

Principle of Holistic Development | Kotahitanga



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 **holistic development | kotahitanga** refers to the need to view the different aspects of children's learning and development (cognitive, **social, emotional**, physical, cultural and spiritual) as an **integrated** and **interconnected** whole. This means that teachers should always consider each area of learning and development in relation to the others. It means that teachers should seek to develop each area of learning in ways which take account of and build upon children's existing **strengths**.

A perspective of holism also informs teachers' understanding of the nature of curriculum. Every aspect of the environment, resources, **relationships, emotional climate, interactions**, and community should be recognised as influencing the learning and teaching that take place. There is a focus on the 'bigger picture' in which **philosophies** and **values** are articulated as an underpinning for the learning that is valued in each setting. This bigger picture or vision is the starting point for determining curriculum, from which activities, events and experiences are derived. Activities should be **meaningful, appropriate and relevant** to children and their communities, so that the learning of skills, dispositions and knowledge is integrated within children's participation in **shared, meaningful activities** and are not separated into discrete, decontextualised learning tasks.

Some particular practices can be helpful in supporting young children's holistic development. These include:

- Effective **assessment practices** which identify children's strengths and the interconnections between learning areas and experiences
- Identifying **local curriculum priorities**, particularly where this is supported by **strong parent partnership**
- Curricular planning approaches such as **inquiries and investigations** which incorporate and integrate a range of different learning areas
- **Culturally responsive pedagogies** and bicultural curriculum
- **Intentional teaching**
- **Play pedagogies**
- Practices related to **inclusion**

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