

# Jace and the taiaha

## January

Lauren (a teacher) brought in a CD of children from the Burnham Primary School kapa haka group. As soon as Jace walked into the nursery today, he stood still upon hearing the music that was playing. He seemed to recognise the waiata. Jace just stood there, listening and looking around the room at the teachers and the other children.

A short time later, he began to move his body to the music, stamping his feet in time to the waiata playing. He seemed familiar with the actions for this piece of music. The other children noticed his response and joined in. Everyone then copied the actions as Jace led this spontaneous activity.

Thank you, Jace, for teaching us the traditional movements for this waiata.

## Interpretation

When Jace's mother arrived in the afternoon, we shared this experience with her. She said that Jace has been going with her to kapa haka practices in the evenings.

Jace discovered a familiar experience here at the centre, drawing on funds of knowledge from home. His spontaneous response to the waiata provided some valuable learning here for us all. Thank you, Jace, for the confident way you shared your knowledge.

## What next?

We were amazed at the knowledge and competence that Jace has in things Māori. This experience has challenged us to use more te reo Māori and tikanga Māori in the centre.

Jace's story also challenges us as teachers to recognise and include children's involvement in the wider local community within the planned experiences we offer each day, helping the children to make connections with the people, places, and things in their world.

We will continue to notice and respond to Jace's interest in kapa haka and to build his confidence in sharing this knowledge with us.

## February 25

Today, the Queen visited the Burnham Camp. The local kapa haka group was performing for Her Majesty. We set up a TV set in the toddler room so that Jace and the other children could experience this event. Jace recognised his mother taking part in the pōwhiri (she was the kaikaranga). He called out, "Mum, Mum" when she appeared on the television. He moved to the television and touched the screen. The teachers all acknowledged this moment. He then sat back with the rest of the children, smiling proudly at everyone in the room.

## April

In April, when he turned two years of age, Jace began the transition to the over-twos' area. He would go over and play with the younger group of children who he knew from the past. When he saw the under-twos' teachers and children outside, he would go and stand by the fence, arms stretched out, wanting to come back. Over two weeks, Jace continued to "touch base" with the under-twos' staff.

The "me" sheet (sheet containing information from home), written by his parents in June for his new teachers in the over-twos' centre, highlights Jace's interest and passion for dancing and listening to waiata and his skill in performing the haka. Much of this interest remained unnoticed by the over-twos' teachers as he spent time becoming familiar with his new environment and the older children. Several entries in his journal show his interest in the climbing equipment and note the new physical challenges he undertakes in the outdoor space. After a while, his abilities in kapa haka again became evident.

## June 6

Today, Jace performed a haka for us. He picked up the broom and, holding it in one hand like a taiaha, he bounced up and down with his knees bent saying, "Hi, ha." At the end of his haka, he stuck out his tongue and opened his eyes wide, showing us how to pūkana. Later, outside, he was observed with a rake in hand, initiating this activity with several of the older boys.

## Interpretation

Jace has really developed confidence in initiating relationships with the children and teachers here. Jace has a strong interest in waiata, haka, and te reo and is willing to share his knowledge with others.

## What next ?

Talk to Jace's parents about his use of taiaha. When is it appropriate to use taiaha? Should we provide a "taiaha" for him? What is his involvement with kapa haka? This challenges us as teachers. We have been talking about gaining confidence and supporting biculturalism more and the need to seek professional development.

Cilla met with Jace's mum to talk about Jace's involvement in kapa haka and to seek some guidance as to what she would like them to do to support Jace.

## August 26

Jace will use anything that resembles a taiaha, such as sticks, brooms, or toy spades.

Jace has been given plenty of opportunities to observe or participate with kapa haka. His mum and his older brother are involved in kapa haka groups in Burnham Camp. Jace goes along with his mum and observes the practices. He also gets to observe kapa haka performances done by the primary school, community, or army as his whānau have copies of them on video.

When Jace gets undressed, he loves to perform the haka in his nappy. He has been doing this for quite some time at home and has recently started doing it at pre-school (before sleep time). When Jace performs the haka, he stamps his feet, does arm actions, and gets down on his knees and ends with pūkana. His mother says that sometimes it becomes a battle to get his clothes back on and that he loves to show off when he gets the chance.

Jace enjoys listening to waiata and seems to pick up the words with ease. What I found very interesting is that Jace is not taught te reo at home. His mother is aware that he is picking up the language and so are his teachers. His mother told me a story about Jace's nan and koro – kaumātua for Burnham – and how they have encouraged Jace to speak te reo. His mother sees his nan and koro on a regular basis,

due to practices and performances, and they greet Jace in Māori. He has learned key words, such as "tēnā koe", "kia ora", and "hōhā".

I did ask his mother about the protocol with the use of taiaha and whether we should be supporting this interest. Her response was that we should not worry about it. She will continue to take him along to kapa haka practice and performances and he will develop his culture from there.

Jace's stories have prompted the teachers' interest in extending their use of te reo to a point where we have a teacher attending evening te reo classes.

Cilla

### **What's happening here?**

These contributions span eight months as the teachers record Jace's interest.

### **What aspects of bicultural assessment does this exemplify?**

Jace has challenged the teachers to use te reo me ōna tikanga at the centre. They support and nurture his interest in kapa haka and thank him for "teaching us" and for "the confident way you shared your knowledge".

At the same time, the teachers are uncertain about cultural protocols. They seek advice from Jace's whānau about protocol to do with the use of the taiaha at the centre.

### **How might this assessment contribute to bicultural practice here?**

The staff at this centre recognise that sometimes it is not appropriate for them to take on a particular cultural task: the whānau may decide that they will do this work.

This documentation reads a little like a teacher's reflective journal as the teachers consider how the programme can be more bicultural and how it can respond to Jace's interest and in what way. It is a record of bicultural work in progress.

Revisiting the record and continuing to consult with whānau about appropriate roles and tasks for the staff will be a source of ongoing reflection.

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

The reflective questions in this exemplar indicate puzzlement and uncertainty about some of the specifics of becoming bicultural. The teachers consult whānau for advice and recognise that some cultural tasks are best left to experts in the wider community.

A number of contributions to children's portfolios show teachers initiating or noticing and recognising opportunities for bicultural curriculum. Some also use the portfolios as opportunities to ask knowledgeable whānau for guidance. This exemplar is an example of this.