

# Talking Together

## Te Kōrerorero



## Acknowledgements | Ngā mihi maioha

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- » The kaiako who brought their practice lens to test and trial the content and the functionality of the online resource.
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- » Dr Melissa Derby, who contributed research findings from her doctoral thesis on teaching practices in early literacy that enable success of Māori children.

## The story of the name

Adults' active engagement in conversations with children is at the heart of a rich oral language environment. 'Talking together' was suggested by a kaiako focus group as a suitable name to reflect this concept. The translation in te reo Māori, 'Te kōrerorero' (by CORE Education) strengthens the focus of the title on 'discussions' and 'conversations'.

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**Tōku reo, tōku ohooho,  
tōku reo, tōku māpihi  
maurea, tōku reo, tōku  
whakakai marihi.**

My language is my  
awakening, my language  
is my treasure, my  
language is my prized  
possession.

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# Te Tiriti o Waitangi

**Enacting Te Tiriti o Waitangi is a commitment to upholding the intent of the Treaty articles. These articles reflect a desire to live together in a spirit of partnership in Aotearoa.**

A commitment is the acceptance of obligations for participation and protection. This commitment has implications for our education system, particularly in terms of achieving equitable outcomes for Māori and ensuring that te reo Māori not only survives but thrives.

Te reo Māori is a taonga under article two of Te Tiriti o Waitangi. Fostering the learning and use of te reo Māori is the responsibility of all kaiako and the education system as a whole.



## The foundation: *Te Whāriki*

*Talking together, Te kōrerorero* is underpinned by the principles, strands, goals and learning outcomes of *Te Whāriki*. The vision is for all children to become increasingly competent and confident communicators, secure in their sense of belonging and in the knowledge that they make a valued contribution to society.

This resource aims to help children to become increasingly capable of understanding and using oral language within the context of a local curriculum. The approaches described are designed to be implemented through practices that reflect the distinctive character and values of each early learning service's community.

# About this resource

**Language is a taonga and nurturing this treasure is too important to be left to chance.** The *Talking together, Te kōrerorero* resource provides a response to the *Extending Their Language – Expanding Their World* report by ERO in 2017, which identified the need for strengthening effective teaching practice for children’s oral language learning and development in early learning services and schools.

***Talking together, Te kōrerorero* is a resource that promotes effective teaching practices** so that kaiako and teaching teams can strengthen how they support the oral language across children’s language pathways.

**This resource is for all children.** *Te Whāriki* (page 25) states: oral language encompasses any method of communication the child uses as a first language. This includes New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL) and for children who communicate using Communication Assistive Technology or Augmentative Alternative Communication (AAC) to replace or augment their speech (TalkLink).

**This is an English language resource that also provides information about English language learning for children experiencing bilingual and multilingual pathways.** It provides support for kaiako to integrate te reo Māori in early learning settings, recognising this is essential for a rich oral language environment.

**The hard version of *Talking together, Te kōrerorero* reflects the content in the online version,** published on 27 October 2020  
<https://tewhariki.tki.org.nz/talkingtogether>

## There are two main sections in this resource:



**Talk tools** (page 9) contains practical approaches and strategies for building on children’s oral language capabilities including through conversations, music, storytelling, asking questions and digital technology.



**Talk information** (page 51) contains key information and understandings about oral language including children’s oral language progression, differences in monolingual, bilingual and multilingual pathways, and underpinning theories.



# Using this resource

*Talking together, Te kōrerorero* is intended to have a range of applications, including:

- » to support the implementation of *Te Whāriki: He whāriki mātauranga mō ngā mokopuna o Aotearoa* – the resource articulates where kaiako and teams need to start when weaving a local curriculum with a focus on oral language
- » to add to the ways kaiako grow and connect their knowledge base of oral language with effective teaching practices, bringing together theoretical and practical information in one resource
- » to provide practical advice for kaiako to ‘dip in and out of’ to find information about oral language and effective ways to foster the oral language growth of all tamariki
- » to offer a wide menu of oral language topics that can be explored over time by kaiako and teams as part of ongoing professional learning and development.



# Talk Tools

Ngā rauemi whakakōrero







## Encouraging conversations Te akiaki i te kōrerorero

*“Conversation is the most powerful tool for communicating our understanding, ideas, feelings and confusions with each other.”<sup>1</sup>*

LISA BURMAN

**While children are born with an innate ability to communicate, the art of conversation requires a lot of learning and practice.**

### Serve and return

Serve and return is what tennis players do to keep a game going. It is also the term used to describe the back and forth interactions that take place between adults and children in conversations. Knowing how and when to take turns is the first step in learning to converse with others.

Taking turns in conversation is vital when so many new brain connections are forming. Turn-taking is more important than the total number of words adults use with children. This is because talking with children rather than talking at children gives them a chance to use their new sounds, words and sentences.

With infants and toddlers, sometimes their serve will be a gesture, glance or kick of their legs. Build your response on the ways infants communicate, especially through tone of voice and facial expressions.



When kaiako name and talk about what children are already looking at or playing with, children learn new words and concepts much faster than if kaiako redirect their attention to a new object. Allow wait time. Like adults, children often need time to process their response. If they feel under pressure, they are less likely to continue the turn-taking talk.

To help children learn the back and forth pattern of a conversation include games that involve turn-taking, such as *Mili mili pati ā* (Samoan chant), *Peek-a-boo* or *I spy*.

As the kaiako, you will be the one who puts the work in to extend the conversation. Children will let you know when they're finished.

#### **An example of serve and return**

Infant SERVE: (Points to a ball.)

Kaiako RETURN: That's a ball!

Infant RETURN: Baah

Kaiako RETURN: A big ball!

Infant RETURN: Baah

Kaiako RETURN: Let's roll the ball.  
(Kaiako rolls ball to toddler.)



### **Story of practice: Katakata/laughter in serve and return**

**Kaiako in a home-based service were introduced to the idea of serve and return, the importance of noticing and acknowledging these conversations and the multiple ways of initiating and sustaining the serve and return.**

A home-based coordinator recorded a kaiako engaged in non-verbal interactions with a three-month-old infant, using gestures and facial expressions as well as te reo Māori.

The kaiako exaggerated his response to an infant's smile with a gentle, "Ahh pēpi." He grinned, raised his eyebrows and waited. Initially puzzled, the infant then replied with delight. Her whole body wriggled as she understood that her utterances were acknowledged. In response to the wriggling the kaiako said, "Katakata. Āe, katakata." The infant put her head back and laughed, returning the kōrero. She waited, expectantly, for the kaiako to return the conversation. The conversation went back and forth for nearly a minute, strengthening the relationship between kaiako and infant and establishing a means of communication - laughter.



## Remembering together at kai times and during care rituals

Valuing conversation means valuing times when tamariki can talk to each other as well as kaiako. Kai time can be particularly good for the back and forth – serve and return – pattern of conversations because it is when tamariki are less likely to be moving around. This is why it is important that kai times and care rituals are not rushed and kaiako can sit with tamariki.

Be mindful of diverse cultural practices around kai and talk.

- » Start and support talk about shared experiences. “Remember when we ...”
- » Start and support talk about events coming up. “I have got an idea for this afternoon, what do you think if we were to ...”<sup>2</sup>
- » Tell or start a story and invite tamariki to add to it.
- » Make sure that quieter tamariki get a chance to participate.

## Oral language development during play

Play is where a lot of language is learnt and practised in conversations. This is why having frequent opportunities for uninterrupted play is so strongly advocated for in early learning settings.

Tamariki tend to interact differently with peers and kaiako and both offer good language learning opportunities. Making sure there is a balance between times when kaiako join in the play and when pēpi and tamariki are able to interact freely with one another is all part of curriculum design (planning).

You can use a range of strategies to build vocabulary and communication when you join in the play. Some examples are:

- » setting up interactions for success by positioning yourself to maximise seeing and hearing for tamariki and you
- » modelling gestures, sounds and words
- » extending thinking and refining language by introducing wonderings such as “what if ...?”, “me aha ...?”
- » bringing the past and the future into the conversation, such as “remember when ...?”
- » encouraging tamariki to lead interactions.





## Useful resources

A video explaining the brain's architecture and why back-and-forth, serve and return, and interactions are critical in children's development.

**Brain architecture and serve and return:** <https://developingchild.harvard.edu/science/key-concepts/brain-architecture>

A Harvard-MIT study discusses the importance of new vocabulary being introduced in meaningful and authentic contexts through conversations.

**Conversation - not word dump - boosts children's brains:** <https://thejournal.com/articles/2018/02/27/conversation-not-word-dump-boosts-childrens-brains.aspx>

Video and images explaining the five steps of serve and return that help brain development.

**Five steps for brain-building serve and return:** <https://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/5-steps-for-brain-building-serve-and-return>

A PDF produced by the Ministry of Education, providing a wide range of options for kaiako setting up play activities as rich opportunities for encouraging conversations.

**Play ideas:** <https://www.education.govt.nz/early-childhood/teaching-and-learning/play-ideas>

A webinar from the series of 10 recordings exploring different aspects of *Te Whāriki*.

**Te Whāriki Online - Professional Development Te Whāriki webinars, Webinar 6 - Communication/Mana reo:** <https://tewhariki.tki.org.nz/professional-learning-and-development/webinars-and-resources/te-whariki-2017-webinars-nga-kauhaurangi>

## References

1. Burman, L. (2008). *Are you listening? Fostering conversations that help young children learn*. Minnesota: Redleaf Press.
2. Reese, E. (2013). *Tell me a story: Sharing stories to enrich your child's world*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

National Scientific Council on the Developing Child (2004). *Young children develop in an environment of relationships, Working Paper No. 1*. Retrieved from [www.developingchild.harvard.edu](http://www.developingchild.harvard.edu)





## Descriptive language strategies Ngā rautaki reo whakaahua

**Language is learnt most effectively when it is built into times you naturally spend together with children, rather than setting aside special teaching times.**

Use meaningful activities as the focus of communication:

- » a shared interest
- » a care ritual
- » a play situation.

While almost any interaction you initiate is better than none, there are specific strategies that you can use to foster children's language. Making these responses part of your teaching kete and using them daily is an element of being an intentional teacher.

### Commenting

#### Describing

Adding language that describes what is happening will help children understand the world and later express their thoughts in new and more complex ways. In effective commenting, kaiako follow the child's lead and talk about the things that are of interest to them at that moment.

For example, dressing to go outside: "Putting your jacket on. Your arm goes in the sleeve. Other arm in. Up goes the zip! You look nice and warm."



### Self-talk

When you are alongside children, talk about what you are doing as you are doing it.

For example, baking: “I’m sifting flour through the sieve very carefully. I’m shaking it left and right. Phew, my arm is getting tired.”

### Parallel talk

You watch the action and describe it without expecting a response as if you are a broadcaster.

For example, a kaiako is sitting alongside Ānaru and talks about his interests: “I can see Rāwiri running. Ooh, watch out, that was close to the big boxes. He is clever at weaving around the swings.” (Child waves) “Hi, Rāwiri. He tino tere ia, he is really fast.”

### Interpreting

Adding language to match the intention of a child’s message (actions, gestures and sounds) is a powerful way to connect with children and to foster their learning and development in oral language. Say it as they would if they could.

For example, a child looks at you, points out the window and says, “Ba.”

The kaiako interprets, “A bird. Oh wow, a tūi landed on our tree.”

### Modelling

Repeating sounds or words with correct pronunciation, directly after the child has spoken, so they can hear your model. There is no expectation that they have to repeat sounds or words.





For example, a child says, “Turn da tey, open da door.”

The kaiako uses positive speech modelling, “Yes, turn the key and open the door.”

Adding words to what a child has just said is a way to increase vocabulary and grow the complexity of ideas or sentence types in their oral language.

For example, a child says, “Look at my dog.”

The kaiako says, “Your dog looks friendly. You’ve drawn a long, waggy tail.”

## Fading support

Gradually reduce scaffolding, such as modelling, commenting and offering suggestions, to help children grow their capabilities in social communication, especially in peer-to-peer interactions.



## Story of practice: Modelling te reo Māori use

**Kaiako at an early learning service use some particular teaching strategies to embed kupu hōu for everyday talk.** Making a point of introducing and using modifiers is one of these strategies. For example, adding the modifier “tino” to “He tere koe” – “He tino tere koe” / “You’re really fast”. However, it is not just the kupu hōu they focus on. It’s also the way these are emphasised with rising intonation, facial expression and body language. These all help to make the kupu hōu stick and fun to learn.

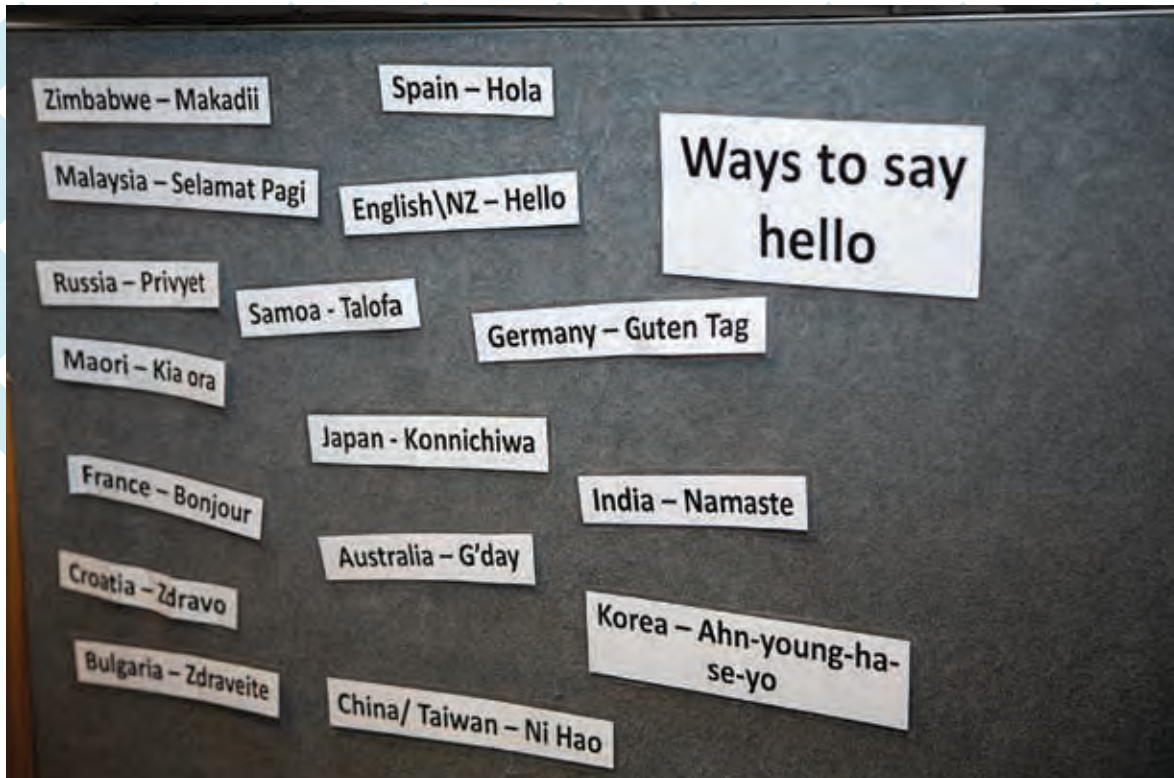
Another teaching strategy is to share a familiar kēmu/game for tamariki, such as *Simon says*, in te reo Māori. “I kī a Emily e noho”, “I kī a Emily, kanikani”, “I kī a Emily, menemene”, provides not just kupu hōu but also a grammatical structure “I kī a” that helps tamariki to form sentences they use in other contexts. In this strategy, regular repetition is really important to tamariki – first receptive language (understanding), then expressive (speaking) te reo Māori.



## References

Weitzman E. & Greenberg, J. (2002). 2nd ed. *Learning language and loving it: A guide to promoting children’s social, language and literacy development in early childhood settings*. Toronto: Hanen Research Centre. pp. 76-90.





## Supporting bilingual and multilingual learning pathways Te taunaki i te ako reorua, reohuhua

*“Hearing and seeing their home language and culture in daily interactions and sharing their cultural knowledge with others, gives dual language learners the reassurance they are part of a caring, supportive, respectful community of learners.”<sup>1</sup>*

CHRISTINE BALL

**This section provides practical ideas for what you can do to support the growing proportion of children living in bilingual and multilingual households in Aotearoa.**

## Supporting children's home languages

Supporting children to develop in their home language/s while they learn English provides the foundation for them to become bilingual, biliterate, multilingual and multiliterate.

Working in close partnerships with families supports children's home languages and shares responsibility for their oral language learning.

### Kaiako:

- » encourage primary caregivers to continue using their first language with children
- » provide information about the benefits of children becoming bilingual, biliterate, multilingual and multiliterate
- » gather information about children's progress in their home languages and about the language learning practices used at home
- » recognise families as rich sources of cultural and linguistic knowledge and invite them to share greetings, words, phrases, songs and written script of the language
- » focus on building understanding of language first, without putting pressure on children's expression/output of language
- » stimulate early literacy skills, such as phonological awareness (recognising and working with the sounds of spoken language), using children's home language
- » use Pasifika Early Literacy Project (PELP) resources to grow Pacific children's oral language and literacy capabilities, in both Pacific languages and in English language.

## Supporting a child's sense of identity, belonging, and wellbeing

Inclusive practices affirm children's sense of identity, belonging and wellbeing.

### Kaiako:

- » learn some basic words and phrases in a child's home language/s and use them in daily interactions like care rituals to build relationships with children
- » encourage a family member to stay to support children's home language during transition into an early learning service
- » use music and songs from home languages as a way to build a connection with a child who does not yet speak English
- » make the different language scripts from a child's home languages visible in the environment, for example, picture books or a greetings board near the front entrance
- » ensure assessment information is gathered in partnership with whānau and strongly reflects each child's languages, culture and identity<sup>2</sup>
- » use local stories to strengthen a connection to place.

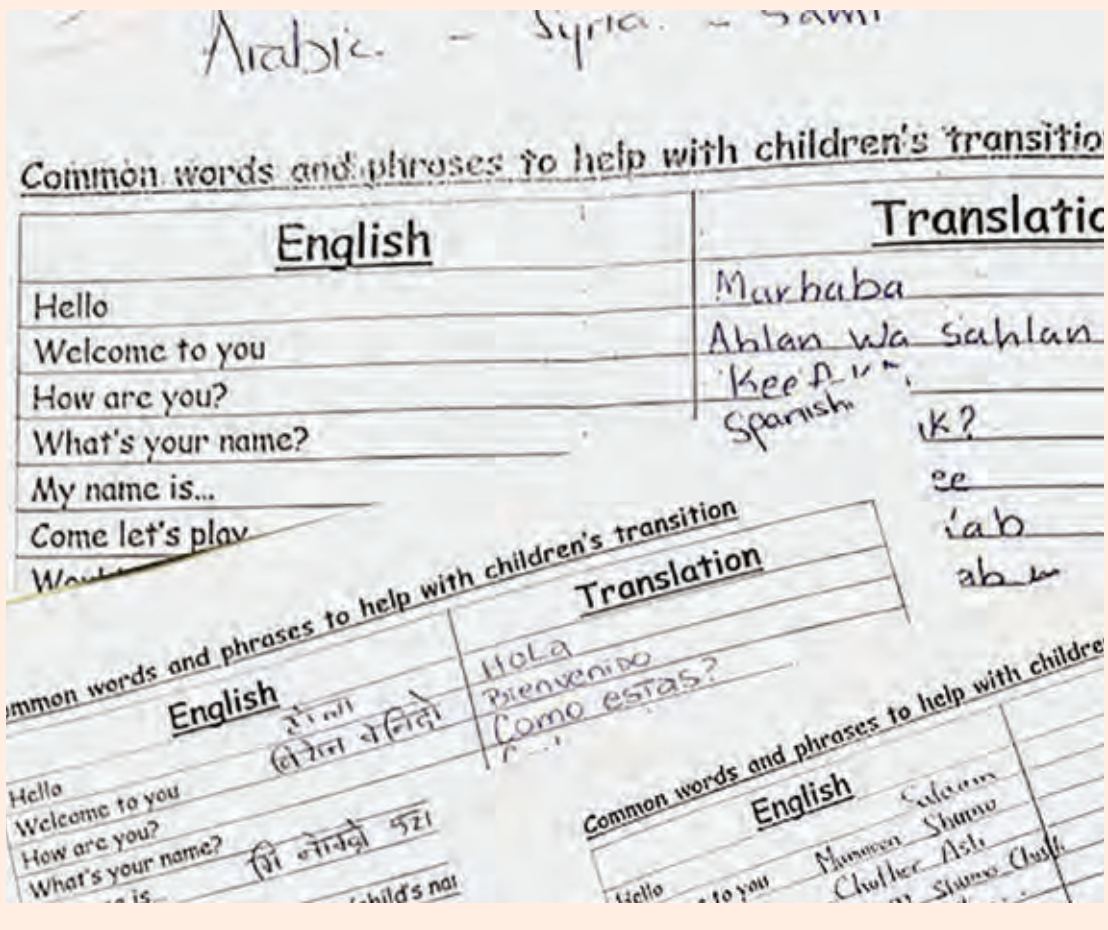




## Story of practice: A language bank folder to assist communication with tamariki

At an early learning service that serves a diverse refugee and immigrant community, kaiako often welcome tamariki who communicate in languages other than English. Where possible, tamariki are matched with kaiako who speak their home language. When this is not an option, kaiako use their language bank folder. This consists of pre-printed English words and phrases commonly used in the centre. When tamariki start, kaiako work through these with families, recording the translation, often phonetically or in their own mother tongue. Kaiako find Google Translate can be helpful with pronunciation, which they know is important to get right when talking to tamariki. For te reo Māori pronunciation, *Te Aka Māori-English, English-Māori Dictionary and Index* is helpful.

A kaiako says, “Using home languages helps our children and families to establish a connection. It settles our children and promotes a sense of belonging and self-identity. It nurtures a sense of respect and celebration of the diverse languages. The language bank folder – along with other strategies we use – mean that all our children are exposed to different languages. Therefore multilingualism is normal in their eyes.”





## Bilingual and multilingual kaiako

Bilingual and multilingual kaiako show the community that linguistic and cultural diversity is valued and provide an important role model of someone being a confident communicator in the early learning setting.

### Bilingual and multilingual kaiako:

- » provide opportunities for children to hear and use their home language
- » support peer-to-peer learning and communicating through both English and home languages by modelling key words and phrases in both languages
- » can teach other staff songs or stories in children's home languages
- » assist with the development of visual resources to ensure learning spaces include home languages
- » facilitate communication with families and support them in maintaining their home language
- » help other staff to understand what it is like to be part of another linguistic and cultural community.

## Communicating in home languages with families

Communicating with families in their home languages helps to foster partnerships between early learning services and families.

### Early learning services:

- » make important written information about the service and about transition to school available to families in their home languages
- » welcome families in their home language every day
- » ensure families know their home language can be used at the early learning service

- » access an interpreter through a service or extended family members to support conversations with families in their home languages about their aspirations for their children's learning and development
- » host hui and special events at the early learning service, such as cultural festivals. These events can create opportunities for families to meet and talk to other families who speak the same home language. This facilitates their children being able to play together and communicate in their home language outside the centre.<sup>1,2</sup>

## Supporting emerging literacy in home languages

Emergent literacy skills fostered in the home language are the foundation for other languages and can be transferred into a new language.

### To support emerging literacy in home languages, kaiako:

- » become knowledgeable about the print/script conventions of the languages represented at the service
- » involve parents in making dual literacy resources, for example, creating home language script for children's name cards
- » use both English and home languages to stimulate early literacy skills, particularly phonological awareness,<sup>3</sup> for example, songs, storytelling or games like *I spy* can transfer between languages
- » ask families about their home literacy learning practices and offer support, for example, ideas for early writing activities in the home
- » use home languages to support growth in vocabulary knowledge<sup>3</sup>
- » make readily available print and audio materials that reflect the cultures and home languages of children in the service, for example, books, music and songs
- » display print in home languages, for example, posters, stories, signs and vocabulary on wall displays.

## Enriching English oral language within bilingual or multilingual contexts

To help children make links between their first language/s and new English words and structures, kaiako:

- » integrate new English words into conversation, play and everyday rituals so that vocabulary becomes linked to meaningful experiences
- » stimulate phonological awareness skills using games and activities in one language, where such activities or games can be transferred into another language – it is likely the phonological awareness will be stimulated in the second language<sup>3</sup>
- » add non-verbal cues so that children have multiple ways to understand oral language content, for example, body language, gesture or show objects, pictures or photographs.

### Bilingual kaiako:

- » read a book in English and lead a discussion in a child's home language to gradually build their understanding of new vocabulary
- » repeat and remodel words in both languages to reduce behaviours caused by misunderstandings and communication breakdown.
- » For more information see the section: **Understanding bilingual and multilingual language pathways** (page 59).



## Useful resources

A Radio New Zealand podcast by Wellington speech and language therapist Christian Wright. **Bilingualism in preschoolers:** <https://www.rnz.co.nz/national/programmes/ninetoon/audio/201852585/bi-lingualism-in-pre-schoolers>

The first downloadable PDF in this series of resource books is an introduction and contains information and understandings about learning an additional language.

**The English language learning progressions introduction:** <https://esolonline.tki.org.nz/ESOL-Online/Planning-for-my-students-needs/Professional-support-for-teachers-and-teacher-aides/English-Language-Learning-Progressions#ELLPBooks>

Best practice guides provide reflective questions on assessment practices in dual literacy, te reo Māori and English. **Kei Tua o te Pae: Assessment for Learning: Early Childhood Exemplars:** <http://www.education.govt.nz/early-childhood/teaching-and-learning/assessment-for-learning/kei-tua-o-te-pae-2>

A Radio New Zealand article where Dr Corinne Seal talks about a project to provide resources for multilingual pre-schoolers to learn in any language they feel comfortable in. **Levelling the language playing field:** <https://www.newsroom.co.nz/2020/05/29/1206632/levelling-the-language-playing-field>

An online dictionary in te reo Māori. **Te Aka Māori-English, English-Māori dictionary and index:** <https://maoridictionary.co.nz>

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## Expanding vocabulary Te whakawhānui i te puna kupu

**Effective ways to expand children’s vocabulary (word bank) start by providing engaging experiences and creating shared interests, before kaiako add in a word or idea. Excursions, visitors, new songs, games, activities and books are all examples of great conversation starters.**

In expanding children’s vocabulary, kaiako consider how they can support them to move through language steps. For example, when tamariki are starting to combine words, it is important that their word bank of verbs/actions grows. These words easily combine with others to make two-word phrases like “Roll ball” or “Mummy look”.

Another example is a kaiako using abstract and technical words like ‘harvesting’, ‘compostable’ and ‘perennial plants’ during gardening to expand the vocabulary and thinking of older tamariki.

### Use specific vocabulary

- » Use specific words, not general terms. For example, a child is much more likely to respond appropriately if you tell them, “Put your cup on the bench” rather than “Put it over there”.
- » When appropriate, use a variety of words for the same thing (synonyms).
- » Avoid asking a child to repeat words after you.

When you observe children developing an interest area, you can plan to add language that expands their bank of specific words.

## Creating word webs

A word web strategy of placing a topic in the centre and identifying a range of related ideas, can develop your intentional practice of vocabulary expansion. Add a variety of words such as names, actions, descriptors, question words, words for feelings and location words. The following example shows a word web of different types of words you could use to talk with children interested in drawing.

## Word web on drawing

As you add specific vocabulary consider:

- » **Language steps:** Add the vocabulary that matches children’s language steps (or one step ahead).
- » **Language pathways:** Where possible, add new vocabulary in children’s home languages as well as English.



### Story of practice: Expanding te reo Māori vocabulary

A team at an early learning service where kaiako had different levels of proficiency in te reo Māori created lists of words and phrases or “cheat-sheets” as they called them. They asked, as narrators of tamariki experiences in this context, what words and phrases do we need to spontaneously use to expand vocabulary?

- » **Tūingoa:** The things tamariki will see, use and/or descriptive words and phrases for them.
- » **Tūmahi:** The actions tamariki will experience.
- » **Tikanga:** How to keep safe and behave appropriately in this context.
- » **Tūāhua kē:** Other descriptive language features like idioms, superlatives, comparisons and wonderings that we want to practise to extend thinking and ako experiences.

The creation of these word lists helped kaiako with their reo and also tamariki who heard the words frequently because the entire kaiako team used them. This repetition led to tamariki using the words too.







## Story of practice: Intentional enrichment of vocabulary

At an early learning service, kaiako make a point of using step-up language in their interactions with tamariki. Step-up language is a strategy kaiako learnt through the Oral Language and Literacy Initiative. For example, when tamariki understand the word 'climbing' they introduce new words such as 'clambering' and 'scaling'. They let the children know and hear what the new word means in the context of play, "You're clambering up that frame, which is like climbing."

Kaiako also work hard at using accurate, technical language that they repeat often and over time. As a result, tamariki will talk about being (say) a civil engineer, an architect or a biologist mixing compounds. They know what these terms mean.

As part of team planning, kaiako create a list of relevant step-up words that all kaiako will know and use. When and how to introduce these is also part of ensuring that all kaiako are on the same page and tamariki have multiple opportunities to learn new vocabulary.





## Reading and oral language Te reo pānui me te reo ā-waha

**A benefit of reading books is that it exposes tamariki to words and phrasing that they may not normally hear or use in everyday talk.**

Reading together and storytelling are valuable interactions for fostering children's oral language, social and emotional development, self-concept and sense of belonging.

Poetry, story books, pūrākau, pakiwaitara, fiction and non-fiction offer opportunities for tamariki to enjoy and experience different narrative structures (the elements in a narrative and how they are organised), for example, a poem about rain, te maramataka poster (Māori lunar calendar) and an illustrated, non-fiction book about water.

Book reading is also a way for tamariki to build vocabulary in te reo Māori and a range of languages.

“The way we read, with emphasis, expression and drama, makes words clearer. It helps children discriminate between sounds and helps them retain the rhythm and playing out of language and sound.”<sup>1</sup>

The best books for developing oral language are those that the child likes and that kaiako and children can have a conversation about – either in small groups or one-on-one.

- » Include books set in New Zealand and around the world.
- » Include picture books that are visually and verbally reflective of the language, culture and identity of tamariki.

- » Having books available in home languages in your service demonstrates that you value children's cultural heritage and provides them with opportunities to talk about familiar contexts.

For promoting conversation, print books are better than ebooks. Print books with less text or even wordless picture books are best.

At any age, book reading is a great way to practise serve and return exchanges.

### Infants

- » Board books that they can touch roughly are best, with simple pictures and only a few words per page.
- » At this age, you're trying to set up a positive routine with books.
- » Don't worry if infants only want to look at one or two pages of a book together.
- » The interaction with the infant and the cuddle time are most important.

### Toddlers

- » Picture books are all about learning new words for toddlers – object words, action words or feeling words.

- » While they're in the naming explosion period,<sup>2</sup> be sure to include some books with realistic drawings or photographs.
- » Their attention spans are still short, so a five-minute conversation about a few pages of a book is better than simply reading the text to try to race through the whole book. They will learn to finish books later on.

### Young children

- » Broaden their choices to include books with a storyline and books about facts, for example, rhyming and non-rhyming.
- » Try to have a deeper conversation about new words, cause and effect, and feelings – linking the story to children's own lives.
- » Introduce basic literacy concepts, such as the front and back, author and illustrator, and text versus pictures.
- » Point out the conventions of print by sometimes pointing to words as you read them and to the pictures as you talk.



## Story of practice: Singing, reading and drawing

During a busy morning in an a'oga amata, the faia'oga/kaiako sat down to read a favourite story, *O le isumu ma le fe'e*. She followed a well-established ritual of singing to welcome those who wanted to come to the whāriki. After repeating the song twice, the children were ready to look and listen.

The faia'oga held up the book and started to read the cover page. Pointing to the title, the author and the illustrator, she explained what these meant. Her pace was intentionally slow and predictable, allowing time for spontaneous interactions. After reading the printed words on each page, she sometimes encouraged children to look closely at the pictures. In this way, the text was enhanced by rich, descriptive language that connected the storyline to the illustrations. Her tone of voice clearly differentiated between reading the text and the responsive conversations about the story.

When the book was finished, the faia'oga suggested the children illustrate their own version of this story. The session ended as it began, with a song.





## Revisiting children's documentation

Revisiting and reading documentation – photos, videos and narrative assessments such as learning stories – is a particularly effective way to encourage conversation. This is because tamariki themselves are usually centre stage in these resources, giving them added confidence and motivation to talk. When kaiako use learning stories as a way to talk about a shared memory (a rich reminiscing approach), it creates engaging conversations where tamariki extend on their storytelling capabilities.<sup>3</sup>

Whether in book or electronic form, documentation needs to be accessible to tamariki for it to be effective in fostering oral language.

- » Keep profile books in a central area and eportfolios easily accessible on mobile devices.
- » Where possible, add new stories with tamariki – because toddlers and young children like to discuss recent-past events.
- » Kaiako who were not involved in recording documentation can express genuine surprise, “Oh my goodness, what were you doing there?”
- » Let tamariki choose how to tell the story. For example, “Lily, you tell me the story. What’s happening here?” Then use echo and add techniques to keep the conversation going.
- » Let tamariki take a series of photographs of an event, for example, cooking. Recount the story as you record it digitally or on paper. Practices like this give kaiako and whānau a way to see how tamariki storytelling skills are progressing over time.



## Useful resources

Dr Jane Carroll talks about her research observing kaiako reading books with children.

**Storybook reading in the early years:**  
<https://edtalks.org/#/video/storybook-reading-early-years>

Van Asch and Kelston Deaf Education developed a range of New Zealand Sign Language resource videos. Videos include well-known songs, picture books, poems and jokes.

**TuriTV:** <https://turitv.ezstream.com/#>

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Acknowledgement for early content development to Professor Elaine Reese (University of Otago).

1. Smoldon, E. & Howell, M. (2014). *From ideas for play: Literacy*. Playcentre Publications (p. 78).
2. For more about the naming explosion period, see the toddler section in **Stepping stones in oral language** (page 54).
3. Bateman, A., Carr, M., Gunn, A. & Reese, E. (2017). *Literacy and narrative in the early years: Zooming in and zooming out*. Teaching and learning research initiative (TLRI). <http://www.tlri.org.nz/tlri-research/research-completed/cross-sector/literacy-and-narrative-early-years-zooming-and-zooming>

Reese, E. (2013). *Tell me a story: Sharing stories to enrich your child's world*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.



## Conversation and questions Ngā whakawhitiwhiti, ngā pātai

**Asking a tamaiti the right question at the right time can extend a conversation, starting up a whole new cycle of *Serve and return* (page 9). Questions are valuable for encouraging tamariki to put their thoughts into words and to give voice to their experiences. They also support tamariki to make sense of their environments by generating and refining working theories.**

(*Te Whāriki*, pages 12-15)

However, too many questions or the wrong kind of question (a closed or test question), can quickly close down a conversation with a tamaiti. For this reason, it's best to use

open-ended questions whenever possible and to balance your use of questions with your commenting and interpreting talk (see *Commenting* and *Interpreting* pages 13-14).



## Open-ended questions

Questions are described as being:

- » closed questions which have a limited set of possible answers, including yes or no
- » open questions which allow someone to give a wider range of responses.

The thoughtful use of open-ended questions is helpful for starting conversations that encourage children to express their own views. Use a serve and return interaction to keep these conversations going.

Remember to:

- » sometimes add your own comments before asking questions – to share yourself with the child and keep it conversational
- » give tamariki time to respond through pausing for several seconds after each question.

Open-ended questions are not all equal. Some ask for factual information while others are more searching, encouraging tamariki to evaluate, critique and speculate. As tamariki grow older, increase the range of open-ended questions to include these.

## Closed questions with open-ended alternatives

Below are examples of how you can turn a closed question into open-ended alternatives.

---

**Closed question:** Do you like the colour red?

**Open-ended alternatives:**

What do you like about that colour?

The colour red makes me think about fire engines. What does red make you think about?

What ideas do others have?

---

**Closed question:**

Did you go to the beach this weekend?

**Open-ended alternatives:**

What happened at the beach this weekend?

I love the beach! Who else went to the beach with you?

---

**Closed question:** Can you see the ladybird?

**Open-ended alternatives:**

What is the ladybird doing now?

I think that's a ladybird. Where is the ladybird going?

Imagine you are that ladybird. What would you be thinking or doing next?

---

**Closed question:** Did you build a tower?

**Open-ended alternatives:**

That's a tall tower! How did you make it balance?

How did you build your tower?

What do you like about your tower?

---

**Closed question:**

Are there any blue crayons in the box?

**Open-ended alternatives:**

I really like blue crayons. What are your favourite colours?

---

**Closed question:** Do you like your new shoes?

**Open-ended alternatives:**

Tell me about your new shoes.

I like the shiny stripes on the back of the shoes. What do you like about your shoes?

---

**Closed question:**

Can you tidy up the blocks now?

**Open-ended alternatives:**

It looks like you've finished playing now. How many blocks can you carry over to the shelf?

---

**Closed question:**

Is it nice to treat Jamie that way?

**Open-ended alternatives:**

Tell me what happened first ... and then?

What words could you say to Jamie instead?

---

**Closed question:** Did you like that story?

**Open-ended alternatives:**

What did you like about that story?

What was the funniest part?

If you wrote that story again how would you change it or make it better?

---

*Table created by Professor Elaine Reese and Jimmy McLauchlan*

Consider cultural perspectives in kaiako use of questions to foster oral language. From a Māori cultural perspective, sometimes a statement is framed as a type of question. This practice is often used to affirm and uplift a tamaiti who might not fully know the answer (be unsure). For example, “That’s a red ball, eh?” The tamaiti would reply “Yes” or nod – an indication the tamaiti understands.

### The use of video coaching to evaluate kaiako interactions

In an early learning service, kaiako use video coaching – videoing small snippets of their practice for self and peer critical reflection. At one point they chose to look at the impact of their talk on children’s motivation to respond. For one kaiako, this professional learning process showed that a high proportion of his interactions were questions. Often the questioning drew little or no response from tamariki and didn’t encourage them to talk to each other.

Alternative strategies suggested during the coaching sessions included:

- » using commenting alongside tamariki
- » extending wait time for responses
- » using sentence starters, such as:
  - “I heard you say ...”; “When I was ...”;
  - “I am thinking about ...”
- » encouraging children to speak to each other.

Trying these strategies out, his interactions were more conversational. There was more turn-taking, with tamariki sharing their thoughts and ideas in response to his. Interactions felt easier and more natural.

Asking fewer closed questions, making more comments and consciously allowing time for tamariki to respond is a work in progress. Video coaching sessions continue to be used to help evaluation.



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1. Hohaia, T. (2017). *Making connections – the power of oral storytelling*, Auckland: TEDxUoA: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uh\\_9H93MACA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uh_9H93MACA)
2. Batt, T. (2006). *The story sack: Story telling and story making with young children*, New Zealand: Playcentre Publications.
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# Storytelling and oral language

## Te kōrero pūrakau me te reo ā-waha

*“Oral storytelling gives knowledge a soul.”<sup>1</sup>*

TRENT HOHAIA

### Telling local stories

Storytelling is a way for tamariki to learn local history and whakapapa. Knowing local stories introduces meaningful vocabulary such as place names. It also contributes a sense of identity and relationship to people and land.

Get to know stories about the local history and people, including pakiwaitara/stories and pūrākau/ancient stories. Make these a regular feature of your curriculum.

See the Useful Resources for an example of a kaiako from Kidsfirst Kindergartens Lyttelton telling a local story about Tamatea Pōkai Whenua and their maunga. Tamariki use different props, objects and drama to tell the story.



## Using props and objects

It's often easier for tamariki to tell stories with the help of props.

- » Shells or stones can be used to sequence events.
- » Clay shapes can be used to act out simple stories.
- » Puppets: even less confident children will usually tell a story to a puppet – especially if the kaiako uses a special or funny voice for the puppet.
- » Magnet board characters and dress ups can be used.

## Encouraging confident storytellers

Renowned storyteller and author Vivian Gussin Paley developed a particular sequence of steps to encourage children's creativity in storytelling. By including storytelling in the curriculum almost daily, children became very confident, adept, and creative storytellers.

The steps are:

1. Inviting children to tell kaiako a story, which is then recorded.
2. Using particular prompts, such as "I'll write down what you tell me. I'm ready, how does your story begin?" and "Is there any more to your story?"

*"Whenever we tell a story, we open ourselves to others, we communicate and share something about ourselves, and invite a response, either spoken or unspoken from our listeners. Stories always give rise to other stories."*<sup>2</sup>

TANYA BATT

*"Storytelling is valuable for children's language, emotional development, coping, self-concept, and sense of belonging."*<sup>3</sup>

PROFESSOR ELAINE REESE



3. Reading the story back to the child with drama and excitement.
4. Inviting the storyteller and other children to act out the story in a performance space as the kaiako reads it line by line.

Storytelling encourages both receptive language learning (listening and understanding) and expressive language learning (gesture and talk). It is an opportunity for tamariki to learn about performance voices and how voice intonation helps to convey a story.

As tamariki get older, encourage ways in which the spoken story can be recorded through drawing and writing and on digital devices. This helps tamariki to see the connection between the spoken word and the recorded word.

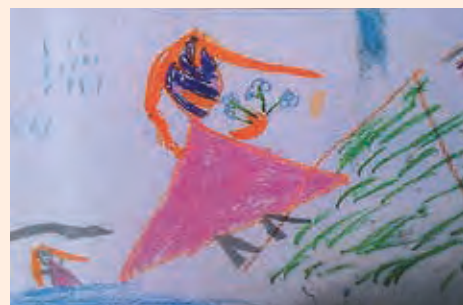
For accomplished storytellers, introduce strategies like storyboarding so tamariki can experience planning and sequencing of their stories. The **Stepping stones in oral language** section (page 54) provides further information on children's growing storytelling capabilities.



### Story of practice: Storytelling using traditional stories

At an inner-city early learning service kaiako introduced traditional stories to foster a love of storytelling and to connect tamariki to their cultural heritage and that of others at the centre.

These stories are often introduced to coincide with particular cultural celebrations, for example, introducing Ramayana (an epic from ancient India) during Diwali (the Hindu festival of lights). Kaiako made a point of reading or telling these stories daily for one or two weeks using different means – books, pictures, puppets, drama and iPads. This helps the tamariki become very familiar with the characters and importantly the concepts or values portrayed.





## Useful resources

A video example of a kaiako from Kidsfirst Kindergartens Lyttelton telling a local tory about Tamatea Pōkai Whenua and their maunga.

**Local curriculum, Tuia Mātauranga and beyond:** <https://tewhariki.tki.org.nz/en/teaching-strategies-and-resources/local-curriculum-and-tuia-matauranga>

An article about a teaching and learning research initiative by Amanda Bateman, Margaret Carr, Alex Gunn and Elaine Reese provides more information on literacy and narrative.

**Literacy and narrative in the years: Zooming in and zooming out:** [http://www.tlri.org.nz/sites/default/files/projects/Final%20formatted%20report\\_Bateman%28v2%29.pdf](http://www.tlri.org.nz/sites/default/files/projects/Final%20formatted%20report_Bateman%28v2%29.pdf)

An article in the journal *He Kupu* on the use of Vivian Gussin Paley's technique in a New Zealand context.

**Helicopter storytelling:** [https://www.hekupu.ac.nz/sites/default/files/2020-05/02\\_Davis.pdf](https://www.hekupu.ac.nz/sites/default/files/2020-05/02_Davis.pdf)

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[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uh\\_9H93MACA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uh_9H93MACA)
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3. Reese, E. (2013). *Tell me a story: Sharing stories to enrich your child's world*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.





## Talking about feelings Te kōrero mō ngā kare ā-roto

**Talking about feelings with children and supporting them to name and describe feelings helps them to understand, express and regulate their emotions.**

Kaiako can:

- » include talking about feelings 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 expand their vocabulary through modelling the use of language to name, describe and explain feelings by reading poems and stories that provide opportunities to talk about them
- » consider different visual prompts and environmental supports that help children to express their feelings. Gestures, facial expressions, pictures and photographs provide additional ways for children to express how they feel alongside oral language.

This information is from page 38 of *He Māpuna te Tamaiti: Supporting social and emotional competence in early learning*.



### Story of practice: The concept of whakamā

Articulating how we feel can be complex. In a bustling early learning service, the manager noticed that a normally vibrant child became overwhelmed during group times. She raised this at a staff hui. “Feelings are not always explosive,” the manager explained, “but that doesn’t mean they are any less powerful.”

Based on a book about feelings in Māori and English, a whole-team approach was designed. Kaiako encouraged tamariki to express a wide range of emotional responses to the situations they experienced. Whānau and kaiako concluded that understanding the concept of whakamā – defined here as shyness or feeling shy – would be helpful for this child. This word was intentionally introduced, “It’s okay to feel whakamā. Sometimes we all feel uncomfortable and whakamā.”

This proved to be a powerful strategy and whānau, who sometimes struggled to find out why their kōtiro clammed up, reported that she could now explain when she felt whakamā.



### Useful resources

See pages 37-38 in PDF of **He Māpuna te Tamaiti: Supporting social and emotional competence in early learning**. For more information on supporting children to understand, express and regulate their emotions: <https://tewhariki.tki.org.nz/teaching-strategies-and-resources/self-management-and-regulation/#anchorTrigger-4749>

Everyday language you can use with tamariki in te reo Māori, including phrases to talk about feelings, pages 29-40.

**Kei roto i te whare: Māori language in the home:** <https://www.tpk.govt.nz/en/a-matou-mohiotanga/language/kei-roto-i-te-whare-reprinted>



## Digital technologies and oral language Te hangarau matihiko me te reo ā-waha

**Many digital devices have functions that encourage children's talk and interactions. However, it is kaiako, not the devices, who determine how well they will be used for this purpose.**

Assessing the value of digital technologies for oral language learning starts by distinguishing between the devices and apps.

Some devices and apps invite tamariki to consume content – watch, listen or play.

Others invite tamariki to create content – record their voice or author their own stories.

Using digital technologies, including augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) devices, can remove communication barriers and promote inclusive practice.



## Choosing and using digital technologies for oral language development

- » Choose devices and apps where tamariki create their own content, such as those for making audio stories and books. These offer greater opportunities for tamariki to actively use and practise language, including te reo Māori. Hearing and seeing their voice recorded increases confidence and a sense of agency to use language.
- » Make good use of digital platforms that offer the opportunity for tamariki to hear, evaluate and re-record their voice. This feature, built into most content creation apps, encourages the experimentation and playfulness with language, which is so beneficial to increasing vocabulary.
- » Encourage tamariki who are bilingual or multilingual to record their voice using both or all their languages. This will help to strengthen their sense of identity as well as their language competence.
- » Share ebooks with tamariki in an interactive way, for example, tamariki taking turns and kaiako using descriptive language approaches, so the technology becomes an engaging way to promote conversations and peer interaction.
- » Use fewer apps more often. Tamariki benefit from multiple opportunities to practise and build up skills. Once they are familiar with what's possible, creativity and language will flourish.
- » Think of digital devices like a paint brush; one of the many means available to tamariki to express their thoughts and ideas.



### Story of practice: Whose feet are these?



After reading a blog on digital devices in early years settings, kaiako from an early learning service decided they needed to shift the way iPads were used by tamariki. Instead of using game apps made by others, kaiako made a point of working with tamariki to create their own. They began with an app that enabled voice recordings to be associated with the pictures tamariki took. These were then made into a digital book. And so, *Whose feet are these?* began – a guessing game that could be played through the LCD screen during group time. It encouraged lots of interaction.

Kaiako noticed that tamariki confidence and motivation grew with the voice recording feature. Over repeated opportunities, making similar games, tamariki experimented with intonation, different languages, storytelling voices and funny voices. Hearing themselves, evaluating and re-recording became part of the fun. Voice recordings also helped kaiako with their assessment of language development.



## Word play and phonological awareness

### Te raweke kupu, te aroā weteoro

**Interacting with a sense of playfulness is one very effective way kaiako encourage language and communication learning. It is particularly valuable for developing phonological awareness (recognising and working with the sounds of spoken language), a leading predictor for reading and writing success.**

Pēpi and tamariki enjoy humour, funny voices and nonsense words and rhymes. When you are playful with gesture and speech sounds, tamariki are more likely to experiment and see language as something that can delight others.

Being playful with language and sound is less about materials and more about the sense of fun and engagement kaiako bring to their everyday interaction.

- » Immerse pēpi and tamariki in rhyme and rhythm through waiata, stories, poems, nursery rhymes and made up ditties. For example, bouncing pēpi on the knee in time to a rhythm of made up words and sounds.

- » Change sounds at the beginning of words or make up silly phrases and sentences. For example, “Racey Tracey”, “Andrew Wandrew”, “Tokai takes time to tentatively tiptoe to the table”.
- » Be playful with voice – alter expression, pace and tone when you read. Introduce ideas like “How do you say that in a bouncy ball voice?”
- » Play *Guess the sound* games with found objects that can be manipulated for different sound effects. For example, tearing paper, banging blocks or using musical instruments.
- » For older tamariki, encourage them to make sound–letter associations. For example, “Those large capital letters are telling me I have to read that word very loudly.” “Who can see something on this page that rhymes with the word mai?” For example, kai. “What else can you see in the room that begins with a ‘k’ sound?” For example, kākahu, karaka or kōtiro.



### Story of practice: Playing with te reo Māori

Reading the Communication/Mana reo section of *Te Whāriki*, kaiako noted emphasis on creativity and enjoyment in language learning. Being playful with their language became something they do daily to engage pēpi and tamariki and learn te reo Māori. They use lots of pūrākau, rotarota (poems, ditties) and raps to encourage gestures and talk. With the older tamariki, kaiako will talk about some of the language features in rotarota or raps and how these make us feel.

#### For example:

Taka, taka, takahi! Para, para, paratī!  
*(Stomp, stomp, stomp! Splash, splash, splash!)*

Kaiako also make up fun phrases to describe everyday events. Kaiako make a point of repeating these often. This way tamariki are introduced to and get to practise different language features in te reo Māori.

Kei te pai, mähunga wai.  
*(It's all good, forgetful)*

Tīkina te kina, e Te Kina, tīkina.  
*(Get the kina. Te Kina, get the kina!)*

Kaiako notice that their emphasis on playfulness has encouraged tamariki to be more creative and confident in the use of te reo Māori.











## Fostering peer communication Te poipoi i te whakawhitiwhiti me ngā hoa

**Successful interactions with peers and siblings rely on children’s growing language competence in both listening and talking.**

Kaiako who teach oral language intentionally plan, rather than leave to chance, opportunities for tamariki to interact with their peers, regardless of their age or language ability. For some tamariki peer-to-peer communication will be built on New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL). Some tamariki may also use alternative or augmentative communication, such as a picture or symbol system.

### Encouraging tuakana-teina relationships

In te ao Māori “tuakana-teina relationships are a fundamental cultural expectation and strength”.<sup>1</sup>

In te reo Māori the words ‘tuakana’ and ‘teina’ are used when referring to an older or younger sibling or relative. In this strategy the terms are given to the more experienced and the less experienced. The relationship is based on skills and experience rather than age or whakapapa.

There are many ways in which kaiako can foster these relationships in oral language, where a more experienced (tuakana) helps a less experienced (teina) learn about communication and talk.

- » Encourage tuakana to help teina – “Rāhera, can you help Hemi take his shoes off?”
- » Plan leadership roles for tuakana. For example, saying karakia or welcoming new tamariki and their whānau.
- » Notice and draw attention to tamariki initiating interactions. For example, “What a great idea to ask Sanjay to help. Remember to tell him how to turn the hose off when he is finished.”
- » Make the most of times when you as kaiako are teina in an interaction. For example, “Alice, remember I can’t speak Korean. Can you tell me what Hara just said?”

## Environmental design for peer-to-peer interactions

Opportunities for peer-to-peer interactions are more likely when:

- » spaces are calm and not too noisy – avoid background noise such as continuous radio or music as this encourages passive listening or tuning out
- » resources are accessible, open-ended and of interest to tamariki – the resources connect to their cultural worlds and experience
- » spaces have inviting physical elements, such as low partitions or see-through barriers that also encourage small group interactions
- » small, quiet, safe spaces are available to retreat to
- » planning and care rituals favour flexible, informal, small groups over large group gatherings.

## Interactions for cooperation and collaboration

Kaiako encourage cooperation and collaboration by:

- » rehearsing turn-taking and listening through group games, sound games or storytelling
- » modelling listening to ideas and different perspectives, for example, “That’s an idea I hadn’t thought of George. Has anyone got a different idea?”
- » including te reo Māori, home languages and NZSL.

## Problem solving and conflict resolution

When tamariki learn to skip or jump, they generally need lots of practice. The same goes for interactions involving problem solving and conflict resolution. These often require kaiako to scaffold (intentionally build) children’s social and communicative capabilities and then step back to encourage direct peer interaction.

Scaffolding may involve suggesting and modelling:

- » vocabulary to identify the problem and articulate feelings
- » ways to work out solutions verbally.







Kaiako signing the story *Dear Zoo* while it is being read.

## Celebrating successes

Celebrating successes in peer communication enhances mana by:

- » noticing children involved in positive peer interaction and giving specific feedback
- » affirming tamariki when they successfully resolve conflict, collaborate, awhi or show manaaki.



## Story of practice: NZSL to foster peer-to-peer interaction in small group play

At a kindergarten in North Otago, kaiako model sign and verbal language to ensure that all tamariki know what the signs mean and can use them without adult support. This means hearing-impaired tamariki, and others who find communication difficult, are able to join in and contribute to interactions with their peers. Kaiako provide visual aids, such as pictures, photographs and toys that tamariki use alongside sign language and talk. Their aim is to foster communication and positive interactions by whatever means.

Kaiako chose signs with peer-to-peer interaction in mind. For example, “Hello, I play?”, “Hello, come and play”, “My turn, your turn” and “Thank you for playing my friend”. If tamariki get stuck, kaiako will model words and phrases to keep the conversation going, always using NZSL and oral language simultaneously. Kaiako have found that their strategy of NZSL for all children has also worked well for some tamariki with autism spectrum disorder who tend to find peer-to-peer interactions easier this way.



*Thank | mihi*



*Play | tākaro*



## References:

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A downloadable PDF is available on [Te Whāriki Online, Self management and regulation](https://tewhariki.tki.org.nz/teaching-strategies-and-resources/self-management-and-regulation/#anchorTrigger-4749): <https://tewhariki.tki.org.nz/teaching-strategies-and-resources/self-management-and-regulation/#anchorTrigger-4749>

Pages 53-64 of this resource provide information on **Fostering peer friendships and interactions**.



## Extending oral language through music and songs Te whakawhanake i te reo ā-waha mā te puoro me te waiata

It has been said “music is the universal language”.<sup>1</sup> The frequent inclusion of waiata and music creates a rich oral language environment. This is especially so when kaiako make a point of being actively involved alongside tamariki.

Waiata and music:

- » help tamariki connect with the words, rhythms and the emotional content of languages
- » encourage imitation, turn-taking and opportunities for social interaction
- » help develop sound discrimination or phonological awareness
- » support tamariki to become strong in their culture and identity
- » provide opportunities for repetition in the learning of additional languages.



## Waiata

Waiata sung with passion strengthens the development of te reo Māori. Gesture, movement and facial expression are all helpful hooks for memorising language. Look to include waiata from local iwi and whānau when you do this. Waiata that repeat sounds and actions: “kapo kapo ringa ringa, paki paki parirau, whatiwhati tō hope” are particularly good for building te reo Māori vocabulary.

Use well-known songs to:

- » introduce concepts of loud, quiet, slow, fast, high, low
- » pause and wait for children to finish a word or line
- » practise and enjoy imitation and turn-taking
- » encourage children to lead singing sessions.

Compose songs with tamariki and whānau to share experiences, tell stories and support transitions and daily rituals. You could borrow an existing rangi/tune, pātere/chant, oriori/lullaby or make up your own.

When introducing songs, talk about new vocabulary and use these words outside of the song.

Kaiako sing, sign and play the waiata *Te aroha* with a group of children.

## Instruments

Use instruments to:

- » make up sound discrimination games like *Guess my instrument*
- » practise and enjoy imitation and turn-taking
- » encourage understanding of rhythm – games such as *Play my name* help understanding of rhythm and how syllables work in words.

Choose recorded music and waiata carefully. Good as they can be, it is your presence and thoughtful interactions that are necessary to facilitate the many language learning opportunities that waiata and music offer tamariki.



### Story of practice: Birthday songs from around the world

The last day of term was busy at the Playcentre – four children were celebrating birthdays. The usual rituals of decorating a chair and making a hat were complete and everyone was sitting around tables outside, eating morning tea. All that remained was to sing “happy birthday” and blow out the candles several times.

After “happy birthday” was sung in English and te reo Māori, a parent said, “Hey, we need to sing it in Dutch.” Eva’s mother and older brother started clapping and singing as she blushed with pride.

“And now in German for Max.”

At the next birthday the following term, a parent who had noticed this offered a special Indonesian birthday song. She handed her baby to the person next to her and squatted down with the children and started to sing, inviting everyone to join in with the repetitive phrases. A parent said, “We’ll need to add that one to our repertoire now – can you write it out for us so we can all learn it?”





### Useful resources:

Waiata words, chords and videos of ten songs for tamariki, kaiako and whānau.

**Te Kōtare:** <https://www.tekotare.org>

Van Asch and Kelston Deaf Education developed a range of New Zealand Sign Language resource videos. Videos include well-known songs, picture books, poems and jokes.

**TuriTV:** <https://turitv.ezystream.com/#>

### References:

1. This quote is generally attributed to poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow who wrote in 1835 “Music is the universal language of mankind”.

# Talk Information

Ngā ariā reo ā-waha









# Understanding oral language

## Te mārāma ki ngā āhuatanga o te reo ā-waha

### What is oral language?

In *Te Whāriki* oral language encompasses any method of communication the child uses as a first language.

This includes New Zealand Sign Language and, for children who are non-verbal, alternative and augmentative communication (AAC) technology and devices to replace or augment verbal communication (*Te Whāriki*, page 25).

### Why is language important?

One of the major tasks for children in the early years is to develop competence in and understanding of language.

Oral language is essential for:

- » **communication** – oral language helps children to share with others what they feel and think and to understand how others feel and think
- » **learning** – oral language helps children learn about other people and the world
- » **wellbeing** – oral language helps children manage their emotions and their behaviour
- » **identity and belonging** – oral language connects children to their culture
- » **literacy and educational achievement** – “Reading and writing float on a sea of talk”.<sup>1</sup> This means that oral language in early childhood is the foundation for literacy learning and achievement in school and kura.

See Mana Reo | Communication strand in *Te Whāriki* (page 41).

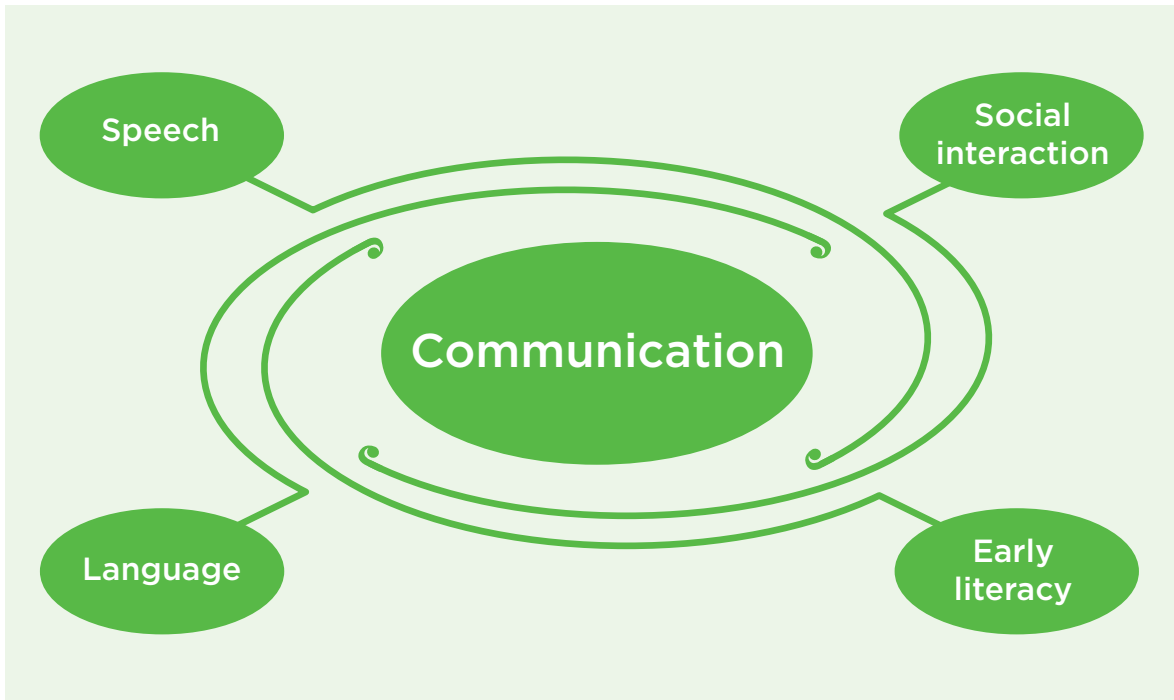


Diagram based on *Much More than Words*.<sup>2</sup>

## What makes up communication?

Communication is multifaceted. It is described as being more than words. Speech, language, social interaction and early literacy skills are all parts of a child's communication repertoire.

### Speech

The words, rhythm and intonation of sentences are made up from speech sounds.

### Social interaction

Learning how to use language appropriately requires listening and taking conversational turns. It includes using social conventions and learning to speak differently with those who are older, younger and more or less knowledgeable.

### Emergent literacy

Learning the building blocks allows the development of reading and writing.

This includes:

- » concepts about print and books
- » story comprehension and storytelling
- » phonological awareness skills including identifying and manipulating units of oral language, such as in rhyming, letter-sound identification and breaking words into syllables.

### Language

The term 'language' includes New Zealand Sign Language.

Oral language is made up of receptive (understanding) and expressive language and can be broken down into:

- » **words** – labels for people, objects, actions, concepts and the beginnings or endings to those labels that show how many or when
- » **sentences** – putting words together into a statement or question
- » **stories** – putting sentences together into a causal chain of events with a beginning, a middle and an ending.



Tamariki need to hear rich language and connect it to real world experiences in order to first understand and then to speak (or sign).

The way you talk to children matters!

## Further information on oral language development

Find out more in:

- » **Stepping stones to oral language** (pages 54-58)
- » **Understanding bilingual and multilingual language pathways** (pages 59-62).



## Useful resources

A webinar from the series of 10 recordings, exploring different aspects of *Te Whāriki*.

**Te Whāriki Online Webinar 6: Communication/Mana reo - Do you hear me?**

<https://tewhariki.tki.org.nz/en/professional-learning-and-development/webinars-and-resources/te-whariki-2017-webinars-nga-kauhaurangi>

## References

1. Britten, J. (1970). *Language and learning*. Coral Gables, FL: University of Miami Press.
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## Stepping stones in oral language He poutama mō te reo ā-waha

**Children’s oral language grows from a base of nonverbal skills to listening and taking turns, understanding and using body language and adjusting to the audience, for example, older or younger, tuakana or teina.**

Social and emotional learning is linked to children’s increasing competence in communication. Kaiako effectively support children to be confident and capable communicators by “being knowledgeable about children’s learning and development and able to identify their varied abilities, strengths, interests and learning trajectories.” (Te Whāriki, page 59)

Kaiako are encouraged to develop an understanding of whānau aspirations for their child’s language learning and development.

Kaiako adjust their supports to each child’s language learning pathway – English language, bilingual or multilingual.

Additional information on bilingualism and multilingualism will give guidance on further considerations when you are thinking about children who are experiencing bilingual or multilingual learning pathways.

- » **Talk information:** Understanding bilingual and multilingual learning pathways (pages 59-62)
- » **Talk tools:** Supporting bilingual and multilingual learning pathways (pages 16-21)

There are differences in some of the stepping stones children progress through across languages.

Below are the broad steps seen in the development of English language across speech sounds, words and sentences, stories and social interaction.

## Stepping stones for infants (birth to 18 months)

**The bullet points below show the broad progressions seen in the development of oral language in infants.**

### Sounds:

- » Saying and playing with single vowel sounds, for example, “aaa, oooo, eeee”.
- » Combining vowel and consonant sounds, for example “ba-ba-ba, do-do-do”.
- » Jargonizing – putting nonsense words together into what sounds like statements and questions.

### Words and sentences:

- » Non-verbal communication, such as sharing eye contact with another person or directing another person’s attention to an object by pointing or reaching.
- » Starting to understand words in speech – understanding comes first.
- » Saying their own first recognisable word. These first words are often short versions of the real thing, for example, “na-na” for banana, “meh” for milk or “bah” for bird.
- » Doing their own first recognisable sign, especially for children who are deaf or hard of hearing and are learning in and through New Zealand Sign Language.
- » Using imitations (imitates others’ sounds and actions) and gestures to communicate (wave for bye-bye or head shake for no).
- » Pointing to body parts or objects and picking objects up to show to others.
- » Gradually building their word bank to 50 spoken words and understanding many more words than they are saying.
- » Combining words into short sentences, for example, “More ‘nan”. Their first sentences might be phrases they copy such as “all gone”.

### Stories

- » Enjoying stories and being read to.
- » Tracking with their eyes as pages are turned.
- » Picking out favourite stories.
- » Pointing to pictures.
- » Articulating what is in the pictures in their own way.
- » Interacting about what is happening in their immediate context of the here and now.

### Social interaction:

- » Paying close attention to adults who respond to their babble/vocalisation/ talking.
- » Taking turns in the conversation by babbling when the adult pauses.
- » Responding to questions, for example, yes, no, what or where, verbally or with an action. This shows that they are listening and understanding.
- » Expressing their needs, wants, likes and dislikes through crying, smiling, looking and body movements.
- » Joining in waiata and songs with vocal sounds and actions.
- » Starting a conversation with a word and a point, for example, “Doggie”, a short question, “What ‘dat?” or a statement, “Me want ‘nana”.





## Stepping stones for toddlers (1 to 3 years)

**The bullet points below show the broad progressions seen in the development of oral language in toddlers.**

### Sounds:

- » Starting to use and play with many new sounds, especially m, n, y, p, b, d, h and w.

### Words:

- » Rapidly learning new words every day - called the naming explosion.
- » Understands and expresses a range of concrete words, for example, sit, car, eat and cup. Later develops an understanding of more abstract words, for example, warm, fast, move or nice.
- » Starting to refer to needs, wants and feelings, usually their own, for example, "My want 'dat" or "I mad at you". These words help children regulate their emotions and behaviour.
- » A spoken vocabulary of 1000 words or more.

### Sentences:

- » Combining words (or signs) into short sentences, for example, "More banana" and "My like banana".
- » Creating more complex sentences, for example, "My want to go home now".
- » Putting endings onto words, for example, "My shoeses" or "We're having drinkers at our tea party". These apparent mistakes are actually a sign of progress.

### Stories:

- » Telling their first stories by talking about the recent past, for example, "Banana all gone" and the future, for example, "Want banana". This is a milestone because toddlers can now talk about images in their mind rather than describing only what they see in front of them.
- » Answering simple questions with words and phrases (what, where or who).
- » Telling a relatively complete story about an event that happened weeks or even months earlier.

### Social interaction:

- » Learning to take turns in short conversations with adults supporting.
- » Starting to take part in pretend play, for example, pretending a block is a phone.
- » Following simple verbal instructions, for example, "Shut the door".
- » Joining in waiata and songs with words and actions.
- » Starting to use common sentence openers in past and future conversations like "Do you remember when ... ?"



## Stepping stones for young children (2.5 to 5 years)

The bullet points below show the broad progressions seen in the development of oral language in young children.

### Sounds:

- » Making more difficult sounds – k, g, f, v, ch, j, sh, zh, l, r, s, z and th.
- » Becoming more aware of sounds and larger parts of words, for example, syllables and rhymes.
- » Making up their own rhymes, for example, bees knees. This sound play is vital for their later reading.

### Words:

- » Continuing to learn new words almost daily.
- » Understanding and using words for abstract concepts (helping, above or because), time (yesterday or tomorrow) and more complex emotions and thoughts (wish, think or scared). These will help them deal with heightened emotions, regulating behaviour and resolving conflicts.
- » Exploring and using mathematical symbols, concepts and processes, for example, volume, concepts, measurement, classifying, matching and pattern recognition.
- » A spoken vocabulary of 300–5000 words.

### Sentences:

- » Making longer, more complex sentences (in oral language or New Zealand Sign Language) with person + action + object + time/place, for example, “I went to Auntie’s today”.
- » Beginning to ask simple questions, for example, “What that?” progressing to asking complex questions like “Why is the sky blue?”
- » Ninety percent of sentences are grammatically correct.



### Stories:

- » Telling short stories about real life, pretend events and dreams.
- » More complex pretend play, for example, “Now you be the fairy and I be the frog”.
- » Telling longer stories with a basic beginning, middle, lots of talk about thoughts and feelings and sometimes an ending, for example, “There was a monster and then ... and then ... it was super scary and I wished it would go away. That’s all”.

### Social interaction:

- » Learning to take turns in a conversation.
- » Starting to adapt their level of language use to different people.
- » Starting to predict what others may be thinking and show empathy with how they may feel.
- » Following two-step instructions without prompting, for example, “Pick up your jersey and put it in your bag”.
- » By age four, most children will be able to communicate effectively in most situations.



## Useful resources

An evaluation investigating how effectively young children's oral language learning and development were supported in their early years of education.

**Extending their language - expanding their word: Children's oral language (birth-8 years):** <https://www.ero.govt.nz/publications/extending-their-language-expanding-their-world>

For more information on supporting children to understand, express and regulate their emotions, see pages 37–38 from:

**He Māpuna te Tamaiti: Supporting social and emotional competence in early learning:** <https://tewhariki.tki.org.nz/teaching-strategies-and-resources/self-management-and-regulation/#anchorTrigger-4749>

A Ministry of Education publication providing information about children's communication development. It includes how to make a referral to Learning Support when a whānau and early learning service have some concerns about a child's communication learning and development.

**Much more than words:** <https://seonline.tki.org.nz/Educator-tools/Much-More-than-Words>

## References

Acknowledgement for this section to Professor Elaine Reese (University of Otago) and Dr. Alison Sparks, SLT.





## Understanding bilingual and multilingual language pathways Ngā huarahi reorua, reohuhua

**“Increasingly, children are likely to be learning in and through more than one language. Besides English, te reo Māori and New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL), some 200 different languages are in use in New Zealand, with Samoan, Hindi, Northern Chinese, French and Yue (Cantonese) being the most common. Children more readily become bi- or multilingual and bi- or multiliterate when language learning in the education setting builds on their home languages.”**

*(Te Whāriki, page 12)*

## Benefits of bilingual and multilingual learning

“Kaiako in early learning have a vital part to play by educating families about the advantages of bilingualism, by helping children retain their bilingual identities and their family ties and by preparing them to live in a diverse society.”<sup>1</sup>

A diverse language environment promotes an understanding of concepts and values associated with identity, language and culture.

Becoming proficient in two or more languages is a proven advantage in any language learning. Research shows that fostering bilingualism (and multilingualism) supports children to develop strengths in cognitive and social learning.

Being bilingual enables children to:

- » communicate with people in their families, communities and learning environments
- » relate to others – participate in cultural activities and connect with others in the community
- » learn new words and learn additional languages
- » develop bi-literacy or multi-literacy skills and have access to additional literatures, traditions and ideas to enrich their later learning
- » access and apply cultural knowledge that is embedded in language<sup>2</sup>
- » demonstrate flexible thinking and be able to use information in new ways
- » come up with new solutions to problems.<sup>3,4</sup>



Kaiako signing the waiata about colours  
Mā is white with a group of children.

## Understanding bilingual language learning pathways

Fostering children's oral language in Aotearoa involves bilingual and multilingual language learning pathways. Kaiako have an important role in integrating te reo Māori in everyday activities. Promoting the learning and use of home languages in the early learning setting affirms children's culture and identity.

Being aware of each child's language learning pathway helps kaiako make thoughtful observations and formative assessments and consider how to support learning and development in ways that acknowledge their linguistic and cultural strengths.

There are two pathways for children becoming bilingual:

- » developing two (or more) languages from birth
- » second (or subsequent) language learning.

### Bilingual from birth

#### Language steps

1. Children spend time immersed in two or more languages from infancy.
2. Children mix their use of languages. They learn sounds, vocabulary and grammar across their languages.
3. Children know the distinct features of their languages.
4. Children are able to switch between languages according to their conversational partner.
5. Children develop a preferred language over time.

## Second (and subsequent) language learning after age three

#### Language steps

1. Children become proficient in their home language. They are introduced to a second language after age three.
2. Children mainly observe and listen in environments where the second language is spoken.
3. Children use patterns of the new language: short sentences that are modelled by fluent speakers.
4. Children become creative in the new language, developing their own correct sentences.
5. Children become proficient and hold conversations in their second (or subsequent) language.

### Code-switching

Children can learn more than one language system at the same rate as monolingual learning. Expect children to combine elements of languages in one sentence as a typical feature of bilingual/multilingual interactions.

### Receptive and expressive language

Expect in all language learning that children's receptive language (knowledge and understanding of language) is a step ahead of their expressive language (what they can express).

### Strategies

See **Supporting bilingual and multilingual learning pathways**. <https://tewhariki.tki.org.nz/en/teaching-strategies-and-resources/talking-together/talk-tools/supporting-bilingual-and-multilingual-learning>





## Useful resources

A Radio New Zealand podcast by Wellington speech and language therapist Christian Wright.

**Bilingualism in preschoolers:** <https://www.rnz.co.nz/national/programmes/ninetonoon/audio/201852585/bi-lingualism-in-pre-schoolers>

The first downloadable PDF in this series of resource books is an introduction and contains information and understandings about learning an additional language.

**The English language learning progressions introduction:** <https://esolonline.tki.org.nz/ESOL-Online/Planning-for-my-students-needs/Professional-support-for-teachers-and-teacher-aides/English-Language-Learning-Progressions#ELLPBooks>

An Education Review Office 2017 report on how effectively young children's oral language learning and development were supported in their early years of education.

**Extending their language – expanding their world: Children's oral language, birth-8 years:** <https://www.ero.govt.nz/publications/extending-their-language-expanding-their-world>

A report bringing together New Zealand and international research by Professor Stephen May, Te Puna Wānanga, University of Auckland.

**Research to understand the features of quality Pacific bilingual education: Review of best practices:** <https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/pasifika/research-to-understand-the-features-of-quality-pacific-bilingual-education>

**Learning language and loving it:** Weitzman E. and Greenberg (2002). 2nd ed. *Learning language and loving it: A guide to promoting children's social, language and literacy development in early childhood settings*. Toronto: Hanen Research Centre. pp. 253-259.

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## Background theories and research in oral language

### Ngā ariā, ngā rangahau o te reo ā-waha

#### He Awa Whiria - a braided river approach

Knowledge and theory are culturally bound. Values and practices are passed down in the traditions of each culture and do not always translate well into other contexts.

He Awa Whiria is a metaphor for considering the relationship between Māori and non-Māori (predominantly Western) streams of knowledge. In braided rivers the water flows through a number of channels separated by alluvial deposits. These channels intersect and shift over time as they respond to the changing water and soil conditions, but they all lead to the same destination. In Aotearoa, braided rivers are particularly common in Canterbury.

This idea is inspired by Professor Sir Mason Durie and developed by Professor Angus Macfarlane and Adjunct Associate Professor Sonja Macfarlane. He Awa Whiria draws from both Māori and non-Māori streams of knowledge and creates space where “the two streams of knowledge are able to blend and interact”.<sup>1</sup>

#### Kaupapa Māori approaches and oral language

Te reo Māori is a language that uses huahuatau/metaphor, kupu whakarite/simile, kīrehu/idioms, kīwaha/colloquialisms and reo whakaahua/descriptive language in everyday speech.

There are traditional ways of being, ways of knowing and ways of doing<sup>3</sup> that can be drawn upon in Kaupapa Māori to teach, model and learn language within everyday activities and through play. These include whakapapa, waiata ā-ringa, karakia, haka, pao, pātere, kōrero tāwhito, pūrakau, pakiwaitara and tuakana-teina relationships.<sup>4</sup>

Users of te reo Māori are encouraged to use these language features to engage with their environment and their listeners. Rich oral language can be caught as much as taught. This can be described as the difference between deliberately teaching te reo Māori and the modelling of te reo Māori.

## Western science and oral language

The Western science tradition has examined relationships between oracy (oral language capabilities) and literacy (reading and writing). It promotes literacy as essential for social, cultural and economic wellbeing. It recognises that both oracy and literacy are essential for communication, future learning and positive life outcomes.

Recent studies on brain development and learning link early oral language, particularly breadth of vocabulary and phonological awareness, to literacy success far into the school years.<sup>5,6</sup>

## Creating a braided river

There are many opportunities for kaiako to be intentional in their use of approaches and strategies from Māori and non-Māori knowledge bases as they support children's oral language. For the early learning service an example is integrating te reo Māori and tikanga within all daily care rituals. For kaiako an example is correct pronunciation of names and modelling the use of phrases in te reo Māori, such as “e noho” / “sit down” or “hoake tātou” / “let's go”.

Another simple and effective strategy that creates a braided river is using the 3 R's plus actions in daily activities and play – repetition, rhythm, rhyme and actions (non-verbal communication).

By braiding the Kaupapa Māori approaches with those of Western science, we add richness to oral language teaching and learning and to the curriculum overall. Weaving approaches equitably avoids assimilating te ao Māori to suit Western constructs.





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## Partnering with whānau for language development

### Te mahi tahi me ngā whānau ki te whakawhanake i te reo ā-waha

*Ehara taku toa i te toa takitahi engari he toa takitini.  
I come not with my own strengths but bring with me the gifts,  
talents and strengths of my family, tribe and ancestors.*

**“Children learn and develop best when their culture, knowledge and community are affirmed and when people in their lives help them make connections across settings.”**

*(Te Whāriki, page 20)*

**Whakawhanauangatanga** – building respectful and reciprocal relationships – is the key to making such connections with whānau.<sup>1</sup>

Whakawhanaungatanga and the whakataukī on this page are useful touchstones (guiding principles) for a partnership model with whānau for oral language. It is a reminder that language is a taonga within each whānau that deserves kaiako attention and respect.

## Conversations

When kaiako regularly have conversations with whānau about new and fun things happening at home, these can be revisited in conversations kaiako have with tamariki. This way, tamariki are often more motivated to talk because they are the expert in a conversation.

Regular catch-ups with whānau give kaiako the opportunity to learn about languages spoken at home and plan together how they can incorporate key words into everyday interactions. In these conversations with whānau, kaiako can promote the importance of fostering the learning of home languages by family members speaking their strongest language with their children.

## Sharing practice

Kaiako can share with whānau new and existing practices. These can be te reo Māori words and phrases, sound and vocabulary games and New Zealand Sign Language.

The idea that reading and writing “float on a sea of talk”<sup>2</sup> may be new to whānau. Guidance for whānau is often as simple as pointing out ways in which they can contribute to children’s expanding language and vocabulary through routines and events in everyday life.

## Whānau aspirations

Whānau have aspirations for their tamariki. This includes having their language, culture and identity affirmed in the learning setting. Inviting whānau to share their aspirations helps to build a shared understanding of how adults can provide learning support across settings.

Two topics that may be of concern to whānau are language delay and learning English as an additional language. They are also topics where whānau and kaiako may have different expectations and desired outcomes.

Kaiako help to navigate these differences by:

- » nurturing trusting relationships as a priority at all times
- » listening carefully – being conscious that their own assumptions can get in the way of listening
- » being conscious of the messages body language conveys, for example, possible messages of doubt or mistrust facial expressions may give to whānau
- » finding common ground as a starting point, for example, kaiako and whānau often have the same goal but the expected process to get there can be different, understanding this can help lighten concerns for both whānau and kaiako
- » having a sound knowledge base from which to support and offer reliable guidance when it is asked for, for example, how and when language develops.







## Useful resources

A Ministry of Education publication providing information about children's communication development. It includes how to make a referral to Learning Support when a whānau and early learning service have some concerns about a child's communication learning and development.

**Much more than words:** <https://seonline.tki.org.nz/Educator-tools/Much-More-than-Words>

Te Puni Kōkiri booklet kaiako can share with whānau to support their learning and speaking te reo Māori in the home.

**Kei roto i te whare: Māori language in the home:** <https://www.tpk.govt.nz/en/a-matou-mohiotanga/language/kei-roto-i-te-whare-reprinted>

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## Kaiako responsibilities in oral language

### Te wāhi ki ngā kaiako i te ako i te reo ā-waha

*“Ka mōmōu ki te takoto mātaotao ki te pukapuka.  
Whakahokia mai ki te arero, ka whakamahi ai.”*

*Language is wasted, lying neglected within books.  
Return it to the tongue, and then use it.<sup>1</sup>*

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

*(Te Whāriki, page 59)*

### Intentional teaching

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.”<sup>2</sup> The quality of kaiako talk and interactions plays a key role in converting intentional pedagogy into actions.

Intentional teaching includes planning for tamariki to hear and participate in a range of oral language rituals. For example, formal mihi, greetings, karanga, talanoa, humour, debates, planning discussions and stories.

*Talking together, Te kōrerorero* supports kaiako to adopt intentional teaching practices. The Talk Information sections provide information about how children learn and progress as they become increasingly capable of understanding and using oral language. Knowledge about how children learn and progress helps kaiako to identify teachable moments. It leads to tailored learning experiences that deepen and strengthen children's oral language learning.

## Cultural responsiveness

*“Children are more likely to feel at home if they regularly see their own culture, languages and world views valued in the ECE setting.”*

*Te Whāriki, page 31*

Cultural responsiveness requires kaiako to think about their own beliefs, values, biases and wellbeing, ensuring these support bilingual and multilingual language learning pathways.

As kaiako learn about the cultures and languages represented in their service, they can initiate and support changes to oral language and literacy practices. This includes promoting the benefits of bilingualism and multilingualism.

Increasing kaiako proficiency in the use of te reo and tikanga Māori helps all children to learn and develop capabilities in te reo and tikanga Māori.<sup>3</sup>

## Inclusive practice

Inclusive practice recognises that each child is unique and their development is responsive to a variety of sociocultural, ecological and biological influences. Reflecting on the connection between children's communication and the whole picture of a child's wellbeing and development is important. Making links between children's communication and behaviour can help kaiako consider appropriate ways to respond to and support oral language learning.

Some children may require more focused or intentional support for their oral language learning. *Talking together, Te kōrerorero* will help kaiako plan for and support every child to progress. Kaiako have a role in learning how to effectively use a range of technologies with tamariki who have augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) devices. In some cases, kaiako may need to draw on external services of a speech and language therapist or other specialist help. The approaches and practices discussed in *Talking together, Te kōrerorero* will help support children's progress towards any individual plan goals related to oral language.

The Ministry of Education resource *Much more than words*,<sup>4</sup> provides information on typical communication development and how to make a referral to Learning Support when a whānau and early learning service have some concerns about a child's communication learning and development.





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<https://seonline.tki.org.nz/Educator-tools/Much-More-than-Words>



## Assessment in oral language and communication

### Te āhua o te aromatawai i te reo ā-waha me te whakawhitiwhiti

Kaiako use formative assessment (assessment that strengthens learning) to find out:

- » what children already know and can do (across their languages)
- » what interests children
- » how children's languages and a language rich environment is currently supported by kaiako, including the integration of te reo Māori
- » how children's learning is progressing
- » what might be the next step
- » areas in which children may need additional support.

Māori ways of knowing, being and doing in formative assessment take account of:

- » educational aspirations of whānau for mokopuna
- » the inherent strengths, traditions, history, whānau and whakapapa of mokopuna.
- » te mita o te reo Māori, the sounds, words and use of te reo Māori that are distinctive for each hapū and iwi.

Assessment information should inform conversations on learning with families and whānau.

Formative assessment may be in the moment or documented. In the moment assessments inform our ability to tailor responses and interactions for the benefit of children's thinking and learning. They are at the heart of intentional teaching.

Documented assessments can take a variety of forms including narratives (learning stories), running records, time sampling, anecdotal observations and audio and video recordings.

From time to time, assessments may inform expert advice. For example, specialist services may make use of your assessment of a child's language development and communication skills.

## Effective use of assessment data

Kaiako making effective use of assessment to foster oral language growth will regularly:

- » consider children's capabilities in languages across all their environments, for example, in English, home languages and community languages
- » engage with whānau as experts on their child's interests and their language capabilities at home and in other settings
- » use assessment information to help select effective teaching strategies that match the needs and interests of a child, group of children or the service as a whole
- » use assessment for informing conversations about language learning with children, whānau and families, other kaiako and external support agencies
- » consider what assessments tell them about progression over time and how they can support children to get to the next step.

## Observing oral language and communication

In the Stepping stones in oral language section you will find lists of the broad progressions seen in the development of language and communication for infants, toddlers and young children in English. Use the descriptors within each of these to inform your observations and gather evidence about progression over time. Descriptors are grouped under the following topics:

- » **sounds** – order of speech sound development and developing phonological awareness
- » **words** – expected word bank and types of words used at different stages
- » **sentences** – word order, word endings and sentence structure
- » **stories** – enjoyment and participation through to creating their own stories
- » **social interaction** – attention, responses and conversational strategies.

## Receptive or expressive language?

All language and communication rely on the development of skills in:

- » **receptive language** – the ability to hear, process and understand information
- » **expressive language** – the ability to respond and express meaning with sounds, words, gestures or signing.

Children's receptive language is usually ahead of their ability to express and respond. This is the reason why it is important to address both aspects within assessments. For example, a child described as "having no English" may not speak but still have a good understanding of the language.

When observing language and communication progressions consider:

- » How well do they understand what is being expressed to them? How do you know that?
- » Does a bilingual or multilingual child demonstrate receptive language capabilities in their home language/s?
- » Can they follow one or two simple directions - an indication of their receptive language capabilities?
- » If they are not using words, do they use gestures to respond and express themselves?
- » In what situations and with which people do they use or not use expressive language?



## Useful resources

Philosophies and practices related to assessment based on Kaupapa Māori.

**Te whatu pōkeka:** <http://www.education.govt.nz/early-childhood/teaching-and-learning/assessment-for-learning/te-whatu-pokeka-english>

Examples of practical ways to document and respond to children's progress in communication capabilities.

**The Education Hub:** <https://theeducationhub.org.nz/strategies-for-supporting-childrens-communication-in-educational-settings>

These best practice guides provide reflective questions on assessment practices in dual literacy, te reo Māori and English:

**Kei tua o te pae, books 1-20:** <http://www.education.govt.nz/kei-tua-o-te-pae-2>

**Book 17 reflective questions:** <https://www.education.govt.nz/assets/Documents/Early-Childhood/Kei-Tua-o-te-Pae/ECEBk17QuestionsNotes.pdf>

This PDF provides information about children's communication development so you can think how a child is talking and support them, using their skills and interests.

**Much more than words:** <https://seonline.tki.org.nz/Educator-tools/Much-More-than-Words>

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## Reflection and inquiry about oral language

### Te huritao me te pakirehua i te ako i te reo ā-waha

Reflection and inquiry both support kaiako professional learning and contribute to improved learning outcomes for tamariki. *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” (*Te Whāriki*, page 59).

Reflective kaiako critically 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 assessment, internal evaluation and

curriculum planning is vital. It allows you to draw together evidence, experience, critical thinking and knowledge about effective, inclusive pedagogies to develop and trial approaches and evaluate progress.

### Whole-team inquiry

Here are some questions to consider in regards to the progression of oral language learning:

- » What are our intentional teaching strategies to support children’s oral language progress?
- » What do recent assessments tell us about the progress of individuals and groups of children in our service?

- » What further information do we need to seek to better understand the different language needs of infants, toddlers and young children? Refer to the sections **Stepping stones in oral language** (pages 54-58) and **Understanding bilingual and multilingual language learning pathways** (pages 59-62).
- » What are we doing for those children who need additional support in communication?
- » What opportunities are there for us to develop and articulate a shared understanding about children's progress in language and communication?
- » How can we better make use of relevant Talk tools as a teaching team? Which strategies will we focus on? When and with which groups of children or individuals?

Further reflective questions on communication are on page 45 in *Te Whāriki*.

## Planning professional learning

Planning ongoing professional learning is critical for kaiako to develop their capability to support the cultural and linguistic diversity of all children in an inclusive environment.

Kaiako, leaders and teaching teams will identify priority areas for growing their knowledge base, skills and experiences.

Consider learning more about:

- » how language and communication develop
- » ways to incorporate phonological awareness (recognising and working with the sounds of spoken language) playfully into the curriculum
- » kaiako interactions and practices that encourage language learning
- » bilingualism, biliteracy, multilingualism and multiliteracy
- » supporting home languages
- » languages and cultures represented within your service and community.

## Support networks

Good leadership establishes networks based on respectful, reciprocal partnerships beyond the service. Such networks create new and existing relationships to draw on when you need professional advice.

These could include:

- » networks connected to your service, for example, families, community groups and mana whenua
- » refugee and new migrant services, for example, translation services
- » specialist support services, for example, deaf community networks.



## Useful resources

Cultural capability frameworks on the Teaching Council New Zealand website, to help identify learning goals and track progress:

**Tātaiako: Cultural capabilities for teachers of Māori ākonga:** <https://teachingcouncil.nz/assets/Files/Code-and-Standards/Tataiako.pdf>

**Tapasā: Cultural capabilities for teachers of Pacific children:** <https://pasifika.tki.org.nz/Tapasā>

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# Self-assessment tool

## Supporting oral language learning and development

This curriculum resource provides key information (Talk Information sections) and practical teaching approaches (Talk Tools sections) which support kaiako to enact a strong oral language focus in early learning settings. The pdf version is hosted on [Te Whāriki Online](https://tewhariki.tki.org.nz):

<https://tewhariki.tki.org.nz/talkingtogether>



### **i** Using the self-assessment tool:

Photocopy from the book or print out a copy of the PDF version of the self-assessment tool (on Te Whāriki Online) to record your discussions about the self-assessment.

This self-assessment tool supports team and individual internal evaluation that is based on the understandings and strategies unpacked in *Talking together, Te kōrerorero*.

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 the effectiveness of individual and team practices.

Use the tool to examine your team’s practice and the degree to which it includes effective, evidence-based strategies that foster language learning and development. The tool will also help you as a team to review your oral language environment and so ensure that it is supportive and inclusive for all tamariki.

You can also use the tool to reflect on your individual practice, ideally 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.

## SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL

Kaiako: .....

Date and time: ..... Observer (if applicable): .....

Characteristics and tikanga of our early learning service: .....

Languages represented in our community: .....



Rate your team or yourself for each strategy or teaching practice by marking **Emerging**, **Partly in place** or **Embedded** referring to the descriptors below.

Descriptors	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Emerging</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Partly in place</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Embedded</b>
<p><input type="radio"/> <b>Emerging</b></p> <p><i>Teaching practices in <b>Emerging</b> can include:</i></p>	<p><i>We are learning about this information and making plans about how and when we can apply it to support tamariki in their oral language learning and development.</i></p> <p><i>In our reflective discussion times, we are starting to have conversations about how we could use this information in our planning and how we could put it into action with our tamariki.</i></p>		
<p><input type="radio"/> <b>Partly in place</b></p> <p><i>Teaching practices in <b>Partly in place</b> can include:</i></p>	<p><i>We have gained some knowledge and can put it into action:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» <i>in some aspects of planning: Data is beginning to be gathered to inform our planning for the language learning and development of individuals and groups of tamariki. This can be seen in our curriculum planning documents.</i></li> <li>» <i>when we're interacting with some tamariki or whānau members (there may be particular groups of tamariki where we are more consistent)</i></li> <li>» <i>some of the time. It may be some parts of the day, some play activities, some care routines or other daily routines in the service.</i></li> </ul>		
<p><input type="radio"/> <b>Embedded</b></p> <p><i>Teaching practices in <b>Embedded</b> can include:</i></p>	<p><i>We are building our knowledge and consistently putting it into action:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» <i>throughout our planning, review and internal evaluation processes: Deliberate collection of data that informs decision making and planning around language learning and development of individual and groups of tamariki is occurring. This can be seen in our curriculum planning documents.</i></li> <li>» <i>when we're interacting with tamariki or whānau members</i></li> <li>» <i>in most contexts: We are using it across the day, during play activities, care routines and other daily routines in our early learning service.</i></li> </ul> <p><i>This can be seen in our formative assessments for tamariki, such as in learning stories and learning portfolios.</i></p> <p><i>In our reflective discussion times, we talk about how we adapt and use this information and the impact it has on fostering the oral language learning and development of our tamariki.</i></p>		



## TALK INFORMATION | NGĀ ARIĀ REO Ā-WAHA

### Understanding oral language growth and key concepts

Rate your team or yourself for each strategy or teaching practice by marking **Emerging**, **Partly in place** or **Embedded** referring to the descriptors

<p><b>1. Stepping stones in oral language</b>   He poutama mō te reo ā-waha (pages 54-58)</p>	<p>We recognise and understand where tamariki are developing their stepping stones in oral language: speech sounds, words and sentences, stories, social interaction.</p> <p>We adjust our intentional teaching strategies for interacting with tamariki by knowing each tamaiti well, recognising their preferences and understanding their language steps.</p> <p>We recognise when seeking additional support for growth in the language steps of our tamariki may be beneficial, along with strengths-based discussions with whānau to explore opportunities, including accessing Learning Support from the Ministry of Education.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> <b>Emerging</b>      <input type="radio"/> <b>Partly in place</b>      <input type="radio"/> <b>Embedded</b></p>
<p><b>2. Braided rivers</b>   He Awa Whiria Weaving a bicultural approach (pages 63-65)</p>	<p>We weave traditional Māori approaches within our oral language strategies in meaningful ways on a regular basis, eg, use of pepeha, waiata ā-ringa, karakia, haka, pātere, pūrākau, pakiwaitara.</p> <p>We use <b>3 R's + actions</b> (repetition, rhythm, rhyme and action or non-verbal communication) to help us remember effective ways to weave elements of Kaupapa Māori approaches in our oral language strategies.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> <b>Emerging</b>      <input type="radio"/> <b>Partly in place</b>      <input type="radio"/> <b>Embedded</b></p>
<p><b>3. Partnering with whānau for language development</b>   Te mahi tahi me ngā whānau ki te whakawhanake i te reo ā-waha (pages 66-68)</p>	<p>We are intentional in partnering with whānau for language development through: regular conversations and catch-ups, sharing new and existing strategies, inviting whānau to share their aspirations and building a shared understanding of how adults can provide support for language learning and development across daily settings for tamariki.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> <b>Emerging</b>      <input type="radio"/> <b>Partly in place</b>      <input type="radio"/> <b>Embedded</b></p>
<p><b>4. Assessment in oral language and communication</b>   Te āhua o te aromatawai i te reo ā-waha me te whakawhitiwhiti (pages 72-74)</p>	<p>We consider the capabilities of our tamariki across all their languages and environments. We engage with whānau as experts on their tamariki and our assessment takes into account Māori ways of knowing, being and doing.</p> <p>We refer to Stepping stones in oral language (pages 54-58) to inform our observations and gather evidence about progression over time for speech sounds, words, sentences, stories and social interaction. We use our assessment data to respond to tamariki and plan next steps for supporting their learning and development.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> <b>Emerging</b>      <input type="radio"/> <b>Partly in place</b>      <input type="radio"/> <b>Embedded</b></p>

## TALK TOOLS | NGĀ RAUEMI WHAKAKŌRERO

### Using oral language strategies and approaches

Rate your team or yourself for each strategy or teaching practice by marking **Emerging**, **Partly in place** or **Embedded** referring to the descriptors

<p><b>1. Encouraging conversation</b>   Te akiaki i te kōrerorero (pages 9-12)</p>	<p>In <b>Serve and return</b> we respond to the interests of tamariki and provide experiences to engage their curiosity and start conversations.</p> <p>We engage pēpi and tamariki in back-and-forth conversations based on what they are looking at or playing with or by building on a shared interest (a focus of joint attention). We notice, recognise and respond to the different turns (their Stepping stones to oral language, pages 54-58) that an infant, toddler or young child has in a conversation and our response matches the tamaiti.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> <b>Emerging</b>      <input type="radio"/> <b>Partly in place</b>      <input type="radio"/> <b>Embedded</b></p>
<p><b>2. Descriptive language strategies</b>   Ngā rautaki reo whakaahua (pages 13-15)</p>	<p>We use descriptive language strategies in the times that we naturally spend together with tamariki, using commenting (saying what we are noticing), self-talk (commenting on what we are thinking/doing), parallel talk (commenting on what tamariki are doing), interpreting (building on communication when tamariki use sounds and actions to communicate) and modelling (using accurate speech and language models and building a rich word bank across languages).</p> <p><input type="radio"/> <b>Emerging</b>      <input type="radio"/> <b>Partly in place</b>      <input type="radio"/> <b>Embedded</b></p>
<p><b>3. Supporting bilingual and multilingual learning pathways</b>   Te taunaki i te ako reorua, reohuhua (pages 16-21)</p>	<p>We work in close partnerships with whānau to support home languages, including learning basic songs, stories, words and phrases from the home languages of our tamariki and using them in daily interactions.</p> <p>We adjust our intentional teaching strategies, resources and supports for tamariki from understanding their language pathway (English language, bilingual and multilingual).</p> <p><input type="radio"/> <b>Emerging</b>      <input type="radio"/> <b>Partly in place</b>      <input type="radio"/> <b>Embedded</b></p>
<p><b>4. Expanding vocabulary</b>   Te whakawhānui i te puna kupu (pages 22-25)</p>	<p>We are intentional in adding a variety of words within conversations, such as names, actions, descriptors, question words, words for feelings and location words.</p> <p>We develop and implement ways to support tamariki expanding their vocabulary in their home languages.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> <b>Emerging</b>      <input type="radio"/> <b>Partly in place</b>      <input type="radio"/> <b>Embedded</b></p>

## TALK TOOLS | NGĀ RAUEMI WHAKAKŌRERO

### Using oral language strategies and approaches

#### 5. We use a range of strategies effectively to foster the oral language learning and development of our tamariki.

For self-assessment, reflect on which strategies you have used with tamariki on a regular basis. Refer to the book or online resource for more information about each strategy.

Reading and phonological awareness | Te pānui me te aroā ororeo (pages 26-29, 41-43)

Emerging  Partly in place  Embedded

Conversations and questions | Ngā whakawhitiwhiti, ngā pātai (pages 30-32)

Emerging  Partly in place  Embedded

Storytelling | Pūrākau (pages 33-36)

Emerging  Partly in place  Embedded

Talking about feelings | Te kōrero mō ngā kare ā-roto (pages 37-38)

Emerging  Partly in place  Embedded

Fostering peer communication | Te poipoi i te whakawhitiwhiti me ngā hoa (pages 44-47)

Emerging  Partly in place  Embedded

Digital technologies | Te hangarau matihiko (pages 39-40)

Emerging  Partly in place  Embedded

Music and songs | Te kōrero pūrākau, te puoro me ngā waiata (pages 48-50)

Emerging  Partly in place  Embedded



### Useful resources for reflection, inquiry and internal evaluation

1. Education Review Office (2020). *Te ara poutama: Indicators of quality for early childhood education: What matters most*. Wellington: ERO.  
<https://moeshared.cwp.govt.nz/publications/te-ara-poutama-indicators-of-quality-for-early-childhood-education-what-matters-most>
2. Education Review Office (2016). *Effective internal evaluation for improvement*. Wellington: ERO.  
<https://www.ero.govt.nz/publications/effective-internal-evaluation-for-improvement>
3. Ministry of Education (2017). *Te Whāriki: He whāriki mātauranga mō ngā mokopuna o Aotearoa, Early childhood curriculum*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.  
<https://tewhariki.tki.org.nz/en/early-childhood-curriculum>

**NEXT STEPS: SUMMARY OF REFLECTION AND PLANNING**  
Look through your self-assessment tool responses

What are our strengths?

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What are our areas for development?

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How can we improve our practice?

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Do we need help? If so, from whom?

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

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