

Update of *Te Whāriki*

Summary of engagement findings



Introduction

Children learn a huge amount in their early years. Participating in quality early childhood education (ECE) and ngā kōhanga reo strengthens early learning and lays the foundations for learning success throughout life.

Quality early learning offers children a broad and rich curriculum of relationships and experiences. It supports a child's all-round development and enables them to discover and deepen their interests and talents.

In 2016, the Ministry of Education initiated a process to update New Zealand's early childhood curriculum, *Te Whāriki*, published in 1996. The update was recommended by the Advisory Group on Early Learning (AGEL) as one of several initiatives to strengthen the implementation of *Te Whāriki* and support continuity of children's learning from birth to eight years. You can access the AGEL report at goo.gl/DPCDy7

The Ministry commissioned a group of early learning academics and practitioners to develop a draft of *Te Whāriki* for wider consultation. The group received advice from the original writers of *Te Whāriki* and other education experts.

Following feedback on an early draft from three practitioner "user hubs", an updated document was publicly released on 4 November 2016 for a six-week consultation period.

Key changes to the document prior to public release included:

- updated context, language, examples, and implementation advice
- stronger bicultural framing and a focus on identity, language, and culture, and on inclusion of all children
- fewer, clearer learning outcomes
- links to *The New Zealand Curriculum* and *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa*
- a streamlined structure that is easier to navigate.

The overarching structure of principles, strands, and goals was unchanged.

The early learning sector, schools, parents and whānau, and others were invited to provide feedback on the draft *Te Whāriki* (including *Te Whāriki a te Kōhanga Reo*) through consultation hui and an online survey. The Ministry held thirty-six face-to-face consultation hui (attended by over 1,400 people), received 774 responses to an online survey, and received a number of direct submissions. The Ministry also met with the Early Childhood Advisory Committee (ECAC) before, during, and after the consultation process.

We have gathered all of the feedback, identified the main themes, and produced a full report. This shorter summary introduces those themes. You can read the full report at tewhariki.tki.org.nz

Feedback from the consultation fell into seven broad areas:

- Consultation and document development
- Learning outcomes
- Inclusiveness
- Educational theories
- Kaiako guidance and support
- Implementation support
- Layout and design



What we heard ...

Consultation and document development

What we heard:

Many respondents thought the timeframe for giving feedback was too short and some commented that it was hard for teachers to attend the consultation hui.

Some respondents felt the draft looked rushed and would benefit from further expert review before final release.

What we've done:

- A range of experts have contributed to the final draft, including the original writers of *Te Whāriki*.
- Where requested, we met face-to-face with people and organisations so we could listen to and discuss their feedback and concerns. This feedback has been taken into account wherever possible. All submissions, whether face-to-face or written, were carefully considered.

Learning outcomes

What we heard:

Generally, respondents supported the reduced number of learning outcomes in the updated <i>Te Whāriki</i> document.	There was concern about the increased prominence of learning outcomes, compared to principles and goals.
Some respondents felt the reduced number of outcomes could be used as a summative assessment “checklist” that overlooked children’s learning progress across the early years.	The language used was considered overly focused on the acquisition of knowledge, rather than broader dispositions, working theories, and “learning to learn”.
Some learning outcomes were seen as too academic and not sufficiently expansive.	

What we’ve done:

- We reviewed the learning outcomes and framed these as the development of children’s capabilities over time, noting that this development occurs in a context of guidance and support.
- We linked the development of learning dispositions and working theories (eg, “learning to learn”) more directly to the learning outcomes.
- Goals and learning outcomes are connected in the one-page overview diagram to show links between pedagogy and learning.
- We reviewed the section on assessment, planning, and evaluation to provide clearer links with the principles of *Te Whāriki*.
- More prominence has been given to the principles of *Te Whāriki* to create a better overall balance.
- Some learning outcomes have been reworded or expanded to better explain intent.



Inclusiveness

What we heard:

Some of the respondents were pleased with the document's stronger bicultural focus while others thought it needed to be further strengthened.	Some respondents felt that the sections on infants and toddlers did not adequately describe their distinctive capabilities, nor the implications for pedagogy.
Some respondents thought a stronger multi-cultural focus was needed.	Many respondents thought the consultation draft was inclusive of all children, while others commented that children who needed additional learning support should be more visible.

What we've done:

- The bicultural framing has been retained and guidance relating to Māori concepts and pedagogy has been expanded.
- The focus on affirming the diverse identities, cultures and languages of all children and their families and whānau has been strengthened.
- The sections describing infants and toddlers have been revised to better reflect current approaches to pedagogy.
- More explicit references have been made to children who need additional learning support.
- Visual aspects of *Te Whāriki* have been changed to better reflect diversity.

Educational theories

What we heard:

Many respondents liked the inclusion of a distinct section on theories. Some wanted more detail about specific theories and theorists, while others wanted stronger links to be made between theory and practice.	Some respondents felt that specific educational philosophies were not well represented.
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What we've done:

- We have retained the section on theories and made stronger links with pedagogical advice. We have not expanded this section further in the print document, however we have noted this as an area for development for tewhariki.tki.org.nz, the implementation website to support *Te Whāriki*.
- We have specifically acknowledged that there are diverse philosophies and approaches across the sector and that this is valued by parents and whānau.

Kaiako guidance and support

What we heard:

Some respondents wanted reflective questions retained to support leaders and kaiako to guide reflective practice.	There was broad support for inclusion of the links between <i>Te Whāriki</i> and <i>The New Zealand Curriculum</i> .
Not everyone agreed with the term “kaiako” to cover teachers and educators and some wondered why this term had been used.	Some respondents thought that <i>Te Whāriki</i> should provide more guidance, tools, and resources on curriculum design, pedagogy, and assessment.
Some respondents thought <i>Te Whāriki a te Kōhanga Reo</i> should be expanded to include more implementation guidance.	

What we've done:

- Reflective questions have been included in the document to support each curriculum strand.
- We have made the links between *Te Whāriki* and *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa* more explicit to better support understanding of this pathway. A section in *Te Whāriki a te Kōhanga Reo* reinforces that language and customary practices provide the foundation for that curriculum.
- We have explained the reason for using the term kaiako and that this term covers teachers, educators, and parents who share responsibility for curriculum delivery.
- We have noted the feedback on additional resources for consideration as we develop the *Te Whāriki* implementation website.
- *Te Whāriki a te Kōhanga Reo* was expanded to include more information about curriculum design, pedagogy, and assessment.



Implementation support

What we heard:

Many respondents commented that a website with a range of curriculum support materials and resources would be useful.

Generally, respondents thought that targeted webinars, workshops, and forums would support curriculum implementation.

What we've done:

- We have incorporated this advice into the design of tewhariki.tki.org.nz, the implementation website in development, and into the design of the professional learning and development programme to support the implementation of *Te Whāriki*.

Layout and design

What we heard:

Most respondents felt the draft layout, design, and writing style was easy to follow, although some thought that was because *Te Whāriki* had been overly simplified.

Many respondents commented on the fact that photos had been added. Support for and against the use of photos was evenly split.

There was wide support for the cover design. Some respondents asked for changes to the whāriki inside the document to make them easier to understand, and for clearer explanations of the designs.

Most respondents liked the “flip” design that put *Te Whāriki* and *Te Whāriki a te Kōhanga Reo* side-by-side. Some respondents questioned this layout and requested that the two parts be published separately.

What we've done:

- We have retained the design features that were favoured.
- *Te Whāriki* has been reviewed to create a better balance between academic and practitioner language.
- We reduced the space given to photographs in *Te Whāriki*. We used smaller photo collages to show greater diversity, with a focus on learning interactions.
- Both whāriki have been adapted and more detailed explanations have been provided.
- We have retained the cover illustrations and added an explanation of the weaving concept.
- The flip design has been retained.



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