

**Success for Māori
Children in Early
Childhood Services:
Good Practice**

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Introduction

Improving educational outcomes for Māori learners is a key priority for the education sector. The focus of current education strategies is to improve the way the education system assists Māori learners realise their potential. Early childhood services have a key role in building strong learning foundations to enable young children to develop as competent and confident learners.

The majority of Māori children (76 percent)¹ participating in early childhood education do so in mainstream early childhood services. ERO evaluated the provision of education and care for Māori children in 576 early childhood services, as part of their regular education reviews during Term 4, 2008 and Terms 1 and 2, 2009. The evaluation focused on the extent to which services:

- responded to the aspirations and expectations of parents and whānau of Māori children; and
- focused on realising the potential of Māori children to become competent and confident learners.

ERO found that although many early childhood services have processes to consult and communicate with the families, less than half (41 percent) were using these processes to identify and respond to the aspirations and expectations of parents and whānau of Māori children. Shifting managers' and educators' thinking and practice from having processes for all children (and their parents and whānau), to understanding the need to listen, respect and respond to what parents and whānau of Māori children expect of the service is one of the biggest challenges.

Just over a third of services were focused on supporting Māori children to become competent and confident learners. Managers and educators in many services need to recognise the importance of acknowledging Māori children's cultural identity and heritage. Reflecting on their practices in supporting Māori children to experience success as learners, and questioning these is a next step for many services.

This report complements the national evaluation report, *Success for Māori Children in Early Childhood Services, March 2010*. It presents examples of good practice from nine early childhood services, identified during their ERO reviews, which had practices that were working for Māori children and their parents and whānau. The report gives some background information about each service, highlights what the service is doing to respond to parent and whānau aspirations and expectations, uses quotes from personnel in the services, and describes practices that focus on Māori children as successful learners. The examples also include ideas to help other services

¹ See www.educationcounts.govt.nz/statistics/ece.

wanting to be more responsive to whānau and to improve their support for Māori children.

These nine services are at different stages in their development. The good practice ERO found showed that some services are well on the way and others are taking small steps towards becoming a service that fits with their vision and aligns with their beliefs and values as expressed in their philosophy statement.

Methodology

ERO identified early childhood services for this report from education reviews in 576 services undertaken in Term 4, 2008 and Terms 1 and 2, 2009. Eight services were selected for a further visit to gather more in-depth information about specific practices that underpinned their provision for Māori children and their whānau. A kindergarten association, reviewed when ERO was undertaking a pilot study for its report *Māori Children in Early Childhood: Pilot Study, July 2008*, was also included in this report.

This report draws on the findings from nine early childhood services:

- Avonside Early Childhood Centre
- Bright Stars Educare
- Edgecumbe Playcentre
- Gisborne Kindergarten Association
- Hutt Family Daycare Limited
- Manuka Early Learning Centre
- Mary Richmond Kindergarten
- St Francis Aroha Whānau Centre
- Takaro Kindergarten.

Examples of Good Practice

Avonside Early Childhood Centre

What kind of service is this?

Avonside Early Learning Centre is a community-based education and care centre situated on the boundary of Avonside Girls High School in Christchurch. Approximately 16 percent of the children at the centre identify as Māori. The management committee, known as the board of trustees, is made up of parents who are very supportive of the centre's bicultural development in the centre.

What does this service do to provide for Māori children and their whānau?

Recent professional development has been vital in building the commitment of all teachers to bicultural development. At the start of the professional development programme teachers were not competent in te reo Māori and they knew they wanted to build their knowledge. Initially they lacked confidence but their commitment to supporting Māori children at their centre was a strong motivator. Teachers accessed professional development was through a local provider.

Staff were excited about increasing their capacity to implement a curriculum that recognised Māori language, culture and values. One parent, fluent in te reo Māori, supported their development. Teachers acknowledged that, as Pākehā, they saw things from a Pākehā perspective, so it was important to seek knowledge from Māori whānau.

Bicultural development involved teachers becoming aware of what it meant for Māori to be Māori, being responsive, and understanding Māori perspectives. Teachers' appraisal goals and the centre's strategic goals focused on extending the bicultural programme.

Building our knowledge was about building our children's knowledge.

Work to strengthen relationships with parents, whānau and the wider community was a catalyst for development. Teachers consulted the parents and whānau of Māori children on their aspirations. The responses were a trigger for teachers to further develop the service's bicultural curriculum.

As a result of professional development looking at bicultural practice, the centre established links with two nearby schools. Children from the centre have visited the nearby secondary school to watch a kapahaka performance, and the kapahaka group has reciprocated with a visit to the centre. Whānau events in the centre bring people together.

Teachers have created a welcoming environment for Māori children and their whānau that strongly reflects the centre's bicultural focus. Māori perspectives are woven through the programme. Teachers naturally integrate te reo Māori through the use of

short phrases, waiata routines and in children's art work. Children take turns in leading waiata and karakia. The centre environment includes children's work completed as a part of recent projects. For example, a recent project with a building focus included looking at whare on a marae. Children and teachers also made kowhaiwhai patterns and displayed reo Māori prompts. A whānau board was set up to show children's ancestral links.

Children's portfolios reflect their learning experiences in a bicultural programme. Management is currently redeveloping the outside area to reflect Māori perspectives, and has sought advice at the planning stage.

From the moment parents and whānau step in the door of the centre they can see this is a place where Māori language and culture is valued.

Staff have documented their development in the form of a datashow so it can be shared with others and revisited. It helps them to reflect on what they are doing, where they have come from and where they are going. Staff want to continue to build their capacity to implement a bicultural curriculum that recognises Māori language, culture and values.

There are a lot of things to do - we need ongoing professional development support.

What might help other services?

When asked what might help other services to be more responsive to whānau and to support Māori children, teachers highlighted the following:

- seeking long term professional development;
- strengthening relationships with families;
- involving the whole team; and
- including bicultural development as part of the staff appraisal process.

Although there are no teachers who are Māori employed at the centre, management and educators' are committed to bicultural development. Staff are genuine advocates for the concept of Te Ao Māori, and continue to actively seek support to build their capacity and capability in this area.

Bright Stars Educare

What kind of service is this?

Bright Stars Educare is a new, privately owned centre located in Melville on the southern side of Hamilton City. The centre opened in January 2008 and had its first ERO review at the beginning of 2009. The centre provides good quality education and care for children from birth to school age. The manager and staff are welcoming and supportive of whānau who bring their children to the centre. Three quarters of the children enrolled at the centre identify as Māori. The centre manager/owner is Māori as are some of the staff. The centre environment, staff and programme affirms Te Ao Māori.

What does this service do to provide for Māori children and their whānau?

When the centre was first set up it was yet to develop a philosophy statement. The manager used questionnaires and brainstormed with teachers and parents, asking “what is important for you and your child?” From the discussions a philosophy was developed which strongly reflected Te Ao Māori and emphasised shared responsibilities for the education and care of the children at the centre.

Māori whānau and their children come to the centre because its small size and mixed-age grouping that sustains tuakana-teina relationships where older children support the younger ones.

Our children take care of one another.

Tikanga Māori guides teaching practices. Teachers demonstrate respect and humility in all areas of their work. They are respectful of whānau and listen to their ideas or requests. Teachers embrace Māori ways of knowing, being and doing and care for children and their whānau. Their enthusiasm and passion for Te Ao Māori is reflected in how they freely share knowledge and information with whānau and their children.

We treat children like they are our own.

Whanaungatanga is important in this centre. Relationships with each other as a team of teachers, and with children and their whānau, matter. Support is given where needed, and caring for each other in a trusting and respectful environment is valued. The whakapapa of children and their whānau is acknowledged, helping to strengthen connections with everyone involved in the centre and with those who have gone before them.

Teachers work collaboratively in ways that are true to their philosophy, empowering children and their whānau to share in the responsibility for teaching and learning. They embrace the concepts of tuakana/teina where it is common for siblings to attend this centre. The younger children learn from the older ones and the older children

learn perseverance. In the context of this centre, the teachers, whānau and children learn from one another.

The centre curriculum embraces Te Ao Māori through teachers' interaction with children and their whānau, and centre activities and events. Te reo Māori is used as part of all interactions with children. Excursions outside the centre have included a visit to a local marae. Such events are documented through photographs, and revisiting these generates a sense of pride for children. Teachers create opportunities in the programme for children to learn and use karakia and waiata. Children demonstrate their knowledge of karakia and behave appropriately at these times.

Children's identity as Māori is acknowledged and teachers focus on helping them to be confident in who they are. Teachers acknowledge whakamā, accepting that children (and their whānau) may feel shy or embarrassed.

Children are allowed to be Māori and are confident in who they are.

Whānau are asked about their aspirations for the education of their children. Whānau views are encouraged and their ideas and contributions are evident in centre activities and planning. Celebrating Matariki, for example, was an opportunity for parents to explore their whakapapa, with some whānau finding out that they shared the same iwi.

Whānau evenings are regular events and are valuable for exchanging information, sharing kai and developing and strengthening relationships with whānau. The centre recently held a cultural evening where the cultures of children attending the centre were shared through song and dance. This event was well supported by parents and whānau.

What might help other services?

When asked what might help other services to be more responsive to whānau and to support Māori children, the manager highlighted the need to:

- keep building bridges with whānau through open, trusting and respectful relationships; and
- value and support staff.

Māori whānau and children experience a sense of wellbeing and belonging at Bright Stars. Te Ao Māori perspectives are a significant feature of this centre and are reflected in the commitment and passion of the manager and staff to building on and enhancing their practices related to the kaupapa.

Edgecumbe Playcentre

What kind of service is this?

Edgecumbe Playcentre is a semi-rural centre, operating as part of the Eastern Bay of Plenty Playcentre Association. The roll has increased in recent years and some families attending are new to the area. The Playcentre values and acknowledges the important role of parents as first educators of their children and serves its community well. Approximately half the children enrolled identify as Māori, with some children having both Pākehā and Māori parents and whānau. The association supports the Playcentre, giving staff space to develop at their own pace and allowing them to be responsive to parents and whānau.

What does this service do to provide for Māori children and their whānau?

Many families are related and the Playcentre provides a social, as well as educational, environment for children and their whānau. There is a lot of networking in the community and it is generally the relationships that bring new parents to the centre. First impressions are important for whānau. When parents visit for the first time, the welcome they receive is often what makes them decide to come back again.

If you feel comfortable you want to come.

Parents and whānau of Māori children are encouraged and supported, fostering a real sense of belonging. Everyone involved has a task or job to do. Responsibility for running the Playcentre is shared. Extended whānau are welcome and often join in sessions. For example, a nanny came along with her mokopuna when the child's mother was unable to attend the session.

Everyone is responsible for something - I do returns for funding - something I thought I could never do.

Playcentre training is accessible to all parents. Each course includes a bicultural component that acknowledges Māori as tangata whenua, and recognises the importance of honouring Te Tiriti o Waitangi by weaving Māori protocols, traditions and te reo Māori into sessions.

A feature of this Playcentre is the balance of informal and formal sharing of information among parents. Formal processes include monthly hui, timely introductory information, and a buddy system for new parents. The aspirations of parents and whānau for their children are acknowledged as part of introductory information sessions, held at times that suit whānau. End-of-session discussions give parents an opportunity to talk about the session, and their children's learning, including a focus on what is happening for Māori children. These discussions are open to all and are a valued time for reflection and future planning. All children are greeted and acknowledged at the start of a session.

Everyone planning together is really good. It gets you buzzing about the next session; activities, resources and trips. It's also a nice way to all get together to know each other -to celebrate what's been happening and to become a part of the group.

Māori perspectives are an integral part of the Playcentre programme and parents are supported in developing their understanding of te reo Māori and tikanga. Māori culture is respected and visible in practice.

Parents encourage each other to speak te reo Māori during sessions. Importance is placed on the correct pronunciation of children's names. Māori history is incorporated into children's play. For example, parents talk with children about 'Putauaki - our maunga'. Playcentre training modules include aspects of te reo Māori and tikanga. Parents' confidence grows along with their own learning.

The more it's done the more natural it becomes.

Children explore and participate in cultural customs and waiata, and use natural resources in their play. The learning environment includes posters and learning resources that reflect Māori culture and are used to help parents integrate a Māori perspective in learning areas. There is a sense of enjoyment as Māori children's culture and language is valued and respected. Māori children are confident in expressing their ideas and becoming competent learners in an environment that acknowledges their cultural heritage.

The children get on well - because we get on well.

What might help other services?

When asked what might help other services to be more responsive to whānau and to support Māori children, parents highlighted the importance of:

- making learning fun for children and for whānau;
- welcoming everyone in the whānau, (older children, Mum, Dad, Nanny, Koro, aunties, uncles, cousins) to sessions, trips and social activities;
- making opportunities for whānau to play and learn together; parent together, contribute and develop a sense of belonging; and
- having discussions at the end of each session.

Edgecumbe Playcentre makes an important contribution to its community. Māori children and their parents are well supported in an environment that recognises and embraces Te Ao Māori.

Gisborne Kindergarten Association

What kind of service is this?

Gisborne Kindergarten Association (the association) is the umbrella organisation for the governance and management of six kindergartens in the Gisborne region. A teaching services manager provides professional advice and guidance to teachers and supports them in the development and implementation of learning programmes for children. ERO's review of the association and its member kindergartens in 2007 was a catalyst for further bicultural development over the following two years. The association was included in ERO's report *Māori Children in Early Childhood: Pilot Study, July 2008*. Approximately half the children attending kindergartens in the association identify as Māori.

What does this service (association) do to provide for Māori children and their whānau?

The association is clear about its role as an active advocate for Māori children and their whānau. This is evident in its commitment to ongoing bicultural development. There are high expectations at association level that teaching teams in individual kindergartens will improve their practice, and they acknowledge this needs support.

The association's strategic plan is deliberately based on the principles of the early childhood curriculum, *Te Whāriki*. Woven through the plan is a commitment to working with parents, whānau and the wider community. Te Tiriti o Waitangi provides the foundation for association-led bicultural development. Board members and teachers have been involved in Te Tiriti o Waitangi workshops.

The association has developed a bicultural plan as part of its strategic direction. This plan expresses a commitment to Te Ao Māori. Strategies have been developed relating to kindergarten programmes, consultation, assessment practice, professional learning and development for teachers, building partnerships with whānau, and self review. Planning also includes a focus on improving transition to school for Māori children by supporting whānau and their children during this time. The bicultural plan has explicit links to *Ka Hikitia*,² and the association is also looking at how to use the recently published *Te Whatu Pōkeka: Kaupapa Māori Assessment for Learning Early Childhood Exemplars*.³

² Ministry of Education, (2008). *Ka Hikitia – Managing for Success 2008-2012*. Wellington. Ministry of Education. See <http://www.minedu.govt.nz/theMinistry/PolicyAndStrategy/KaHikitia.aspx>

³ Ministry of Education. (2009). *Te Whatu Pōkeka: Kaupapa Māori Assessment for Learning Early Childhood Exemplars*. Wellington. Learning Media Limited.

See:

<http://www.educate.ece.govt.nz/learning/curriculumAndLearning/Assessmentforlearning/TeWhatuPokeka.aspx>

Bicultural development is seen as a collective venture involving the association board, kindergarten teachers, parents, whānau and community. Professional learning and development, along with leadership and a commitment from the association board, has been crucial to development. Stability on the association board and in kindergartens has helped to consolidate and improve practice.

There is trust between us so we can do the work.

Ongoing professional learning and development supports the work of all involved in the association. Various professional development opportunities have been taken up enabling association personnel and teachers to increase their knowledge and understanding of Te Ao Māori knowledge and theory. Built into this development are opportunities for sharing along the way. Kindergarten teams are documenting their journeys as a useful tool for reflection and self review. A plan is being developed for the provision of future professional development.

The association has a strong focus on supporting whānau, and teachers in kindergartens have an important role in assisting parents to access relevant services. Relationships with key agencies are also being strengthened further.

Strengthening self review to include regular, systematic feedback from parents, whānau, children and teachers is an association priority. The focus is on gathering reliable evidence about the impact of learning programmes for Māori children. A set of questions has been developed to be used as a basis for self review. These were drawn from ERO's pilot study report *Māori Children in Early Childhood: Pilot Study, July 2008*. A statement of what good practice 'looks like' provides a sound basis for evaluating progress and improvement. It includes:

- having high expectations;
- the inclusion of the aspirations of parents and whānau;
- embedding te reo Māori in all programmes; and
- strengthening children's sense of identity through pēpeha, whakapapa, karakia and waiata.

If you can't see the benefits for the children then what you are doing is not working.

What might help other services?

When asked what might help other services wanting to be more responsive to whānau and to support Māori children, association personnel highlighted the following:

- relationships are essential to working in partnership with whānau; and
- non-contact time for teachers is necessary for bicultural development.

Management plays a key role in advocating for bicultural development across the association. Leadership at the association level is supporting and guiding development for each individual kindergarten in a way that acknowledges and celebrates successes and helps to overcome the difficulties along the way.

Hutt Family Daycare

What kind of service is this?

Hutt Family Day Care Limited is a small independent service in the Hutt Valley. Two owners/coordinators, who are registered teachers, manage the service and support educators with the help of an additional part-time teacher. All educators have completed a recognised course of training to support their roles in home-based care. The service operates a weekly playgroup, run by the coordinators. Approximately 10 percent of children enrolled in this service identify as Māori.

What does this service do to provide for Māori children and their whānau?

Home-based services and their provision for Māori children and their whānau are very different from that of centre-based services. This has implications for practice. Although Hutt Family Daycare has always had Māori children attending the service, having educators who are Māori is ideal, but not always a reality.

The owners/coordinators have reviewed and changed their practice for when parents enquire about using the service and want to enrol their child. They acknowledge that families are different and so are educators, and it is important to take time to get the match right between child, parents and educator. Initially the coordinators spend time visiting homes to get an indication of parents' values and what they want for their child – their expectations and aspirations.

It has got to be right for everyone.

For this service, being responsive is about establishing relationships early and getting to know families and children well as part of the placement process. A shared vision that all children deserve the best drives practice. Relationships are at the heart of what happens for children at all levels of the service. The first contact with parents and their children begins on day one. First impressions count and such practices as offering parents a cup of tea or coffee help to create space for informal discussions. The coordinators see themselves as the linchpin between parents, children and the educators. They facilitate relationships but also know when to allow the relationships to develop independently.

A strong sense of whānau is a feature of our service.

The owners of this service are honest with parents about what they can and cannot provide, which is especially important for parents who want their children to be in an environment where te reo Māori is spoken and tikanga followed. The owners support educators by providing a range natural materials, books and puzzles that reflect Māori perspectives.

Professional development is ongoing. The owners organised a service-wide Māori language and tikanga course to be held early in 2010. They are committed to building

the service's capability for being more responsive to Māori children and their parents and whānau.

A collaborative style of leadership supports Māori families. The service functions with everyone participating in multi-layered leadership – educators, parents, children and coordinators. It works from the strengths that people bring to their various roles.

What might help other services?

When asked what might help other services to be more responsive to whānau and to support Māori children, the owners/coordinators highlighted:

- listening to parents and their aspirations for their children;
- educators and parents developing really good, deep relationships; and
- ideally, for home-based services, having educators who were Māori.

Hutt Family Daycare places priority on relationships that start when contact with parents and whānau is first made. The owners put time and energy into getting the match between educator, child and their parents right from the start and checking on how it is going for all involved. They acknowledge that being responsive to the parents and whānau of Māori children in a home-based service is not always easy. Their commitment to developing and maintaining meaningful, respectful relationships lies at the heart of their practice.

Manuka Early Learning Centre

What kind of service is this?

Manuka Early Learning Centre is a part of Manuka Community House in central Nelson that provides support, counselling and childcare for families. The centre has been in operation for 30 years. A collective governs Manuka Community House and has oversight of centre operations. Recent staff changes include the appointment of a manager whose leadership has had a positive impact on the service's responsiveness to the parents of Māori children. The centre has a strong focus on supporting Māori children as competent and confident learners. Approximately 10 percent of children attending the centre identify as Māori.

What does this service do to provide for Māori children and their whānau?

The centre's philosophy statement, Te Tiriti o Waitangi policy and various planning documents reflect a commitment to forming partnerships with parents and whānau and acknowledge the unique place of Māori as tangata whenua. This commitment is strongly evident in practice. Underlying practice is a belief in tino rangitiratanga – supporting children to be self sufficient, confident and competent learners.

A Māori teacher who has now left the centre (due to promotion) advocated for, and modelled te reo Māori and tikanga. The centre manager speaks te reo Māori and continues to provide leadership for other staff. A Māori parent also gives support in use of te reo Māori in the centre.

As new teachers have been employed they have developed an understanding of the centre's philosophy. Initial teacher education programmes helped some staff gain an understanding of Te Tiriti o Waitangi and what it meant for practice. Teachers are encouraged to listen to and respect each other. Staff meetings begin and end with karakia. Te Tiriti o Waitangi provides a basis for everyone to work in partnership.

The centre has access to the family support service that operates as part of Manuka Community House. A social worker and a counsellor working in the family support service have a close professional relationship with centre staff and give priority to supporting parents and whānau whose children attend the early childhood centre.

Having this support makes our work easier.

For this centre, being bicultural is about being a whānau centre. According to centre staff and management, Māori children are more likely to achieve success if staff have good relationships with whānau. Through its good relationships the centre acknowledges the diversity of families and is sensitive to children's home situation. Staff get to know each child, their whānau and their life outside the centre. They embrace everyone, and acknowledge that not everyone is the same.

The special place of whānau is what we treasure here.

Parents know we are all whānau - makes them comfortable to leave their children with us.

Māori children who attend this centre are highly engaged in learning. Their profile books give an insight into their learning and development. The programme is based on their interests and reflects learning experiences that reinforce their identity as Māori. For example, one child's interest in dance led to her being part of a local kapahaka group and she brought her experience in this group back to the centre. Numeracy and literacy learning is a big part of the programme, especially for the older children. Staff take an active interest in children's transition to school.

When I come to the centre everyone is busy and happy and you don't hear children crying.

What might help other services?

When asked what might help other services to be more responsive to whānau and to support Māori children, the manager and teachers highlighted the importance of:

- having a greater understanding and acceptance of Te Tiriti O Waitangi – identifying what this means for your service, how it relates to your philosophy and how it is incorporated into all areas of your curriculum and programme;
- working cross-culturally with whānau, local marae, tangata whenua, families, other early childhood services and local agencies;
- working closely with Māori children and their whānau towards a successful and smooth transition from early childhood service to school;
- understanding Māori concepts of wellbeing; and
- whānau and whānau development and wellbeing.

This involves understanding Part B of *Te Whāriki* which is specific to Māori immersion programmes and therefore Māori children.

The manager's leadership is a key factor in the centre's responsiveness to whānau and its focus on Māori children developing as competent and confident learners. Through her leadership, bicultural perspectives in the curriculum are honoured and Māori children's cultural identity is valued and strengthened. Te reo Māori and tikanga are seen as integral to the curriculum. Leadership, team coherence and commitment to Te Tiriti O Waitangi makes a difference to what happens for Māori children and their whānau.

Mary Richmond Kindergarten

What kind of service is this?

Mary Richmond Kindergarten is one of 15 kindergartens operating under the umbrella of the Napier Kindergarten Association. It has recently changed its hours in consultation with the community and now operates a six-hour day. Forty children attend for the morning and then 20 of the older children stay on for the afternoon. Approximately 85 percent of children attending the kindergarten identify as Māori.

What does this service do to provide for Māori children and their whānau?

Teachers at this kindergarten are very aware of the progress they have made in being more responsive to their community and focusing on Māori children as competent and confident learners. They are also clear about what still needs to be done and the challenges associated with this.

A priority for the teaching team is to develop and maintain positive working relationships with each other. Part of building a new teaching team was the development of a group contract that sets out how they will work together. Teachers work collaboratively and recognise that every teacher has strengths to contribute and areas to develop.

Teachers provide a welcoming environment that is inclusive of whānau. They recognise the importance of developing and maintaining respectful relationships with children and their whānau and within their teaching team. The kindergarten's vision focuses on developing good relationships. Parents' initial experiences and first impressions matter, and teachers are working on ways to ensure that the environment and their interactions with whānau are warm and welcoming. When each child is enrolled, teachers spend time discussing with whānau what they want for that child. They have a form for parents to complete, but find that the informal face-to-face discussions work best.

The teaching team is working on developing a sense of community in the kindergarten. Work is under way to make the kindergarten entrance more welcoming and inviting. At present a screen door inside the main door is a barrier to getting parents and whānau to come into the centre and become involved with their children. Teachers want parents to come in and spend some time with their children, and not just come to drop them off or pick them up.

Changes to the hours children can attend the kindergarten have had some positive benefits for children and their families. Whānau grouping of children, whereby the siblings or relatives of older children can attend at the same time, fosters tuakana/teina relationships with the older children supporting their younger siblings or relatives.

This works wells for our community - they like to have their children all in the same place.

Te Whāriki, the early childhood curriculum, both guides and challenges teaching practice. The kindergarten's curriculum offers Māori culture through such activities as art, waiata and the use of te reo Māori. Teachers are building on what they are doing, and have plans to visit the local marae and invite people from the local community to visit the kindergarten and talk about their knowledge of Te Ao Māori.

We are moving out of our comfort zones.

Teachers are currently developing a relationship with the nearby kura kaupapa Māori, strengthening the links between the kindergarten and the Māori community. Establishing a relationship with one parent led to her sharing her knowledge of weaving with children and teachers. Developing relationships further should gradually enable teachers to involve parents and whānau in the programme.

We need to show our faces a bit more in the community.

Teachers are documenting learning stories that have a Māori perspective or context. Having a visual record of the various learning experiences at the kindergarten and of trips into the community enables children to revisit these and to talk about them with other children and their parents. Examples are: a learning story with photos recording a group of children revisiting their previous experience of a hangi as they played in the sandpit; and a child sharing her love for the story of Pania of the Reef and discussing with the teacher a recent visit to the sculpture with her family.

Teachers place importance on making children's learning visible for parents and this leads to meaningful discussions between children and their whānau. One parent took her son's portfolio home and wrote his whakapapa in it. Teachers are looking at ways for all of their Māori children to do this.

What might help other services?

When asked what might help other services to be more responsive to whānau and to support Māori children, the head teacher highlighted the importance of:

- being encouraging and welcoming of whanau;
- looking for opportunities to build on and foster relationships;
- building a sense of belonging to the kindergarten so parents feel they can talk about their feelings and aspirations for their child;
- gaining the respect and trust of families as a basis for developing relationships;
- enriching the learning environment and looking for ways to include the local community within the kindergarten; and
- being open to a review of practices, looking at what families want and then assessing what steps need to be taken to achieve this.

Mary Richmond Kindergarten is an example of a centre that is aware of its successes and the challenges it faces in being responsive to the parents and whānau of Māori children who attend the kindergarten. Teachers are taking manageable steps towards implementing a curriculum that supports Māori children as competent and confident learners.

St Francis Whānau Aroha Centre

What kind of service is this?

St Francis Whānau Aroha Centre is located in the Western Heights community of Rotorua. The centre has been open for nearly eight years and operates under the umbrella of the Waiapu Anglican Social Services Trust Board, which is based in Napier. As well as the early childhood centre, the Trust has a whānau support service in an adjacent building. The centre and the whānau support worker work in partnership with families and their children. Parents are expected to be involved in the whānau centre and in the early childhood centre programme. Approximately two thirds of children attending the centre identify as Māori. The centre is highly responsive to its community and is focused on serving the needs of children and their parents and whānau who live in this community.

What does this service do to provide for Māori children and their whānau?

A feature of this centre is the strong link between the philosophy and what happens in practice. The philosophy emphasises affordability and whānau involvement and support. The personal teaching philosophies of individual teachers are closely aligned to the overall philosophy of the service. Discussions with teachers highlighted their very personal commitment to the centre's philosophy and to realising this in practice.

The needs of whānau drive what we do.

Teachers are professional and caring in their approach to each other, and with Māori children and their whānau. Relative stability of management and staffing underpins effective teamwork and a shared understanding of roles and responsibilities.

Teachers are either qualified or in training, and all share a passion for their work with children and their families. The initial teacher education programmes they are, or have been, involved in, include a strong focus on Māori perspectives and Te Tiriti o Waitangi. Teachers talked about what this meant for their practice, particularly in helping to build their confidence in working in an environment that respects whānau and honours Māori values and beliefs.

Ongoing professional and personal development for teachers builds on their current knowledge and practice and keeps them fresh and motivated. The centre manager and teaching practice manager play a key role in upholding the centre's philosophy and in providing guidance and support to staff. Professional development has involved teachers in re-engaging with *Te Whāriki*, refining self review, enhancing partnership with parents and whānau, and attending reo Māori classes.

If I'm teaching children I have to know myself.

When parents enrol their child at the centre it is expected that they will be involved, not only in attending events and activities organised by the whānau support centre but also in the education and care of their children. Parents' aspirations and expectations for their children are integrated into the programme.

Crucial to the centre's success is the whānau support worker, who is currently employed as part of the centre's involvement in a Parent Support and Development programme funded through the Ministry of Education. Parenting programmes, guest speakers and coffee mornings are regular events organised by the whānau support worker that enable parents to network and develop strengths and skills relating to everyday life situations.

Some parents are shy at first. They come out slowly. There is no pressure on them.

Relationships in this centre connect the teachers, parents and children in a way that gives a strong foundation for learning for all. Teachers provide opportunities that encourage and foster positive relationships. Children are respected, cared for and supported in their learning.

The whānau support worker has developed trusting relationships with individual parents, and she works in a confidential and sensitive manner with them to provide targeted support and assistance.

Parents are comfortable with us.

A bicultural curriculum is naturally woven into the programme. This curriculum is an outcome of the strong philosophy, caring and capable teachers and respectful relationships that permeate all that happens in the centre.

Māori children learn in an environment where an ethos of care and respect is highly visible. Children and their whānau have a strong sense of cultural identity. Their whakapapa is included in their portfolios, and whānau are given help in researching ancestral links where these are not known, for example using the internet.

High quality learning opportunities promote children's confidence. Children enjoy sharing their portfolios with each other, teachers and their parents.

Whānau participate actively in centre activities. The strong connection between the family centre and the early childhood centre makes it easier for parents to get involved. For example, their involvement in a gardening project has included the opportunity for parents to borrow gardening tools to help set up home gardens. Parents take responsibility for organising events such as the centre's Christmas party.

Great to see so many whānau participating in the gardening project.

Children's wellbeing and sense of belonging are fostered. They are confident learners with a developing sense of who they are as Māori and are able to express themselves through opportunities to use te reo Māori in karakia and waiata. Waiata and kanikani are a regular part of daily mat time and are evident in children's spontaneous play.

What might help other services?

When asked what might help other services to be more responsive to whānau and to support Māori children, teachers highlighted the importance of:

- having staff who are passionate about supporting Māori children to become competent and confident learners; and
- being supported in learning through ongoing professional development.

St Francis Aroha Whānau is a centre with a high percentage of non-Māori staff who are committed advocates of te reo Māori and tikanga Māori. Their work and relationships with Māori parents are non-threatening and empowering. Children experience the benefits of their parents' involvement in the centre which creates a sense of confidence and self worth. The centre offers Māori children and their whānau a peaceful, respectful and safe place where learning and teaching are both reciprocal and responsive. It is a place where parents are comfortable and relaxed.

Takaro Kindergarten

What kind of service is this?

Takaro Kindergarten operates under the umbrella of Ruahine Kindergarten Association. It offers six hour sessions three days a week and four and a quarter hours morning sessions two days a week. Situated on the west side of Palmerston North, it caters for children from a diverse community. Māori children make up approximately 70 percent of the roll. The kindergarten's sound, well-established philosophical base influences what happens for Māori children and their whānau.

What does this service do to provide for Māori children and their whānau?

The leadership capabilities of children, whānau and teachers are nurtured. Māori children know they are valued as competent learners and demonstrate confidence to lead others in a range of activities. Many kindergarten practices are initiated by children or the community. Mihimihi at the beginning of the day gives children opportunities to lead haka, pēpeha, waiata, and karakia.

Teachers take on leadership roles with team members and with whānau. They help each other to increase their confidence in using te reo Māori. Their passion for using te reo Māori is passed on when new teachers join the team. Parents address teachers as 'whaea'.

Parents and whānau also have leadership opportunities in this kindergarten. As well as involvement on the committee, daily help in the kindergarten and help with maintenance activities, they are encouraged to get involved in their child's learning. They read and contribute to their child's portfolio, and more recently some parents have taken a lead in planning the programme.

Everyone contributes one way or another.

Relationships are integral to everything that happens in the kindergarten. Developing and maintaining positive, professional relationships between staff is seen as a necessary starting point for developing relationships with children and their whānau. Good staff relationships also influence relationships between children. The kindergarten has an open door policy, and parents and whānau are welcome at any time. First impressions for parents are crucial to laying foundations on which to build meaningful partnerships. Whānau feel confident when teachers accept them for who they are without imposing expectations or demands on them.

This centre has developed a strong whānau base which is reflected in practice across all areas of centre operation. Qualities of whanaungatanga such as manaaki, tautoko, tiaki and awhi are reflected in interactions among teachers, whānau and children. This enables everyone to engage in meaningful and purposeful relationships. Kai time, when children have their lunch at kindergarten, is important as it is a family

time. Parents come to pick up their young children who finish at 12.30pm, many stopping to have lunch or sit alongside their children while they eat with the older ones.

Not what's on the wall but what is in your heart.

Māori perspectives are woven through all that happens in the programme. Children and adults use te reo Māori comfortably and confidently as part of daily interaction. Learning stories show how the curriculum offers culturally rich learning experiences that affirm children's identity as Māori. An integral part of the kindergarten curriculum is a "virtues" programme that is tightly linked to the values and beliefs expressed in the philosophy statement. The virtues are expressed in te reo Māori and in English. Children are gaining understanding of these, especially when used as Māori concepts.

For the teachers, implementing a bicultural curriculum is about being committed to ongoing development. They have respect for tikanga Māori and a love for te reo Māori. Teachers acknowledge that initial teacher education programmes have influenced what they bring to their teaching. They have a genuine interest in Māori children and their learning and get excited about their work and celebrate their successes.

Implementing a bicultural curriculum is more about tikanga around what you do.

A reflective culture in the centre supports self review and goal setting. Te reo Māori is included as part of ongoing review. Parents and whānau are actively involved in self review through a thorough consultation process. For example, parents were invited to give their ideas about what 'aroha' means to them and a sheet on the noticeboard invited comments from parents. Teachers also check with people in the community about the correct phrases to use in mihimihi.

You need to know, accept and appreciate your own culture - looking inward first before you can tell others.

Teachers and families are presently involved in some action research about 'Diverse Families Shaping Early Childhood Curricula.' Families use the kindergarten video camera to record significant events in their homes. This provides a 'window' into what happens for children outside the kindergarten. Information gathered through this process is being used to create an inclusive learning environment for children. Teachers acknowledge the need to strengthen relationships with whānau and recognise that this involves establishing a two-way path between the kindergarten and its community. They are working on ways to tap into the 'funds of knowledge' that children and their whānau bring with them to kindergarten.

We are always in a place where we are teachable.

The kindergarten has a very special ‘feel’ for all who attend and visit. There is a strong emphasis on ensuring that the wairua of the children and whānau is nurtured. This is evident through many comments by teachers to children about their manaaki of other children and direct reference to their wairua being very settled or happy that day.

Parents are treated with respect and dignity. They hear teachers using te reo Māori phrases and experience a programme that affirms and validates aspects of Te Ao Māori. They know their children are participating in a programme that strengthens their identity as tangata whenua.

Staff are active in promoting and enhancing the bicultural nature of their programme. They are open to learning te reo Māori and gaining knowledge of the Māori world. Learning about differences enables them to easily accept everyone for who they are.

Development is not a race-we progress at our own rate.

What might help other services?

When asked what might help other services to be more responsive to whānau and to support Māori children, teachers highlighted that:

- you need to know, accept and appreciate your own culture before you can appreciate others’ cultures;
- your attitude determines how you see others;
- building relationships is a key;
- it is important to ‘not be afraid,’ to be open to taking some risks;
- it is important to value everyone’s contributions to the centre, in whatever way that might be; and
- it’s not what’s on the wall but what’s in your heart that counts.

Teachers at Takaro Kindergarten advocate for Māori children to develop strong learning foundations and a sense of themselves as learners. The head teacher provides effective leadership to advance bicultural development in this kindergarten.

Discussion

Although each service in this report has a different way of working with the parents and whānau of Māori children, they all focus on realising Māori children's potential to become competent and confident learners. Each has common aspects of practice and similar challenges in developing and sustaining what they are doing.

A strong feature of these services was the importance given to establishing and strengthening relationships with the whānau of Māori children. Many highlighted the need to establish good working relationships in the teaching team, and to recognise that this was essential to developing responsive and respectful relationships with Māori children and their whānau. Several services acknowledged that first impressions mattered. They focused on how parents and whānau were welcomed and included on their first visit and during the enrolment process. Flexibility in encouraging parents and whānau to participate in the programme was crucial.

Another feature common to many services was how managers and educators perceived and gave effect to a bicultural curriculum. This was particularly so in the context of their philosophy, vision and connections with local people, places of historical and cultural relevance and what was meaningful for children and their whānau. In some services, Māori perspectives were woven through the programme, visible in the environment and teaching practice, and evident in records of assessment such as learning stories. The fostering of close links with the wider educational community, for example with schools and other early childhood services, enhanced the extent to which the curriculum included local history and tikanga.

Managers and educators in these services demonstrated a commitment and passion to make a difference for Māori children. They were motivated to improve their own understandings of Te Ao Māori, including te reo Māori and tikanga. Planning and undertaking relevant professional learning to assist with bicultural development was critical. Such professional development was a collective venture in all of the services. By increasing the level of the expertise and knowledge in the service, managers and educators gained the confidence to work in partnership with parents and whānau of Māori children and recognise and value the experience and knowledge Māori children bring to their learning.

In some services, initial teacher education programmes prepared teachers to emphasise Māori perspectives in the curriculum and to understand what Te Tiriti o Waitangi meant for their work, particularly in relation to working in partnership with whānau. Teachers spoke of their confidence in implementing a bicultural curriculum as a result of their study and experience while gaining their qualifications.

The pace of change in services was an important consideration, especially in relation to bicultural development. Managers and educators played an important role in leading ongoing development. Many were strong advocates for Māori children and invested time and energy in relationships with them and their parents and whānau.

Self review enabled services to regularly evaluate what they were doing, particularly in relation to their philosophy statement and their bicultural provision. Services highlighted the importance of working together, seeking contributions from all, being comfortable with the challenges, and able to celebrate progress and success.

Conclusion

The examples of good practice from the nine services described in this report show the many and varied ways services work with the parents and whānau of Māori children to build respectful relationships and develop partnerships for learning. Each service responds to its community in different ways. The examples highlight how services shape their curriculum and associated teaching and learning practices to enable Māori children to become competent and confident learners.

All services, regardless of where they are in supporting Māori children, can use their self review to evaluate the impact of their bicultural curriculum on Māori children and continue to improve their knowledge and understanding of Te Ao Māori.

Appendix 1: Glossary

Te Reo Māori	English meaning
Ako	Both children and adults are learners and teachers
Aroha	Respect, empathy, compassion
Awhi	Embrace and support
Haka	Māori ceremonial dance
Hapū	Subtribe, kinship group
Hui	forum for discussion which is underpinned by Māori values
Iwi	Wider kinship group
Kai	Food, to eat
Karakia	Prayer, grace, incantations
Kaumātua	Adult elder (usually male)
Kaupapa	Topic, matter for discussion, plan; philosophy
Kowhaiwhai	Painted design, usually on meeting house rafters
Kuia	Adult elder (female)
Manaaki	Provide sustenance, nurture; look after
Manaakitanga	kindness, caring
Maunga	Mountain of special significance to iwi
Marae	Tribal gathering place where ceremonial events are held and issues are debated
Matariki	Signals the Māori New Year (first appearance of Pleiades)
Mihimihi	Speech of greeting and introduction of oneself
Mokopuna	Grandchild
Pākehā	New Zealander of European descent
Pēpeha	A saying which describes landmarks and symbols significant to particular iwi
Tangata whenua	People of the land, local people

Tautoko	Support
Te Ao Māori	The Māori world
Te reo Māori	Māori language
Te Tiriti o Waitangi	Treaty of Waitangi
Tiaki	Care for, look after
Tikanga	Customary practices
Tino rangitiratanga	Self determination
Tuakana teina	Mentoring relationship
Waiata	Song(s)
Whakapapa	Genealogy
Whakawhanaungatanga	Creating relationships, sense of family
Whānau	Nuclear or extended family
Whanaungatanga	Relationships, sense of family
Whaea	Mother, aunty
Whakamā	Shy, embarrassed
Whare	House