

Principle of Empowerment | Whakamana



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ECE resources

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

The principle of **empowerment | whakamana** encourages teachers and leaders in early childhood education settings to recognise the mana of the children and families they work with, and consider how their approach to learning and care might **enhance** this mana. Mana is a Māori concept for the power of being. It means supporting children and families to be the best they can be, or to meet their **potential**. It also means that children and families act in ways that enable others to be their best, and are **respectful of and support others** to reach their potential.

Mana aligns closely with the concept of **children's rights**, such as rights to have their **health and wellbeing** protected and nurtured, to have **equitable access** to learning activities, to have their **language, culture and identity affirmed and respected** as well as agency over some decisions that concern them.

Children are also likely to be empowered, respected and trusted when they are able to pursue their **individual interests and intentions** in relation to learning activity, and when they are involved (as much as possible) in **decision-making** around their care and learning. Children are also empowered when the curricular programme enables them to explore learning through **play and playfulness**, and when teachers are **intentional** in providing meaningful, enjoyable and appropriate activities to extend their learning.

Some particular practices can be helpful in promoting empowerment for young children and their families. These include:

- **Culturally responsive pedagogies**
- **Play pedagogies**
- **Parent/whānau partnership**
- **Assessment practices** that support teachers to identify and respond to children's interests, skills and knowledge
- **Responsive and respectful care practices** in which children are **active participants**
 - Curriculum planning which involves children in **decision-making** and offers opportunities to **participate and contribute**, and enables curriculum to be **co-constructed**. See an example of one centre's curriculum planning [here](#).

PREPARED FOR THE EDUCATION HUB BY



Dr Vicki Hargraves

Vicki is a teacher, mother, writer, and researcher. She recently completed her PhD using philosophy to explore creative approaches to understanding early childhood education. She is inspired by the wealth of educational research that is available and is passionate about making this available and useful for teachers.



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