

## Te whatu pōkeka (English)

This resource aims to stimulate debate and to encourage people to share their experiences and views on the ideas, suggestions, and practices within it. It is hoped that kaupapa Māori early childhood services will then be able to validate, share, and build on the values, philosophies, and practices related to assessment based on kaupapa Māori.

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### Publication details

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### Te Whatu Pōkeka

Download a printable version of the bilingual resource [Te Whatu Pōkeka](#) [PDF, 2.9 MB] that includes images for the exemplars.

## Introduction

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This resource aims to stimulate debate and to encourage people to share their experiences and views on the ideas, suggestions, and practices within it. It is hoped that kaupapa Māori early childhood services will then be able to validate, share, and build on the values, philosophies, and practices related to assessment based on kaupapa Māori.

This book explores cultural contexts and methods that contribute significantly to nurturing all aspects of children's growth and development. Rameka (2007) believes that a kaupapa Māori approach to assessment privileges and empowers Māori children and puts the concept of an empowered Māori child at the heart of understandings about learning and assessment. It acknowledges and values Māori children's cultural capital and celebrates their learning achievements. Durie (2006) argues that celebrating success is important but that it is more important that Māori progress normalises success. Assessment based on kaupapa Māori is a powerful vehicle for the normalisation of success for Māori children and whānau.

The following discussion is the result of a number of meetings, set up by the Ministry of Education in 2003, between Māori professionals providing early childhood education for tamariki Māori and a small working party of writers.

We have named this project "Te Whatu Pōkeka". A whatu pokeka is a baby blanket made of muka (fibre) from the harakeke (flax) plant. Carefully woven into the inside of the blanket are albatross feathers to provide warmth, comfort, security, and refuge from the elements. The pōkeka takes the shape of the child as it learns and grows. It is a metaphor for this project, the development of a curriculum that is determined and shaped by the child.

Our principal focus in this project is the assessment of Māori children in a Māori early childhood setting. We want to ensure that the culture and the voices of the children are heard throughout, rather than those of the adults or the organisations. We also want to ensure that the identity of the Māori child is not marginalised during the course of their experiences from birth to adulthood. Tikanga Māori and Māori history and language are key elements of the overarching philosophy, theories, and processes of the Kaupapa Māori Learning and Assessment Exemplar Project.

The information contained in this document is based in te ao Māori. Broad Māori concepts and perspectives are discussed to provide an understanding of the insights and ideas that inform the philosophy of Te Whatu Pōkeka. These perspectives are then drawn through to the exemplars included in this project.

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## The structure and content of this document

The first part of this document establishes the kaupapa or philosophy of Te Whatu Pōkeka through a well-known tauparapara. The tauparapara describes phases of consciousness and is considered to be an expression of whakapapa that links specifically to the wholeness and connectedness of the Māori child. The ideas and processes that emerge from the tauparapara are articulated to make clear associations to concepts about growing and learning.

The key ideas drawn from the tauparapara suggest a view of Māori children who, in their journey through to conception, are adorned with their own mana (potential and spiritual power); mauri (living essence), and wairua (spiritual self), inherited from their ancestors, from the spirit world of atua. The values and beliefs of tikanga Māori, including concepts such as manaaki (to nurture), aroha (to respect), awhi (to embrace), tautoko (to support), and tiaki (to care for), underpin all activities.

This part also draws on the key concept of tikanga whakaako or teaching and learning within a Māori context, where tikanga Māori are the basis for all learning contexts. There are links to the Māori principles of *Te Whāriki* and to assessment based on kaupapa Māori concepts. The roles adults play in the learning and teaching of Māori children are also described.

This section includes excerpts from documentation recorded by the project co-ordinators and kaimahi of centres that are part of this project. These provide examples and links between the centres' philosophy, practices, and kaimahi reflections.

The second part of this document focuses on the journeys of the early childhood services that participated in this project. Discussions about these journeys highlight important aspects of the centres' development as they participated in, and progressed throughout the project. This part also includes the exemplars or examples chosen by each centre. Centres chose these exemplars to highlight their assessment philosophy and processes. A framework for linking the concepts of the tauparapara to these exemplars is included.

## Kaupapa Māori

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The philosophy of this document is based on a well-known tauparapara. A tauparapara is the first utterance by an opening speaker. It is a tribal poetic chant containing traditional or philosophical statements that usually contain genealogical references (Rewi, 2004), or links to whakapapa.

This tauparapara is acknowledged across various iwi and, as with many accounts, it differs in many ways according to local tribal history. While variations are not unusual, different versions have general themes and concepts in common. The concepts identified within this tauparapara continue throughout a person's life. They are not static or linear but fluid and transformative.

## The interpretation of the tauparapara

This interpretation of the tauparapara was developed specifically for Te Whatu Pōkeka. While it identifies the notion of growth, development, and learning, it includes themes that are common across Māori creation stories: the conception and birth of a child, and the learning child. The tauparapara refers to the creation story as the starting point to highlight the links and connections between the three contexts outlined below. For the purposes of this project, the following contexts emphasise what many Māori believe to be their truths about:

the birth of the world;

the birth of a child;

the birth of ideas and process of learning and teaching.

### THE TAUPARAPARA

I te tīmatanga, ko te kore

In the beginning there was a void.

Ko te pō

Within the void there was night.

Nā te pō

From within the night, seeds were cultivated

Ka puta ko te Kukune

It was here that movement began – the stretching.

Ko te Pupuke

There the shoots enlarged and swelled.

Ko te Hihiri

Then there was pure energy.

## THE TAUPARAPARA

Ko te Mahara	Then there was the subconsciousness.
Ko te Manako	Then the desire to know.
Ka puta i te whei ao	Movement from darkness to light, from conception to birth.
Ki te ao mārama e	from learning to knowing.
Tihēi Mauri ora	I sneeze and there is life.

This tauparapara is considered appropriate because it refers to, and describes, three generic phases of learning and growing that highlight clear links to what Charles Royal refers to as Mōhiotanga, Mātauranga, and Māramatanga.

**Mōhiotanga** – What a child already knows and what they bring with them highlights new beginnings, new knowledge, new discoveries.

*Te kore, te pō,*

**Mātauranga** – This is a time of growth for the child. It denotes a phase of increasing potential, negotiation, challenge, and apprehension when dealing with new ideas.

*Te kukune, te pupuke, te hihiri, te mahara, te manako*

**Māramatanga** – This is when a child comes to understand new knowledge: a phase of enlightenment, realisation, and clarification.

*Te mahara, te Hinengaro, te manako, te wānanga, te whē, te ao mārama.*

The following summarises the commonalities and connectedness across these three contexts.

## THE CONTEXTS

Te ōrokohanga o te ao	The birth of the world
Te whānau tangata	The conception and birth of a child

## THE CONTEXTS

Te āhuatanga o te tamaiti

The learning child

The common threads that weave across all these contexts are those of collective power, potential, possibilities, fertility, energy, apprehension, challenges, new knowledge, new learning, resilience, and aspirations.

## Linking the tauparapara to assessment

Te Whatu Pōkeka requires that we recognise what the children bring to the context. This includes not only their inherent strengths but also their traditions and history, their whānau, and their whakapapa. Assessment informed by kaupapa Māori does not view the child in isolation. It recognises that the child emerges from rich traditions, surrounded by whānau, both visible and invisible, living and dead. It recognises that the child is linked strongly with his or her whānau, hapū (subtribe), iwi (tribe), history, whakapapa, and identity (Hemara, 2000).

## The representation of a Māori child

The tauparapara with its interpretations and the links across the three contexts provide a basis for representing the Māori child. The contexts can clearly be seen in an analysis of the Best of Both Worlds Bilingual Preschool's framework for teaching and learning. This preschool positions Māui Tikitiki as a mentor for centre operations and practice.

The Māui framework is the understanding that Māui is the product of his whakapapa. He achieved what he did because of who he was and what his tipuna, parents, and grandparents had given him. This can be linked to children in that they bring the talents, understandings, and abilities of their tipuna. They are, therefore, extremely rich with potential.

Project co-ordinator 2005

## Ngā āhuatanga o te tamaiti: Ways of being

The following section summarises connections across contexts. It is followed by a statement offered by a kaumātua working on the project to highlight the uniqueness of the Māori child.

### Connections across contexts

#### The creation story

The creation of the world signalled potential. This context refers to the seedbed of Ranginui and Papatūānuku which is fertile. It is a space for the conception of their many offspring. The children of Ranginui and Papatūānuku are ready to depart from their sanctuary. Contractions begin, and energy builds as the children are released. After the separation there are apprehension and challenges among the children. It is here that the domains of nature were decided. The siblings' existence requires new knowledge and new learning, intuitive wisdom. The transition from the spirit world to the natural world is now possible. The resilience of the offspring is evident as certain domains are established. Settlement of the new worlds is complete. The future has been determined. Guardianship over land, sky, sea, forests, animals, insects, and humans has been negotiated. "Tihēi mauri ora" - we sneeze the breath of life

#### The conception and birth of a child

The mother's womb has the ability to protect and preserve whakapapa. The womb is a seedbed for procreation. It is fertile. A child is conceived. After a period of confinement, the child is ready to be birthed. Contractions begin, which become pure energy. Finally the child is born. The newborn child experiences apprehension and challenges as he/she struggles to make sense of their new world. There is no longer the sanctity and protection of the womb. Once in the embrace of the parents, the infant begins to absorb new information, new knowledge, and new learning from his/her environment, adding to the child's resilience. The newborn reconciles with his/her new surroundings, the the familiar faces, the voices, the smells, the sounds. The future has been determined.

#### The learning child

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The child has endless potential and possibilities. The child is a seed that is fertile and open to learning. Learning for the child is like contractions, which come in waves. The child draws on his/her energy to absorb new knowledge. New learning experiences bring discoveries, apprehension, and challenges as the child learns strategies for problem solving. The people, places, things, and time that a child experiences offer new learning and new knowledge. This contributes to the child's resilience. New information is supported by different sounds, new activities, and familiar people. Future aspirations have been determined.

## **Ko wai koe? Nā wai koe? I ahu mai koe i hea?**

### **Who are you? From whom are you? Where have you come from?**

I am Māori, a descendant of people who came to Aotearoa from Rangiātea, a place located in the spiritual world of Hawaiiki. I am a unique person with my own mana, mauri, and wairua inherited through my ancestors from our supreme creator, Io-Matua-Kore. Therefore my very being is treasured. My life-journey began in the womb of my mother, a place of warmth, security, love, nourishment, and contentment, a place that met all my needs – the perfect environment for my growth and development.

Observe me as a child of my own indigenous culture. Provide me with an environment that accepts, values, and sustains my individuality so that I can truly feel safe as well as nurtured. Allow me to explore and interact with this environment so that I may reach my full potential.

*Puritia ngā taonga a ngā tūpuna mō ngā puāwai o te ora, ā mātou tamariki.*

Hold fast to the cultural treasures of our ancestors for the future benefit of our children.

## **He kuru pounamu te tamaiti Māori: The Māori child is a treasured gift from our creator**

Each child is an individual with individual personality traits inherited from their ancestors. The child is surrounded by those that have passed on and by whānau that guides them on a day-to-day basis. From these guardians, they have developed their own unique ways of being

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and of enhancing the world. Their abilities to grow and learn about their environment and the wider world in their own time and at their own pace are accepted unconditionally. These personal traits enhance a child's rangatiratanga or distinctive strengths. The project co-ordinator who worked with Ngā Kākano o Te Kaihanga Early Childhood Centre highlighted this concept when she stated:

We talked about the idea that children do not come by themselves but bring with them an “invisible rōpū” who is always with them. We need to recognise this rōpū in everything we do with children. Furthermore, children have the seeds of greatness within them. They are the culmination of generations of chiefs and rangatira. They therefore cannot be viewed as being needy or from a deficit model. They are full and complete and bring with them their history, their ancestors, and their rōpū.

Project co-ordinator 2005

The unique personality traits with which each child is born enhance the richness and diversity of their learning contexts. Each child will know about, and learn from, their environment as they grow towards maturity.

For many people, Māori children hold a special place in the world. They are considered to be the iwi's greatest asset (Hemara, 2000). With links to people, places, things, and time, it is important that the Māori child be seen as having the following characteristics:

## **Te wairua o te tamaiti: The child is an emotional, spiritual being.**

The concept of wairua is derived from Māori cosmology. Wairua is a concept linked to spirituality, the sanctity of each individual, and the special attributes that a person is born with, which help to define his/her place in time, space, and locality. Hemara (2000) considers that the child is heir to several spiritual attributes that are fundamental to the spiritual, psychological, and social well-being of the self.

## **He mana tō te tamaiti: The child is powerful.**

Tapu and mana are inseparable. Where tapu is the potential for power, mana is the power,

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the realisation of the tapu of the child. The mana of a child is derived from their links with ngā atua. The spiritual powers are their immediate source of mana (mana atua) – they are the source of the child’s tapu; they come from their iwi, hapū, and whānau (mana tangata) and from their land, their tūrangawaewae (mana whenua). The mana of a child needs recognition and must be nurtured.

## **He mauri tangata: The child as an active force of life.**

Mauri is a generic life force. People are born with mauri, and it remains with them all their lives. Mauri is an essential and inseparable part of the child. When the body is physically and socially well, the mauri is in a state of balance.

Mauri is the life force that is bound to an individual and represents the active force of life. This enables the energy to be expended; the mind to think and have some control over how the body behaves. It enables the personality of the person to be vibrant, expressive and impressive

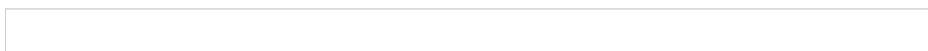
(Mead, p54, 2003)

Within this representation of the child, children are viewed as possessing three ira (essences) or links to whakapapa. These are:

Ira Atua – the essence of or links to Atua;

Ira wairua – the essence of or links to their ancestors;

Ira tangata – the essence of or links to both sets of parents.



The common themes that emerge from this image of the child are collective power, potential, personal power, challenges, new knowledge, new learning, resilience, and distinctive strengths and aspirations. These concepts then have implications for teaching and learning and for the roles of adults in the life of the child.

Linking the image of the Māori child to Te Whatu Pōkeka:

Te Whatu Pōkeka is concerned with enhancing the mana of the Māori child and their

whānau. For Māori it is about putting Māori constructs of the child and their whānau in the centre of the assessment frame, ensuring that assessments capture the strengths, abilities, and competencies of children and their whānau rather than focusing on any perceived deficiencies.

Assessment for Māori must therefore acknowledge, respect, and protect each child's mana and further promote and encourage its growth and development

(Rameka, 2007, p. 138)

## **Tikanga whakaako: Ways of doing**

Learning and teaching within a Māori context are based on whanaungatanga and tikanga Māori. The Māori word “ako” means both learning and teaching. It identifies every teacher as a learner and every learner as a teacher (Metge, 1984; Pere, 1997).

The dimensions of tikanga whakaako include culturally appropriate learning settings, curriculum planning and implementation that reflect te ao Māori, and the importance of the whānau as the foundation for education

### **Contexts for learning that is valued**

Examples of such contexts are learning situations that are generated by the children and their whānau and by adults who work with the children.

These contexts are based on the responsiveness and intimacy that underpin whānau relationships or whanaungatanga. In an early childhood context, the strength of these relationships determines children's learning and development.

Planning and implementing culturally and socially appropriate programmes for Māori children is another component of tikanga whakaako. Te Kōhanga Reo o Mana Tamariki, utilise Te Aho Matua, a philosophical framework for learning and teaching that draws on concepts and contexts embedded in te ao Māori:

*Te Aho Matua* was developed as a theoretical framework to ensure the essence of Kura Kaupapa Māori remained spiritually, culturally, linguistically, and

administratively Māori. An important aspect of *Te Aho Matua* is that there is as much emphasis on feeling as there is on seeing. One does not just observe learning. One should be able to articulate how the child feels and is felt by the people, places, and events and things s/he has relationships with.

Te Kōhanga Reo o Mana Tamariki, 2005

The following whakataukī describes adult responsibilities when working with tamariki.

*Kohikohia ngā kākano, whakaritea te pārekereke, kia puāwai ngā hua.*

Gather the seeds, prepare the seedbed carefully, and you will be gifted with abundance of food.

A pārekereke is a traditional seedbed for growing kūmara seedlings. It is an appropriate analogy for the environment of the child. This environment must be carefully prepared so that it provides well for the growth and development of the child. The importance of planning and preparing this environment cannot be underestimated.

This whakataukī uses ngā hua as a metaphor for children. It suggests that in order to get the best out of the child, the whānau, kaiako, or kaimahi are responsible for:

- preparing the environment;
- laying down the best nutrients to provide a nourishing environment for the child and to ensure growth;
- providing the best of everything for the child to grow;
- being the right people – having the appropriate qualifications, expertise, and skills to lay strong foundations for the child's education;
- empowering the children, ensuring that they have choices;
- focusing on the conditions and processes established in the early childhood setting.

A report by the project co-ordinator identified that Ngā Kākano o Te Kaihanga Early Childhood Centre uses the metaphor of a plant, which highlights links to the pārekereke, in their philosophy:

Their centre philosophy (sowing of seeds so that children will succeed), their view of children (koru who unfurl as they learn), and their centre whakataukī (E kore e

hekeheke te kākano rangatira) combine to provide a strong foundation for assessment practices.

Project Co-ordinator 2006

## Linking tikanga whakaako to Te Whatu Pōkeka

Kaupapa Māori assessment cannot be restricted to the individual child within the early childhood centre context but must be viewed through the lens of whānau, hapū, and iwi. Whānau are intrinsically involved in the child's learning and therefore must be intimately involved in the assessment process of Te Whatu Pōkeka. Embedded within the notion of whānau are concepts of rights and responsibilities, obligations and commitments, and a sense of identity and belonging. The role of kaiako as the expert, with the power to judge and classify children, must be redefined as that of a contributing whānau member. Teaching and assessment must be perceived and recognised as a collaborative activity where whānau and kaiako both have a valued contribution.

### Contextual framework for learning and teaching

The four Māori principals of *Te Whāriki* and their related concepts form the basis for the contextual framework for learning and teaching.

### Māori principles of Te Whāriki: Ways of doing

The Māori principles of *Te Whāriki* encapsulate the diverse ways of knowing, ways of being, and ways of doing which inform quality planning and implementation of programmes to enhance children's learning. The statements in English are interpretations that summarise what each principle endorses.

#### Whakamana:

Ko te whakatipu i te mana o te mokopuna te tino taumata hei whaingā mā tātou. Me tauawhi te mokopuna i roto i te aroha me te ngākau mārie, ā, me whakatō te kaha ki roto i a ia kia

pakari ai te tipu o tōna mana whakahaere ... kua mōhio ia ki tōna mana āhua ake.

To whakamana or empower a child is a major principle for working with children. To uphold a child's mana, the child must be supported, respected, and given choices so that her/his potential can be reached.

#### **Kotahitanga:**

E rua ngā āhuatanga e pā ana ki tēnei wāhanga. Tuatahi, ko te whakakotahitanga o ngā whakahaere mō te ako i ngā mokopuna ... ka taea ngā mahi katoa i te wāhanga kotahi, arā, te waiata, te kōrero, te hīkoi ... ko te tuarua, ko te whakakotahitanga o ngā mahi mō te tipu o te tinana, o te Hinengaro, o te wairua, me te whatumanawa. Kāore he wehewehenga. Kāore he aukatitanga ... Tukuna tōna Hinengaro kia rere arorangi, ā, āwhinatia ia ki te whakatinana ōna whakaaro, ngā koroingotanga o tōna wairua, me ngā haehaetanga ki tōna whatumanawa.

Prior planning and identifying suitable strategies to stimulate, encourage, and motivate the physical, intellectual, emotional, and social well-being of the child are the two inseparable processes that illustrate this principle.

#### **Whānau Tangata:**

Ko tētahi o ngā tino uara o te ao Māori kia mōhio ngā mokopuna ki te whanaungatanga. Ka mōhio ia ko wai ia, ko wai ōna mātua tīpuna, ko wai ōna marae, ko wai ōna tūrangawaewae. Me whiri mai te whānau, te hapū, te iwi o te mokopuna ki te tautoko i ngā akoranga i a ia. Kia tipu te mokopuna i roto i te aroha hei taonga whakahirahira mā tōna whānau, mā tōna iwi, me tōna wāhi noho.

It is important to consult with the whānau, hapū, and iwi in order to support the child's understanding of the many relationships they have with their grandparents, their marae, and the places from which they come. These relationships contribute to ways in which the child views their place in the world.

#### **Ngā Hononga:**

Mā te ngāwari i waenganui i te mokopuna me ngā tāngata ka pā mai ki a ia, ka piki te hiahia o te mokopuna ki te ako. Mā te takoto o te rangimārie i roto i ngā piringa me ngā hononga ki

aua tāngata ka pakari anō te hiahia o te mokopuna ki te ako ... kua tau tōna mauri ... kua piki tō ora, te mana me te ihi o tōna tinana, tōna Hinengaro, tōna wairua, me tōna whatumanawa.

The ways in which adults interact and behave around children impact on the ways in which children will learn. If the adults display a love of learning and a curiosity about the world, so too will the children.

## Linking Te Whāriki to Te Whatu Pōkeka

*Te Whāriki* affirms the distinctive role of an identifiable Māori curriculum that protects te reo Māori, tikanga Māori, Māori pedagogy, and the transmission of Māori knowledge, skills, and attitudes. The Māori principles, ngā kaupapa whakahaere of *Te Whāriki* clearly outline the roles and responsibilities of kaiako when planning and assessing learning experiences that are socially and culturally responsive to Māori children (Rameka, 2007).

## The broad goals of Te Whatu Pōkeka

### What are these?

Assessment is about children's learning within a Māori learning context.

Assessment implies that there are aims or goals for children's learning.

Assessment is based on our ways of seeing and knowing the world and on our ways of being and interacting in the world.

Assessment involves making visible learning that is valued within te ao Māori.

Assessment is a vital aspect of early childhood education in that it is about articulating kaupapa and mātauranga that underpin practice.

Assessment is something that happens during everyday practice.

Assessment is observation based.

Assessment requires an interpretation that may include reflection and discussion (as we strive to understand our observations).

Assessment is purposeful (puts our understandings to good use).

### Why do it?

The purpose of assessment is to give useful information about children's learning and

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development to the adults providing the programme and to children and their families (Te Whāriki, page 29). We undertake assessment:

- to understand children's learning better;
- to start discussions about children's learning;
- to share information with others;
- to reflect on practice;
- to plan for the learning of individuals and groups;
- to ensure that all children receive attention;
- to highlight the learning that is valued;
- to involve children in self-assessment;
- to discuss the programme with family/whānau;
- to share experiences with family/whānau.

## **Te Whatu Pōkeka: Kaupapa Māori Assessment**

Te Whatu Pōkeka considers the broad goals of assessment while at the same time focusing on the three goals of education for Māori. These are identified by Durie (2003) as being: to live as Māori; to actively participate as citizens of the world; and to enjoy good health and a high standard of living. Therefore this assessment model:

- is positive;
- builds on children's strengths and interests;
- facilitates ongoing learning for the child;
- strengthens the place of Māori in the world;
- reflects the "image of the Māori child" (it encompasses all dimensions of children's learning, including te taha tinana, hinengaro, wairua, and whatumanawa);
- empowers kaiako and provides information that will help centres to improve the ways in which their programmes cater for Māori children;
- involves whānau and illuminates children's voices;
- recognises and applies the concepts of whanaungatanga, including awahi, tautoko, aroha, tiaki, and manaaki;
- recognises experiences that take place beyond the walls of the centre, understanding both the learning that is taking place and the cultural and historical backgrounds of the children;



enables kaiako to reflect critically on their own values, beliefs, and assumptions; ensures that the adults involved in the children’s learning are consistent, constant, and constructive.

The interconnectedness between values and beliefs embedded within the notion of assessment is summarised well by Te Kōhanga Reo o Ngā Kuaka, who state:

The development of our framework depicts the connections we have identified with whakapapa, to ways of knowing and being Māori. The connection with assessment and whakapapa embedded within Māori epistemology has created a paradigm for assessment of children’s learning. Examining the idea around whakapapa and observing children’s development within our framework, we began to identify that there was a connection to the holistic learning of each child in terms of visualising children’s voices through the connecting lens of whānau, staff, and tamariki.

*Te Kōhanga Reo o Ngā Kuaka*

The Pākōwhai Te Kōhanga Reo assessment philosophy outlines clear links to Durie’s four broad goals and the view of connectedness. This is articulated through the following four principles, where they state:

The “whānau/community development” model of practice used by the Pākōwhai Te Kōhanga Reo has developed as a direct consequence of the unique circumstances that surround the kōhanga, their whānau and community. It is important to understand that it is firmly founded in:

- a Māori world view;
- a Māori understanding of *Te Whāriki*;
- a firm commitment to partnership relationships with whānau and community;
- an absolute commitment to the “paramourncy of the child”.

*Pākōwhai Te Kōhanga Reo*

## Analysing the exemplars

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The framework used to analyse the exemplars is drawn from the following areas:

**Ngā hononga ki te tauparapara: Ways of knowing**

Mōhiotanga: what a child already knows and brings with her/him.

Mātauranga: a time of growth when the child is learning new ideas.

Māramatanga: when a child comes to understand new knowledge.

**Ngā āhuatanga o te tamaiti: Ways of being**

Te wairua o te tamaiti: the emotional, spiritual being of the child.

He mana tō te tamaiti: the mana and potential with which the child is born.

He mauri tangata: the life force and energy of the child.

**Tikanga whakaaro: Ways of doing**

Tikanga whakaako: Learning and teaching within a Māori context is based on whanaungatanga and the application of tikanga Māori.

**Te Whatu Pōkeka: Kaupapa Māori assessment**

To be Māori and to live as Māori.

**Te hononga ki *Te Whāriki***

The principles of *Te Whāriki: He Whāriki Mātauranga mō ngā Mokopuna o Aotearoa/Early Childhood Curriculum* are referred to in the following exemplars to support the analysis of the exemplars.

## **The early childhood centres involved in the development of Te Whatu Pōkeka: Kaupapa Māori Learning and Assessment Exemplar Project**

Discussions began in 2003 with a small number of kaupapa Māori, whānau-based centres

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across the country. Interest was high. However, during the project, a number of centres withdrew and were replaced with others. Work was completed in 2006 with five centres:

- Best of Both Worlds, South Auckland;
- Ngā Kākano o Te Kaihanga, West Auckland;
- Pākōwhai Te Kōhanga Reo, Gisborne;
- Te Kōhanga Reo o Mana Tamariki, Palmerston North;
- Te Kōhanga Reo o Ngā Kuaka, Hamilton.

The diversity and richness that each centre brought to this project highlighted their unique and distinctive qualities. These are reflected in their individual philosophies and theoretical understandings. Within this individuality, however, there are clear links to the principles identified in the overarching philosophy of this project.

## Centre journeys

The centres' journeys outline the contexts of each centre, their individual philosophies, and the understandings of their kaimahi about learning and assessment at the beginning of the project. They illustrate the challenges; how these were overcome; and the new learning, knowledge, and wisdom that emerged as the journey progressed.

## Best of Both Worlds

### Background

Best of Both Worlds is located in Papakura, South Auckland. It was established in 1995. Due to lengthy waiting lists, a second centre opened in 2004. The centres serve a community that is low socio-economically and has a high population of Māori and Pacific Islands families. There are 34 children in one centre and 33 in the other and 16 teachers altogether. Most of the children attending the centre are Māori although a diverse range of cultures, ethnicities, and nationalities is represented. The centre has a bicultural, bilingual programme.

### Kaupapa

To support children's identity, self-esteem, and confidence for life and to enable children: to learn, understand, and implement their tikanga; to challenge and test boundaries; to take risks and problem solve; to establish relationships and ongoing friendships; to learn life skills in an environment where they are loved and understood.

## The journey

In early 2002, Best of Both Worlds was approached to participate in the National Early Childhood Learning and Assessment (NECLA) project. The work on the national exemplar project required that the centre articulate their assessment procedures and provoked much thought about what learning they should be capturing, and how. The centre was using a mixture of assessment processes including checklists and photographs.

In 2003, the centre was approached to work on the Kaupapa Māori Learning and Assessment Exemplar (KMLAE) project. Educators were positive about the opportunity to further develop their assessment processes and understandings, especially through a project that had a strong Māori focus. The responses to the project and the project objectives were extremely positive and timely. Their previous work had been the catalyst for the educators to begin to examine how tikanga Māori was represented in practice and what implications it had for children's learning. They saw that the KMLAE project allowed them to extend the progress they had made, and they expressed enthusiasm about the opportunity to explore and articulate what kaupapa Māori early childhood education and assessment meant to them and how it may be expressed in the future.

Educators indicated that although many centres work from a kaupapa Māori base, they rarely had the opportunity and space to analyse in any depth what this meant or to articulate their understandings of the concepts, values, and understandings that underpinned their philosophy.

The work on the project has required re-examining the centre's kaupapa, and how tikanga Māori is, and could be, characterised in practice. This review of the kaupapa has been a useful opportunity to encourage thinking and understandings around what is important learning for children. It has opened pathways to new and exciting activities and events and strengthened tikanga Māori and the sense of being Māori in the centre.

It has also required kaiako to develop their understandings of assessment and how it relates

to the curriculum. There was a need to move past the “lovely” stories to the key learning, and how learning can be documented. Probably the biggest barrier to progress for the centre has been the time and energy requirements of kaimahi working on the project.

Best of Both Worlds has for many years viewed Māui as a mentor, an inspiration for the centre's practice. Through the work on the project, the staff have been able to articulate their understandings of how Māui's characteristics could be utilised as a way of assessing teaching and learning in their particular context. They are desirable and to be emulated. Furthermore, there is the realisation that Māui is the product of his whakapapa. Children are also products of their whakapapa - they therefore bring with them the talents, understandings, and abilities of their tīpuna - they are extremely rich with potential. Best of Both Worlds has developed a framework that emphasises the following aspects of Māui's character:

- **Mana:** identity – pride – inner strength
- **Manaakitanga/aroha:** caring – sharing – kindness – supporting others – being a friend
- **Whakakata:** humour – fun
- **Tinihanga/whakatoī:** cunning – trickery – cheekiness
- **Pātaitai/kaitoro:** testing – challenging – questioning – curiosity – exploring – risk-taking
- **Arahina/māiatanga:** confidence – self-reliance – leadership – perseverance – self-assurance
- **Māramatanga:** developing understandings – working through difficulty – lateral thinking
- **Ngā hononga:** tuakana–teina – ako – whanaungatanga

## Ngā Kākano o te Kaihanga

### Background

Ngā Kākano o te Kaihanga is a christian, kaupapa Māori centre located in Titirangi, West Auckland. There are 18 children and 5 full-time and part-time staff.

### The journey

In early 2002 we participated in the National Early Childhood Learning and Assessment

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In early 2002 we participated in the National Early Childhood Learning and Assessment project (NECLA). In 2003 we were approached to work on the Kaupapa Māori Learning and Assessment Exemplar Project (KMLAE). We felt that the KMLAE project seemed to really fit our philosophy. It challenged us to see things through a Māori lens. This supported us to see children in a different light and challenged us to ask, “What are we on about? What is our philosophy? Why are we doing it? Have we achieved our purpose? Where is the proof?”

Over time, our view of the child changed. We began to see the fern frond as a symbol for the child. The child, like the pikopiko, is initially tightly wound. Every branch of the pikopiko is part of the child’s character and disposition. The child unfolds as s/he is nurtured, just as the pikopiko unfurls with growth. Just as the pikopiko is surrounded by the outer fronds of the fern, as the child unfolds we see her/him, not in isolation, but surrounded by the outer branches of whānau, community, whakapapa, and whakawhanaungatanga. This surrounding support needs to be particularly strong around some families.

Despite a number of staff changes and major developments, we have continued to refine our thinking and practices about teaching, learning, and assessment. Our enthusiasm for the project has grown as our confidence in our abilities to utilise assessment to support children’s learning has developed.

## **Issues emerging from our work**

**Whānau/whanaungatanga** – The whānau is the key to our framework development.

**Whānau/child assessment** The child is part of the whānau and the whānau is part of the child. One cannot be separated from the other. The child learns within the context of whānau, which is a real-life context. It is not a socially contrived environment such as the early childhood service. Learning occurs first in the whānau and it is the whānau that determines the learning that is valued. It does this sometimes in association with the early childhood centre, and sometimes not.

Assessment must acknowledge and make visible the relationship between whānau and child. Whānau do not merely contribute to the assessment of their children. They are central to it. We are now focusing on how this relationship can be reflected in practice in our assessment processes. This involves ongoing hui with whānau to wānanga what this means for whānau and educators.

**Leadership and commitment** – An important factor in the success of this centre has been the team’s commitment to providing the best possible learning opportunities for our children. Openness to new ideas and practices, and upskilling educators and whānau have been crucial to the development of our assessment understandings. Strong consistent leadership not only guides and supports the growth and development of the educators, but is crucial in maintaining enthusiasm and commitment for the project.

**Assessment and the transition to school** – The primary school new entrant class has adopted the assessment model developed by Ngā Kakano o te Kaihanga and has continued to map children’s learning journeys as they transition from the centre to the school. This two-way passage of information has provided important feedback to the centre on the effectiveness of our assessment processes in capturing and extending children’s learning. Kaimahi feel a sense of pride that our work is being acknowledged and is useful and meaningful in the primary school context.

**Te reo** – Participating in the project has supported the reo development of educators. We began with kaimahi writing assessments in English and accessing the support of fluent speakers in the centre to translate into Māori. Over time kaimahi were encouraged to attempt to translate the stories themselves before accessing the support of others. Some kaimahi are now able to write assessments in Māori, accessing support from fluent speakers only when required. A marked improvement in te reo has occurred over a period of time.

**Te pītau o te pikopiko** – Te pītau o te pikopiko – We are now working on deepening our understandings of our framework, “te pītau o te pikopiko”, the “frond of the fern”. We feel very confident that this framework will provide us with a basis for our evolving ideas on teaching, learning, and assessment in a kaupapa Māori context. There is a growing sense of confidence in our abilities and understandings, and in the validity of our framework.

## **Mana Atua – our god/love**

Rangimārie – *peacefulness/overall well-being*

Ohaohanga – *generosity*

Ngākau Māhaki – *soft natured*

Aroha – *love*

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Whakaute – *respect*

## **Mana whenua – our place**

Māia – *confidence/competence*

Rangimārie – *peacefulness/overall well-being*

Kawenga – *taking responsibility*

Pukumahi – *hardworking/diligence*

Arahina – *leadership*

## **Mana tangata – our character**

Mahi tahi – *co-operation/group endeavour*

Manaakitanga – *caring/nurturing/loving*

Hiringa – *determination/perseverance/persistence*

Māia – *confidence/competence*

Manawaroa – *patience*

Ngākau Pāpaku – *humility*

## **Mana reo – our communication**

Whanaungatanga – *relationships/connectedness*

Whakahoahoa – *friendliness*

## **Mana ao tūroa – our learning**

Haututū – *exploring/seeking*

Auahatanga – *creativity*

Whakakata – *humour*

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## Pākōwhai Te Kōhanga Reo

Kei te ora, kei te whakatipu te tamaiti kei waenganui i tōna ake whānau

A child lives and grows within the context of a family or a community

### Background

Twenty years ago we, as a community, as a whānau, were approached by a representative of Te Kōhanga Reo National Trust to consider establishing a kōhanga reo for our babies, our tamariki, and our mokopuna. Right from the start, this service was never perceived as being simply another early childhood service. We have always understood our kōhanga reo to be a vehicle, an opportunity for a community, a hapū, to realise our dreams and aspirations. It was those who were regarded as the leaders in our community, our parents and grandparents, who gave the OK for the kōhanga reo to be established. But it was the young and mostly new parents who were given the task of germinating the seed and then nurturing it to ensure its healthy growth and fruition. That focus on achieving the dreams and aspirations of a people in an all-encompassing, holistic way has remained the driving force of our whānau at Pākōwhai Te Kōhanga Reo.

### The Journey

The journey forward from twenty years ago has been achieved by allowing the true richness of whānau to be a living, breathing reality on a twenty-four-hour, seven-days-a-week basis. This journey has embraced the past, taken lessons from it and brought these lessons into the day-to-day life of not only the kōhanga reo, but also of the whānau. To achieve this we have taken the time and made the effort to reflect continuously on the good times and on the bad, on our successes and on our failures.

It is important to understand what whānau is really about when one is considering the gravity and the huge importance of our journey. For many the harakeke, the flax bush, has become the symbol of the whānau. In the midst of the harakeke is the rito, or baby shoot, the future of the flax bush. This rito is surrounded by a mass of individual yet strongly connected rau or flax leaves. The rito is nurtured and protected by the surrounding leaves as the whānau nurtures and protects its young. Every individual within a whānau has a contribution to make to the well-being of the whole.

Whānau is also a place where the concept of whāngai is realised. Whāngai is about nourishment and nurturing. Within the whānau, the physical, mental, emotional, social and spiritual welfare of the individual is nurtured, and with this nurturing the well-being of the whānau is ensured. The individual is nurtured and nourished according to their perceived and understood needs. The kaiwhāngai, or those who provide the nurturing, endeavour to be responsive to these recognised needs.

## **Our views about assessment**

During our journey we realised that a key part of the process included a focus on reflection, identifying needs that were evident and not so evident. Through this we learnt that we were in fact practitioners of assessment. With this insight, we as a whānau became involved with the *Kei Tua o te Pae: Assessment for Learning Early Childhood Exemplars Project*, and then we developed an in-depth involvement with the *Kaupapa Māori Learning and Assessment Exemplar Project*. We draw on our strengths and learning to continue to build assessment processes that will help us to better meet the needs of our tamariki and mokopuna. We have slowly developed and allowed ourselves to evolve our unique assessment practice.

At the start of our journey with the kaupapa Māori assessment project, we thought that the workload of assessing and recording children's mahi would be more of a chore and added work on top of our already busy daily workload. However once we were under way with the project our whakaaro changed.

A primary caregiver is assigned to each tamaiti in our kōhanga reo. This caregiver is the first point of contact for mātua or whānau who want to know anything about their child when they are here at kōhanga reo. The child's mahi and learning are recorded in their profile book. Through this recording, we are the eyes and ears for the parents and the whānau.

After many years of documenting children's profiles, kaimahi recognise their own growth and learning about assessment, and about the process of documenting information about assessment. The profile books of our tamariki have become, therefore, an assessment tool for our learning as adults.

We continue to strive to provide our tamariki and our mokopuna with the best we can offer. Our practice and our assessment methodology therefore do not only represent our aspirations for our tamariki. They are also expressions of our growing understanding of

ourselves and of our tamariki, and of the process of ako, or mutual learning and growth.

This has been a journey of learning, growth, and development for us all and it continues to be a journey that encompasses not only what happens on a day-to-day basis at kōhanga, but also our lives and experiences in the wider community.

## **Mana Tamariki Te Kōhanga Reo me Te Kura Kaupapa Māori**

### **Our journey in the kaupapa Māori learning and assessment exemplar development project**

Mana Tamariki was established in late 1989 to help satisfy the growing demand within our community for kōhanga reo. In 1990 we became the sixth kōhanga reo in Palmerston North. Although Palmerston North is an educational centre, it is not unfortunately a Māori cultural hub and there are very few native Māori speakers living in the area. Ironically, it is the scarcity of Māori culture and language in the district that has provided the environment that has allowed Mana Tamariki to develop and flourish.

Mana Tamariki embraces the goals of the National Kōhanga Reo Trust, which give primacy to Māori language and culture. Our declared objectives illuminate our core values. We aim to uphold the concept of “Mana Tamariki”, which is defined as “children’s status”, “empowerment of children”, and “young people’s authority”. Mana Tamariki places the children as the central focus of all activities in each learning environment.

- “Children’s status” means that children will be imbued with knowledge and skills appropriate to their level of development.
- “Empowerment of children” means that children will develop to their full potential.
- “Young people’s authority” means that Mana Tamariki will actively involve young people in the implementation of these objectives and encourage their participation in decision-making.

We have a holistic view of human development, recognising that cultural, physical, and

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emotional well-being are as essential as intellectual and creative development.

We promote and uphold an indigenous Māori spiritual dimension.

We recognise the right of Māori with special needs to their ancestral language and culture, and we commit to provide for them.

We aim to develop the students' confidence, creativity, self-esteem, pride in being Māori, and a love of learning.

We aspire to standards of excellence for each learning environment and each individual student.

In recognition of the Treaty of Waitangi, tino rangatiratanga/Māori self-determination is a core element of our organisation.

We aspire to engage with Māori families to focus on the learning, growth, and development of their children.

Child and whānau-centred learning in our environment provides a framework that upholds tino rangatiratanga.

In 1995, we opened our kura kaupapa Māori, a total immersion Māori language school. Our kura kaupapa Māori now also includes a wharekura, a secondary school section.

Our journey in the Kaupapa Māori Learning and Assessment Exemplar Project began in 2003 when Te Kōhanga Reo o Mana Tamariki agreed to participate. We had already begun a developmental journey exploring assessment through the learning stories approach. It would be fair to say that we had a rocky start and the project really set us in motion. The major impact was that involvement in the project provided Mana Tamariki with a forum where we could discuss our efforts with everyone else in the project. Drawing upon the views of others at hui allowed us to consider the theories that were constantly emerging.

Our first narratives strictly followed the learning stories approach. There were no photos. The stories were recorded on one A4-size page of documentation. They were linked to the learning dispositions as described in the learning stories approach. The learning dispositions were, in turn, linked to *Te Whāriki*. Despite this, our stories seemed dry and uninspiring, and often focused on the children's developmental stages rather than on the learning that was

taking place. This was a stage in the development of our understanding. We continued to share our learning with whānau at monthly meetings. Parents listened and contributed but they too were trying to understand the processes that the staff were following. At this point we did not feel competent and this impacted on our confidence in articulating our understanding of the process.

Not long after we joined the project we purchased a digital camera. The project gave us some assistance to do this and also provided us with our first USB key. The addition of a digital camera launched the staff into a new aspect of professional development – technological advancement. Not only did we add digital documentation to our stories but we also learned about downloading photographs. We trialled different digital filing systems. We printed directly to a photocopier and we maximised our use of the USB key.

As we were getting our heads around the technology, we were also becoming more familiar with the learning stories approach and with formative assessment. We were concurrently trying to align our analysis of the learning that was taking place with a Māori world view. To do this we trialled several systems of analysis or frameworks created from Te Aho Matua, the philosophical document that guides kura kaupapa Māori. We also uphold this philosophy in our kōhanga reo. Initially we maintained a dual focus on the learning dispositions that link to *Te Whāriki*, along with Te Aho Matua. It was then that we moved to recording our learning stories on A3-size paper. In this format they lent themselves more easily to the collective approach to assessment that suited the Mana Tamariki whānau. More people could group around a story to discuss it and that meant whānau could bounce ideas off each other in a way conducive to our way of functioning.

We now have a quite a file building up – evidence of the extensive trials and adaptations we have undertaken. We hope it will continue to expand because that will mean we are still learning and striving to improve. We have learned that we cannot “master” assessment. As with a Māori world view, the process is continually emerging and our understanding is constantly evolving. The realisation that each learning story fulfils numerous purposes has astounded us. One story becomes an assessment of learning and teaching for all, a language resource, a documentation of history, a planning tool, a report, a piece of evidence for external agencies – and the list goes on.

Currently we produce our stories in A3 format with colour pictures. We adorn the walls of the kōhanga with documentation in an attempt to invite the children’s reactions and responses as

well as adults'. We store the documentation in A3 clear files so that the whānau, including children, can revisit the stories as they choose. External feedback about the way we document the stories is mostly positive. However, we still feel that we have a long way to go. I'm not sure if it is a route we are travelling or a circular path that we keep traversing, deepening our understanding with every round. We look forward to continuing the journey and further developing our theories and ideas about how we can better understand the way in which children learn and grow.

## Te Kōhanga Reo o Ngā Kuaka

### Background

Te Kōhanga Reo o Ngā Kuaka derives its name from discussions held with the university's Māori Department in 1989. In previous years there had been a Māori student group called Ngā Kuaka Marangaranga. They called themselves this because of the way students, like the kuaka or godwit, come to feed, in this case on knowledge, and then leave on their journey. The name was appropriate for the kōhanga reo because like their namesakes, the tamariki come to kōhanga, feed and grow on the knowledge within, and then continue on their journey. Like the kuaka, they keep returning, bringing with them their teina, akuanei pea, a rātou mokopuna.

### The journey

The journey for te whānau o Te Kōhanga Reo o Ngā Kuaka has been a practical one that continues to move and shape itself. Our journey has taken an uncharted path with no organised order or prescribed map. Rather, a layering of collective wisdom and interactions have worked as a process through which we have explored tā mātou reo me ōna tikanga through kaupapa Māori assessment. Te whānau o Te Kōhanga o Ngā Kuaka is pan-tribal and sits under the umbrella of Tainui. The ethos of our whānau is driven by the desire and the determination to educate and manaaki our tamariki within te ao Māori. Without realising the framework that would later emerge, and the connection to our whānau within a pan-tribal setting, we would discover how an idea can create a context with the potential to nurture the importance of whakapapa for every member within the whānau.

## Our views on assessment

We began our journey with the invitation into the unknown, to participate in the Kaupapa Māori Learning and Assessment Exemplar Project. Initially we had no clear vision for a framework for our work. However, by asking ourselves a range of questions, our ideas began to gather momentum and energy, and opened unlimited possibilities. Moving between the unknown to moments of clarity, we found ourselves exploring our own understanding of assessment. We discussed current forms of assessments that staff had found useful. We wondered what our participation would look like, asking ourselves what we wanted to gain from this project, how it might support our whānau, and what it would look like in practice.

Exploring culturally preferred assessment tools offered multiple entries from which whānau could work in terms of teaching and learning. The prior knowledge of the whānau and the knowledge of the children could be integrated so that together they were able to become a community of collective learners.

Exploring the notion of whakapapa illuminated for us that whakapapa is far more than a connection to people through genealogy. Equally important is that children's learning connects with their experiences, knowledge, skills, and attributes. In an assessment framework whakapapa is where past learning connects to learning in the present, which continues to grow and evolve into the future. Whakapapa is not bound by time or place. In this view, learning is life long and assessment does not necessarily focus on a single episode in the child's life. Instead it views the child's experiences holistically. The role of assessment within this framework is to enhance the ira tangata of the child through the lens of a philosophical and pedagogical construct that is kaupapa Māori.

Strengthening the connection between whakapapa and assessment is the role of whanaungatanga. Te Whānau o Ngā Kuaka acknowledges that everyone in the community has a valued contribution to make to the lives of the tamariki. The community is whanaungatanga.

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