



Te Poutāhū
Curriculum Centre

KŌWHITI WHAKAPAE



Using Kōwhiti Whakapae



**Te Tāhuhu o
te Mātauranga**
Ministry of Education

**Te Kāwanatanga
o Aotearoa**
New Zealand Government

Ngā mihi maioha | Acknowledgments

The Ministry of Education wishes to thank the generosity of:

- › the kaiako who brought their practice lens to trial the content and functionality of the resource
- › the mokopuna and whānau whose photos enrich the resource
- › Associate Professor Tara McLaughlin (Massey University), Associate Professor Sue Cherrington (Victoria University), and their team for their expertise in developing the framing and approach of Kōwhiti Whakapae and the social and emotional learning content
- › Professor Brigid McNeill, Professor Gail Gillon, Doctor Ngaroma Williams, and Benita Rarere-Briggs of the University of Canterbury, along with their early childhood education advisors Michelle Clarke, Caroline Bryant, Chantelle Forster, Karen Stephens, and Joanne Lynch, for their expertise and experience in developing the oral language and literacy content
- › Professor Claire McLachlan for her expertise in in developing the oral language and literacy content
- › Dr Jane McChesney (University of Canterbury) for her expertise in developing the maths content
- › Professor Sally Peters (University of Waikato) for her expertise in developing the maths kaiako guide
- › members of the Sector Reference Group and Internal Advisory Groups who provided their time and expertise to review and comment on the work throughout its development
- › the Early Learning Diversity Voices Group for their inclusive advice and reviews
- › Te Rito Maioha for their cultural expert reviews and content development
- › Tātai Aho Rau CORE Education for shaping framing and content throughout the development and working with the sector to trial, iterate, and finalise numerous drafts
- › the content and technical writers who distilled the content into an online format.

Published by Te Tāhuhu o te Mātauranga | The Ministry of Education
www.education.govt.nz

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ISBN (online) 978-1-77697-997-4

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About Kōwhiti Whakapae

What is Kōwhiti Whakapae and why was it developed?

Kōwhiti Whakapae is an online curriculum resource designed to help early learning kaiako strengthen planning, formative assessment, and teaching practice within the framework of *Te Whāriki: He whāriki mātauranga mō ngā mokopuna o Aotearoa* (2017). It is available as both a [comprehensive online resource](#) and [four separate books](#) in PDF form.

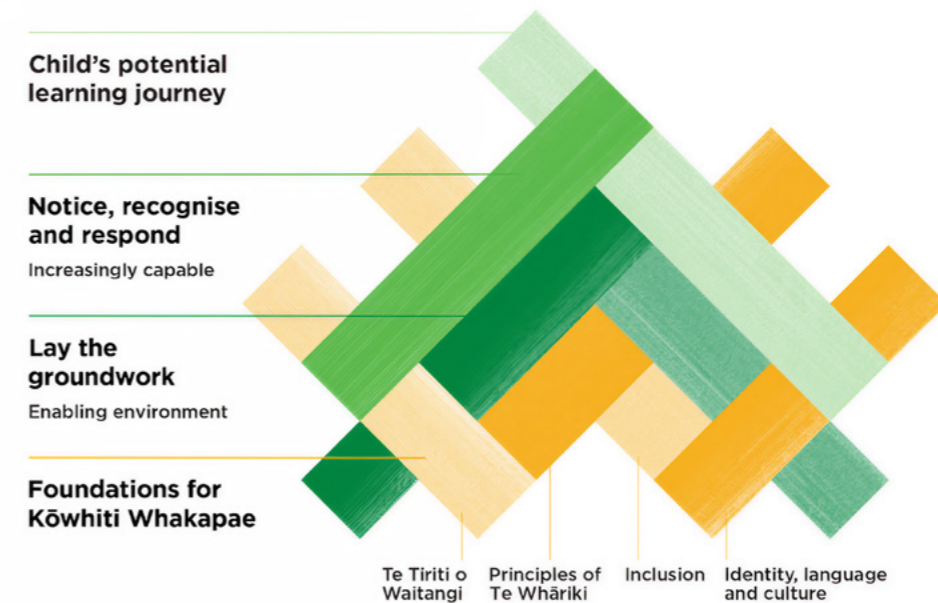
Kōwhiti Whakapae supports kaiako to recognise children’s capabilities and progress and to respond with effective practices in three areas of learning:

- › Social & emotional learning
- › Oral language & literacy
- › Maths.

These areas are crucial for positive later educational and life outcomes. Using Kōwhiti Whakapae will help kaiako to strengthen their teaching in these three areas across the strands of *Te Whāriki*, to support children’s expanding capabilities, and to foster their growing identity as learners.

Kōwhiti Whakapae developed from Action 4.2 of ‘He taonga te tamaiti – Every child a taonga: Early learning action plan 2019–2029 (ELAP). This action arose because we know that quality early learning depends on kaiako adjusting their teaching practices in response to evidence-based judgements about children’s progress. Building a clear picture of children’s progress over time is important for supporting positive learning trajectories, growing positive learner identity, and knowing when to seek additional support.

The foundations of Kōwhiti Whakapae



Kōwhiti Whakapae is built upon the four foundations shown above. Together these foundations task kaiako with providing equitable opportunities for all mokopuna to thrive within individually and culturally responsive learning environments.

This includes:

- › promoting equitable outcomes for Māori and weaving te reo Māori and tikanga Māori meaningfully into the everyday curriculum
- › valuing children’s home languages and cultures and being responsive to their cultural ways of knowing and being
- › working with families, whānau, and community to identify and dismantle barriers to participation and learning
- › adapting environments and teaching approaches and challenging beliefs that limit children’s potential
- › weaving the four principles of *Te Whāriki* through all curriculum decision making and using them to guide every aspect of pedagogy and practice.

What does Kōwhiti Whakapae include?

Each area of learning – Social & emotional learning, Oral language & literacy, and Maths – provides information about teaching practices and children’s progress in the area. Each area also guides kaiako through a four-step process to:

1. **Lay the groundwork** to create an enabling environment for all children
2. **Notice and recognise** children’s current capabilities in relation to four phases of progress
3. **Respond** to scaffold, consolidate, or expand children’s learning over time
4. **Document** children’s learning using assessment examples as a guide.

Kaiako are also encouraged to **revisit** and **review** practices, and to recognise when children may need additional support.

Each area of learning is supported by associated resources, including:

- › Kaiako Guides that provide more information for those who want to explore further
- › Whānau Guides, to support conversations and collaboration with whānau.

How is progress approached in Kōwhiti Whakapae?

Progress refers to the way children’s learning changes in complexity and their range of capabilities develops over time, both shaped by their identity, language, and culture. While individual progress varies in direction and pace, there are typical characteristics and patterns that are observable over time.

In Kōwhiti Whakapae, children’s learning progress is described across four phases: Te korekore (the realm of potential), Te pō (the realm of exploration), Te ao mārama (realisation), and Te ao hōu (innovation, growth that spirals outward and always connects back). These phases are not age-based, and the expression of the capabilities they describe varies for each child and is shaped by the child’s language, identity, and culture. Capabilities across phases are cumulative and overlapping.

Te korekore

The realm of potential

Māori Marsden, a Tai Tokerau elder and Anglican minister, explains that Te korekore (a variant of Te kore) is “the realm between non-being and being: that is, the realm of potential being”. Within the right environment, it will reach its fullness, whatever that may be.

Te pō

The realm of exploration

Te pō can be likened to a seed that has been planted in the ‘darkness’ of rich and fertile soil. The earth is the environment where a seed has everything it needs to grow and sprout, upwards towards the light.

Te ao Mārama

Realisation

Te Ao Mārama is the world of light and life, where understanding dawns and grows.

Te ao hōu

Innovation, and growth that spirals outward and always connects back

Te ao hōu is an ever-growing understanding in which mokopuna can reach back to what is familiar to make sense of new learning and to create new and innovative ideas.

How will Kōwhiti Whakapae help you in your teaching role?

Kaiako are primarily responsible for facilitating children’s learning and development through thoughtful and intentional pedagogy (*Te Whāriki*, page 59). This includes making evidence-based judgements about children’s progress and using this information to adjust teaching practices in ways that help children expand their learning over time.

Kōwhiti Whakapae guides you to lay the groundwork to create an enabling environment for all children and to then use evidence to notice, recognise, and respond to children’s learning. Kōwhiti Whakapae also supports you to have meaningful conversations with children about their learning, to collaborate with other kaiako and whānau in supporting children’s progress, and to identify learning priorities when designing local curriculum.

Kōwhiti Whakapae builds on the goals and learning outcomes of *Te Whāriki* by providing specific guidance about teaching strategies and children’s progress in the areas of Social & emotional learning, Oral language & literacy, and Maths. The guidance is consistent with the principles of *Te Whāriki* and supportive of teaching and learning across all its strands, goals, and learning outcomes.

Why focus on social & emotional learning, oral language & literacy, and maths?

Life-course research

Life-course research tells us that social and emotional, oral language and literacy, and maths capabilities are crucial to positive educational and life outcomes. However, persistent inequities remain in these areas of learning for some groups in our education system, and evidence shows that inequities that begin early may persist.

Integrating domain knowledge

Kōwhiti Whakapae helps kaiako to realise the full potential of *Te Whāriki* as an integrated curriculum. Domain knowledge (such as in maths) is woven throughout *Te Whāriki* and, while such knowledge is more explicit in the Mana reo | Communication and Mana aotūroa | Exploration strands, it can also be found in others. For example, making connections between people, places, and things relates to mathematical skills and knowledge such as grouping and an understanding of spatial relationships. It is also reflected in the learning outcome “... children become increasingly capable of making connections between people, places and things in their world | te waihangā hononga” within the Mana whenua | Belonging strand.

Te Whāriki (pages 9 and 59) reminds us that kaiako need to integrate domain knowledge into their local curriculum in ways that connect with children’s interests and strengths and other aspects of learning. Kōwhiti Whakapae is designed to help kaiako do this in ways that recognise play-based and routine-based learning opportunities as being at the heart of natural and authentic curriculum.

Positive learner identities

A child’s positive learner identity grows when they can engage with new contexts, opportunities, and challenges with optimism and resourcefulness. For these reasons, *Te Whāriki* emphasises the development of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and dispositions that support lifelong learning. Kōwhiti Whakapae guides kaiako to use teaching practices supportive of children’s expanding capabilities in specific areas of learning, so that children can increasingly engage in this way.

What does an inclusive environment mean in Kōwhiti Whakapae?

Te Whāriki (page 13) defines an inclusive curriculum as one in which kaiako are “adapting environments and teaching approaches as necessary and removing any barriers to participation and learning”. Inclusion encompasses diversity in gender, ethnicity, ability and learning needs, family structure and values, socio-economic status, and religion.

Kōwhiti Whakapae supports an inclusive environment where all children are able to fully engage, learn, and achieve with appropriate accommodations, adaptations, and learning supports. The expectation is that kaiako provide a learning environment, including teaching strategies, organisation of time, resources, and technologies, so that each child can actively participate, communicate, and achieve alongside their peers in a way and at a pace that is appropriate for them.

A learning environment that is inclusive of diversity of ability and learning includes kaiako adapting the environment for a child who is physically disabled. It can also include adjusting routines and supports to fully include children with high levels of anxiety and/or sensory, social, and emotional needs.

In addition, within Kōwhiti Whakapae, ‘inclusive communication’ incorporates all the ways in which children and kaiako communicate, including:

- › spoken languages, including te reo Māori and home languages
- › New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL) and other home-signed languages
- › oral and visual means of expression, including vocalisations, gestures, movement, images, and alternative and augmentative communication (AAC).

Partnering with whānau supports kaiako to better understand and respond to whānau aspirations and children’s capabilities and learning progress over time. Where there are concerns about a child’s learning progress, seek additional support and guidance from centre leaders and learning support, in order to address the concerns collaboratively with whānau in a mana-enhancing way.

The name and visual design of Kōwhiti Whakapae

The name Kōwhiti Whakapae

The name Kōwhiti Whakapae draws on the ‘kōwhiti whakapae whāriki’ on page 11 of *Te Whāriki*. This pattern symbolises the “start of a journey that will take the traveller beyond the horizon” and has a focus on the realm of potential.

The name also embodies the importance of weaving rich and responsive curriculum experiences for children. It represents the space for conversations (formal and informal) that involve kaiako, children, and their whānau and that are crucial to formative assessment and local curriculum design.

Kōwhiti Whakapae draws on concepts underpinning the cover image of *Te Whāriki*. This image depicts the underside of a whāriki, revealing its weaver’s mastery. It also shows the hiki or hono that symbolises where new knowledge joins existing strands to support the quality of the whāriki. The whāriki is unfinished with loose strands still to be woven; this acknowledges the child’s ongoing learning.

The visual design of Kōwhiti Whakapae

The visual design of Kōwhiti Whakapae is underpinned by two elements: whānau nurturing and protecting a child, and kaiako and hapori supporting and guiding the whānau.

The two elements are woven together with strands of harakeke, which emphasises the important connection between two supporting events in a child’s life: learning and development.

The white spaces in the design allow for conversations and learning, and the painted texture gives a sense of the weaving being handmade and the importance of the mastery of the weaver.

The three areas of learning are represented through unique woven designs that can also form patterns.



Social and emotional learning

This design reflects connection, emotion, inclusion, hand and heart, and strength from joining strands of harakeke.



Oral language and literacy

This design reflects multiple ways of communicating, different forms of expression, coming together, and leaving space for others. The central space with its four surrounding squares represents tapa whā and a holistic approach to learning.



Maths

This design reflects poutama – the stages of learning that lead to knowledge – and therefore how maths is a foundation of mātauranga. In maths, it represents a bar graph and counting blocks.

The development process for Kōwhiri Whakapae

In 2020, the Ministry of Education began developing resources to help early learning kaiako strengthen their formative assessment and intentional teaching practices. We approached the work in phases to allow for trialling and iteration, and we worked closely with kaiako and others in the sector.

Throughout the process we engaged people with expertise in curriculum and formative assessment, including in kaupapa Māori and Pacific contexts, and with expertise in subject (or domain) areas of learning.

The Ministry's Early Childhood Advisory Committee helped establish a Sector Reference Group so that the views and expertise of kaiako, early learning services, providers, and other stakeholders could guide the process. This group was an invaluable source of critique and support.

To find out more about who was involved in the development of Kōwhiri Whakapae, see [Ngā mihi maioha | Acknowledgments](#).

Trialling and revision

Between October 2021 and June 2022, a PLD-supported trial of the initial framing and draft social and emotional content was undertaken with kaiako and whānau from over 100 early learning services.

The Ministry used the findings from this trial to revise the framing, content, and language of Kōwhiri Whakapae. To inform this work, we continued to work closely with the Sector Reference Group and an Internal Advisory Group, as well as kaiako and academics. We held public meetings and several meetings with interested stakeholder groups.

To address perceptions that the progressions were too linear and could be misused, we made changes to strengthen the focus of kaiako practice in supporting children's growing capabilities. This included introducing 'Respond' practices and using a stepped process to guide kaiako through the essentials of Kōwhiri Whakapae.

Continuing from this earlier work, the Oral language & literacy and Maths content followed the same framing as the Social & emotional learning area, with development informed by sector trialling and feedback.

Suggestions for getting started with Kōwhiri Whakapae

Gaining an overview

After reading this book, skim one of the three 'areas of learning' books (Social and emotional learning; Oral language and literacy; and Maths). You might also find it helpful to take a look at [Kōwhiri Whakapae online](#) and to watch the 'About Kōwhiri Whakapae' video on the [homepage](#).

Exploring an area of learning

Next choose one area of learning to focus on. Each area of learning begins with an overview that explains what the area refers to, why it's important, and how it is approached in Kōwhiri Whakapae. Then the area divides into four sub-areas.

We suggest you choose one sub-area to work with. All sub-areas follow the same approach, so once you are familiar with one sub-area, you will find it easy to navigate others. Each sub-area begins with a brief overview and then has four steps:

1. **Lay the groundwork**
2. **Notice and recognise**
3. **Respond**
4. **Document**

Step 1: Lay the groundwork

In this step, you'll find teaching practices to help you to whakaritea te pārekereke | prepare the seedbed and create an enabling environment for all children.

- First** Read through some of the practices to get a feel for the key ideas.
- Next** Consider your current learning environment with your team. Which of the practices are evident in your routines, your equipment, and how you use space or organise staff? Which practices do you want to know more about? Which are strengths you can build on?
- Then** Choose practices that you think will be most helpful in creating an enabling learning environment for all children in your setting. Focus on a few practices at a time, to keep it manageable. Decide with others how to adapt these practices to be meaningful to the identity, language, and culture of children in your setting and consistent with your service's philosophy. Think about how you might adjust your routines, equipment, use of space, or organisation of staff.

Now Put the practices ‘into practice’. You might spend several months embedding a few at a time. It is important to take time over this step – to establish an enabling environment for all children and their whānau, before focusing on children’s capabilities and learning progress.

Review Once you’ve adapted and used these practices in your setting for a while, review their effectiveness and make adjustments where needed. This could happen as part of your usual internal evaluation or self-review processes.

Step 2: Notice and Recognise

In this step, you’ll find progressions that illustrate children’s capabilities at different phases of learning (Te korekore, Te pō, Te ao mārama, and Te ao hōu). As discussed above, these phases are not age-based and the capabilities across phases are cumulative and overlapping. They describe characteristics along a continuum of learning; however, the expression of these capabilities will vary for each child, shaped by their identity, language, and culture.

The progressions will help you notice and recognise children’s current capabilities and identify possible directions for scaffolding, consolidating, or expanding these capabilities to support broader learning over time. The progressions are not specifically mapped to *Te Whāriki* learning outcomes, because the capabilities they describe focus on specific aspects of learning (such as agency and adaptability) and connect to a range of *Te Whāriki* learning outcomes across a range of strands.

First Read through all four phases of the progression to see how they describe children’s expanding capabilities over time.

Next Decide how these capabilities might be expressed in your setting. What would you expect to see (‘notice’) children doing at each phase? Talk within your team to arrive at a consistent view.

Then Use evidence to help you decide which phase best fits the current capabilities of a particular child or small group of children in your setting (‘recognise’). Evidence could include discussions with kaiako, children, and whānau, informal observations, video or audio recordings, formal observations such as time-samples, and examples of the child’s work. Look at adjacent phases of progress to test your thinking about which phase best fits the child’s current capabilities.

Now Decide whether the child’s current capabilities are beginning to emerge or are more established within the phase you have chosen. These decisions will guide your response at step 3.

Step 3: Respond

In this step, you’ll find teaching practices to help you respond to children’s learning at different phases of progress. The practices will help you support children and to scaffold, consolidate, or expand their capabilities and broaden their learning over time.

First Select the phase that you decided best fits a child’s current capabilities. (You made this decision in step 2.) Read through the different practices to see how to respond in this phase.

Next Decide on your purpose for responding. This will depend on whether the child’s current capabilities are emerging, well-established, or somewhere in-between. For example, if a child’s capabilities in Te pō are just beginning to emerge, you might decide to scaffold and then consolidate these capabilities. Alternatively, you might want to help the child consolidate or expand their capabilities in different situations or contexts.

Then Identify the practices that you think will be most helpful in supporting this progress. To do so, think about your evidence and talk with whānau and the rest of your team. Think about what interests the child, their strengths, and what they might need most help with.

Now Decide how to adapt these practices so that they are meaningful to the child and your setting. Think about the child’s identity, language, and culture when deciding how and when to apply the practices. Some practices might involve adjusting your routines and equipment, how you use space, or how you organise staff during the day.

Review Once you’ve been using a practice for at least a couple of weeks, review its effectiveness and make adjustments where needed. Is it helping the child’s progress as intended? Go back to step 2 and gather new evidence to help you make this judgement. It often takes time to embed or adjust new practices – that’s fine. Over time, some of the phased practices may become part of the way you ‘lay the groundwork’ for all children. Other practices might be useful only when children’s capabilities are in a specific phase of progress.

What if there are concerns?

Te Whāriki (page 13) notes that “... although learning and development generally follows a predictable sequence, for some children progress in some areas may require further assessment, planning, intervention and support”. If you have spent time reviewing and adjusting practices in collaboration with whānau and there are concerns that their child is not progressing, you should seek additional support. Visit [He Pikorua](#) to find out more.

For guidance on inclusive practice, including connecting with learning support and other services, visit: [‘Te mahi kauawhi – Inclusive practice’](#).

Step 4: Document

In this step, you’ll find assessment examples that illustrate ways of using information gathered through the previous three steps to enhance your documented assessments and communication.

Each assessment example describes and tracks learning progress over time and informs ongoing planning. This documentation also supports conversations with children and whānau about learning and progress.

First Read one or two assessment examples that describe and track a child’s progress over time. You will see that each assessment highlights how both *Te Whāriki* and Kōwhiri Whakapae have informed the teaching and learning that are described. They also highlight the kinds of evidence, such as observations or conversations with whānau, that were used to support judgements and planning decisions.

Next Think about how you currently document your planning and assessments and describe learning progress over time. Talk with team members and children’s whānau to identify how your assessment documentation might better describe:

- › a child’s current capabilities, strengths, and interests – including evidence (‘notice’)
- › a child’s progress and possible directions for their learning (‘recognise’)
- › how you will support the child to progress over time (‘respond’).

Revisit This four-step process is not an end in itself. It is important to continue reviewing your practices.

An A3 printable poster on the above four-step process is available on [Kōwhiri Whakapae online](#).