



Belonging | Mana whenua

ECE resources

This series of guides on the principles and strands of Te Whāriki offers an overview of the key areas of learning within Aotearoa New Zealand's early childhood curriculum. Each guide provides links to other resources across our website which can help in the implementation of the curriculum.

A sense of belonging | mana whenua enhances children's confidence and sense of empowerment. When a strong sense of belonging is encouraged in an early childhood setting, children:

- Know that their individual strengths, interests, cultures, languages and families are **respected** and **valued**, which contributes to a strong sense of **self-worth** and individual wellbeing
- Feel **confident** to participate and contribute to activities and routines that are meaningful and purposeful
- Feel a sense of **responsibility** and engage in positive behaviours and actions to promote the shared values of the setting

Some particular features of practice are significant for supporting children's sense of belonging. These include:

- **An inclusive, accessible and meaningful curriculum.** It's important to design activities to enable all children, including children of diverse cultural backgrounds and different capabilities including **neurodiversity**, to build on their strengths. For example, it is important to find out about strategies to ensure diverse children can participate in the curriculum, such as the strategies outlined **here** for children with autism.
- **Cultural responsiveness** and a strong valuing of children's culture, language and world views. You can access some great advice for developing and demonstrating a positive attitude to cultural diversity **here**.
- **Strong partnership with parents** that enables families and whānau to participate in curriculum decisions. This will involve you getting to know families and whānau and their **particular cultural values and practices** so that you can include them effectively. **Here** you can also identify barriers to parent and whānau participation and learn about potential ways to address these.
- **Positive social interactions with children** (such as interactions using the strategies outlined **here** for developing strong relationships and a positive tone to the setting) that emphasise each child as valued and welcome in the setting.
- Acknowledging and respecting children's **aspirations and achievements**. Use **assessment practice** effectively to identify, celebrate and respond meaningfully to children's strengths and learning interests.
- **Connections with children's families, the local area of the setting, and the wider world.** This might include sharing the histories, pakiwaitanga and waiata related to the local area, with the support of local iwi and hapū, while connections to the wider world help children to gain a sense of themselves as global citizens. See **this example** of one centre's approach to investigations of the local area with their tamariki.

- Opportunities to **make a contribution** to the running of the programme, and to activities such as caring for the environment (kaitiakitanga or stewardship), or helping others with self-care.
- A positive environment which enables children to understand desired and valued behaviours, in which **routines and expectations** are consistent and well-understood
- **A social justice** focus in curriculum, which enable children to understand the need for everyone to experience fair treatment.
- Spaces for children to store their things, and **environments which genuinely and meaningfully reflect children's cultures**.
- **Unhurried, regular routines** that children can anticipate and be reassured by. You can read more about the importance of calm and unhurried routines in infant and toddler pedagogy [here](#).

How might provision vary for children at different stages of development?

Infants will develop a strong sense of belonging when they experience stability and consistency in their caregiving arrangements, such as with primary caregiving approaches to infant and toddler care, and with regular routines that are flexible to meet individual children's needs and preferences. **Making links with home** involves incorporating familiar words, signs and routines from home into the early childhood setting.

Toddlers will develop a strong sense of belonging when they have opportunities to build strong **relationships** with people, places and things and when these relationships are respected and encouraged. Toddlers benefit from being able to talk about people and events at home, as well as bringing special objects from home. Toddlers are also likely to be interested and excited by a widening range of **materials, play experiences**, books and events. Including toddlers' favourite toys and events in the programme help support toddlers' sense of belonging. Caregiving practices should be both predictable and enjoyable. Relationships developed with key teachers can help toddlers to develop a **positive sense of identity**, support the development of **self-regulation** and help toddlers manage their feelings when making choices and dealing with frustration and **conflict**. Watch our webinar on supporting toddlers [here](#).

Older children can develop a strong sense of belonging when they are given opportunities to talk about activities, people and other things from home. They also develop belonging when given diverse opportunities to contribute to the running of the daily programme, such as fixing and cleaning things or arranging environments for play. Young children's belonging also is enhanced when they have opportunities for decision-making about aspects of the programme and can get engaged in **longer-term projects and investigations**. Children should be supported to learn **social skills** and competencies, and to make behaviour choices with positive behaviour strategies. Children develop belonging when they are valued for their own particular ways of doing things and are encouraged to **discuss their feelings** and negotiate expectations and rights.

Other areas that teaching teams may wish to explore in relation to promoting children's sense of belonging include policies and processes for **transition** (both within and outside of the setting).

PREPARED FOR THE EDUCATION HUB BY



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