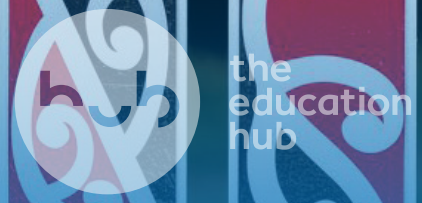


# Culturally responsive assessment based on Kaupapa Māori



ECE resources

Culturally responsive assessment, which informs culturally responsive teaching, is recognised as laying a strong foundation for future learning and education success, particularly for priority learners. Children's achievement is improved when language and culture are consistent between home and ECE. To enable this, Kaupapa Māori assessment approaches have been developed by ECE centres in collaboration with New Zealand researchers. Kaupapa Māori involves perceiving the world from a Māori perspective and normalising Māori values, behaviours and understandings as valid. It entails implementing Māori processes and understandings within a Māori philosophical framework.

Kaupapa Māori places the concept of the empowered child with unique strengths, abilities and competencies at the centre of understanding about learning and assessment. This allows learning and assessment to be influenced by Māori ways of knowing and being, expectations of success and support for the aspirations of Māori whānau. Accordingly, approaches to assessment empower Māori children, acknowledging their unique cultural capital and enhancing the mana of the child and their whānau.

There are three Māori concepts that describe the stages of the learning process:

- **Mohiotanga:** what the child already knows and can do, which they bring to the learning experience
- **Mātauranga:** the challenge involved in learning something new and the struggle of learning as the learner comes to understand it
- **Maramatanga:** the understanding and feeling of achievement that comes from the struggle

## Recognising Māori identity

Kaupapa Māori assessment begins with the recognition of what and who children bring to the ECE setting: their strengths, history, traditions, whānau and whakapapa. It is essential not to marginalise the child's Māori identity nor focus on perceived deficiencies. The Māori child emerges from their family and cultural traditions, and is strongly linked with their whānau, hapū and iwi. Their holistic wellbeing is linked to their whakapapa, through which the child inherits many characteristics, including **mana** (potential and spiritual power), **mauri** (living essence) and **wairua** (spiritual self). The following concepts are key:

- **A learning child** with endless potential and possibilities, like a seed that is open to growth and development. The child uses energy to absorb new knowledge and learn from new experiences, people, places and things through the processes of mohiotanga, mātauranga and maramatanga. New knowledge contributes to the child's resilience and enhances their mana.
- **An emotional and spiritual being** with wairua, linked to spirituality, and the unique attributes the child is born with, which help to define his or her place in the world. Teachers need to recognise and acknowledge who the Māori child is and his or her links through ancestors to the spirit world.
- **A powerful child** with mana, derived from their spiritual power (mana atua). Almost all activities are related to upholding mana, while learning and education can enhance mana. The child's mana needs recognition and must be nurtured. The expression and assertion of mana includes standing up for oneself and others, sharing ideas confidently, and having a positive self-concept and views

about one's relationships and place in the world. Children need to have a strong sense of identity and belonging.

- **The child as life force** with mauri, which remains with them all their lives. It is important for the child to be physically and socially well, so that mauri is in a state of balance. Mauri is linked to positive self-esteem, learning, knowledge, enlightenment, respect and harmonious relationships with others and with the world. The mauri of the child can be protected and nurtured by respecting and valuing each child and supporting them to engage in learning.

### What does this mean for assessment practice?

- Māori learners should be observed and recognised as children of their indigenous culture in ways that accept, value and sustain the child's individuality.
- Assessment should reinforce views of the Māori child as holding personal and collective power, potential, resilience, strengths and aspirations, and focus on promoting and encouraging the growth of the child's mana.
- Assessment should make visible learning that is valued within te ao Māori. This means developing a kaupapa for Māori learners that underpins practice. For example, teachers might identify particular Māori values that are significant for their setting, such as **manaakitanga** (caring, friendship, love and nurture), **whānaungatanga** (relationships and responsibilities), **rangatiratanga** (leadership, confidence, self-determination) or **whakatoi** (playfulness and cheekiness). Articulation of guiding values aims to strengthen the place of Māori in the world, and encompass all the important dimensions of learning for a Māori child.
- Whānau engagement and contributions are crucial to a vibrant kaupapa Māori assessment process.

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### Further reading

Fitzgerald, G. (2015). Unpacking my kete: Ko te kore – the child has potential. Retrieved from [https://www.elp.co.nz/files/unpacking\\_my\\_kete\\_ko\\_te\\_kore-2.pdf](https://www.elp.co.nz/files/unpacking_my_kete_ko_te_kore-2.pdf)

Rameka, L. (2009). Kaupapa Māori assessment: A journey of meaning-making. *Early Childhood Folio*, 13, 32-6.

Rameka, L. (2013). Culturally relevant assessment: Kaupapa Māori assessment in early childhood. *Early Education* 54, 12-17.

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