



Understanding and Using Language



Adam's growing communication

This assessment example illustrates one way that Kōwhiti Whakapae can be used to inform your assessment documentation. You will see connections to Kōwhiti Whakapae and *Te Whāriki* highlighted in the annotations.

Introduction

The following planning and assessment exemplar follows three-and-a-half-year-old Adam, as he learns to use a core board to support his communication.

Adam lives with his parents, Maryam and Paul, older sister Maira, and baby brother Elijah. He has attended his local kindergarten four mornings a week for the last 8 months. Adam has complex needs associated with cerebral palsy and has minimal spoken language. He communicates with a mix of vocalisations, facial expressions and gestures. He also uses a walker with a seat attachment to move independently around while at kindergarten.

Kaiako have been working with Adam's parents and Ministry of Education Speech Language Therapist (SLT). Recently, with guidance and support from the team, Adam's parents have decided to introduce Adam to a core board to support his communication at home. Over the last few months Adam's parents have been using the core board with Adam, and he has been picking it up very well. They would now like to see Adam also using the core board at kindergarten. The team agree this is a good idea and put a plan in place.



As you read the following learning notes, highlighted comments provide more information about the connections between learning note content, *Te Whāriki* and the **Understanding & Using Language** area of *Kōwhiri Whakapae: Oral Language & Literacy*.

Te Whāriki & Kōwhiri Whakapae links

ADAM'S COMMUNICATION PLAN

12 FEBRUARY 2024

AIMS:

- Introduce Adam to the idea of using core board at kindergarten.
- Build kaiako confidence and skills using a core board to support their communication with Adam.

PLAN:

- Put copy of core board in staff room. All kaiako to build familiarity with location of vocabulary on core board (CB).
- Attach core board to the side of Adam's walker so it's always available.
- Prompt Adam to use the core board (e.g., 'Can you show me?'). Give Adam time to respond (waiting expectantly).
- Respond positively when Adam uses his core board. Check understandings by modelling back using the core board - recast and rephrase using rich language and full sentences.
- Record Adams core board use (event records) and vocabulary.
- Revisit this plan after a fortnight.

Kaiako developed this plan with Adam's parents (Maryam and Paul) and the Ministry of Education Speech Language Therapist (SLT) to support Adam's learning in relation to the Mana reo | Communication strand of *Te Whāriki*. Kaiako realise that to support Adam, they also need to be confident and familiar with using the core board.

This plan draws on advice and guidance from Adam's whānau and SLT alongside the Kōwhiri Whakapae: Understanding & using language 'Lay the groundwork' practices.

Adam's parents continue to implement similar strategies at home

DESCRIBE: (notice)

13 Feb

I asked Adam to show me his core board today. He pointed to some of the images/ words as I named them.

- Michelle

14 Feb

Lunch time - I asked Adam if he wanted his yoghurt now or later - pointing to words on CB. Asked Adam to show me. Adam looked at me and I pointed to 'now', asking 'now?' Adam nodded and pointed to 'now'. Tino pai Adam!

- Lisa

Asking Adam to share his knowledge reflects the Te Whāriki principles of Whakamana | Empowerment.

15 February

I asked Adam if he was finished his kai o te ata - morning tea, pointing to 'finished' on CB. He nodded and pointed to 'finished'.

- Mayra

19 February

When I asked Adam if he was finished his kai o te ata he pointed to 'all gone'! Ka wani kē Adam!

- Mayra

Modelling language, while using the core board has helped both kaiako and Adam become more familiar with the location of different symbols/words.

20 Feb

Adam brought me a book to read. I asked what he wanted, and pointed to 'you' and 'read' on his CB saying 'You can ask - 'can you read to me?'. I waited, and then said 'Can you show me?' Adam pointed to 'read' on his CB. Well done Adam!

- Michelle

22 February - conversation with Maryam

Adam's been using his core board at home more often - mainly about food, toilet, sleep etc. Maryam said Adam can lose interest while they look for the right symbols. They find keeping the CB attached to his walker helpful, but Adam doesn't always use this at home.

- Mayra

Kaiako and the team continue to communicate regularly with Adam's whānau reflecting the Te Whāriki principles of Ngā Hononga | Relationships and Whānau tangata | Family and community.

EVENT RECORDINGS

DATE	ADAM'S CORE BOARD USE
Mon 12 Feb	
Tue 13 Feb	HHH II
Wed 14 Feb	II
Thu 15 Feb	III
CORE BOARD (CB) WORDS USED	look, play, sit, stop, wait, happy, sad, now, out, up, yes, no, drink, finished

The team decided to use event recordings to track Adam's core board use over time. They also record Adam's core board vocabulary – as suggested in Kōwhiri Whakapae: Understanding & using language 'Lay the groundwork' practice – 'Expanding vocabulary with rich language'.

INTERPRET: (recognise)

- *We are all becoming more familiar with the core board.*
- *Adam is more confident using the core board at kindergarten and is beginning to use it to initiate interactions with kaiako (e.g. reading).*
- *Most communications using the core board are still focussed on Adam's needs.*

The team recognise that it will take time and practice for Adam, his whānau and kaiako to become familiar with the core board.

WHAT NEXT? (respond)

- *Maintain use of the core board throughout the day.*
- *Keep modelling and encouraging Adam's core board use to support his communication for a range of purposes - expanding beyond care routines including 2+ word sentences.*

Strategies:

- *Follow Adam's interests and use comments and open questions to encourage Adam's communication.*
- *Model short sentences on the core board, use suggestions, 'can you show me?', and expectant waiting to encourage Adam to respond, using his core board.*

The team recognise growth in Adam's understanding and use of language – supporting the Mana reo | Communication learning outcome of *Te Whāriki* - 'Understanding oral language and using it for a range of purposes' (noting that for Adam, oral language includes using his core board).

The team want to continue to expand Adam's communication, supporting his increasing capability to understand oral language and using it for a range of purposes (*Te Whāriki* Mana reo | Communication learning outcome).

The team plan to continue embedding Kōwhiri Whakapae: Understanding & using language 'lay the groundwork' practices into their every day practices.

ADAM'S COMMUNICATION PLAN

26 FEBRUARY – 7 MARCH 2024

DESCRIBE: (notice)

28 February

Adam in a cuddly mood today. He used his CB (no prompting) to ask if I'd read to him – pointing to 'read'. Part way through he taped me, pointed to 'stop' and then 'toilet' on his CB. Ka pai tō mahi Adam! – Mayra

29 February

Adam used his CB to ask me to read to him, so I suggested one of my favourites - 'Wonky Donkey'. I asked what he thought of the story - Adam pointed to 'like' on the CB. I pointed to 'I', 'like' & 'it' – and said 'I like it too'. Adam copied me, pointing to the same words. I pointed to 'silly' and said 'I think it's silly'. Adam laughed and pointed to 'again', so I read it again. Ka mau te wehi! – Mayra

4 March

Adam asked me to read 'Wonky Donkey' again today – pointing to 'you' 'read' on his CB. When I finished, Adam turned the pages back to the start. I pulled out his CB and waited. Adam pointed to 'read' 'again'. Ka pai Adam. – Mayra

5 March – Michelle

I explored the core board with Adam again today. We used the sorting box to explore words like big, small, same, different, all, some, that, this. Adam enjoyed the game, copying me and then taking over. He's quick to learn the symbols and has a good understanding of these words.

6 March

Maryam has bought a copy of 'Wonky Donkey' as Adam loves it so much! He's using his core board a lot more at home and seems less frustrated. He's even started bossing his big sister around!

– Mayra

7 March – Michelle

Adam was playing with the coloured blocks, sorting them into groups. I asked him about the blocks and he told me some blocks were 'big', some were 'small' using his CB. We also talked about blocks that were the 'same' and 'different'.

Te Whāriki & Kōwhiri Whakapae links

By choosing a book she likes, Mayra can share her enjoyment of language with Adam. This reflects Kōwhiri Whakapae: Understanding & using language 'lay the groundwork' practice 'Supporting complexity of language use' and the Te Whāriki Mana reo | Communication learning outcome: 'Enjoying hearing stories and retelling and creating them'.

Ongoing communication between home and kindergarten upholds the Te Whāriki principle of Whānau tangata | Family and Community, supporting shared understanding and consistency across settings.

Michelle intentionally supports Adam's growing vocabulary by connecting new words and their meanings - reflecting Kōwhiri Whakapae: Understanding & using language 'lay the groundwork' practice - 'Expanding vocabulary with rich language'.

EVENT RECORDINGS

DATE	ADAM'S CORE BOARD USE
Mon 26 Feb	Adam tired – went home early
Tue 27 Feb	Adam away today
Wed 28 Feb	IIII
Thu 29 Feb	+++
CORE BOARD (CB) WORDS USED	<i>yes, no, like, all, gone, stop here, toilet, now, later, finished, drink, eat, help, read</i>

EVENT RECORDINGS

DATE	ADAM'S CORE BOARD USE
Mon 4 Mar	+++ IIII
Tue 5 Mar	+++ +++ IIII
Wed 6 Mar	+++ +++ II
Thu 7 Mar	+++ +++ +++ IIII
CORE BOARD (CB) WORDS USED	<i>yes, read, no, you, like, all gone, here, stop, want, toilet, now, later, finished, drink, eat, help, I, like, it, again, go, out, up, that, silly, some, all, big, small, same, different</i>

INTERPRET: (recognise)

- Adam is using the core board to communicate more often.
- Adam understands others well. He's using a wider range of words, starting to use 2+ word combinations, and is starting to initiate more conversations (mainly with kaiako/ his parents).
- Conversations with Adam are often limited by the words on his core board. Adding more words /symbols related to his interests will help Adam communicate about the things he's doing.
- Adam enjoys 1:1 interactions with kaiako - reading 'Wonky Donkey', block and sorting play.

Kaiako share the event record data with Adam's parents and SLT so they can see how Adam's core board use and vocabulary at kindergarten is progressing over time.

Adam's understanding and use of language for a range of purposes is continuing to grow (*Te Whāriki*, Mana reo | Communication learning outcome). The team notice and recognise Adam's communication reflects Te Pō phase of Kōwhiri Whakapae: Understanding & using language.

The team recognise that Adam's communication is influenced by his interests - reflecting the *Te Whāriki* principles of Whakamana | Empowerment and Ngā hononga | Relationships.

WHAT NEXT? (respond)

- Continue supporting Adam's communication including expanding vocabulary, use of longer phrases, and communication with others.
- Provide opportunities for Adam to communicate with other children (cooperative games/experiences) that build on Adam's interests, strengths and abilities.
- Support all children to become familiar with the core board as a communication tool.

STRATEGIES?

- Add *fringe words related to Adam's interests (start with Art words).
- Continue encouraging Adam to use his core board to talk about what he's doing – use comments and open questions.
- Continue to use recasting and rephrasing to model rich language.
- Support Adam to enter play with others
 - modelling phrases on core board for Adam
 - e.g. 'Can I play'.
- Actively include other children in conversations with Adam.
- Put extra core boards around the centre for all children to use.
- Keep recording Adam's core board word use.

Kaiako, Adam's parents and SLT plan continue to build Adam's understanding and use of language for a range of purposes (*Te Whāriki*, Mana reo | Communication learning outcome).

They also aim to support Adam's communication with his peers – supporting the Mana tangata | Contribution goal, and Whakamana | Empowerment principle of *Te Whāriki*.

*Fringe words are words that we use less often than core words. Having a list of words / symbols relating to Adam's interests will help expand his vocabulary – reflecting the Understanding & using language 'lay the groundwork' practice - 'Expanding vocabulary with rich language'.

These strategies draw on Understanding & using language Te Pō 'respond' practices as well as 'lay the groundwork' practices - including 'Communicating with others'.

ADAM'S COMMUNICATION PLAN

11 MARCH – 21 MARCH 2024

DESCRIBE: (notice)

11 Mar – Michelle

Adam & I explored the new art words on his CB with three other children at the art table. After going through them a few times, Adam used the CB to say 'I want paper', then 'red pen' and started drawing.

A short while later Adam used the CB to ask Ollie for a 'black pen'. Ollie understood and passed the pen. Great to see!

12 Mar – Michelle

I asked Adam about his drawing and commented on all the colours. Adam pointed to red, blue, yellow, green on his CB as I named the colours. Then I commented on the shapes and Adam pointed to 'I draw squiggle', and then 'draw circle fast' – showing me how he had drawn the circle shapes really fast.

Te Whāriki & Kōwhiri Whakapae links

Involving other children in this way supports their communication with Adam and strengthens all the children's learning in relation to the three Te Whāriki Mana tangata | Contribution goals.

Here, Michelle has used the Kōwhiri Whakapae: Understanding & using language Te Pō 'respond' practice - 'Variety of language experiences'.

13 Mar: Adam was playing with felt shapes and Eva and Moana join him - passing Adam felt pieces and then putting pieces on the board for him. I could see Adam trying to use his CB to say something to them, but the girls weren't paying attention. After a few minutes, Adam become frustrated and left.
– Mayra

18 March

We added some cooking words to Adams CB and I went through these with Adam before making cupcakes with a group of six children. I use the CB and recipe cards as I talked through the process with the children. Then we made cupcakes and Adam was using his CB to say 'my turn', 'mix sugar', 'put in oven', 'be careful, hot'. I repeated Adam's words as he pointed to the CB so everyone could understand what Adam was saying. – Mayra

Observations like this show that progress will vary in direction and pace at times and is influenced by many factors.

19 Mar

We made cheese-on-toast with Adam and 4 other children using recipe cards. Adam was fully involved using his CB to say 'my turn', 'put in oven', 'be careful, hot', 'I eat some' as I spoke the words for him. The other children were interested in the CB. – Lisa

Kaiako also use the Kōwhiri Whakapae: Understanding & using language Te Pō 'respond' practice - 'Communicating with others'.

21 March

I added some play cooking items and some recipe cards to the sand/water tray today. Adam went to it as soon as he saw it and started playing along with 3 other children. I noticed Adam trying to communicate but the others weren't paying attention. I joined the group to help verbalise for Adam, but he chose to leave and play on his own.
– Mayra

EVENT RECORDINGS

DATE	ADAM'S CORE BOARD USE
Mon 11 Mar	+++ +++ ++ +++ I
Tue 12 Mar	+++ ++ +++
Wed 13 Mar	+++ +++ ++ +++ IIII
Thu 14 Mar	+++ +++ ++ +++ +++ IIII
CORE BOARD (CB) WORDS USED	yes, no, be careful, ready, go, open, close, sit, up, down, more, eat, drink, cold, all gone, give, that, I want paper, red pen, blue, yellow, green, I draw squiggle, circle, fast, be careful, little, slow, silly, read, turn, you, like, all gone, here, stop, want, toilet, now, later, finished, help, you read it, I like it, that

These event recordings show Adam's language use expanding quickly, helped by the interest-related words (fringe words) that have been added to his core board.

EVENT RECORDINGS

DATE	ADAM'S CORE BOARD USE
Mon 18 Mar	+++ +++ ++ +++ III
Tue 19 Mar	+++ ++ +++ +++ +++ +++
Wed 20 Mar	+++ +++ ++ +++ +++ III
Thu 21 Mar	+++ ++ +++ +++ +++ +++ III
CORE BOARD (CB) WORDS USED	draw, paper, pen, sticky, same, little, red, green, there, circle, square, squiggle, more, in, where, fast, stop, help, tell, come, look, ready, make, my turn, make, mix, sugar, egg, bowl, put in oven, cupcake, my turn, be careful, hot, I eat some, yes, like, all gone, more, here, stop, toilet, now, later, finished, drink, eat, help, read, I want

INTERPRET: (recognise)

- Adam is using the core board to communicate in most interactions (at home and Kindergarten).
- Adam using more words and longer phrases - usually 2 - 3 words, and taking more conversation turns. He answers questions (e.g. what, where, who) and talks about things he has done as well as what he is doing. He's also asking what, who, where questions at home.
- Adam is starting to initiate and engage in more conversations with his friends, mostly with an adult there to verbalise his communications (e.g., in group experiences like cooking).
- Adam can become frustrated when communicating with other children when there isn't a support adult.

Kaiako, Adam's parents and SLT have all recognised rapid growth in Adam's understanding and use of language for a range of purposes (*Te Whāriki*, Mana reo | Communication). The team recognise Adam's communication has expanded within Te Pō phase of Kōwhiri Whakapae: Understanding & using language, and he is beginning to demonstrate some Te Ao Mārama capabilities.

Building all children's familiarity with the core board supports the *Te Whāriki* goals of Mana tangata | Contribution and reflect the importance of the Ngā hononga | Relationship and Whakamana | Empowerment principles.

The team recognise that Adam's current core board has limitations that may impact on his continued progress including independent communication with his peers.

WHAT NEXT? (respond)

To continue supporting Adam's communication we will:

- Discuss Adam's progress and next steps with the full team, including the possibility of shifting to a higher tech AAC device that supports his expanding language use and includes voice output.

Kaiako, Adam's whānau and SLT agree that Adam is outgrowing his current core board and will investigate other AAC options that better support his communication growth.

In the meantime:

- Keep using communication expanding strategies with Adam to encourage longer conversations with Adam (and all children) = modelling, recasting and rephrasing longer phrases, using comments and open questions, expectant waiting.
- Continue to provide group experiences (e.g., cooking, reading, co-operative games) that reflect Adam's interests and strengths and provide opportunities for him to communicate with other children.
- Continue to add fringe words as needed to Adam's core board – relating to his interests and group experiences/activities.
- Keep using core board with all children - both planned and 'in the moment' experiences - to build familiarity and 'normalise' the core board as a way to communicate.

Kaiako, Adam's whānau and SLT will continue to support Adam's expanding Understanding & using language Te Pō capabilities and begin to scaffold his learning towards Te Ao Mārama. To inform this plan, they have looked at both the Te Pō and Te Ao Mārama 'respond' practices.

They also recognise the importance of also supporting the *Te Whāriki* principle of Whakamana | Empowerment, and Mana tangata | Contribution goals for all children.

REVISIT:

The team continue to support Adam's growing communication as he transitions into using a high-tech AAC system. Once Adam, the team and the kindergarten children are familiar with this system and the team see that Adam's communication is progressing well, kaiako shift focus and continue to support Adam's holistic learning as part of their regular planning and assessment approaches. This includes revisiting Adam's communication on a regular basis.