rātou tūrangawaewae ...
- ka mōhio rātou ki ō rātou whānau me ō rātou ao.

Te Whāriki, page 40

This reminds us that whanaungatanga underpins much that is socially and culturally valued.

Future books in this series will further exemplify the three aspects of competence discussed in this book within the curriculum strands of Well-being/Mana Atua, Belonging/Mana Whenua, Contribution/Mana Tangata, Communication/Mana Reo, and Exploration/Mana Aotūroa.

Exemplars

Not happy with the wheel

Ngā tauaromahi



1. This is Matthew's first attempt to draw his car, but he was not happy with the wheel.



2. This is Matthew's second attempt, but again, his wheel was not what he wanted.



3. Matthew is starting his third attempt to draw his car.



4. Matthew is now drawing the doors on the car, and it has windows and hubcaps, too.



5. The car is taking shape, and Matthew is very happy!



6. Look, this door opens here!

What's happening here?

This series of photographs illustrates Matthew's attempts to draw a car that he is happy with.

What aspects of competence does this assessment exemplify?

Matthew sets himself a goal. He makes several attempts to draw a car.

His perseverance makes it clear that he accepts that making a mistake is part of the learning process.

Matthew seems to be making sense of and honing his perception of the world, in particular, cars, by being an artist and drawing them.

How might this documented assessment contribute to developing competence?

Matthew can revisit and read this series of photos. It reminds him that he is someone who persists when he gets it wrong.

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

Opportunities for chalk drawings may encourage a positive response to making mistakes: they are easily refined or erased and redone.

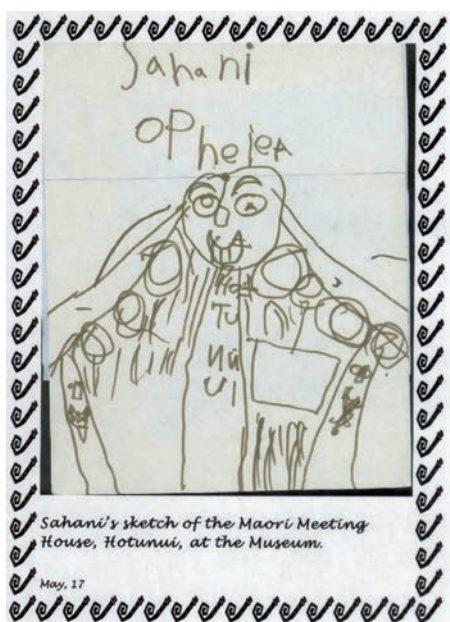
Sahani's drawing

May

At the end of our visit to the Treasures and Tales Exhibition at the museum, we had time to visit the Māori section.

The children sat on the steps and drew some sketches of what they could see around them.

Sahani drew Hotunui, the carved meeting house. She included incredible detail in this drawing and even included the writing that was positioned at the apex of the whare.



Sahani's sketch of the Māori meeting house, Hotunui, at the museum.

Learning story

Name: Sahani

Date: June

Teacher: Lesley

Impact of the visit to the Tūtahi Tonu Marae, June

During the visit to the marae, the children had the opportunity to sketch their impressions and ideas in the whare. Sahani sat directly in front of the carving depicting the story of Māui finding his father and sketched the carving. She incorporated the bird at the bottom and the overall perspective of the carved panel.

The next day at kindergarten, the children were given the opportunity to revisit their marae experience through their drawings. Sahani drew a series of designs depicting the tukutuku patterns and carvings featured in the marae, including Tāwhirimātea (who cares for the wind and the rain). She clearly recalled the stories shared by Whaea Urania (the marae co-ordinator), and these featured in her work. Sahani's aunty told us about the extensive range of sketches she had done at home after the visit. Sahani shared with her parents in great detail the stories and experiences of the marae trip. The range and details of the sketches are incredible!

Short-term review

Sahani's interest in the designs and patterns incorporated in the whare whakairo, both at the museum and the marae at ACE, was clearly evident through her extensive range of designs drawn at the museum, at the marae, at kindergarten, and at home. (*Te Whāriki*, Belonging, Well-being) The clarity of detailing and perspective are incredibly accurate. (*Te Whāriki*, Exploration) Sahani recalled the stories and their significance and connection to the carvings, kōwhaiwhai panels, and tukutuku panels, and she shared them accurately with her family. (*Te Whāriki*, Communication)

What next?

Develop further Māori art processes: tukutuku panels using paper-weaving techniques.

Parent's voice

Sahani talked with enthusiasm about what she saw and how she went in ... she draws pictures, paints them. I truly find her very creative. She consults with her brother when selecting colours ... she gets the co-operation of her brother, spends hours drawing, painting pictures of what they saw to take to kindergarten ... very, very involved!



What's happening here?

Sahani's interest in drawing is combined here with her developing interest in Māori art and Māori stories as a result of visits to the Māori section of a museum and the local marae.

What aspects of competence does this assessment exemplify?

One way to make sense is to represent, and, in this exemplar, Sahani explores the history and stories represented at the marae, establishing her own working theories. The teacher comments that she "recalled the stories and their significance and connection to the carvings, kōwhaiwhai panels, and tukutuku panels, and she shared them accurately with her family".

Sahani is making her own representations as an artist and a scholar. "The clarity of detailing and perspective are incredibly accurate."

How might this documented assessment contribute to developing competence?

This assessment is about representation (making a record) by Sahani at Hotunui and at the Tūtahi Tonu marae. The collection of Sahani's work records her developing interest and competence in representing what she sees and learns. The work is not simply collected; it is dated, it is connected to the events that accompany it by photographs and commentary, and it is connected to Sahani's recall and interest in the stories and their significance.

The teachers also constructed a wall display of these learning experiences. This documentation illustrates for the parents what the children were learning (their developing competence or understandings) when they went on these visits.

The children's portfolios invite families to contribute, and Sahani's family have added to this rich record by commenting on her drawing at home, on her collaboration with her brother in drawing enterprises, and on her continuing enthusiasm about the marae visit.

All this documentation will encourage Sahani to continue representing her experiences and learning.

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

The visits to the museum and the local marae show that the teachers value New Zealand's bicultural heritage. In a sense, they can be seen to value the competencies associated with being a New Zealander.

These visits are projects: they include discussions before the visit, experts at the site, opportunities for the children to be closely focused (by drawing), many follow-up activities and discussions back at the centre, wall displays, and comments from home and by informed teachers.

Dinosaur exploration



Green play dough dinosaurs

Neeve came to me early in the day and said that she would like to make another dinosaur from play dough. Out came the play dough and a firm base to put it on, and she was onto it.

Today she wanted to make a stegosaurus. She found the favourite dinosaur book, and she was right onto it. When the head kept drooping, she asked for sticks and began to strengthen it so that it was free-standing. I have not seen Neeve use tools to stabilise her work before, and I was impressed. The moment she finished, she decided that one was not enough and sat down to make an ankylosaurus. Neeve makes this dinosaur at home quite a lot, and she made it quickly and accurately and then began the third dinosaur, a magnificent green and orange one. Now, for Neeve, three in one day is not enough! She came to me at the end of the day and said, "Robyn, I made another dinosaur, and Maya put him in the sun to dry." I went with her and, sure enough, there was the most beautiful little clay triceratops drying in the sun. Four magnificent dinosaurs in one day!



Soundtrack for the dinosaur movie show

I brought a dictaphone to work this morning with Neeve's Dinosaur Movie in mind. I talked to Neeve and Damien about making a soundtrack to accompany each of their movies. I thought that a practice run might be the best way to start, so Neeve, Damien, and I sat together and took turns to speak into the dictaphone. Neeve didn't hesitate to say her name after Damien, and then she made a longneck sound. We repeated this several times. The three of us then took over the sleep room. Neeve and Damien's scrolls were stretched from one side of the room to the other.

I gave Neeve three pieces of her art work I had saved to attach to her scroll. She was delighted to see them and went to work immediately and independently.

Both Neeve and Damien had a small amount of space to add more to their scrolls, so after both of them had finished attaching their pictures, we went to the computer to print some more dinosaur pictures. Neeve decided that she wanted the same two pictures as Damien. I enlarged and printed them. They shared the same chair and enjoyed watching them coming out of the printer. Neeve went straight back to work cutting and taping her dinosaur pictures onto the scroll until it was all completed.



Short-term review

Neeve has shown great dedication and independence in bringing this Dinosaur Movie production to its final closing stages.

12 June

Neeve, Damien, and Helen had a wonderful time today putting a soundtrack together for each of their movies. When we had finished, Neeve and Damien ran around the centre pretending to be dinosaurs themselves for a short time. Sound effects and all!

What's happening here?

Neeve and Damien have a passion for dinosaurs. Neeve's assessment portfolio indicates that, for about a year, she has represented dinosaurs using a range of media: painting, drawing, and sculpting with clay, play dough, modelling clay, and sand. Her teacher wrote one of the learning stories in this exemplar when Neeve and Damien collaborated to put on two movie shows.

What aspects of competence does this assessment exemplify?

This project includes sustained focus, persistence when difficulty arises, and collaboration, illustrating the children's developing participation strategies and dispositions. When they make the scrolls for the movie show, Neeve contributes her painting ability and Damien contributes pictures that (with assistance from a teacher) he has downloaded from the Internet.

In pursuing this interest, Neeve and Damien acquire a wealth of knowledge about dinosaurs and their habits and habitats. A number of writers (for example, Csikszentmihalyi) have suggested that being deeply involved in a topic

or interest over time is a source of creativity. Neeve and Damien's experience provides an example of this.

How might this documented assessment contribute to developing competence?

Neeve and Damien's interest in dinosaurs and the strategies and dispositions that they develop over time have been documented. These assessments provide examples for the children and their families of the learning that is valued, of the way in which competence is being defined, and of how the programme is enhancing that competence.

The process the children go through to represent and develop their ideas has been carefully documented. (See the process photographs of Neeve making a stegosaurus out of green play dough.) The teachers can refer back to this when discussing possible learning pathways with Neeve and Damien.

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

The teachers at this childcare centre have had to keep up with Neeve and Damien. They consult the library and the Internet and encourage the children to find information from a wide range of sources.

A range of media is readily available for the children to represent their ideas about dinosaurs.

“I did it!”



Hannah, Rena, and I went to Riccarton Bush this morning. On a previous visit, Hannah had to be carried over the raised walkways. She indicated that the gaps between the planks (and the fact that she could see down though them to the ground) were the issue.

Today, however, she dared to crawl across the first platform after watching Rena (seven years old) bound across. She moved very slowly as she looked down through the gaps to the earth below. Rena and I both supported her bravery with lots of fervent encouragement. At the end, we made a huge fuss over her.

“I did it!” said Hannah as she clapped her hands in self-applause.

When we got to the next similar construction, she didn’t even appear to notice it coming. She was running behind Rena and ahead of me. Rena just flew over it, and Hannah followed – still running – and she didn’t balk, either. She looked so amazed (as was I) when she got to the other side. After I expressed my delight at what she’d done, she jubilantly commented, “It’s not scary.”

I asked her to do this again so I could photograph it. As she ran across the platform again, she smiled, and as you may have noticed throughout this book, Hannah doesn’t generally smile for photos!

What’s happening here?

Hannah succeeds in crossing a raised walkway with gaps between the planks.

What aspects of competence does this assessment exemplify?

To fully participate in the walks around this home-based setting, Hannah has to negotiate several raised walkways where she can see down through the gaps between the planks. The teacher explains that she found the gaps frightening and that it needed “bravery” for her to manage the walkway independently.

How might this documented assessment contribute to developing competence?

The teacher asks Hannah to repeat her achievement so that she can take a photograph. This photograph, together with the commentary, is testimony for Hannah and her family of Hannah’s courage.

The process of achieving this goal is described (she crawled first, very slowly) so that Hannah can appreciate the progression from “scary” to “not scary” and from inability to competence.

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

The teacher allows Hannah to take her time over tackling a challenge (she was carried over the raised walkways on a previous occasion) and then expresses “delight” at Hannah’s achievement. Rena (aged seven) modelled “flying” across the bridge.

Growing potatoes

The children here learn, as a group, about real things, like gardening and how this contributes to daily life. Growing and harvesting crops in a semi-rural township is a significant economic event that involves everyone.



"Are they ready? How do we know?
Let's dig one up to see its size."



"They're big."



The Potato Scrubbers
"Does that look clean to you?"



They shared the potatoes out for scrubbing,
showing good maths skills.

What's happening here?

This is part of a wall display about growing potatoes at an early childhood centre.

What aspects of competence does this assessment exemplify?

Being part of the collective of potato growers is a valued role at this centre. As the introduction makes clear, growing crops is a "significant economic event that involves everyone" in the wider community.

How might this documented assessment contribute to developing competence?

The wall display, viewed by families and whānau, children, and visitors, reminds the readers that early childhood education here includes learning roles and values (and the skills and understandings that are allied to them) that are relevant to the wider community.

Wall displays then become books, which are able to be revisited some time later by the children and teachers, emphasising the continuity of valued projects and competencies.

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

In this centre, there is an emphasis on tasks that have meaning in the wider community. The teachers recognise and respond to opportunities for learning that are both collective and real.



Once cooked, now the taste test – a little butter – a little salt and mmm ... e kai.

Readers, carers, and friends

Daniel has recently developed an interest or enthusiasm for babies, and much of his play is seen by the teachers in this setting as the re-creation of his own experiences.

Daniel found a doll lying on the floor and picked it up, saying "baby" in an excited voice. Next to me was a pillow and blanket, which I pointed out to Daniel, suggesting he might like them for his baby. Daniel smiled and dragged the pillow over to the doll, then covered the baby using the blanket.

He practised covering and uncovering his baby. I started singing "Peek-a-boo!", and Daniel would anticipate and wait to pull off the blanket. We laughed together each time. When the game finished, Daniel became very interested in showing me the baby's body, for example, its feet and eyes.



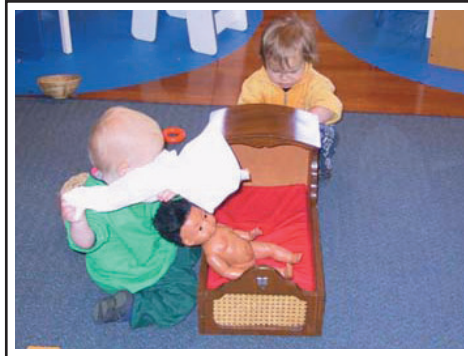
The teachers went on to share their stories with Daniel's mother, Lynne. This conversation has led to Daniel's new interest being supported at home as well as at the centre.

Today I spoke with Daniel's Mum about his sudden interest in and involvement with the dolls. Lynne commented that they didn't have any dolls at home, but she would see if Grandma had any. Then, as if to show his Mum what I was talking about, Daniel spotted the dolls in the cradle on the way out. "Babies" he yelled, smiling and bouncing up and down in Lynne's arms. Lynne let Daniel get closer to them and asked Daniel if he would like to say goodbye to them. With a huge smile, Daniel waved and said "Goodbye."

Daniel and George's friendship has continued to grow immensely. They can often be found sitting together looking at books, either in the book corner or in the middle of the floor where a couple of books happen to be. Today, for example, we invited the children to go outside. When most had raced out, we looked around the room, and who were in the corner ... but Daniel and George!



It seems that (aside from the common passion they share for books), whenever one of them becomes involved or interested in an activity or toy, it isn't long before the other is by his side, showing his interest, too. For example, this week, Daniel has become interested in the "babies" (dolls). Finding the dolls on the floor, he talks to them and puts them into bed. George, too, has joined Daniel on many of these occasions, watching Daniel first as if observing Daniel's interest in the activity, then becoming involved himself.



What's happening here?

Two toddlers are sharing an interest in books and in playing with dolls. This week, Daniel has become interested in the dolls (talking to them and putting them to bed), and George has watched Daniel and then become involved himself. Daniel and George have shared interests while developing a close bond.

What aspects of competence does this assessment exemplify?

Daniel and George play out two socially and culturally valued roles, being a reader and being a carer, as they interact with books and dolls.

The children employ a variety of learning strategies, imitating each other (as they copy how to hold and look at books and pretend to put babies to bed), communicating in non-verbal ways, jointly posing and solving problems, and imagining.

How might this documented assessment contribute to developing competence?

Two teachers jointly wrote this documentation, recalling and discussing what they had seen as they analysed it.

This lively record is one of "work in progress", and the readers (family and teachers) are thereby invited in. Consequently, they will wait with interest and support the next episode in Daniel and George's learning.

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

There is strong detail here on the context of this play: the responsive and reciprocal relationship developing between the two children. Participation in education is frequently enhanced in joint attention episodes and trusting relationships. The teachers comment that "It seems ... whenever one of them becomes involved or interested in an activity or toy, it isn't long before the other is by his side, showing his interest, too."

The teachers responded to an interest by suggesting resources and adding words to actions.



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Child's name: **Imogen**

Teacher: **Rosie**

		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.	If ever there is music playing, you can always be sure that Immy will be there, ready to dance as quick as a flash. Today was no exception ... I arrived to find her swirling the two ribbons to and fro. “Up in the air,” I gestured. “Down on the ground ... Immy continued to wave the ribbons, dancing to the beat. “You, too!” she called as she passed a ribbon to Lynn. After much jiving and swishing, Immy collapsed on the ground and said ... “Immy sleep.”
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 aotioroa	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

I always thoroughly enjoy witnessing Immy's passion for music and movement. It is amazing, too, the way in which her interest is sustained for long periods – she is more often than not the first to arrive and the last to leave after the music begins!

Her willingness to include Lynn in her dance demonstrates the trust and confidence she has in her.

I just loved the way she collapsed spontaneously on the floor! ... literally “danced till she dropped”!

What's happening here?

Music is playing, and Immy is swirling two ribbons to and fro.

What aspects of competence does this assessment exemplify?

Music and dancing are personal interests for Immy. She is “ready to dance” whenever there is music playing and is “the first to arrive and the last to leave”.

Immy communicates ideas through literacies in the arts – her dance and her spontaneous role play when she collapses on the floor and says “Immy sleep.”

The teacher comments on the “trust and confidence” Immy shows in including another person and on how she sustains her interest “for long periods”.

How might this documented assessment contribute to developing competence?

For Immy's family and teachers, this assessment records her interest in music and dancing. It is

made more complex by Immy's invitation to an adult to join in with her and her dramatic finale as she pretends to sleep.

For Immy, revisiting the record encourages a view of herself as a competent and joyful learner with an interest that is valued and whose social interactions and dramatic play are valued, too.

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

The teacher notices and comments on Immy's movement, perhaps to encourage the addition of a rhythm: “up in the air” and “down on the ground”. She appreciates Immy's interest and delight in music and the subtle complexities and strengths of this episode. She recognises, too, the ways in which it reflects Immy's ability to sustain an activity, to interact with others, and to experiment with literacies in the arts.

"Some boys are nice, and some girls are nice"

Narrative record for Abigail

6 July

Abigail and the baby's gender

Abigail has been quite definite that her new baby will be a girl, to the point where she says that if it's a boy, she will take him back to the baby warehouse and swap him! Today we had a bit of a breakthrough. We were discussing that the baby could be a boy or a girl and you couldn't tell, just had to wait. (I had talked to Liz previously – they don't know the sex of the baby.) Abigail was not convinced. I tried to say that boy and girl babies are both nice. Abigail's comment was along the lines of a boy would be OK if he wasn't "rough". This seems to lie at the heart of the matter. We had a lengthy discussion that not all boys were rough and some girls were rough, and Abigail began to accept this, particularly when I told stories about my big brother (who was rough) and Kate added stories about her sister (who sat on her brother). Abigail found these tales very amusing. As a conclusion, Abigail said: "Some boys are nice, and some girls are nice, and fairies are nice because they don't have guns. They have nice dresses!" M. B.

Planning (links to *Te Whāriki*)

Outings with mainly boys. (Contribution)

Encourage developing friendship with Leo. (Contribution)

Books about babies. (Exploration)

Educators to keep discussing the fact that "roughness" is not a boy-only thing, and boys can be gentle etc. (Contribution)

Mitchell's baby brother came in and had a bath at the centre.

Follow up on gender – excerpts from incidental notes

26 August

Abigail threaded a beautiful necklace for her mum. As she was threading, she commented that the beads were "girl beads", and I then asked her to explain this. "Because my mum bought them in for us," was her reply. We had a discussion about beads being objects and that they didn't have a gender, male or female. J. S.

19 September

Abigail's ideas about gender are becoming more complex. M. B.

23 September

We read some books that challenged gender stereotypes today. *Princess Smartypants* was much enjoyed by all. M. B.

27 September

Abigail told a parent that some kids are "made" as boys and some as girls. Todd came as a boy, and she came as a girl.

October

Liz came in and said that Abigail had been sharing the complexities of the baby's gender with anyone who cares to listen, informing people in the supermarket that you have to wait until the baby comes out. She's using detailed descriptions and accurate terms! M. B.

November

Abigail's baby has been born. Abigail was delighted to get a phone call at the centre from her dad that she had a little sister!

What's happening here?

Abigail is considering the possibility that her family's new baby will be a boy. Her initial reaction is to "take him back to the baby warehouse and swap him". The teachers and the other children help her to explore alternative ideas about boys.

What aspects of competence does this assessment exemplify?

Abigail is constructing a working theory about gender: "Some boys are nice, and some girls are nice." This is a theory of some importance to her since her mother is having a baby and the baby may be a boy.

How might this documented assessment contribute to developing competence?

It is often helpful for families to read about their children's developing ideas on topics that are of importance in the family. The centre staff document Abigail's progress as her ideas about gender become more complex. They also document the planning they do to encourage Abigail to be more flexible in her attitude towards the gender of her new sibling (for example, by reading books, such as *Princess Smartypants* by Babette Cole, that challenge gender stereotypes). These records will help Abigail's family and the teachers to understand and support her developing working theories.

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

The teachers explore the children's ideas, including any stereotypes they may have accepted, often by telling or reading stories that challenge simple theories.

"Did they have alarms at your centre?"

Child's name: Jesse

Date: 3 September

Teacher: Wendy

		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. Courage.	Jesse: At your centre, did you have sleeptime? Wendy: Yes, we did. Jesse: Did you have mahi taonga time, too?
well-being mana atua	Being Involved	Emotional well-being. Sustained attention, feeling safe, trusting others. Being playful with others and/or materials.	Wendy: No, we didn't have mahi taonga time. That is something special that we do here. Jesse: So the children can do it here?
exploration mana aotūroa	Persisting with difficulty, challenge and uncertainty	Setting and choosing difficult tasks. Using a range of strategies to solve problems when stuck. Puzzlement and curiosity.	Wendy: Yes, they can. Jesse: Did they have alarms at your centre and a practice with the alarms?
communication mana reo	Expressing an idea or a feeling	In a range of ways (specify). (100 languages of children). Taking initiative, child: child, child: adult interactions	Wendy: Yes, we did have alarms and a practice. Jesse: Not a real fire? Wendy: No, just a practice. Jesse: Are the alarms still there?
contribution mana tangata	Taking responsibility in the social setting	Responding to others, to stories and imagined events, ensuring that things are fair, helping others, contributing to programme. Negotiation, turn-taking, scaffolding	Wendy: Yes, they are. Jesse: Why? Wendy: So the other people that use the building can have a practice fire drill.

Short-term review

Jesse has an understanding of the routines, customs, and regular events of the centre and an understanding that these can be different in other settings.

Jesse's language skills are increasingly complex, such as asking relevant questions, asking for clarification, discussing alternatives and keeping a conversation on track.

What next?

Ongoing conversations with the children who have shifted over from the other centre.

What's happening here?

A childcare centre has closed down, and some of the staff and children have shifted to Jesse's centre. Jesse asks one of the staff about what the other centre was like and how it compares with her centre.

What aspects of competence does this assessment exemplify?

Jesse is developing her working theory or understanding about childcare centres. She asks questions about what happens in different childcare centres. She is interested in the routines and the regular events in which the children and teachers participate: sleep time, mahi taonga time, and fire drills. She can imagine alternative customs.

The teacher also comments that Jesse's exploration of this topic reveals evidence of her increasingly complex language skills.

How might this documented assessment contribute to developing competence?

Jesse's language and inquiry skills are being

tracked by detailed documentation that includes accurate reporting of her comments.

Documenting this conversation makes it possible for Jesse and the teacher to revisit the topic, discussing it further to help Jesse to increase her understanding of childcare centres.

The What next? heading signals that Jesse and the children who have shifted to the new childcare centre are probably interested in exploring this topic and making comparisons. This is a conversation in progress that may be taken up by other teachers.

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

This was probably a very short conversation, one of many between the children and adults on topics of interest to the children, the adults, or both. Wendy took the time to write it down, which suggests that such jointly focused conversations are highly valued. The centre presumably makes time for them, and adults take them seriously.

The “mooshy gooey” bus

July

Some round stickers were the inspiration for Grace to create a bus.

Step 1

Grace stuck the circles on each side and selected a green crayon to draw windows. “It’s the Orbiter,” she decided.



Step 2

Grace used her wonderful hand-eye co-ordination to hammer a lid on the roof.

Step 3

Grace chose red paint. “It’s the red bus,” she said. “It’s the coloured bus.” She very carefully applied the red paint all over her bus.



Step 4

There was a container of black leftover messy gloop. Grace carefully spooned it onto the lid she had hammered on, then spread it out with her fingers.

“Some of this is mooshy and gooey,” she told Joey and



Coyse. “Look at my hands,” she said proudly!

She continued to pour messy gloop onto the bus until she announced, “It’s finished,” and she went to wash her hands.

“That was a wonderful bus you made, Grace,” I said.

She nodded. “Mooshy play!” she replied.

Interpretation

Grace spent a considerable amount of time on this creation. Each step was part of a gradual process that required careful concentration.

I really liked how she used a variety of materials and skills to get to the final product – of which she

was very proud! Not normally involved in messy play, she has definitely moved out of her comfort zone to try out this activity.

What’s happening here?

Grace creates a bus at the carpentry table while dressed in a bridal veil. When she has nearly completed the construction, she pours “gloop” out onto the bus and spreads it with her fingers.

What aspects of competence does this assessment exemplify?

From the photos, Grace appears to be taking on what might be a valued social role for her (being a bride) while being involved in carpentry and painting. She uses a variety of materials and skills to achieve her final construction and comfortably combines the roles of bride and carpenter.

The teacher states that Grace “definitely moved out of her comfort zone to try out this activity” [messy play]. Grace’s willingness to try something new is a valued competence at this centre. The teacher also comments on the time and concentration it took for Grace to persist with a complex task “to get to the final product”.

How might this documented assessment contribute to developing competence?

The documentation can remind Grace of the occasion when she made a bus at the construction table, capably using the hammer, drawing windows on with a crayon, and adding “mooshy gooey” gloop (an unusual venture into messy play).

These records often promote more complex work with constructions, and this one might encourage further experiments with “gloop” and with carpentry.

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

The teacher writing this assessment knows Grace well enough to say that she is not normally involved in messy play, so she notices this occasion and recognises it as a special moment.

Skye in a box

13 December



Skye discovered the large box on the platform. She climbed inside, fitting perfectly. She sat upright, peering out through the transparent scarf. She poked her head out and smiled at me. I smiled back, saying “Boo!” Skye went back inside. Michael was sitting beside the box. Skye poked her head out and said “Boo!” to Michael. Then she went back inside the box. She did this over and over with Michael, laughing and smiling.



Interpretation and analysis

This activity portrays enclosure schema and interaction with another child.

What next?

We will provide more opportunities for Skye to be inside spaces.

What’s happening here?

Skye climbs inside a large cardboard box and plays “peekaboo” with Michael (a game initiated by the teacher).

What aspects of competence does this assessment exemplify?

This is an example of a teacher working with very young children and making an informed guess about their personal goals and interests. We don’t know whether Skye’s main interest is being in the box or using the box as a way to communicate and have a common interest with Michael. The teacher introduces an interactive game (hiding and saying “boo”) that encourages the interaction with Michael. There is laughing and smiling, a good indicator of enjoyment and personal interest.

How might this documented assessment contribute to developing competence?

This interactive game is now on record as one that Skye (and perhaps Michael) enjoys. (We don’t know whether this interaction with Michael is well established or whether it is developing and is worthwhile deliberately nurturing.)

The teachers are working with a schema development framework. Further documented events may confirm that Skye is interested in “enclosure”.

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

The teachers appear to be alert to examples of “schema” (for example, enclosure, trajectory, and connecting) as personal interests or comfort zones and encourage these apparent interests by providing more opportunities for them to develop.

This teacher’s intuitive response to Skye as she peered out through the transparent scarf appeared to be just right. It is probable that the teachers know the children well and trust their own intuition.

Alex the writer

Alex at the beach, writing in her notebook

Teacher: Robyn



When we were at the beach, I noticed Alex busy writing in her notebook. She was totally absorbed in the task, standing on her own and writing. She even had her pencil with her – she had come prepared!



The next day, Alex was looking at the photo of her writing at the beach. She said that she had been writing about the long steps there. She decided to make another book the same size, and she drew a picture in it of the steps and the flowers we saw at the beach. Leah said that she was a real journalist! What a wonderful understanding Alex has of meaningful literacy.

What's happening here?

During a trip to the beach, Alex writes in her notebook. A teacher takes a photo.

What aspects of competence does this assessment exemplify?

Alex understands the “script” for being a writer (or a journalist). She has a notebook and a pencil and writes during significant events, in this case, a trip to the beach.

How might this documented assessment contribute to developing competence?

The record includes the comment that “she was a real journalist”. Comments like this in the written record, read back to Alex, encourage her to view herself as competent.

The photograph encourages Alex to recall what she was interested in at the time and to draw a picture of her interest: the long steps.

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

The teachers at this childcare centre take the children on frequent visits to nearby places. They record the trips in photographs and written stories, often writing down what the children say in order to explore it later. (Alex may be copying this way of responding to learning experiences.)

Reflective questions

He pātai hei whakaaro iho

How do we define “competence”?

How does our assessment documentation help the children to develop their sense of themselves as capable and confident learners and communicators?

Looking at some samples of our assessments in recent weeks, what kinds of learning have we been documenting? Have we recognised and responded to the kinds of learning that we value? Do we want to extend or change this focus? Do these samples reflect the cultural perspectives of the families within our centre?

Taking a selection of children’s names from our roll, what have we noticed and recognised about each child’s personal goals, interests, and working theories?

What learning strategies and dispositions are valued here? How does the programme encourage and motivate the children to develop them?

What social roles and culturally valued literacies have we recognised in recent assessments?

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