

APPENDIX D Sample Curriculum and Assessment Statements

Most publicly funded large organizations turn to commercially available curriculums and assessment tools as an easy way to meet the requirement to adopt a “research-based” curriculum. While this is understandable, it often leads to an interpretation that a more child-responsive, emergent approach to curriculum planning is not compatible with this requirement. Appendix D offers examples of documents that agencies have used to clarify the philosophical and theoretical components of an approach that is in line with those promoted in *Learning*

Together with Young Children. Additional examples can be found across Canadian provinces as they define Early Learning Frameworks.

Also included is a collaboratively developed document with a specific example of how to turn requirements into something that keeps the child at the center of the process, rather than required assessments. Consider all of these as models for expanding what is possible in holding yourself accountable for the standards and approaches you want to uphold.

Puget Sound ESD Head Start Curriculum Statement

Puget Sound ESD Head Start in Burien, Washington, offers another example of an agency addressing current Head Start requirements to name the research-based curriculum they use. Puget Sound ESD wanted their teachers to use an emergent curriculum approach and developed the following statement for their curriculum.

Puget Sound ESD Head Start Curriculum Statement

Puget Sound ESD Head Start sees every child as a whole person who is capable, intelligent, resourceful, experienced, and a learner. We use a locally designed, emergent curriculum drawn from the ideas and practices embedded in *Authentic Childhood* (Fraser and Gestwicki 2002), *Reflecting Children's Lives* (Curtis and Carter 1996), and *The Creative Curriculum* (Dodge, Colker, and Heroman 2002). Curriculum encompasses experiences and environment (physical space, social interactions, and daily routines and rituals) designed and arranged to foster learning and development.

Goal

The optimal development of the whole child: social-emotional, language/literacy, cognitive, physical, and creative domains.

The Role of the Family

- Families are a valuable source of information and share insights about their child's interests, abilities/skills, strengths, and needs.
- Families and teachers collaborate to create individual learning goals to be incorporated into the environment, materials, experiences, and daily routines.

The Role of the Teacher

- Teachers develop supportive relationships with children that foster positive social and emotional development: empathy, problem-solving, camaraderie, self-regulation, confidence, persistence, resilience, and self-esteem.
- Teachers respect children's emerging interests and inquiries and develop them into topics for discussion, exploration, and group projects.
- Teachers provide opportunities for children's multiple learning styles in the environment, experiences, and materials.
- Teachers use a range of strategies and tools to support and extend the learning goals based on the objectives outlined in the ECEAP/Head Start Early Learning document.
- Based on the elements of the Portfolio System of Assessment (observations/work samples and the Developmental Profile Checklist) and family contributions, teachers plan, implement, and individualize for children and the classroom community.
- Teachers incorporate planned health, nutrition, and safety experiences, and a personal safety curriculum, "Talking About Touching," into the child development program.

The Role of the Environment

- The cultures and languages of children and families are reflected by the materials chosen to create a richly diverse environment.
- Both the indoor and outdoor environments are provisioned and planned to provide a variety of opportunities for active learning, creativity, and social interactions.
- The environment conveys the unique personality and values of the children, families, and staff.
- The design and arrangement of the environment evolves in response to the changing interests and growth of the children and to stimulate ongoing development.

Assessment for Learning in Aotearoa/New Zealand

With thanks to the Aotearoa/New Zealand Ministry of Education, we have extracted a portion of its description of the early childhood exemplar books, which offer examples of assessments that make visible learning the Ministry defines as valued, and reflect the philosophy and four principles of New Zealand's curriculum Te Whāriki. These examples illustrate how assessment can help the learning community develop ongoing and diverse learning pathways. Assessment sits inside the curriculum, and assessments do not merely describe learning, they also construct and foster it.

Kei Tua o te Pae—Assessment for Learning: Early Childhood Exemplars

Having Clear Goals

Assessment for learning implies that we have some aims or goals for the children's learning. Te Whāriki provides the framework for defining learning and what is to be learned. The goals and indicative learning outcomes are set out in strands.

WELL-BEING/MANA ATUA

The health and well-being of the child are protected and nurtured. Children experience an environment where their health is promoted, their emotional well-being is nurtured, and they are kept safe from harm.

BELONGING/MANA WHENUA

Children and their families feel a sense of belonging. Children . . . experience an environment where connecting links with the family and the wider world are affirmed and extended; they know that they have a place; they feel comfortable with the routines, customs, and regular events; they know the limits and boundaries of acceptable behavior.

CONTRIBUTION/MANA TANGATA

Opportunities for learning are equitable, and each child's contribution is valued. Children experience an environment where there are equitable opportunities for learning, irrespective of gender, ability, age, ethnicity, or background; they are affirmed as individuals; they are encouraged to learn with and alongside others.

COMMUNICATION/MANA REO

The languages and symbols of their own and other cultures are promoted and protected. Children experience an environment where they develop nonverbal and verbal communication skills for a range of purposes; they experience the stories and symbols of their own and other cultures; they discover and develop different ways to be creative and expressive.

EXPLORATION/MANA AOTŪROA

The child learns through active exploration of the environment. Children experience an environment where their play is valued as meaningful learning and the importance of spontaneous play is recognized; they gain confidence in and control of their bodies; they learn strategies for active exploration, thinking, and reasoning; they develop working theories for making sense of the natural, social, physical, and material worlds.

There are particular dimensions for considering Māori educational advancement, which are outlined in the document.

Documenting Assessment

Some assessment will be documented, but most of it will not. There should be a balance between documented and undocumented interactions, and the two kinds of interactions should be in tune with each other.

The phrase “assessment for learning” implies an assumption that we develop ideas about “what next?” and the exemplars include many examples of planning from assessments. Usually the child will decide “what next?” For example, a child may decide whether to repeat an attempt on a jigsaw puzzle that was successfully completed yesterday or to try a more difficult one. Teachers, often in negotiation with a learner, will also make decisions about “what next?” and how to respond to what the learner does. Most teachers’ decisions or negotiations will be undocumented and spontaneous, but there are good arguments for documenting some of the possible next steps.

Assessment for Learning

NOTICING, RECOGNIZING, AND RESPONDING

Assessment for learning is described as “noticing, recognizing, and responding,” a description from Bronwen Cowie’s work on assessment in science classrooms. These three processes are progressive filters. Teachers notice a great deal as they work with children, and they recognize some of what they notice as “learning.” They will respond to a section of what they recognize.

Mary Jane Drummond’s definition of assessment adds more to this description of assessment for learning: “[the] ways in which, in our everyday practice, we [children, families, teachers, and others] observe children’s learning [notice], strive to understand it [recognize], and they put our understanding to good use [respond].”

The early childhood exemplar books use the term “assessment for learning.” Many writers call this “formative assessment.” Philippe Perrenoud says that “any assessment that helps the pupil [child] to learn and develop is formative,” and adds, “development and learning depend on countless factors that are often interrelated. Any assessment that helps to optimise one or more of these factors, to however small a degree, can be considered formative.”

Perrenoud includes children’s motivation, their social identities as learners, their views about learning, and the learning atmosphere among these “countless factors.”

One important connection between assessment and learning is feedback. Research tells us that feedback to learners improves learning. Some of this feedback will be through documentation (such as assessments that families and teachers can read back to children and photographs that children can “read” themselves). Some of it will be verbal. Some of it will be nonverbal (through a gesture, a nod, or a smile). Feedback tells the learners what outcomes are valued in the learning community and how they are doing, and it acknowledges the goals that children set for themselves.

Teachers share stories as well as feedback and this enriches their noticing, recognizing, and responding.

EVERYDAY CONTEXTS

Assessments are carried out in everyday contexts. A major purpose of documentation is that it will inform everyday, undocumented, interactive teaching and spontaneous feedback, making children’s interactions richer and more reciprocal. The curriculum is at its best when activities and conversations are sited in meaningful contexts.

PROTECTING AND ENHANCING THE MOTIVATION TO LEARN

Assessment for learning will protect and enhance children’s motivation to learn. In 2002, Terry Crooks, one of New Zealand’s leading commentators on assessment, set out some requirements for effective learning. He emphasizes motivation: People gain motivation and are most likely to be learning effectively when they experience success or progress on something they regard as worthwhile and significantly challenging.

ACKNOWLEDGING UNCERTAINTY

The phrase “assessment for learning” suggests that we know what an appropriate next step might be, and for complex learning we don’t always know.

LISTENING TO CHILDREN

One way of responding to the inevitable uncertainty is to get to know the children well, to listen and observe carefully, and to respond appropriately. One of the exemplar books demonstrates how children can comment on their own learning, set their own targets, and do their own assessing.

COLLECTIVE ASSESSMENTS

This curriculum emphasizes the critical role of socially and culturally mediated learning and of reciprocal and responsive relationships for children with people, places, and things. Children learn through collaboration with adults and peers, through guided participation and observation of others, as well as through individual exploration and reflection. Thus, the documented assessments are both collective and individual and are often dictated by the children.

KEEPING A VIEW OF LEARNING AS COMPLEX

Worthwhile educational outcomes are often complex, especially if they are about relationships and participation. Te Whāriki states that “the outcomes of a curriculum are knowledge, skills, and attitudes” and that they “combine together to form a child’s ‘working theory’ and help the child develop dispositions that encourage learning.” A focus on learning dispositions, accompanied by the aspiration that children should be secure in their sense of belonging and in the knowledge that they make a valued contribution to society, foregrounds children’s strengths and achievements. Assessment notes what children can do when they are “at their best.”

Recognizing complexity means viewing assessment as something much more complex than assigning marks or checking boxes. No one format is “right,” but the Te Whāriki principles provide four evaluative criteria:

- Is the identity of the child as a competent and confident learner protected and enhanced by the assessments?
- Do the assessment practices take account of the whole child?
- Do the assessment practices invite the involvement of family and whanau [extended family]?
- Are the assessments embedded in reciprocal and responsive relationships?

In the assessment documentation or “learning story,” annotations follow a standard question-and-answer format:

- What is happening here?
The answer gives a brief description of what is happening.
- What aspects of the area specified does this assessment exemplify?
The answer explains why this assessment was chosen.
- How might this documented assessment contribute to developing the area specified?
The answer suggests how this assessment might be used to support learning and development in the relevant area.
- What might this tell us about informal noticing, recognizing, and responding in this place?
The assessment process is part of the pedagogy that occurs in the context of reciprocal and responsive relationships in each setting.

Assessment from the Child's Perspective

The New Zealand approach to assessment asks teachers to consider questions from the child's voice as centers begin their journey of ensuring accountability through evaluation and assessment. These questions are built on the principles of their

Te Whāriki curriculum, which provides the framework for defining learning and what is to be learned. Their goals are based on clearly defined values and reflect the following strands:

Belonging	Do you appreciate and understand my interests and abilities and those of my family?	Do you know me?
Well-being	Do you meet my daily needs with care and sensitivity?	Can I trust you?
Exploration	Do you engage my mind, offer challenges, and extend my world?	Do you let me fly?
Communication	Do you invite me to communicate and respond to my own particular efforts?	Do you hear me?
Contribution	Do you encourage and facilitate my endeavours to be part of the wider group?	Is this place fair for us?

Getting to Know Each Child Books

Home-made books for each child serve several objectives:

- Promoting careful observation skills in teachers to get to know key aspects of each child
- Fostering an identity for each child as a competent learner
- Strengthening relationships and collaboration with each child's family
- Offering a concrete tool each family can take to their child's next teacher

Questions to guide observation and documentation collection:

- Who is this child as a member of a family/culture/community?
- What curiosities, interests, and enjoyment does this child have?
- How does this child try to become a friend and what friendships are emerging for this child?
- How does this child approach learning something new?
- What example can you offer of how this child pursued an investigation or inquiry? Grew in a particular area? How is this child developing an identity as a learner?
- Why are you delighted to have this child in your group?

Ideas for coaches, directors, ed coordinators, and mentor teachers in providing pedagogical leadership to promote reflection, intentionality, and strong images and relationships with children and families:

- In every meeting, include the question for teachers "what have you seen this week that makes you curious or delights you?"
- In every visit to classroom, model a quick conversation about something you notice that a child is doing that you are delighted by or curious about.
- Provide regular practice of describing a photo or observation of children by identifying how you connect responses to your values by saying your answers to these prompts: Because I value. . . I wonder. . . I want to try. . .
- Assign each teacher the task of starting to know each new child by developing a little book about them. Each week they should focus on a different question for a page in each child's book and then add more pages to that question as the year goes along. At the end of this child's time with you, send this book home as a gift to the family; also make a copy or extract portions to have the family take to the new school or kindergarten.

Getting to Know You Book—Guiding Questions for Teachers

Getting to know each child assignment: Using the guiding questions highlighted below, integrate what you know about each child by developing a little book about them. Each week focus on a different question for a page in each child’s book and then add more pages to that question as the year goes along. At the end of this child’s time with you, send this book home as a gift to the family; also make a copy or extract portions to have the family take to the new school or Kindergarten. You may also suggest that parents use the book as a way to begin the

conversation with new teachers and administrators to encourage them to see the child for their unique talents, gifts, and opportunities to support learning and success in school rather than being defined by a group or by select behaviors or characteristics.

For each child, create a little photo book with pages including information from the guiding questions below. Some questions include suggestions on alignment with objectives in Teaching Strategies Gold (TSG) and High/Scope KDIs.

Q.1: Who is this child as a member of a family/culture/community?

Feedback from families and from what you’ve learned from observations over the year. Consider including a family photo, drawings they may have created of the members of their family (immediate, extended, pets, or house). You may also consider including feedback from a parent survey or meeting and/or asking parents to write a letter to the child to include.

Q.2: What curiosities, interests, and enjoyment does this child have?

Feedback from families and from what you’ve learned from observations over the year. This may include themes in their play, quotes from questions or predictions they made, and so on.

Q.3: How does this child try to become a friend and what friendships are emerging for this child?

*Here are some suggestions for linking your observations and reflections from **TSG** or **KDI** to the guiding question above.

Social–Emotional

1. Regulates own emotions and behaviors
 - Manages feelings*
 - Follows limits and expectations*
 - Takes care of own needs appropriately*
2. Establishes and sustains positive relationships
 - Forms relationships with adults*
 - Responds to emotional cues*
 - Interacts with peers*
 - Makes friends*
3. Participates cooperatively and constructively in group situations
 - Balances needs and rights of self and others*
 - Solves social problems*

B. Social and Emotional Development

1. **Self-identity:** Children have a positive self-identity.
2. **Sense of competence:** Children feel they are competent.
3. **Emotions:** Children recognize, label, and regulate their feelings.
4. **Empathy:** Children demonstrate empathy toward others.
5. **Community:** Children participate in the community of the classroom.
6. **Building relationships:** Children build relationships with other children and adults.
7. **Cooperative play:** Children engage in cooperative play.
8. **Moral development:** Children develop an internal sense of right and wrong.
9. **Conflict resolution:** Children resolve social conflicts

Q.4: How does this child approach learning something new?

*Here are some suggestions for linking your observations and reflections from **TSG** or **KDI** to the guiding question above.

Cognitive

1. Demonstrates positive approaches to learning
 - Attends and engages*
 - Persists*
 - Solves problems*
 - Shows curiosity and motivation*
 - Shows flexibility and inventiveness in thinking*
2. Remembers and connects experiences
 - Recognizes and recalls*
 - Makes connections*
3. Uses classification skills
4. Uses symbols and images to represent something not present
 - Thinks symbolically*
 - Engages in sociodramatic play*

A. Approaches to Learning

1. **Initiative:** Children demonstrate initiative as they explore their world.
2. **Planning:** Children make plans and follow through on their intentions.
3. **Engagement:** Children focus on activities that interest them.
4. **Problem solving:** Children solve problems encountered in play.
5. **Use of resources:** Children gather information and formulate ideas about their world.
6. **Reflection:** Children reflect on their experiences.

Q.5: What example can you offer of how this child pursued an investigation or inquiry? Grew in a particular area?

*Here are some suggestions for linking your observations and reflections from **TSG** or **KDI** to the guiding question above.

Science and Technology

1. Uses scientific inquiry skills
2. Demonstrates knowledge of the characteristics of living things
3. Demonstrates knowledge of the physical properties of objects and materials
4. Demonstrates knowledge of Earth's environment
5. Uses tools and other technology to perform tasks

G. Science and Technology

- 1. Observing:** Children observe the materials and processes in their environment.
- 2. Classifying:** Children classify materials, actions, people, and events.
- 3. Experimenting:** Children experiment to test their ideas.
- 4. Predicting:** Children predict what they expect will happen.
- 5. Drawing conclusions:** Children draw conclusions based on their experiences and observations.
- 6. Communicating ideas:** Children communicate their ideas about the characteristics of things and how they work.
- 7. Natural and physical world:** Children gather knowledge about the natural and physical world.
- 8. Tools and technology:** Children explore and use tools and technology.

Q.6: How is this child developing an identity as a learner?

*Here are some suggestions for linking your observations and reflections from **TSG** or **KDI** to the guiding question above.

Social Studies

1. Demonstrates knowledge about self
2. Shows basic understanding of people and how they live
3. Explores change related to familiar people or places
4. Demonstrates simple geographic knowledge

Physical

1. Demonstrates traveling skills
2. Demonstrates balancing skills
3. Demonstrates gross-motor manipulative skills
4. Demonstrates fine-motor strength and coordination
Uses fingers and hands
Uses writing and drawing tools

H. Social Studies

1. **Diversity:** Children understand that people have diverse characteristics, interests, and abilities.
2. **Community roles:** Children recognize that people have different roles and functions in the community.
3. **Decision making:** Children participate in making classroom decisions.
4. **Geography:** Children recognize and interpret features and locations in their environment.
5. **History:** Children understand past, present, and future.
6. **Ecology:** Children understand the importance of taking care of their environment.

C. Physical Development and Health

1. **Gross-motor skills:** Children demonstrate strength, flexibility, balance, and timing in using their large muscles.
2. **Fine-motor skills:** Children demonstrate dexterity and hand-eye coordination in using their small muscles.
3. **Body awareness:** Children know about their bodies and how to navigate them in space.
4. **Personal care:** Children carry out personal care routines on their own.
5. **Healthy behavior:** Children engage in healthy practices.

Q.7: Why are you delighted to have this child in your group?

Personal reflections from the love of your work with and getting to know this child. Focus on what you absolutely love about this child and perhaps how their presence in the class has helped the whole group grow.