



Briefing Note: Kōwhiri Whakapae | Evaluation and future directions

To:	Hon Jan Tinetti, Associate Minister of Education		
Cc:	Hon Chris Hipkins, Minister of Education Hon Kelvin Davis, Associate Minister of Education Hon Aupito William Sio, Associate Minister of Education		
Date:	29 July 2022	Priority:	Medium
Security Level:	In Confidence	METIS No:	1292156
Drafter:	Ann Pairman	DDI:	9(2)(a) [REDACTED]
Key Contact:	Jane Ewens	DDI:	9(2)(a) [REDACTED]
Messaging seen by Communications team:	No	Round Robin:	No

Purpose of Report

The purpose of this paper is for you to:

- **Note** the findings from the evaluation of the PLD supported trial of Kōwhiri Whakapae (overall framing and the draft social-emotional tool).

Noted

- **Agree** to the release of the evaluation reports (Appendix 1 and 2), accompanied by a Ministry response (Appendix 3).

Agree Disagree

Summary

- In June you were provided an update on Kōwhiri Whakapae | early learning practice and progress tools that included background on the rationale, purpose, and development of the Kōwhiri Whakapae programme of work (METIS 1289174). At that time, we committed to providing you with a summary of the final evaluation report from the PLD supported trial, along with our proposed response for your approval.
- At the end of June, 2022 the Ministry received the final evaluation from the trial. This evaluation comprises three reports (Appendix 1) on the evaluation of the tools including a summary, and one report (Appendix 2) providing advice about the PLD.

- Overall findings from the trial suggest that Kōwhiri Whakapae has potential to support significant shifts in kaiako practice, including the use of new teaching strategies and engaging in enriched conversations about learning with colleagues and with children's whānau. Most kaiako felt that Kōwhiri Whakapae was well-aligned with te ao Māori cultural perspectives.
- However, kaiako have a range of concerns about the tools, including the potential for misuse (e.g., used as checklists), perceptions that the progressions are overly linear and that their focus on development conflicts with sociocultural theory.
- In addition, the structure of the four books and some of the content is considered overly complex and, while some kaiako used the information gained from the tools to enrich their narrative assessments, many kaiako viewed the tools as providing 'stand-alone' assessments.
- Participants' wide range of qualifications and prior experience is likely to have contributed to the diverse and sometimes polarising views reported. Feedback from the PLD suggests that greater focus on what learning and progression entails is also needed.
- The Ministry suggests that the evaluation reports are published (Appendix 1 and 2) on the education.govt.nz website, along with the Ministry's response (Appendix 3).

Proactive Release

- a **agree** that the Ministry of Education release this briefing in full once it has been considered by you.

☒ **Agree** ☐ **Disagree**


Ellen MacGregor-Reid
Hautū | Deputy Secretary
Te Poutāhū | Curriculum Centre

29/07/2022


Hon Jan Tinetti
Associate Minister of Education
(School Operations)

30/07/2022

Background

1. In June you were provided an update on Kōwhiri Whakapae | early learning practice and progress tools (METIS 1289174). At that time, we committed to providing you with a summary of the final evaluation report from the professional learning and development (PLD) supported trial, along with our proposed response for your approval.
2. The Kōwhiri Whakapae work programme includes the development of tools and associated resources to strengthen formative assessment and teaching practice within the framework of *Te Whāriki He whāriki mātauranga mō ngā mokopuna o Aotearoa (Te Whāriki)*. Tools and associated resources are planned in three foundational areas: social-emotional learning (SEL), oral language and literacy (OLLit) and maths, and the intention is that these will support implementation of the *Literacy & Communications and Maths Strategy* for early learning, and deliver on Action 4.2 of *He taonga te tamaiti – Every child a taonga: Early learning action plan 2019–2029 (ELAP)*.
3. The tools are intended to help kaiako focus on what children can do (current capabilities), possible directions for the growth and expansion of these capabilities (progress), and how they can work with whānau to support this progress. The tools are also intended to help kaiako to recognise when positive learning trajectories are at risk and additional support may be required. The draft tools explain how aspects of key learning are shaped by the principles of *Te Whāriki*, connect across the strands and goals, and contribute to multiple learning outcomes.
4. The draft framing for Kōwhiri Whakapae together with the draft structure and content of the first tool (SEL) were completed as a series of four books in July 2021. A PLD supported trial took place between October 2021 – June 2022. The Ministry received the evaluation reports from the trial on June 30, 2022 (Appendix 1 and 2).

The PLD supported trial

Context

5. The purpose of the trial was to evaluate the effectiveness of the draft Kōwhiri Whakapae within a programme of PLD. CORE Education (CORE) led the design and delivery of the PLD and subcontracted the evaluation to the University of Waikato (UoW). CORE also provided advice about aspects of the PLD and support materials that were particularly useful in helping kaiako to understand, navigate and use the tools appropriately.
6. Kaiako from 112 early learning services registered to participate in the trial across face-to-face and on-line PLD options. Kaiako participated from a range of service types, including Māori immersion, Pasifika, English medium, and services with high numbers of new migrant families. These service types comprised education and care (including mixed-age, long day services and Montessori), kindergarten, playcentre, and home-based networks situated in rural and urban locations across Tai Tokerau, Tāmaki Makaurau, Pōneke, and Ōtautahi.
7. COVID-19 significantly impacted the services in the trial, including levels of kaiako participation and engagement. CORE minimised disruption by shifting from face-to-face to online media where possible and supporting facilitators' tireless efforts to reschedule hui in response to venue changes and staffing challenges. Over the course of the project 26 services withdrew (23% of those initially registered to participate), and

attendance became a challenge for many services remaining in the trial due to staffing, therefore aspects of the PLD were delayed. This drop in engagement is reflected in a response rate of only 26% to the end of project kaiako survey.

8. Because participants were encouraged to work with the practice tools first, not all participants had the opportunity to do justice to the progress tools within the timeframe of the trial with COVID disruptions. This limitation is regrettable because tools designed to help kaiako focus on children's progress, in order to deepen or strengthen learning through teacher practice, are a new concept in early learning.

Findings

Evaluation of the tools

9. The UoW evaluation drew on email surveys of kaiako, interviews with PLD facilitators at the beginning and end of the project, and case study interviews with kaiako and whānau from 18 of the 112 settings.
10. The UoW team evaluated the following three broad questions in addition to seven sub-questions:
 - a. The use of the practice tools and their influence on kaiako understanding and teaching practice.
 - b. Whether and how use of the tools strengthens intentional teaching and supports children's learning progress.
 - c. Whether the progressions appropriately describe SEL trajectories of learning in different contexts, including cultural contexts.

11. Key findings in relation to these three questions are:

- a. *The use of the practice tools and their influence on kaiako understanding and teaching practice*

The books and practice tools did guide kaiako to reflect on their teaching practice to identify areas they may need to strengthen to better support children's progress. Most kaiako were positive about the practice tools and the majority would use them again.

The evaluators thought that participants' wide range of qualifications and prior experience may have been reflected in the diverse and sometimes polarised views reported. For example, an almost equal number of kaiako survey respondents reported that most or all of the knowledge was new, as those respondents who reported that they already used the strategies and concepts outlined.

Most kaiako were positive about the SEL tools and many found the culture, language and identity (CLI) practice tool helped them to be more aware of their own cultural bias and to make shifts in their practice. However, others felt that the CLI content was overly prescriptive and potentially divisive. PLD facilitators suggested weaving (currently separate) CLI content into the other practice tools and including more about gender identity.

- b. *Whether and how use of the tools strengthens intentional teaching and supports children's learning progress*

Kaiako developed their ability to adjust teaching practices more precisely to support children's continued progress. Some kaiako reported greater awareness and intentionality, and others felt that shifts in their practice supported shifts in children's progress. One kaiako wrote "I think it was useful to locate where they were as it provided some ideas of where to next for that child. It also gave me

specific things to observe and helped with assessment and planning". Of those who experienced practice shifts, the most influential impact was their awareness and use of new language.

Again, kaiako held diverse views about using the progress tools. Most of the case study kaiako described feeling uncomfortable locating children on a progression or sharing that information with whānau. On the other hand, most of the kaiako survey respondents reported that they felt "comfortable" or "enthusiastic" about locating children's current capabilities on the progression (n=40, 75%). Some kaiako found that the tools supported them to build relationships with children and families, with a Samoan kaiako noting that the tools helped her to "...know the child for who they are and get to know them and their families and what they have already installed in them through the upbringing of their families, culture, tradition and language".

Some kaiako integrated new information gained from using the tools into their current narrative assessment practices, however others viewed the tools as 'stand-alone'. The approach kaiako took to using information for assessment may have influenced their preparedness to share information with parents or new entrant teachers. 75% of kaiako in the survey found that Kōwhiri Whakapae helped them to have meaningful conversations with parents/whānau, and some used evidence of children's progress to discuss possible next steps. However, others felt uncomfortable sharing this information, particularly with schools, as they thought it could result in unwanted 'pre-judgements' on school entry. While some parents were also reluctant to share this information with schools, other parents (particularly those in a multi-cultural setting) thought it would be useful in supporting conversations about their child's progress.

c. *Whether the progressions appropriately describe SEL trajectories of learning in different contexts, including cultural contexts*

The extent to which the progressions appropriately describe SEL trajectories of learning and help kaiako to recognise when positive learning trajectories may be at risk was less visible in the data. Although comments in the kaiako survey showed that the tools helped to increase kaiako confidence and ability to see next steps, concerns were also expressed about the apparent linear nature of the progressions, the use of 'developmental' language, and the potential for the tools to be used to rank or stereotype children.

In general, kaiako from case study services felt that the progress tools did not sufficiently support them to consider the contextual and dynamic nature of learning. For some, concerns about locating a child on a progression were amplified by the separation of learning areas which they felt made it difficult to represent progress holistically. There were various suggestions that a more holistic, less linear visual presentation was needed.

There were also a diverse range of opinions around whether the progress tools should/could be used with children with recognised learning support needs. While acknowledging that the tools have the potential to help kaiako identify progress in a positive way, some kaiako said that specific examples of assessments and planning were needed to help them to use the tools in a holistic and positive way.

12. Additional key findings are:
- While some kaiako found the information well-laid out with a clear progression of ideas, many kaiako found the content and structure overwhelming and confusing, and the writing too dense and overly focussed on development.
 - Some kaiako felt that Kōwhiri Whakapae did not reflect a bicultural curriculum, and there were mixed views about specific aspects of the content, such as the inclusion of spirituality.
 - Some Māori and Pacific services particularly appreciated that the tools offered opportunity to include local practices.
 - Some kaiako who were initially hesitant about the tools, especially the progress tool, found them increasingly useful as their understanding grew over time with PLD support. Most kaiako in the survey who used both the tools said that they would use them again.

Evaluation of the PLD

13. CORE's report (Appendix 2) outlines PLD strategies that were particularly effective, and makes recommendations for future PLD and support materials.
14. Overall the report findings are that, while some kaiako initially found the tools overwhelming, PLD (including mentoring) was crucial in supporting practice shifts for these kaiako. PLD facilitators reported a general lack of understanding of assessment and curriculum design in the sector and recommended a greater focus on *what learning and progression entails*. They also noted that *Te Whāriki* has set early learning on a path due to its interpretive sociocultural approach. This path means that, while the draft Kōwhiri Whakapae may be used well in high functioning settings, many kaiako need more support to engage with the basics of *Te Whāriki* and its theoretical understandings in order to fully realise Kōwhiri Whakapae.
15. The CORE report includes Stories of Practice (SOPs) that illustrate the following shifts in practice:
- taking a more focussed approach to teaching practice based on information about children's progress;
 - engaging in richer and more informed conversations with children's whānau about individual children's learning; and
 - developing a better understanding of the way culture, language, identity can influence children's progress.

Recommendations

16. The CORE and UoW evaluations make a series of recommendations including:

Kōwhiri Whakapae

- Revise the way progress is presented to represent learning in a more holistic way that better aligns with a bi-cultural approach.
- Reduce the four books into one document, with less repetition.
- Edit the language to be more accessible for kaiako with different understanding, experience, qualifications, and language backgrounds.
- Develop and share exemplars of practice online.
- Make explicit links to other documents to avoid overload and support understanding.
- Design the tools to better support kaiako to integrate information into narrative formative assessments and facilitate linkages with online assessment resources such as Storypark and Educa.
- Translate Kōwhiri Whakapae content into different languages.
- Greater consideration of gender identity in the CLI and better integration of the CLI with other progress tools.

- i. Omit the progress tool or change to a format that shows progression as more complex, dynamic and situated.

Future PLD

- a. Provide comprehensive national PLD in a variety of formats and for a longer period.
- b. Use kaiako home languages and culturally responsive approaches (content and facilitation).
- c. Offer a cluster model of at least 12 months duration with at least two participants from each service (supported by paid release time during working hours). Include opportunities for kaiako to receive individualised mentoring (face to face, online, or a blend).
- d. Ensure PLD facilitators have a clear understanding of the tools and their use, and technical expertise to utilise online apps that support kaiako learning.

Consultation with Māori

- 17. The UoW evaluation also recommends further consultation with iwi. The kaiako survey indicated a perception of a high degree of alignment with current approaches to assessment, with Te Whāriki, and with te ao Māori cultural perspectives. Consultation with, and full inclusion of, Māori practitioners and kaupapa Māori experts will continue as the work progresses.

Future directions

- 18. Findings from the trial are informing further development of Kōwhiri Whakapae. We think that changes are needed to the structure, content and language to help kaiako at all levels better understand progress in terms of specific capabilities that grow and expand within broader learning aligned to *Te Whāriki*, how to use information about children's growing capabilities to enrich formative assessment, and how formative assessment connects to and informs local curriculum design.
- 19. To achieve these changes, we intend to revise the content and lanaguage, and shift to an online approach that illustrates:
 - a. more explicit alignment of Kōwhiri Whakapae to the language and theoretical underpinnings of *Te Whāriki*
 - b. progress as expanding (breadth and depth) as well as forward.
 - c. relationship between growing capabilities in specific areas and broader holistic learning and development.
 - d. how contextualised information from the tools can be used to inform formative assessments.
 - e. key concepts such as intentional teaching and local curriculum design, and how these can be supported by Kōwhiri Whakapae.
 - f. better integration of practice and progress elements (including the culture, language and identify practice tool).
 - g. links to related resources and examples.

Stakeholder engagement

- 20. We have updated ECAC as the trial has progressed, and responded to requests from various sector groups to hear more about Kōwhiri Whakapae. Now that the trial is completed, we intend to establish further avenues for stakeholder engagement, including the possible establishment of an expert advisory group and kaiako forum to support the revision and further development of Kōwhiri Whakapae. We also intend to remain responsive to requests from members of the sector to test ideas wherever possible.

21. With your approval, the Ministry would like to publish the PLD supported trial's evaluation reports (Appendix 1 and 2) on the education.govt.nz website, along with our response (Appendix 3).
22. In mid July, we received a critical review from a group of academics, teacher educators and teachers led by Professor Linda Mitchell from UoW (Linda also led the evaluation aspect of the PLD supported trial). Linda formed this independent advisory group in the early stages of the trial and we understand that the resulting review arose from discussions held in February 2022. The review raises similar concerns to those outlined in final evaluation reports, although it provides a more detailed academic perspective. The review also critiques the ao Māori cultural constructs within Kōwhiri Whakapae and recommends that the progress tools are not used or developed further because they are perceived as incompatible with *Te Whāriki*.
23. The Ministry has responded to the group by thanking them for the review and noting that we are currently considering changes to both the structure and content of Kōwhiri Whakapae in response to feedback we have received from the trial, as well as from individuals (including some from this group) earlier this year. We intend to carefully consider the views and recommendations expressed as we work on further iterations of Kōwhiri Whakapae and have offered to meet with the group to test some new thinking in October.

Key Risks and Benefits

24. The notion of identifying, articulating, supporting and mapping children's *progress overtime* is new for many early learning kaiako and this presents challenges to the acceptance and uptake of curriculum resources in this area. Diverse and sometimes polarised views about Kōwhiri Whakapae are likely to remain, partly due to diverse levels of qualification and experience evident in the sector. However, we expect that the approach we have outlined for the project's future direction, together with ongoing responsive engagement with the sector, will result in greater shared understanding, acceptance, and uptake of the tools.
25. There is a risk that the sector are unwilling to participate in future trials of the oral language and literacy tool, or the maths tool, due to COVID related stressors. Once completed, uptake and effective use of the tools is likely to be compromised if PLD is inadequate, and if kaiako work in services where they lack access to strong mentors or leaders, or where conditions make it difficult to develop collective understanding.

Next Steps

26. Use the findings from the trial and other feedback received to inform further development of Kōwhiri Whakapae, including revising the content and language, and shifting to an online approach. This work is already well underway.
27. Establish further avenues for proactive stakeholder engagement to test thinking as it develops throughout the remainder of 2022.
28. Remain responsive to requests from members of the sector to discuss Kōwhiri Whakapae wherever possible.
29. Begin work on the draft Literacy Teaching and Learning Guide from December, 2022.

30. Further develop and carry out a small user-trial the draft content of the second tool (Oral Language and Literacy) within the revised (online) overall framing and tool structure in February 2023.

Proactively Released

Appendix 1

University of Waikato

PLD Supported Trial of The Early Learning Practice and Progress Tools (*Kōwhiri Whakapae*): **Evaluation Summary Report.**

PLD Supported Trial of The Early Learning Practice and Progress Tools (*Kōwhiri Whakapae*): **Survey of Kaiako – Final Findings.**

PLD Supported Trial of The Early Learning Practice and Progress Tools (*Kōwhiri Whakapae*): **Evaluation Team – Case Studies Report.**

PLD Supported Trial of The Early Learning Practice and Progress Tools (*Kōwhiri Whakapae*): **Evaluation Report – Final PLD Facilitator Findings.**

Appendix 2

CORE Education Tātai Aho Rau

Trial PLD and evaluation of Kōwhiri Whakapae practice and progress tools: social and emotional competence. **Final Milestone Report – PLD.**

Proactively Released

Kōwhiti Whakapae | Evaluation of the trial and future directions

Action 4.2 of *He taonga te tamaiti – Every child a taonga: Early learning action plan 2019–2029* (ELAP) is to develop tools to support formative assessment in early learning. ELAP Action 4.2 responds to concerns that current assessment practices do not always build a clear picture of children's progress over time (ERO, 2016) and that progress in areas of most significance to positive educational and life outcomes for children should not be left to chance.

The Ministry began work in 2020 to develop a suite of resources to support formative assessment and intentional teaching in early learning. The draft resource is called Kōwhiti Whakapae and is intended to help kaiako to notice and recognise patterns in children's progress and to respond through effective teacher practices that support children to grow and expand their capabilities (progress).

We are planning to develop the Kōwhiti Whakapae suite in three areas: social-emotional learning (SEL), oral language and literacy (OLLit), and maths.

The draft framing for Kōwhiti Whakapae together with the draft structure and content of the first area - social-emotional learning (SEL) - was developed by a project team in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and a sector reference group. The project team comprised researchers and practitioners with expertise in formative assessment, including in kaupapa Māori and Pacific contexts.

The overall framing and first draft tool were trialled between October 2021 – June 2022. A huge thank you to those kaiako and early learning services who participated in the trial during difficult COVID times. Thank you also to CORE Education and their associates who led the PLD aspect of the trial, and to the Evaluation Team from the University of Waikato.

The evaluation of the trial has provided the Ministry with a wide range of very thoughtful feedback. This diverse and sometimes polarised feedback is summarised below and is informing our next steps.

What did we hear from the trial?

We heard that Kōwhiti Whakapae has potential to support significant shifts in kaiako practice, including the use of new teaching strategies and engaging in enriched conversations about learning with colleagues and with children's whānau. Many kaiako found Kōwhiti Whakapae helped them to reflect on their teaching and identify areas of their practice they may need to strengthen and adjust to better support children's continued progress. However, kaiako also raised a range of concerns about the tools, including the potential for misuse (e.g., used as checklists), and perceptions that the progressions are overly linear with a focus on development that seems to conflict with sociocultural theory.

Kaiako found the structure of the four books and some of the content was overly complex and, while some used the information gained from Kōwhiti Whakapae to enrich their narrative assessments, many kaiako viewed the tools as providing 'stand-alone' assessments. Participants' wide range of qualifications and prior experience is likely to have contributed to the diversity of views reported, and feedback from the PLD suggests that greater focus on what learning and progression entails is also needed.

What are the next steps?

Findings from the trial are informing further development of Kōwhiti Whakapae. We think that changes are needed to the structure, content and language to help kaiako at all levels:

- better understand progress in terms of specific capabilities that grow and expand within broader learning aligned to *Te Whāriki*,
- use information about children's growing capabilities to enrich formative assessment, and
- understand how formative assessment connects to and informs local curriculum design.

To achieve these changes, we intend to revise the content and language, and shift to an online approach that illustrates:

1. more explicit alignment of Kōwhiri Whakapae to the language and theoretical underpinnings of *Te Whāriki*
2. progress as expanding (breadth and depth) as well as forward.
3. relationship between growing capabilities in specific areas and broader holistic learning and development.
4. how contextualised information from the tools can be used to inform formative assessments.
5. key concepts such as intentional teaching and local curriculum design, and how these can be supported by Kōwhiri Whakapae.
6. better integration of practice and progress elements (including the culture, language and identify practices).
7. links to related resources and examples.

How can you be involved?

Now that this first trial is completed, we intend to establish further avenues for stakeholder engagement to help us revise the overall Kōwhiri Whakapae framework and SEL area over the next few months, and develop the second area (in Oral Language and Literacy). We're keen to test our ideas with you. If you are interested in hearing more about this work, please keep a look out for more information about stakeholder engagements or get in touch with Te Poutātū (early learning curriculum team) at [\[email address\]](#) and we will make every effort to meet with you to share and discuss ideas.

You can read the Evaluation Reports and a report on the PLD [here](#) [link]. Please note that the draft Kōwhiri Whakapae is not publicly available. This is because we knew that substantial PLD support was needed to unpack the draft content. This PLD support was provided as part of the trial, which is now completed.