

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

***The Strands of Te Whāriki: Well-being***  
***Ngā Taumata Whakahirahira ki***  
***Te Whāriki: Mana Atua***

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## Introduction

## He kupu whakataki

In 2001, Mason Durie set out a framework for considering Māori educational advancement. He set out three goals in this framework (discussed in Book 1). Goal 3 relates to well-being:

A third goal for education is linked to well-being. Education should be able to make a major – if not *the* major – contribution to health and well-being and to a decent standard of living. Educational achievement correlates directly with employment, income levels, standards of health, and quality of life. Where there is educational underachievement, health risks are higher, length of life is reduced, and poor health is a more likely consequence ... A successful education therefore is one that lays down the groundwork for a healthy lifestyle and a career with an income adequate enough to provide a high standard of living.<sup>1</sup>

This book collects together exemplars from early childhood settings that illustrate the assessment of learning that is valued within the curriculum strand of Well-being/Mana Atua, keeping in mind that the following definition of exemplars was developed by advisers and co-ordinators during the exemplar project:

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.

Although the exemplars have been annotated with a Well-being/Mana Atua lens, in many cases the lens of another strand could have been used. The principle of Holistic Development or Kotahitanga set out in *Te Whāriki* is a reminder that the curriculum “strands” are a construction, and in any episode of a child’s learning, these strands are inextricably intertwined and interconnected.

## Assessment for Well-being    Aromatawai mō te Mana Atua

The exemplars in this book illustrate possible ways in which assessing, documenting, and revisiting children’s learning will contribute to educational outcomes in the curriculum strand Well-being/Mana Atua.

- Assessments secure the responsible and thoughtful involvement of all children (for very young children, photographs of learning episodes can be revisited, and families will provide a proxy involvement for their children).
- Assessments reveal the nature of the teacher’s belief about learning and determine their commitment to “teaching through interaction to develop each pupil’s power to incorporate new facts and ideas into his or her understanding”.<sup>2</sup>
- Portfolios become artefacts of well-being, signifying the competence of the learners and celebrating learning identities in a spirit of “appreciative inquiry”.<sup>3</sup>
- Opportunities for children to discuss health, emotional well-being, and safety are provided by revisiting assessment episodes that relate to these topics.
- Teaching about health, emotional well-being, and safety, when included in the assessment record, enhances the reader’s knowledge in this area.
- Documentation provides all teachers with information about a child’s well-being cues, enhancing sensitive and well-informed relationships between teachers and children.
- Portfolios document children’s well-being journeys, including their strengthening confidence in a range of areas while suggesting possible ways forward for teachers, families, whānau, and children.

## The three domains of Well-being

## Ngā rohe e toru o te Mana Atua

*Te Whāriki* elaborates on the Well-being/Mana Atua strand:

The health and well-being of the child are protected and nurtured. Children experience an environment where: their health is promoted; their emotional well-being is nurtured; they are kept safe from harm.<sup>4</sup>

Ko tēnei te whakatipuranga o te tamaiti i roto i tōna oranga nui, i runga hoki i tōna mana motuhake, mana atuataka ... Kia rongō ia i te rangimārie, te aroha, me te harikoa, ā, kia mōhio ki te manaaki, ki te atawhai, me whakahirahira i a ia me ōna hoa, me ōna pakeke.<sup>5</sup>

The three interwoven domains of Well-being/Mana Atua are described (as goals) in the English text of *Te Whāriki*, and each domain includes indicative learning outcomes. The exemplars presented in this book can each be allocated to one of these three domains.



### Health

This domain emphasises the physical indicators of health: knowledge, skills, and attitudes to do with eating, sleeping, toileting, and keeping warm. One of the foundations of health and well-being is teachers' attunement to the children's cues, which enables sensitive and well-informed relationships. In "Dreaming the day away", Lewis's caregiver describes her strategies for "reading" Lewis's cues for being tired and needing a sleep. This record will be useful for other teachers getting to know Lewis and for reassuring the family that Lewis's health and well-being are in safe hands. In "Fish pie, please", Nicholas is involved in choosing the lunch menu. The teacher writes up the chef's story, and Nicholas's parents add more information to the record. In "Hannah goes without a nappy",



Hannah’s caregiver describes Hannah’s first experiences at the centre without a nappy and how she stayed calm when they had to travel some distance to find a toilet.

Dispositions and working theories include developing ways of coping with fears and anxieties (and interests) to do with health services, sometimes through stories and drama. A hospital playroom, the setting for the “Today in the playroom” exemplar, provides more examples of children exploring the daunting mysteries of health services. These stories will travel with the children between home and hospital, making a point of connection for other children and offering a catalyst for discussing potentially frightening topics.

Vygotsky explains that children are able to explore, in play, issues that are beyond their usual range of understanding:

*In play a child always behaves beyond his average age, above his daily behavior; in play it is as though he were a head taller than himself.<sup>6</sup>*

## Emotional well-being

Well-being/Mana Atua develops in a safe and trustworthy environment where all children are valued and enabled to be involved. Enjoyment too is a feature of such an environment.<sup>7</sup> Well-being requires integration of the emotional with the cognitive, the social, and the physical. Health includes the attunement of the body to the mind and the spirit. Mason Durie explains this in his model of te whare tapa whā as four domains – taha wairua, which relates to identity; taha hinengaro, which is about knowledge, information, and behaviour; taha tinana, which relates to physical health; and taha whānau, which refers to the place of the child within whānau and the wider social context or community.<sup>8</sup> A key aspect of Well-being is the principle of Empowerment or Whakamana, where children are enabled increasingly to make their own choices and to remain focused on a task for a sustained period.

Kayoko Inagaki’s early childhood research discusses a number of studies that strongly suggest that, when children acquire intensive knowledge about some topics or domains that they have chosen as their own and thus are deeply involved in, they can go beyond the topics or domains ... such knowledge may serve as the basis for reasoning and acquiring knowledge in related areas as well.<sup>9</sup>

Assessments give value to being “deeply involved” – the capacity to be ready, willing, and able to pay attention, maintain concentration, and tolerate a moderate amount of change, uncertainty, and surprise. In “Finn’s dragonfly”, Finn is deeply involved in drawing a dragonfly. The teacher reminds him of previous occasions when he was equally focused and concentrated and offers specific detail about what he did to keep going. Book 4 includes examples of children contributing to their own assessments. These are good examples of how assessments themselves can enable children to be engaged in their own learning, make thoughtful choices, and determine their own actions. In “Caroline spreads her wings”, photos and comments document Caroline’s progress towards independence, something that her mother is eager to encourage.



Working theories include developing ways of making sense of emotional events, sometimes through stories and drama. Working theories about the world include a sense of being of value in a particular setting. They also enable children to develop an understanding that they can help others to cope with distress and in turn can rely on others to help them cope with experiences of grief and anxiety.

In “Making a card for Great-grandad”, Zachary talks about making his great-grandfather a card to “cheer him up”. The teacher and another child, Monique, are involved in his conversations about death and dying. The assessment portfolios at that centre provide a place for a Parent’s voice that adds useful information for the teachers in developing an understanding of Zachary’s situation.

“Pōwhiri for the new principal” illustrates that well-being and a sense of belonging are closely aligned. It records (for the children, the families, and the whānau) an episode in which the childcare centre’s community is greatly valued and the children’s “exemplary” behaviour is clearly described: sitting quietly, standing to waiata when required, and remaining respectful for the whole hour.

## Safety from harm

Children develop a sensitivity to place and occasion that provides them with capacity to “read” the environment and to recognise places where they trust the people, places, and things to keep them safe while they become focused and involved over a sustained period. Revisiting stories about learning can assist with this development, to the point of their recognising that the resources available to help them overcome their fears<sup>10</sup> and to keep themselves safe in their early childhood education centre may be different from the resources available in their homes.

*Being safe* is a value that encompasses physical, cultural, spiritual, and emotional safety and the idea that children should feel safe to “speak out” and be safe from exclusion. The opposite of a child feeling safe to speak out is the concept of whakama, where some children exhibit a humility that limits their full participation. This can be misconstrued as being a lack of interest or apathy. Connections with Belonging/Mana Whenua are clear in this Well-being/Mana Atua strand. We can talk about a safe environment that enables a safe and trusting child. This is an absolutely central goal for early childhood education; young children do not have the power to create their own safe environments.

Research by Iram Siraj-Blatchford and Kathy Sylva, for the Researching Effective Pedagogy in the Early Years (REPEY) project, describes some of the features of a “safe” environment:

The quality of adult–child interactions in the most effective (excellent) settings in terms of the cognitive outcomes was particularly striking. The quality of interaction in one setting in particular (an inner-city nursery school), for example, was very high. The ECERS-R [Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale] Adult/Child Interaction Scale showed a high degree of consistency in staff behaviour with a strong emphasis on positive responses to children and their emotional and learning needs. The staff clearly enjoyed being with the children and engaged with them in a respectful, caring way, without criticism or harshness. They encouraged the children to try new experiences and were very enthusiastic about their efforts ...<sup>11</sup>



This enthusiasm can be reflected in assessments. Assessments also give value to being ready, willing, and able to take increasing responsibility for safety. Dispositions include respect for rules about harming others and the environment and an understanding of the reasons for such rules. In “Alexander and the trees”, Alexander’s interest in trees includes taking action to protect them when he perceives that they may not be safe from harm. When this story goes home and is read by others, Alexander will gain a reputation as someone who protects the environment.

Working theories for making sense of the world include recognising that strategies for being safe from harm are different in different places and that safety is distributed across people, places, and things. In “Leora cares for others”, Leora takes responsibility for ensuring that Hannah is involved in what the group is doing and feels safe, and Leora comforts another child, Krystal, with a toy when Krystal is hurt. This kind of documentation sets down some features of this place: children help to keep each other safe from harm. Hannah and Krystal may well copy Leora, and the teacher’s recording will remind her and other teachers to notice and recognise any such acts of caring for others.

## Exemplars in other books

## Ngā tauaromahi kei pukapuka kē

There are a number of exemplars from other books in the *Kei Tua o te Pae* series that could also be useful in considering assessment within the Well-being/Mana Atua strand. These exemplars are as follows:

**Book 2:** “Those are the exact words I said, Mum!”; Aminiasi sets himself a goal; “Write about my moves!”

**Book 3:** Pihikete’s learning; Micah and his grandfather

**Book 4:** all of the exemplars in this book

**Book 5:** A gift of fluffy slippers; Sharing portfolios with the wider community; Rangiātea; Growing trees

**Book 6:** “I did it!”; Growing potatoes; Alex the writer

**Book 7:** Te rakiraki; Greer’s increasing confidence

**Book 8:** Adam determines the routine; Haere mai, Sam

**Book 9:** Eating at kindergarten; “I can’t tell you how amazing it is!”

These additional exemplars provide teachers who wish to reflect on the analysis and assessment of learning outcomes within the Well-being/Mana Atua strand with a comprehensive collection of exemplars for discussion.