

He Māpuna te Tamaiti

Supporting Social and Emotional
Competence in Early Learning

Ngā Pūkenga Whakaratarata me
te Whakapakari Whatumanawa
i ngā Akoranga Kōhungahunga



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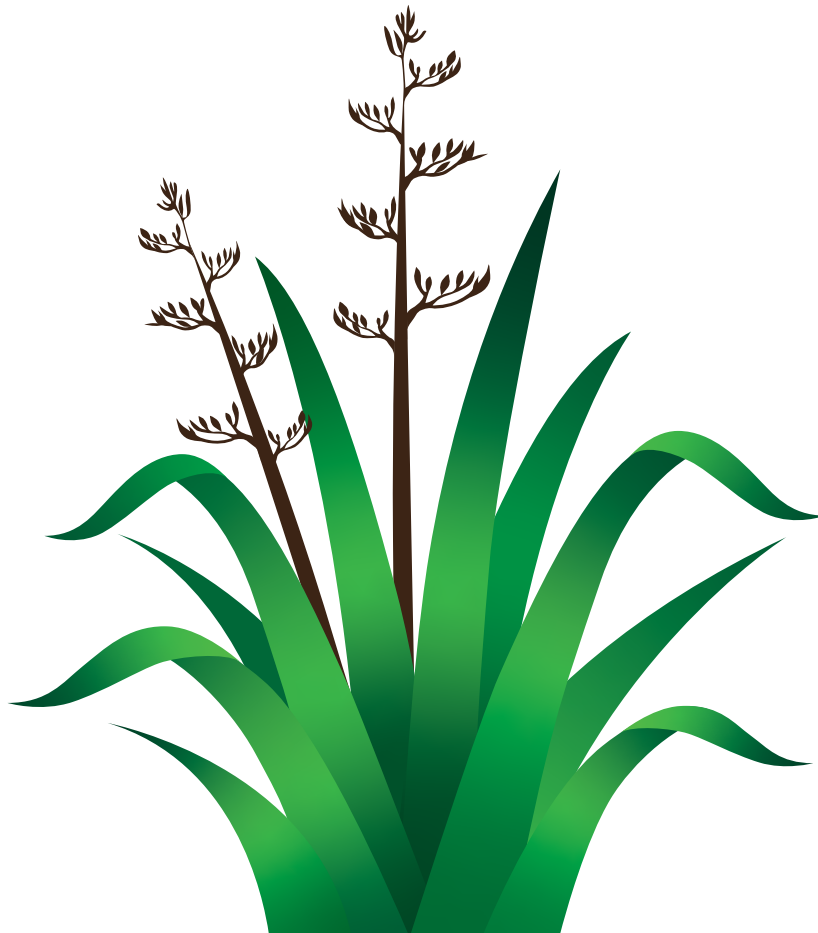
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Tūngia te ururua kia tupu whakaritorito te tupu o te harakeke.

Clear away the overgrowing bush so that the new flax shoots will spring up.

Remove barriers to learning, engagement, and wellbeing so that our mokopuna will flourish.



This resource uses harakeke as an underpinning metaphor. The harakeke plant symbolises the whānau, with mokopuna at the centre. The mokopuna are loved, protected, and supported by mātua, tīpuna, and the wider hapū and iwi.

Every early learning service is a whānau. The wellbeing of mokopuna is at its heart, and its values and expectations ensure all members of its community are included and supported.

Harakeke is the main material used for raranga. This links this resource to *Te Whāriki: He Whāriki Mātauranga mō ngā Mokopuna o Aotearoa | Early Childhood Curriculum*, where principles and strands are woven together to create an inclusive, culturally responsive curriculum.

The practices and strategies recommended in this resource emerge from the foundation of *Te Whāriki*.



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Te Tiriti o Waitangi

The Treaty of Waitangi

Te Whāriki highlights the important role of early learning in upholding Te Tiriti o Waitangi. The principles of partnership, participation, and protection should guide kaiako as they work to support the wellbeing of Māori tamariki and their whānau. When all members of early learning communities collaborate to create a positive, culturally responsive environment that is welcoming and engaging for Māori whānau, they are enacting these principles.

Through strong *partnerships*, whānau and kaiako learn from each other and work together to support the learning and social and emotional development of tamariki. When whānau are welcomed as active *participants* in the co-construction of an inclusive, culturally responsive curriculum, the identity, language, and culture of Māori tamariki and whānau are understood and valued in ways that can be seen, heard, and felt by all members of the community. When the self-concept, esteem, and cultural identity of Māori tamariki are authentically supported and strengthened, the principle of *protection* is enacted.

Te Whāriki acknowledges the increasing diversity of Aotearoa New Zealand's population. Te Tiriti o Waitangi is the foundation for a partnership that is inclusive of all children and their families. Mana whenua across Aotearoa New Zealand provide a 'korowai manaaki' (cloak of welcome and care) for all people who live in their takiwā. All children benefit when the valuing of culture is deeply embedded in all aspects of the early learning context.





About this resource

Mō tēnei rauemi

This resource has been written for kaiako in New Zealand early learning services.¹ Its purpose is to support you to understand and draw on effective practices that enhance children's social and emotional competence, engagement, and learning. Much of this resource will confirm and reinforce your existing practice, but it may also help you to further develop in areas you would like to strengthen. Professional development facilitators will also find it useful in their work with kaiako and early learning services.

The resource is structured around a framework underpinned by *Te Whāriki* and is organised around four major sections based on key pedagogical approaches promoted by *Te Whāriki*. Each section discusses a range of strategies shown to be effective by research in New Zealand and overseas.

The resource recommends strategies that provide a good foundation of support and guidance for *all* children. Children with complex needs or significant challenging behaviour will benefit from these inclusive, universal strategies but may also need a more intensive, personalised approach. In addition, you as their kaiako may benefit from external support – for example, from a Ministry of Education early intervention teacher (see page 81).

Using this resource

The resource is designed for you to dip in and out of, with key messages revisited in different ways throughout. It supports ongoing use and learning over time. Hence it also includes activities to support your professional learning and has links to further information, including websites, video clips, and books. If you are working with hard copy, you will need to access the online version at tewhariki.tki.org.nz/en/teaching-strategies-and-resources in order to activate many of these links.

You may wish to use the self-assessment tool on pages 100–104 as a starting point for identifying areas to focus on. This will help you to select sections and strategies that are of particular relevance for you or your kaiako team.

Sections 5 (*Understanding behaviour*) and 6 (*Reflection, inquiry, and problem solving*) and the activities in sections 1–4 will be particularly useful when your kaiako team is working together to build your knowledge and expertise. In this way, your use of the resource will align with the approach you take to whole-centre inquiry and collaborative problem solving – adopting a reflective, inquiring frame of mind to ensure all your tamariki are engaged and learning in an inclusive community.

About the title

The title of this resource, *He Māpuna te Tamaiti*, can be translated as “Each child is precious and unique.” It comes from a model of holistic human development and learning developed by Waiariki Grace (2005), and so encapsulates ideas of nurturing and growth.

¹ Note that there is a companion document for primary and secondary schools, *Teaching for Positive Behaviour*, available on TKI.

Introduction

Kupu whakataki

Mā te ngākau aroha e ārahi.

Let a loving heart guide your decisions.

In our work with children and whānau, our decisions are based on agreed strong values.

THE FOUNDATION: TE WHĀRIKI

Te Whāriki is the foundation for this resource and its strategies for promoting wellbeing and positive behaviour. These strategies are underpinned by the principles and strands of *Te Whāriki* and informed by its theoretical perspectives on children's learning and development (see pages 60–62 of *Te Whāriki*).

Each strategy is designed to support you to have mana-enhancing, culturally informed, responsive interactions with children and whānau.² These interactions will reinforce caring relationships within a positive, supportive environment for all learners and their whānau.

Like *Te Whāriki*, this resource is a bicultural document that acknowledges the special relationship between tangata whenua and tangata tiriti.³

² Note that throughout this resource, 'whānau' is generally used in place of the full expression 'parents, families, caregivers, and whānau'.

³ Tangata tiriti includes all immigrants and descendants of immigrants who have made their homes in Aotearoa New Zealand since the signing of Te Tiriti o Waitangi.



Figure 1: Supporting wellbeing and positive behaviour in early learning

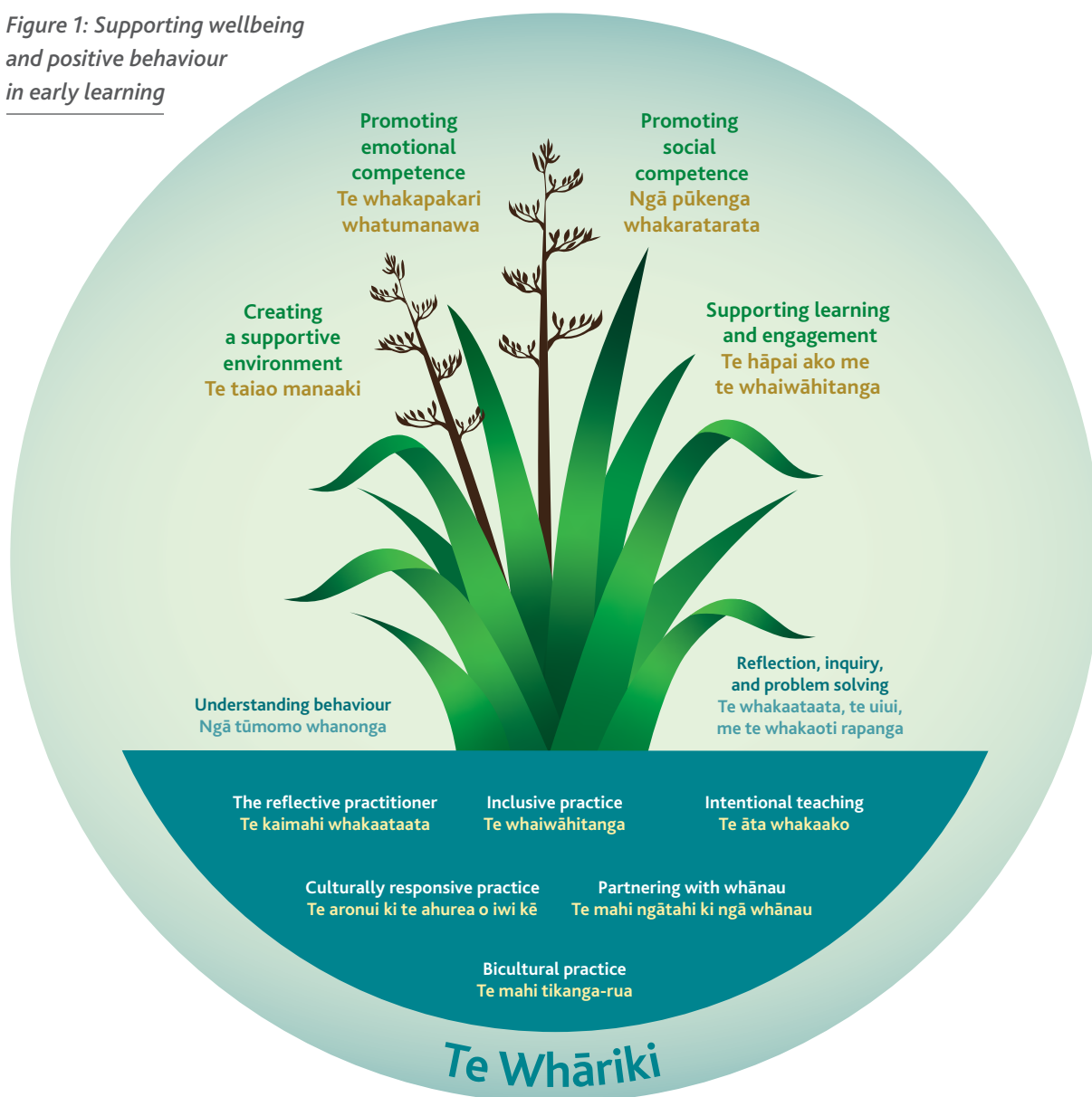


Figure 1 shows the framework for this resource.

- Underpinning support for children's wellbeing and positive behaviour is *Te Whāriki*. Specific links to *Te Whāriki* are highlighted throughout the document.
- The strategies promoted by the resource are grouped under four evidence-based approaches: *Creating a supportive environment*, *Promoting emotional competence*, *Promoting social competence*, and *Supporting learning and engagement*. These are discussed in sections 1–4 of the resource.
- Figure 1 also includes *Understanding behaviour* and *Reflection, inquiry, and problem solving*. These are key to supporting children's wellbeing and behaviour and are discussed in sections 5 and 6 of the resource.
- Finally, Figure 1 shows six key elements (*Bicultural practice*, *Culturally responsive practice*, etc.) that underpin the evidence-based approaches and that will support inclusion and learning for all children in your care. These elements are discussed on the following pages.

BICULTURAL PRACTICE

Te Whāriki and other resources such as *Te Whatu Pōkeka* share the view of Māori tamariki as the keys to the future wellbeing of iwi and encourage all educators to treasure them as do their whānau, hapū, and iwi. When early learning services cherish their Māori tamariki and their whānau and appreciate their unique place as tangata whenua, they are more likely to embed bicultural practice in visible ways in teaching, learning, and relationships (Macfarlane et al., 2019).

Māori whānau have a diversity of cultural experiences and expression. Many are on a journey towards a deeper understanding of their whakapapa. As kaiako, you can contribute to that journey by showing that you value their identity, language, and culture and by actively providing opportunities for tamariki to connect with their heritage.

The Education Review Office's 2012 report *Partnership with Whānau Māori in Early Childhood Services* acknowledges that genuine partnerships between early childhood educators and whānau Māori can give greater effect to the curriculum. *Ka Hikitia*⁴ asks us all to step up our commitment to ensure that all tamariki and their whānau can experience success as Māori and achieve equitable outcomes. Bicultural practice that reflects a Treaty-based approach is a strong contributor to the holistic wellbeing of tamariki in early learning communities.

Bicultural practice is strengthened in early learning communities when:

- children and whānau are welcomed with appropriate tikanga
- whānau have opportunities to share whakapapa connections
- relationships are developed and nurtured based on reciprocity and respect
- te reo and tikanga-a-iwi are used in all aspects of the early learning community
- Māori values inform and shape the expectations and routines of the service
- whakataukī are used as metaphors for how we grow, learn, and play together
- the curriculum is co-constructed with whānau and mana whenua to create a responsive, localised curriculum linked to te ao Māori
- whānau members are consulted with and included in decision making, goal setting, and problem solving
- whānau expertise is valued and community members are viewed as teachers and learners
- communication problems with whānau are solved in creative, flexible, and responsive ways
- kaiako work to understand learning and behaviour from a kaupapa Māori perspective
- kaiako are open to feedback from whānau and the wider Māori community
- kaiako actively engage with mana whenua and take responsibility for embedding their knowledge and narratives within curriculum and practice
- kaiako participate in a process of continuous inquiry, asking *Is our service meeting the needs of our Māori tamariki and whānau? What works best for them? How can we remove barriers to their participation and engagement? What does our service look, sound, and feel like from a Māori perspective?*

Informed by Education Review Office, 2012

⁴ The Ministry of Education's Māori education strategy



At a Christchurch kindergarten, Whaea Hine is the weaver-in-residence for a week. The kaiako met Hine through their local marae, where they attend regular workshops on strengthening place-based learning from a Māori perspective. As a result of the workshops, they have been working to embed the cultural narrative for their area into their practice and environment, including into their values, curriculum, garden planting, and artwork.

Whaea Hine is in the centre every morning for the week, and the children and parents are free to watch her or join in. Children sit with her to make little woven harakeke fish and to watch her make a wahakura (baby basket), which will be a present to a kaiako who is about to have her first baby. The children are also learning about the traditional uses of harakeke and the protocols for harvesting it. Learning the whakataukī 'Hutia te rito o te harakeke' has helped them understand that the harakeke plant can be a metaphor for the family and how adults love and protect children.

As well as supporting bicultural practice at the kindergarten, the presence of Whaea Hine has enhanced the wellbeing of the community. She has a calming effect and the children enjoy watching her work and chatting with her. Also, some of the young Māori mothers without whānau in Christchurch have enjoyed the opportunity to spend time with a kaumātua and reconnect with their heritage.

CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE PRACTICE

Learner identity is enhanced when children's home languages and cultures are valued in educational settings and when kaiako are responsive to their cultural ways of knowing and being.

Te Whāriki, page 12

All four *Te Whāriki* principles highlight the vital importance of culturally responsive practice in supporting the holistic wellbeing of whānau and children. Culturally responsive kaiako have high expectations of all children and their whānau and work to identify unconscious cultural biases that can get in the way of respectful, reciprocal relationships (Berryman, Lawrence, & Lamont, 2018).

When you prioritise culturally responsive practices within caring, respectful relationships, whānau are more likely to feel that they belong, their expertise is valued, and differences are celebrated (Singh & Zhang, 2018). They are then more likely to communicate their aspirations for their child's learning and social-emotional development. As a result of such trusting communication, you can get to know whānau well and are better able to support children's wellbeing and behaviour in ways that reflect whānau values and cultural practices.

A co-constructed curriculum that promotes intercultural learning encourages children to be curious about the lives of others. They are able to experience diversity through, for example, the sharing of home languages, stories, food, dance, music, and different ways of celebrating. By including and responding to the diverse languages and cultures of the community, you can show that you view cultural competence as a strength and provide opportunities for children and their whānau to be both teachers and learners.



An Auckland puna reo has participated in a research project (Rameka et al., 2017) in which kaiako consulted with whānau about their childhood memories and important features of their upbringing. Many of the whānau talked about the place of kapa haka and waiata – himene and waiata mōteatea such as oriori – in teaching and learning, developing confidence, and having fun.

After much discussion, the centre decide to use waiata to help establish mokopuna identity, roles, and responsibilities, to link to iwi connections, and to develop a sense of belonging as ngā hau e whā (people of the four winds). As well as introducing a number of well-known waiata to the mokopuna, kaiako decide to compose their own puna mōteatea (chant). Their mōteatea focuses on acknowledging and supporting leaders' dispositions, such as those displayed by chiefly tūpuna (ancestors) of the mana whenua.

Kaiako use the mōteatea daily for a range of purposes, including to calm, comfort, settle at wā moe (sleep time), aid daily transitions, and energise and invigorate tamariki. Kaiako also translate the mōteatea into te reo rotarota (sign language) for all children to learn and use. (See page 39 for an example of a kaiako using the mōteatea.)



As a kaiako team, read and discuss the above story and then consider:

- In what ways do we currently promote intercultural learning? How could we create further opportunities for this?
- How can we strengthen our relationships with whānau and mana whenua in order to support the development of children's identity, language, and culture?
- How can we draw on local knowledge to support place-based learning for our tamariki?
- What support would we need to create a waiata or puna mōteatea that reflects our local cultural narrative and community values?

PARTNERING WITH WHĀNAU

This resource aims to help you to support positive behaviour in caring, culturally responsive ways. Engagement and partnership with whānau is central to this because strategies and practices work best when they make sense for whānau and reflect their values and world view. Whakawhanaungatanga – the building of respectful, reciprocal relationships – is the key to engaging with whānau.

Getting to know the child also means getting to know and engaging positively with whānau and valuing their knowledge and expertise. Whānau have their own ways of doing things, their own expectations of children as they grow, and differing aspirations for their children's learning and development. It is vitally important that kaiako nurture relationships with whānau to ensure they share in all important decisions about their children.

Whānau are the experts on their children. Their input and agreement ensure continuity between home and the early learning setting. A consistent approach with shared routines, expectations, and boundaries is ideal, but this won't always be possible. Fortunately, with the right support and guidance, children are well able to manage and adapt to different expectations in different contexts.

For example, you might believe that supporting independence is important and encourage three-year-old Isaac to dress himself. His family might still dress him because they see attending to his personal care past the time when he is capable of doing it for himself as a way of showing love. This doesn't mean his family is wrong; rather, it provides an opportunity for different perspectives to be shared. The important thing is that you and the family understand each other and recognise that both practices are based on a desire for good outcomes for Isaac. At the centre, he is learning and practising some independent skills while being reassured by the loving support of his family at home.

Children can learn to navigate such differences. It helps when the differences are clearly described and explained to them – this avoids a 'clash of cultures', leading instead to a co-constructed, negotiated continuum of expectations that a child and their whānau can understand and prepare for. Negotiation and openness about differing goals, values, or expectations ensures that everyone feels heard and understood.

Communication with families is not always easy, and we need to remember that families sometimes find it difficult to communicate with kaiako. It is important that we don't assume a whānau is not interested in their child's learning and behaviour if we are finding it hard to connect with them. We must persist with attempts to reach out and try to work with the whānau's preferred methods of communication. Face-to-face catch-ups in combination with texting, emailing, and the use of digital platforms such as Storypark can support a flexible approach.

A small Lower Hutt centre has a policy that climbing is an outside activity. Julie, a kaiako, is talking to Kate, whose 2½-year-old daughter Ruby likes to climb on furniture when she is playing inside. The centre's kaiako view Ruby's climbing behaviour as a strength and sign of her developing physical confidence, agility, and courage. However, they want the family to understand their reasons for redirecting Ruby when she climbs inside.

Julie: We've noticed Ruby is strong and agile and enjoys climbing. At the centre we have to keep everyone safe. We have a range of ages and physical confidence, so we don't allow children to stack and climb on the furniture inside. Our rule is 'Climbing is for outside play'. Sometimes we have to remind Ruby of the rules and help her find a different activity. Tell me what you do at home when she climbs.

Kate: At home Ruby has fun climbing on her brother's bunk and making huts and towers with the table and chairs. We let her do that because we like her to take some risks and have fun with her brother on rainy weekends. We don't intervene, because we think she knows her limits. We think she's going to be a mountain climber one day, aren't you, Ruby?

Julie: That's great. We hear lots of stories from Ruby about the fun she has with her brother. So when she is here doing inside play on rainy days, we'll remind her of the rules and the need to be safe. But we'll give her lots of opportunities with the climbing boxes and ladders when she's outside. She's getting to be really good at remembering our rules.

A blue circular icon containing a white lowercase letter 'i', representing information or a note.

Some whānau find it helpful when kaiako recommend reliable information on child rearing that they can draw on at home. A good New Zealand-based example is [S.K.I.P.'s Tips for Parents](#).

The Education Review Office report [Partnership with Whānau Māori in Early Childhood Services](#) provides helpful and challenging information on partnerships with whānau in the early learning sector.

INCLUSIVE PRACTICE

This resource promotes inclusive practices that help remove barriers to presence, participation, and learning for children with diverse strengths and needs. The strategies in this resource will help you to support all children to develop the social and emotional competence needed for learning and relationship building. Central to this is the creation of a supportive environment in which all children are able to access and contribute to a rich and rewarding curriculum tailored to their particular interests, strengths, and needs.

Each child is unique, and their development is responsive to a variety of sociocultural and biological influences. This resource emphasises the importance of intervening early when there are concerns about a child's wellbeing and behaviour. It encourages you to consider how you can adapt the environment to better support *all* children to be successful in their learning and relationships (section 1). It also provides strategies for supporting children's emotional and social learning and promoting their participation and learning in the curriculum (sections 2–4).

Children with additional learning needs may need more focused or intentional support for their social and emotional development. In some cases, you may need to draw on external services for early intervention support or other specialist help. However, there is much that you and your team can do to intentionally plan for and support every child to be successful in your setting. The strategies discussed in this resource will enable you to support children's additional needs and, if applicable, help them to progress towards their Individual Plan goals.





Three-year-old Poppy attends a Hastings kindergarten and uses a combination of signs, actions, and vocal sounds to communicate. Sometimes her frustration at making herself understood results in her being upset and hitting or pulling at others to get their attention. With the support of her parents and a speech-language therapist, kaiako and children are learning about how Poppy sends messages, such as wanting to play or needing some help.

The kaiako are trying the following ways to reduce Poppy's frustrations and improve their communication with her:

- observing her to get to know her unique communication strategies
- being patient and giving her time to get her messages across
- supporting her communication with others, by encouraging those who know her well to provide a voice for her when that is helpful
- giving her encouragement and feedback when she seeks attention from others in positive ways
- modelling for her ways of getting attention from kaiako and children, such as touching them on the arm, smiling, or pointing to something
- using visual communication aids, including pictures and home-made photo books.



TKI includes much information that supports inclusive practice – see for example Te Whāriki Online's webpage [Inclusive Practice](#).

THE REFLECTIVE PRACTITIONER

Supporting children's social and emotional competence requires a reflective approach. Reflective practitioners are able to think about the impact of their own beliefs, values, biases, and emotional wellbeing and to ensure that these don't create barriers to relationships and effective practice. They understand how deeply held beliefs can influence our responses to children and their whānau. They are critically self-aware, which helps them contribute to collaborative inquiry and to support changes to practice as a result of deep reflection on their own and their colleagues' attitudes and values. Through thoughtful questioning, internal evaluation, and professional learning, they build their knowledge and ensure their practice is inclusive and culturally responsive.

Children's behaviour can elicit strong emotional responses from those who care for and teach them. Kaiako, like everyone else, get tired and experience stressful situations in their own lives. Tiredness and stress influence your emotional responses to children's behaviour. So too does your history of family and cultural experiences. Just as the children and whānau in an early learning community have values and beliefs related to child rearing, so do kaiako.

Working constructively with families whose educational views and social values are different to your own can be challenging and confronting. When children are noisy and impulsive, don't comply with reasonable requests, or use language that seems rude or disrespectful, it is easy and natural to feel frustrated, irritated, or stressed. The important thing is to have strategies to manage such feelings and to carefully examine where unhelpful assumptions and biases are getting in the way of good practice.

It is important for all who work with children to appreciate and acknowledge differences without assuming that difference means deficit. It is also important to avoid judging families based on personal views of good parenting. This acceptance of difference is central to the principle of Family and community | Whānau tangata in *Te Whāriki*.

All cultural groups have beliefs, traditions, and child-rearing practices that place value on specific knowledge, skills, attitudes and dispositions.

Te Whāriki, page 20

The ways in which we talk about children's behaviour often illustrate unconscious biases, gendered thinking, or cultural assumptions. Sometimes how we describe a child's behaviour is based on our feelings about the behaviour, rather than an objective view of what is happening. For example, a child who is described as non-compliant and always snatching resources from others or disrupting their play may have only done this a couple of times, but the incidents were intense, stressful, and memorable for everyone.

Sometimes we frame children's behaviour as a problem when the behaviour can be viewed as a mix of strengths and areas for development. For example, a child who appears to boss and organise others during games is showing leadership and problem-solving skills, but they may need some guidance about understanding the feelings of others and the impact of their own actions on them.

When we examine our values and beliefs and how these influence our responses to children and whānau, we are more likely to develop positive, inclusive solutions co-constructed with whānau. Collaborative inquiry can support such examination and help us to explore such key questions as *Are our beliefs and values hindering us from meeting the needs of all our children and their whānau?* and *How can we change our environment, policies, and practices to better support this child and their whānau?*

Sections 5 and 6 will support you and your teaching team to better understand behaviour and to inquire into how well your practices and environment are supporting wellbeing and positive behaviour.

Nick is in his first year of early childhood teaching and is working at a preschool in South Auckland. The preschool community includes a high number of Pacific families, mostly Sāmoan. Nick is Pākehā and has had limited contact with Pacific communities. He feels nervous about 'getting things wrong' when interacting with Pacific families and knows that he has absorbed some stereotyped views that are a barrier to him getting to know and appreciate them. His mentor teacher, Masina, is Sāmoan. She has been supporting Nick to examine his understandings and responses to Sāmoan 'aiga and encouraging him to be respectfully curious about their values, beliefs, and cultural practices.

An important learning opportunity for Nick has been an 'aiga fono for the Sāmoan families, led by Masina. The fono was an opportunity for relationship building as well as a forum for the families to share their aspirations for their children. Masina facilitated the fono, ensuring that the families were comfortable about contributing to discussion. Nick ensured he listened well. He was impressed with the high expectations expressed for children's learning and wellbeing and the importance placed on maintaining a strong connection to Sāmoan beliefs and practices.

In particular, the families asked that the kaiako:

- help their children to mix with others and make friends
- teach the children to be respectful and well behaved
- use Sāmoan language during everyday activities and pronounce the children's names correctly
- welcome their input into the curriculum
- involve them in discussions and decision making about their children's learning and wellbeing.

Another significant learning experience for Nick has been attending church with Masina. Many of the Sāmoan families were there, and Nick was able to observe the respectful behaviour of the children and how extended whānau and the wider Sāmoan community all contributed to their guidance.

With Masina's guidance, Nick is getting to know each family in their own right. He is now more comfortable about asking questions and is making a real effort to use Sāmoan greetings and to pronounce the children's names correctly. He has come to admire the families' valuing of education and high expectations for their children's development, behaviour, and achievement. He knows that they have high expectations of him and the other kaiako to help realise these aspirations.

INTENTIONAL TEACHING

Te Whāriki clarifies the roles and responsibilities of kaiako, emphasising the need for collaborative approaches, critical inquiry and reflection, and the use of evidence to inform practice. It also highlights the important role of intentional teaching in supporting and promoting learning.

Kaiako are the key resource in any ECE service. Their primary responsibility is to facilitate children’s learning and development through thoughtful and intentional pedagogy.

Te Whāriki, page 59

Intentional pedagogy refers to “teachers’ planful, thoughtful, and purposeful use of knowledge, judgment, and expertise to organise learning experiences for children” in everyday play activities, routines, and transitions (McLaughlin & Cherrington, 2018, page 35). This resource provides support for intentional teaching, so that you can confidently plan to support children’s developing social and emotional competence as well as identify and make use of teachable moments.

The resource will help you in “creating challenging learning environments and providing the appropriate teaching assistance at the right time to move children forward in their learning” (Hedges, 2000, page 20). Such teaching, in the context of play, will include practices with strong evidence of effect, such as modelling, role play, thinking aloud, prompting, and giving feedback and encouragement. These practices are woven throughout the resource to help you enact the strategies recommended in each section. See the Appendix for a full description of each practice.

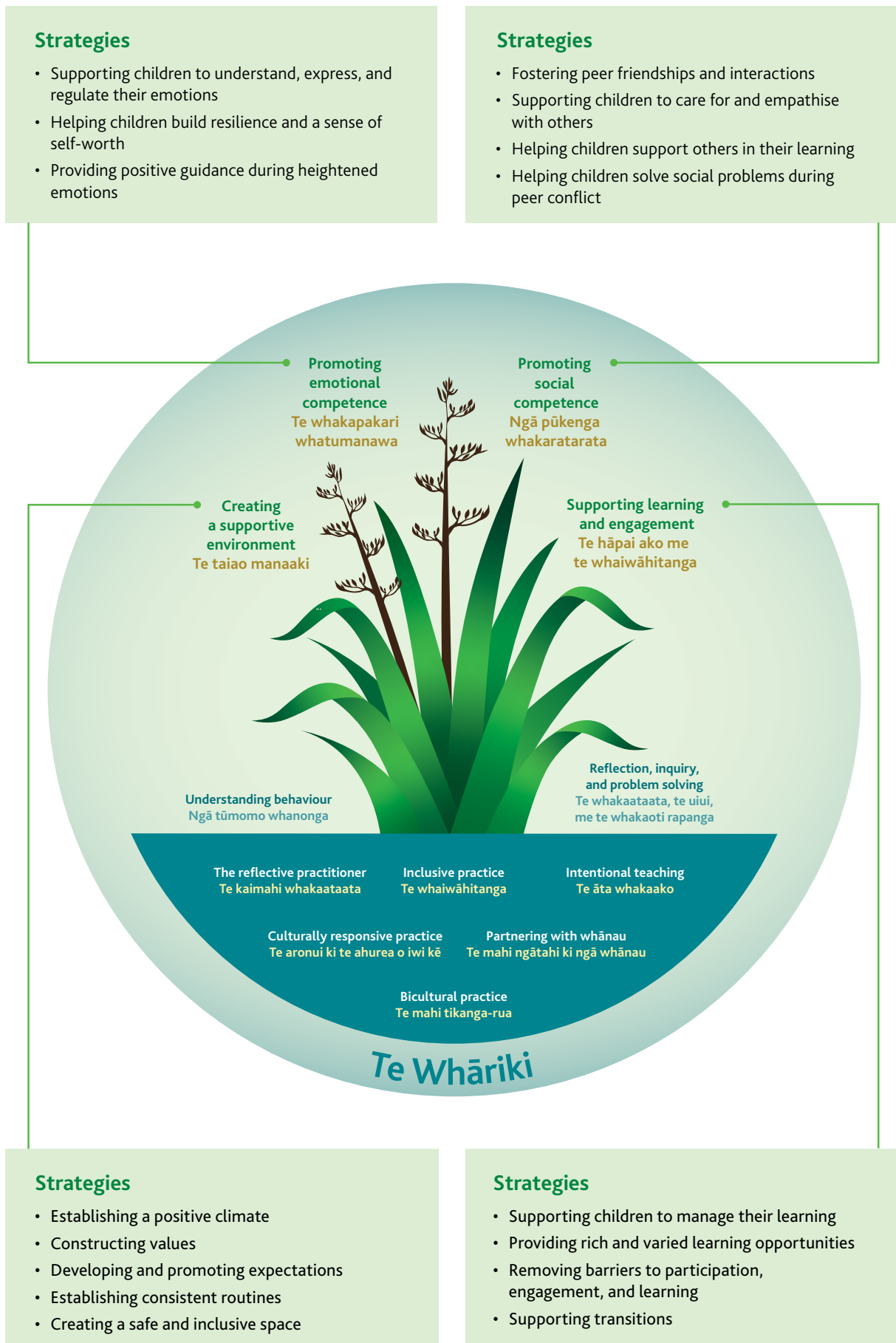
This resource aligns with *Te Whāriki* and supports your work within it. As discussed above, it explores four evidence-based approaches that will support you in your intentional teaching:

- Creating a supportive environment
- Promoting emotional competence
- Promoting social competence
- Supporting learning and engagement.

Figure 2 expands on Figure 1 to show the strategies discussed within each of these approaches. Through reflective inquiry you will be able to trial and adapt the suggested strategies and deepen your expertise and understanding of them. The strategies have a strong evidence base; when underpinned by warm, caring relationships and culturally responsive, inclusive teaching, they will support inclusion and learning for *all* tamariki in your care.

Sections 1–4 unpack the four approaches and their strategies.

Figure 2: Evidence-based strategies for supporting wellbeing and positive behaviour





Section 1: Creating a supportive environment

Wāhanga 1: Te taiao manaaki

Whāia te kotahitanga o te wairua.

Mā te rangimarie me te aroha e paihere.

Pursue unity of spirit. Be bound together by peace and love.

Shared, positive values and expectations are the foundation for a strong, unified community.

Parents and whānau trust that their ECE service will provide an environment where respectful relationships, encouragement, warmth and acceptance are the norm.

Te Whāriki, page 21

The climate and culture of an early learning environment can be sensed by everyone who enters. Voices, facial expressions, and body language give messages of welcome and inclusion. Pictures and signage reflecting the local environment, use of children's home languages, and routines indicate the accessibility and responsiveness of the curriculum. Together, aspects such as these communicate the culture and values of an early learning community and the strength of relationships within it. New children and whānau fit most easily into a positive culture that is welcoming and inclusive and in which values, expectations, and routines are clear and easy for everyone to understand and follow.

Relationships are at the heart of early learning. The ability to nurture and maintain relationships is a core competency for kaiako (McLaughlin, Aspden, & McLachlan, 2015). In the context of warm, secure relationships, children are able to be themselves, confident that they are accepted and loved by the adults who care for them. They can practise their developing social skills, take risks, and test boundaries, knowing that the responses from adults will be consistently calm and caring.

Where positive, reciprocal relationships between you and tamariki are in place, you will know your children well. You will have learnt about their strengths, interests, and areas for development by listening to, observing, and interacting with them. Through caring and deep knowing, you can co-construct a curriculum with whānau and tamariki that is personalised and responsive (Berryman, Lawrence, & Lamont, 2018).

Key strategies that this section unpacks are:

- Establishing a positive climate
- Constructing values
- Developing and promoting expectations
- Establishing consistent routines
- Creating a safe and inclusive space.

Related learning outcomes from Te Whāriki

Over time and with guidance and encouragement, children become increasingly capable of:

- Taking part in caring for this place | te manaaki i te taiao
- Understanding how things work here and adapting to change | te mārama ki te āhua o ngā whakahaere me te mōhio ki te panoni
- Showing respect for kaupapa, rules, and the rights of others | te mahi whakaute.

ESTABLISHING A POSITIVE CLIMATE

A positive climate is created when the early learning community demonstrates whanaungatanga, manaakitanga, and ngākau nui (big-heartedness). These values encompass the generosity of spirit that helps us accept and value diversity, welcome and include others, and form relationships that are secure enough to cope with the big and small challenges that occur within any whānau. Supportive language, friendly voices, warmth, and affection are all indicators of positive values in action.

Physical affection is an important way of comforting and affirming children and of promoting their wellbeing. Providing positive attention through physical affection is a normal and natural way of expressing whānau and community values and of showing children that we care about them and enjoy their company. Providing physical comfort when children are hurt or upset is an appropriate and necessary response. At the same time, it is important to be aware of and respect cultural expectations, practices, and boundaries. Many Māori and Pacific children show respect and affection towards others through a kiss of greeting and farewell. Other whānau may have different expectations and boundaries. Communication and negotiation will ensure that everyone is comfortable with how positive values are expressed between members of the early learning community.

How kaiako relate to each other has a significant impact on the climate of the community and the ways in which children relate to each other. You provide a model that influences children as they develop and practise their social skills. This includes the ways in which you manage frustration, tiredness, or disagreements with others. A respectful, friendly tone between adults is an important contributor to a positive climate.



Here are some signs of a positive climate in an early learning setting:

- Children are welcomed in the morning by name and in a manner that signals pleasure at their arrival and positive expectations of a happy day ahead.
- Whānau are greeted by name when they drop off and collect their tamariki.
- Children are encouraged to greet each other, using their names and a friendly, welcoming voice.
- Kaiako make time to ask whānau about daily life, in order to support their understanding of each child's world beyond the early learning context.
- Kaiako negotiate with whānau the kind of information they would like to hear and share when they collect their children at the end of the day.
- Kaiako talk to children at their level. They have fun and are playful with children, and they have extended interactions with them.
- Kaiako share information about themselves, and they encourage children to share information about their home lives.
- Kaiako celebrate children's moments of achievement and success and encourage children to be pleased for each other.
- Kaiako keep promises to children and apologise if they can't meet a commitment. *I'm sorry, Charlotte. I know I said I would come and watch you on the climbing frame. I am excited to see what you can do. But Kaia is feeling unwell, and I need to keep a close eye on her until her dad comes.*
- Departure time is pleasant for children and whānau and an opportunity for sharing and relationship building. It is not rushed, and it includes a positive summation of the day and positive forecasting for the day ahead. *Charlotte and her friends have had such a happy day running under the sprinkler and making little rivers and dams in the sandpit. Charlotte's getting so good at sharing resources and taking turns. See you tomorrow, Charlotte!*
- Staffing schedules support secure attachment and continuity for children.



The video clip [Early Childhood Education: Embedded in the Community](#) describes a New Zealand research project on how active whānau participation within a positive climate supports children's learning.

The British resource [My Space](#) explores how the emotional, indoor, and outdoor environments contribute to a positive climate.

CONSTRUCTING VALUES

In early learning settings, practice sits on a foundation of shared values. Early learning settings such as Montessori preschools and kōhanga reo have established values intrinsic to their philosophy and practice. For others, values will be informed by the beliefs and aspirations of community members, including tamariki, whānau, hapū, and iwi.

Newly established settings start out with a philosophy statement that they review in consultation with their community during their first year. As they get to know the strengths and needs of their community, they are able to establish values and unpack what they look, sound, and feel like for all members of the community.

Well-established settings use their internal review cycle to ensure that their values in practice are dynamic and responsive to their community. Values that reflect a bicultural approach and are clearly linked to *Te Whāriki* are most likely to have the depth and breadth that is needed.

When reviewing values, think about the following:

- Is it easy for kaiako, whānau, and children to describe what our community's values look, sound, and feel like in practice?
- Are our values visible through signage and pictures?
- Are our values spoken about frequently? Do we refer to them during small-group or community mat times?
- Is our community becoming increasingly diverse? If so, do our values reflect this diversity?



As a kaiako team, discuss and answer the above questions. Where one or more of your answers is no, think about how you might strengthen your practice to ensure that values are visible and thoughtfully embedded in your setting.

Manaakitanga is a core value for a West Coast kindergarten and is at the heart of its philosophy and practice. Manaakitanga is described around the walls of the kindergarten with words and pictures drawn by the children.

We show manaakitanga by:

Welcoming new children and asking them to join in our games

Looking after our friends if they are hurt or sad

Helping each other to learn what to do

Saying hello to our kaiako and friends

Being happy for our friends when they do well

At community mat times, kaiako ask children to share times when they saw someone showing manaakitanga, and children talk about how they felt when a friend was kind, shared with them, or helped them out.

Kaiako make it clear that kind, respectful, caring behaviours are important for the community and can be learned by everyone. They model this in their interactions with each other and through the ways in which they welcome and include whānau in the daily life of the kindergarten.

DEVELOPING AND PROMOTING EXPECTATIONS

Clear expectations and boundaries support positive behaviour. Having expectations doesn't imply a rigid application of rules. Rather, it means that expectations of behaviour are clearly linked to values and used to support children in their development of social and emotional competence. Clear expectations lead to consistent responses from kaiako and help create a settled, peaceful environment for all.

Co-construct some core expectations with your children that apply across your setting. Ensure that there are only a few and that they are expressed in child-friendly language, as in the example below. This is from a rural kindergarten whose core expectations are underpinned by the values of manaakitanga, whanaungatanga, and tiakitanga.



If clear behavioural expectations are needed for particular activities, think about the values and behaviours needed for each activity and use these to develop your expectations. For example, for mat time, kaiako and children might agree on the following:



Here are some ways in which you can effectively promote behavioural expectations for your setting:

- Display your setting's expectations using words, pictures, and visual symbols.
- Plan ways of promoting and supporting expectations – for example, through prompting, modelling, and role play using dolls or puppets.
- Notice and provide positive feedback when children meet expectations or are working towards meeting them.
- Encourage tuākana to show leadership by modelling expectations and by helping other children to adhere to them.



ESTABLISHING CONSISTENT ROUTINES

Expectations describe how we behave and act as a community. *Routines* describe what we do during our shared, daily activities such as eating, toileting, and using resources.

For infants and toddlers, caregiving routines help to provide a reassuring rhythm to their day and support their attachment and confidence as they learn to trust that their needs will be met.

For young children, consistent routines help them to manage their day and prepare for what is going to happen next. Knowing 'how we do things around here' creates safety and security for everyone and is a key learning outcome within the Belonging | Mana whenua strand of *Te Whāriki*.

Routines reduce anxiety for children and help them to learn to take responsibility for themselves and others. Knowing what to do in preparation for and during a particular activity strengthens a child's self-concept as a competent, capable community member. When they are able to help others learn a routine, they become an 'expert' who can support the learning of others.

Consistent routines also support children to consider the needs and safety of others. Kaiako can promote responsibility for others within a free play environment through routines for regular experiences, such as transitioning between activities, fetching and returning resources, and small-group or community mat times.



Consider the following when developing routines:

- Think about activities and transitions that occur daily. Is there a clear routine for them? Do all your children know how to follow each routine?
- Ensure that children understand the purpose of each routine and how it helps the community run smoothly and in a way that is safe, secure, and inclusive of everyone. *We walk around the mat where the babies are playing so that we don't stand on them ... We put the little cars away in this box when we are finished with them, so that others can find them easily ... We wash our hands after the toilet, so that we don't get bugs in our tummies.*
- Teach children routines by modelling and practising them and by providing positive feedback and being flexible as children develop fluency with them.
- Use pictures, signage, music, and other cues to prompt children to follow routines.
- Encourage children to help each other with routines and to teach new children what to do.
- Review routines regularly with input from children, to ensure they still meet the needs of the children and are helpful and supportive.
- Talk about how children in books and stories manage expectations and routines.

In a centre in the Hokianga there are clear values, expectations, and routines to support positive behaviour at kai time. Expected behaviours include sharing, helping, considering others, thanking, and tidying up.

Kai time is a cooked lunch, served at a table from serving bowls that the children can handle and pass between themselves. Children wash their hands and sit at the table. After a karakia, the children pass each bowl and take some food with tongs or a spoon. If they don't want the food, they say, *No thank you* and pass the bowl on. Kaiako encourage the children to notice and help if someone needs assistance with passing the food or using the tongs or spoon.

Kaiako sit with the children and model kai time manners and conversation. They encourage them to eat slowly and mindfully. *These are delicious feijoas, aren't they? Does anybody have feijoas growing at home?*

When the children have finished eating, they say, *Thank you* to the cook and take their plate and spoon to the dishes trolley. They wash their hands again and go to play.



Complete the table below. The first row is filled in as an example and the second row is a suggested context for you to complete. The remaining rows are for you to add contexts relevant to your setting.

This activity will support your team to consider areas for which a clear routine for children and kaiako would be helpful. If possible, include your older children in the activity. This will highlight their role as tuākana who support younger children to follow routines.

CONTEXT	ROUTINE
Kai time	<i>We wash our hands and come to the table.</i> <i>We say karakia.</i> <i>We pass the food.</i> <i>We say thank you to the cook.</i> <i>We put our plates on the trolley.</i> <i>We wash our hands and go to play.</i>
Sleep time	

CREATING A SAFE AND INCLUSIVE SPACE

The physical environment makes an important contribution to children's identity, wellbeing, and engagement. An intentional pedagogical approach in relation to the safe and inclusive use of space and resources helps children take responsibility for themselves and others. It is important to teach children to help each other safely negotiate the physical environment and to access and use resources in safe, responsible ways.

Through ongoing internal evaluation, you can ensure that your environment promotes inclusion and belonging and supports the learning and wellbeing of all community members. Evaluating the physical environment from the perspective of inclusive practice helps to ensure that it minimises barriers to play, learning, and participation for children and whānau members. For example, you might review the designation of areas for different activities, the use of home languages in signs and notices (Harris, 2018), the organisation and display of resources, and routines and systems for ensuring all children can access and use the environment in safe ways.

Here are some key practices for setting up a new space or reviewing your existing space:

- Ensure the physical environment is welcoming, with some adult seating where whānau can sit and talk to each other and to kaiako.
- Organise and display resources in ways that make it easy for children to access, retrieve, and share them, and to engage in complex projects and 'messy' creative play with others.
- Set aside quiet spaces for children when they need some time to calm down or to relax away from active play areas.
- Ensure signage is culturally inclusive. Aim to use children's home languages and to display pictures that document the cultural connections and activities of whānau and the wider community.
- Make it easy for children to 'get things right' when using resources because the physical environment supports them to use the resources carefully and responsibly.
- Use explicit teaching approaches (e.g., modelling, prompts, reminders) to ensure safety with equipment such as scissors, hammers, and glue guns.



The webpage [Inclusive Practice](#) on Te Whāriki Online includes helpful ideas and reflective and evaluative questions in relation to organising your space.

The Australian newsletter [Creating Enabling Environments](#) discusses the importance of developing physical and social learning environments that have a positive influence on children's learning.



As a team, watch the video [Early Childhood Education: Seeing and Being Seen](#). As the kaiako have done in the video, create a map of adult movement within your environment and use it to:

- understand the ways in which your physical environment influences whānau engagement and participation within your setting
- actively strengthen relationships with whānau, ensuring a welcoming, inviting environment for them and increasing opportunities for them to interact with you, their tamariki, and each other.

In this resource, mixed age groups are promoted as an opportunity for whanaungatanga and tuākana–teina learning experiences for all children. In early learning settings, tuākana can play an important role in caregiving practices and scaffolding learning for younger children.

In many early learning environments, there are separate areas for different age groups. When this is the case, it is important to create opportunities for mixed age group interactions, to reflect the care routines and teaching and learning relationships that naturally occur in families – for example, in Māori and Pacific whānau, where tuākana play a pivotal role.



Creating a supportive environment: Key points

A positive early learning environment is welcoming and inclusive, with strong reciprocal relationships between kaiako, tamariki, and whānau. A respectful, friendly tone between adults makes an important contribution to such an environment.

In a positive, inclusive environment, children can practise their social and emotional skills, take risks, and test boundaries, knowing that the adults will be consistently calm and caring.

Values should be regularly reviewed to ensure they reflect a bicultural approach and respond to the diversity of the community.

Values, expectations, and routines should be clear, consistent, and easy for everyone to understand and follow. This helps young children to manage their day and prepare for what is going to happen next.

The design of the physical environment should minimise barriers to play and learning for children and to participation by whānau.

Effective strategies for creating a supportive environment include:

Establishing a positive climate

- Fostering warm and caring relationships with children
- Using a friendly tone and providing positive attention to all children
- Ensuring arriving and leaving routines are personalised, pleasant, and unhurried

Constructing values

- Co-constructing values with whānau and displaying them
- Talking with children about values and how they are expressed

Developing and promoting expectations and routines

- Co-constructing and displaying expectations and routines
- Teaching expectations and routines using intentional pedagogies
- Giving children positive feedback in relation to expectations and routines

Creating a safe and inclusive space

- Ensuring the physical space is welcoming for children and whānau
- Organising and displaying resources to make it easy to access and share them
- Ensuring visual images, resources, and signage reflect and celebrate cultural diversity
- Teaching children to use space and resources responsibly.



Section 2: Promoting emotional competence

Wāhanga 2: Te whakapakari whatumanawa

Nā koutou i tangi, nā tātau katoa.

When you cry, your tears are shed by all of us.

The early learning community takes responsibility for the emotional wellbeing of all its community members, including children, whānau, and kaiako, nurturing their emotional competence and resilience within a supportive, responsive environment.

Emotional competence is a foundation for children's success in learning and relationships and vital for their wellbeing. Kaiako, peers, and whānau all play important roles in its development:

Safe, stable and responsive environments support the development of self-worth, identity, confidence and enjoyment, together with emotional regulation and self-control.

Te Whāriki, page 26

Emotional competence includes understanding what we are feeling and why we are feeling it, as well as appreciating how others may be feeling and the impact of our actions on them. It also includes responding to our feelings and expressing them appropriately – and, when the feelings are strong or difficult to manage, in ways that help us calm down and feel better.

A child's emotional competence develops over time as a result of whānau, peer, and community interactions and the social and cultural learning opportunities available to them. Through a combination of naturally occurring and planned, scaffolded experiences, children learn to understand their own feelings, to interpret the feelings of others, and to manage and express their emotions in contextually appropriate ways. Children who can manage their emotional responses to life's ups and downs and work through conflict, disappointment, and frustration are much more likely to grow into self-managing young people and adults with positive life outcomes (Morkel & McLaughlin, 2015).

Emotional competence is supported when adults and children model positive social values such as manaakitanga and whanaungatanga and provide feedback and guidance to each other about the appropriate expression of feelings and emotions. Ideally, kaiako, children, and whānau together create an environment that promotes emotional competence through the ways in which they communicate with each other and through their enactment of core social values. In addition, kaiako can intentionally and actively scaffold children's emotional learning by planning and enabling experiences to deepen children's knowledge and understanding.

The emotional world of infants, toddlers, and young children

Infants are born with the ability to communicate their needs and build relationships with others. They are capable and busy learners with endless potential. From a Māori world view, each child is born 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” (Ministry of Education, 2009, page 47). Their journey of emotional development begins at birth and is shaped by their social and cultural environment as well as their own unique biology.

Whānau and other carers help to scaffold emotional development as infants learn to self-soothe, focus their attention, mirror reactions, and respond to emotional indicators from others such as smiles, laughs, and frowns. During feeding, bathtimes, personal care, and games, they learn about the reciprocal nature of communication. They begin to copy sounds, to vocalise, and eventually, to use words to communicate. These early ‘conversations’ are important opportunities for supporting social and emotional development. During them, carers are guided by the child's focus, interest, and their signs of enjoyment, which direct the pace and duration of activity. Carers are also guided by signs of frustration, which can arise if they inadvertently impede an infant's need to communicate and explore or prolong an activity that is no longer engaging.

As they grow and with adult and peer support, children learn to identify their own feelings and become aware that other people have feelings that their actions can affect. Toddlers begin to show sympathy and concern for others, responding to physical signs of emotion such as laughing and crying. As their language and thinking skills develop, so does the range of emotions that they experience, along with the ability to recognise and name more subtle feelings such as shame, guilt, empathy, shyness, or pride. They often experience emotions in physical ways, such as having ‘tummy butterflies’, feeling sick, breathing more quickly, or getting hot or cold.

Related learning outcomes from *Te Whāriki*

Over time and with guidance and encouragement, children become increasingly capable of:

- Managing themselves and expressing their feelings and needs | te whakahua whakaaro
- Expressing their feelings and ideas using a wide range of materials and modes | he kōrero auaha
- Understanding oral language and using it for a range of purposes | he kōrero ā-waha.

Young children have a growing awareness of the feelings and perspectives of others and of the kinds of events that can trigger emotional responses in themselves and others. They understand that they can experience more than one emotion at a time and that feelings bring with them choices about how to respond. They can use their cognitive skills to ‘think’ their way through and out the other side of situations that engender strong emotions. They are also developing a range of strategies to calm themselves, to distract themselves from negative thinking, to work through times of nervousness, anxiety, or shyness, and to prepare for potentially stressful events such as saying goodbye to a whānau member or stopping an enjoyable activity when told.

Emotional competence differs for children at different stages of their development and varies according to the sociocultural norms, beliefs, and values of their whānau. It is important that you take account of this in your judgments about appropriate ways of expressing emotions and in your expectations of children's ability to regulate their emotions. Flexible thinking, empathy, and patience should guide our responses.

Key strategies that this section unpacks are:

- Supporting children to understand, express, and regulate their emotions
- Helping children build resilience and a sense of self-worth
- Providing positive guidance during heightened emotions.

SUPPORTING CHILDREN TO UNDERSTAND, EXPRESS, AND REGULATE THEIR EMOTIONS

How children understand, express, and regulate their emotions has a major impact on their ability to cope with everyday life. It is important to remember that developing emotional competence takes time. The pathway to competence varies for each child and is not necessarily predictable or linear. Often children will appear to 'go backwards' in their development – this is normal and can be the result of a change or transition they are adapting to.

You can help all children to better understand their emotions by talking in ways that acknowledge their feelings and help them to name and explain what they are feeling. It is important that we don't tell children how they are feeling; but we can take a 'best guess' and show that we want to help.

Some children experience and express emotion with great intensity. This can be a natural aspect of their temperament, part of who they are. Strong feelings should not be viewed as a problem, and all feelings should be acknowledged and validated. If a child's expression of emotions creates stress for the child, affects others, or results in behaviours inappropriate for the context, provide appropriate guidance and support for the child and those around them. For example, preparing children for situations likely to trigger strong emotional responses helps them to use strategies for managing their emotions, such as positive self-talk.

Sometimes a child's behaviour shows that they need more support and guidance while they are developing the ability to manage their feelings and to recognise the feelings of others. Take time to 'tune in' to each child's emotional world so that you can provide the support they need, when they need it.

Social learning at home and in the early learning setting is a key influence on a child's emotional development. How adults express feelings and meet emotional needs provides a model for the child. Sometimes a child expresses their need for emotional support in intense ways because they are used to being ignored or to the needs of adults taking precedence. Children with unmet emotional needs can find it difficult to regulate their emotions (Moffitt, Poulton, & Caspi, 2013).

Self-regulation is the ability to control our feelings, thoughts, and behaviours and is a vital aspect of emotional competence. It involves managing our emotions so that we can persist at tasks, solve problems, control our impulses, and delay gratification when necessary. For infants and toddlers, co-regulation with their whānau and kaiako provides the support, guidance, and modelling that are needed for them to eventually become self-regulated children (Rosanbalm & Murray, 2017). Responsive, caring interactions with adults help children to trust that their needs will be met. It is much easier to delay gratification and control impulses when they know that waiting, sharing, practising, trying again, and asking for help will result in good outcomes for them.

Here are some ways in which you can support children to understand, express, and regulate their emotions:

- Include 'feelings talk' in everyday conversations, so that it's normal for adults and children to name and discuss emotions. Learn the words for different feelings in children's home languages and the cultural meanings and norms associated with them. Help children to expand their vocabulary by modelling the use of language to name, describe, and explain feelings and by reading poems and stories that provide opportunities to talk about them.
- Notice the signs and actions of infants and toddlers that are indicators of feelings. Mirror these to acknowledge understanding and respond in ways that show you recognise the communicative intent of them. Be aware that young children can experience feelings in physical ways. Watch their body language and help them to understand that their body is responding to how they are feeling, and that this is normal.
- Talk about the range of emotions that children might feel. When talking about emotions that are difficult to manage, link this to coping strategies and actions that will help the child to calm down or work through a problem. Make sure that your response recognises that it is OK to feel that way, and acknowledge what the child has done to feel better or manage the emotion.
- Help children to learn to 'read' the emotions of their peers. Encourage them to help each other to manage their feelings by talking about the responsibility of whānau members to help each other. *Maia might be feeling sad because her dad has left to go to work. What could we do to cheer her up?*
- Acknowledge and give praise when children make decisions that help them to avoid prolonged or intense emotional responses. Show that you appreciate that the regulation of emotions takes effort and concentration. *I think you were pretty excited about the police dog visit today, but you stayed very quiet and calm. How did you manage that?*
- Help children to understand that they have choices that can help them to manage their emotions. Discuss the choices they can make, such as asking an adult to help them, finding a quiet space to calm down, or using a calming down strategy.



Working with your team, read the above bullet points and discuss:

- How well do we include 'feelings talk' in our daily practice? Is this an area we could strengthen?
- Do we need to gather some additional resources that would help us be more intentional in our approach (e.g., poems, stories, songs, photos, and art works that focus on feelings)?

In a puna whakatupu in Auckland, kaiako use a mōteatea (traditional chant) daily for a range of purposes, including to settle tamariki at wā moe (sleep time), to support daily changes in routine, and to transition new children into the puna whakatupu. One of the most beneficial uses is for soothing and promoting calmness. Often tamariki initiate it by themselves.

Kaiako: The mōteatea is a source of comfort and soothing for Tama when he's tired. When he hears it, he experiences aroha and finds rangimarie (peacefulness) in his tinana (body), wairua (spirit), and hinengaro (mind). Today after lunch, he was keen to go outside and enjoy the sunshine. However, after a few minutes he looked tired. He stood in front of me rubbing his eyes, so I cuddled him and chanted our mōteatea in a soft, gentle voice. When he heard the mōteatea, he lay down on my lap quietly, his head on my chest and holding my hands tightly while watching other tamariki play. (See page 13 for the genesis of this mōteatea.)

Calming rituals

Encourage and make space for the use of rituals for soothing, calming, and distracting – for example:

- singing waiata
- rhythmic movements such as rocking or swinging
- breathing exercises
- shaking eco glitter in a jar
- using a hand-held fan to cool down
- blowing bubbles
- going to a quiet space to relax
- gentle touch or massage
- listening to music
- kanikani for dancing away troubled feelings
- tactile experiences such as water play or modelling with dough
- a cuddle and a story with a chosen friend and kaiako.



The books in the Ministry of Education series 'My Feelings' are excellent for helping young children to explore and understand emotions. Many early learning services will have them in their library, as all services received free copies from 1995 to 2009, when the series was discontinued. Most books in the series can now be purchased from [Learning Media](#).

There are many examples of feeling faces charts that can be helpful when discussing emotions with young children. A good New Zealand example is 'Māori Emotional Faces', which is the sixth document listed on this [webpage](#).

HELPING CHILDREN BUILD RESILIENCE AND A SENSE OF SELF-WORTH

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.

Ministry of Education, 2009, page 50

The development of a child's self-concept begins in infancy in the context of the attention and responses they receive from whānau. It continues as the child absorbs others' views and expectations of their abilities, talents, temperament, and potential.

The language you use as you talk to a child and their whānau can help to 'construct' the child as a competent, resilient, caring person who is increasingly able to manage challenging situations. Feedback, encouragement, and praise help children to build self-esteem. Confident children with good self-esteem are more resilient and able to manage their emotions because they expect to be able to cope and succeed.

It is critically important that reporting to whānau at the end of the day is positively focused, so that they hear more about what their child can and did do than what they couldn't and didn't do. Share progress towards goals, and where there has been a behavioural incident that the whānau needs to be aware of, frame this as an opportunity for everyone to plan together so that tomorrow will be a better day. The child and their whānau must know that kaiako and other community members will be pleased to see them the next day, with the 'slate wiped clean' and expectations of a happy, productive day ahead. This helps the child to feel loved and secure and to give themselves the positive self-talk they need to work towards social and learning goals.

Being resilient doesn't exclude a child from feeling and showing emotion when disappointed, frustrated, sad, or angry. However, a resilient response will be one in which the child can still move forward, think their way out of a situation, and regain balance, perspective, and optimism. *Tino pai, Ricky. It looked like you felt upset when Ellie took the truck you were playing with. I'm glad you came over for a cuddle and now you are calm. Well done! Babies don't know about sharing yet, do they? When Ellie is older she will understand that sometimes we have to share and wait for a turn.*

Here are some key practices for supporting resilience and self-esteem:

- In conversations with children, highlight the skills, knowledge, attitudes, and values that develop as we grow. Acknowledge when children's behaviour demonstrates they are becoming more caring of others, taking more responsibility, being a good role model for younger children, or being a tuakana, a leader who is able to think beyond their own immediate, personal concerns. This gives the message that the child is a valued member of the early learning whānau, with important strengths and skills. *Thank you for comforting Masina when she was upset ... for showing Olly where we keep the crayons ... for helping to welcome Whaea Hine when she came to weave with us. How would we manage without you?*
- Prepare children for change by talking about what will happen, discussing how they might feel, and highlighting the good things that the child can expect as a result of the change. *Tomorrow Kaiako Katie won't be here. She's going on a holiday. I know that you love being with Katie and will miss her. But all the other kaiako will be here, and we will help you to have a happy time while Katie is away. She'll be back next week. Let's hope she has a lovely holiday.*

- Ensure that feedback to children is positive and encouraging. If feedback in response to inappropriate behaviour is needed, make sure you give it in a mana-enhancing way that acknowledges that sometimes emotions overwhelm us and prevent thoughtful choices in the heat of the moment. *You were upset and forgot to use kind words and gentle hands. Next time I will help to remind you if I see that you are getting upset. I can see you are getting better at staying calm. Soon you will know how to manage for yourself.*
- Remember that it takes practice to learn a new skill or behaviour or to change an existing behaviour that has been used successfully many times to meet our needs. Look for opportunities to provide feedback and encouragement by noting children's attempts and approximations. If we wait for perfect behaviour before we praise, many children will never receive positive feedback. We all need encouragement and acknowledgment as we work towards a goal. *I think you might be feeling disappointed at the moment, but look how much further you got this time. And it's great you'll get to have another go.*
- Where necessary, provide more frequent feedback, encouragement, and attention. Some children attract and receive many positive, encouraging comments from adults each day, whereas others may mostly receive instructions and neutral or disapproving comments at home and may be 'running on empty' when it comes to praise and positive feedback. These children may appear to demand attention but are communicating an important emotional need. Remember also that not all children enjoy public praise, so sometimes quieter, more private acknowledgments are needed.



At a Dunedin centre, three-year-old Mason often begins his day feeling a mix of emotions that are hard for him to manage. He is a naturally high-energy boy who can sometimes react intensely, particularly to new situations or people. He often struggles to adapt to change and can be easily bothered by things that he finds uncomfortable, such as being hungry.

In the mornings, Mason is excited to see his friends and keen to carry on with projects from the day before. He feels disappointed if his friends have arrived before him and chosen different activities with other peers. He is always sad to say goodbye to his Nana, who drops him off in the mornings on the way to work. Often he hasn't eaten a good breakfast because of needing to hurry in the mornings and the excited feelings in his tummy.

This complex mix often means that Mason starts his day in a heightened emotional state and finds it difficult to settle. To support his transition into the activities of the day, kaiako and his Nana agree to put in place three strategies:

- Nana will bring Mason's breakfast to the Centre for him to eat with the other early starters.
- She will aim to regularly do some 'positive forecasting' with Mason in the car – about the fun day he has ahead, how well he will manage, and how she will be looking forward to seeing him at the end of the day.
- Together, she and Mason will develop a consistent 'goodbye' routine (e.g., two kisses, a hug, and a wave from the window with a favourite kaiako who is always available to support his arrival).

The kaiako decide to support continuity and predictability by:

- preparing Mason near the end of each day for the day ahead. *What do you think you would like to do tomorrow? What could you do if Jackson is here before you and is busy with a new project?*
- providing visual supports for choosing morning activities – photographs of the activity areas, which Mason can select from and stick onto his personalised timetable. The kaiako will help him to learn to use this support and revisit it with him each morning in case he wants to make a new selection.
- ensuring that the activity he left the day before is easily retrievable and available for him to carry on with in the morning. When that is not possible, they will explain why not and help him select a different activity.

They also plan to build Mason's confidence and self-esteem by:

- encouraging him to be a leader in early morning routines by helping new children put away their bags and find an activity
- giving him plenty of positive feedback when he manages the morning transition in a calm way.

Finally, the kaiako schedule an early morning kanikani that begins with high-energy music and finishes with slower, more relaxing music. Mason loves to dance – he is a great mover and shaker!



The website [Sparklers](#), developed in response to the Canterbury earthquakes, contains many ideas, activities, and games for helping young children to manage their emotions and build resilience and a sense of self-worth.

Massey University's Early Years Research Lab provides a comprehensive [list of recommended children's literature](#) to support children's emotional and social learning.



Working in a small group, read and discuss the above story about Mason. Then consider:

- Are there children in your setting who regularly find it difficult to settle when they arrive or during another transition?
- Why do you think this is the case? What do you think is happening from the child's point of view?
- What are some additional strategies you could put in place to better support these children?
- What strategies do you currently use to help all children develop emotional resilience? What new strategies could you integrate into your practice?



PROVIDING POSITIVE GUIDANCE DURING HEIGHTENED EMOTIONS

It is normal to experience feelings of sadness, anger, frustration, jealousy, and disappointment. While it is natural to want children to be happy participants in a calm environment, it is not the job of kaiako to shield children from 'negative' emotions or to prevent children from expressing them. It is impossible and undesirable to create a social and learning environment where there is no conflict, no disappointment or frustration, and no challenge to overcome. Emotions are natural and necessary and always an opportunity to learn about self and others.

When you know the children in your setting well, you will recognise situations that trigger strong emotions for particular children. You will understand that some children can have rapid changes in emotion or experience strong emotions very quickly. You can therefore act preventatively, by providing physical space and resources to support self-calming and prompts and reminders that help children to remember expectations and use self-calming strategies.

An early learning community is a whānau, and all whānau have their ups and downs. Knowing that within your community there will be events that provoke strong emotions, you can be a calm and positive influence. While children are experiencing heightened emotions is not the time for teaching. Rather, you can provide guidance, reassurance, and affirmation, recognising that strong emotions can be stressful and exhausting for children. In this way they learn to trust that support is available when they need it. Positive guidance 'in the moment' helps children to recognise strong emotions and to calm down without feeling that the emotions themselves are wrong. As they mature, and with the right support, they become more able to self-manage during such times, with only some caring 'checking-in' from others needed.

Children can also provide support for one another, by recognising others' emotions and thinking about and practising what they can say and do to help others feel better. This gives them the opportunity to advocate for the wellbeing of others and to become a whānau member who shares responsibility for enacting the values of the community.

When children are calm, you can draw on intentional pedagogical practices such as thinking aloud, modelling, and role play to support them to understand and manage their emotions.

Here are some key practices for providing positive guidance during heightened emotions:

- Provide an open, neutral space for calming down. Using it should not be seen as a reward or a punishment. Rather it will be somewhere a child can choose to go in order to relax and calm down, with calming resources available such as soft toys, pictures and books to look at, and tactile objects to hold. If the child has a comfort blanket or soft toy from home, they can take that with them.
- Recognise that during heightened emotional responses is not the time to 'unpack' a child's feelings. Provide support without being intrusive, and wait for a calmer time to debrief and plan strategies for next time. *I can see that you are upset. Can I help? I'm here if you need a hug or a little chat.*

- After an experience involving strong emotions, check in with children once they are calm and engaged with a chosen activity. *OK now? Well done for calming down. Would you like to talk a little about how you were feeling?* If the child wants to talk, try not to ask too many questions – just listen and help with words for naming feelings if needed. Acknowledge that the situation was upsetting without making a big deal of what happened or re-stressing the child. Make a positive forecast for how the child will manage in a similar situation in the future. *I think next time you feel cross, you will remember that it's OK to feel cross, but it's not OK to hit. You will walk away and go to the calming corner until you feel better. Then when you feel better we can help you to solve the problem that's making you cross. Or you might have thought up a plan for yourself. That would be great!*
- While children need reassurance after being upset, you need to balance that with plenty of positive attention and encouragement when children are demonstrating self-managing, regulated behaviour, such as waiting patiently for a turn, sharing nicely, comforting others, walking away from conflict or finding a solution to it, and talking themselves through a difficult situation.
- In preparation for situations where a child may feel anxious, use thinking aloud to model strategies for calming down and for using positive self-talk. *I'm feeling a bit worried about Mila and Rana coming over to play with us, but I think we will be able to share the blocks. I'm going to use my friendly voice and ask them to join in. I think we will have fun together.*
- Use a 'feelings thermometer', other visual tools, and verbal strategies for showing and naming feelings, developing awareness of when emotions are escalating, and identifying strategies for calming down. Teach children about these tools and resources at times when they are calm.



The website [Talking is Teaching](#) includes helpful information on [understanding and responding to problem behaviour](#). It also has helpful tips for families that are valuable for sharing with whānau. If you are an Incredible Years teacher, you'll have met the 'turtle technique' for managing extreme emotions. If not, it's explained in a Tucker Turtle scripted story with teacher tips available as a [Powerpoint online](#).



Working with your team, read the above subsection and discuss how well you support children when they experience strong emotions:

- Do we have strategies in place to help children calm down?
- Are we aware of the likely triggers for children, and do we help them to prepare for situations that might activate these triggers?
- Do we provide specific feedback and positive attention when children are managing their emotions well in challenging situations?

If you identify areas to strengthen, choose a strategy or strategies from this subsection to trial.

Biting

(The advice and strategies below can apply equally to other hurting behaviours.)

Biting is a relatively common behaviour for infants and toddlers. Infants explore their world with their hands, eyes, ears, and mouths, and toddlers are only just beginning to learn how to regulate their feelings and their reactions to others.

Generally, biting is something that children grow out of as they develop self-control, language, and other ways of communicating, solving problems, or relieving stress. However, it is a good idea to discourage biting and other hurting behaviours the first time they occur, because such behaviours can isolate children from their peers. It is also important to think about what might be causing the hurting behaviour, while making a plan for responding supportively and consistently.

For **infants**, causes of biting include to ease teething pain and to meet the need for oral stimulation. An effective preventative strategy is to provide suitable things to bite during teething, such as a cold face cloth. If biting others still occurs, remain calm and use clear signals to communicate that biting someone is not OK – a firm *No* or *No biting* is an appropriate response.

For **toddlers and young children**, causes of biting include:

- to be in control
- to obtain attention
- to defend themselves
- to communicate needs when, for example, hungry or tired
- to relieve stress or express frustration or discomfort
- to imitate others
- to explore what happens when they bite.

Preventative strategies for biting (and other hurting behaviours) by toddlers and young children include:

- developing and teaching consistent and predictable routines and behavioural expectations, with gentle reminders and prompts
- fostering verbal and non-verbal communication skills for gaining attention and expressing needs
- giving clear messages in response to hurting behaviour, which reduces the likelihood of future occurrences
- reducing stress for children by supporting them to manage transitions and other situations that can cause anxiety
- listening to children and being aware of their feelings
- teaching strategies to manage conflict, seek help, and calm down
- providing attention and positive feedback when children are playing nicely with others or using self-control to manage conflict and stay calm.

What to do when a toddler or young child bites or hurts

What you do will vary, depending on the incident, the children involved, and your relationship with them. Here are some potential strategies:

- Calmly move to the children's level, so that you are in close physical proximity and better able to keep them safe.
- Ensure that you are calm. Take a moment and take a deep breath before you respond. You are here to help the children learn.
- Attend to the child who has been hurt. Offer comfort. Give first aid, such as putting ice on the bite. (If possible, ask another kaiako or child to collect the icepack.)
- If you think the children are able to talk about the incident, ask them both what happened. Make sure you listen and respond respectfully, without judgment. Name, validate, and acknowledge the children's emotions. *It seems like you felt frustrated. It's hard to wait for a turn.*
- During or after this conversation, make your expectations clear. *No biting. It hurts when we bite; we don't hurt our friends.* Depending on the child and the reason the incident occurred, describe what they should do next time. *When you feel cross, you can walk away. You can ask a kaiako for help. You can say, "It's my turn, and your turn next."*
- Stick around. Help the children return to play, together or separately depending on their preference. Take some time to notice their positive behaviour. Comment on what they are doing well. *You are waiting patiently for a turn. You passed the toy to Ella – nice sharing.*
- Talk with the whānau of the child who has been bitten. Explain how the situation has been handled and the preventative strategies that are in place.

If the hurting behaviour has become a habit, make a plan for responding consistently, in combination with the preventative strategies above. Changing behaviour takes time; a consistent approach by kaiako and between the home and the early learning setting will be most effective.

Informed by [Understanding and Responding to Children Who Bite](#)



Promoting emotional competence: Key points

Emotional competence includes understanding what we and others are feeling. It also includes having strategies to manage and express our feelings in appropriate ways and to calm ourselves when needed.

Thinking aloud, modelling, and role play are all good practices for supporting children to understand and manage their emotions.

We help children to develop emotional competence by acknowledging and talking about feelings and preparing them for situations that may trigger strong feelings. Through intentional approaches we can support children to 'bounce back' when they are disappointed or frustrated.

Dedicated space, resources, and strategies for self-calming help children when they experience heightened emotions.

Positive feedback when children show awareness and concern for others helps to build empathy.

Effective strategies for promoting emotional competence include:

Supporting children to understand, express, and regulate their emotions

- Talking about feelings with children and supporting them to name and describe feelings
- Noticing and giving feedback to children when they demonstrate self-regulation

Helping children build resilience and a sense of self-worth

- Giving children positive feedback that affirms their developing skills and competencies
- Preparing children for changes by talking about feelings triggered by change
- Positively acknowledging children's attempts and approximations at meeting expectations

Providing positive guidance during heightened emotions

- Providing appropriate support when children are experiencing heightened emotions
- Modelling strategies for managing emotions
- Checking in with children when they have calmed down.



Section 3: Promoting social competence

Wāhanga 3: Ngā pūkenga whakaratarata

Ko koe ki tēnā ko ahau ki tēnei kīwai o te kete

With you at that handle and me at this handle of the basket

Sharing, helping, and cooperating are key skills for working and playing positively together.

Support and encouragement is provided for behaviour that is both socially and individually appropriate. Kaiako use proactive strategies that encourage children's social participation.

Te Whāriki, page 40

Infants are social beings from birth. They are born ready to engage with those around them and to learn through their interactions with others. Through the voices, facial expressions, and gentle touch of whānau, they grow to be safe and secure. Their social learning is supported and promoted within the closeness of the whānau and with kaiako dedicated to observing, responding to, and caring for them within the early learning community.

In these contexts, infants learn to express their readiness for social communication and interactions with smiles, by mimicking sounds and expressions, by turning towards people, and by extending their arms to be picked up or hugged. Sensitive, 'tuned-in' responses from whānau and kaiako support secure attachment and are important for infants as they learn and practise the strategies that work best to communicate their social needs.

Infants are usually socially comfortable with a range of people. However, during their first year, they become aware that their favourite people still exist when they are out of sight. Naturally this can create anxiety; they can become upset when whānau members leave and can reject people beyond the close circle of the whānau. During this stage, it is important to take a gentle approach in which you encourage social exploration in small, safe ways.

As children grow, we learn about their readiness to explore, experiment with, and expand their social worlds through their preferred ways of playing. From playing alone and observing others, they begin to engage in parallel play, where two or more children are focusing on their own activity in close proximity to one another. In parallel play, children are not interacting with one another, but may be interested in and influenced by each other's actions. It is a step on the way to more social, cooperative play and provides an important opportunity for language development and for learning to be comfortable close to others.

As they develop greater social confidence and curiosity, young children begin to enjoy cooperative play with others. This gives them opportunities to develop their social skills and to support the learning of others through sharing ideas, taking an organisational or creative lead, and accepting and responding positively to others' suggestions.

Supporting and teaching social skills

Children with good social skills are more likely to be successful in their learning and relationships and to have positive long-term social and health outcomes (Church et al., 2003). However, some children have difficulties with social relationships and need additional support from their whānau, kaiako, and peers to develop their social skills and confidence.

Young children who have yet to develop self-control and an understanding of the impact of their actions on others can find peer interactions particularly challenging. These children are often rejected by their peers and socially isolated because their attempts at engagement are experienced as disruptive, aggressive, or annoying. This isolation means that they have fewer opportunities to practise their social skills with others and develop their social capability, which in turn negatively affects their self-perception, confidence, and motivation. This is an example of the Matthew Effect – having social skills and confidence leads to increased social opportunities and connections, whereas lacking them leads to isolation, peer rejection, and low self-esteem.

The good news is that social skills can be supported and taught. You can intentionally help children to develop the skills and behaviours they need to initiate and maintain friendships, navigate and learn from peer conflict, and communicate and interact positively with others.

Positive social behaviours include sharing, cooperating, problem solving, helping, and showing kindness and consideration to others. These behaviours are underpinned by important competencies: language skills, empathy, and self-control. We help children greatly when we support them to develop these competencies through what we model and say and the opportunities we take for intentional teaching of positive social behaviours based on clear expectations and values.

Culturally responsive, inclusive values should inform our teaching of positive social behaviour. This includes recognising the influence of social and cultural learning at home and appreciating each child's unique temperament, along with their developmental readiness to navigate relationships with others. Sections 5 and 6 provide guidance for reflecting on a child's behavioural strengths and needs, as well as strategies for understanding and responding to the communicative intent of their behaviour.

Cultural expectations and values influence social behaviour. While many cultures – for example, Māori and Pacific peoples – emphasise collective endeavour and success, others put a greater emphasis

on individual endeavour and success. In the early learning context, we can provide learning opportunities that promote both collective and individual values. In a rich, responsive curriculum, children can learn to support others and be positive, contributing group members, while having opportunities to develop their talents, test themselves, explore, and be celebrated for their individual contributions.

Key strategies that this section unpacks are:

- Fostering peer friendships and interactions
- Supporting children to care for and empathise with others
- Helping children support others in their learning
- Helping children solve social problems during peer conflict.

Related learning outcomes from *Te Whāriki*

Over time and with guidance and encouragement, children become increasingly capable of:

- Treating others fairly and including them in play | te ngākau makuru
- Using a range of strategies and skills to play and learn with others | te ngākau aroha
- Keeping themselves and others safe from harm | te noho haumarū
- Using a range of strategies for reasoning and problem solving | te hīraurau hopanga.

FOSTERING PEER FRIENDSHIPS AND INTERACTIONS

The ability to form and maintain friendships has a lifetime effect on a person's social and emotional wellbeing. This ability requires particular social behaviours, including organising play, sharing, cooperating, helping, and giving compliments (Joseph & Strain, 2003). These behaviours are in turn underpinned by the capabilities of communication, self-control, and empathy.

Being able to initiate social interactions with peers is a key skill. Children with good communication skills find it easier to initiate conversations with others and to say the 'right thing' to gain access to games and activities. They can also respond appropriately when other children engage with them, and they know how to make suggestions in a friendly way. Children who readily say "Yes, let's ..." or "You be the ... and I'll be the ..." are showing their readiness to participate in activities initiated by others and to create roles for others in their games.

Socially capable children are more likely to promote the successes of others – *Wow, you made a really high tower* – and to notice things about others – *I really like your hat, Tama*. These 'noticing comments' have the effect of making others feel liked and valued, and this results in positive feelings towards the 'noticer' and further positive interactions.

When children are playing with others, it is inevitable that there will be incidents that cause frustration, disappointment, hurt feelings, or confusion. Children often begin an activity or game with a very clear idea of how it will go and how they will feel as a consequence. Making space for the feelings and desires of others, modifying plans in response to other ideas, or reaching a compromise that differs from the original vision can bring with it a heavy cognitive and emotional load for young children. You can help in these situations by acknowledging the 'heavy lifting' that is taking place.



Provide guidance if needed when children are working towards a social compromise, but give space for this important learning opportunity. Then when children successfully negotiate the situation, frame this as evidence of their growth in maturity and rangatiratanga. *I noticed that you listened to each other's suggestions for the stilts you're building together, you took turns with the hammer, and you were very patient with the little ones who wanted to help. Tau kē!*

As children's social skills develop, they are increasingly able to be flexible in their thinking and to take into account the perspectives of others. They understand that as much as they want to do something *this way*, the other person wants to do it *that way*, and that they can compromise. *Let's do it your way this time, and my way next time!*

Here are some ways in which you can foster children's friendships and interactions:

- Make comments that support children's social 'noticing' and interaction. We help children to learn to be interested in others when we frame peer interactions as positive and model how to initiate and respond to social invitations. For example, we can:
 - draw a child's attention to what another child is doing and model positive interest. *Look, Nikau is making a little cake with his dough. Shall we ask Nikau if we can have a 'taste'? – Mmm, yummy.*
 - facilitate, and help children prepare for, potential interactions. *Look, Ari is crawling over to see us. I think she wants to listen to the story with us. Hello, Ari. Can we make room for Ari to snuggle up with us?*
 - help children to interpret the actions of others in positive ways. *I think Riley is tugging on your jersey because he wants to show you something. Shall I come and have a look too? What have you made, Riley?*
 - model and talk about non-verbal ways of initiating peer contact, such as smiling, eye-contact, playing alongside, and passing equipment.
 - help children with strategies for joining in with others. *Would you like to help Nia with the farm she is making? You could try patting her on the shoulder and asking to join in.*
- Talk about friendships and friendly play during small-group times, mat times, and other community-building activities. Key questions for discussion might be:
 - What makes a good friend?
 - What are good ways to play with a friend?
 - How can you help a friend who is upset?
 - What can you do if you and your friend don't agree?
- Use community mat times to model and teach social behaviours for group interaction – for example, taking turns to talk, listening when others are speaking, acknowledging, commenting on, and asking questions about what someone else has said.
- Use puppets, role play, or social stories⁵ to explore how to initiate play with others. Include waiting for a good moment to get someone's attention, using a friendly and polite voice to ask to play, and managing our feelings if someone says no.
- Teach children considerate ways of saying no when others ask to play, such as “*Not right now*” or “*Next time you can*”. Role play the kinds of situations where it might be reasonable to say “*Not right now*”, and model the friendly voice and facial expression needed for this.

⁵ A social story is a short narrative that describes how a child can successfully navigate a social situation.

The value of puppets

Puppets are a useful tool for supporting children's prosocial development (Duley, McLaughlin, & Sewell, 2018). Using puppets allows children to solve social problems without having to manage the emotions that can arise from peer conflict. In the suggested process below, children are the experts. They are actively involved in social problem solving, with opportunities to learn from each other in an engaging context. The outcomes of the process can provide you with a powerful tool to draw on in other contexts.

1. Establish the puppets as learners who need help.

This positions the children as experts and helps them to develop confidence and fluency in a peer learning situation.

Kiwi and Kea are learning what to do when they have trouble playing nicely together. It would be great if you could help them.

2. Explain the problem that the puppets are having.

Use the language of feelings to help the children think about how the conflict is making the puppets feel.

Kiwi: I want to play with the little diggers.

Kea: I want to play dress-ups.

Kiwi: I'm feeling cross because I want to play my idea first.

Kea: I'm feeling impatient because I want to play my idea first. What could we do?

3. Ask the children for ideas to solve the problem.

They could play with the diggers first, then dress-ups.

Kiwi could find someone else to play with the diggers, and Kea could find someone else to play with the dress-ups.

4. Choose an idea from the children.

Let the puppets explain that they are happy with this solution and that their friendship is still intact despite the disagreement.

Kiwi: That's a great idea. I'm going to ask Ruru to play diggers with me. Hey Kea! Let's play together again later.

Kea: I'm going to ask Pīwakawaka to play dress-ups with me. See you later, Kiwi. Have fun with the diggers!

5. Use the outcome as a teaching tool in other, naturally occurring contexts.

What did we tell Kiwi and Kea to do when they had a problem like this? You could try that, too.

Connie is nearly two and attends a North Shore playcentre. As a naturally reserved, cautious child, she takes time to warm to new people. She tends to prefer quiet activities and often sits back to observe other children as they play. She likes to follow her older brother, Noah, and be close to where he is playing. Noah has been taught to keep a close eye on Connie; he helps her get ready for kai and comforts her if she is upset. He is very supportive of Connie, and this is valued and affirmed by the playcentre whānau.

Sometimes when Noah is playing with his peers and Connie wants to be close by, he asks her to go away. When this happens, she gets very upset and seeks out her favourite kaiako to be comforted.

To support Connie to be more socially confident, kaiako are trying a range of strategies. They have decided to avoid 'over-comforting' her when Noah doesn't want to play with her, because this sends a message that not being able to play with Noah is distressing. Instead they simply say, *That's OK, Noah wants to have a game with his friends for now*, and then help her to calm down with a hug, song, or story and support her to engage in a high-interest activity. When she is calm, they repeat the message that there are lots of times each day when she can be with Noah but it is OK to play with other friends. *Noah is having fun playing with his friends. You are having fun playing puppies with Alfie.*

The kaiako are also intentionally strengthening Connie's identity as a socially capable child who is able to help, comfort, and interact positively with other children:

- They talk about and encourage the social behaviours that she is good at. *Connie, can you give Tessa a little pat to help her feel better? – Tessa's new and needs a kind person to help her feel welcome. Connie, would you and Alfie like to wave at the window to Alfie's Nana?*
- They encourage her to play alongside other children and make connections with them, and they provide commentary that supports these interactions. *Do you think you could join your road onto Alfie's road? That would make a really long road for the trucks to go on!*
- They praise confident social behaviour when they see it and name the positive outcome it leads to. *Connie, you smiled at the baby, and now she wants you to pick up her toy and play with her.*

When Connie hesitates to join in, they frame her shyness positively with other children and provide positive forecasting. *Connie takes a little time to warm up. Soon she will be ready to play with you. You can say, "I hope you will play with me soon, Connie."*

i

'You've got to have friends' by Gail Joseph and Phillip Strain provides valuable advice on social and emotional teaching strategies for supporting children's friendships.



As a team, make a plan for strengthening your focus on friendship and friendly play during community or small-group sharing times:

- Identify and gather resources that will support discussions within an intentional approach, such as puppets, stories, and songs.
- Discuss how you will make links to these discussions as you provide feedback and interact with children throughout the day.



SUPPORTING CHILDREN TO CARE FOR AND EMPATHISE WITH OTHERS

Empathy emerges as a result of caring relationships and interactions, attachments to loving adults, and consistently and reliably having our needs met. As infants and toddlers learn to read the emotions of others, they begin to develop empathy. Tears, laughter, smiles, singing, clapping, and dancing provide them with visible and audible evidence of the emotional worlds of others. Naming and talking about feelings helps them put words to their observations.

The next step is to develop an understanding of the perspective of another person – what they are feeling and why they are feeling it – and, most importantly, to think about how to respond in a way that supports them and affirms the feeling. While their own needs will often take precedence, children in an early learning community have many opportunities to see the impact of events on other children and, if the impact is challenging, the ways in which they are supported to feel better.

We know that children are developing empathy when they:

- are affected by the emotions of others and share in their distress, disappointment, excitement, joy, and so on
- show concern for others when they are upset, trying to help them or advocating for them
- can imagine the feelings of others in response to events. *I think Daisy is feeling excited because her mum's coming to pick her up soon. And Rana is cross because he wants to keep playing and it's tidy up time.*

For most children, naturally occurring interactions within the early learning community and at home provide the experiences they need to develop empathy. Children who are securely attached to the adults in their world and who know that they can count on them for emotional support are more likely to feel concern for others and to try to help them, because they feel safe and supported to do so. They know that the adults won't let them take more of an emotional load than they are able to handle.

Some children need more intentional help to develop empathy. You can support them to learn and practise empathetic skills through both planned opportunities and the use of 'teachable moments'. Developing empathy is also helped when children experience an inclusive community in which diversity and difference are celebrated and manaakitanga is a core value. Here they learn to care about all people, not just people like themselves. This is something that you can model, with a focus on the things we all have in common.

Here are some ideas for supporting children to care for and empathise with others:

- Make use of naturally occurring situations to help children develop empathy. For example, you can support a toddler's learning by helping them to notice that a baby is upset because she has dropped her 'blankie' and by asking them to return it to her. When they see that the baby is feeling better, they are learning about emotional cause and effect and that they can contribute positively to someone's wellbeing.
- Help children to develop their identity and self-concept as a caring, helpful, empathetic person. *I noticed the way you gave Li Jing a back rub when she fell over outside. That helped her feel better. You are a kind person.*

- When a child behaves in an uncaring or thoughtless way, help them to understand the impact of their behaviour. Encourage them to listen when those who have been affected explain how the behaviour has made them feel, and invite them to think about how to fix the problem. This won't require a lecture – rather brief, clear messages and reminders about the behavioural expectations and values of the community. Opportunities to express regret or forgiveness, fix a problem, and restore relationships help everyone involved to develop self-awareness, to learn about others' perspectives, and to understand the impact of their actions on the feelings and wellbeing of others.

Saying sorry and feeling sorry

We want children to learn to be responsible, accountable, and empathetic towards others. While saying sorry may be an expectation in some contexts, the approach below aims to maximise the opportunity for learning that conflict can create. This approach is helpful both alongside and instead of a requirement to say sorry.

Making a child say sorry can be unhelpful if they don't feel sorry or can't yet see things from another's perspective. A different approach that reflects a culture of care within a whānau is to help the child to understand how someone they have hurt or upset is feeling. At the same time, it is important to help them to understand their own feelings – those that may have led to the incident, and those that have arisen from it. In this way, you can help the child to begin to understand the impact of their actions on others and, as a result, to begin to feel genuine regret for causing hurt or stress.

When conflict occurs, avoid rushing to assign blame. Rather, be open and interested about what has happened, seek understanding, and offer help to resolve the situation. Where it is clear that one child has hurt another, acknowledge the hurt and provide a model of regret about it. When the child who has hurt another is calm, remind them of your setting's behavioural expectations and express optimism that they will learn to manage their emotions and to meet their needs in socially positive ways. *I'm sorry that this happened to you, Tala. Matty is learning how to play in a friendly way. He is going to get better at it. Tala, could you please tell Matty how you felt when he pushed you? That will help him to learn ... Matty, we don't push people at our centre. We use a friendly voice to ask someone to please move. I think you will remember to do that next time.*

It may be that, after time to reflect, the child chooses to make a genuine apology. This might be through words or kind actions, demonstrating that the child is expressing manaakitanga and trying to restore the relationship.



Books 5 (Community) and 15 (Contribution) in *Kei Tua o te Pae/Assessment for Learning: Early Childhood Exemplars* explore examples of young children supporting and caring for their peers.

HELPING CHILDREN SUPPORT OTHERS IN THEIR LEARNING

In the early learning community, children can safely try out many different social roles – for example, friend, teacher, learner, tuakana, teina, leader, observer, carer, helper, and problem solver. Through different kinds of play, children explore such roles and develop the social skills needed for successful cooperative interactions with others. We can support this learning by providing opportunities for children to work with and support others.

Here are some key practices for helping children to support others' learning:

- Provide frequent opportunities for tuākana to take leadership roles and responsibilities, such as welcoming new children and whānau, saying karakia for kai, and showing new children routines (e.g., washing hands before eating, how to get and return resources).
- Create opportunities for peer tutoring, in which a child with particular expertise teaches a peer how to make or do something (e.g., a song, dance, rhyme, joke, or trick). *Jasmine, would you like to teach Lucas how to fold a paper plane? Your plane flew a really long way, so I think you are our paper-plane expert!*
- Prompt a child who is 'teaching' to think about their role and the needs of the learner. This has reciprocal benefits for the 'teacher' and 'learner'. In particular, the 'teacher' has to think about the skills and concepts involved in the task and how they are best communicated. *Jasmine, I like the way you slowed down when Lucas wasn't sure what to do next. Lucas is asking you some great questions, and you are being a good teacher!*
- Foster tuakana–teina relationships, within which an older or more experienced child works with and supports a younger or less experienced child. Encourage older children to care about younger children and to contribute to their wellbeing. Be aware that for some peoples, older children have a significant caring role for younger siblings and that for Māori and Pacific whānau, tuakana–teina relationships are a fundamental cultural expectation and strength.

At a rural kōhanga reo, a kaiako writes the following reflection:

Phew! What a day we had, and now it's time for afternoon tea. Each tuakana is asked to take a pēpi by the hand and lead them to the washbasin. For today Prestige has Te Wikitoria, who is doing a good job of showing him how to walk to the basin, hold her hand, and listen to what she is telling him. As he nears the basin she rolls up his sleeves and feels the water to make sure that it is not too hot for him. She then places his hands under the tap and turns them over and over using the soap to make sure that they are clean. When that is all done she turns the tap off and gets two pieces of paper to dry his hands, placing them into the rubbish bin when she has finished. Prestige watches her intently, following every move she makes. Te Wikitoria is not finished yet, as she once again takes him by the hand and leads him to the table, making sure that he is seated properly.

Oh what a perfect role model you are, Te Wikitoria, a perfect tuakana for Prestige to learn from. I commend you to the highest for all that you are teaching our pēpi to do.

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The Daisies publication [“How children learn about responsibility”](#) provides helpful information on supporting tuakana-teina relationships.



As a team, think about the opportunities that currently exist in your setting for children to teach others, show leadership, and be 'experts':

- Consider whether you need a more intentional approach to ensure that children are able to explore these roles and develop these behaviours.
- Plan to provide positive attention to children when they support others, teach, and lead, so that you are signalling to them and others that these behaviours and roles are valued in your community.

HELPING CHILDREN SOLVE SOCIAL PROBLEMS DURING PEER CONFLICT

Conflict with others, while it may be intense, loud, and disruptive, is a significant learning experience for children. From conflict, children learn about the impact of their behaviour on others and develop a greater sense of empathy and an understanding of the emotional worlds of others. Conflict also provides an opportunity for children to create solutions to a problem, such as sharing resources, taking turns, saying sorry, asking for help, or explaining how they feel to others. It supports them to develop and put to use their inner resources for resolving issues (Clarke, McLaughlin, & Aspden, 2017).

When conflict between children occurs, try to avoid jumping to conclusions about what has happened or who is 'at fault'. It can be easy for some children to become scapegoats in many situations. Conflict can be an opportunity for you to counter this, by examining and rejecting potentially biased assumptions and ensuring that your responses are fair and reasonable. Allow space for the children to develop their own solutions, such as sharing a resource or taking turns. Listen to the children, and, if your involvement is needed, ask what they would like to do next and how you can help. Give credit for the problem solving they are engaged in and be sympathetic to those whose feelings have been hurt. Help the children to clarify which behaviours are not OK according to the values and expectations of the community. Frame these behaviours as mistakes, something that some children haven't learned to manage yet but will be able to with practice and help. Be guided by the children's sense of fairness without agreeing to severe consequences.



Consequences can be appropriate when a child hurts another, but they should be educative and natural – for example, listening to how the hurt child is feeling, or fetching a comfort item such as a toy or blanket to help them feel better. Help the child to clarify what they might do next time to manage a similar situation, and provide space for them to express regret for what has happened, without insisting on an apology. Any discussion should be brief and to the point, and it shouldn't leave any child feeling alienated or unwanted by the community. It should clarify that community values and expectations are something we all agree to and that when we make a mistake, we can apologise and plan to do differently next time. We can all help each other to learn. That is our shared responsibility to the early learning whānau. We are still loved, included, and accepted when we make a mistake.

Here are some ways in which you can support children during conflict:

- While conflict presents opportunities for learning, too much conflict creates stress for all members of the community. Therefore, a preventative approach is important. Develop clear expectations and boundaries and help children to understand the need for rules and routines that keep everyone safe (see 'Developing and promoting expectations' in section 1). Actively supervise the learning space, watch out for likely triggers for children, and make sure everyone knows the agreed limitations for their emotional responses. *We can tell people in a firm voice what we want and need, but we don't shout and say mean words, and we don't hurt with our hands or objects.*
- Remember that it's hard for children to recall skills and strategies when they are very upset or in the midst of a conflict. It can take all their energy to cope with the intensity of what they are feeling, so they may need support to work through the event as it is happening. After conflict, children may need help to settle to an activity or rejoin a game that has been the source of conflict. The problem-solving approach below can help with this.
- Plan and teach problem-solving skills and the steps of identifying a problem, thinking of solutions, and trying out solutions. Notice and recognise when children independently problem-solve to manage tricky situations, by taking responsibility for their actions and working to resolve conflict. *I noticed Leo pushed you when you were playing in the sandpit. You said, "I don't like that" and then walked away. Well done, that was a good choice!*
- Use role play, puppets, or storytelling to demonstrate problem solving during conflict. There's no problem with you modelling a wrong way and some right ways to solve a problem, so that children can explore the pros and cons of each approach. Ask children to identify and demonstrate right ways, but don't ask them to model wrong ways, as it's not helpful for them to practise these. In addition, they may play out different scenarios during dramatic play, which helps them develop fluency as they imagine a variety of resolutions to problems.
- Prepare children for situations that you anticipate could lead to conflict. For example, some children have difficulty with the proximity of other children when they are playing. *I think Maia is coming to play beside you. Hello Maia. Maia is going to play with the truck while you are playing with the loader. Perhaps you could dump some sand on the truck for Maia.*

A problem-solving approach for young children

1. **Calm down.** *OK, I'll take some deep breaths and count to 10.*
2. **Name the problem.** *George is playing with all the little cars and I want to play with them too.*
3. **Think of some safe, fair solutions.** *I could ask George to share the cars. I could play something else until he's finished with them. I could ask an adult to help.*
4. **Try one of the solutions.** *When I asked George and said please, he gave me all the red and blue cars.*



Cue cards can be useful for planned teaching with children on how to resolve conflicts and then for referring to as reminders.



Promoting social competence: Key points

Play is very important for the development of children's social skills.

Cultural expectations and values influence social behaviour.

Being able to initiate social interactions with peers is a key skill. We can help children to learn it by modelling how to initiate and respond to social invitations.

In the early learning community, children can safely try out different social roles such as friend, teacher, learner, tuakana, teina, carer, and problem solver.

From conflict, children learn about the impact of their behaviour on others and develop a greater sense of empathy. Intentionally teaching problem-solving skills helps children to manage and resolve conflict.

Effective strategies for promoting social competence include:

Fostering peer friendships and interactions

- Supporting children to notice each other and initiate and respond to invitations to play
- Providing praise and encouragement when children demonstrate social skills
- Supporting children with social behaviours needed for group interactions

Supporting children to care for and empathise with others

- Noticing and affirming children's caring behaviour towards others who are upset
- Supporting children to understand the impact of their behaviour on others

Helping children support others in their learning

- Enabling and supporting tuakana–teina relationships
- Creating opportunities for children to teach each other and to lead

Helping children solve social problems during peer conflict

- Establishing clear behavioural expectations and boundaries
- Teaching children problem-solving skills to help them avoid or work through conflict.



Section 4: Supporting learning and engagement

Wāhanga 4: Te hāpai ako me te whaiwāhitanga

Ka whāngaia, ka tupu, ka puāwai.

That which is nurtured blossoms and grows.

When we support children to be capable learners, their social and emotional competence grows as well.

Successfully supporting learning and engagement requires high expectations, a responsive curriculum, and planned, intentional pedagogical approaches. A child develops an identity as a learner as a result of the expectations that kaiako hold for them and the opportunities that the curriculum provides for them to choose, lead, create, explore, plan, and solve problems. *Te Whāriki* describes the critical role of play in this regard. Children become confident, curious learners through play in an environment that responds to their strengths and interests and that stretches them beyond the familiar.

Children learn through play: by doing, asking questions, interacting with others, devising theories about how things work and then trying them out and by making purposeful use of resources. As they engage in exploration, they begin to develop attitudes and expectations that will continue to influence their learning throughout life.

Te Whāriki, page 46

Learning and behaviour go hand in hand. Self-regulated, self-managing behaviours help children make the most of opportunities to learn. Positive social behaviours help children to learn with and alongside others and to support others' learning. When we use inclusive pedagogies that support learning *and* behaviour, we ensure that all children are motivated, engaged, and able to participate and contribute.

In this resource, *self-regulation* refers to having appropriate control over emotional responses and showing resilience in response to disappointment or conflict. *Self-management* refers to having the cognitive control needed for learning: being able to focus attention, persevere, plan, choose, and decide what to do next. These skills support the development of learning dispositions such as curiosity and creativity and help children to develop their identities as capable learners.

These behaviours and skills relate to the concept of 'executive functioning', which includes having self-control, working memory, and flexibility in thinking. Executive functions enable children to pay attention and focus, plan and prioritise, regulate their emotions, and keep track of what they are doing as they are working on a task.

Toddlers show their developing capability to self-manage by being able to focus their attention for short periods of time, being able to delay gratification in some circumstances, and modifying their behaviour in response to feedback or to achieve a goal. *I can wait for the plate of sandwiches to be passed around ... I know to be quiet near where the babies are sleeping ... I can share the space for the blocks when someone else wants to play beside me.*

Young children are able to focus their attention and persist with tasks for increasing lengths of time. They can use cognitive strategies such as positive self-talk to calm themselves, prepare themselves for a transition, or work through a problem. *I am going to tidy up my game now (even though I don't want to) so that I can be ready to go to the park ... I'm going to ask Connor nicely to share because I've learned that he is more likely to share with me when I use a friendly voice and don't snatch.*

Children learn about the beneficial outcomes of self-regulated, self-managing behaviours as they test out different ways of interacting with others and receive feedback from adults and peers. This learning is supported by:

- warm, positive relationships within which children feel cared about and secure, enabling them to explore, take risks, and make mistakes
- consistent routines and clear boundaries that make it easy for children to understand and meet behavioural expectations
- intentional pedagogies such as modelling, prompting, and providing opportunities for practice and feedback
- a rich, varied curriculum responsive to children's strengths, interests, and preferences
- help with language to describe emotions and communicate needs for support.

Related learning outcomes from *Te Whāriki*

Over time and with guidance and encouragement, children become increasingly capable of:

- Making sense of their worlds by generating and refining working theories | te rangahau me te mātauranga
- Recognising and appreciating their own ability to learn | te rangatiratanga
- Making connections between people, places, and things in their world | te waihanga hononga.

Key strategies that this section unpacks are:

- Supporting children to manage their learning
- Providing rich and varied learning opportunities
- Removing barriers to participation, engagement, and learning
- Supporting transitions.

SUPPORTING CHILDREN TO MANAGE THEIR LEARNING

At the heart of self-management is metacognition – the ability to think about our thinking. Children learn to use their thinking skills to manage their learning. When children make choices during play, work things out for themselves and solve problems, use resources in creative, innovative ways, and use charm and diplomacy to get others to help them enact a plan, they are demonstrating their ability as thoughtful, capable, self-managing learners. We can support children's development of metacognition and promote self-managed learning by noticing and articulating the causal relationship between self-managing behaviours and good outcomes. *When you used a friendly voice to ask for help, people really wanted to help you, because you were showing your nice manners ... When you got a bit bored with the blocks, I noticed you having a little think, and then you came up with a great plan for a new activity – ka pai! ... When you were having trouble getting your tower to stay up, I saw you try some different ways, and then you worked out what to do. You stayed very calm and solved the problem. Well done!*

Kaiako play an important role in scaffolding children's learning and development through guiding and prompting and by provoking learning to occur. It is important that all children have opportunities to be supported in their learning by kaiako and tuākana. This enables them to 'stretch' towards their potential through collaboration with adults or more capable peers.

When the concept of ako is in action, both children and kaiako experience opportunities to be teachers and learners. For a child, such opportunities strengthen their self-concept as a capable leader and learner.

As they develop, toddlers and young children become increasingly capable of reflecting on their learning and behaviour. Reflection helps children to manage their own learning, make choices, persist at tasks, and have the confidence to use time, space and resources in complex, creative ways.



Here are some ways in which you can support children to manage their learning:

- Share narratives about learning with children and their whānau to highlight the children's use of self-managing, self-regulated behaviours. Sharing narratives encourages whānau to value and support the behaviours and enables the co-construction of goals to strengthen them.
- Ask children about their plans and take an active interest in what they are working on. (See the story about Ioane on the right for an example of this.)
- Give specific feedback when you notice children's attempts at working towards a goal and their use of self-managing behaviours, such as persistence, to help them achieve it. *I noticed the way you kept trying ... had another go ... tried a different way ... asked questions to find out ... asked someone to help ... bounced back after you felt disappointed ... solved the problem.*
- Provide positive forecasting to help children to expect good outcomes from using self-managing strategies such as visualising and planning. Help them to bounce back if things don't go to plan. Oliver: *I'm going to use this bucket to dig a channel for the water to flow down and then make a dam at the end with the big stones to make a little lake.* Kaiako: *Great idea to make a plan before you start. I can't wait to see how it turns out. ... I was so sure your plan would work, Oliver, and you tried really hard. Perhaps after lunch you could think of a new plan and have another go. I'm excited to see what you try next!*
- Use video modelling as a way of inspiring children to challenge themselves. *Here are Maddie and Silesi on the monkey bars. See how they are using their legs to start swinging, and the muscles in their arms to try to swing across to the next bar? It's pretty tricky, but they keep trying. They're not giving up. Yay, they did it!* You can also use video modelling for teaching communication and social skills, such as asking to play, asking to share, and asking for help.
- Create photo stories of children working through a problem – making a plan and then carrying out a task or collaborating with others. Share and revisit the story during community or small-group meeting times.



At a Pacific early learning centre in Papakura the children are currently interested in small-world play using found objects. Ioane has been making an animal habitat for toy animals using small pieces of wood, sticks, leaves, and sand.

A kaiako sits down beside Ioane to talk about his habitat. In the conversation, she supports his learning by taking an extended interest in his project, expanding his oral language, asking him to describe his next steps, encouraging him to think about the materials he will need to implement his plan, and supporting him to invite another child to join him.

Kaiako: *Mālō Ioane, what you are working on today?*

Ioane: *I'm making little places for the jungle animals to hide in. This is a place where the lion can watch the other animals. See, the giraffes can't see the lion in the grass.*

Kaiako: *I see. The lion is camouflaged by the brown leaves. That means he is the same colour as the leaves and can't be seen. What are you going to make next?*

Ioane: *I want to make a little waterhole for the giraffes to get a drink.*

Kaiako: *What will you need for that?*

Ioane: *I need to get some water, and maybe a big shell can be the waterhole.*

Kaiako: *That sounds like a good idea to try out. Do you need anyone to work with you?*

Ioane: *I want to ask Leilani to help, but I think she's busy.*

Kaiako: *You could tap her on the shoulder and ask her to come and see what you're doing. She might like to join you.*



The individual books in *Kei Tua o te Pae/Assessment for Learning: Early Childhood Exemplars* contain many examples of kaiako and whānau supporting children's goal setting and self-reflection.

The website of Harvard University's Center on the Developing Child contains helpful summary information and a video on [executive functions](#) and self-regulation, and a video showing [five steps for brain building 'serve and return'](#).

Online portfolio platforms such as [Storypark](#) help kaiako and whānau to support children's self-reflection by documenting with pictures and text children's learning and their developing social and emotional strengths and interests.

Video modelling – what it is and how to use it – is discussed on this [webpage](#).

PROVIDING RICH AND VARIED LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

A rich, responsive curriculum, actively planned and regularly reviewed, will engage and motivate children. While children's interests and preferences provide a good starting point for curriculum development, it is also important to extend children beyond what they know and what they experience in their everyday lives. This gives them opportunities to explore new ideas and diverse social and cultural contexts, and to practise their developing social and emotional skills as they engage with new experiences. To provide a mixture of challenge and familiarity, you can integrate children's interests and preferences into new experiences and contexts. You can also draw on your own talents, strengths, and interests to enrich and enliven the curriculum.

Some children may be anxious or tentative about trying new activities. Support and modelling from tuākana can then be helpful – observing older children trying out and enjoying new activities helps younger children to visualise themselves 'having a go'. It is also important to give the children time and space to 'warm up' to the idea. Careful preparation, gentle encouragement, and thoughtful noticing of children's attempts and successes with new experiences will help them to feel supported without pressure.

Engaging with a variety of learning opportunities and contexts supports children's acquisition of vocabulary and development of communication skills, including the use of increasingly complex language structures. These skills strengthen children's social confidence, as they become better able to talk about and express their emotions and to use language to access and contribute to group activities.

A rich and varied curriculum will be culturally responsive and affirm the importance of language and culture in children's identity-development and wellbeing. Where possible, whānau, hapū, and iwi will be an important source of knowledge and content in the development of a local, community-connected curriculum (Glasgow & Rameka, 2017).

Some children spend many hours in an early learning setting, and sometimes lack of engagement and boredom lead to problematic behaviour. It is helpful for children if you talk about boredom as a problem to be solved through their own agency, by making choices that create interest for themselves. You need to give space for this to happen and provide feedback about the active choice making and problem solving that has taken place. This is much easier with a varied curriculum that stimulates imagination and initiative through the availability of rich, open-ended activities.

To ensure that your local curriculum provides a variety of learning opportunities to support engagement, try the following:

- Go out into the wider community and environment to engage children with the world beyond the early learning setting. For children who are naturally energetic and curious, this will provide stimulating adventures.
- To help achieve the goal of culturally confident children, use home languages as much as possible and encourage whānau to contribute their support to this. Strengthen relationships with extended whānau members as a way of weaving cultural practices, stories, and languages into your setting and curriculum.
- Engage in extended interactions with children. Deep conversations exploring complex ideas and problems help children to develop their thinking and language skills. They also support the development of social competence, as children learn to listen and respond in thoughtful, connected ways. Such conversations are sometimes referred to as 'sustained shared thinking'.

- Ensure that there are space and time for thinking, imagining, quiet reflection, and cognitive rest. These are important components of a child's day. The natural environment provides an important context for this and for sustaining and revitalising the wairua of children.
- Ensure that activity areas remain inviting and intriguing. Is there enough variation to keep activities captivating and thought-provoking? Is there a balance of continuity and change that encourages children to revisit activities? For example, little kete or tables of objects that are thematically linked can provoke sorting, sequencing, and creative play opportunities. To keep these fresh, replace some items every few days.
- Ensure that there are plenty of opportunities for physically active play in which children build confidence in using and controlling their bodies, testing their limits, and releasing tension through exercise.
- Display images of children engaged in different projects and activities as a source of inspiration for children. Encourage children to bring photos from home that show them engaged in interesting activities with whānau, and use these to support children's choices of activities.
- Develop social stories or photo boards that show a child moving from being unsure about what to do next to engaging in an engrossing activity that uses resources in creative ways.
- Create 'story tables', where favourite picture books are displayed with objects that encourage retelling and dramatisation among groups of children. This supports language development and cooperative play.



The webpage [Provocations on the Playground](#) provides a rich example of using natural materials to create an engaging outdoor activity area. New Zealand's [Enviroschools programme](#) also opens up possibilities for outdoor learning opportunities.

Children's Services Central in New South Wales has published [several articles](#) on the learning opportunities offered by sustained shared thinking by children and adults together, and the paper "[Adult-child sustained shared thinking: Who, how and when?](#)" in New Zealand's *Early Education* journal discusses research findings in relation to this topic.

For supporting children's developing oral language, see [Much More Than Words](#) on TKI, ERO's [Oral Language Learning and Development](#), and Dana Suskind's book [Thirty Million Words: Building a Child's Brain](#).



Read and discuss one or more of the articles on sustained shared thinking that are linked to immediately above. Are there some new ways in which you can support children's thinking and language skills? For example:

- Plan more extended conversations with children in which you work together to contribute to thinking and ideas.
- After a week of trialling this approach, reflect on and share the kinds of questions and strategies that worked best to promote complex thinking and problem exploration.

REMOVING BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION, ENGAGEMENT, AND LEARNING

Sometimes, we inadvertently create barriers to children's successful participation and engagement through our policies or practices, and this can lead to problem behaviour. Our internal evaluation processes should help us to think about whether our organisational structures interrupt the flow of children's activities or impede children's agency and choice making.

We want all of our tamariki to participate in and contribute to the early learning curriculum. We are more likely to achieve this when the environment provides:

- multiple opportunities for children to build knowledge and develop theories about how their world works
- multiple ways in which they can show us what they know and can do
- varied activities that engage their interests and motivate and challenge them.

Here are some key practices for identifying and addressing barriers to children's successful participation, engagement, and learning:

- Limit tidy up times to only once or twice a day. This ensures that children can get engaged with complex, open-ended activities that promote maximum creativity and exploration. Sometimes, the nature of your available space means that activities have to be cleared away for kai or rest time. However, it is important to ensure that routines such as mat time and tidying up don't dominate the day or prevent children from getting into the flow of a sustained activity.
- Label and store resources so that they are easy to find, access, and return. Make sure they are in good working order and that there are enough of them, particularly for high-use items.
- Maintain a flexible approach for where resources can be used. Can dolls have an adventure in the garden or sandpit? Can dough be used to make a picnic for soft toys under a tree? Ensure that limitations and boundaries are created to serve your children's interests rather than for efficiency and adult-centred convenience.
- Use multiple means of communication, including visual prompts such as pictures for the routines of washing hands, setting the table for kai, and putting bags away. Pair gestural prompts with verbal prompts (e.g., patting your head and saying *Tikina tō pōtae/Fetch your hat*). These help children to navigate the routines and expectations that are in place.⁶
- Be aware of activities, kaiako practices, or policies that can cause stress or conflict. For example, in the following story, insisting that all children stay on the mat was positioning some children as 'problems' when they chose to leave the mat for a preferred activity. When reframed, the behaviour becomes an example of child agency, where children are seeking an activity in which they feel engaged and calm, rather than bored, frustrated, and needing to be 'managed' by others.

⁶ For children with additional communication needs, you can seek advice and support from the Ministry of Education's Early Intervention Communication Service.

At a Tauranga kindergarten, the kaiako have a policy that all children must come to the mat to listen to a story each morning. The children are expected to listen quietly, with hands and feet still. Kaiako believe that this is an important time for community building, and that it also prepares the children for school. While one kaiako reads a story, another draws pictures to accompany it on a whiteboard. Many of the older children enjoy this; however, some children will leave the mat for a different, preferred activity during the story. The centre policy is that if children leave before the story is finished, a kaiako will bring them back. This can cause a disturbance that delays the story and increases the duration of mat time.

Three-year-old Tyler finds mat time particularly challenging. He often tries to engage with other children on the mat by chatting to them and touching them. Often he brings a toy to play with, which he sometimes throws at other children to get their attention. He usually chooses to leave the mat at some time during the story, and does not willingly return with a kaiako.

The kaiako jointly agree that mat time is not working and decide to review their policy. They ask themselves some key questions:

- Is mat time meeting the needs of all of our children?
- Does it matter if children leave the mat when they are not interested in the story?
- Are mat time expectations causing us to think of children such as Tyler as disruptive? What is another way we could view his behaviour?

After a careful review, including watching a video recording of mat time, they decide to change their approach. Now mat time has been shortened so that there is still an opportunity for community building through greetings and a waiata. After this, children can choose to stay for a story. If a child decides to leave the mat to find a preferred activity, this is viewed as a positive choice. Tyler and others receive a 'thumbs up' when they choose to quietly leave without disrupting others and find something else to do.



There are many books, articles, and websites on Universal Design for Learning, which focuses on removing barriers to children's successful participation and engagement. Three examples are the article '[Universal Design for Learning \(UDL\): What you need to know](#)', the website [Early Childhood Building Blocks](#), and TKI's [Guide to Universal Design for Learning](#).



Working with several colleagues, read the above story on mat time and discuss:

- Do any of our policies restrict children's choices or create challenges for them that result in problem behaviour? If so, how could we modify them?
- Do we regularly reflect on the rationales for our policies to ensure that they are focused on the needs of children rather than convenience for adults?

SUPPORTING TRANSITIONS

Major changes and transitions can trigger strong emotions for children. It is essential that they are given plenty of time to prepare for them, that they have opportunities to talk about what may be worrying them, and that their questions are answered honestly and supportively. During times of change, children need additional attention, affection, and reassurance. It is important that adults help them to positively frame the potential outcomes of the change while acknowledging their feelings. *I think you might be feeling worried, Anaru. That's OK. I think you will love it at school because you are so good at making friends. The teachers from your new school are coming for a visit tomorrow to meet you. Then next week your family is taking you to visit the school to have a little play there. It's great that you will know your teachers and lots of the children before you start.*

For smaller transitions between activities, the following simple strategies help to reduce stress:

- Give plenty of warnings and reminders about routine transitions. *In five minutes it's going to be time to come to the mat for waiata and a story. Then we'll wash our hands for lunch.* Try to be unhurried with this approach, giving plenty of time for children to prepare cognitively for what is going to happen next.
- Develop visual cues, rituals, games, songs, and chants to make transitions predictable and to help children prepare for them and remember the transition routine. *I'm going to put on our 'tidy up' music. Let's see if we can get it done before the song finishes ... It's nearly lunchtime – remember, it's 'tidy up, wash our hands, karakia, kai'.* Photos of the steps involved in the transition can be a useful teaching tool.
- Offer choices that give the children some agency in how the transition is achieved. *When it's time to come to the mat for waiata, will I give you a wink, a wave, or a thumbs up? ... When it's time to tidy up, you can put the little cars away first, or the blocks.*
- Avoid making threats, such as *I'm counting to five and then ...* This can add stress for children who are resistant to a transition and can create an oppositional or anxious response.
- For transitions to events outside your setting, such as going to a marae or on a bush walk, prepare the children well in advance by talking about what is going to happen. Involve them in preparations and give them responsibilities for remembering what is needed for a successful outing. Model and practise with them the use of positive self-talk ahead of the transition, and clarify the expectations of safe and positive social behaviour in the new setting. Leadership and modelling from tuākana will be an important support for younger children.
- Remind children of times they have managed a transition successfully, drawing on positive prior experiences when preparing them for the change. *Remember when we went for a visit to the gardens? You felt a bit worried at the start. But then you held hands with Lyla and Liam, and you three had a lovely time eating your sandwiches beside the fountain.*



The [Pathways and transitions](#) page of Te Whāriki Online provides valuable support for situations involving transitions.

[Volume 53](#) of New Zealand's *Early Education* journal contains a useful article by Aimee de Candole on supporting children and whānau in the transition from an early learning setting to school.

Supporting learning and engagement: Key points

Successfully supporting learning and engagement requires high expectations, a responsive curriculum, and planned, intentional pedagogical approaches.

Learning and behaviour go hand in hand. Self-regulated, self-managing behaviours help children make the most of opportunities to learn.

Children's interests and preferences provide a good starting point for curriculum development. It is also important to extend children beyond what they know and what they experience in their everyday lives.

A rich and varied curriculum will be culturally responsive and affirm the importance of language and culture in children's identity-development and wellbeing.

Effective strategies for supporting learning and engagement include:

Supporting children to manage their learning

- Having extended interactions with children about their plans, projects, and experiences
- Giving feedback to children demonstrating self-managing learning behaviours
- Motivating children to extend and challenge themselves

Providing rich and varied learning opportunities

- Drawing on the wider community and environment to create a rich curriculum
- Ensuring activity areas are inviting with a balance of continuity and change
- Ensuring there are opportunities for physically active play

Removing barriers to participation, engagement, and learning

- Limiting tidy up times to allow children to engage with complex tasks
- Ensuring routines are inclusive, supportive, and helpful
- Changing policies or practices that create confusion for children or whānau

Supporting transitions

- Preparing children and providing reminders ahead of routine, daily transitions
- Offering choices that support children's agency during transitions
- Supporting children to prepare for major transitions.



Section 5: Understanding behaviour

Wāhanga 5: Ngā tūmomo whanonga

Whaowhia te kete mātauranga.

Fill the basket of knowledge.

Building our knowledge about behaviour helps us support children more effectively.

Kaiako, in partnership with whānau, play an important role in supporting children to develop behaviours that enable them to be successful in their learning and relationships. When you understand the social and individual influences on behaviour, you are better able to create a responsive environment and to support positive behaviour through intentional teaching and guidance.

Children's behaviour is influenced by a combination of 'nature' and 'nurture'. A child's temperament sits mostly within the 'nature' part of the equation, as it is something that they are born with. Their temperament influences their developing personality, their dispositions for learning, and the ways in which they respond to their environment.

Temperamental traits lie on a continuum from being shy and cautious, to being relaxed, adaptable and calm, through to being highly active, with intense emotional responses. While these are innate qualities, they can be strengthened or moderated by the parenting, modelling, and teaching that a child experiences. With the right support and feedback, children can build on their existing skills and develop new skills in order to interact successfully with others in different contexts (Wittmer & Petersen, 2014).

All traits bring with them particular strengths as well as areas for skill-building and development. A naturally shy, cautious child can draw on their particular 'way of being' to form relationships with others and become more socially confident. A child who is easily distracted and has difficulty concentrating can learn to pay attention and persist at tasks. Whānau are the best source of information about a child's temperament. With this information, kaiako are better able to ensure that the early learning environment is supportive and responsive.

Social learning is the 'nurture' part of the equation. In particular, what happens at home is one of the strongest influences on behaviour. The Family and community | Whānau tangata principle of *Te Whāriki* reminds us of the important link between a child's wellbeing and the wellbeing of their whānau. The wellbeing of whānau members, along with their values, behavioural expectations, and beliefs about bringing up children, influences the development of a child's social and emotional competence. While you cannot address many of the issues that cause stress in a whānau, you can provide support by working in partnership with the whānau and valuing their contribution. You can focus on the important difference you can make for all children in the context of the early learning environment.

VALUING DIVERSE CULTURAL VIEWS OF BEHAVIOUR

There is no single definition of positive behaviour, no one 'right way' for children to behave. Positive behaviour for your early learning context will reflect the values and expectations that have been co-constructed by kaiako, tamariki, and whānau.

Definitions of positive behaviour are culturally constructed and located. It is important to be aware of this before making judgments. Valuing diverse ways of being and knowing is central to *Te Whāriki*. This should encourage us to be curious about the different ways whānau view their children's behaviour. For example, Samoan 'aiga may prioritise respect for elders and compliance with instruction from adults at home and in the early learning setting. For Māori for whom Māui is a cultural hero, the attributes of manaakitanga, rangatiratanga, determination, resourcefulness, and initiative may be greatly valued. For many Māori, the ability of older children to take responsibility for and care for younger siblings is critical, and values and behaviours associated with this are prioritised (Rameka, 2011).

Viewing behaviour through a cultural lens ensures that we take a strength-focused, holistic approach to supporting children's behaviour. When we take into account whānau perceptions, we are less likely to frame behaviour in deficit ways. 'Cheek' can become 'charm', risky behaviour may be framed as showing a sense of adventure and problem solving, and passive acceptance can be seen as peaceful, respectful ignoring – as in the story about Cho on the right.

Te ao Māori takes a holistic approach to wellbeing and development. Where the child's physical, mental, spiritual, or whānau wellbeing is out of balance, their behaviour will be affected (Durie, 1998). Similarly, the Holistic Development | Kotahitanga principle of *Te Whāriki* describes the interconnectedness of all dimensions of a child's development – cognitive (hinengaro), physical (tinana), emotional (whatumanawa), spiritual (wairua), social, and cultural. A holistic approach to children's behaviour means that you should consider the whole picture of a child's wellbeing and development in order to better understand and support them. In particular, in an environment that supports te taha wairua, children feel uplifted and engaged by relationships that are warm and mana-enhancing and a curriculum that is responsive to their preferences and interests.

Because children develop holistically, they need a broad and rich curriculum that enables them to grow their capabilities across all dimensions.

Te Whāriki, page 19

An infant being shy with strangers, a toddler who resists being put to bed, a young child having difficulty with peer relationships – these behaviours are part of children's social and emotional development. We shouldn't label them as problems. With attention, patience, and support from whānau and kaiako, children come through these stages and become increasingly secure, trusting, and confident. They also learn skills that support their ongoing development.

Sometimes, however, a child's behaviour does become a problem. It is a problem when it is a barrier to their positive engagement with others, when it reduces opportunities to participate, learn, and make friends. It is also a problem when it creates anxiety, isolation, or stress for the child and for the child's whānau. The remainder of this section discusses what you can do to prevent problem behaviour from developing and to support behaviour change when needed. In situations of serious concern, you may need help with behaviour support planning.

Four-year-old Cho has recently joined a playgroup in Wellington. He and his family are Burmese and have recently arrived in New Zealand as refugees. Cho is a naturally shy child, and this trait has been strengthened by his parents' cultural values and expectations. For them, it is important that Cho plays quietly and doesn't fight with other children. At home, he is taught to be polite, respectful, and compliant, and so he has learned not to respond if other children snatch a toy from him, push him, or talk to him unkindly.

The kaiako at the playgroup is a confident, assertive person. She encourages children to 'use their words' and to clearly communicate their needs and wants to others. She views Cho's submissive behaviour as somewhat problematic and is concerned about how he will manage at school. She believes that he needs to stick up for himself and has been encouraging him to do so. This has created anxiety for Cho, who tries hard to comply with adult instructions.

To discuss Cho's behaviour, Cho's parents have come to a meeting accompanied by someone who translates for them. As a result, they and the kaiako gain an understanding of the two differing views of behaviour that Cho is trying to make sense of. The kaiako sees that his parents are proud of the respectful, calm way in which he responds to other children. They want him to make friends, to fit in with other children, and to transition well to school. But they also want to reinforce their cultural expectations of behaviour, because that is important to the wellbeing of the whole family.

The kaiako agrees that Cho's peaceful, respectful approach is a strength that the playgroup community could learn from. She also suggests, and the parents agree, that it is OK for Cho to sometimes say *I am playing with that* or *I don't like that* to other children, as a respectful and friendly way of communicating his needs to others.

Behaviour support planning: Seeking help

In situations where you are concerned about an individual child, you can contact your local Ministry of Education office to discuss your concerns. The service manager for your area will help you decide whether a request for additional support is needed. With the agreement of a child's family, you can then make a request.

A learning support practitioner such as an early intervention teacher will meet with the family to work through the informed consent process. The practitioner will talk with you about what is currently working well and help with further planning and any environmental or practice changes needed in the early learning setting. The practitioner may also provide support in the home, or connect the family with an appropriate service provider.

Learning support practitioners can also help you with more general advice about behaviour support or how to create an inclusive environment for children with diverse learning needs. A family concerned about their child can also contact the Ministry of Education directly and speak with Learning Support.

Where a plan to support behaviour change is needed for an individual child, it will be most effective when it is co-constructed with whānau. Whānau who feel connected to kaiako and valued for their knowledge of their child are most likely to contribute to a behaviour support plan and to follow it at home (Macfarlane & Macfarlane, 2012).

BEHAVIOUR AS COMMUNICATION

All behaviour has a purpose. Through their behaviour, children may be trying to obtain something (e.g., a toy, attention) or to avoid something (e.g., having to wait for a turn).⁷ However, behaviour also communicates important information about what is happening in a child's social and emotional world. This information helps us when the child's behaviour has become a problem. By observing the behaviour and trying to understand its purpose and meaning, we can plan appropriate strategies to support behaviour change.

It is important to remember that a child is not necessarily conscious of the purpose of their behaviour; they may be responding in learned ways that have become automatic. If these learned responses work for the child, they will continue to behave in these ways. Our goal is to create an environment that supports toddlers and young children to communicate their needs in socially positive, contextually appropriate ways. Where a child has learned and practised inappropriate behaviours to meet their needs, we can help them by teaching and reinforcing alternative, positive behaviours. This is a recommended practice within the Belonging | Mana whenua strand of *Te Whāriki*.

Strategies that promote positive behaviour for learning are used to prevent unacceptable behaviour and support the learning of new behaviours, social skills and competencies.

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A simple way to identify the purpose of behaviour is to analyse its 'ABC'.

- The **A**ntecedent (what happens before the behaviour)
- The **B**ehaviour itself
- The **C**onsequence (what happens after the behaviour).

When we are using the ABC model, it is important to always start by describing the behaviour, the B part of the model. This helps us to be clear about what it is that a child is doing that has become a problem, and to describe a replacement behaviour – an alternative behaviour that will be more helpful for the child's learning and relationships. In the following story, the kaiako describe the behaviour that has become a problem and then use the ABC model to form a hypothesis about its purpose. They then identify what Ricky needs to do instead (learn friendly ways to play and manage his emotions) and decide how they will help him to learn these new skills.

⁷ Obtaining and avoiding are the two purposes usually associated with behaviour. A third possible purpose is seeking sensory stimulation or the release of tension.

Three-year-old Ricky attends a preschool in Blenheim. When he is required to share playing space or resources with other children, he is likely to shout *Go away!* When he does this, children leave him to play by himself.

The kaiako describe this behaviour and then further analyse it using the ABC model. This helps them come to the following hypothesis:

When Ricky is required to share space and resources with other children (Antecedent), he is likely to shout (Behaviour). When he does this, children leave him by himself (Consequence). His behaviour allows him to avoid interacting with others (Purpose).

The kaiako decide that Ricky's behaviour is a problem because it isolates him and reduces his opportunities for positive social learning. They agree that Ricky needs some help to learn friendly ways to play with others and to manage his emotions when the presence of other children makes him feel anxious or threatened.

The kaiako talk to Ricky's whānau, who explain that generally they prefer to let Ricky and his siblings sort out their differences themselves. When it is agreed that Ricky's shouting is causing him to be socially isolated, the whānau and kaiako agree to implement some consistent responses to the behaviour at the preschool and at home.

They agree that at the preschool, the kaiako will:

- support Ricky to manage his feelings about sharing and taking turns with resources
- teach him some friendly ways to respond to children who want to play with him and create situations where he can experience success with these (e.g., games that require sharing and turn taking)
- model sharing and turn taking with puppets during community mat time and use this as a teaching tool in other contexts. *Remember what we told Kiwi to do when Kea wanted to share the little cars with her?*



ANTECEDENTS: USING A PREVENTATIVE APPROACH

Most of our planning and energy should go towards the antecedent part of the ABC model – that is, to creating an environment where problem behaviour is largely prevented and positive behaviour is supported for all children. Sections 1–4 of this resource describe in detail the preventative (antecedent) practices and strategies that help us create such an environment.

While you can't have control over all of the factors that can influence or trigger problem behaviour, there are broad, environmental antecedents that you can directly take responsibility for. These include:

- the relational environment – modelling and supporting values such as manaakitanga and aroha
- the learning environment – using good assessment practices that help you to know your learners and provide a varied, stimulating curriculum that meets their needs and responds to their interests and preferences
- behaviour support strategies – consistently using clear expectations, boundaries, routines, prompts, and reminders
- supporting and teaching positive social behaviours – in planned ways and when 'teachable moments' arise during play.

When these are all in place, the likelihood of positive behaviour is increased. See section 1 for more information on creating a supportive, inclusive environment for all children.



BEHAVIOURS: INTERPRETING AND DESCRIBING BEHAVIOUR

When we talk about behaviour, it is important to be as objective as possible in our description and to focus on the behaviour rather than the child. Descriptions of problem behaviour should avoid judgmental language or subjective interpretations (e.g., words such as naughty, wilful, mean, manipulative, sly, bossy, lazy). Describing the behaviour in objective terms and focusing on what the child does helps us think about the alternative behaviours that will help the child to be more successful in their learning and relationships.

When we combine the description of a child's behaviour with information about what happens before and after the behaviour, we can better understand the purpose and meaning of the behaviour. We should also take into account other contextual influences, such as family stressors or aspects of the early learning environment that may need to be reviewed (e.g., curriculum, relationships, organisational practices, policies). Our information gathering should also consider the sensory environment, including the possible impact of noise, light, or temperature on the child's behaviour. Understanding the purpose and context for the behaviour helps with planning to support behaviour change.

Millie attends a Queenstown kindergarten. Often when kaiako ask her to tidy up what she is doing at a table so that they can serve kai, she says no and becomes upset. They then give her a bit longer to play, and other children and a kaiako comfort her and help her to tidy up.

After discussing Millie's behaviour, the kaiako agree that it is telling them that she wants to keep doing what she is doing and is frustrated by having to stop before she is ready. They think the purposes of her behaviour are to avoid having to stop her activity when asked, to avoid having to tidy up, and to get attention from children and adults.

The kaiako discuss the behaviours that will be more helpful for Millie's learning and development. They agree that it would be helpful for Millie to learn to say "OK" in a friendly voice and to follow the instruction with just a little bit of help if needed.

After further contextual consideration and planning, the kaiako note this change to their daily practice and the kindergarten's procedures:

Millie enjoys independent exploration and play. She often gets immersed in a project and enters a state of 'flow'. We understand that children's projects are very important to them, so we are going to think of some organisational solutions to needing tables for kai and for project work that will benefit all the children. We also see that Millie could benefit from more attention from us, and we are going to spend more time with her.

We do think that Millie needs to learn how to respond to reasonable adult requests without too much fuss. We are going to use our puppets to model this kind of response at mat time. We are also going to give Millie individual warnings about upcoming transitions to help her prepare for changes of activity. We will make sure we give her positive feedback when she says "OK" in a friendly voice and follows instructions.

CONSEQUENCES: RESPONDING TO BEHAVIOUR

It is important that the ways in which we respond to inappropriate behaviour are mana-enhancing and preserve the dignity of all involved. We must take care that we never embarrass children, single them out as an example, or use humour or sarcasm in ways that belittle or label them. We also need to be aware of our biases, regularly checking that our responses are not influenced by low expectations or deficit theories related to culture or gender (see 'The reflective practitioner' on page 18).

Children's developing personalities and individuality should be valued and celebrated. At the same time, all children need to develop self-control, empathy, and a level of social competence to be successful. All children need to learn to accept and respond appropriately to reasonable adult requests or instructions and to friendly invitations from peers or siblings to play, join in, or share. We need to ensure that our responses reinforce these important competencies and behaviours. We also need to help children learn the specific behaviours that will enable them to participate, play, and learn alongside their peers (see sections 3 and 4).

Positive and negative reinforcement

We reinforce a behaviour when we respond in ways that make it more likely that the behaviour will be repeated. For example, giving in to a child's demands that are accompanied by hitting is likely to lead to future hitting. Praising gentle hands will increase the likelihood of future gentle behaviour.

Positive and negative reinforcement both strengthen the behaviour that they follow.

We **positively reinforce** a child's behaviour when we respond by giving something that the child likes and is motivated by. For example, Rana helps to soothe Rosie when she has tripped over by helping her up and patting her back. Immediately a kaiako smiles at him and acknowledges his caring, helping behaviour. This strengthens Rana's helping behaviour and reinforces the value of caring behaviour in the community for him and other children who have observed what happened.

We **negatively reinforce** a child's behaviour when we respond by removing something that the child doesn't like. For example, when Rana is asked to bring the sorting buttons back inside because they are an inside activity, he shouts *No* and begins to cry loudly. In order to avoid the disruption from his shouting and crying, the kaiako says that he can have them outside just this once. The requirement to bring the buttons inside has been removed, shouting and crying has been a successful strategy, and the likelihood of Rana crying and shouting in response to a request in the future has been increased.

Interestingly, the kaiako has also had her behaviour negatively reinforced. The disruptive behaviour stopped when she gave in to the child's behaviour. It is very common for children and adults to get stuck in a negative reinforcement cycle like this – adults give in to problem behaviour to avoid disruption, and children learn that disruptive behaviour results in successfully avoiding something they don't like. This cycle can be disrupted by a planned team approach (see section 6).

Two-year-old Grace often whines and grizzles when she needs attention from the kaiako at her home-based care setting. This strategy works well for Grace at home, where her parents and older siblings will often give in to the grizzling for the sake of peace in their busy household.

On close observation, the kaiako develops a hunch that the purpose of Grace's behaviour is to gain attention. She would like to help Grace to use other, more socially appropriate ways to meet this need. After a chat with Grace's mum, a plan is made to help Grace practise and learn a new way of communicating her needs.

First the kaiako checks through observation what typically occurs before the grizzling, to confirm that Grace is looking for attention when she grizzles. She also notes what has typically been happening after the grizzling, to see whether her responses have been reinforcing the behaviour.

Then Grace's mum and the kaiako agree to trial three key strategies:

- providing additional feedback and attention during the day to ensure that Grace's need for attention and social and emotional support is being met
- ignoring whining and grizzling as much as possible, responding instead with a brief reminder to use a friendly voice to ask for help, and modelling how to do this
- giving warm acknowledgment and praise when Grace seeks attention without whining or grizzling.

After a week of consistently using these strategies, the whining has nearly completely stopped. Grace has even been overheard telling other children to use a friendly voice if they need help.



Natural and logical consequences

Sometimes there is a **natural consequence** to a child's problem behaviour. At home, if a child refuses to wear shoes on a walk, despite advice to do so, and then gets a prickle in their foot, this is a naturally occurring consequence. Many children will learn from this experience and decide to wear shoes in future. A slightly painful foot is not serious or significant, and the child has learnt a valuable lesson.

When children avoid a child whose behaviour is unfriendly and aggressive, this is also a naturally occurring consequence, but a more complex and potentially harmful one. The social isolation that could result is very unhelpful for the child's social and emotional development. It is important that we don't rely on the child to learn from this natural consequence by themselves. Intentional teaching and scaffolding will help them develop the social skills needed for interacting positively with others.

It is appropriate for children to experience **logical consequences** for actions that don't meet the agreed expectations of their early learning community. For example, when a child uses materials for a project and leaves a mess, it is logical and reasonable for them to help clean up. When a child has done something that upsets another child, it is logical and reasonable for them to be reminded of the expectations of friendly play and to be asked to do something to restore the relationship. This could involve listening to how the upset child is feeling, or bringing a glass of water or cuddly toy to help them feel better. This kind of approach is more likely to lead to a natural sense of remorse and a desire to make amends than insisting on an apology. (See page 59 for guidance on helping children to say sorry.)

Ignoring

If we ignore a behaviour, eventually it will stop. However, with toddlers and young children, it is important we always check that it is safe to ignore a behaviour. Is the child communicating a basic need for sleep, warmth, food, or comfort? Is the child hurting somewhere or upset for a reason that we can't see?

It is important to remember that when we ignore, there will usually be a period within which the behaviour escalates. During this time, it can be unsafe to ignore. If after a period of ignoring you decide you can no longer ignore and must respond to the child's behaviour, the behaviour will be strengthened. So decisions to ignore need to be made very carefully.

Rather than ignore, we can reduce the attention we give to problem behaviours and provide short, neutral reminders about our behavioural expectations. *Don't snatch the digger from Riley. Ask nicely for a turn instead, because that is what we do at our centre ... Thank you.*

If you do decide to ignore, remember the golden rule: **We ignore the behaviour but never the child.** It is very important to still be friendly and attentive when the child is behaving appropriately (or approximating appropriate behaviour), only ignoring the behaviour that is causing a problem.

We should never ignore an infant's efforts to communicate with us. Babies depend on us to respond attentively to them, and we support their attachment and trust when we do this.

The problems with punishment

Punishing children brings with it particular problems, including poor social outcomes for children who experience frequent punishment at home or an education setting (Church et al., 2003). While punishment can stop problem behaviour in the short term, particularly with children who experience punishment infrequently, there are damaging 'spin-offs' that mean we should look for more effective, mana-enhancing ways to respond to problem behaviour.

The key reasons why we should avoid punishing children are:

- Punishment damages relationships and reduces trust between children and adults.
- Punishment can gratify an adult's need for revenge or to release stress, rather than support children's learning.
- Punishment harms a child's mana, spirit, and self-concept.
- For punishments to maintain their effectiveness, they have to be increasingly severe.
- To avoid punishment, children will often demonstrate problem behaviours such as running away, telling lies, and blaming others.
- Punishments often happen at times of heightened emotion for everyone involved, which can result in unintended, unsafe practices.

Time out

This resource does not promote the use of 'time out' in education settings in response to problem behaviour, as it excludes and isolates children. Instead, it recommends a 'time to calm down' approach. Time to calm down provides an opportunity for regulating emotions, thinking, and resettling, with guidance and support from kaiako or tuākana.

At times when children are calm, kaiako can rehearse with them the strategy of using a calming down space. This will be a quiet space in which children can engage in calming rituals with the support of kaiako or tuākana. (See pages 39 and 44.)

TEACHING BEHAVIOUR

Problem behaviour can be unlearned, and positive behaviour can be learned. This learning occurs through a combination of intentional teaching, modelling, and feedback. It takes place within a culture that supports calmness and positive behaviour through the clarity of its values and expectations (see section 1).

The ways in which we respond to problem behaviour are important opportunities for teaching and learning. The following are examples of responses that support behaviour change:

- **Providing short, neutral messages** – describe what the problem behaviour was, why it's a problem, what the child should have done instead, and what is going to happen next. Make sure you use a normal voice (i.e., not growly or overly friendly). *I saw you hit Josh. We don't hit at our kindy. We walk away and ask for help when we are feeling cross. I will help you to find somewhere else to play for now.*
- **Offering choices** – provide a choice to avoid the direct conflict that can result from insisting that a child does something 'your way'; for some children, this results in an automatic, oppositional response. Having choices is empowering for them, giving them agency and involvement in the decisions that affect them. Two choices are usually sufficient, more can be overwhelming. Make sure that they are genuine choices, rather than a choice between 'my way' and something unappealing. *We are going for a walk. It's a cold day. I can help you put your coat on, or you can do it by yourself.* Offering choices is both a preventative (antecedent) approach and a way to respond when you notice resistance to compliance with reasonable requests. *We've said it's time to tidy up and wash our hands for kai, but you're still playing. Do you need Manu to go with you to show you how we wash our hands, or can you remember how we do it?*
- **Redirecting** – when you see a child's behaviour escalating, redirect the child to an alternative activity away from the source of stress or conflict. Do this with a minimum of discussion, using short, clear messages about what you see happening. Check in later to see that the child has settled and returned to good spirits. Talk about strategies for managing stress or conflict when the child is calm.
- **Providing feedback and encouragement** – most importantly, make sure that you provide frequent feedback and encouragement when a child is approximating or succeeding with a new behaviour that you are supporting the child to learn. We need to acknowledge attempts to 'do the right thing', because these often require considerable effort for a child who has practised an inappropriate way of having their needs met over a long period of time.

Sections 1–4 include many examples in italics of teaching behaviour. Section 6 will help you and your colleagues with problem solving and planning to support behaviour change.



Read the stories in this section about Ricky, Millie, and Grace again. Using them as examples of practice informed by the ABC model, consider your current approaches to understanding problem behaviour and supporting behaviour change. Are there areas you could strengthen? – for example:

- describing behaviour in objective, non-judgmental ways
- identifying the triggers for problem behaviour
- recognising responses to problem behaviour that may be reinforcing it
- identifying the likely purposes of problem behaviour
- describing replacement behaviours that will be more helpful for a child's learning and relationships
- planning strategies and environmental changes to support positive behaviour change
- working with whānau on a shared approach.



Understanding behaviour: Key points

A holistic approach to children's behaviour considers the whole picture of a child's wellbeing and development.

All behaviour has a purpose and communicates important information about what is happening in a child's social and emotional world.

By observing behaviour and trying to understand its purpose and meaning, we can plan appropriate strategies to support behaviour change.

Where a child has learned inappropriate behaviours to meet their needs, we can help them by teaching and reinforcing alternative, positive behaviours.

Important aspects of understanding and interpreting behaviour include:

Knowing about behaviour

- Understanding that positive behaviour can be learned and problem behaviour unlearned
- Supporting and teaching positive social behaviour in planned and incidental ways
- Using strength-based, objective, respectful language to describe children's behaviour

Responding to problem behaviour

- Responding to problem behaviour in calm, caring, and consistent ways
- Giving children feedback about their behaviour and reminders about expectations
- Providing fair, logical consequences for problem behaviour

Supporting positive behaviour

- Reinforcing positive behaviour by providing feedback and encouragement
- Redirecting children when we notice that their behaviour is escalating
- Actively teaching children strategies to self-regulate and self-manage their behaviour.

Section 6: Reflection, inquiry, and problem solving

Wāhanga 6: Te whakaataata, te uiui, me te whakaoti rapanga

He moana pukepuke, e ekengia e te waka.

Mountainous seas can be negotiated by a canoe.

We can solve problems through strength-based, collaborative, evidence-informed approaches.

Reflection and inquiry support both kaiako professional learning and the solution-focused problem solving needed to improve outcomes for children. *Te Whāriki* describes the key responsibilities of kaiako. One of these is for kaiako to be “thoughtful and reflective about what they do, using evidence, critical inquiry and problem solving to shape their practice” (page 59). Reflective kaiako examine their thinking, attitudes, values, and practices, and they learn from experience. Through inquiry, they use multiple sources of evidence to inform changes to their practice aimed at improvement.

Bringing a reflective, inquiring frame of mind to internal evaluation and collaborative problem solving is vital. It allows you to draw together evidence, experience, critical thinking, and knowledge about effective, inclusive pedagogies to develop and trial solutions and evaluate progress.





WHOLE-SETTING INQUIRY

The following 'big picture' questions will help your kaiako team to consider the kinds of evidence that could inform an inquiry into how you support the social and emotional growth of tamariki. Such an inquiry can lead to environmental and practice changes aimed at strengthening inclusion, engagement, and learning for all.

- How evident are the values of manaakitanga and whanaungatanga in our early learning culture, environment, policies, and systems?
- How well is our approach to supporting positive behaviour underpinned by culturally responsive pedagogies and practices?
- How inclusive is our early learning context? How well do we foster and communicate inclusive values and practices?
- What is the impact of our current policies and systems on children's behaviour, engagement, and wellbeing?
- How can we strengthen our support when children transition into the early learning environment, between rooms, and out to school?
- Are our approaches to promoting positive behaviour and responding to problem behaviour effective? Are we meeting the needs of all our tamariki? How do we know? Can we do better?
- How intentional are we in supporting children's emerging social and emotional competence?
- How can we improve collaboration and curriculum co-construction with whānau, hapū, and iwi?

COLLABORATIVE PROBLEM SOLVING

A collaborative problem-solving approach will help you make environmental and practice changes to better support individual children or groups of children. Meeting together regularly, kaiako can:

- bring examples of current behaviour-support challenges to discuss with the group
- bring information to support the discussion, such as observations about when, where, and how often a particular behaviour is occurring, whānau perspectives on the behaviour, and a hypothesis about what the behaviour may be communicating. This helps the group to arrive at an objective and considered description of the behaviour and why it might be happening.
- describe how a behaviour is impacting on learning and relationships for the child (or group of children, if several are demonstrating the same behaviour)
- agree on a replacement behaviour – an alternative behaviour that will be more helpful for the child's learning and relationships – while ensuring that expectations are developmentally appropriate and reflect whānau perspectives
- consider ways in which the environment might need to change to provide better support
- identify strategies to trial that will support a change in a behaviour (this could include strategies from this resource).

During discussions about children, remember to focus on their potential by identifying their strengths and interests, and the aspirations of their whānau for them. Describe times when they are able to self-manage or show resilience, motivation, and engagement. This will help you to take a strength-based approach, valuing and building on evidence of their developing social and emotional competence.

Questions to help develop an understanding of a particular behaviour

The following questions will help you to:

- better understand what a child is communicating through their behaviour and what its purpose might be
- identify activities, expectations, and kaiako or peer actions that might be triggering the behaviour
- think about how responses from teachers and peers might be reinforcing the behaviour
- think about how the wider learning or social environment might be providing the conditions for problem behaviour.

What is the problem behaviour?

How often does it happen? – for example:

Non-compliance with reasonable kaiako or peer requests ... Needing support on a daily basis to manage her emotional response to the proximity of other children, the need to share resources or space, or to wait for a turn ...

What is the typical setting or context for the behaviour?

*When seated on the mat for community times ...
When sharing space with others in the sandpit ...
During the arrival routine ... During the departure routine... At tidy up times ... During kai ...*

What typically happens before the behaviour occurs?

*An instruction to tidy up or change activity ...
A competitive activity ... Saying goodbye to Dad ...
Conflict with peers over space or resources ...*

If I wanted to make the behaviour happen, what would I do?

Give instructions for a change or transition without preparation ... Leave him playing independently for long periods of time ... Hurry her when saying goodbye to a whānau member ...

What happens immediately after the behaviour?

He is separated from others ... is reprimanded ... is comforted ... is made to apologise ... is reminded of the routine or expectations ... Other children come over to watch ... Other children provide help ...

When is the behaviour least likely to occur?

*When she knows the expectations or routine ...
When his favourite kaiako is close by ...
When she is left to play undisturbed by adults or peers ... When he has plenty of time to work on a project ...*

What might the child be avoiding or obtaining through this behaviour?

How is the behaviour 'useful' for the child?

Avoiding the proximity of other children ... Avoiding sharing resources with others ... Getting attention from children and adults ... Delaying saying goodbye to whānau ... Avoiding sitting on the mat ...

What might the child be communicating through this behaviour?

*I need to stay close to my preferred kaiako when I am tired or anxious ... I need support as I develop the social skills for cooperative play ... I don't understand the routine or expectations for this activity ...
I need help to solve social problems ... I need a quiet space to go when I feel anxious or cross ... I need space to adjust and calm down when Mum leaves ...
I need you to slow down when you are asking me to do something ... I'm bored ... I'm anxious about a change or transition ... I'm still learning to share resources and take turns and need help with this ...
I need help to understand the perspective of others ... I feel overwhelmed by my feelings in some situations ...*

What currently works well to calm, refocus, or re-engage the child?

How could we build on this to provide a sustainable solution?

*Being supported by a tuakana or preferred kaiako ...
Having a cuddle and a story to help calm down ...
Being guided towards a change of activity ...
Having a kaiako check in with her after she has calmed down ... Being given opportunities to lead and help others ...*

Questions to support planning an appropriate response

After using the questions above to develop a deeper understanding of a child's behaviour, you can then consider environmental changes and teaching strategies that will help you to provide effective additional support and guidance.

The following questions will assist you to collaboratively plan this support and guidance:

Do our responses or those of other children to the behaviour unintentionally reinforce it? What might be a better way to respond?

Do the curriculum and the learning environment ensure that this child experiences success?

Does the child have the necessary skills to be successful with cooperative play? If not, what scaffolding and additional support could we and tuākana provide?

Does the child have plenty of opportunities to receive positive peer attention?

Does the child know our routines (e.g., for toileting, sharing kai, getting and returning resources)?

Does the child have a strong, positive relationship with at least one kaiako?

Do we need to actively reteach routines and behavioural expectations?

Could we be more active in supervising our learning spaces?

Do we need to check in with the child more often and aim for more extended interactions with them?

Do we provide choices when asking the child to do something?

Do we provide praise and feedback when the child is demonstrating self-managing and self-regulating behaviours such as resilience and perseverance and positive social behaviours such as noticing, helping, and supporting others?

Do we provide cues and reminders for upcoming transitions to new activities or settings?

TEAM AND INDIVIDUAL SELF-ASSESSMENT

This section provides a self-assessment tool that supports internal evaluation and that is based on Figure 2 and the strategies this resource promotes. Using this tool will reinforce the value of reflecting on practice. Such reflection is especially helpful when it is done with colleagues – regular, supportive discussion of teaching practices fosters a collaborative approach and helps kaiako to assess and reflect on their effectiveness as individuals and as a team.

Use the tool to examine your team's practice and the degree to which it includes effective, evidence-based strategies that promote positive behaviour. The tool will also help you as a team to review your physical, social, and learning environment to ensure that it is supportive and inclusive for all tamariki.

You can also use the tool to reflect on your individual practice, possibly in collaboration with a colleague. For example, a colleague can support you to use the tool by observing you and providing specific feedback to help you plan ways to strengthen your practice.

Rate your team or yourself for each strategy by checking 'Emerging', 'Partly in place', or 'Embedded'.

This tool is available as an interactive PDF online at tewhariki.tki.org.nz/en/teaching-strategies-and-resources.



SUPPORTING SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL COMPETENCE: SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL

Kaiako: _____

Date and time: _____

Observer (if applicable): _____

Teaching approaches & strategies	Kaiako actions that support social and emotional competence
1. Creating a supportive environment	
<p>Establishing a positive climate (pages 24–25)</p>	<p>Our relationships with children are warm and caring, reflecting the values of manaakitanga and whanaungatanga.</p> <p>We use a friendly tone and provide positive attention to all children.</p> <p>We show children warmth and provide comfort through physical affection.</p> <p>We communicate with each other in friendly, respectful ways.</p> <p>We ensure arriving and leaving routines are planned, personalised to meet children's needs, pleasant, and unhurried.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Emerging <input type="radio"/> Partly in place <input type="radio"/> Embedded</p>
<p>Constructing values (page 26)</p>	<p>We co-construct values with whānau or ensure they reflect the established philosophy of our early learning context.</p> <p>We display our values through signage and pictures.</p> <p>We talk with children about our values and how they are expressed in different contexts.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Emerging <input type="radio"/> Partly in place <input type="radio"/> Embedded</p>
<p>Developing and promoting expectations (page 27)</p>	<p>We have co-constructed behavioural expectations, linked to our values, with children and whānau.</p> <p>We ensure expectations are displayed using words, pictures, and symbols.</p> <p>We help whānau to understand the expectations and to promote them in the early learning setting and at home.</p> <p>We ensure that children can explain the expectations and support one other to meet them.</p> <p>We teach the expectations using intentional pedagogies (e.g., modelling, prompts, reminders).</p> <p>We give children positive feedback as they work towards and meet expectations.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Emerging <input type="radio"/> Partly in place <input type="radio"/> Embedded</p>

Teaching approaches & strategies	Kaiako actions that support social and emotional competence
<p>Establishing consistent routines (pages 28–30)</p>	<p>We have co-constructed with children the routines for particular activities.</p> <p>We display and regularly teach the routines.</p> <p>We ensure children receive feedback and encouragement to follow the routines from us and from one another.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Emerging <input type="radio"/> Partly in place <input type="radio"/> Embedded</p>
<p>Creating a safe and inclusive space (pages 31–32)</p>	<p>We ensure the physical space is welcoming for children and whānau.</p> <p>We organise and display resources to make it easy for children to access, retrieve, and share them.</p> <p>We have a neutral, quiet space available where children can go to calm down if they need to.</p> <p>We ensure visual images and resources reflect and celebrate cultural diversity.</p> <p>We use pictures to document the cultural connections and activities of whānau and the wider community.</p> <p>We make our signage culturally inclusive, using children's home languages.</p> <p>We teach children to use space and resources responsibly and to consider the safety and needs of others.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Emerging <input type="radio"/> Partly in place <input type="radio"/> Embedded</p>
<p>2. Promoting emotional competence</p>	
<p>Supporting children to understand, express, and regulate their emotions (pages 37–39)</p>	<p>We talk about feelings with children and support them to name and describe feelings.</p> <p>We notice and give feedback to children when they demonstrate self-regulation (e.g., by waiting their turn, sharing with others, using a strategy to calm down).</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Emerging <input type="radio"/> Partly in place <input type="radio"/> Embedded</p>
<p>Helping children build resilience and a sense of self-worth (pages 40–43)</p>	<p>We give children positive feedback that affirms their developing skills and competencies.</p> <p>We prepare children for changes by talking about feelings triggered by change and inspiring confidence about managing change.</p> <p>We positively acknowledge children's attempts and approximations when they are working towards meeting behavioural expectations.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Emerging <input type="radio"/> Partly in place <input type="radio"/> Embedded</p>
<p>Providing positive guidance during heightened emotions (pages 44–45)</p>	<p>We provide appropriate support and guidance when children are experiencing heightened emotions.</p> <p>We model strategies for managing emotions (e.g., calming down, using positive self-talk).</p> <p>We check in with children when they have calmed down, helping them to talk about their feelings and strategies for managing their emotions in the future.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Emerging <input type="radio"/> Partly in place <input type="radio"/> Embedded</p>

Teaching approaches & strategies	Kaiako actions that support social and emotional competence
3. Promoting social competence	
Fostering peer friendships and interactions (pages 53–57)	<p>We support children to positively notice each other, to initiate play, and to respond to invitations to interact from peers.</p> <p>We talk about and model friendly play.</p> <p>We provide praise and encouragement when children demonstrate their developing social skills (e.g., by using a friendly voice, waiting for a turn, sharing, inviting others to join in).</p> <p>We support children with the social behaviours needed for group interactions (e.g., listening to others, taking turns to talk).</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Emerging <input type="radio"/> Partly in place <input type="radio"/> Embedded</p>
Supporting children to care for and empathise with others (pages 58–59)	<p>We notice and affirm children's caring behaviour towards others who are upset.</p> <p>We support children to understand the impact of their behaviour on others.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Emerging <input type="radio"/> Partly in place <input type="radio"/> Embedded</p>
Helping children support others in their learning (pages 60–61)	<p>We enable and support tuakana–teina relationships.</p> <p>We ensure that tuākana have opportunities to take leadership roles.</p> <p>We create opportunities for children to teach each other.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Emerging <input type="radio"/> Partly in place <input type="radio"/> Embedded</p>
Helping children solve social problems during peer conflict (pages 62–64)	<p>We take a preventative approach by establishing clear behavioural expectations and boundaries.</p> <p>We teach children problem-solving skills that help them avoid or work through conflict situations.</p> <p>We are aware of specific situations that may create conflict and help children to prepare for these.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Emerging <input type="radio"/> Partly in place <input type="radio"/> Embedded</p>

Teaching approaches & strategies	Kaiako actions that support social and emotional competence
4. Supporting learning and engagement	
<p>Supporting children to manage their learning (pages 69–71)</p>	<p>We have extended interactions with children about their plans, projects, and experiences.</p> <p>We notice and give feedback to children when they demonstrate self-managing learning behaviours (e.g., perseverance, resilience, problem solving).</p> <p>We provide positive forecasting to help children expect a good outcome from using self-managing strategies.</p> <p>We motivate children to extend and challenge themselves.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Emerging <input type="radio"/> Partly in place <input type="radio"/> Embedded</p>
<p>Providing rich and varied learning opportunities (pages 72–73)</p>	<p>We draw on the wider community and environment to create a rich and stimulating curriculum and contexts for learning.</p> <p>We ensure that activity areas are inviting and intriguing, with a balance of continuity and change.</p> <p>We ensure that there are opportunities for physically active play.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Emerging <input type="radio"/> Partly in place <input type="radio"/> Embedded</p>
<p>Removing barriers to participation, engagement, and learning (pages 74–75)</p>	<p>We limit tidy up times to allow children to engage with complex tasks.</p> <p>We ensure routines are inclusive, supportive, and helpful.</p> <p>We take a flexible approach to how and where resources can be used.</p> <p>We reflect on and make changes to policies or practices that create confusion for children or whānau.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Emerging <input type="radio"/> Partly in place <input type="radio"/> Embedded</p>
<p>Supporting transitions (page 76)</p>	<p>We prepare children and provide reminders ahead of routine, daily transitions.</p> <p>We use visual cues and rituals to support routine transitions and make them fun.</p> <p>We offer choices that support children's agency during transitions.</p> <p>We support children to prepare for major transitions by providing additional attention and by positively framing the potential outcomes of the change.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Emerging <input type="radio"/> Partly in place <input type="radio"/> Embedded</p>

Teaching approaches & strategies	Kaiako actions that support social and emotional competence
5. Understanding behaviour	
Knowing about behaviour	<p>Through observation, we endeavour to understand the communicative purpose of a child's behaviour.</p> <p>We understand that positive behaviour can be learned and problem behaviour can be unlearned.</p> <p>We actively support and teach positive social behaviour in both planned and incidental ways.</p> <p>We identify children who need additional support and agree on strategies to help them in collaboration with their whānau.</p> <p>We use strength-based, objective, respectful language to describe children's behaviour.</p> <p> <input type="radio"/> Emerging <input type="radio"/> Partly in place <input type="radio"/> Embedded </p>
Responding to problem behaviour	<p>We respond to problem behaviour in calm, caring, and consistent ways.</p> <p>Our responses to problem behaviour are mana-enhancing and preserve the dignity of all involved.</p> <p>We give children feedback about their behaviour and reminders about boundaries and expectations.</p> <p>We provide fair, logical consequences for problem behaviour.</p> <p>We ignore minor problem behaviour if it is safe to do so.</p> <p> <input type="radio"/> Emerging <input type="radio"/> Partly in place <input type="radio"/> Embedded </p>
Supporting positive behaviour	<p>We reinforce positive behaviour by noticing children's efforts and providing feedback and encouragement.</p> <p>We redirect children when we notice that their behaviour is escalating.</p> <p>We actively teach children strategies to self-regulate and self-manage their behaviour.</p> <p>We encourage children to support each other to manage their behaviour.</p> <p> <input type="radio"/> Emerging <input type="radio"/> Partly in place <input type="radio"/> Embedded </p>

Next steps

Look through your responses above.

What are our strengths?

What are our areas for development?

How can we improve our practice?

Do we need help? If so, from whom?

Could this improvement form part of an individual or collaborative team inquiry?

Hannah, Lima, and Joe are the kaiako team in a Hamilton early learning centre. This year they have a shared professional goal to strengthen their practice in the area of support for positive behaviour. Together they work through the self-assessment tool in *He Māpuna te Tamaiti*. This helps them to identify some key areas where they all agree they could improve.

The team agrees on two key areas to focus on. The first is to identify any barriers to inclusion or engagement that could be addressed by making changes to their policies, routines, or expectations. The second is to identify and prioritise children who require additional support and to trial and evaluate some strategies to help them.

The team makes a plan for reviewing their current policies, behavioural expectations, and routines to ensure they are fit for purpose and responsive to the increasing diversity of their community. Once they have completed this review, they make a number of changes and plan ways to support the children's understanding of the expectations and routines by using intentional teaching approaches.

Following this review, the team shifts its focus to individual children.

- Each team member identifies one child they are concerned about. They use the questions on page 98 of *He Māpuna te Tamaiti* to clarify their concerns, to identify the child's strengths, and to agree on areas where additional support is needed.
- Each kaiako then meets with the child's whānau to talk about their concerns and to share thinking about strategies that could be supportive at home and at the centre.
- Using *He Māpuna te Tamaiti*, each kaiako next identifies a strategy that will benefit all children at the centre and be of particular help for the identified child.
- The whole team trials each strategy, one at a time for three weeks. Each week they share their reflections on the impact of the strategy and agree on enhancements that will strengthen its effectiveness in their context.

After the trial period, the team agree to integrate the strategies into their daily practice. They are pleased with the positive impact on all children's social and emotional development, and the particular improvement in the confidence and competence of children needing additional support. They agree to revisit the tool and repeat this process as a regular part of their ongoing reflection and evaluation.



Appendix: Teaching practices for supporting social and emotional competence

Āpitihanga: Ngā tikanga whakaako hei hāpai i ngā pūkenga whakaratarata me te whakapakari whatumanawa

Knowing all children well is fundamental to effective teaching. As a key resource in early childhood services, kaiako use this knowledge to facilitate each child's learning and development through considered and intentional pedagogy.

In all situations, it is important to consider what children already know and can do and the learning goals for them. By remaining flexible and attentive, kaiako can determine which practices to use to meet the individual needs of each child.

The list below is not exhaustive but includes key practices used to support the strategies in this resource. Note that there is a set of cards available for professional learning based on these practices (item number 69795).

Describing

Providing a verbal description of a child's behaviour or play to make it clear to the child or other children. This can be combined with specific feedback, praise, and positive forecasting.

I noticed the way you kept trying ... tried a different way ... asked questions to find out ... asked for help ... bounced back after you felt disappointed ... solved the problem.

Encouraging

Using positive gestures, verbal comments, or visual cues to help a child try something new, practise a skill or behaviour, or persist with something that may be challenging.

I think you might be feeling worried, Anaru. That's OK. I think you'll do a great job helping to welcome our visitors.

Fading support

Gradually reducing scaffolding and support, such as prompts and reminders, to help children gain independence and fluency. Children can then be encouraged to provide support to others.

I can give you a little reminder about calming down when you are cross. Soon you will know how to manage for yourself. And then you will be able to show others how we calm down.

Giving specific feedback

Noticing and specifically describing a child's action and behaviour with reference to their developing social and emotional competence. Feedback supports motivation and promotes learning as the child works towards meeting expectations or achieving a goal.

I noticed Leo pushed you in the sandpit. You said, "I don't like that!" and then walked away. Well done, that was a good choice!

Modelling

Demonstrating something to promote learning (e.g., a social behaviour, attitude, way of speaking, skill, action, way of approaching a problem). This practice is often used with thinking aloud.

Look, Ari is crawling over to see us. I think she wants to listen to the story too. Kia ora, Ari. Can we make room for Ari to snuggle up with us?

Noticing and acknowledging

Letting a child know they were heard or noticed by giving positive attention. This can be verbal or gestural (e.g., smiling or a thumbs up). It is important to use your knowledge of the child to acknowledge them appropriately (e.g., publicly, privately).

I heard you, Sina. I'll finish this and be with you soon. Thanks for being patient. Kia ora, Tama, he whakaaro rangatira tēnā! (That's a chiefly thought, Tama!)

Positive forecasting

Talking optimistically about a child's ability to manage socially and emotionally in the immediate future. Providing positive forecasting helps children to expect good outcomes from using self-managing strategies and to bounce back if things don't go to plan.

I was so sure your plan would work, Oliver, and you tried really hard. Perhaps after lunch you could think of a new plan and have another go. I'm excited to see what you try next!

Praising

Providing positive verbal statements about one or more children's attempts or actions as they work towards meeting community expectations and values. Effective praise is specific and descriptive.

Ka pai for sharing the blocks with Jack! He's new here, and you are helping him to feel welcome.

Preparing

Supporting children with a transition or change by reminding them of expectations and routines, describing what is going to happen, acknowledging their feelings, and talking about changes they have managed well.

Remember the last time we went to the gardens? You felt a bit worried at first. But then you held hands with Liam and had fun together. Let's find the photo in your portfolio.

Prompting

Using gestural, visual, or verbal cues to help a child remember or practise a behavioural expectation or routine. The nature of the prompt is determined by the child's need for additional support.

It's nearly time to come to the mat for waiata and a story. Can you remember what we need to do before then?



Providing opportunities to practise

Ensuring children have chances to try out and learn new skills, behaviours, or routines. Kaiako support children's developing fluency by planning ways for them to achieve small steps and by providing praise and feedback for these small successes.

It's nearly lunchtime. I'm going to put on our tidy up music. Let's see if we can get it done before the song finishes. Remember, it's "tidy up, wash our hands, karakia, kai".

Providing vocabulary and information

Modelling vocabulary and giving explanations to support children's understanding and ability to talk about feelings, friendships, and other aspects of their social and emotional development. Other terms for this practice are 'commenting', 'coaching', and 'narrating play'.

I think you might be feeling frustrated, Rana, because you want to keep playing and it's tidy up time.

Reminding

Helping a child to remember an expectation or routine, or to recall a situation where a positive way of behaving helped them to be successful or solve a problem.

Remember how this morning you asked Billie nicely to share the cars? Billie said you could have the blue ones. Why don't you try that with Mila and the blocks?

Role playing

Kaiako, children, or puppets acting out situations in order to generate positive solutions. When children are role playing, encourage them to act out positive behaviours that lead to a good outcome, rather than to act out 'the wrong way'.

Kiwi and Kea are learning what to do if they are having trouble playing together. They both want to use the digger. It would be great if you could help them solve the problem.

Scaffolding

Collaborative interactions with children that are designed to facilitate learning. The level of support provided is carefully tailored in response to the nature of the task, the child's social and emotional competence, and the child's cognitive and language development.

Would you like to join Leilani making a waterhole for the animals? Shall we walk over together? You could say, "Hey, Leilani, can I join in?" ... Look, she's smiling at you.

Supporting social noticing

Making comments that support children's noticing and awareness of others close by. We help children to learn to be interested in others when we model positive attention and curiosity.

*Look, Nikau is making a little cake with his dough. Shall we ask Nikau if we can have a 'taste'?
Mmm, yummy!*

Supporting tuakana–teina relationships

Supporting relationships within which an older or more experienced child plays with and supports a younger or less experienced child. For Māori whānau, tuakana–teina relationships are a fundamental cultural expectation and strength.

Jasmine, I like the way you slowed down when Lucas wasn't sure what to do next. Lucas is asking you some great questions, and you are being a good teacher!

Thinking aloud

Talking aloud about what we are thinking, doing, or feeling and why. This helps to demonstrate a concept, action, or thought process and to promote learning.

I'm going to ask Connor to share. I'll use a friendly voice because I think he might share if I ask nicely and don't snatch.

Video modelling

Using video recordings of children to inspire other children to challenge themselves. Video modelling is also useful for teaching communication and social skills, such as asking to play, asking to share, and asking for help.

Here are Maddie and Sione on the monkey bars. See how they are using their legs to start swinging, and their muscles to swing across to the next bar? Yay, they did it!

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