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Case Studies of assessment practice
Examples from
Continuity of Early Learning: Learning Progress and Outcomes in the Early Years


Report commissioned by
Ministry of Education
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1. Setting the scene

The Continuity of Early Learning: Learning progress and outcomes in the Early Years project arose in a policy environment in which the government is investing significant funding in early childhood education (ECE) and the early years of schooling. This investment is in response to New Zealand and international research that has shown the positive benefits for children from participation in ‘quality’ ECE and the influence of transition-to-school practices and experiences. The project was commissioned by the Ministerial Early Childhood Cross-Sector Forum, which provides collaborative cross-sector leadership and advice on how to raise achievement for every learner in the early years. A particular focus of the project is on improving outcomes for priority learners (Māori, Pasifika, learners with special educational needs, bilingual children and learners from low socioeconomic backgrounds).

The Continuity of Early Learning project has two components: a literature scan and a survey of ‘thoughtful’ practice in a purposive sample of schools and their associated early childhood services. This report is on the empirical component of the study, which aimed to collect evidence of the range of ways that learning progress for children aged 0–8 years is documented, shared and used between ECE services, schools, and parents and whānau. Data were collected on the learning outcomes and assessment practices that are valued and used by four hubs which comprised a school and its associated early years centres, where these agreed to participate, along with findings from four pairs of a school and an associated early childhood centre.

A report by Mitchell et al (2014) gives an overview of the methodology and a synthesis of findings across the hub and partnership cases in relation to the research questions.

This report, ‘Case Studies of Assessment Practice’, provides details of findings from the four hubs and four pairs, constructed as case studies. It should be used as a background resource to the overview report and provides details of the assessment practices reported by teachers/educators and parents interviewed over the course of a one day site visit. Hence the data reported here is self-report, complemented by participant commentary on illustrative examples of site assessment practice(s), including photographs of wall displays and other examples of student work.

The cases provide evidence of the richness and variation in assessment practices across and between the different sites. There are limitations to the collection of data in interviews over the course of one day. Cases provide a broad overview of a site’s practices rather than detail on the nuances of teacher/educator curricular and pedagogical foci.

Highlights of thoughtful practice in each site are set out in Table 1 below for readers who have an interest in aspects of assessment and want to find out where these may be located. All services are undertaking worthwhile assessments.
Table 1: Highlights of thoughtful assessment practice from hubs and pairs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hubs and Pairs</th>
<th>Thoughtful practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kowhai Hub</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kowhai School</td>
<td>Innovative tasks to assess key competencies and learning areas outcomes. Student self-assessment tasks. Aggregation, analysis and use of data focused on priority groups. Buddy system between school and kindergarten to support transition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kowhai Education and Care Centre</td>
<td>Primary caregiver system and IEPs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nikau Hub</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nikau School</td>
<td>Profile books to highlight learning and progress over time. Narrative assessment, emphasis on key competencies derived from school values alongside literacy, numeracy and other learning areas. Three-way child-led conferences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nikau Playcentre</td>
<td>Narrative assessments able to be “read” by the child. Parent responsibility for assessment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nikau Kindergarten</td>
<td>Systematic audit of learning stories to show lens for assessment. Children’s agency in setting goals and deciding what is documented. Strategies to make provision in assessment for priority learners.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nikau Early Learning Centre</td>
<td>Use of narrative to track learning progression—use of language for more purposes and contexts, as well as in repertoire of words.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pohutukawa Hub</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pohutukawa School</td>
<td>Narrative assessment, emphasis on learning dispositions alongside literacy, numeracy and other learning areas. Child-led conferences, co-constructed and child self-assessment. Multiple and innovative ways to connect with families. Leadership in forging continuity at transition to school through transition meetings with ECE, buddy system, use of assessment portfolio.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pohutukawa Sessional Centre A</td>
<td>Group inquiries and project books documenting group learning, with contributions from teachers, children, parents and whānau.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pohutukawa Centre B</td>
<td>Two-way sharing information with families. Learning stories linked to a previous story to show progression. Variety of documented information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pohutukawa Infant and Toddler Centre C</td>
<td>Focus on wellbeing, infants and toddlers as explorers and experimenters.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pohutukawa All-day Centre D</td>
<td>Children’s schema interests documented.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Rata Hub

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School/Group</th>
<th>Thoughtful practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rata State Integrated School</td>
<td>Identifying needs to communicate with Pasifika families about key competencies, work with ECE on transition to school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rata A'oga Amata A</td>
<td>Home language and culture threaded through curriculum. Commitment to passing on cultural values and valued learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rata punanga o te reo Kuki Airani</td>
<td>Home language and culture threaded through curriculum. Variety of ways to communicate with families. Cultural values and valued learning highlighted in narrative assessments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rata A'oga Amata B</td>
<td>Home language and culture threaded through curriculum. Commitment to passing on cultural values and valued learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rata State School</td>
<td>Use of assessment to identify priority learners, initiate dialogue with teachers and help develop teaching strategies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rata Kindergarten</td>
<td>An analytic approach to documenting and using learning stories. Finding out about languages and cultures of families.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Pairs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Thoughtful practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kauri Kōhanga Reo and Kura</td>
<td>An approach to assessment, Paki Ako, linked to te ao Māori and the foundational values of kōhanga reo. Seamless education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totara School and Kindergarten</td>
<td>How assessment can embed and contribute to bicultural pedagogy in mainstream educational settings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karaka School and Kindergarten</td>
<td>Kindergarten assessment making learning visible, inviting contribution and reflection and offering a bridge to the school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rimu School and Early Learning Centre</td>
<td>Providing foundations for children to develop a strong sense of self and identity as Māori.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. Findings from the hubs

This section provides findings from each of the four hubs of school/s and ECE services in a particular community context. Each section follows a common layout. The characteristics of the community (Census Area Unit), school/s and ECE services are described. Values and practices around learning outcomes information in the first years of school and then in the ECE services are examined, including provision for priority learners and accumulation and use of learning outcomes information. Learning outcomes and information that is documented and exchanged at transition points is then discussed. Following this we look at strengths, challenges and additional information that groups may like to use. A summary forms a final section of the report for each hub.

Kowhai Hub

Profile of locality, school and ECE services

Kowhai is a suburb in a North Island main urban locality. It is an older suburb and an area of mixed housing stock. In the past year an early childhood centre has been built on the school grounds. Information about education, work and income of people in this Census Area Unit shows the profile to be higher than that for the region in which the community is located (see Table 1).

Table 2: Profile of Kowhai locality (2006 census data)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity of Population</th>
<th>62.8% European, 18.5% Māori, 17.1% Pacific peoples, 8.5% Asian, 0.4% Middle eastern/Latin American/African, 9.7% Other.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>27.3% of people aged 15 years and over have no formal qualifications compared with 20.3% for the region.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work</td>
<td>Unemployment rate is 4.5% for people aged 15 years and over compared with 5.6% for the region.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>Median income of people aged 15 years and over is $29,000 compared with $26,800 for the region.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The school in the Kowhai hub is a full primary state school (Years 1–8). It has a decile rating of 4 school with a roll of around 360 students. Teaching is exclusively in the English medium. Ethnicities of children are Māori 33%, NZ European Pākehā 15%, Samoan 15%, Tongan 10%, Cook Islands Māori 9%, Indian 6%, Niue 3%, Asian 2%, other European 2%, other Pacific 1%, other 4%. The school is well known for operating a buddy programme with the local kindergarten. Older children are given a buddy at kindergarten who is about to start school. The school buddy visits the kindergarten and also develops a portfolio showing stories about their interaction with the kindergarten child. When the kindergarten child goes to school, the school buddy is responsible for helping them settle in. Being a school buddy is a role that is in much demand with the older school children.

The profile of the three ECE services in the Kowhai Hub is shown in Table 3.
### Table 3: Profile of ECE services in the Kowhai hub

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ECE service</th>
<th>Operational structure and relationship to school</th>
<th>Ethnicities of children</th>
<th>Ages of children, roll size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Centre A—Kowhai Kindergarten</td>
<td>Community based Operates a “buddy” system with the school, but further away than other services</td>
<td>17 Māori 20 Pasifika 14 Asian 34 European/Pākehā 2 Other</td>
<td>Age 3: 33 Age 4: 53 Age 5: 1 Total: 87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centre B—Kowhai Education and Care Centre</td>
<td>Privately owned education and care centre On school grounds</td>
<td>16 Māori 5 Pasifika 5 Asian 6 European/Pākehā</td>
<td>Age 0: 1 Age 1: 3 Age 2: 7 Age 3: 15 Age 4: 6 Total: 32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centre C—Kowhai Playcentre</td>
<td>Community based Located about 100 metres from the school</td>
<td>7 Māori 4 Pasifika 0 Asian 20 European/ Pākehā</td>
<td>Age 0: 11 Age 1: 4 Age 2: 5 Age 3: 4 Age 4: 7 Total: 31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The values and practice around learning outcomes information in the first years of school and in the ECE services

**Kowhai School: Values**

The deputy principal described the Kowhai School vision for learning as holistic and drawing on the knowledge that every child has to bring to the learning process, and working for all children:

- Taking every child as they come to us. No child comes with nothing.
- While we have to do National Standards we have fought hard to keep other things in the programme. For example, dance and sports. We are educating the whole child.
- Our vision is to make school work for all our children from the slow learners to the gifted.

The whole child vision is carried out through a programme that addresses eight concepts over two years. These concepts are belonging, identity, sustainability, wonder, opportunity, change, creativity, curiosity—this is where the key competencies are taught. The whole child concept was decided and developed as a school where “we sat down and decided what we wanted our children to understand at the end of year 6”.

The focus on the whole child and the child’s funds of knowledge is reflected in assessment practices that aim to portray the child through a credit-based lens, emphasise key competencies and build continuity with home and ECE settings from which children come.
Kowhai School: Practices around learning outcomes information in first years of school

The purpose of assessment at Kowhai School was said to vary according to context and task. School Entry Assessment and a parent and child interview are used as baseline data. ECE transition portfolios from one of the contributing early childhood centres build a picture of the child’s strengths, and where-to-next for learning prior to entry to school. These transition portfolios make links to Te Whāriki and the key competencies in The New Zealand Curriculum.

The school uses structured data collection, conversations with different participants, documentation of actions and interactions, and compilations of data in the early years of schooling.

School Entry Assessment (assessing mathematics, reading and writing and oral language) is carried out in the first week of school. This is valuable in providing baseline data alongside parent and child interview data and offering a diagnosis of areas of strength and need. “Oral language is a biggie for us because a lot of children come in with not a lot.”

Teachers, parents and the deputy principal placed high value on informal conversations, knowing the child well and building relationships with the child and family (see section ‘Learning outcomes information that is documented and exchanged at transition points’).

Written reports and parent interviews related to National Standards are undertaken at 40, 80 and 120 weeks. All teachers are expected to collect Overall Teacher Judgments (OTJ) which inform the “back page comments of National Standards reports”. The school attracts high parent participation at interviews on National Standard reports (including priority learners) and teachers try to follow up by phone parents who do not come to interviews. Children are present at interviews, and will translate where parents do not speak English.

Information is shared via wall displays. Information about expectations is conveyed through a maths sheet on the wall of the classroom that describes mathematical understandings that children could/need to achieve. A classroom caterpillar on the wall shows each child’s reading level.

ECE Portfolios. (See section ‘Learning outcomes information that is documented and exchanged at transition points’ for information on portfolios from ECE being shared with the school).

In 2012, the team leader implemented a class portfolio system to capture dispositions—using photographs and childrens’ stories. The deputy principal noted, “when it worked, often children captured learning that teachers didn’t see”. The class portfolio system is not currently happening, however it is likely to be reinstated.

Innovative assessment tasks. Innovative tasks had been developed to assess key competencies and learning outcomes from different learning areas. An example was provided of key competencies from the school’s ‘concept curriculum’ being assessed through a dedicated task that required students to create a ‘belonging box’. This task can be seen as focusing on the key competency of Participating and Contributing, thereby providing a link between The New Zealand Curriculum and Te Whāriki, although whether this is deliberate is not known.
Exemplar 1: A belonging box to assess key competencies and learning areas outcomes

The key competencies included in the school’s ‘concept curriculum’ are assessed through a dedicated task that requires students to create a ‘belonging box’, that is, a collection of objects showing “where you belong in time and place”. Each object needs to be labelled with a tag that both describes and explains how the object reflects learning about belonging.

The school makes use of assessment tasks that focus on learning outcomes from different learning areas. The following task is an example of this approach, which has science, art (visual) and technology outcomes, and assessment criteria. The task was set in the following context: You are an artist who has identified a technological problem which will affect your art. As a consequence you need to design a solution to the problem. You will need to use scientific process to test, select and explain the best design for the problem. It was accompanied by a set of criteria to be used to evaluate student learning in technology.

The technology criteria were focused on whether students could “evaluate the function of an item of technology, its changes over time, and effects on a group of people” over two curriculum levels, whether they could identify a technological problem (described at two levels), and select and design a solution to a technological problem (over three levels). The science-related criteria over three levels focused on whether students could “take scientific action to find suitable materials to use in solving a technological problem” with outcomes detailed over two levels. Other criteria related to addressing the posing of questions amenable to scientific experimentation, designing a science experiment, recording of the outcomes of an experiment by drawing and/or writing, and communicating findings/answers. Some of the level 3 criteria focused more directly on students’ science inquiry skills. The art dimension of the task was assessed via criteria linked to “complete an art work for display” by experimenting and being able to explain various artistic approaches, the selection of appropriate materials and time management.

Self-assessment. Exemplar 2 below is an example of a student self-assessment during the art design process.

Exemplar 2: A student self-assessment during the art design process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>My Art Problem:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We couldn’t get the string to stick to our boards to make our rubbing boards.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The function of my design is…</th>
<th>My technological plan is…</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We have to make sure the string stays on the board so when we do our rubbing it doesn’t move and we can see our pattern.</td>
<td>We are using string and card.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We can stick the string on the card using sticky tape, staples, glue stick or PVA glue.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>My scientific action was…</th>
<th>The consequence of my design is…</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First we tried glue stick and the string stuck to our hands and not the boards! We tested all the ways to stick the string on our board. The PVA glue worked the best. We used bigger boards to make sure our patterns were big.</td>
<td>The string stuck to the big board and when we did our rubbings we could see our patterns.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Kowhai School: Accumulation and use of learning outcomes information across time for each child and in an aggregated way

Assessments are standardised through use of a six-year survey conducted on entry and then again at age six years. Student data is loaded onto the Student Management System (SMS), and analysis made of trends. Data is retrieved and analysed for particular purposes and groups (see next section, ‘Use of assessment for priority learners’). Team meetings are held to discuss the data, both for individual children and groups. The school leadership team uses analysed student data as a basis for deciding whole-school professional development topics. Professional development at the time of data collection was focused on literacy and National Standards and tailored to different levels within the school.

Kowhai School: Use of assessment for priority learners

The achievement and progress of Māori boys and of Pasifika children, is analysed by class level, by groups within a class, and for individuals over time. Data on English Language Learners is sometimes aggregated. The analysis of these data can lead to the adjustment of schoolwide and class programmes. Some children with identified higher needs receive additional help from Group Special Education. In addition, each class has a group of children who are a target group for literacy and numeracy development because they have been judged as under-achieving in these areas. The school pays and trains teacher aides to work with these children. They do this in six-week blocks with goal(s) for student learning set by the classroom teacher. After six weeks, teacher aides and the classroom teacher discuss and decide if the learning goal(s) have been met or not. If not a child goes into a second cycle of support.

Kowhai ECE Services: Values

There were three ECE services contributing to the Kowhai hub. The values described by the Kowhai Kindergarten and Playcentre participants were reflected in their assessment focus and the ways in which learning was portrayed and discussed. The Kowhai Education and Care Centre documentation had less congruence with described values.

Values for holistic learning, children’s ‘100 languages’, for children to be creative and independent thinkers, to make choices, as well as partnerships with parents were visible in the Kowhai Kindergarten information and learning stories. Continuity of learning across the sectors was supported through transition portfolios prepared for school entry and pamphlets for parents. Children play an active role such as picking out the stories they want to put in their transition portfolios.

Playcentre learning stories highlighted learning dispositions. These and “quick observations” displayed in photographic form were easily read by children, who were regarded as the main audience. Parents wrote learning stories for their own child as well as other children. Daily conversations and after-session evaluations were valued as the main means for discussing learning.

However, the Kowhai Education and Care Centre teachers’ expressed values of social competence were not reflected in the predominant focus in their information and assessment on concepts and skills, such as learning colour concepts and the development of fine motor skills being listed as outcomes for art activities. This was the only ECE service reporting that it used a checklist as an assessment tool. Teachers at this centre did not portray a strong role for assessment in creating learner identity. They said, “Assessment is relevant and it is not—there is much more than assessment that will help achieve that dream [for the people you would like your children to be and become].”
Kowhai ECE Services: Assessment practices

Conversations and discussions were described as a common and essential form of assessment for all three ECE centres. These happened daily on an informal basis with teachers/educators, parents and children. More formal discussions occurred amongst teachers/educators: in playcentre, in a quick evaluation at the end of session; in kindergarten and education and care through regular teacher discussion, evaluation and planning. Table 4 profiles the Kowhai ECE services’ vision for learning and approach to assessment.

**Table 4:** Kowhai ECE teachers’ visions for learning and predominant assessment approaches

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ECE service</th>
<th>Vision for learning</th>
<th>Predominant approach to assessment</th>
<th>Typical comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kowhai Kindergarten—has a buddy system with the school, trialling a transition-to-school portfolio.</td>
<td>Go back to Te Whariki and the vision for children. Our vision:   • to provide quality education experiences, which includes literacy and numeracy;   • We value all learning—creativity, art, the 100 languages, construction, creative thinking, children engaging with each other and us in positive and inclusive ways;   • We value collaborative endeavour, physical challenge, ecological learning.</td>
<td>A variety of narrative learning stories are produced for each child and groups. Categorising learning outcomes is difficult because learning is holistic. Literacy and numeracy are integrated in everything that happens—built in the learning every day for every child. It is important that children learn English. Aim to work in partnership with parents, to stimulate and extend children by spending time engaging with them. Emphasis on independence, allowing children to build social contacts, creativity. A transition portfolio is being trialled, targeted for a school audience.</td>
<td>Twenty-two languages are spoken by children attending. Teachers promote language and culture through the portfolios. They ask families about their celebrations, home languages, and what culture they would like their children to identify with so that parents realise that speaking home language is valued and seen as an opportunity. They teach children days of the week in many different languages. “It’s not important that they all know all the days of the week, what is important is to recognise that there are other ways of saying things, you know, that language is different for different people.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kowhai Education and Care Centre—on school grounds.</td>
<td>To allow children to explore, discover and learn at their own pace. Children don’t learn alone—collaboration with peers and adults. Many children learn in more than one language. Emphasis on supporting bilingualism (interpreted as English and Māori) but also use Pasifika and Indian languages.</td>
<td>Teachers spoke of emphasis on social competence as a foundation for other learning. All about Me form (pepeha). Parent voices included in learning stories. Learning stories sighted were focused mainly on concepts and skills. Individual development plan where a specific goal for each child is decided by teachers. Checklist shortly before child goes to school and based on collaborative discussion between staff.</td>
<td>We talk to parents about what we are doing to equip children for school, e.g., developing literacy, helping them to write their name, how they are learning maths through play. Sometimes we are really just telling parents how to be parents. We talk about social competence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECE service</td>
<td>Vision for learning</td>
<td>Predominant approach to assessment</td>
<td>Typical comment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kowhai Playcentre—located very close to the school</td>
<td>That children learn best through play in an environment that is a home away from home. That children’s learning is child-led and adult’s role is to extend children’s interests. That learning should be viewed as holistic. That children should develop a strong sense of belonging. That learning happens when there are high adult-child ratios. &quot;What we value is what they create and getting them to verbalise what they are doing.&quot; Vision for learning is not isolating skills and knowledge—rather children having confidence.</td>
<td>Narrative learning stories for groups and individuals twice a term. Record at end of session what learning have we observed and where we are going next. Conversations and informal observations are very important.</td>
<td>We also value informal sharing—verbal. Informal observations every session about what children are doing and enjoying—parents share this with each other during the session and when they meet at the end of each session; &quot;It’s a way of life here, there is conversation constantly. So whether it be formally written down or informally, it is a bit of a mindset from the time you walk in the gate you are thinking about the set ups you are doing what they were into previously, what have we generally planned for as a bigger picture.&quot; Parents ask each other how they can make better use of what they are observing. &quot;You have also got all the conversations where so and so says, 'Matthew seems to be scared to do this, how do I encourage it?'&quot;</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Narrative learning stories is the predominant form of written assessment in all three ECE centres.

The learning stories in Kowhai Playcentre are written for the children as the main audience because parents are present in the session and do not need these for themselves. Many of the learning stories are done quickly, in the moment, during the session. Hence they are timely in capturing critical moments and achievements. These stories are often linked to a strand and goal of *Te Whāriki* (see Exemplar 3).
Exemplar 3:  Jake’s story: Making learning dispositions and physical skills visible

30 August 2013

Today at Playcentre we had an obstacle course set up with boxes of different sizes and plants at different heights. You decided you wanted to explore! Climbing the boxes you made it to the first plank... after holding my hand to help down you let go and walked the plank not out any help, fantastic! Then you climbed to the higher plank and walked that without any help, amazing.

You showed some great confidence in being prepared to walk across the plant without any help. I loved how you turned to me when you had reached the other side... “Mum, mum!” You said, you wanted me to see what you had done. I was so proud of you. You did the trip.

I could see that you loved the obstacle course, especially as you did it several times, gaining more in confidence every time - even figuring out how to step down onto the plant without help, & adding jumping from the boxes. Next time let’s add some different angles and sizes to extend your learning.

Learning dispositions: You showed courage, trust and perseverance while learning a new skill - balancing on a plant.

Te Whāriki: Strand 5, Goal 2 - they gain confidence in t control of their bodies.

Love Mum xxx
Kowhai Kindergarten had the widest range and depth of purpose for its learning stories (individual, group, and for specific times and purposes—a welcome story, going to the farm story) and a transition portfolio comprising stories chosen by the child with the teacher’s written summary. The focus was on dispositions, working theories and skills. Portfolios were frequently revisited and discussed by the teacher team, and previous learning was built on and referenced in new learning stories. Teachers make a point of going back over portfolios regularly. They use information to suggest ideas and possible lines of future direction for a child. Generally they said they do not use information to redirect children to activities that they are not participating in. Teachers explained that they do not hold some outcomes, such as literacy and numeracy, as more important than other outcomes but rather view these as integral with and/or contributing to learning in other areas: “We believe that if a child is practising physical skills this is also very valuable for literacy.”

Such a position is consistent with the kindergarten’s expressed view of learning as holistic, encompassing ‘100 languages’. These teachers portrayed themselves as confident in maintaining a holistic focus for assessment and in affirming a breadth of learning outcomes despite their obvious awareness of the priority accorded to literacy and numeracy at school. Teachers in this kindergarten have a history extending back to 1999 of undertaking action research and working as teacher researchers in collaboration with research associates and professional development advisers. It is possible that this might have contributed to their confidence in articulating their priorities.

All three centres collected data systematically and regularly for each child (see Table 5). Congruent with the nature of parent-led provision, where parents attend the sessions and run the programme, playcentre educators were more likely to use frequent informal observation and verbal communication to exchange information with each other.

**Table 5: Systems for assessing learning progress by ECE services in Kowhai**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ECE service</th>
<th>Informal conversations and short notes</th>
<th>Documented assessments for each child</th>
<th>Centrewide documentation</th>
<th>Wall displays</th>
<th>Teacher/educator discussions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kowhai Kindergarten — school buddy system and transition portfolios</td>
<td>Parents invited to share in portfolios. Parents contribute information, often verbally. Teachers talk with support people frequently.</td>
<td>Each child has a portfolio. On average one story a month. Assessments include a welcome story in the beginning, individual stories, group stories. Children who go to the farm once a week get a story each week. A tracking board is used to ensure children are not overlooked. Teachers are also trialling transition portfolio for children going to school.</td>
<td>Group stories. Newsletters to parents often include information about learning, e.g., we are doing this activity and children are learning (say) literacy, how to care for the environment.</td>
<td>Contribution to portfolios displays inviting stories from home, with pictures and illustrations. Many pamphlets have been produced for parents—e.g., on curriculum literacy, beginning writing, nearly five, and portfolios.</td>
<td>Portfolios are frequently revisited and discussed by teacher team, strong emphasis on building and referencing previous learning when writing new learning stories. Teachers make a point of going back over portfolios regularly. They use information to suggest ideas and possible lines of future direction for a child. The admin person is involved in discussions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Individual Education Plan (IEP).

**Kowhai ECE Services: Accumulation and use of learning outcomes information across time for each child and in an aggregated way**

Kowhai Kindergarten systematically accumulates and uses information across time for each child. Every two weeks the team meets, goes back through photos and uses these as prompts to talk about learning, e.g., something they have noticed about a child’s interest or knowledge. An example might be a child who has become an expert and is helping others. They discuss what they could encourage next in the way of learning for this child. Often teachers decide as a team whether the experience is going to be written up. Children’s learning experiences and progress are recorded through the portfolios. The administration person also participates in these discussions on the rationale that she talks to parents at pre-entry, including about the portfolios and why they are so important.

Children’s learning and learning progress was aggregated in a number of ways:

- When stories build on each other, past learning is often referenced in the stories.
- Teachers often summarise aspects of a child’s learning informally when talking to parents.
- Aggregation also occurs if more than one person writes the story which can happen. “That way we get different perspectives.”
The transition portfolio served as an important forum and imperative to pull together the main threads of a child’s learning and achievements when teachers wrote a summary page about these aspects. This was for the teacher at school but written directly to the child. Learning progress for groups is not aggregated.

Kowhai Playcentre educators have informal conversations about learning and an end of session review every day, and twice-termly planning meetings. In the review they discuss the learning they have observed and where they are going with it. The choice to document learning is usually made when there has been a break through with a child or a shift in abilities such as a child walking along a plank without holding a parent’s hand. The main purpose of documentation was said to be to meet requirements and for the child to have a record of their own learning. As a co-operative, all members participate in discussions and all are expected to act on information. Some aggregated information is used to inform programme self-review, for example: “We do sometimes brainstorm around the different age groups for ways we can improve and extend learning for a cohort.”

In the Kowhai Education and Care Centre, learning outcomes information is obtained for individual children but not aggregated for sub groups. Learning stories and documentation are discussed in programme planning meetings. A primary caregiver system operates and each staff member talks about their group. They give the head teacher information and this is used for planning. The plans develop from children’s interests and might also be based on something children bring from home. It is through the IEP that observations are brought together across time and used as the basis of the learning goal for each child, in the form of a summary of what children can do—mainly academic skills and concepts. The whole team is involved in the discussions about children’s learning although the key staff member has main responsibility for reporting and making sure the IEP is implemented.

**Kowhai ECE Services: Provision for priority learners**

Kowhai Kindergarten makes provision for children with English as an additional language. This happens when teachers sit alongside children in mat times. The kindergarten has begun a new research project on children who learn in more than one language. The teachers commented that they adopted an inclusive approach to children with special educational needs:

> We have a very inclusive viewpoint—we document in exactly the same way for special education children—record their learning experiences and progress through the portfolios. We also talk with their support people frequently which is another way to report progress.

Teachers acknowledged they probably do not use information on Māori ways of being well. They said it “came up in their appraisals and they have identified it as something they still need to work on”. Exemplar 4 below illustrates how the centre finds out about children’s language and culture. This exemplar also provides evidence of the value parents accorded to the affirmation of diversity in language and culture.
Exemplar 4: Finding out about family culture

Kowhai Kindergarten teachers “try to acknowledge children’s culture from the beginning of the portfolios”, and the visual border on the front cover and some of the questions to parents and whānau when children start reflect this. These enrolment questions at the same time introduce the strands of Te Whāriki.

These questions appear under the heading “Identity, Language and Culture. Getting to know you”: How did you choose your child’s name?, What would you like us to know about your child that we don’t know already?, Where did your family name come from? Under “Communication: Mana Reo”: What language/s is (are) spoken at home? What language/s do (does) your child understand? What greetings do you use at home? Are there any special words that your child uses? (e.g., for toilet, hungry etc.)? Under “Exploration: Mana Aoturoa”: Does your child attend any other ECE centres? Are they used to being around lots of other people? Do they have opportunity to play outside? What extra activities is your child involved in (e.g., swimming, ballet, gym, library etc.)? Preschool experience? Current preschool experience? Please tell us about your expectations for your child and their learning at kindergarten.

Parents who were interviewed appreciated the enrolment questions and the information pack that was given. One parent commented that her 9-year-old could now read the information that was provided on enrolment and so the whole conversation about the origin of their names was revisited many years later. Parents stressed the importance of social learning as aspirations for their child. Three of the four interviewed made comment on language and culture as an aspiration:

- A Māori grandmother said her goal for her granddaughter was to learn Māori language and be proud of her culture. “She comes home from kindergarten singing waiata and the Māori pronunciation she has learnt is excellent.”

- A Pākehā parent—“Learning how to get along with people who speak different languages and understand cultural differences.”

- An Irish parent—“Be a Kiwi first as Irish culture will always be there—know that diversity is normal. A sense of belonging is really important and they get that here. To know who they are.”

Kowhai Education and Care Centre teachers were less specific about priority learners, and spoke of “putting culture, language and identity into our practice as natural because of who we are (ethnically and culturally mixed)”. One of the parents interviewed reinforced the value of cultural diversity and the freedom for children to communicate in their own languages: She said, “I like the fact that at the centre and the school children can express themselves through their culture and language—they are free to do this.” She thought it was “good for children to know where they come from and be proud of it, not embarrassed. Able to try out different languages.”

Kowhai Playcentre educators said, “Everyone who comes gets a warm and welcoming atmosphere. We value the use of te reo and rituals such karakia, celebrate Matariki and recognise different groups through sharing of food.” The playcentre tries to recognise and incorporate the background and languages of all the families. The educators interviewed acknowledged that playcentre may not be an option for some priority groups unless there is adequate financial support at home to become involved. Pressure on beneficiaries to go back to work was raised as a reason why playcentre might not be an option for some.
Kowhai ECE Services: Links to Te Whāriki and The New Zealand Curriculum

All three ECE centres use Te Whāriki in their learning stories and information, but varied in the ways it was discussed.

The Kowhai Kindergarten teachers seem to have an embedded understanding of the theoretical framing and concepts of Te Whāriki that is apparent in how their assessment documentation and what they choose to document. They say Te Whāriki is sometimes made explicit but not always. “However, we are making those links when we write the stories all the time—we use a Te Whāriki lens (i.e., work together with children on outcomes rather than determine outcomes for children). Our understanding of Te Whāriki makes a difference in how we view children—what we value and record, e.g., we value children making choices.” An explicit link is made to The New Zealand Curriculum in the transition portfolios—this kindergarten and Karaka Kindergarten were the two ECE services that made a connection.

The Kowhai Playcentre uses a frame of “notice, recognise and respond” and links learning stories to Te Whāriki strands and goals. End of session discussions are related back to the curriculum.

The Kowhai Education and Care Centre teachers link learning to strands and use phrases from Te Whāriki in their wall displays, learning stories and IEPs.

Learning outcomes information that is documented and exchanged at transition points

Between ECE and school at transition points

The Kowhai School staff commented that they were keen to have access to children’s ECE portfolios in their classrooms but they often found this was hard to do because parents wanted to retain their child’s portfolio, a response that provides a clear indication of the value parents place on the portfolios. To address this situation the school and Kowhai Kindergarten have instigated a special transition portfolio system in the hope that these will be left at school. The vision is for the portfolios to be used to build a picture of child’s strengths and where-to-next for learning. The deputy principal commented that the portfolios varied in their focus depending on the centre they came from and that the most useful aspect was that they provided insight into children’s interests and friendships.

The Kowhai Kindergarten transition-to-school portfolios were designed to honour children’s agency; children choose the three learning stories that are included in the portfolio (see Exemplar 5). The stories highlight children’s competencies and passions and make links to The New Zealand Curriculum key competencies. The Kindergarten Transition to School Pamphlet signals an intent to promote continuity of learning “by recognising and documenting children’s learning in the kindergarten setting and encouraging families to share their child’s learning journey so far with those at school”.
Kowhai Kindergarten parents were positive about the buddy system as supporting transition to school and had no suggestions about additional information that could be exchanged with school.

- “Exactly what is already in place—it is absolutely ideal.”
- “This takes all the worry off me about starting school. Children are very familiar with school when they start.”

The buddy system starts six weeks before children start school. One parent made the comment that it would be nice if the buddy relationship had lasted longer once the children got to school, acknowledging however that it was designed to “get children over the hump” of starting school.
The children from the Kowhai Education and Care Centre attend a school-based programme once a fortnight where they take their portfolios with them. Teachers were not sure if the portfolios were looked at or used by the school. Parents were explicit that they wanted the information about their child, that was passed on to the school, to be framed within a competency-based lens. Concern with sharing information was that some children would be labelled and parents did not want that. A briefing on what a child can do was said to be preferred. In addition, some parents commented that it was important that teachers understood that siblings are very different—again implying a fear of labelling if an older child had had problems.

Kowhai Playcentre educators said that, to their knowledge, none of their parents have taken their child’s portfolio to school and nor has the school asked for them. Transition support was left up to parents. The playcentre parents tended not to go to the school’s 4-year-old Friday because it was held on a playcentre day. Parents had tried to institute a buddy system similar to that run by the kindergarten but said it had not been taken up, probably because so few children go on to school from the playcentre each year.

**Kowhai School: Communication with parents**

The school uses informal conversations, formal interviews and wall displays to communicate with parents. Information about each child is gained at the new entrant interview with parents and child. The emphasis here has shifted from informing parents about the school to spending time getting to know the child—their interests and strengths, what they like to do in the weekends. This was described as “more of a conversation with the child to build a relationship”. Interviews are done by the deputy principal and information is then forwarded to the classroom teacher. Often children bring their ECE portfolios or ECE transition portfolios to the interview. Parents commented on these interviews as “very conversational and [they] have a focus on getting to know the child, so information shared often comes from the child, not always the parents”. Some parents shared information about their child’s nature, e.g., “my daughter is a day dreamer”. One parent commented that her child was extremely well prepared for school but she herself wasn’t—she felt isolated and upset. “I was not confident, despite all the preparation.”

A lot of information about children’s learning is shared informally, according to the group of parents who were interviewed. They said that if things were not going well they did not want to wait for a formal report, they wanted to be told sooner so they could help their child. However, getting useful information relied a lot on being proactive. This group of parents felt confident to ask for information about their children if they felt it was needed. However they thought a downside of informal communication was that parents may not share information with the other parent accurately or with the same emphasis. So having something documented that they could refer to was also valued.

The group of parents interviewed raised some issues about the school reports and National Standards. In particular they noted they were told only if their child was meeting or failing the standards. This was said to be unsettling because no written guidance was given about how to help their child. These parents thought it was important to sit down with the teacher and have National Standards explained and reported that once this happened the report made more sense. There was concern expressed that a National Standards focus means children’s other abilities may be overlooked, for example, children who are bilingual were considered to have a real advantage in learning language, and more broadly, but this was not reflected in National Standards reporting from the school.

Parents liked the information about expectations conveyed through the wall displays—the maths sheet on the wall of the classroom that describes mathematical understandings that children could/needed to achieve. Parents said it would be good if this sort of information could be sent home showing their child’s level. A classroom caterpillar on the wall shows each child’s reading level.
Kowhai ECE services: Communication with parents

Parents from each of the Kowhai ECE services were happy with the exchange of information with their centre and did not want anything more. All the parents interviewed indicated they had been invited to contribute to their child’s portfolio.

In the playcentre, where parents contributed to the education programme on a regular basis and took up playcentre training opportunities, the playcentre-home connections to support learning were strong. The Kowhai Playcentre parents themselves wrote a learning story for their own child each term and as educators communicated every day with other educators about the playcentre and children’s learning. The “informal talk” that occurred each day was said to work well for parents in describing and seeing learning outcomes and progress. The playcentre training courses assisted parents to be able to do this. The Playcentre always has a Course 3 parent on site at every session to support less experienced parents in identifying learning.

Two key phrases in the playcentre philosophy are role modeling and emergent leadership—the Course 3 person needs to be always aware of their role in describing learning to others.

Another advantage of playcentre for continuity with home was the deep knowledge that parents have of their own child—"They are our children so we know them—when you are at home it is always going through your head what they are learning."

In teacher-led services, parents were keen to talk about the teachers’ knowledge of their child and informal sharing, which was highly valued:

- Teachers catch up with parents very regularly, share information about what the child has been doing and their special qualities, e.g., one parent was very proud to be told that her son was showing great empathy for his age by looking after other children at the centre. Parents appreciated that teachers came up to them (at least once a week, one parent said) and shared something. “They take time to seek you out.” All said they felt the teachers all knew their children very well.

- Parents indicated they were keen to share information pertaining to their children’s mood or disposition, e.g., tiredness on a particular day, rather than about their learning as it might relate to the curriculum. Parents said that sharing information with teachers was often more about their own concerns for their child, e.g., one parent from Kowhai kindergarten talked of her child coming home talking of an incident that made him uncomfortable so she shared this with the teacher and felt very able to do so. She noted that the centre followed up on the incident and the issue was resolved. Another talked of sharing her concern about her child always going to the science corner on his own when she left him. She sought reassurance, and received it, that he didn’t stay there all morning.

- Parents from Kowhai Education and Care Centre said they feel informed and thought that teachers knew the children. They shared information from home and had a “gut feeling” it was used. One example was from a parent who shared with staff that her child loves babies. The child is now allowed to visit the babies and play with them.
Strengths, challenges and additional information the groups would like to use

Teachers and parents were asked to “think about the people you would like your child/ren to be and become. How could you, your ECE service/school, parents and whānau use assessment and information to help achieve that dream?”

**Kowhai School**

The deputy principal identified National Standards as the main current challenge faced by the school in implementing a fair assessment system for each child. She said the school has to try to get all children to the same standard at 40 weeks—no matter what sort of learning (or not) they bring, that is the benchmark for everyone. She communicated a sense of urgency to do this. She noted this meant however that it was hard to achieve a balance in the focus of both instruction and assessment between reading, writing and mathematics and other learning areas and the key competencies where children might have special strengths.

The challenges stem from the emphasis on National Standards. Children may be struggling with reading, writing and maths but they are amazing dancers or sports players. The constant challenge is to find ways to report that allows them to have their time to shine.

Parents discussed the further information they would like from the school about their child’s learning. Because this group of parents were in and out of school constantly they considered they had access to most of the information about their child they needed. However, they wanted their own unique knowledge of their child to be listened to and acted on. They wanted teachers to “know their child”. One parent made the comment that they struggled to share what they knew of their child’s capabilities with his teacher.

I have actually struggled to feel that the information I want to give is wanted. I feel that [child] is very conceptual, like he really gets ‘big picture’ stuff that blows us away and I feel that the teacher doesn’t have time to deal with that…. I know that all children have parts of themselves which are exceptional. I don’t feel that the current system invites children to be exceptional or that teachers have the time or the energy to support that exceptional part of the child’s personality and that my job is help him function within the system.

Consistent with wanting their teacher to know their child, these parents were concerned that a tight focus on reading, writing and mathematics, as the areas within the National Standards, was narrowing the curriculum to emphasise academic achievement at the expense of recognising sufficiently other talents such as sporting ability, creativity, and design potential.

Parents valued a two-way exchange with home. Some parents said they would like to see the use of portfolios that went home and/or more regular information in the children’s ‘communication bag’, acknowledging however that this would probably be “too time consuming for teachers.” In terms of actively engaging parents with their children’s learning, the school is moving away from giving homework. Parents said this has positives and negatives—something that is lost is the fact that homework keeps parents more informed of what their child is doing and how well they are doing it.

Parents would have liked more information on systems, routines and structures before their child started at school, e.g., things like when lunchtime starts and ends and when school finishes. They commented that an information handbook would have been useful. This group of parents indicated they were proactive in finding out this information, e.g., they accessed the school website or asked at office but they felt not all parents would do this for a variety of reasons.

These parents suggested two ways of using assessment and information to help achieve their dreams for their child. Both suggestions reinforce the value to parents of face-to-face communication and teachers’ capacity to notice and recognise their child’s achievements, rather than only formal testing:
1. It would be good to have an alumni programme where adults and older children at Intermediate came back as role models of being successful. They could share their stories of success with the current children.

2. In terms of assessment—strengthen the social aspects within assessment. “Assessment is about spending time with individual children and then reporting. Teacher instincts are important in assessment too.”

**Kowhai ECE services**

*Teachers* from Kowhai Kindergarten thought that children’s learning was valued through documentation. To them, the biggest barrier for children from Māori, Pasifika and low socio-economic families is inconsistency of attendance.

We have about 10 families a year where broken attendance becomes an issue. Income is a problem as well—families can’t afford the $40.00 to come five days a week. Patterned absence means children don’t settle well and that affects learning.

*Parents* from Kowhai Kindergarten thought the kindergarten was doing a superb job.

This kindy is awesome! We, honestly, I don’t think we could really ask for anything more. I mean they have pretty much got all bases covered with, you know, with some very happy well rounded little people. (Kowhai Kindergarten parent)

I think that the one thing that this kindy does give them is a really wonderful well-rounded sense of culture and you know, lovely values that I think is just going to carry them through, you know, right through school. (Kowhai Kindergarten parent)

*Playcentre parent educators* thought that their current assessment led to children being “strong and confident, articulate—that leads to success; people who give things a go, take risks; and who have enquiring minds—because it focuses on individual achievements and values what children are succeeding at”. Those interviewed thought perhaps learning stories could be shared more, “if we had time,” to provide more insight into learning and also to make more use of this information as parents. They also proposed that the playcentre and school could share more information.

*Parents* from *Kowhai Education and Care Centre* were not sure about the second part of the question. One parent said he disliked the word assessment attached to 4-year-olds—“just let them be kids”. With interviewer probing, parents could see that assessing confidence might be helpful although it was also thought to be very subjective. An interviewer impression was that parents viewed assessment as something that involved an element of compulsory and academic learning.
Summary

What learning information was generated and valued by the school and ECE services?

Overall, there were clear indications that for both teachers and parents assessment, including assessment documentation, served to make visible what was valued educational outcomes. Both groups expressed a wish to develop and affirm a breadth of learning outcomes and accomplishments, in particular key competencies and the full range of learning areas in the school and learning dispositions and other outcomes in ECE services. Both groups were also concerned to elicit and value children’s “funds of knowledge” from home (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & González, 1992).

There was consistency between the vision for learning expressed by teachers/educators and that articulated in documentation provided as illustrative of practice. Teachers/educators and parents supported an assessment/assessment documentation focus on what the children could do, rather than what they could not do, a focus that aligns with the philosophy of both The New Zealand Curriculum and Te Whāriki. An example was provided of assessment in task that integrated key competencies with technology, science and art (Exemplar 1: A belonging box to assess key competencies and learning outcomes). There was some comment by teachers and parents that the school National Standards reporting process was problematic because of its focus on reading, writing and mathematics.

Assessment approaches used: School practices

Mixed assessment approaches were used in the school: diagnostic assessments in literacy and numeracy, a compilation for teacher judgements for National Standards reporting, the use of specially constructed tasks along with the use of narrative assessment, particularly to assess and promote key competencies. A highlight of thoughtful practice for the school was the use of student self-assessment tasks (Exemplar 1 above and Exemplar 2: A student self-assessment during the art design process). It is noteworthy that student production of a team or class portfolio had not been continued beyond the initial year, a reflection perhaps of the challenges to sustaining innovation even when it is supported by a team leader and viewed as a success for the way it captures “learning that the teachers didn’t see”.

Assessment data analysis and use: School practices

The school leadership and staff as a whole actively engaged in targeted analysis of student achievement data, with this analysis focusing on data from children from priority groups including Māori boys, Pasifika children, and children with special needs. This analysis informed schoolwide and class programmes and the provision of additional support for individual students. Teacher collective discussion of data and data trends suggests the school staff had come together as a learning community to work together on the goal of improving the learning of all the children in their care, an approach that aligns with the recommendations in the Ministry schooling sector assessment position paper (Ministry of Education, 2011, p. 26).

Assessment information exchange: School-parents

Parents valued two-way communication between home and school, particularly the informal conversations they had with teachers about their child’s learning that also included what they could do to help. It was important to parents that the exchange of information took place in a timely manner and was not restricted to more formal reporting sessions. Parent comments indicated that both homework and the children’s ‘communication bags’ could have been used more frequently, and more effectively, by teachers to share information and engage parents in supporting their child’s learning. This comment confirms the value of the school and family partnership in children’s learning.

Assessment approaches used: ECE practices

Assessment in the ECE services was mainly through narrative approaches based on teacher observation and conversation, particularly learning stories which could have different foci depending on context. One centre also used checklists of skills and concepts. Playcentre educators in this hub, similar to playcentre educators in other hubs, pointed
out that because parents were directly involved in informal and documented assessment, children were often the main audience (see for example Exemplar 3: Jake’s story: Making learning dispositions visible).

A feature of thoughtful practice in each ECE setting was the role played by parents, whānau and children as contributors to assessment. For example, young children decided what documentation to include in their transition portfolios at Kowhai Kindergarten; parents wrote narrative learning stories for their own children and the children of others at Kowhai Playcentre. There was a focus in documentation on children’s interests so that assessment was meaningful and affirmed what children could do in all the ECE settings. In addition to these approaches, informal conversations were seen as vital.

Assessment data analysis and use: ECE practices

Teachers from the three services examined individual children’s learning stories to monitor progress and plan for further learning. Teachers from the kindergarten systematically reviewed individual children’s assessment data fortnightly. They reported that evidence of progress, which could include a child helping others or a child pursuing an interest, was documented. Stories built on each other and included informal summaries in conversation with parents. The preparation of a transition portfolio provided the imperative to pull together evidence of learning progress, indicating this kind of synthesis and summation of learning might be worth pursuing more regularly for the insights it can provide.

Neither the kindergarten nor the education and care centre teachers aggregated information for different groups of children. The playcentre educators made some use of aggregated data for programme self-review.

Assessment information exchange: ECE services-families

The ECE services used a variety of means to reach out to families, to find out about their culture (Exemplar 4: Finding out about family culture), and to access their knowledge of their child. Parents affirmed that this assessment process contributed to their sense that diversity was valued within the services, thereby indicating that assessment is an important message system for communicating what is valued in a particular setting.

Assessment information exchange: School-ECE services

Within this hub, the ECE services were working with the school to strengthen transitions through building relationships with each other, and the use of portfolios to promote continuity of learning between the settings. Kowhai Kindergarten had worked with the school over some years and a buddy system was well established. Transition-to-school portfolios were a more recent initiative designed to highlight children’s interests and passions and to identify links to the school key competencies so these could be activated as a resource by teachers in the school setting (see Exemplar 5: An example from Steven’s transition portfolio). The other ECE settings and school were working to establish a productive use of assessment as part of their desire to support continuity with school. It is interesting to note that participants from all services seemed to be aware of site-specific practices across the different sites in the hub even when these practices were not being implemented at their site.

Assessment and priority learners

Research questions asked about the frequency of assessment and provision for priority learners. All the settings gathered and analysed information for individuals and groups on a regular basis. Participants in this hub were most focused on the nature and quality of assessment documentation and how the information is gathered, discussed and used. Overwhelmingly, informal undocumented assessment via conversations and discussion were described as essential ways in which learning was noticed, recognised and progressed, although progression was emphasised in the kindergarten’s portfolios. Parents valued conversations most of all, along with the sense that the teacher/educator knew their child and was interested in, and willing to take account of, parents’ knowledge of their own child.
Nikau Hub

Profile of locality, school and ECE services

Nikau is a suburb in a South Island city. Information about education, work and income of people in this Census Area Unit shows the profile to be similar to that for the region in which the community is located (see Table 5).

Table 6: Profile of Nikau locality (2006 census data)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity of Population</th>
<th>80.0% European, 5.7% Māori, 2.5% Pacific peoples, 5.0% Asian, 0.5% Middle Eastern/Latin American/African, 12.3% Other.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>19.7% of people aged 15 years and over have no formal qualifications compared with 25.7% for the region.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work</td>
<td>Unemployment rate is 3.5% for people aged 15 years and over compared with 4.0% for the region.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>Median income of people aged 15 years and over is $25,000 compared with $23,500 for the region.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There was one school in the Nikau hub. It is a decile 5 contributing school (Years 1–6) with a roll of 182 students. Teaching is exclusively in the English medium. The profile of ECE services in the Nikau hub is shown in Table 7.

Table 7: Profile of ECE services in the Nikau hub

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ECE service</th>
<th>Operational structure and relationship to school</th>
<th>Ethnicities of children</th>
<th>Ages of children, roll size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Centre A—Nikau Early Learning Centre</td>
<td>Community based</td>
<td>18 Māori</td>
<td>Age 0: 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5 Pasifika</td>
<td>Age 1: 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2 Asian</td>
<td>Age 2: 19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>50 European/Pākehā</td>
<td>Age 3: 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 Other</td>
<td>Age 4: 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Total: 76</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centre B—Nikau Kindergarten</td>
<td>Community based</td>
<td>8 Māori</td>
<td>Age 2: 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3 Pasifika</td>
<td>Age 3: 30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6 Asian</td>
<td>Age 4: 37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>51 European/ Pākehā</td>
<td>Total: 68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centre C—Nikau Playcentre</td>
<td>Community based</td>
<td>2 Māori</td>
<td>Age 0: 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2 Pasifika</td>
<td>Age 1: 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2 Asian</td>
<td>Age 2: 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>34 European/ Pākehā</td>
<td>Age 3: 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2 Other</td>
<td>Age 4: 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Total: 42</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Nikau School: Goals and values

Nikau School has a set of four values, four goals and a whakatauki that guide the teachers/teaching and learners/learning: Whakatauki-Kimihia te ara totika—seek the right path.

The school goals are to foster:

1. Resilient people (are positive and keep trying)—are independent; preserve with tasks, even when difficult; give new situations a go; have confidence.

2. Thinkers (solve problems)—ask questions—seek answers; are critical and creative thinkers; are organised and plan; learn from their mistakes.

3. Caring citizens (respect each other and the world)—are co-operative and kind; listen and share; value others’ ideas and beliefs; take responsibility for their actions.

4. Communicators (share thoughts and ideas)—Relate well to others; are effective users of communication ‘tools’; are numerate and literate; make a positive contribution.

The four values are honesty, respect, curiosity, and children attaining their personal best.

Teachers considered these goals and values were integrated into curriculum and assessment.

Teachers reported that the full breadth of learning outcomes described in The New Zealand Curriculum were valued, but assessment of literacy and mathematics and the school values and goals were given priority in terms of written documentation. The school values and goals were usually assessed and documented in the context of activities and experiences related to a range of curriculum areas. The National Standards focus on reading, writing and mathematics were reported to influence what information was gathered and reported on.

Teachers said they particularly valued “undocumented assessments,” which they carried out with children “dozens of times a day.” They described these as a “critical part of building the relationship between child and teacher, and parent and teacher”.

Nikau School: Practices around learning outcomes information in first years of school

Documentation around the key competencies learning, literacy and numeracy is gathered through a variety of tools. Structured observations and checklists are commonly used for assessment of reading, writing and numeracy. (Running records for reading, work samples for writing, a checklist of knowledge and strategies for numeracy/mathematics).

Some teachers write narratives/learning stories that are highly visual. They make use of photographs and include what children say and do. Teachers regarded these as helping to engage children and parents in assessment documentation.

Learning stories are used predominantly for children with special educational needs.

A four-to six-week assessment process occurs when the child first starts school. The school has developed its own tests rather than use the School Entry Assessment. The entry check for children after one month at the school focuses on skills and knowledge related to:
1. Reading, e.g., recognises own name, recognises the front of a book.

2. Writing, e.g., writes own name, able to re-read their story, draws a picture that relates to their story.

3. Alphabet check, includes letter identification (upper and lower case), letter sounds (upper case, lower case) and a high frequency word check.

4. Oral language e.g., listens to/follows instructions, participates in discussion, speaks clearly and confidently.

5. Other, e.g., walks in alone, confidently; looks after own things; able to unpack bag.

6. Maths e.g., shapes; size; able to sort and classify.

7. Motor skills e.g., can run, skip, heel to toe.

A six-week report is then prepared for parents, which is shared in an interview with them. The report contains statements in relation to the school’s four goals (resilient learner, caring citizen, communicator, thinker), followed by statements about literacy (reading, writing and printing) including scores out of 54 for letter names and letter sounds, and a score out of 36 for basic words. There is also a statement about numeracy (both knowledge and strategies), as well as a general comment about the child, e.g., how they participate in class, their transition, friendships and attitude (based on their informal assessments/observations from the previous six weeks).

Monitoring children’s progress then follows a regular cycle of reporting and assessment. For the junior school (Years 1–3) this starts in March of the year when a 10-minute three-way goal-setting meeting takes place. A three-way interview (child-led conference with parents, child and teacher) with portfolios is held at 20, 40, 60, 80 and 120 weeks of schooling (‘anniversary reporting’). This process includes an interim report against the goals set at the beginning of the year. This interim report includes next steps and how the child will work to achieve his/her goals. There is a final summary/report in December.

The final report in December includes an assessment against the key competencies (stars to colour in relating to frequently, sometimes, and seldom) and the National Standards for writing, mathematics and reading. This reporting includes a statement such as “… is working towards the National Standards requirements after two years of schooling”. A statement also refers to the past anniversary, e.g., “at 40 weeks at school, Oliver exceeded the National Standards. Now at 51 weeks at school …”. The report includes specifics on what the child can do in relation to the National Standards, e.g., “Oliver can write about himself and how he felt …”. This section also includes goals/next steps and how to help at home.

Exemplar 6 summarises how information from these various sources are compiled into a profile book.
Exemplar 6: Profile books to highlight learning and progress overtime

Nikau School profile books show assessment is used for a range of purposes. Each child has a profile book, a “Junior learning and progress file” intended “to demonstrate the learning and progress that the child makes over time, to support the child with their Learning Pathway (goal setting, action plan, three-way interview), and to support effective communication between home and school”. The portfolio contains a sheet that describes why the school undertakes this process with children, and includes an explanation of what teachers are looking for in terms of progress and achievement. These relate to academic achievement, social development and personal development. There is a focus on the five key competencies, which are assessed against the indicators associated with the school’s four goals. The responsibilities of the child and the parents (both at school and at home) and the reporting schedule are set out. The profile follows with the child’s goals—in literacy, numeracy, and social and personal, how the child will achieve these goals at school and home, work samples, checklists, the one-month entry check and reports.

The school principal said a key issue was to try to encourage “child-centred authentic assessment … that takes place in the context of learning”.

Standardised tests are reliable etc. and valued, they tick all those boxes but they are not authentic assessment—you don’t really get a sense of what the child can do. You just get a snapshot of what they can do, in a very narrow area on one particular day. All assessment is like this though. That’s where narrative assessment comes in. The portfolio is like a narrative … a narrative over the year—it tells one chapter of your story of learning.

Nikau Primary School places particular emphasis on the development of key competencies (via their school goals and values) as well as reading, writing and mathematics in the first years of school. Exemplar 7 illustrates the ways teachers summarise learning in these areas to assist them to report to parents after one month of school. These reports are used within the context of conversation between the teacher and parent/s, in combination with work samples.

Exemplar 7: One month report on Henry Smith—February, 2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resilient learner</th>
<th>Caring Citizen</th>
<th>Communicator</th>
<th>Thinker</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[Student’s name] is able to manage his belongings and his behaviour independently. He is willing to give everything a go, do his personal best, keep trying when it gets difficult and is beginning to ask for help when he needs it. [Child’s name] is able to follow the routines and expectations of school easily.</td>
<td>[Child’s name] develops and maintains friendships easily. He can initiate a game, merge into an existing game, and seems to be able to solve any problem that arises.</td>
<td>[Child’s name] is quietly able to share his thoughts and feelings with the class. He is able to converse with a buddy and is beginning to actively listen and add to others’ ideas in a group situation.</td>
<td>[Child’s name] is beginning to share his thinking with others. He demonstrates his creative and critical thinking by solving problems when he is constructing and making.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Writing</th>
<th>Mathematics</th>
<th>General Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[Child’s name] is reading the book by looking at the pictures, pointing to the words accurately and making the story make sense. [Child’s name] reads with fluency and confidence and is ready to move on.</td>
<td>[Child’s name] can print some letters correctly and is able to “write his own story” and read it back. Letter names: 51/54 Letter sound: 34/54 Basic words: 1/47</td>
<td><strong>Number Knowledge:</strong> [Child’s name] can count forward to, say the “number before and after” and read the numerals to 10. <strong>Number Strategy:</strong> [Child’s name] can add small numbers to 10 by counting without pointing.</td>
<td>[Child’s name] has made a quiet but confident start. He understands the routines and expectations of school. [Child’s name] already has some emergent knowledge and skills.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Teachers at Nikau Primary School have been using narrative and “Comic Life” (an application that allows creation of a comic with personal photographs and images) to explore ways to keep learning connected to the context for children and parents. Exemplar 8 shows a child and their work. The child’s own explanation of her actions/focus are incorporated in the learning story. An analysis by a teacher of the learning against the specific curriculum levels is included along with a judgement by the teacher of the child’s stage on the Number Framework. Stories like this one were displayed in the classroom. A copy of a child’s story is put in his or her portfolio for discussion at a three-way learning conference.

Exemplar 8: Keira’s learning story on giving directions

Keira can give directions!

May 2012 - Year 1

I asked Keira to describe her scene she had made...

“The blue triangle is a lake and the boat is going into the lake and then the yellow car goes all around the outside here on the road and goes into his garage. It goes past this big tower. The green plane is in the airport and it takes off up here."

Keira pointed to the teddy bears as she counted.

There are 1, 2, 3, 4, 5... 17 teddy bears. They are all sitting beside the lake. They like watching the boat.

Keira described where to find the red train.

The red train is on top of the track and and it is beside the cow.

This task provides some of the evidence needed to show that Keira is achieving at early curriculum level 1 and the year 1 standard in Geometry and in Number. She has demonstrated that she is able to describe personal locations and to give directions using everyday language. She can also apply a counting-all strategy, which suggests that she is working at the Counting from One on Materials stage of the Number Framework.
Teachers and the school principal were critical of National Standards. The expectations for what 5–6-year-olds would achieve were described as “huge”. The principal thought that National Standards detracted from an integrated curriculum. “I’m a little bit frustrated that National Standards have taken over our reporting process and it’s only for reading, writing, maths; everything else is pushed aside”. Likewise, teachers felt that National Standards had undermined the time and ability they had to assess the key competencies in the way they wanted to through narrative assessment. “National Standards have gazumped everything else.” Moderation has proven to be time consuming and complex, and teachers reported huge pressure on them associated with this.

**Nikau School: Accumulation and use of learning outcomes information across time for each child and in an aggregated way**

How information is used differs according to the audience and purpose. Information that is made public is shared with the child and used to show and discuss progress and valued learning. According to teachers, this sharing was particularly the case during child-led conferences between children, parents and teachers.

Teachers reported they used assessment information to group children for maths and reading. They also identified if extra support was needed for groups of children such as special educational needs. Teachers also used information for informal discussions with each other about how to support children. On a syndicate and schoolwide basis, assessment information was used to describe achievement against school learning targets and analyse trends over time.

**Nikau School: Use of assessment for priority learners**

The school reports on achievement levels of Māori students. Māori students at the school are not doing as well as non-Māori but they are doing better than national figures. The principal meets informally and individually with Māori parents (in addition to three-way interviews) to ‘touch base’ with them, to discuss their aspirations, how their child is progressing and how they are feeling about things. This process replaced group forums for Māori parents/whānau which had not been well attended or effective in the past.

**Nikau ECE Services: Values**

The vision for learning expressed by participants was reflected in the process, and nature of service assessment practices.

Nikau Playcentre educators, who emphasised fun, motivation, independence and confidence and who themselves were educators of their own children, valued conversations with other parent educators, and narrative assessments that could be easily read by their children, primary audience for narrative assessments, and included a number of photographs.

Nikau Kindergarten teachers especially valued children as active contributors to their own learning and assessment, setting their own learning goals, and documenting episodes of this.

In the Nikau Early Learning Centre, emphasis was on individual children’s interests and belonging to a community.
Nikau ECE Services: Assessment practices

Conversations and discussions happening every day between different participants were highly valued as ways in which learning is noticed, recognised, and responded to, a view that is a consistent finding across this study.

The predominant approach to written assessment for Nikau ECE services was the use of narrative learning stories. Table 8 profiles the Nikau ECE services’ vision for learning and approach to assessment.

Table 8: Nikau ECE teachers’ visions for learning and predominant assessment approaches

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ECE service</th>
<th>Vision for learning</th>
<th>Predominant approach to assessment</th>
<th>Typical comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nikau Playcentre</td>
<td>Emphasised having fun, being interested and learning, becoming socially competent,</td>
<td>Value the conversations above the documentation. Learning stories as</td>
<td>LS are more photos than writing, because I like to show them to the child—connect with the children—photos do this. Words don’t mean as much to children…. So many times, what is happening isn’t documented, but it’s all still happening, so that’s important. The problem is that ERO comes [expects written documentation].</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>confident, and independent.</td>
<td>written documentation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nikau Kindergarten</td>
<td>Children to be competent and confident, ask questions, problem solve—in keeping</td>
<td>Learning stories written using a noticing, recognising and responding</td>
<td>Sometimes what is documented is what children are working on, children setting their own goals, e.g., Bree setting a goal of wanting to learn her ABC, [child] wanting to learn to write, so capturing visually, with photo or exemplar of the work to illustrate progress and what she has valued. “I want this in my book.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>with Te Whāriki aspiration statement. To be respected, to respect each other. Know</td>
<td>framework.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>themselves as a learner, set own goals for learning. Have pride in who they are and</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>where they are from.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nikau Early Learning</td>
<td>Children to have high self-esteem, to be confident, independent, to be able to try</td>
<td>Learning stories focused on the individual child.</td>
<td>What information we collect is hugely dependent on the individual child, e.g., a lot of social, emotional, communication skills. A biggie for being part of the community here is to develop the skills to cope with this [group ECE situation]. This changes as they get older.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centre</td>
<td>out new things, understand “what they love” and their strengths.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In terms of frequency, Nikau Kindergarten and Nikau Playcentre had expectations for the minimum number of learning stories that were written for a child. Nikau Playcentre coordinators wrote at least one per term, but parents often wrote them too. Nikau Kindergarten used a system based on hours of attendance of each child. For example a child attending 9–12 hours per week was part of at least one learning story each term; those attending 15–20 hours per week had two learning stories prepared a term, three learning stories per term were completed for those attending for 20–30 hours per week. Nikau Early Learning Centre teachers write “regular” learning stories but the frequency of these is not prescribed (see Table 9).
Table 9: Systems for assessing learning progress by ECE services in Nikau

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ECE service</th>
<th>Informal conversations and short notes</th>
<th>Documented assessments for each child</th>
<th>Centrewide documentation</th>
<th>Wall displays</th>
<th>Teacher/coordinator discussions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nikau Playcentre</td>
<td>Conversations predominant means of communicating information and about learning.</td>
<td>Learning stories, particularly targeted to the child, and “more photos than writing”. Goal-setting sheet for each child but not everyone completes these and they are not often shared or used.</td>
<td>Learning story on wall for each session for sharing with others, crossover on sessions, different people, different sessions. (There is a whole different group of children on different days). Parent goals.</td>
<td>Evaluation done at end of session, along with tidy up.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nikau Kindergarten</td>
<td>Daily diary, conversations, one-on-one conversations with parents.</td>
<td>Learning stories to “record some of the important learning”, video in relation to outcomes of interest</td>
<td>Newsletters. Group learning stories (individualised for child’s portfolio).</td>
<td>Parent aspirations and goals displayed on wall. Learning in context displays.</td>
<td>Team meeting discussions. Audited learning storybooks to look at the lens of assessment—dispositional learning strong, sometimes bicultural lens, working theory lens. Self-review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nikau Early Learning Centre</td>
<td>Daily conversations with all parents and immediate follow-up by teachers.</td>
<td>Learning stories, especially around social, emotional and communication skills.</td>
<td>Newsletters to communicate group learning experiences. Whiteboard notes. Photo slideshows.</td>
<td>Display board on topics and projects.</td>
<td>Team meeting discussions e.g., around teaching strategies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Nikau Kindergarten teachers took an analytic approach to their learning stories. They were the only ECE service in this study who reported that they systematically audited their learning stories to examine their lens for assessment. Most stories were written from a dispositional lens, some from a bicultural lens and some from a working theory lens. Such analysis is one way to focus on different aspects of valued learning, not only dispositions but also children’s thinking, so that ways can be found to extend valued learning.

Exemplar 9 illustrates some of the ways teachers at Nikau ELC keep track of children’s developing language competence using narrative. They identify a number of episodes over time that illustrate the way the child is using language for more purposes and contexts, as well as a growing repertoire of words. The teacher identifies strategies teachers will use to encourage further progress. The child’s mother also adds context to the child’s use of language based on experiences from home.
Exemplar 9: A narrative over time of developing language

May 2013

Louis, over the past number of weeks your language has begun to really flourish.

As part of the kai time routine, we have started to sing one or two songs before our karakia. Children are given the opportunity to ask for a favourite song. Louis, when you are asked which song you would like us to sing, your immediate answer has been “pider”! We realised you were saying “spider” – meaning ‘Incy Wincy Spider’……..so Incy Wincy Spider it would be!!

Not only are you now able to contribute in a verbal way to the routines of the Nursery, but you are very competent in expressing your wants and needs!

When you decide that you would like to have a bottle, your way of expressing this is to confidently approach me and say “bottle” (sometimes backed up with a pointing gesture, but usually without it). I am more than happy to accommodate this request, as you now only have a bottle if you really want one. Once the bottle is ready, you then say “muzzy”, which I retrieve from the cubby hole and then it is off to the soft corner where you lie down to drink your bottle!!
Another example of your wonderful language
Louis was towards the end of May when you
arrived one morning with a plaster on your
hand. When we inquired of you what had
happened, you pointed at the plaster and said
"Mamma, plaster": it was quite clear that you
knew what this object was on your hand and
who had put it there (and I guess this was all
that really mattered 😊)

Louis, you are also now beginning to incorporate language into your
everyday play. One of your favourite toys at the moment is a small motorbike
and as you engage your imagination with this toy, using the “bobbrrrrmmmnnnn”
noise that accompanies it, the words “jump, jump” are said as you make the
bike do some ‘awesome’ jumps! Lindsey told me how you and Daniel
like to watch clips on “You Tube” of motor bikes. It seems that
both you and Daniel share this interest together!

The last example I would like to share of your developing language skills is
when you sat yourself down in one of the plastic boxes and began to say
"row, row, row your boat". This of course, was referring to the "row, row, row your boat"
song. We started to sing it and from then on, the box became your "boat"!

Louis, it is wonderful to see how your language skills are continuing to
develop. The teachers will support and encourage you by accepting and
supporting these early words, by modelling new words and phrases, allowing
you to initiate conversation and giving you time to respond and converse.
Nikau ECE Services: Provision for priority learners

Nikau Kindergarten reported on efforts to make provision in assessment for priority learners e.g., through including parental aspirations in learning stories and using languages of children where English is not their first language. Learning is communicated in a variety of ways, such as through video and photographs. Teachers said they were working to become more bicultural, e.g., through finding out about children’s iwi, undertaking reading and the analysis discussed above of their lens in written learning stories.

Nikau Playcentre supervisors said priority families might be something to think about and pondered why they had few Pasifika families and whether in hindsight they might have asked families about their aspirations and included language and songs in the programme.

The Nikau Early Learning Centre did not make special provision for priority learners—it identifies when groups of children have particular interests, and in this way is able to build on experiences that are meaningful to the child.

Learning outcomes information that is documented and exchanged at transition points

Between ECE and school at transition points

The ECE services in the sample contributed to more than one primary school and had different relationships with each. Their descriptions highlighted that assessment documentation is not on its own a useful support for a child’s transition—the documentation needs to be understood, appreciated and used by the school; crucial to this is the relationship and understanding between teachers/educators in the school and ECE setting. This relationship works better when there is a shared understanding of theories of learning underpinning curriculum. In this hub there was little indication of a genuinely reciprocal relationship between ECE and school.

The Nikau School new entrant teacher said that teachers asked for, and sometimes children brought, their ECE profile book to school. Teachers used these in class with children. They usually asked children to share a favourite thing from the book with the whole class. They put the portfolios in the classroom so the child and other children could look at them, and the children took them home at night to read. Some ECE profile books were said to be “better” than others.

The new entrant teacher found it most useful when ECE teachers described the ways children learn, and what they had learned. “When they track a need or strength, track the ongoing learning. Cumulative, when you can see progress.” Information that simply described what children were doing was less useful “when it’s a photo album, when there’s no meaty information about dispositions and how they are developing”. Nevertheless, she saw this descriptive information as important for a child and family, saw value in it for those audiences and that it helped her make connections with the child’s interests.

Learning stories that described the ways children were beginning to overcome challenges were said to be very useful as primary teachers “read between the lines”, and can therefore continue to support the child. Some information was said to be shared directly by local kindergarten teachers for some children. Kindergarten teachers will ring if they have a particular concern about the family e.g. mental health issues. ECE and primary teachers worked together when a child with Special Education Needs (SEN) was transitioning to school.

School parents who were interviewed presumed information would come from the ECE centre when the child transitioned to school, but they had found it did not. They thought that it could have been valuable for the profile book to go to school, especially from the child’s point of view.

Nikau Playcentre does not exchange any information with the schools, but currently does not have any children transitioning to school.
Nikau Kindergarten teachers encouraged parents to take the child’s learning stories books on school visits. These teachers reported on varying experiences with schools and “that some school teachers will embrace it, and others won’t, based on their values”. They thought not all school teachers understood sociocultural learning, and one kindergarten teacher described a transition meeting where the new entrant teacher was “closed off” and had no interest in what the child had done at kindergarten.

Nikau Early Learning Centre teachers wrote a specific learning story that “sums up knowledge and understanding of the child—personality and strengths”. They did not know if teachers read these. Meetings were held with school teachers if the ELC teachers were concerned about how a child would get on at school.

Parents from Nikau ELC argued that “silos” between school and ECE should be broken down and school needed to be more child centred. These parents were critical of National Standards:

> My personal opinion is that National Standards means way too much pressure at such a young age, it is highly inappropriate. Coming home with a report card that says “not achieved” at 5, that is just SO inappropriate. At that age, that shouldn’t be the focus. I don’t want my child to be babied, not at all, but I don’t believe they are ready to be specifically compared until they are a little bit older, up until around 6. They develop at different rates.

Nikau School: Communication with parents

Like teachers, parents interviewed valued informal conversations with teachers. They appreciated the availability of teachers to talk informally and the “open door policy” of the school. They felt “very comfortable” with the teachers. Overall, parents described the reporting as good “because you get progress in chunks”. However, some parents were critical of the three-way conferences because they were inhibited in what they could say with their child present. “It’s a perfect time to ask when you think of an issue but you don’t want to do this in front of your child.” The National Standards ratings were described as “pretty wishy-washy”. It was thought that “people do not understand them”. The more useful information for parents was said to be comments that told parents if the child was “doing well enough” or was behind.

Nikau ECE services: Communication with parents

All the parents from ECE services in Nikau valued the informal conversations they had with teachers, often on a daily basis. These are important, since as one kindergarten parent said, “The teacher is really important, they watch our babies, they hold a lot of responsibility, we trust them.”

In the Nikau Early Learning Centre, where a key teacher system operated, a parent spoke of being told “a lovely story about whether he’s been empathic with another child or really nice stuff I like to hear” and another commented on the “in-depth conversations” she had with the key teacher once a week. These parents appreciated having their concerns addressed such as when a child was unsettled; the teachers “paid a lot of attention and gave feedback and followed it up with a learning story”. Parents liked the fact that teachers knew their children well and that they picked up on parental values and followed up with actions. All these parents spoke of contributing to portfolios, and that the teachers made the process easy, for example by writing up a story told by the parent. One parent, whose child also attended a Montessori centre commented that Montessori was more precise in terms of information about literacy and mathematics, which she liked. She also felt she knew more about individual learning opportunities at Montessori. She was aware of science projects at the education and care centre but would like learning to be “spelled out” and “greater communication of learning achievements”.

Playcentre parents spoke of their introduction to playcentre as being relaxed, watching what was going on and what their child was doing, and being invited to join in. There was always an adult with whom parents could talk.
Kindergarten parents spoke of the range of communication through wall displays, in profile books, newsletters and during mat times where activities done during the day are discussed. Teachers “don’t use big words” and were said to talk at parents’ levels. The parents interviewed liked the fact that their input was used by teachers and conversely that they knew about what was done at kindergarten and their child was transferring their learning to home.

I add things to the profile book, it’s a record and they’ll use it, and make a little comment, so they’ve taken note, you know there’s been a discussion about it.

And there’s a compliments circle, they sit around in a circle and they might say, “X have you got anything to say today?” and he might say, “Thank you for playing with me”…. [Teachers] actually wrote it in the profile book because X was coming home and was saying, “How you’re your lovely day to day mum?”, transferring from kindy to home.

These parents liked being asked about their learning expectations for their child and what their child was interested in. The expectations were written on a leaf and displayed on a tree on the wall. This process was said to open up discussion at home about what would the child would like to do at kindy.

Parents were offered ideas for parenting issues if they wanted support. Mainly they valued informal communication alongside learning stories, but they did not want learning stories to take too much time.

Teachers can get stuck in the office making sure they are doing how many learning stories for how many children, which is really, really good, and we love that information, but the hands on is really important.

Keep the hands on stuff and what’s in their profile books, and that’s all you need.

Let teachers be teachers.

They are trained, they know about Te Whāriki, let them just get on with it.
Strengths, challenges and additional information groups would like to use

Participants were asked to think about the people they would like their children to be and become. They were asked: “How could you, your ECE service school, parents and whānau use assessment and information to help achieve that dream?” School parents, teachers and the principal responded to this question in relation to the transition processes. The predominant view was a desire for good communication to occur between ECE services and schools about children, including the passing on of, and appreciation of, assessment documentation.

School parents who were interviewed wanted information from the Before School Check to be passed through to the school. They said profile books could be shared between ECE and school and spoke of the need for better communication between the ECE teacher and new entrant teacher “to give the teachers in school a really good ‘heads up’”. These parents had a perception that this could not be done because of privacy issues. Another suggestion was that transition to school should occur over a six-month period. Some children may be ready, others not. Parents thought the school needed to have more discovery time and more free play. (Note: The school in this hub is planning for NE/Y1 classroom programmes to be more free-play/discovery orientated.) One parent spoke of an assumption made by the ECE teacher that a child would start school on the child’s fifth birthday when the mother had wanted the child to stay until six years.

Primary teachers would like to see more information in ECE profiles books about language. “Often there is no mention about language development.” Oral language was very important to new entrant teachers, who said they want to know if a child faced any challenges. “If there are issues, this could be said in a range of ways. It doesn’t have to be negatively described.” In an ideal world primary teachers would like to work with ECE teachers/parents in the same way they work with children with SEN, for example to:

• All meet to discuss the child and share information.
• Know each other and work together.
• Visit each other, and visit the child in ECE.

Teachers said that currently it was hard to pass information on. Children came in from multiple ECE services and teachers said they did not always know where they came from or when. The school has no zone. There was a view that ECE was not preparing children well.

Some children [are] coming to school unable to string a sentence together or haven’t picked up a pencil. Yet they have been at ECE—how can this be? What is ECE doing?

The school principal thought it would help if children started in groups with two intakes per year.

ECE teachers/educators and parents were also concerned about transition to school and strategies for communication and the passing on of information to the school.

Profile books were portrayed as offering a “meaningful picture of the child” by the Nikau Early Learning Centre teachers. They were said to be of particular value for showing children’s capabilities and how the teachers had worked with the child. The profile book was regarded as a “lifelong treasure” that could be revisited in years to come.

Nikau Early Learning Centre parents shared the view of school parents that school was not very child-centred and that going to school was a big change for the child. “There is a lot more interaction in ECE, a lot more opportunities, a lot more individual [attention]. There is not a good integration of culture and values into the school”. These parents thought that reporting against National Standards at a young age was inappropriate because, as one parent explained, “children
develop at different rates”. Another parent described National Standards as “children being labelled from the beginning”.

These parents described many ideas to support transition, for example,

- a programme of familiarisation where 4-year-olds spend some time each week in the new entrant classroom—this would prepare children emotionally and physically for school;
- a longer transition period and more school visits;
- information for parents about transition, such as teachers talking to parents, DVDs and written resources;
- new entrant teachers learning from ECE teachers about specific children; and
- continuation of the ECE profile book at school and consistency of curriculum.

Playcentre supervisors were more focused on assessment and information within their own playcentre—they said they would like to have more learning stories written with everyone’s input at the end of session. They were keen for families to stay at the playcentre rather than use other ECE services.

Like other parents, playcentre parents recommended more time to meet and get to know the new entrant teacher, and for the ECE profile books to be used by the school. The playcentre was planning to improve on links with the school.

Similarly kindergarten parents wanted profile books to be sent to school “to find out what she’s good at and things that they could help her work on, and ideas of who she is. They provide an idea of who [child] is.” These parents thought it important for children to know someone in the new place. They also wanted to know how to support their children once they were at school.

Kindergarten teachers regarded the profile books as a taonga in which children could see how they were valued and the mana they had at kindergarten. They expressed a wish that new entrant teachers value what learning had happened in their services and that, ideally, each child’s profile book would sit on a shelf at the school for the first six months. They spoke of wanting to constantly strengthen biculturalism and the curriculum links between Te Whāriki and The New Zealand Curriculum.
Summary

What learning information was generated and valued by the school and ECE services?

Vision for learning and valued assessment practices appeared to be closely related across the sites in this hub. Nikau School had developed its own values and goals, framed as their key competencies and as human characteristics for living and working together. These were used as indicators in written assessments, alongside reporting on literacy, numeracy and other learning areas. Playcentre educators valued narrative assessment for its capacity to be “read” by the child; Nikau Kindergarten highlighted children’s agency and active role in setting goals; and Nikau Early Learning Centre foregrounded children’s interests and belonging to a community in their individual and group assessments.

Assessment approaches and data analysis and use

Conversations and discussions happening every day between different participants were highly valued as ways in which learning is noticed, recognised and responded to across the settings in this hub. Conversations and discussions occurred with different audiences for different purposes in the Nikau School and ECE services: with children to engage the child as an active contributor in setting goals and documenting learning; with parents as part of two-way communication; and between teachers to analyse, evaluate and plan for learning. The school used a carefully structured programme to assess and monitor children’s development and learning in their first weeks of school. Data for this programme were gathered from both formal and informal sources. The school brought together information on a child’s learning within a profile book: these were used to highlight learning and progress over time, for goal setting with the child, and for communication with home. The child was an active contributor to assessment, leading three-way conferences with parents and teachers and in setting goals. Parent opinion on these conferences was divided. Parents did not appreciate the child-led conferences because they thought this inhibited them in what they might talk to the teacher about, a view also expressed by the school parents in the Pohutukawa hub.

An example of thoughtful critical analysis was the way in which Nikau Kindergarten teachers systematically audited their learning stories from a dispositional lens, a bicultural lens and a working theory lens. This analysis enabled the teachers to focus on different aspects of learning, so that ways could be found to extend the breadth of learning they valued. These teachers used the analyses to identify ways they might work more biculturally. They used assessment to find out about children’s iwi and included parental aspirations in learning stories. They used the languages of children where English was not their first language.

Similar to other hubs, written assessment was carried out regularly in all these settings, for individual children and for groups. More important than frequency was the purpose of assessment and its use. In Nikau settings, profile books brought together examples of student work, narrative assessments, and in-school test results—together these constructed a story of learning progression over time. The school purposely referred back to previous learning in its reporting and in ECE settings narrative assessments connected with children’s interests.

Similar to some in other schools, parents and teachers were critical of National Standards—parents because they considered children have different rates of development and did not want their child categorised. These parents did want to know how their child was progressing but expressed a preference to learn this via a constructive discussion with the teacher that helped them to know what they could do to support their child. Teachers and the principal considered the National Standards processes within the school took time away from other valuable learning and learning areas, and detracted from an integrated curriculum.

Assessment information exchange

School and ECE parents appreciated the comfortable relationship they had with their child’s teacher. The school/centre open door policy that allowed them to access the teacher to talk about their child when they wanted to was valued. In
the early learning centre, a key worker held daily in-depth conversations with parents. ECE parents appreciated their input to discussions and learning stories being listened to and acted on, and there was evidence that the two-way exchange supported continuity between ECE and home.

Children from the Nikau ECE services attended a range of schools when they left ECE. Issues about transition were said to be somewhat problematic with both groups indicating there was room for improvement. ECE teacher/educator comments reinforced that documentation on its own does not necessarily provide active support for a child’s transition. ECE teachers/educators spoke of varying experiences of the reception of children’s profile books. These ranged from the books being “embraced” to the books being disregarded. They wanted teachers in schools to value the children’s profile books and the information they contained. From the school teachers’ points of view the profiles were more useful if they gave an account of a child’s dispositions and learning, and described challenges for the child. Similar to other hubs, a shared understanding and a collaborative working relationship between teachers in the different settings was important. This relationship is a vital influence in the interpretation and subsequent meaningful use of assessment information in the school setting. Parents were clear that they wanted their child’s profile book to be used by the school, considering that it would assist teachers at the school to know how to support their child.

Assessment and priority learners

Māori students at Nikau School were not doing as well as non-Māori but they were performing better than national figures. The principal met informally and individually with Māori parents in addition to three-way interviews to discuss their aspirations, how their child was progressing and how they were feeling about things. Nikau Kindergarten was using a variety of strategies to make provision in assessment for priority learners via learning stories, using the languages of children where English was not their first language and the use of video and photographs. Teachers said they were actively working to become more bicultural by finding out about children’s iwi and engaging in their own professional reading. Nikau Playcentre supervisors and Early Learning Centre educators did not seem to have or make special provision for priority learners.
Pohutukawa Hub
Profile of locality, school and ECE services

Pohutukawa is a suburb in a North Island main urban locality. Information about education, work and income of people in this Census Area Unit shows the profile to be fairly similar to people in the region in which the community is located (see Table 9).

Table 10: Characteristics of Pohutukawa locality (2006 census data)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity of population</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Work</th>
<th>Income</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>60.6% European, 15.3% Māori, 11.7% Pacific peoples, 18.3% Asian, 0.6% Middle Eastern/Latin American/African, 7.5% Other.</td>
<td>24% of people aged 15 years and over have no formal qualifications, compared with 20.3% for the region.</td>
<td>Unemployment rate is 4.5% for people aged 15 years and over compared with 5.6% for the region.</td>
<td>Median income of people aged 15 years and over is $27,600 compared with $26,800 for the region.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pohutukawa School is a decile 5 contributing primary school (Years 1–6) with a roll size of approximately 370 students. The ethnicities of children are Māori 21%, NZ Pākehā/European 35%, Pacific 25%, Chinese 5%, Indian 5%, Filipino 2%, Korean 2%, Middle Eastern 2% and other 3%.

The education medium is English for all classes. There are four ECE services in the Pohutukawa hub. Three of the four ECE services are community based and all are in close proximity to the school, with two having a direct relationship through being located on school grounds and with school representation on the governing body. The profile of ECE services in the Pohutukawa hub is shown in Table 11.

Table 11: Profile of ECE services in the Pohutukawa hub

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ECE service</th>
<th>Operational structure and relationship to school</th>
<th>Ethnicities of children</th>
<th>Ages of children, roll size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Centre A—Sessional education and care</td>
<td>Community based, located on school grounds. School principal represented on governing body.</td>
<td>7 Māori 8 Pasifika 8 Asian 25 European Pākehā</td>
<td>Age 3: 15 Age 4: 31 Age 5: 2 Total: 48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centre B—Sessional education and care centre</td>
<td>Community based. In close proximity to school.</td>
<td>8 Māori 5 Pasifika 17 Asian 25 European Pākehā 3 Other</td>
<td>Age 2: 8 Age 3: 24 Age 4: 26 Total: 58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centre C—All day infant and toddler education and care</td>
<td>Community based, located opposite school. School principal represented on governing body. Children usually go from this centre to Centre A.</td>
<td>1 Māori 3 Pasifika 7 Asian 17 European Pākehā</td>
<td>Age 0: 2 Age 1: 10 Age 2: 11 Age 3: 5 Total: 28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centre D—All day education and care centre</td>
<td>Privately owned. In close proximity to school.</td>
<td>10 Māori 6 Pasifika 1 Asian 34 European Pākehā 2 Other</td>
<td>Age 0: 3 Age 1: 12 Age 2: 14 Age 3: 16 Age 4: 7 Age 5: 1 Total: 53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The values and practice around learning outcomes information in the first year of school and in the ECE services

**Pohutukawa School: Values**

Pohutukawa School’s vision for learning is that children leaving the school will

- be confident, knowledgeable learners;
- understand assessment—contextualising this within the big picture, and that children will be “knowers” about the tests and assessment.

The school’s written vision statement emphasises connectedness and the role of whānau in the educational progress of their child. It states

- that every whānau and child feels connected to [Pohutukawa] School;
- that all whānau believe that staff at [Pohutukawa] School know what makes their child special and considers their child to be important;
- that whānau feel they are an important part of the team in the educational progress of their child;
- that every child feels happy, secure and respected when they start at [Pohutukawa] School and prepared for the next step as they leave at the end of Year 6; and
- that teachers ‘know’ the new students entering their classes.

The focus on connectedness is reflected in assessment practices that emphasise continuity at transition points, and the agency of children and their families. A schoolwide strategic goal is to find ways for children to have input into assessment. The school values the contributions children make.

**Pohutukawa School: Practices around learning outcomes information in first year of school**

The school uses a portfolio system similar to those used in the ECE sector. The first entries are from the child and family—an “About Me” form filled in by the child and parent/s. In another form parents record “what makes your child special” in relation to each of the strands of *Te Whāriki*. This focus is a deliberate choice to strengthen continuity at transition from ECE.

New entrant teachers generate assessments on reading, writing and maths, and some holistic assessment related to learning dispositions. Some assessments go into a child’s portfolio and are the “school report” that goes home to parents. Samples of student work, an assessment of student work “co-constructed” by the teacher and child, and a National Standards sheet are a schoolwide requirement. A child’s self-assessment sheets (skills-based with smiley faces and ticks for children to use to represent how they see themselves), and the National Standards sheet, go into portfolios completed at the end of each term. Teachers said they felt constrained by what the school requires in the portfolios and by National Standards. The early years teachers reported they were working to include more holistic and child friendly entries through, for example, the use of “Comic Life” to document children’s inquiry work.

The teachers explained that children are encouraged to share their learning and progress with each other at daily mat times, in pairs and via wall displays of their work. One teacher commented, “The children soon pick up the language of progress and repeat this in context to one another, e.g., ‘You have used full stops. Well done!’”

Child-led conferences are a feature of the school reporting programme. The principal described them in the following way:
The child leads some, at least one area. Some of Year 5/6 children may lead the whole [conference], it just depends on the child. It is a great way for teachers to get a feel for what the relationship is between the parents and student. A bit of a heads up on how things are. The teachers’ role in these is [to make] tea and coffee for parents and make sure the IT goes, support the children if they need it and to work with the children beforehand to make sure that they know what they are going to talk about and how. It’s quite a different role. At the conference if the parents want to make a time to talk with the teacher they can but it has to be on a different day, so we don’t take away from what the student has shared, and the celebration of learning that they have just done. (Principal)

Child-led conferences and the inclusion of co-constructed and student self-assessment items in student portfolios can be seen as an enactment of the school vision that children understand and are able to use assessment. They indicate an alignment between the school assessment and curriculum practices. The same applies to the inclusion of material from parents.

**Pohutukawa School: Accumulation and use of learning outcomes information across time for each child and in an aggregated way**

Every term, Pohutukawa School gathers, in various ways, individual student outcomes information in mathematics, reading and writing. Assessments are created by syndicates to reflect the National Standards criteria and in the new entrant class there is some holistic data gathering around the student inquiry that occurs schoolwide. These are examined at staff meetings with all staff across the school. Teams then examine the data at their levels, and then at class and individual child level. These analyses inform schoolwide, team and classroom curriculum and assessment planning.

Consistent with the school values of openness, emphasis is placed on sharing data with all participants. Information from the range of data sources is accumulated across time within the individual child’s portfolio. Aggregated data is presented to the board and to Year 5 and 6 classes.

[The] Year 5 and 6 team present the data every term to the students and they let them know how they are going as a cohort and there’s competition between the Year 5 and 6s as to who is progressing the most. (Principal)

The NZCER student engagement survey is completed by Years 5 and 6, and shared in different ways with all school classes. This survey is analysed for the school and for the cluster of 30 schools.

**Pohutukawa School: Use of assessment for priority learners**

Each term student data is analysed in terms of ethnicity, and trends. Concerns and achievements are identified and reported to the whole staff team, to syndicate leaders and to the Board of Trustees. Assessment data are used to identify those needing more assistance, children who may not be progressing as expected, and children who have made accelerated progress. Data analysis is used to inform decision making about how to target assistance and/or extension.

As noted earlier, the school’s vision statement emphasises connectedness and the role of whānau. Teachers and school leadership are familiar with research on culturally responsive pedagogy and view engagement with families as central to this. Exemplar 10 shows multiple and innovative ways school leaders and teachers connect with families, including “hard to reach families”.

Exemplar 10: Multiple ways to connect with families

This school was well informed by research on culturally responsive pedagogy. Teachers said their core values were based on Ka Hikitia and Russell Bishop’s work and the aim was to be “strongly culturally responsive”. They had investigated various ways of making connections and communicating with families, as in the use of Facebook and organising activities that involved families in curricula and extracurricular activities. Facebook was used for both posting and for communication. At the beginning of each term the teachers made contact with each parent in their classroom and they used whatever worked for them and their families. Some parents preferred being contacted through Facebook messaging. A Samoan new entrant teacher said:

We focus on ‘hard to reach families’—some of these parents have had bad school experiences themselves. One way we have reached these families is through our ‘secret class’ Facebook page (access is only for the class of that year). We asked families if they would prefer Twitter or Facebook and they chose Facebook. This communication has worked really well with families that we could not previously engage. Speaking as a Samoan teacher I can say that the school tries really hard to connect with Pasifika families. We have cultural groups where families are involved, ESOL classes and different interest group meetings for parents where those of similar ethnicities can get to know each other and support each other and translate if necessary.

Pohutukawa ECE Services: Values approaches and systems for assessing learning progress

Teachers from Centre A who emphasised dispositions of confidence, problem solving, positive self-identity, curiosity, taking responsibility, independence and self-help, reported they used assessment approaches that captured these dispositions and the context in which they occurred. Children themselves were encouraged to contribute to the assessments and parents were included. Group project documentation highlighted working theories. The emphasis on community in Centre B was reflected in the diverse ways through assessments that encouraged parent and whānau voice. In the infant and toddler centre (Centre C), children’s milestones, interests and strengths were said to be closely observed and documented, and the teachers commented that they sought to make connections between this documentation and their vision for learning. The vision of Centre D was for teachers to support children to be ready for school. The vision linked to their skills assessment practices and to their highlighting of dispositions. Table 12 highlights the visions for the four Pohutukawa ECE services.
Table 12: Pohutukawa teachers’ visions for learning and predominant assessment approaches

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ECE service</th>
<th>Vision for learning</th>
<th>Predominant approach to assessment</th>
<th>Typical comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sessional centre A—on school grounds</td>
<td>• For children to leave with a love of learning.</td>
<td>Inspired by Reggio Emilia approach. We take a holistic approach and use narrative/learning stories to capture context and more than just skills (which we used to do). We empower children to contribute pieces of work they do and add them to the portfolio. Parents are included in group inquiries as children take their questions and investigations home. Parents work with children on the questions and document their thoughts, questions and findings to those of the children.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• To provide a learning environment rich in quality.</td>
<td>Social interaction is a key value—and group inquiry—we do projects and document these in project books and on the walls. We value children’s working theories and document their questions, problem posing, theories and findings.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• For children to become confident, problem solvers, to have a positive image of themselves (a sense of belonging), to be curious about the world around them, to develop self-help skills, take responsibility, and grow in independence.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sessional centre B—community “kindergarten”. This centre has a strong community feel with second-generation children now coming (and parents coming from out of the area specifically to this centre). Teachers have been there for a long time (mid 50s age group) and parents and teachers know each other really well.</td>
<td>For children to: • be settled; • have their voices heard; • be independent and confident; • be part of the running of the programme; • know routines and rules; • care for the environment; • learn pro-social skills.</td>
<td>Variety of approaches, including learning stories and news items from home. Parent and whānau voice is valued and encouraged.</td>
<td>We have an environmental programme aimed at community engagement and sustainability and we build connections with families through the shared experiences we have around our garden and recycling. For example, we have a vege garden and several fruit trees (feijoa, plum, peach, nectarine) and parents share in the produce and some have established home gardens with children sharing about these informally and through news. We share knowledge with each other about gardening and healthy eating.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### ECE service Vision for learning Predominant approach to assessment Typical comment

**All day infant and toddler centre C—on school grounds.**
- For children to be confident and competent learners—who enjoy exploring engaging and experimenting.
- For all children to have equitable opportunities to grow in a safe and loving environment.
- Recognising children’s strengths and interests and building on these.

Something that links to previous ‘what next’ or entry. Something significant (like a milestone—especially with infants, e.g., rolling, stepping, etc.). A particular interest/strength that has become evident. If a parent has raised a question or is curious about something that their child is doing, we might observe and document this specifically. Improvements (e.g., for special needs). Learning that links to parents’ aspirations. A lot of parents of children this age are concerned with their child’s sense of wellbeing so we make sure this is included.

We also collect information that supports and illustrates our vision for children as specified in Question 1—i.e., for children to be confident and competent learners—who enjoy exploring, engaging and experimenting.

**All day private centre D**
- For children to be individuals; “able to comply to the school environment”; confident to go and face the wider world.

Learning stories focused on skills assessment. Learning stories focused on schema, interests, relationships.

Following visit to school: I have introduced the laptop with the four year olds using a website that mainly helps with mouse control (but we also use Google for searching—the main purpose is to build familiarity with the keyboard and mouse and some basic search skills so that when children go to school this is not foreign to them (and they are learning that they are not going to do anything wrong: "It’s just like holding a pencil"). When they get to school they know the basics and can learn more.

The table documents that four ECE services gathered information from parents/caregivers about their child on enrolment. They all said that assessment occurs throughout each day on an informal basis. In Centre B daily discussions were deliberately scheduled to happen at morning and afternoon tea times.

All four ECE services used narrative assessments, most commonly learning stories that documented and highlighted learning dispositions. For example, Centre A wrote, “Trying is succeeding” on Adam’s story of persisting in trying to throw a ball into a basket. Centre B’s documentation described Mathew as “a keen gardener”, and included writing about, and photographs of, his work in gardening in the centre and at home. In the infant and toddler centre, Andrew’s progress in settling in and becoming “confident” was documented. In Centre D, schema interests were examined in documentation. A wall display described schema as “a repeated pattern of play—a thread of thought which is acted out (demonstrated by repeated actions in children’s play)”. Assessments integrated dispositions with knowledge skills and learning areas within contexts of participation.
Teachers considered they had a positive focus on constructing competence and competent learners by making visible to children what they could do and were achieving. Children could revisit their portfolios. Teachers said another purpose of documenting was to communicate learning with parents and vice versa. In Centre C, photographs from home showed “my family and I doing things together”.

The two centres catering for under-twos filled in a daily notebook documenting sleeping, food, toileting and activities (in addition to documented learning).

All the ECE services collected data systematically and regularly. They formally documented learning progress. Most commonly, narrative assessments were written at least once per month for each child. Each service had a system for documenting group learning, which varied in depth from photographs to planning documentation (see Table 13).
### Table 13: Systems for assessing learning progress by ECE services in Pohutukawa

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ECE service</th>
<th>Informal conversations and short notes</th>
<th>Documented assessments for each child</th>
<th>Centrewide documentation</th>
<th>Wall displays</th>
<th>Teacher discussions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sessional centre A—on school grounds.</td>
<td>Teachers &quot;recognise and respond&quot; throughout the day. Informal verbal communication.</td>
<td>Staff allocated 10 children each—at least one entry per month. Staff add to other children’s portfolios. Learning stories, photo stories, artefacts.</td>
<td>Project books document group inquiries.</td>
<td>Large pictures and displays record children’s investigations in progress into things such as the features of a butterfly, how to catch a butterfly, building a butterfly house; celebrating Matariki.</td>
<td>Daily informal discussions among selves and with children. Teachers do not formally share what is in portfolios with each other. Monthly staff meetings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sessional centre B—community “kindergarten”</td>
<td>Daily morning and afternoon tea discussions about what happened during day.</td>
<td>Learning stories—no roster but staff keep track of each child, constant review. Information shared at morning and afternoon tea. News stories—guidelines to parents to assist in preparation so all children are able to “share something special from home” and present an interesting news account. Graduation book when child leaves—photos and stories.</td>
<td>Daily centre book with photographs on display for parents and whānau, and children to revisit (which they do). Planning meetings once a month—use the information collected to evaluate and forward plan—what noticed, themes, and what next for individuals and groups. Meeting notes on discussions. A2 planning book where each teacher contributes “highlight” for the week, capturing learning and experiences linked to dispositions.</td>
<td>Illuminate the emergent curriculum.</td>
<td>Three hours non-contact per week for each individual, often used to write learning stories.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All day infant and toddler centre C—on school grounds</td>
<td>Daily communication book (e.g., sleeping, eating, activities) for each child.</td>
<td>Individual learning stories at least once per month (full time); bi-monthly (part time).</td>
<td>Photo stories (no words). Monthly planning—planning books which include learning outcomes and evaluations (individual and group).</td>
<td>Photo board. Reggio-inspired learning samples.</td>
<td>Daily conversations. Staff meetings to discuss individuals and group/s and ways to support learners. Decisions are made about focus areas.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Examples of sharing information and experiences at home and in ECE are shown in Exemplar 11.

**Exemplar 11: Two-way sharing of information and experiences—Matthew’s news story**

Centre B had the greatest variety of methods and ways to communicate learning on a regular basis. The teachers indicated that they critically evaluated their approaches as they went along. For example, the comment that “we have a whakapapa sheet but it is really hard to get parents to fill this in unless we catch them and ask them to do this ‘right now’, but we get lots of positive reinforcement from the news”. Both parents and teachers in this centre mentioned the value of sharing information through portfolios and also through the children’s news programme whereby the children were rostered to present news stories. Parents are sent home guidelines (a news card with questions) on what the news could be about and how to help their child prepare this. The news is written up and included in the child’s portfolio. Parent comments indicated they valued this activity. Parents said that children do not have to contribute but most do and were said to develop real confidence and language—which was clearly visible to parents. “Even the shy ones will bring something just to show”. “We see these changes in our children” (Parent).

Teachers said the news told them a lot about what was going on at home and built links for them. For example Matthew’s news story (below) was inspired by his interest in gardening and makes visible the funds of knowledge from home.
Matthew's News

3rd September 2013

Written by Terry

Today Matthew you came in really excited to show me the label from your apple tree you had planted on the weekend. I asked you if you would like to share your news this morning at mat time.

Matthew you are confident to come up to the front and greet the children, you said good morning to the children. You told the children you had gone to the apple shop to buy the tree. When it was time for questions you told us that Dad had dug a big hole in the garden and you helped him plant it. Glenis asked what kind of apple was it and we read the label it was a Pacific Rose.

Mum told me that you were building a Matte's orchard at home and on Friday you were going with your grandparents to buy a lemon tree. You told me you like to eat lemons.

Matthew you are a really keen gardener and I will be able to use your expertise at kindy when I purchase a plum tree to plant in our kindy garden.

News time gives children a chance to share something special from home with their friends and teachers which strengthens their sense of belonging at kindy.

“Children develop: connecting links between the early childhood education setting and other settings that relate to the child, such as home”

(Te Whāriki, p. 56).
Pohutukawa ECE Services: Use of assessment for priority learners

In comparison with school teachers, ECE teachers had a less deliberate or systematic approach to analysing assessment information for priority learners.

One ECE service (Centre A in the Pohutukawa hub) said that Māori, Pacific children, and those with special needs were a priority, but they best catered for children with special needs because of the support services available. Here an adult with a disability acted in a volunteer capacity in this centre. Help was provided in this centre with translation where English was a second language, and teachers consciously tried not to use jargon.

Centre B teachers said they had “really worked at” having resources that reflected their bicultural values, and reported that “Māori families tell us they like us because of the whānau feel here and the relationships”. Parents who were interviewed commented on the special efforts of staff to communicate as well as taking extra time with “shy parents”.

No specific provisions for priority learners were made in other services; for example, in Centre D nothing specific was done for target groups, and there were no advisors or kaumatua. “We do the same for all our children.”

Pohutukawa School and ECE Services: Links to Te Whāriki and The New Zealand Curriculum

Pohutukawa School linked assessment to The New Zealand Curriculum and National Standards. This was personalised in that it made a comment on each child. It made use of Te Whāriki strands in the information gathered from parents when the child started school. Pohutakawa was the only school to do so.

All four ECE services linked assessments to Te Whāriki, and commented that they used family-friendly words to describe concepts. For example, ECE centre A described Te Whāriki as

> a foundation for what we do. We use it to guide our thinking and assessment of children but make sure our wording is family friendly. The principles of Te Whāriki are embedded through our learning stories. What we describe in learning stories uses similar wording to Te Whāriki. We often use a child’s disposition in our assessments, for example perseverance, being involved, problem solving expressing both verbally and non verbally, exploration.

Pohutukawa ECE Services: Accumulation and use of learning outcomes information across time for each child and in an aggregated way

ECE services had less formal approaches than schools to accumulating learning outcomes information. ECE centres B and C described the most systematic approaches. Centre B teachers aimed to link each new learning story to a previous one, and to provide a next step for following up with extension. Teachers mentioned the learning story to the parent/s when it was written. Centre B teachers described a progression of information from the daily communication to individual portfolios to planning books that captured group and individual stories about learning highlights. When a child leaves, their graduation book is given to them as a record of stories (text and photos) from teachers and families of their time at the centre.

Parent comments showed that they appreciated the portfolios—“it showed what [child] was doing, how he progressed, interests and strengths, memories for [child]”. These parents liked the fact that staff took time to know their child, as evidenced by the care and attention involved in their child’s documented learning stories as well as informal conversations. Parents recognised the difference being at this ECE centre made to their child’s learning. It was through the connections and comparisons made with home that learning was made visible for parents:
• The children can be different people at home and in the centre—developing different aspects of who they are—how they act and what they do at the centre can be quite different from at home and in other settings—I see their identity development as complementary.

• The centre allows my child to evolve and they are not forced to be or do what they don’t want to and yet they are encouraged to try new things—we see these changes in our children.

• My son has gained real confidence through news time and he talks about this at home. This is helping his language develop and his ability to respond to questions.

• The relationships that the children develop with their teachers is really important and they talk about their teachers at home as if they are part of the family—“One day my child was looking at our wedding photo and he asked if S (teacher) was at our wedding.” “When I asked my child who their best friend was they said their teacher.”

• We are most aware of how our children are doing because they love their teachers and coming to the centre. There was no ‘just collecting lots of paper information’ for the sake of it—the most information was gathered through conversations and ‘meaningful’ interactions.

ECE centre C teachers discussed outcomes and ways to progress learning for individuals, small groups (similar to developmental stages) and across the centre. Teachers, the supervisor and manager participated in planning meetings. They revisited portfolios and discussed children’s interests, strengths and needs as individuals and a group. This is where decisions were made about focus areas. The one parent interviewed in this centre reported she noticed changes in her child, through verbal feedback and her own observations. She said she “loved looking at [her son’s] portfolio once a month—it is a good record of his time here”.

Centre A teachers regarded the portfolios as conveying progress over time, and did not have a formal planning programme. “Instead we work with individuals in the moment to extend their thinking. We are a close-knit team so we discuss what we are doing each day and kind of work in a rhythm. We are always talking about what we have observed.” Some parents from this centre said they found learning outcomes were clearly conveyed, but thought “progression is missing”.

Centre D held a monthly meeting to discuss concerns and issues, but “don’t do planning meetings”. A whiteboard listing each child, their schema, interests and areas needing support was located in each room. The whiteboard notes were connected to observations and used to help remind staff of the focus for their work. Parents here thought the links made to learning in the portfolios and verbally were clear.

Learning outcomes information that is documented and exchanged at transition points

Between ECE and school at transition points

Pohutukawa School had a commitment to, and focus on, transition. The principal described doing a lot of work with the local principals’ association around transition and how to strengthen it. This included working with a researcher, and becoming informed about research literature. Through this work, an action plan on transition was developed, including intended outcomes and success criteria for a smooth transition from ECE and home. Transition was supported by having two of the ECE centres on school grounds and the principal being on the governing boards of these two centres. Exemplar 12 describes the transition process in detail.
Exemplar 12: Supporting continuity at transition

Many transition activities were described by the school. Transition meetings with all the ECE services in the community were held once a term. Other activities included reciprocal visits and conversations with ECE teachers, cooperative initiatives, a buddy system where Year 3 and 4 school students become buddies to 4-year-olds, child visits, and parent nights. The principal reported there was consistency in assessment information through the development of portfolios by new entrant teachers which had parallels with those used in ECE centres. The child’s ECE portfolio was taken on school visits, where it was valued and shared, and parents were encouraged to take the ECE portfolio to school when the child starts. Verbal exchanges of information happened at regular transition meetings between school staff and ECE centre staff. A common practice was for teachers to find out about each other’s programmes. An ECE centre introduced a laptop after seeing the IT suite at school—teachers wanted children to become familiar with computers and learn search skills.

School parents commented positively on the starter pack on preparing children for school and the visits to school (“My child was worried about where the toilets were so we drove down to see.”) However, some children did not get opportunity to visit school. Being located on the school grounds helped (“Going to the kindy helps as they can see and wave to the school kids”) as did existing knowledge and relationships (“I already had one child here so it was easier”). The buddy system seemed a good idea (“It is great when you are in the mall and an older child calls out to your child and says hi”) and the parent information meeting was welcomed.

ECE parents had views about the information they would like exchanged with the school. Most wanted information about their child to be conveyed to the teachers. For example they wanted teachers to read the portfolios and get a “sense of their child”, to “break the ice” and “show some history”. This would assist teachers to help their child build possible connections with other children who might show similar interests/strengths. Some parents wanted teachers to receive information on “the level of learning the child is up to”. Parents mentioned the value of school visits, knowing what the expectations are and narratives about their child’s changes in learning and development.

Pohutukawa School: Communication with parents

The school used a range of ways to build consistency of curriculum and assessment focus between itself and contributing ECE services and parents/whānau. One way was through the use of portfolios similar to those used in the ECE sector. According to the new entrant teachers, however, there was still some way for the school to go in developing portfolios to appeal to different audiences, particularly the children. The suggestion was that this was because they had less visual appeal and more words, which was something the new entrant teachers were trying to address:

the children don’t read school portfolios like they do the ones they bring from ECE.

Parents and children work together to provide information to the school when the child first starts. The first entries that go into the portfolio on the child come from the child and the family. One is filled in by the parent and child called ‘about me’, and the other by the parent using the headings from Te Whāriki for consistency and familiarity with the ECE sector. This gives teachers what they called: ‘personal nuggets’ on the child as a whole person. It is the chance for teachers to find out what makes the child special on a personal level. The school believes that this helps to show parents that they are valued right from the beginning. (New entrant teachers’ interview)

Similar to new entrant teachers, the three parents interviewed valued ECE portfolios, however they saw a need to develop school portfolios further.
The preschool portfolios were more interesting to look at—at kindy they are learning through; here they are here to learn—it’s different. (Parent interview)

These parents thought there was too much assessment in school that detracted from teaching and learning. They were somewhat critical of summative assessment, tests and norm referenced standards for a range of reasons:

- These were not always an accurate reflection of what the child could do. The teacher said, “I know she can do this but on assessment day…. That was really frustrating.”

- They did not necessarily help the child progress. “I don’t think it’s moving my child forward, maybe summing it up.”

- The testing context is artificial. “The child is put on the spot, they know they are being tested.”

- Children can be labelled and stigmatised through comparisons with norms. “The levels can be disheartening. My child has been diagnosed with dyslexia and he is always under the normal.”

Two of the parents said they would like more support on how to help their child at home. Some parents commented that for them some assessment information was “hard to decipher”, a finding that reinforces the importance of assessment from parents’ perspectives being communicated in a way that crosses boundaries from one community to another.

Some parents were critical of child-led conferences for young children. Comments included that these are “a bit of a waste of time”, that parents do not have a chance to learn much about their child’s learning, and that the conferences may be hard for the child. One parent would prefer to go back to the ‘old’ parent/teacher interviews, with some involvement from children. A common view was that the child-led conferences work better in the middle school.

**Pohutukawa ECE Services: Communication with parents**

Most ECE parents were happy with the exchange of information with their service. Comments were made about the value of informal communication, portfolios, and having their input recognised and acted on.

In ECE centre D, parents commented on the long-term relationships they have developed with the owners, who are very involved in the centre, and parents’ enjoyment of reading the portfolios.

Centre A, where parents contributed to portfolios, a parent commented, “And the great thing is we get feedback on what we have contributed—it comes back to us through word of mouth or it might be in the portfolios.”

The following are some examples:

[Jack] works in the centre as a volunteer and he is in a wheelchair. [Sarah’s] daughter calls him ‘sit down [Jack]’. One day the daughter came home and said she was not happy with [Jack] as he would not let her sit in his chair! [Sarah] emailed the centre to tell them this as she thought there might be other children like her daughter who did not realise that [Jack] could not actually get out of his chair so she could sit in it. The response from the centre was to have a group discussion with all the children, which included [Jack], where they talked about why [Jack] was in a wheelchair and disabilities in general. [Fictitious names]

In Centre B, both parents and teacher mentioned the sharing of information through portfolios and the news programme highlighted above. “This tells us a lot about what is going on at home and builds links for us” (Teacher).
Strengths, challenges and additional information groups would like to use

*Pohutukawa School teachers* commented they were constrained by requirements and would like their portfolios to be more child friendly. These teachers would like an ongoing system of assessment, rather than portfolios being completed at the end of each term. Assessment was portrayed as being in development; teachers wanted children to contribute to assessments.

The *school principal* saw strengths in the measures to promote continuity between school and ECE services in the community. In particular connections between the school board and ECE governance committee of Centres A and B (on the school site): the alignment between the development of the school and its strategic plan, and the plan for these centres. She affirmed the value of having ECE services on a school’s site, and other centres linked to the school. The challenges were to always “work on doing it better”. In terms of principles, she described the school as being about developing academic, socially adept, culturally responsive and physically well and confident young people. The school uses specific data each term to inform students, parents and teachers about progress and next steps. Conversations continue to be timely, relevant and ongoing. Teachers do not focus much on the “at” the standards part of the conversation because assessment is “a moment in time” and the next learning steps are most important. The principal portrayed National Standards data as a blunt, narrow measure of student achievement that does not begin to “measure all that matters”.

*School parents* would like support on how to help their child at home, e.g., worksheets and word finders. They wanted less summative assessment to be understandable. One parent wanted more mathematics.

*ECE service teachers* saw strengths in their assessment approaches, such as Pohutukawa Kindergarten teachers who recognised the role of assessment in creating learner identities through “supporting and celebrating children’s curiosity, problem-solving, growing independence and success”. A need expressed by Pohutukawa Centre C teachers was to be able to access support services when they are needed.

*ECE service parents* were mostly happy with the information they received. However, parents from Centre A, where no formal chart or programme with “what next” or scaffolding list was done (“Instead we work with individuals in the moment”), would like more information on progression. One of these parents would like small but achievable goals to be set at home and in the ECE centre, with recognition once these were achieved.

Parents were asked to think about the people they would like their children to be and become. In their portrayal of how assessment and information could help achieve their dream, parents from the ECE services emphasised:

- Freedom to develop in own way: “letting my child evolve over time”, “not boxing my child”, “letting the kids be kids” (Centre B).
- Learning dispositions: “helping my child to love learning”, “letting my child be curious”, “taking responsibility for their own things and themselves”, “paying attention” (Centre B).
- Co-operation and contribution: “to be happy and a valuable contributor to the centre”, “manners are important to me” (Centre C).
- Assessment that constructs competence: “capturing the moments that the child will be proud of looking back” (Centre B).

Parents tended to be very happy with how things were. Parents in all four centres commented that relationships and/or communication with teachers were key to achieving their dream for their child.
Summary

Pohutukawa hub stands out in how assessment information was made use of between the school and the four ECE centres. Their systems supported connectedness and continuity of learning between the ECE services and the school, and with families and community. Two of the ECE centres were on school grounds and the school principal was on the ECE centres’ governing board. The school principal was supported by the local principals’ association and through research-based professional development to develop and extend transition practices. She played a pivotal role in bringing together all ECE services that contribute to the school by holding regular transition discussion forums. School-developed portfolios made links to the strands of Te Whāriki and the portfolios developed and used in ECE were shared at school visits. The school principal described a raft of transition activities that were implemented, including a buddy system similar to that used in Kowhai School.

Similarly, research-based literature and professional development were used by the school in supporting teachers to connect with families and community, including “priority” families termed by one teacher as being “hard to reach.” Pohutukawa School was informed by the work of Russell Bishop and Ka Hikitia in developing culturally responsive pedagogy and associated assessment/communication activities. It analysed assessment data on achievement levels in relation to a number of factors, including: ethnicity, those needing more assistance, children who may not be progressing as expected, and those who had accelerated progress. Teachers found ways to draw in families to the school community, including use of Facebook for communication, out of school interest groups such as ESOL for parents, and inclusion of an interpreter in school meetings. This approach is similar to integrated service provision in ECE settings such as Karaka Kindergarten where different gateways are found to enlist family contribution.

The school’s vision that children become active and informed assessors was reflected in practices such as the inclusion of self-assessments in their portfolio and children’s involvement in child-led conferences. Consistent with findings from some other schools in this study, National Standards were seen by teachers and parents as detracting from a focus on children’s competencies through labelling and stigmatising children who achieved poorly. This was regarded as disheartening and demotivating.

Likewise the Pohutukawa ECE settings placed value on what children can do, how they can participate in assessment, and the ways to include families in collaborative learning and discussions. In Pohutukawa community “kindergarten”, bringing news stories from home was an innovative practice, loved by families, children and teachers, and used as a way to bring in some of the ‘funds of knowledge’ which existed within the children’s extended families. Parents commented that the news story enabled children to develop real confidence and language—an illustration of how dispositions/key competencies and learning in the curriculum learning areas are/can be integrated.

Parents across all four ECE centres commented on relationships and communication with teachers as the key to achieving their dream for their child. Parents who were interviewed from the school and Centre A, however, also wanted some more information—the former on how to help the child at home, the latter on goal setting for the child between the home and ECE centre, and recognition of when the goals were achieved.
Rata Hub

Profile of locality, school and ECE services

Rata is a suburb in an urban North Island city. Information about education, work and income of people in this Census Area Unit shows the profile to have a higher level of unemployment and lower median income than for people in the region in which it is located (see Table 14).

**Table 14: Characteristics of Rata locality (2006 census data)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity of Population</th>
<th>58.2% European, 10.3% Māori, 13.4% Pacific peoples, 14.1% Asian, 6.7% Middle Eastern/Latin American/African, 7.7% Other.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>17.4% of people aged 15 years and over have no formal qualifications compared with 19.8% for the region.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work</td>
<td>Unemployment rate is 7.7% for people aged 15 years and over compared with 5.2% for the region.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>Median income of people aged 15 years and over is $23,700 compared with $28,000 for the region.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are two schools included in the Rata hub.

*Rata State-Integrated School A*—is full primary, decile 3 school, with a roll of approximately 160 students. Teaching is carried out exclusively in the English medium.

The school community is richly diverse and includes a large proportion of migrant families. The majority of students are of Samoan descent. Many children start school with little English. A Samoan/English bilingual classroom has been established to help new entrants transition into the school. Recently, the school lost its Samoan teacher and this has left a considerable gap in its ability to provide for the Samoan community. School B—Rata State School is a co-educational state primary school (Years 1–6). It is decile 4, with a roll of around 220 students. The ethnicity of students is New Zealand European 26%, Māori 29%, Pacific 20%, Asian 13%, and other 12%. Some students are taught in the Māori medium.

Of the five ECE services located in the Rata hub, three are community-based Pasifika education and care centres, contributing mainly to the state-integrated school. The two other centres are a kindergarten and a home-based network, contributing mainly to School B. All of the five ECE centres are within close proximity to the two schools.
Table 15: Profile of ECE services in the Rata hub

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ECE service</th>
<th>Operational structure and relationship to school</th>
<th>Ethnicities of children</th>
<th>Ages of children, roll size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pasifika Centre A—A’oga Amata</td>
<td>Community-based Samoan ECE service.</td>
<td>3 Māori</td>
<td>Age 0: 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>31 Pasifika</td>
<td>Age 1: 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 Asian</td>
<td>Age 2: 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0 European/Pākehā</td>
<td>Age 3: 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Age 4: 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Total: 35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pasifika Centre B—Te Punanga</td>
<td>Community-based Cook Islands ECE service.</td>
<td>6 Māori</td>
<td>Age 0: 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>18 Pasifika</td>
<td>Age 1: 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0 Asian</td>
<td>Age 2: 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3 European/Pākehā</td>
<td>Age 3: 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 Other</td>
<td>Age 4: 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Total: 28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pasifika Centre C—A’oga Amata</td>
<td>Community-based Samoan ECE service.</td>
<td>4 Māori</td>
<td>Age 0: 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>18 Pasifika</td>
<td>Age 1: 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 Asian</td>
<td>Age 2: 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0 European/Pākehā</td>
<td>Age 3: 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Age 4: 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Total: 23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centre D—Rata Kindergarten</td>
<td>Community-based kindergarten.</td>
<td>8 Māori</td>
<td>Age 3: 34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4 Pasifika</td>
<td>Age 4: 33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>20 Asian</td>
<td>Age 5: 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>33 European/Pākehā</td>
<td>Total: 68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3 Other</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centre E—Rata Home-based network</td>
<td>Privately owned, home based.</td>
<td>4 Māori</td>
<td>Age 0: 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2 Pasifika</td>
<td>Age 1: 34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3 Asian</td>
<td>Age 2: 24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>97 European/Pākehā</td>
<td>Age 3: 27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7 Other</td>
<td>Age 4: 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Age 5: 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Total: 113</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pasifika centres and state-integrated school

The three Pasifika ECE centres and the state-integrated school where most of the students go, are discussed in separate sections of this sub-chapter.

The values and practice around learning outcomes information in the first year of school and ECE services

Rata State-Integrated School: Values

The mission statement of Rata State-Integrated school reflects the school’s Christian values. Much effort is put into developing relationships with families to provide support for students’ learning. Maintaining its special character and provision of pastoral care are portrayed as school priorities, consistent with the school vision of “caring for the community and learning for tomorrow”.
Consistent with the vision, value is placed on the key competencies within the school. The principal felt that perhaps the key competencies were not valued as much as they could be within the Pacific community—she identified a need to provide more knowledge about key competencies to Pacific parents and how they as parents might support them.

**Rata State-Integrated School: Practices around learning outcomes information in first years of school**

The main information gathered in the first year of schooling is through the six-week net, which reports on a wide range of skills, including social skills. This is followed by a six-month interim progress report, after which Reading Recovery is put into place if necessary. At the end of year one, reports state whether the child has or has not met competencies. Overall Teacher Judgements are made about National Standards as required. An inclusion register contains assessments of behaviour, additional needs, health needs, reading, writing and mathematics.

**Rata Pasifika ECE centres: Values**

All three Pasifika centres are immersion or bilingual in their home language and culture. A fundamental overarching value is for their home language and culture to be woven into the threads of the curriculum. This relates to preserving the culture and language in New Zealand, where many of the people are now born, and passing on valued learning. Teachers recognise the benefits of babies starting language learning early and at home as a component of “quality” early childhood education. A’oga Amata B teachers said the A’oga Amata was open to all cultures but the home culture was taught “as it is important to carry through to the next level/generation”.

Cultural values are promoted as learning outcomes, e.g., “We use a holistic approach to learning outcomes. We promote values such as respect as an important outcome of children’s learning. We focus on relationships and promote a sense of belonging to the collective group—fostering a sense of belonging to family—parents and whānau.”

Cultural values are important for families too—using Samoan language and English, having a religious connection were two examples mentioned.

Table 16 summarises the Rata Pasifika centres’ visions for teachers and assessment approaches.
Table 16: Rata Pasifika centre teachers’ visions for learning and predominant assessment approaches

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ECE service</th>
<th>Vision for learning</th>
<th>Predominant approach to assessment</th>
<th>Typical comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rata A’oga Amata A—Affiliated with a Samoan church association, located adjacent to the state-integrated school.</td>
<td>To weave our language into learning especially for those who are born and raised in the New Zealand culture.</td>
<td>Information gathered about parent aspirations, children’s interests—learning stories written.</td>
<td>What we do is look at each child’s development holistically but also the programme is delivered in Samoan. [It is desired that the language] is maintained through their further stages of education, and to prepare for any challenges ahead.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rata punanaga o te reo Kuki Airani</td>
<td>Our strong vision is for our children to know their identity, their language and their culture. This helps to preserve our culture and their own individual cultures. We promote diversity, which means we are open to others’ cultures as well. Children carry this through their lives.</td>
<td>Promoting children’s learning and development through feeding back to parents orally, and through visual displays, portfolios of learning stories and work samples.</td>
<td>It is a source of pride that we have children attending whose parents used to be our former children and they are now bringing their children back for White Sunday services 10–20 years later. This is a language nest so we have a focus on children learning the Cook Islands language and culture as an important learning outcome linking to the kaupapa of this setting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A’oga Amata B</td>
<td>Samoan philosophy and language—Samoan as children’s first language. Making strong links to the community, culture and spiritual guidance, and caring.</td>
<td>Observations, learning stories, feedback from parents.</td>
<td>For New Zealand-born Samoans, they are exposed to Samoan culture and language. We have a mixture of cultures here but the Samoan culture is taught as it is important to carry through to the next level/generation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Valued outcomes for promoting language, culture and identity are reflected in written assessment documentation and wall displays. Wall displays included images from the home country, and home language (see Exemplar 13). Learning the home language and culture is a central and valued outcome. In addition, supporting families to feel a sense of belonging and community are regarded as important.
Exemplar 13: A wall display from the A’oga Amata
Table 17 outlines the assessment approaches used by Pasifika ECE services in Rata.

**Table 17: Systems for assessing learning progress by Pasifika ECE services in Rata**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pasifika service</th>
<th>Informal conversations and short notes</th>
<th>Documented assessments for each child</th>
<th>Centrewide documentation</th>
<th>Wall displays</th>
<th>Teacher discussions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rata A'oga Amata A</td>
<td>Informal verbal communication.</td>
<td>Four children are observed each month and observations are written as learning stories.</td>
<td>Group learning stories.</td>
<td>Many wall displays, featuring images and Samoan language.</td>
<td>Programme is developed based on goals for the children observed for that month (and other children). Parent interviews—“The parents show a preference for one-to-one discussions.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rata punanaga o te reo Kuki Airani</td>
<td>Feedback to parents orally.</td>
<td>Observations, and learning stories in portfolios. Children formally observed once a month, anecdotal observation more often.</td>
<td>Group learning stories (see umu making below).</td>
<td>Many wall displays featuring Māori, English and Cook Islands languages, e.g., display “Ko toku reo ko toku ia mato. My language is my culture”, images from Cook Islands.</td>
<td>Share children’s portfolios with parents twice a year “but it is a problem with parents not bringing books back”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rata A'oga Amata B</td>
<td>Open communication is fostered. Learning information is conveyed regularly and face-to-face.</td>
<td>Observations and learning stories in profile book.</td>
<td>Monthly newsletters. Songs and resources used to promote language learning in Samoan, and also all cultures represented.</td>
<td>Wall displays featuring Samoan and English words and images, including from Samoa.</td>
<td>Parent meeting and interviews twice a year; questions for parents to answer. Interviews.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Pasifika centres supporting language, culture and identity**

All the Pasifika centres implemented a curriculum through which their home language and culture were threaded. The punanga sent through narratives supporting culture, language and identity of Kuki Airani. Communicating through Cook Islands music and dance, and the cultural values expressed by teachers of belonging to the collective group, are featured in Exemplar 14 below.
Exemplar 14: Mama Moe’s dancing: Teachers noticing tuakana/teina relationships

Today Mama Moe had all the children up and dancing to the Cook Islands music. Each and every child chose a partner for themselves and swayed to and fro to the beat of the music.

The children experienced the communicative potential of their whole body through their dance movements. As this activity progressed, we noticed the tuakana/teina relationships amongst the children as they expressed themselves with poise.

The children also performed the haka where the young toddlers were drawn in with the actions. There was a lot of fun and excitement amongst the children and the teachers.

The exemplar learning story (Exemplar 15) of umu making shows collaborative working together, preparation of food, and opportunities for language and story telling. Note: for reasons of space, the font for this has been changed from the original. See Appendix 1.
Exemplar 15: Umu making: A learning story about belonging Goal 1

Umu Making

Belonging Goal One—Children are developing an understanding of the links between the early childhood education setting and the known and familiar wider world through people, images, objects, language, sounds, smells and tastes that are the same as at home.

While a staff member was trimming the banana tree, several children approached her and she informed the children about the story of the banana leaves. By listening to the story, the children placed the banana leaves on their heads as it was “raining”. The children decided they would do exactly the same.

The children then decided they would bring the banana leaves over to the picnic table and start preparing them for the “umu”. A staff member showed them the process that they would do to create their umu and first of all they had to prepare the banana leaves.
The children continued to prepare the leaves and then placed food in the leaves. They informed the staff around them what food they were putting into the uma in English and Te Reo Kaki Arami. “Meska-pi” (mripe (green) Banana). “Kimana”

After preparing all the food, the children placed into several containers and placed it on the picnic table to cook for a few minutes (hours).

The staff member yelled out, “It’s cooked” and several children came in and picked their individual food out. They enjoyed yummy kaikai (food).
Meitaki tamaki mi

What’s happening here?
The children are making links from the centre to the outside world. They are forming these links and making connections.
The children are extending their knowledge of how to prepare food not just at home but from different cultures.
The children are developing a perception of themselves as capable of acquiring new interests and abilities.

The children are continuing to work on their relationships that they have with the adults/other children in teh centre. They are figuring out what skills and strategies they can use in regards to each relationship they have.
The children are expanding their knowledge in the wider world and realizing that the same at home can be different at punanga. An example of this is to do with food being cooked in teh oven at home and food being cooked in an “uma”.
What next:
We will continue to provide the children with a number of opportunities that extends their knowledge and also make them interested. Opportunities include: chalk, dance.
Rata Pasifika centres: Links to *Te Whāriki*

All three Pasifika centres linked their learning stories to learning outcomes and strands in *Te Whāriki*. A’oga Amata A made particular reference to the principles of Holistic Development and Family and Community and all five strands. The principle of *Te Whāriki* as a “woven mat for all to stand on” was evident in the documentation and words of one teacher who said, “We have our own way of using the curriculum”.

Rata Pasifika centres: Accumulation and use of learning outcomes information across time for each child and in an aggregated way

Learning stories and portfolios document learning outcomes over time. None of the centre teachers reported that they discussed learning outcomes information in an aggregated way.

Learning outcomes information that is documented and exchanged at transition points

Between ECE and state-integrated school at transition points

According to the school principal and new entrant teacher, little information is passed on by the Pasifika ECE centres to the school and there are no relationships between the current new entrant teacher and the Pasifika centre teachers since the former Samoan new entrant teacher has left. The school plans to send the Pasifika centres a copy of the school newsletter and the new entrant teacher says she would appreciate seeing the children’s portfolios. More networking is planned.

Relationships between the A’oga Amata with the school were stronger when there was a Samoan new entrant class and a Samoan teacher at the school. A’oga Amata Centre A teachers reported on sharing portfolios at that time. A’oga Amata Centre B said that they had had a strong link with the state-integrated school through the Samoan new entrant teacher who taught in the Samoan new entrants class. Unfortunately, the teacher had left and the class closed. The relationships, according to the school and centre, were no longer strong. The A’oga Amata would like to build the relationship, a sentiment also expressed by the school principal. A’oga Amata A parents expressed they were happy to let the teacher put in place any information that needed to be shared with the school.

The punanga teacher described relationships with the school as a “work in progress”. Of particular concern was that children’s home language was not preserved, and there appeared to be a perceived low valuing of the ECE portfolios. Keeping continuity with school was seen as essential.

Rata State-Integrated School: Communication with parents

Relationships between teachers and parents at the state-integrated school tend to be one way partly because, according to the principal, parents do not see a role for themselves in their child’s learning.

Parents feel that they have little to offer. They see us [the teachers] as those in authority and not as partners. Parents will often defer to the teachers, disempowering themselves. Parents’ experiences, often negative, of school can impact on their understandings. We would like parents to know how they can help their children’s learning at home. Language can be a huge issue and we do promote a strong home language model. (Principal)

The principal felt that the key competencies are perhaps not valued as much as they could be within the Pasifika community. A need is to offer more information about key competencies and how these might be supported.

Another issue is that many parents work shift work and/or are not at home after school; this makes face-to-face communication difficult.
Rata Pasifika Centres: Communication with parents

Pasifika centres all shared information with parents verbally, and at parent interviews. A’oga Amata A teachers said parents had a preference for one-to-one interviews, and this was stated by parents in the interviews. A’oga Amata B teachers thought face-to-face information allowed for more honesty.

The punanga also used Facebook, email and newsletters. The teacher said she thought information was passed on through “children and the teachers demonstrating their Cook Islands language and cultural practices such as White Sunday and performances”. Teachers expected parents to join in promoting the programme, bringing children to White Sunday and being involved in community events.

Parents were satisfied with the information they received from, and gave to, the teacher. Parents interviewed from two of the centres mentioned that they had passed on information about their child’s medicine, but had not passed it on about their child’s learning.

Parents who were interviewed regarded the relationship with teachers described them as warm and positive. One parent from A’oga Amata A whose other children had attended general ECE services preferred the A’oga Amata: “We have family connections here and good relationships. We wish our children to go through to school with no restrictions to their imaginations and within a disciplined environment.”

Parents clearly appreciated the cultural base of the centres:

This is a culturally based [setting] rather than a normal daycare. For me that bond is important to culture and identity. For the next generation strongly building it up [the knowledge and culture].

Strengths, challenges and additional information groups would like to use

Rata Pasifika centres

The main concern for Pasifika centre teachers was for the skills and talents of their children to be recognised as the children progressed through school. “We are very proud of the learning outcomes that children achieve here, where the children have progressed.” The punanga teachers were worried that the school system promoted Western culture and values and wanted to see the gapbridged.

Likewise a Samoan parent expressed the hope that “Our vision for our child’s culture will be maintained, the Samoan language and the value of respect for others and himself”. A punanga parent spoke of fearing that her child would lose the Cook Islands Māori she had gained and “being gutted” that she herself could not speak more. They would like assessment to show culture as well as subjects such as maths.
Summary

The two A’oga Amata and the state-integrated school had high percentages of Samoan children attending, while the Punaga had a largely Cook Islands population. These are priority groups. A few children from other ethnic groups also attended.

All three Pasifika centres were immersion or bilingual in their home language and culture. The fundamental valuing of language, culture and identity lays the foundation for curriculum and assessment. Strong commitment was expressed by teachers and parents to preserving the culture and language in New Zealand, where many of the people are now born. They also expressed commitment to passing on valued learning, including: values of respect and belonging to a collective, music, dance, mathematics and literacies. These values flowed through into curriculum and assessment. Learning the home language and culture was important for passing on through generations.

Documented assessments and information made visible these valued outcomes. As well, emphasis was placed on children showing what they can do, such as through musical and dance performances. A range of mechanisms were used for conveying information to parents, including adopting of face-to-face interviews in recognition of some parents’ preference for these.

Rata State-Integrated School had recently lost its Samoan new entrant teacher, who seemed to have played a pivotal role in using portfolios from the Pasifika centres during transition to school and working with teachers. Unfortunately, there now appears to be little relationship at transition despite views from all parties that this is valuable. This breakdown highlights a systemic issue that good practice is highly dependent on individuals as well as established policies and processes. A real worry for parents and teachers from the Pasifika centres was that their children may lose their home language and culture when it is not reinforced in the school setting. This was of particular concern for parents who had limited language understanding themselves. Language and cultural maintenance was a highly valued outcome for Pasifika families whose children were enrolled in Pasifika centres.

Rata State School and general ECE services

Rata State School: Values

The vision for learning at Rata State School is to provide equitable opportunities for all including ESOL, Māori, Pasifika as well as gifted and talented children. Families are welcomed and included in the teaching approaches with special emphasis given to priority group families to aid their understanding of the school system and language in order for them to help their children. There is a central entry point for new entrants into the school, which is intended to enable strong relationships to be built prior to starting and a consistent foundation for assessment.

The school song is “E tū Kahikatea” with the idea of everyone working together to make everyone stronger. The following four values are held for students. To be:

- a learner;
- respectful;
- positive; and
- safe.

These four concepts underpin expectations for learning in the classroom. Students are reminded of these inclusive values and the different subtexts within these, as appropriate to the level of the students. Subtexts include “keep trying and give things a go”, “listen to the person who is talking”, “be kind to others”, “only touch yourself and your things”. 

Rata State School: Practices around learning outcomes information in first years of school

Every term a new learning unit is rolled out across the school in the form of a poutama. These are developed with different levels and also aligned to the National Standards. There is a visual representation of this poutama in all classrooms and students are encouraged to place themselves on their current level and to know what the learning steps for the next level are.

Reporting in the junior school changed in 2013 with National Standards reports being generated by children’s attendance anniversaries (i.e., 6 months and 12 months) rather then being undertaken at a standard time during the year (i.e., end of terms two and four). Reports that cover key competencies and social aspects are done once per year. The staggering of reports allows for information to be: up to date, relevant for the amount of teaching that has been received, and rich and meaning for parents.

All new entrants are received into a small group taught by the new entrant head teacher. They remain in this small group (around eight) until a space is needed for another new entrant. At that stage they transition to another new entrant teacher in the same shared-learning area. A full report is generated during their first six weeks, which includes alphabet knowledge, letter sounds, reading, writing their name, handedness, some maths and social skills. This report forms the beginnings of “notes of [the] cumulative record” which are added to as the child progresses through the school.

Rata State School: Accumulation and use of learning outcomes information across time for each child and in an aggregated way

Learning outcomes information at Rata State School is accumulated and used to track the progress of children over time. It breaks down outcomes information by ethnicity and age. The broken down information is discussed by teachers and reported to the Board of Trustees. Rata State School records “progress over time” for National Standards and provides a cumulative record of learning (capturing other learning, behaviours, achievements, and social skills) for all children. This is undertaken from initial 5-year-old testing through to completion of primary school.

Rata State School: Use of assessment for priority learners

Achievement reports are used within Rata State School. They are prepared for management, teaching staff and the BOT. They are often used to identify or track priority learners and are produced by ethnicity and subject. With a high number of ESOL, Māori, and Pasifika students, these reports are used to initiate dialogue with teachers and help in the development of teaching strategies for those children needing extra help. These teaching strategies are often developed as teaching-as-inquiry programmes and involve a group of students. Some may not be priority learners but the teaching is tailored towards those children who are.

The change in reporting has also helped assist these learners, as often it is these children who miss chunks of school due to extended breaks overseas. The adjusted reporting allows this to be taken into consideration, that is, reports done after 40 weeks of teaching. Some ESOL students are also re-tested at age seven to ensure they are picking up what they need.

The school has begun a home/school partnership. Priority group parents (generally Samoan, Tongan, Indian and Somali) are invited to the school where they learn how to support their children in a particular area (currently maths). It is intended to offer parents ways to help their children at home and provide vocabulary for the next topic to be covered. The school is finding this partnership programme works very well and reports a lot of parent participation.

Rata general ECE services

The non-Pasifika ECE services in the Rata hub are a kindergarten under the umbrella of a kindergarten association (Rata Kindergarten) and a private home-based organisation (Rata Home-based).
Rata Kindergarten teachers place high value on a disposition to “love learning”, children’s agency and exploration. The Rata Home-based service coordinator regards secure attachment relationships and building continuity with home as central to their vision.

Both ECE services use verbal communication as the main form of information sharing and connection with home. Rata Kindergarten uses a system that ensures teachers have contact with parents at the end of each session and although this may only be a quick couple of words, it can communicate any issues, interests or specific learning that has happened that day. Rata Home-based service has a philosophy of supporting the whole family and as such will provide any information that helps make the parent feel more comfortable with the service. Learning is portrayed as part of a holistic, trusting relationship.

Parents at both ECE services talked about the importance of feeling welcomed and that their child was cared about as being more important than any other aspects. Written information could be useful at different points of time. Rata Kindergarten parents said they were provided with a welcome pack but this did not really seem helpful until they looked at it again a couple of months after their child had started, when they had an understanding of the culture and routine of the centre. A parent from Rata Home-based said the detailed enrolment form was “great” as it helped parents form a picture of what was important in regard to their child’s learning. Table 18 shows Rata ECE teachers’ visions for learning and predominant assessment approaches.

**Table 18: Rata ECE teachers’ visions for learning and predominant assessment approaches**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ECE service</th>
<th>Vision for learning</th>
<th>Predominant approach to assessment</th>
<th>Typical comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rata Kindergarten—sessional kindergarten under administration of a kindergarten association. Has been located within community for a long time and has great outdoor space. New head teacher. Recent changes to sessional times, audits of outcome recording and further staff changes.</td>
<td>To provide children with a lifelong love of learning. Support children to progress their own learning. Supporting children’s natural curiosity and exploration, and to provide them with tools for learning.</td>
<td>Socio-cultural approach. Use of narrative/learning stories to capture learning progress and highlight dispositions. Much of the sharing of this information is verbal, due to language barriers. Parents asked and encouraged to contribute. This is often done verbally and recorded by teachers.</td>
<td>The best kind of learning story is one that shows progression of skill and relates this more to the principles than the strands of <em>Te Whāriki</em>. These are broad enough to encompass the progression that you see in the children’s learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rata Home-based—private home-based service. Philosophy founded on secure attachment and the belief that children will prosper when they have a strong, supportive connection with an adult.</td>
<td>Secure attachment relationships with educators. Provision of tailored opportunities for each child. One-to-one relationships between child and educator.</td>
<td>Activities recorded every day with comments on achievements. Use of more structured learning stories linking to <em>Te Whāriki</em>. Strong focus on parent contribution to guide education path. Monthly progress notes completed by programme tutor and forwarded to family. These are more learning outcome focused than the day-to-day recording.</td>
<td>There is a lot of opportunity for sharing information and learning though conversations because of the lower numbers of children. Some parents want to know everything irrespective of it being a ‘learning outcome’ and if that helps the parent relax and feel good about what is happening then that’s what happens. Doesn’t diminish the communication around learning outcomes but supports it.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Teachers/coordinators in both services said that they were always mindful of what learning was taking place during activities even if it was not being documented (see Exemplar 16).

Exemplar 16: An analytic approach to documenting learning stories

Rata Kindergarten teachers each had a camera available to photograph episodes as they happened. They also carried notebooks to write down quotes and occurrences that could then be used for learning stories and further discussion. Teachers analysed occurrences over time and contributing factors in the learning episodes that were captured and in this way went beyond simply describing learning episodes.

Sometimes a child is doing something and you notice it, but then a week later they might still be doing it and you start to wonder what it’s about. It’s about picture building, taking all the threads and putting them together along with the demeanour of the child.

The Rata Home-based coordinator said the act of recording activities every day made the educators think about progression and development of the children. Decisions around what to record on a day-to-day basis were based around what the parents would find interesting or what was being discussed at the time, so progressions were made clear (see Table 19).

Table 19: Systems for assessing learning progress by general ECE services in Rata

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ECE service</th>
<th>Informal conversations and short notes</th>
<th>Documented assessments for each child</th>
<th>Centrewide documentation</th>
<th>Wall displays</th>
<th>Teacher discussions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rata Kindergarten</td>
<td>Teachers “notice, recognise and respond” throughout the day. Informal verbal communication.</td>
<td>Staff allocated 18 children each to set up and monitor portfolios. Expectations of one learning story per term.</td>
<td>Snapshots. Single photo and sentence about activity and learning which gets displayed.</td>
<td>Have a project wall that centres on a specific topic (last one was Matariki). Activities are recorded, children’s work displayed, photos, parents’ contributions. Also have a snapshot wall. Single photo and sentence.</td>
<td>Daily teaching and learning meeting—noticing, recognising, responding. Discussions about children’s learning, what could support it, who will take responsibility for it, and extra resources or activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rata Home-based service</td>
<td>Educators utilise organisational play centres to share ideas. Some will meet outside of these as well. Programme tutors discuss individuals and groups when needed to generate teaching/learning ideas.</td>
<td>Journal kept every day of activities. Also includes less frequent narrative learning stories. Monthly programme tutor reports which focus on learning outcomes.</td>
<td>Resources are shared between hub offices and educators with specific knowledge help with special topics. As there is no centre per se, there is no shared assessment documentation.</td>
<td>Not applicable.</td>
<td>Formal monthly discussions between educator and programme tutor. Monthly meeting between programme tutors to discuss individual cases.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Rata Home-based service had diverse ways of recording and communicating the learning of children. The organisation had standard templates and journals in various sizes that educators could use. They also provided a template for individual learning plans, linked to *Te Whāriki*, with a space for parent contribution and activity learning sheets. However, if the educator felt these were not appropriate they were able to present the information in other ways as long as it was recorded in line with the company requirements – information demonstrated learning outcomes and the parents were happy with the medium. For example, an educator could use a scrapbook with learning stories and photos. The sharing and tailoring of student assessment information was mentioned by a parent as one of the valuable things about the service.

Rata Kindergarten gathered documented assessments into individual children’s portfolios (see discussion below).

**Rata ECE Services: Use of assessment for priority learners**

Exemplar 17 shows how Rata Kindergarten found out about the languages and cultures of its families. The exemplar also pinpoints challenges for teachers in communicating about learning with parents whose experiences of educational programmes is very different.

**Exemplar 17: Finding out about language and culture**

Rata Kindergarten acknowledges the language/s of families by using these alongside Māori and English in each portfolio display illustrating the strands of *Te Whāriki*. In this way, currently 15 different languages have been used. The kindergarten has made connections with external organisations supporting immigrants and refugees; for example recent use of a social worker to support a Middle Eastern refugee family and help with communication. The kindergarten utilises sign language to help all children to communicate regardless of language barriers and there is a strong emphasis on cultural props and resources within the kindergarten.

One difficulty that teachers discussed was the sharing of learning information with families who had experienced different systems in their home countries and held different underlying philosophies about how and what valued learning takes place. For example, being able to explain to parents why messy/water play is important was said to be difficult because some parents did not want their child to get dirty or wet. Some parents who were interviewed said that the learning that might be occurring through play was not visible to them in documented assessments.

> I think they are learning but I’m not sure what they are learning out of the play, maybe we are not seeing this in the profiles. Maybe it’s there but we’re not understanding, as parents what it is they’re learning from this type of play.

These comments highlight the challenge of identifying and articulating the learning that emerged through play in ways that made sense to parents whose own experience of educational programmes might be very different. Similar challenges have been reported in earlier studies of family engagement in ECE (e.g., Mitchell, 2006).

Rata Kindergarten teachers expressed concern about the length of time taken to get formal assessment by GSE of children with special needs and to receive additional help for these children. They wanted specialist knowledge to be available. One child who had autism had recently been waiting over a year from the time a referral by the centre was made to a teacher aide being funded.

Rata Home-based ECE was well equipped to cater for children with special educational needs because of its capacity to match the educator to the needs of specific individual children.
Exemplar 18: Home-based catering for children with special educational needs

The Rata Home-based coordinator felt the service catered for priority groups well. Programmes could be tailored to suit individual families because the number of children in each home was small and the service was flexible. Several children enrolled in the Rata Home-based service had serious medical conditions. Educators were trained in the care of these children and were able to meet commitments associated with care, such as medical appointments and meeting primary medical needs. This service coordinator also felt that they could provide good cross-cultural support due to the flexibility in resources and the ability to connect families with educators who spoke the same language as the family. Learning outcomes are documented in English but these are communicated to parents in a bilingual fashion.

Rata State School and ECE Services: Links to Te Whāriki and The New Zealand Curriculum

Rata State School connected their assessment and reporting with the curriculum and National Standards. They had made some changes to reporting to fit the requirements of National Standards, but the level of assessment and reporting was said to have not changed a great deal. The schoolwide poutama was arranged to align learning across all levels of the school. The poutama also provided a visual resource for the children to track progress and monitor achievement. There was also some discussion about the use of a more “Te Whāriki-based” approach for the first year of school with a move planned to focus more on dispositions/key competencies rather than tested learning outcomes.

Both ECE services made reference to Te Whāriki to frame assessments. Rata Home-based had developed their own poster version to help educators become more familiar with what dispositions look like in learning and how these link to curriculum. If the educators were not familiar or comfortable using this framework it became the programme tutors’ responsibility to record outcomes in line with Te Whāriki.

Rata ECE Services: Accumulation and use of learning outcomes information across time for each child and in an aggregated way

The Rata ECE services used portfolios or journals to show children’s progress over time. The approach at Rata Kindergarten was to focus on any change or shift in behaviours and activities that teachers thought were persisting. New learning stories were usually mentioned to parents so they could read them and comment on them. Some teachers used a specific space for ‘parents’ voice’ while others did not. For families with communication barriers, teachers would talk through the learning story rather than just relying on the written form. This allowed the parents’ view to be expressed and sometimes recorded by the teacher. Portfolios were kept by the children when they left, but often were not passed on to the school because parents wanted to keep them at home. Children who had support for special needs had a more managed transition process and kindergarten teachers would spend time in discussion with school teachers.

Parents’ views on the portfolios conveyed several ideas. Portfolios did not take the place of daily communication but were seen to be a vehicle for communication with wider whānau who did not come to the ECE service. Children enjoyed their portfolios at later ages. The quality of documentation was dependent on the skills and input of the teacher. Parents preferred teachers to write many stories.

As a parent [I do not value the portfolios] so much because of [my] daily interaction [with the teacher] but wider whānau, grandparents, working spouse love them. You do kind of work on no news is good news. If there’s a problem you expect that the teacher will share that.

It depends on the teacher. Some teachers do lots; some teachers hardly do it at all. My older child still reads through his.

I love coming in and looking through it, I wish there was more stories about what they were doing. I think they’re really valuable.
Exemplar 19 describes the daily use of journals in the Rata Home-based ECE.

**Exemplar 19: Journals in Rata Home-based ECE**

The use of journals by Rata Home-based was the main form of recording and communication. It is completed everyday by educators and provides a comprehensive record of activities and behaviours that can them be tracked. There is also a monthly record, written by the programme tutor—which is cumulative and follows the child. The tutors visit the educator, and observe and discuss what has happened over the last month and learning outcomes. This forms the basis of the cumulative monthly record, and also the monthly report that then goes to parents. The journal, cumulative record, and parent report is called the “the triangle of communication”.

The parents’ comments around this record of learning were overwhelmingly positive. It helped them feel connected on a day-to-day basis, they could provide complementary experiences and learning, they could comment and change the direction of the teaching and learning by reviewing the notes and communicating with the educator. One of the parents commented:

> His progress has been excellent and we can see the progress. [The record of learning] gives me pointers and we can discuss things at home that I feed back to the educator and we come up with a strategy. Could be interests and or something we’d like to support in his development.

Learning outcomes information that is documented and exchanged at transition points

**Between ECE and school at transition points**

Rata State School welcomed parents and children into their new entrant learning space at any time, which included before or after the child starting school. Their transition-to-school process meant children would spend a short time in a new start group with one teacher in a shared learning area where assessments and profiles were completed. This smaller group meant more support could be offered to children and families over this time and it did not matter which of the many ECE the children came from. The children then moved to their regular teacher who was part of the same shared-learning environment.

The school teachers said they had good relationships with the two kindergartens in the area and would visit with children a few times a year. This allowed discussions about children who were known to be moving to Rata State School but did not start a connection with the parents. Rata State School teachers felt they did not need a great deal of information from the kindergartens and a summary one-pager could be enough to share important information such as interests and difficulties. Having this to discuss with parents could inform the teaching approach. ECE portfolios were welcomed into the school although teachers made comment that their usefulness was limited. They saw the value of narratives in showing progress but felt useful information was sometimes more fundamental. Comments such as “orally very capable but totally disinterested in print/words/writing” would be more useful.

Parents felt that they learnt about the school and the way it worked from coming into the classrooms and observing rather than being given any specific information. They commented that they received a two-page information sheet about toilets, lunches, drop-off points and so forth, but information about the teachers would also have been good so “we felt our children were secure”.

Rata Kindergarten had no formal transition-to-school process. Portfolio books or other information were not shared directly with schools. One of the reasons for this was the kindergarten feeding into a number of different schools which made it difficult to form good relationships with schools and build knowledge of what would be helpful. There were two different age sessions run in the centre, which had slightly different structures and learning opportunities. Some parents felt that ECE should be kept separate from school. They felt that any change or movement to make the
transition smoother should be up to the school, and that the school could change their structure slightly, so that children took their passion for exploration and learning with them to the new school environment where it would be encouraged and supported.

Rata Home-based, because of its flexible nature, also had no real strategy in place to assist with transition. Educators worked with parents to assist with school visits, but ultimately it was up to the parents to share information through the enrolment process. One parent said that he would send his child to a more formal “kindy-like” ECE to help facilitate the transition process from home to school.

**Rata State School: Communication with parents**

Parents are encouraged by the school to spend as much time as they need in the classrooms during the transition process. Parents are given an information sheet on things such as toilets and what should be in lunches, but parents mentioned that information about daily structure would be helpful as well. The main avenue for sharing information in the very early stages was only through the enrolment form, which included medical information and a small amount of information on culture and early childhood experience. Parents mentioned centres that had ‘about-me sheets’ (interests, likes, dislikes, etc.) and felt this type of information would be good to share but there was no opportunity for this.

Parents also indicated they felt that information about a variety of things was not passed on either from teachers, or from teacher to teacher. This included health information, homework requirements and general information about what was going on in the class. Parents indicated they would like more information about their child’s progress. There have been changes with teachers and classes and this has led to inconsistency about what was getting back to parents about their child’s achievements and learning progress. However, also discussed was being able to see the positive changes in their children’s learning and development, so there were no concerns about the learning, just the documentation and reporting of this.

**Rata ECE Services: Communication with parents:**

Rata Kindergarten parents appreciated the amount of communication between Rata Kindergarten and themselves. Although they valued and enjoyed the portfolios, they felt the relationships with teachers were what provided the real insight into their child’s learning. This also provided links to home for learning opportunities. Examples from parents are below.

They knew I’d been having car trouble and one day I called a tow truck here [to kindergarten], which got turned into a learning experience for all the children. They knew there were problems so they accepted that the child may feel a little unsettled by it as well.

They acknowledge that it’s not just about the child while they’re here; it’s about their life.

Some parents said that sometimes they would like to understand the learning more, maybe to have something quantifiable or explicit as well as the learning stories which highlighted dispositions. They also commented that it would be helpful to know the deficits in their child’s learning or development as well as the positives so they could help support or manage these at home.

Parents’ views were varied about whether information should be shared by the ECE services when their child went to school. Some felt there should be more integration between the two with information shared before the children started school. Others felt it was good for the child to have a “clean slate” and have no expectations placed around them.
Rata Home-based parents were very happy with the recording and exchange of information and felt it demonstrated their children learning clearly. It also gave ample opportunity for parents to have input into their children’s learning directions and parents saw changes in their child through the daily recording.

**Strengths, challenges and additional information groups would like to use**

**Rata State School**

Challenges that were identified by the school were poor systems in recording information about children. Software that didn’t function properly, or was not compatible, meant that it needed to be recorded in different places. The school also faced challenges with a new school building after some buildings were earthquake damaged. This had repercussions for students’ learning and teaching staff getting used to new teaching facilities and teaching practices (moving from an older school and prefabs to modern learning environments).

There was a concern that the National Standards focus on reading, writing and mathematics could push other teaching out of the way. Teachers were working hard to ensure that other learning areas remained, were recorded and were appreciated. In this vein teachers felt that the shift to the new reporting practices (at 6 months and 12 months of school) was positive because teachers would be better able to focus on the individual child.

Parents would like to see better information sharing and would like more parent-involved groups such as a reading and maths group so they understand what, and how, their child is learning. This would help them to better support their child’s learning at home.

**ECE services**

Rata Kindergarten teachers identified the challenge of accessing support services and felt they let children and families down when there were long delays. The Rata Home-based coordinator talked of enjoying the challenges presented and saw solving the problem of ECE in complex family situations as a real strength of the organisation.

Parents from both of the ECE services seemed very happy with the relationships and service being delivered. When asked about how assessment and reporting would help their children to be or become the adults they wanted, some of the parents responded:

- Don’t want to typecast or generalise so more dispositional based information, but not all good stuff, otherwise you don’t get the whole or complete person.

- Giving personal information can help a teacher or school to manage certain behaviours.

- Assessment helps both parents and teachers know how to support that child at the right level.

Within these comments are some of the common themes of parents wanting to gain a full view of their child, the value of sharing information from home, and of enabling both teachers and parents to support their children.
Summary

Rata Kindergarten and Rata State School both have an ethnically diverse population of children, particularly Maori, Pasifika and Asian. Most children from Rata Home-based ECE were of Pākehā European ethnicity. The Home-based ECE included a number of children with medical conditions.

Rata State School provided its own transition to school, where children were taught in very small groups when they first attended before going to the mainstream class. This catered for the many children who came from the number of different ECE services contributing to the school. However, professional relationships with individual ECE service staff were not strong. Portfolios were regarded by school new entrant teachers as having limited value, and there was a desire by these teachers for them to show gaps in learning as well as strengths. Similarly, some parents wanted to know more about their child’s difficulties. Parents felt well supported by information from the school at transition time, but wanted to know the teachers well so their child could feel secure.

Rata State School has changed its reporting time for National Standards and aligned it to other reporting. It is now more meaningful in relation to individual children. There is still a concern that a National Standards emphasis might detract from teaching in other learning areas.

Rata Kindergarten and Rata Home-based ECE had made special efforts to cater through assessment information for priority families. Rata Kindergarten connected with cultural resource people in the community, invited appropriate experts in to support families, such as a social worker for a Middle Eastern refugee family, and had translators available where needed. The wall display about strands of Te Whāriki was translated into 15 languages (alongside English and Māori). Nevertheless, difficulties for teachers in communicating about valued learning outcomes and processes of teaching and learning were discussed. These were said to arise particularly where parents’ experiences of education programmes in their home country was very different from New Zealand. Similar challenges have been found in studies of family engagement in ECE (see for example, Mitchell, 2006). The Rata Home-based ECE service was able to employ educators from the same cultural background as families. It also catered well for children with medical conditions because of the flexibility of educators to take the child to medical appointments and to attend to individual medical needs. The use of daily journals for reporting was liked by parents and enabled them to feel closely connected to their child’s experiences in the setting.
3. Findings from Individual centres and schools

Kauri kōhanga reo and kura kaupapa Māori

Kauri is a provincial city in the North Island.

Table 20: Characteristics of Kauri locality (2006 census data)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity of population</th>
<th>58.2% European, 10.3% Māori, 13.4% Pacific peoples, 14.1% Asian, 6.7% Middle Eastern/Latin American/African, 7.7% Other.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>7.4% of people aged 15 years and over have no formal qualifications compared with 19.8% for the region.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work</td>
<td>Unemployment rate is 7.7% for people aged 15 years and over compared with 5.2% for the region.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>Median income of people aged 15 years and over is $23,700 compared with $28,000 for the region.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Kauri kōhanga reo and kura kaupapa Māori provide total immersion Māori language for children from aged birth to 17 or 18 years. The kōhanga reo and kura kaupapa Māori work collaboratively and under one roof in a “seamless Māori language immersion education”. As part of its entry criteria for families, one parent must agree to speak only in Māori (never English) with all the children enrolled, including their own, all the time.

The profile of Kauri kōhanga reo are detailed in the Table 21.

Table 21: Characteristics of Kauri kōhanga reo

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kōhanga reo</th>
<th>Operational structure and relationship to kura</th>
<th>Ethnicities of children</th>
<th>Ages of children, roll size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Kauri kōhanga reo| Kōhanga reo under the umbrella of the National Kōhanga Reo Trust. Seamless education with kura kaupapa Māori. | 100% Māori             | Age 0: 2  
Age 1: 6  
Age 2: 9  
Age 3: 5  
Age 4: 8  
Age 5: 2  
Total: 32 |
In this section, we highlight an approach to assessment, Paki Ako, linked to te ao Māori and the foundational values of kōhanga reo.

**Kōhanga reo and kura kaupapa Māori values**

The main objective of the kōhanga reo is the regeneration of the Māori language and culture in their community. Core values are as follows:

- We have a holistic view of human development, recognising that cultural, physical, and emotional wellbeing are as essential as intellectual and creative development.
- We promote and uphold an indigenous Māori spiritual dimension.
- We recognise the right of Māori with special needs to their ancestral language and culture, and we commit to provide for them.
- We aim to develop the students’ confidence, creativity, self-esteem, pride in being Māori, and a love of learning.
- We aspire to standards of excellence for each learning environment and each individual student.
- In recognition of the Treaty of Waitangi, tino rangatiratanga/Māori self-determination is a core element of our organisation.
- We aspire to engage with Māori families to focus on the learning, growth and the development of their children.
- Child and whānau-centred learning in our environment provides a framework that upholds tino rangatiratanga.

**Kōhanga reo approaches and systems for assessing learning progress**

Paki Ako is the kōhanga reo’s approach to assessment. It was developed over many years. From the beginning the challenge has been to go back to te ao Māori and the voices of tīpuna. The development was assisted through working on Te Whatu Pōkeka Kaupapa Māori Assessment for Learning exemplars and through being a Centre of Innovation. A kaumatua and researcher supported the kōhanga reo to develop Paki Ako, which is an ongoing work—teachers described themselves as “still developing our understandings of the stories”. The support has helped clarify how to show, collect and clarify evidence. In the example below (Exemplar 20) teachers linked Paki Ako to te ao Māori and the foundational values of the kōhanga reo.

Paki Ako is a Māori approach where multiple voices are included. Whānau are integral to the process of developing Paki Ako. Kōhanga reo values are reflected in the nature, focus and development of Paki Ako.

Children get a sense of what they’ve done that whānau are proud of, that the stories of their learning are amazing and that the stories are a celebration. We try to teach teachers that if it’s not something that grabs you, don’t do it. All powhiri stories go into all children’s folders so that when the folders go home all whānau know the children and their whānau, and it starts building whanaungatanga links. Don’t write anything that could not be shared—they are whānau stories. We also try to incorporate the aspirations of tīpuna—what is uniquely Māori, and depth and connections—how children carry themselves, trust in te ao Māori and te reo Māori.
Exemplar 20: Paki Ako embedded in te ao Māori and foundational values

From a Māori perspective, children, through their ancestral links, are connected over time to the original source of te ao Māori. The child’s spiritual connection to the voices of ancestors is nurtured.

The kōhanga reo uses whakataukī as a way of linking to the voices of ancestors and te ao Maori. Some Paki Ako utilise a wide whānau lens and others use a close-up lens. An example of a wide whānau focus is the story of te awa o nga mātua tīpuna. The story started with a tribal oriori about the river. The oriori reveals the focus of the kōhanga reo on place and tribal knowledge, the tribal region and the stories of the people. The children of the tribe carry roles as kaitiaki here because they are from the area, so there are strong links to the awa.

Koinei te karanga a Pou Milton i tēnei ata ki ērā o te whānau ehara i a Rangitāne. I tū pakari koutou ngā tamariki o Rangitāne i te taha o Pou Milton ki te pūhiri i te whānau o te kōhanga ki tō koutou awa.

Nō te putanga i te ngahere ka kite i te awa o Manawatū, ā, ka mārama he a Hau i tapaina ai ko Manawatū. Hi ana ngā pewa i te rahi, i te rerehua.

I whakatauria te whānau e Pou Milton, ā koa ana te ngākau he kaitiaki pakupaku i tōna taha e whanake mai ana mā koutou tō koutou awa e tiaki, e manaaki. I whai wāhi ia tamaiki ki te pā ke te wai o te awa o Manawatū i tēnei ata.

I mea a Pou Milton i ngā wā o mua i hāereere ōna mātua tīpuna i te awa i tētahi pā ki tētahi atu. I hoea te awa ki te moana hoki. Nā te awa ngā tīpuna o Rangitāne i ora ai, nā reira, he mea nui ki a Rangitāne tō rātou awa.
E mihi ana ki ngā kōrero i whakatakotoria i te ata nei. Rangitāne, kei whea mai! Kua nōhia tō koutou nei takiwā e mātou te hunga i haramai i wāhi kē, i iwi kē. Ko tā koutou he manaaki, he tawhī, he mainoa. E kore e pau ngā mihi me te mōhio anō he momo koutou nā ō koutou tipuna. Nō te rangi nei ka tino kītea tērā te wā ka tū pakari, ka tū rangitira koutou ngā tamariki o Manawatū hei raukura mō tēnei o ō koutou iwi.

Kōkā Brenda 01.03.13

This is how Pou Milton greeted those of us who are not Rangitāne this morning. All of you children who are Rangitāne stood so confidently next to Pou Milton to welcome us the whānau of the kōhanga to your river.

When we emerged from the bush we saw the Manawatū and immediately understood why Hau named it so. Our eyebrows raised at the vastness and the beauty of the river.

Pou Milton welcomed us and it was heartening to see the young aspiring guardians at his side who will in time develop to take care of your river. Each child was able to touch the water this morning.

Pou Milton told us all how his ancestors travelled up and down the river from one pā to the next. They also paddled the river to the sea. The river was an important source of sustenance for Rangitāne.
Stories are a language resource for parents (reo is checked by one teacher) because stories going home must be very good reo. Most staff started writing in English and have become stronger in writing in te reo over the years. Teaching skills have also improved, and show deeper thinking about how to engage and encourage children’s learning extensions.

Parents appreciated Paki Ako very much, including the way Paki Ako supported the child at transition. School and kōhanga reo parents said that Paki Ako provided a comprehensive picture of the essence of their child and their learning.

Paki Ako from kōhanga is about as much information as you need. What’s in there is invaluable. It’s a running record of your child, an amazing book, covers your child’s behaviour, activities from the kid’s point of view. (School parent)

Parents appreciated the collaborative participatory approach to discussion and development of assessment.

We used to discuss assessment at kōhanga whānau hui, which were wonderful because we were all interested in the stories, never got bogged down in systems and processes, we accepted that what was happening for our children was quality, we accepted that kaiako were working to [quality]…. The kōhanga reo provides quality education in a quality te reo foundation of kaupapa.

The kōhanga reo has expectations of each staff member in terms of numbers of stories they write; however, numbers do not drive the story development.

Stories that have the most connections to the kaupapa are from those who have come through the kōhanga reo and kura and have the wairua embedded within the stories. Other forms of assessment cannot capture the wairua, the uniqueness of te ao Māori, kaumatua voices…. Another point is that in
other places the stories may be written in te reo they are not in essence Māori, but have Pākehā thinking.

In a year, each child has 10–12 close-up stories written, two or three a term. In addition, each of the five groups have two group Paki Ako stories a year. These become a resource and are kept electronically as well.

Teachers regarded assessment as being about gathering evidence about how teachers extended the learning, making visible the connections and striving for excellence. Over time they have been able to show connectedness to Te Whāriki and Te Aho Mātua. They consider the stories have become clearer and teaching skills have improved because as teachers they are now conscious of looking for the learning. They are able to have deeper thinking about how to engage in learning, and quality has increased and deepened. Stories that go home to inform parents about te ao Māori are more meaningful. Linking Paki Ako to the kura is a current focus.

**Transition to kura**

Children from kōhanga reo and kura often eat together, do activities together and already know each other well. Children from each setting may go back and forth.

Casual unplanned whānau-type engagement where kaiako from kōhanga bring a group of babies or children through the building and engage on the way is a lovely and important aspect of the link between kōhanga and kura. (School principal)

Transition from kōhanga to kura is a handing over process, usually for two children at a time. Powhiri to kura takes place indoors because children are just moving within the whare. The whole whānau come and kōhanga get together to mihi to the children. A parent whose child had transitioned to the kura when she was 5½ years described the time to learn about the tikanga of the kura as being very valuable.

**Summary**

The kōhanga reo and kura children are 100 percent Māori and whānau are committed to the regeneration of the Māori language and culture in their community.

Paki Ako is the kōhanga reo approach to assessment where multiple voices are included. Paki Ako are embedded in te ao Māori and the foundational values of the kōhanga reo. Paki Ako was developed with whānau through a collaborative and participatory approach. Outcomes from a Māori perspective link to principles and strands of Te Whāriki and Te Aho Mātua. A telling point is that numbers of Paki Ako do not drive the story development. What is essential is that the wairua, the uniqueness of te ao Māori is embedded within the stories—the strongest have come from whānau who have come through the kōhanga reo and kura.

Teachers have been supported over the years through working on Te Whatu Pōkeka Kaupapa Māori Assessment for Learning exemplars and being a Centre of Innovation. A kaumatua and researcher supported the kōhanga reo to develop Paki Ako, which is an ongoing work. Teachers are using Paki Ako to extend learning, make visible the connections and strive for excellence. Teachers say their skills have improved because now they are conscious of looking for the learning.
Totara Kindergarten and School context

Totara is a minor urban town in the North Island. The population has a lower income level, more people aged 15 and over with no formal qualifications, and a higher unemployment rate than for the region as a whole. It has a higher percentage of Māori and of those speaking Māori (see Table 21).

Table 22: Profile of Totara locality (2006 census data)

| Ethnicity of population | 64.0% European, 34.1% Māori (compared with 12.8% Māori for region as a whole), 3.6% Pacific peoples, 4.2% Asian, 0.1% Middle Eastern/Latin American/African, 9.5% Other. 15.3% speak Māori compared with 3.6% for the region. |
| Education | 35.9% of people aged 15 years and over have no formal qualifications, compared with 19.8% for the region. |
| Work | Unemployment rate is 6.9% for people aged 15 years and over compared with 5.2% for the region. |
| Income | Median income of people aged 15 years and over is $18,600 compared with $28,000 for the region. |

The Totara School profile is a contributing primary school (Years 1–6), roll size around 200, decile 3. Five classes are Māori immersion (Level 1) and two classes are bilingual (Level 2/3). The ethnicity of students is 85% Māori, 7% New Zealand Pākehā, 6% Pasifika, and 2% other ethnic groups. The majority of trustees and teachers identify as Māori.

The profile of Totara Kindergarten is detailed in Table 23.

Table 23: Profile of ECE services in the Totara hub

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ECE service</th>
<th>Operational structure and relationship to school</th>
<th>Ethnicities of children</th>
<th>Ages of children, roll size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Totara Kindergarten</td>
<td>Community based, located adjacent to school, governed by a kindergarten association.</td>
<td>Māori 23 Pasifika 8 Asian 7 European Pākehā 41</td>
<td>Age 3: 2 Age 4: 33 Age 5: 44 Total: 79</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The ECE service and school in Totara were chosen for their high percentage of Māori children. Totara Kindergarten used to have 50 percent Māori children but this is no longer the case—yet it is still moderately high with 29 percent. In this section, we highlight how assessment can contribute to bicultural pedagogy in mainstream educational settings.

Totara School

Totara School: Vision for learning

The principal’s vision for learning is “child centred learning for all children and that children have the most opportunities possible to grow and develop. The aspiration is that children: know self; are proud of their identity, know their hapū/iwi and community; and are leaders.”

The school’s written statement emphasises pride in identity and cultural heritage, a broad education and learning dispositions, along with contribution and connectedness to homes, communities, whānau, iwi and hapū.

Vision: [Totara School] believes that the heart of our school is our tamariki/mokopuna, our learners. We believe that every learner has the right to achieve excellence in a wide range of academic, cultural and sporting activities, for they are our leaders and guardians of tomorrow.
**Mission:** Is to provide a safe, supportive and stimulating learning environment to ensure that our graduates develop to their full potential and that they are confident, successful, caring young people, who will become leaders in their homes, communities, whānau, iwi, hapū.

**Aims:** We (staff, parents and BOT) aim to encourage each and every child in all aspects of learning by

- Working together as a team—kotahitanga;
- Providing a balanced curriculum—ako;
- Catering for all abilities—mohiotanga;
- Promoting curiosity, enthusiasm and a thirst for knowledge (life-long learning)—matauranga;
- Encouraging independence and confidence—maiatanga;
- Promoting critical and creative thinking—whakaaro;
- Encouraging respect for themselves and for others—mana/manaakitanga;
- Working with the iwi/hapu/whānau whānui/am community—whanaungatanga;
- Acknowledging and celebrating the diverse gifts, talents, culture and heritage of each child—whakanui within an environment that is caring, stimulating and challenging.

The parents interviewed emphasised their vision for children to be confident—to walk in te ao Māori and to be citizens of the world.

I want my children to be confident in both worlds, to be able to communicate within both worlds, to have a strong foundation in te ao Māori. To have good support systems, and go to university and gain a degree.

To be able to make informed choices and be able to carry through with what they choose to do. To be a leader in their community and have the ability to move back and forwards [across their worlds].

**Totara School: Approaches and systems for assessing learning progress**

The purpose of assessment was conveyed as being to locate children’s achievements in the different curriculum domains, to assess learning progress, and to alert the school to students with accelerated learning and those needing support. Informal and formal assessment processes were described.

*School enrolment information* is provided by parents/caregivers.

*School entry assessment* is done at about 10 weeks and used to gauge competencies and where students might need extra support or extension. Concerns are communicated to the principal, specialist support teachers and to parents. In general, teachers aim to talk with parents about anything that might impact on their child’s learning and learning progress.

This is primarily for my own information and it alerts us to the quick learners and those with gaps in learning who we may need to watch closely. Also we can assess what has been picked up at school and children’s learning styles. We also alert the principal if concerns arise, or we may need to refer to Special Ed and talk to parents. We try to talk to, to catch parents to talk about anything. (New entrant teacher)
Test at six years, observations and a survey. These measures follow up from the first year entry assessment, and identify both accelerated learners and learners in need of support. This assessment information is entered on the school database and shared with all teachers, who go through the results together.

In addition to the six-year assessment, regular assessment information is gathered through

- running records (reading);
- writing samples (monthly);
- maths assessment (every few weeks); and
- general observations with notes about children’s progress.

Teachers said they were aided by small classes which enabled them to assess children’s progress in an in-depth manner.

Parents commented on the ease with which they could make contact and talk with teachers (“No formal appointment is needed. Teachers are obliging”). They described the environment as supportive and one where there is collective responsibility—“You are in the whānau to all children not just your own”.

**Totara School: Use of assessment and information to raise achievement and to communicate with parents and whānau**

This school is innovative in facilitating access to te ao Māori—access to language and culture, to marae, and involving Māori networks of iwi, hapū and particularly whānau. Assessment information is used to raise achievement of all students, including its large number of Māori students. The school’s approach to assessment enables teachers to examine the levels and progress of every child in relation to expectations, and to support and extend identified children. On a schoolwide basis, the school uses e-asTTle to identify learning areas where students are achieving below expected standards, and follows up with professional development to enhance teaching practice in these learning areas. The school is supported by specialist staff: a Resource Teacher: Learning and Behaviour Māori, a Resource Teacher: Literacy, and a Social Worker in Schools.

The following exemplar (Exemplar 21), details how the school sets about developing lines of communication and a relationship with parents and whānau—including its large number of Māori whānau. These relationship-building and information-sharing processes, which aim to develop community and whānau engagement in education, begin before a child enters the school.
Exemplar 21: A school building whānau and community relationships from the beginning

Relationships with whānau start to be built before the child comes to the school. The school encourages parents to come with their child for “pre-entry visits” to meet with their child’s classroom teacher, and spend time in the classroom at each of the times during the school day (early morning, late morning/lunch, afternoon). Parents can come to the classroom at any time.

The written information given to parents encourages parent help and suggests what parents might do in the classroom. For example:

When in the classroom we would like you to:

- Talk with, listen to and interact with the children as much as possible—chatter/conversations/talking about particular tasks.

- Encourage the children to solve their own problems.

- Help, but don’t do everything for them, e.g., using scissors, constructing things.

- Question them about other ways of tackling the task: How will you begin? What to do next? How could you change it? Is there a better way to do this?

The school holds a powhiri for new children and families. This was described by parents interviewed as an opportunity to meet and exchange information face-to-face with teachers and the start of a commitment by parents to the school kaupapa.

Each family must tono (request or apply) to be accepted into the immersion Māori syndicate whānau. This formal process requires that families stand in whānau hui and request acceptance. Parents made the following comments:

Tono process—it is not easy to stand in front of whānau (teachers and parents) to ask to be accepted in. It is a conscious decision on parents’ part to be committed to the whānau and school. Requires a buy into the kaupapa which puts accountability back on parents to the children and the school.

It is an ice-breaker that allows parents and children to develop relationships. The process supports the development and ongoing maintenance of connections and relationships (strengthens whanaungatanga) with whānau and school.

Parents described a positive and trusting relationship with teachers in which they could talk openly, knowing teachers would use the information responsibly and keep it confidential.

Information about children’s character, ahua, if they’re a tangiweto, allergies. Teachers often pick up on it anyway but we are able to confirm it. Also talk about living circumstances, i.e., if parents separated. We trust teachers with our information and know it will be respected, and that it will not go outside the walls. We’re not scoffed at but it is dealt with in a positive way. Teachers are able to deal with information however they need to and they will ask if they need more information from me. There is trust and rapport between parents and teachers.
This parent commentary indicates that they value the tono process even though they find it challenging, acknowledging the commitment it demands and the relationship it initiates. Also important, parents identify the need for mutual trust and respect if they are to share intimate details about their child and family circumstances. Their comments highlight the essential social and relational nature of any sharing and action on information on children’s learning and learning progress.

Teachers reported they use formal individual interviews after assessment and informal visits and conversation, texting and Facebook to articulate the difference they are making to children’s learning to parents and whānau. Parents identified that the generation of a sense of community belonging, the high expectations held by teachers across all learning areas, behaviour, sport and kapahaka, and the “strong and capable management team: contributed to their understanding of the difference school makes to their child’s learning.

Participants were asked to “think about the people you would like your child/ren to be and become. How could you, your school, parents and whānau use assessment and information to help achieve that dream?” The principal, teachers, parents and whānau identified relationships with early childhood services as pivotal. The principal suggested a parent day at the school especially for English-based early childhood services (the school has contact with kōhanga reo already). Teachers would like a programme for 4½-year-olds in ECE to prepare children for school and visits to the school to do maths and handwriting. They considered that often the content of assessments from the early childhood services “is not that useful or valuable”. They indicated children needed to learn “basic things such as cutting, tying shoelaces, sharing, being able to string a sentence together”, indicating a mismatch in expectations between the two groups. Parents suggested better communication between ECE and school. Like teachers, they suggested “a formal process, with teachers discussing what is required for children for school”.

**Totara Kindergarten**

**Totara Kindergarten vision for learning**

Assessing, planning and evaluating of learning is described as “Te Manawa: The heart of the matter” at Totara Kindergarten. Kaiako described the aspirational statement and curriculum principles of *Te Whāriki* as the fundamental basis of the kindergarten kaupapa. The vision for learning showed a commitment to Māori tikanga and values with teaching and learning opportunities flowing from this foundation:

The curriculum is designed and planned to enable children to follow their interests, develop skills and knowledge and values under the umbrella of a philosophy where Te Ao Maori, sustainable/environmental education and whakamana, building mana, are deemed to be vital—both for individual learners and our planet. Aspects of curriculum are designed to encourage development of specific dispositions, values and skills, e.g., aspects of tikanga: manaakitanga—looking after each other, kaitiakitanga—caring for Papatuanuku, Whanaungatanga—valuing family and community, Tuakana/teina— supporting each other.

The parents who were interviewed did not have the same explicit emphasis on tikanga Māori and values but they too emphasised self-esteem and confidence, identity as learners, making a contribution, respect and valuing of others:

We want them to be confident people, content, happy, open and inquisitive, with positive self-esteem. We want them to contribute positively to society/community, to be content in their skins, and appreciate who they are. We want our children to enjoy learning and to be lifelong learners, to be tolerant of others, aware of and value difference, and be respectful.
Totara Kindergarten approaches and systems for assessing learning progress

Totara Kindergarten kaiako were clear about the purposes of assessment:

- to build a picture/knowledge of the child’s identity as a learner;
- to be able to celebrate/share with whānau, working on establishing a culture of sharing/partnership in children’s learning; and
- to support progress in a child’s learning, providing information that will help us scaffold their development.

They reported each type of assessment has an explicit value and purpose; not all assessment is documented but there is a process for documented assessment that informs evaluation and planning. The methods kaiako said they used to gather assessment information were observations, note-taking, korero with child/whānau and each other, and photographs.

Daily notes: Kaiako “notice, reflect and respond” every day to “children’s participation within the curriculum, their sense of wellbeing and belonging, how they engage with us, their social, cognitive, physical, language and emotional [dimensions]”. Each kaiako writes in the “Green Curriculum Planning Book” at the end of session, significant learning, curriculum happenings, and korero with whānau. They read each other’s notes and talk together. Points pertaining to planning are pulled over to the facing page for follow-on conversations at the fortnightly curriculum hui and/or immediate action. The curriculum planning notes are written solely for kaiako, to serve as a reminder and a point for reflecting back.

Documented learning stories: Each child has a “book” with two documented stories a term. A “story list” is kept and monitored to ensure an equitable distribution of stories. Stories are chosen that contribute to the child/whānau vision of themselves as belonging to the kindergarten group, that build their identity as a competent learner and celebrate who they are. When the child first starts, a kaiako who has worked with a new child will write a welcome story and create their pukapuka. This story will reflect the importance of whānau, wellbeing and belonging. “Our aim is that whānau will feel some ownership of the documentation and contribute towards it.” Kaiako try to tie the kindergarten book documentation together, writing after looking at the stories, so that each story becomes part of the bigger story of a child’s learning and development. In this way progression is documented. Kaiako aim to create “a readable, whānau-friendly book. We know how valuable the visual documentation is to children and families. The ‘hard copy’ is often a treat, so many whānau have digital machinery but sometimes they aren’t printed off.”

An “Active Learning” notice-board shows some aspect within the programme. Assessment frames add lenses to the stories such as physical, science, bicultural lenses.

A “term book” has a collection of stories describing some of the curriculum happenings and is mainly connected to group learning opportunities. It was described as “a good reflective tool for children/whānau/students plus archival ‘pataka’, a store-house of curriculum memories, to help us remember things that have happened in the past”.

Kaiako use assessment “to guide our practice and the possibilities we plan for and help us choose the outcomes to focus on. To keep us honest and maintain a curriculum that is planned for possibilities, and to make the most of opportunities for intentional teaching—phrases like ‘We look after each other, ourselves and our place’. ‘Be kind’.”

Parents at Totara Kindergarten were satisfied with the different ways information is provided and opportunities to contribute. “We feel it is a joint partnership where we can contribute if we wish, but there is no pressure.” The documentation and opportunities to talk helped parents understand their child’s learning and development, and the role of the kindergarten.
It helps us understand what is happening and where my child is at. I feel confident about where my child is at and what they’re learning.

[The teachers] know our children and us well. There is a high trust relationship with teachers and we know teachers will tell us whatever is required. The children’s personal profile books give us information about what they’re learning, and we can see it, or children talk about their understandings at home.

This kindergarten was chosen to highlight its pathway toward bicultural assessment practice. The Totara Kindergarten kaiako had clear ideas about outcomes that they valued and an underpinning philosophy of te ao Māori, sustainable/environmental education and whakamana, building mana. Their assessment documentation reinforces this and illustrates how some tikanga Māori concepts are put into practice:

**Manaakitanga**—looking after each other;

**Kaitiakitanga**—caring for Papatuanuku;

**Whanaungatanga**—valuing family and community; and

**Tuakana/teina**—supporting each other.

Assessments included community projects and contributions from children, parents and whānau. The head teacher’s documentation of “Part of the worm sorting team” (Exemplar 22) highlights the kindergarten values of sustainable environmental education and kaitiakitanga. Learning that occurs through such projects was made visible, not only in terms of “how the world works” but also through children gaining “a sense of responsibility for the place”. Caring for the worms was an evident concern: “worms don’t like the light”, “they had to go back under the soil quickly so their skin wasn’t damaged by the sun”, “put all the scraps in the special bucket so they don’t go hungry”. Community contributions are mentioned in the story—“the wooden trough that Brian had made especially for the job”—and the collaborative work of the “worm sorting team” is a focus. In this way community, collectivism and collaboration are made visible and given value in [teacher’s] commentary.
When asked what difference being at the kindergarten made to their child’s learning, parents talked about some of the same values that kaiako had identified:

A huge difference. Children are more confident, tolerant of others, able to explore and build on their experiences. They can be who they want to be.

They discussed some examples of valued learning: making clocks—carpentry skills; understandings of sunburn—science and safety; trips to gym—social and physical skills; camp fire—learning about safety; being away from parents—learning to be independent.

Parents said that communication with kaiako and documentation were the reasons why they knew about their child’s learning and development, suggesting that the systems and processes used at Totara Kindergarten are conveying valued learning.
Totara Kindergarten learning outcomes information documented and exchanged with schools

Children from Totara Kindergarten went to a variety of schools in the community, but unfortunately very few went to Totara School (above). Transition to school was under review and the kaiako had just introduced the concept of a transition-to-school conversation at the age of 4½ years. Children are encouraged to take their kindergarten book to school. Kaiako reported they try to have conversations with school teachers about children whom they feel might struggle but

pressure on schools often means this doesn’t happen as easily as we would like. It is an ongoing goal to maintain strong relationships with all the schools our children move into. It would be great if schools also had this as an ongoing goal for them. They have best intentions but just get ‘bogged down’.

Kaiako would like to know how well their children settle into school, whether they are getting into reading recovery and “who struggles and who does well”.

The parents who were interviewed on the whole regarded transition to school as a parental responsibility and considered parents need to visit the school. Parents agreed that a one-page report from the kindergarten to the school on behavioural issues or special disabilities would help. They did not feel that sharing of personal profiles would be useful. In general parents agreed: “We would like to see the gap between the ECE, the state and schools and parents lessen”.

Summary

A high percentage of Māori students are enrolled in Totara School (85%) and although much lower in the kindergarten, probably because of the existence of kōhanga reo and immersion centres in the community, the percentage is still high (29%). The innovative practices in these two settings highlighted ways in which assessment can embed and contribute to bicultural practice. The settings were innovative in facilitating access to te ao Maori, access to language and culture and marae, and to involving Māori networks of iwi, hapū and particularly whānau.

The school culture and assessment practices encompassed values of whānau collective responsibility for all children. From the start, the powhiri and process where each family must tono to be accepted into the Māori immersion syndicate requires a conscious decision on parents’ part to be committed to the whānau and school. The process strengthens whanaungatanga with whānau and school. Teachers use a range of assessment approaches to monitor learning and learning progress. The school has access to and uses a number of people to both extend and support children’s learning. The school uses a variety of methods (Facebook, texting, formal and informal interviewing) to convey and discuss assessment information. Parents indicated they trusted teachers to support their child and felt they could share information and seek advice as and when they needed or wanted to.

Assessing, planning and evaluating learning was described as Te Manawa or the heart of the matter at Totara Kindergarten. Teachers and parents articulated similar aspirations and goals for children’s learning. Kaiako used a range informal assessment approaches that were linked in with more structured documentation and review processes to ensure a “curriculum that is planned for possibilities and to make the most of intentional teaching”. Assessments documented curriculum learning over the course of a term. They documented community projects and the contributions of children, parents and whānau.

Very few children went from the kindergarten to the school in the study; nonetheless teachers and parents in both settings expressed a wish for better communication and sharing of information between the school and kindergarten.
Karaka Kindergarten and School

Karaka is a suburb in a North Island town. Information about education, work and income of people in this Census Area Unit shows the profile to have a higher percentage of Māori and Pasifika people, a higher number of people with no formal school leaving qualification, higher unemployment, and lower median income than for the region in which the community is located (see Table 24).

Table 24: Characteristics of Karaka locality (2006 census data)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity of Population</th>
<th>59.6% European, 38.2% Māori, 11.4% Pacific peoples, 1.3% Asian, 0.8% Middle Eastern/Latin American/African, 6.6% Other.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>54.1% of people aged 15 years and over have no formal qualifications compared with 30.9% for the region.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work</td>
<td>Unemployment rate is 15.5% for people aged 15 years and over compared with 5.2% for the region.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>Median income of people aged 15 years and over is $15,300 compared with $21,600 for the region.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The single school in the Karaka hub is a state full primary school (Years 1–8). It is a decile 1 school with a roll of around 150 students, with teaching done exclusively in the English medium.

The profile of Karaka Kindergarten is detailed in Table 25.

Table 25: Characteristics of ECE services in the Karaka hub.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ECE service</th>
<th>Operational structure and relationship to school</th>
<th>Ethnicities of children</th>
<th>Ages of children, roll size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Karaka Kindergarten</td>
<td>Community based, located next to primary school.</td>
<td>33 Māori, 23 Pasifika, 0 Asian, 20 European/Pākehā</td>
<td>Age 1: 15, Age 2: 22, Age 3: 22, Age 4: 17, Total: 76</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In this section we highlight ways in which kindergarten assessment made learning visible, invited contribution and reflection and offered a bridge to the school. Strengthening the mana of children and families is a foundational principle.

**Karaka School**

The principal’s vision for Karaka School is that every child is given the right to an education in a safe, caring environment. Written statements outline aspirations of every child being equipped with the tools and skills to set and achieve their goals while the expectations of students are to learn, to be safe and to be respectful within the framework of Positive Behaviour for Learning.

In their focus group interview parents talked about wanting their children to have a “good education to help them get a job”; to be happy, to be able play, and to develop the skills they need to get on with all kinds of people and cultures.

**Karaka School approaches and systems for assessing learning progress**

At Karaka School the purpose of assessment is to inform teaching. There is an expectation that teachers will know what a child’s learning needs are based on assessments in a range of curriculum domains and in accordance with National Standards. Assessment data is gathered from a variety of sources.

Every child has an assessment file containing assessment results and examples of their work. These include a basic reading word list, NumPA Form A and a school specific new entrant assessment. This assessment includes skills such as counting, writing their name, colour recognition, Marie Clay Concepts about Print, a self-portrait drawing, teacher observation of social skills and questions to the child’s family about their family and their child’s friendships and likes and dislikes. The school enrolment form asks parents to identify any concerns they have about their child’s development. In the first month of school a child is assessed using a variety of assessments.

The new entrant teacher reported that she used unit evaluations to inform future teaching and to gain a sense of what children had learned. She had been at the school for only a term and so was still learning the school systems but said she attempted to talk to parents at the beginning or end of each day and to share successes with them about their children.

The focus for Karaka School is on numeracy and literacy. Teachers use assessment information to plan ‘next steps’ for children. E-asTTle is used for gathering reading and writing data for children throughout their school career. Children’s progress in reading is tracked by graphing reading levels. Teacher observations about number knowledge and strategies are recorded on a maths tracking sheet.

Assessment information is used at syndicate level to ascertain which children need support and are ‘below’ or ‘well below’ the Standards. Senior management use this information to ensure they are informed and can keep track of children’s progress. Assessment data is aggregated at the beginning and end of the year to monitor progress and to identify variance in development.

Karaka School is piloting a boys’ and girls’ only classes for Year 8 students; this is particularly in response to Pasifika girls’ learning preferences.

**Karaka School using assessment information to raise achievement and communicate with parents and whānau**

Karaka School uses a variety of methods for informing parents and whānau about their child’s learning. Formal parent-teacher interviews are held twice a year while monthly newsletters also provide information about children’s learning. The parents who were interviewed said that the conversations they had with the teacher when they dropped off or
picked up their child were helpful and they all felt they could approach the teacher with any issues. One parent commented, “You can go into the classroom and see their work. They are bringing home their homework—this all helps us know that children are doing OK.” This point was reiterated by the group. The parents felt it was up to them to seek out information and to get involved at school.

The principal had an aspiration for children to have the learning that they come with from home embedded in their school life. She commented, “Children come from a whole range of learning experiences and we are looking for the bridges that stimulate their learning and this can be a challenge. We call it ‘student voice’ and this is what they bring with them and we want to see it acknowledged in assessment but it is hard.”

The principal talked about the strong relationships the school had with two kindergartens. These relationships had resulted in some useful processes for transitioning children. At the kindergarten adjacent to the school the principal meets with families and children at the kindergarten before they start school. This gives her the opportunity to have a conversation with the families and hear their aspirations for their children. The kindergarten and the school have an ‘open gate’ day every Friday where children can come and go between the two places.

The kindergarten provides a portfolio with documentation of a child’s learning to take with the child to the new entrant classroom. The portfolio is located in the classroom library for children to access at any time.

Parents endorsed the use of a transition portfolio, commenting they liked that it stayed in the classroom. They felt it helped the children settle at school.

At the time of the interview the new entrant teacher was unsure about how to make sense of the information in the portfolio. She considered this was because she was new to the school and had not had a chance to have a discussion with the kindergarten teachers.
Karaka Kindergarten

The Karaka Kindergarten vision for learning, planning and assessment is based around whānau—learning happens for children, teachers and families. They noted the vision is embedded in the principles of *Te Whāriki*. Essential to the learning and assessment of children is mana: mana of children and whānau. The bicultural frame of *Te Whāriki* reflects Māori values and creates possibilities for cultural values to be highlighted.

Learning stories and the woven nature of *Te Whāriki* with principles, strands and learning outcomes encourages teachers to describe learning for children. The bicultural emphasis and the way in which the curriculum emphasises the mana of the child and the principles that reflect Māori values creates lots of possibilities for cultural values to be highlighted in the documentation. Learning stories provide a vehicle to highlight children’s learning no matter who they are and they can show progression of learning and/or learning across different areas and contexts.

Parents talked about the importance of their children being contributors to society, to have their home language valued, and to be able to embrace their culture should they choose. They also emphasised the social aspect of learning.

Socialising with others—being friends, looking out for each other, diversity of cultures, learning foundation skills, learning expectations of appropriate behaviour, taking risks, trying hard, not giving up—parents have learnt that this is important for children, language development, environment offers lots of resources for learning.

Karaka Kindergarten approaches and systems for assessing learning progress.

At Karaka Kindergarten assessment is used to document significant learning for children. This documentation helps build a picture for children and whānau of children’s learning competence. Assessment also includes whānau aspirations and connects with children’s wider lives to take account of their contexts.

Kaiako at Karaka Kindergarten gather learning information about children through informal conversations with whānau and colleagues.

A daily information sheet is used to record significant events that have been noticed by teachers. These are discussed by the team. These discussions take place weekly at staff meeting to inform planning but informal conversations at the end of the day or at lunchtimes also assist with teachers’ responses to children’s learning.

Exemplar 23 below is an example of how pukapuka mahi make learning visible, invite parent responses, and are a medium for reinforcing values and revisiting experiences and learning.
Exemplar 23: Pukapuka mahi making learning visible, inviting contribution and reflection

**Documented learning stories:** Learning stories capture continuous learning from teacher observations and discussions. Learning stories, which include photographs, are displayed on the wall usually after they have been shared with the child and their family. The stories are also put in the child’s pukapuka mahi (a portfolio of their learning). These pukapuka mahi are available and accessible to children and whānau and can be taken home at any time. Information from conversations with whānau is integrated into learning stories and whānau are also invited to write comments. Kaiako endeavour to incorporate words from the child’s home language into the stories. Learning stories highlight dispositions, working theories, skills and key competencies.

Parents commented on the pukapuka mahi and the ways in which learning was made visible for them.

Pukapuka mahi with learning stories that show learning on a continuous basis, community stories on the wall that we can add our voice. Profile books can be looked at at any time, taken home at any time to be shared with others. The pukapuka mahi reflect the culture of the kindergarten and make connections with children’s lives such as including events with families. Pictures children have drawn/painted come home. Newsletters, Facebook page give information too. It’s really open if you want to talk about something.

The four parents interviewed all said they felt very comfortable about talking to the teachers at any time. The information received is very valuable because it helps parents understand what their children are doing at kindergarten. Parents talked about the value of having home language words and phrases used in learning stories. The parents also talked about the value of feeling that they could ‘hang out’ at kindergarten and get involved. This has helped them gain a deeper understanding about their child’s learning. They also talked about having intergenerational links to the kindergarten, that the older children can still come here and remember what they did here. Profile books allow for connections that children can revisit even after they have left. The parents talked about how children’s profile books reflected the culture of the kindergarten and the things that were valued and they wanted their production and use to continue so that their children were growing up with those values.

**Wall displays:** Documentation and stories about specific domain areas or areas of interest are displayed on the wall; for example, literacy or whakaute (respect). Learning stories are used to illustrate these concepts.

**Newsletters:** Two to three times a term newsletters are available for whānau. These contain information about a particular area of interest or learning.

**Facebook page:** This is a recent innovation which is used to inform whānau of events but also contains information on learning that is similar to that in the newsletters.

**Coffee group:** The weekly coffee group is an opportunity to talk to whānau about what is happening in the kindergarten and what children are learning. At the focus group interview parents highlighted the usefulness of coffee group in helping them know what their children were learning.

**Karaka Kindergarten learning outcomes information documented and shared with schools.**

There was evidence of some innovative information sharing practices between Karaka Kindergarten and Karaka School such as the regular ‘open gate’ day. The kindergarten teachers, school principal, new entrant teacher and parents at Karaka School talked about the transition portfolio, indicating it was well known and valued in both settings. The kindergarten teacher’s description and a sample of documentation are detailed in Exemplar 24. This exemplar includes a form that directs attention to the different dispositions and competencies and a learning story on repeating patterns with blocks.
### Exemplar 24: Tōku Mātauranga Oranga: My journey in learning

This portfolio (Tōku Mātauranga Oranga: My journey in learning) contains a letter to the new entrant teacher from the kindergarten teachers highlighting the child’s learning identity. It also contains a page of information constructed by the child and their family and an annotated summary of the learning stories that have been recorded at the kindergarten. The annotations highlight links to *The New Zealand Curriculum* key competencies. The head teacher is currently organising meetings with the principals and new entrant teachers at schools other than Karaka School to talk about Tōku Mātauranga Oranga.

The parents who were interviewed at the kindergarten all had children at Karaka School. They talked about how they liked the transition portfolio because it was something that the children had to take to school that showed their learning.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TE WHĀRIKI</th>
<th>KEY COMPETENCIES</th>
<th>SIGNIFICANT STORIES</th>
<th>ANNOTATION OF STORIES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>Self Management</td>
<td>September 2011—Lyrics With Le‘ama: This Nga Pāci Ako shows Le‘ama being supported to join a group by her kākako recognizing Le‘ama’s attentions. The kākako then encourages her to take turns, enjoy her friends company and develops her confidence to be part of a group. March 2013—Karārehi—A Leader, Mentor to our Friends: This Nga Pāci Ako demonstrates Le‘ama’s growth of dispositions and her confidence to interact with groups of children. Le‘ama has become a well-respected tāuhūa/leader of the Kindergarten and can confidently guide others by gently encouraging them to take turns and make the right choices. She demonstrates daily manaakitanga/caring and kindness.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning</td>
<td>Relating to others</td>
<td>January 2012—Whānau Tangata: Le‘ama is a capable learner who can manage her own self. In this story she demonstrates her skills of caring for the well-being of her younger cousin, by taking tataiki/responsibility to giving him his morning kai.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belonging</td>
<td>Participating &amp; Contributing</td>
<td>March 2010—Remember When? March 2011—A Visit From my Sister, June 2012—Matariki: These Nga Pāci Ako show Le‘ama’s strong connection to our Kindergarten and her special connection to her whānau. Being part of our Kindergarten and having whānau that have been before and are currently actively involved in what we do provides Le‘ama with a feeling of whakapapa; embraced in support and love.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explorer</td>
<td>Thinking</td>
<td>July 2012—A Repeating Pattern with the Blocks: Making your own decisions and problem solving are skills that aid in thinking and exploration. Le‘ama demonstrated this learning as she repeated a pattern with blocks and tested out her thinking by changing the blocks to make them more stable, thus creating a new strategy to support her thinking.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Using language, symbols and texts</td>
<td>September 2011—Le‘ama Prints her Name: Le‘ama shows us her ability to work independently as she finishes a piece of word by writing her name on it. This indicates she has self-knowledge of the letters of her name and understands the order they re-present spells her name.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It was clear from the interviews that Karaka Kindergarten and Karaka School had a strong reciprocal relationship. The principal talked about her vision for developing a community of learners incorporating the two sites and she and the kindergarten head teacher have scheduled a planning day to develop a strategic plan for this vision.

The parents commented that having transition visits (two per week at Karaka School) helped with information sharing and that the kindergarten teachers were very good at communicating about what to expect when their child went to school.

The teachers at Karaka Kindergarten wanted the outcome of their community of learners vision with the school to develop a shared philosophy of how children learn from birth to adults to best ensure continuity of learning. On the other hand, the new entrant teacher felt that early childhood was hamstrung by its vague curriculum from being able to teach children “useful things” such as holding a pencil, how to write their name and the alphabet as part of preparing children for school.
The principal felt there were challenges at the interface of school and early childhood. She commented:

Children are coming in with better levels but we are at early stages because the NE teacher is new. The challenges of current assessment is doing too much and some of it having no purpose. We are trying to be smarter and look at how we could do things better. The challenge is being creative. Children and families are individuals and this needs to be reflected in assessment. Literacy should be interwoven. Children don’t learn inside four walls and from A–Z but the competitive nature of schools tends to make school move away from children and their learning to “What do we look like?”

Summary
Karaka School and Kindergarten have a high percentage of Māori and Pasifika children and are located in a community where many leave school with no formal school leaving qualification. There is high unemployment, and low median income.

The school focus is on assessment to inform teaching with an emphasis on literacy and numeracy. Assessment data is collected from a range of sources and used in planning ‘next steps’. The school develops an assessment file for each child on entry; children’s transition portfolios are located in the classroom library. Parents commented that they learned about their child’s learning and progress by talking informally with the class teacher, through newsletters, classroom wall displays of student work, homework activities and formal parent-teacher interviews. The school had an ‘open-gate’ policy every Friday for children to move back and forth between the school and the kindergarten.

The kindergarten has developed pukapuka mahi for each child, with learning stories capturing learning over time based on teacher observations and discussions. The annotated summary of the selected learning stories makes explicit links between the dispositions in Te Whāriki and the competencies in The New Zealand Curriculum. The pukapuka mahi make learning visible, invite parent responses and are a medium for reinforcing values. They are used by older children and whānau to revisit experiences and learning and are very much valued and enjoyed. It is noteworthy that strengthening the mana of children and whānau flows through in the processes and content of assessment.

Karaka Kindergarten and School have developed reciprocal relationships in which the contribution of each party has been welcomed with further developments planned. This pair illustrates something of the breadth of ways schools and centres can work together, and also the importance of shared understanding and hence the extent that staff changes can impact on how information communicated via documentation is understood and taken up.
Rimu Immersion Early Learning Centre and School

Rimu is a suburb in a provincial city in the North Island. It has a slightly higher percentage of Māori and higher unemployment rate than for the region. The median income is marginally higher.

**Table 26: Characteristics of Rimu locality (2006 census data)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Values</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity of population</td>
<td>European 68 percent; Māori 22.8 percent; Pacific 4.4 percent; Asian 5.9 percent; Middle Eastern/Latin American/African 1 percent; Other 10.4 percent. This compares with European 70.4 percent and Māori 21 percent in the region.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>34.8 percent over 15 have a post school qualification compared with 37.1 percent for the region. 30.8 percent have no formal qualification compared with 29 percent for the region.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work</td>
<td>5.9 percent are unemployed compared with 5.2 percent for the region.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>Median income is $24800 compared with $24100 for the region.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Rimu School is a decile 2 school with a roll size of around 440. It has 74 percent Māori students, 17% Pākehā European, 3% Pacific and 6% other ethnicity. A feature is its six rumaki (immersion) classes and four bilingual classes. It is the base for an RTLB cluster.

The ages and ethnicities of children and characteristics of Rimu Early Learning Centre are detailed in the table below.

**Table 27: Characteristics of Rimu Early Learning Centre**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kōhanga reo</th>
<th>Operational structure and relationship to iuschool</th>
<th>Ethnicities of children</th>
<th>Ages of children, roll size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rimu Early Learning Centre</td>
<td>Community based</td>
<td>Māori 51</td>
<td>Age under 2: 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tongan 1</td>
<td>Age over 2: 40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Total: 52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Rimu School and Early Learning Centre value and provide a foundation for children to develop a strong sense of self and identity as Māori.

**Rimu School values**

The Rimu School’s vision for learning is to provide a holistic learning environment where students are empowered to succeed. The school aims for children to confidently walk into the world knowing who they are—their tūrangawaewae; move comfortably between Māori and Pākehā worlds; have a strong sense of self; know their heritage; be able to stand up and greet; have good knowledge of tikanga of marae, and feel comfortable moving from marae to marae.

This vision for learning, including its assessment processes, are set out below in its Rumaki Graduate profile.
Rimu School approaches and systems for assessing learning progress

Assessments are undertaken in basic number knowledge, alphabet knowledge and Concepts about Print one month after a child starts school. These are used for planning for individual children. Observations are carried out on how the child settles, and children are paired with a buddy based on what they need. Behaviour issues are noted in a diary so they can be dealt with early.

The school uses student portfolios, graduate profiles, ngā whanetanga graphs, and work samples, including examples of reading, writing and maths, to report progress. The following are reading, writing and maths examples.
Exemplar 25: Examples of learning area assessment tasks

‘Tuhia nga kupu kei te ngaro’ requires that the student not only write the missing words but also that they utilise a Māori worldview in the activity. Translated this statement reads—this is the family of Tama Nui te Ra, the sun. The second example identifies the child can write their name, write letters and words, and there are spacings between words. The third example shows the child can identify the numbers that are missing and can count the objects correctly. ‘Te ahunga me te panoni’ requires students to demonstrate their understandings of words such as above, under, inside, and outside and that they are able to place the objects, people or animals correctly. The final example provided evidence of the child’s knowledge of addition.
The school has detailed guidelines on assessment expectations around literacy and numeracy. Each term assessment timelines are reviewed and teachers are informed in writing of the assessment expectations for the term. The school is moving towards collaborative moderation and holds staff meetings on assessment—what we do and why we do it. Senior teachers are released to review assessment procedures and a manual on assessment in the school is about to be released.

MUSAC is the data management system used by the school to record assessment. The school leadership has plans to change some of the headings in MUSAC to make it more user friendly. The school principal said they have made a lot of changes to help the school make robust valid teacher judgements. Graphs are produced in reading, writing and maths, setting out the number and percentage of students at each level for reading, writing and mathematics. Graphs also set out the number of students who are currently exceeding Ngā Whanaketanga Rumaki Māori, currently achieving Ngā Whanaketanga Rumaki Māori, currently working towards Ngā Whanaketanga Rumaki Māori, and currently needing extra support towards achieving Ngā Whanaketanga Rumaki Māori. In response to parents’ wishes, colours are used for these levels. Rumaki report against Ngā Whanaketanga Rumaki Māori and National Standards.

Alongside written reporting to parents at the end of Term 1 and beginning of Term 3, student-led conferences are used for face-to-face reporting. Attendance at conferences is monitored and the school tries to catch up with all parents. The child’s portfolio, graduate profile, graphs and work samples are used in these conferences.

As much as possible we get the children to articulate their own learning—goals where they’re at and where they going. Parents can look at the graph and know where their child is at. Also we use National Standards yearly pamphlets that show parents where their child is at on that level and what they can be doing at home. If parents do not attend the Term 3 conference we provide a written report that is sent home so parents are still kept informed. All parents receive a detailed plain language report at the end of the year. Reporting takes place throughout the year so there are no surprises. Parents
report they always know where their children are at and can ask questions. Reports are really clear and all set out in similar way. They include values and key competencies, reading, writing, maths (below, average and above). This is what they can do, these are the next learning steps, and this is what can be done at home.

The school principal supports National Standards and Ngā Whanaketanga on the basis that parents have a right to know where and how their child is achieving. The school is working on improving tools to ensure assessment and reporting are robust and valid.

Rimu School: Use of assessment for priority learners

The school is 74% Māori. Most Rumaki children do not get specialist support “as they do not tend to need it, but there is also a lack of Māori speakers in specialist support groups. Rumaki does not reflect the community—parents are more educated and involved because they made the choice to be in Rumaki”. The principal commented that of 100 children in Rumaki, 64 are from out of zone. “The demand for Rumaki is increasing and there is not the capacity in the city to cope with demand, there are not enough Rumaki teachers.”

Assessment is used to identify any support needs, including health, eye and ear checks and needs associated with family background. Portfolios of assessments are used to identify gaps and inform planning, to place children in similar ability classes and identify whether children need extra support from the kaiahwina.

Analysis of assessment data is done at the end of year—by whole school data, year level data, gender, and ethnicity. This drives the school budget and professional development, and is used to set targets for ethnicity, children who are below and also children who are well above. The school considers whether intervention is needed within the classroom or additional to classroom or from outside agencies, such as RTLB. The school manages a lot of outside experts as well as a pastoral care programme that has been developed over time to support whānau.

Rimu School: Challenges

From the principal’s perspective, the main challenges are showing progress through finding tools to demonstrate that children who started well below and are now just below average. There is

- a need to keep working on improving tools to ensure reporting is valid;
- a need to increase teacher knowledge and quality of education for Māori students. “Good intentions are not going to accelerate learning, we need professionals, quality teaching, we need quality teachers;” and
- a need to “look at tertiary providers as there is too much theory and not enough hands on nuts and bolts of teaching—reading, writing and maths. Need the ‘how’ of teaching not just the theory!”

The one parent interviewed said it was still “early days” but they were satisfied with catching up with the teacher one-on-one once a term. They noted the school was always a welcoming environment where they felt comfortable talking with someone should they feel the need.

Rimu Early Learning Centre: Values

The vision for learning incorporates holistic learning, Māori values and community.
Whakatauki

Ko ngā tamariki ō ē nei rā hei rangatira mō āpōpō

Vision of [education institution]

[Education institution] will provide holistic education opportunities of the highest quality for Māori, peoples of Aotearoa and the World.

Ō mātou uara – Our values

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Te Aroha</th>
<th>Having regard for one another and those for whom we are responsible and to whom we are accountable.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Te Whakapono</td>
<td>The basis of our beliefs and the confidence that what we are doing is right.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ngā Ture</td>
<td>The knowledge that our actions are morally and ethically right and that we are acting in an honourable manner.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kotahitanga</td>
<td>Unity amongst iwi and other ethnicities; standing as one.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whakamana</td>
<td>Children know and feel the strength of their identity and are empowered by it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kotahitanga</td>
<td>Education and care encompass our cognitive, social, cultural, physical, emotional, and spiritual dimensions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whānau Tangata</td>
<td>Supportive families and communities are integral to our education and care.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ngā Hononga</td>
<td>We learn through responsive and reciprocal relationships with people, places and things.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Te Reo Rangatira</td>
<td>We hold steadfast to our Māori language</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The vision was described by the teacher interviewed as:

Kia rangatira te tua ngā tamariki/mokopuna. Getting them ready for their journeys. We have a holistic approach to education for kura. Learning along with whānau, meeting positive challenges. The vision is about values and beliefs.

Parents interviewed emphasised their aspirations for their child’s identity, tikanga and te reo Māori.

I want my child to be well educated in values, fluent in tikanga, know and value others, treat people with respect, know they can do anything they want, and value people.

To be a healthy and active member of the community. To be strong in her own identity. To know who she is, where she’s from. More Māori culture, be exposed to te reo. To be happy in herself and mindful of morals and values. To have an expectation of success. To be successful in what she wants to be and do. Whānau is important—sharing and caring—provides the whanaungatanga.

**Rimu Early Learning Centre approaches and systems for assessing learning progress**

When children start at Rimu Early Learning Centre they are given a questionnaire asking about the where the child is from, people who are important to them, marae, some family values, and health information. Parents come with their child for a week before the child starts and have many opportunities to ask questions and give information. Korero face-to-face and interaction with whānau is valued.

We value different perspectives. Exchange understandings, what we want—a shared approach with whānau, everybody including support services. We document movies, whānau record themselves speaking. We don’t want there to be any barriers. We want to make visible what is happening.

The centre does one or two formal written assessments for each child every year as well as written informal ongoing assessments. The centre uses Te Whatu Pōkeka—Mohiotanga, Matauranga, Maramatanga as a basis for the assessment process.

The following exemplar (Exemplar 26) provided evidence of a child’s involvement in self-assessment.
Cycles of assessment, planning and implementation are followed. First, a five-week assessment round takes place concentrating on a group of children. Assessment is based upon individual learning.

- In week 1, children are observed at play to see where the child is at—Mohiotanga. Teachers talk to whānau about who the child is.
- In week 2, kaiako come together to plan. They discuss the feedback from the whānau and decide what goals and strategies are going to be set for the child for the following weeks.
- Weeks 3 & 4 is “the implementation for strategies, setting out activities and doing what we can for individual children, grouping children if appropriate so kaiako can apply the same strategies”.
- In week 5, kaiako capture evidence of those strategies and can see the progress they are making with the goals. “We write the analysis and evaluation—the puawaitanga (analysis of what has been achieved). So we start with the kakano (seed) and we nurture it, to where it blossoms What the child has done is written down. We try to talk to whānau in this time to ask what they have seen and what difference we are making from the whānau’s perspective. Whanake ake—where to next? The group of kaiako will stay with the child for two terms then the assessments are passed to the next group of kaiako.” When the next group of kaiako write up the goals for the child, with consultation with whānau, they make links to the “where to next” from previous assessments. Links made to Te Whāriki are important to help kaiako understand and interpret those learning outcomes.

As well, anecdotal assessments are used. Kaiako write about something they saw or believe is important at any time, including whānau ideas and perspectives.
Learning outcomes information that is documented and exchanged at transition points

**Between ECE and school at transition points**

*Rimu School* liaises with early childhood providers. It regularly visits the local kindergarten and once a term the kindergarten comes to school. Four year olds have six weeks of preschool visits every term to get to know routines, expectations, make some friends, and go to the library. Children are said to be more likely to succeed if they are happy and feeling good about themselves. Te kōhanga reo children come over as a group—“We awhi children into the school, and we invite them to special events in the school.”

The school principal said it would be useful to have information from the ECE centre about basic skills, and if a child can count to 10, know some letters, will listen to a story, can go to the toilet, and can hang their own bag up.

An ECE parent interviewed felt that she was not sure that everything was being done to make the next step comfortable. She suggested a more structured day for those children close to transition that included activities such as eating their lunch and writing their name. Children need to feel confident, to have strong self esteem and a foundation in te reo.

**With parents and whānau**

Both the school and early learning centre use a variety of means to exchange information with parents and whānau. An emphasis is placed by both on having an open door policy and verbal exchange of information.

The school holds parent/whānau nights with a barbecue twice a year and showcases events at school. Formal reporting is through student-led conferences, mid-term reports and end of year reports. Each child has a portfolio with a range of information that includes attitudes to learning, samples of work, photographs of activities, and any assessments.

The early learning centre uses a whakatauki—ehara taku toa i te toa takitahi engari he toa takitin i—success through the collective not the individual. “For me here the individual is us as an ECE service. It is our role with parents and whānau to provide an extension for the tamaiti from home (mohiotanga) and to develop, extend, and introduce familiar, new, and different opportunities for learning and development towards their lifelong learning. We are a part of that very important journey. Nāku te rourou nāu te rourou ka ora ai te iwi.”

The teacher said she had been challenged by the question of how we articulate the difference we are making to a child’s learning to parents and whānau. However, she said a key difference their service articulates for parents/whānau and their tamaiti/tamariki is promoting and valuing “being Māori”.

**Summary**

*Rimu School* and Early Learning Centre each have a high percentage of Māori children attending. They share a common vision for children. This vision provides the foundation for children to develop a strong sense of self and identity as Māori. It focuses on children becoming knowledgeable about their culture, language, history and place, and a wish that this knowledge supports children to participate fully in, and move comfortably between, Māori and Pākehā worlds. The service and school have an expectation that children will succeed both in education and in life. They adhere strongly to the belief that whānau play a crucial role in achieving this aspiration for children. The proverb “Nāku te rourou nāu te rourou ka ora ai te iwi”—“With your food basket and my food basket the people will be fed”—highlights that educating young children requires a meaningful partnership between service/school and community.

Alongside plentiful opportunities for informal discussion with parents, the focus of formal assessment in the school rumaki is on reading, writing and mathematics, set within a kaupapa Māori framework of te ao Māori. Formal
communication with parents and whānau is through student-led conferences where the child’s portfolio, graduate profile, graphs and work samples are used, and written reporting.

Similarly the early learning centre values informal communication with parents and whānau. It uses Te Whatu Pōkeka for written assessment and follows systematic cycles of observation, planning, implementation and evaluation for each child.
Reference


APPENDIX 1: UMU MAKING: ORIGINAL

Umukaking

Belonging Goal One: Children are developing an understanding of the links between the early childhood education setting and the known and familiar wider world through people, images, objects, languages, sounds, smells, and tastes that are the same as at home.

While a staff member was trimming the banana tree, several children approached her and she informed the children about the story of the banana leaves. By listening to the story, the children placed their banana leaves on their heads as it was “raining”. The children decided they would do exactly the same.

The children then decided they would bring the banana leaves over to the picnic table and start preparing them for the “umu”. A staff member showed them the process that they would do to create their umu and first of all they had to prepare the banana leaves.

The children continued to prepare the leaves and then placed food in the leaves. They informed the staff around them what food they were putting into the umu in English and Te Reo Kuki Arani. “Meika-pi” (unripe (green) Banana), “Kumara”

After preparing all the food, the children placed it into several containers and placed it on the picnic table to cook for a few minutes (hours).

The staff member yelled out, “it’s cooked!” and several children came in and picked their each individual food. They enjoyed yummy kaikai (food).

Meitaki tamariki ma
What’s happening here?

The children are making links from the centre to the outside world. They are forming these links and making connections.

The children are extending their knowledge of how to prepare food not just at home but from different cultures.

The children are developing a perception of themselves as capable of acquiring new interests and abilities.

The children are continuing to work on their relationships that they have with the adults/other children in the centre. They are figuring out what skills and strategies they can use in regards to each relationship they have.

The children are expanding their knowledge in the wider world and realising that the same at home can be different at punanga. An example of this is to do with food being cooked in the oven at home and food being cooked in an “umu”

What next:

We will continue to provide the children with a number of opportunities that extends their knowledge and also makes them intrigued. Opportunities include: shells, dance.