



New Kōwhiti Whakapae resources to support literacy and maths in early learning

Contributes to **Priority 2: Better approach to literacy and numeracy:** implementing evidence-based instruction in early literacy and mathematics

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For students to be successful in school and kura, they need a strong foundation of literacy and numeracy skills to build on. The new Kōwhiti Whakapae content gives early learning kaiako and whānau the tools to support development of those key skills early on, giving all children the best possible start to their learning.

The latest Kōwhiti Whakapae content is now available to support the development of literacy and numeracy skills in early learning. The new oral language & literacy, and maths areas contain a range of resources that help kaiako and whānau lay the groundwork for their children's foundational skills, support successful transitions into schools and kura, and identify children who need extra support early on.

A lot of work needs to be done to lift student achievement in reading, writing, and maths – and we know that some of the most important learning happens in early childhood.

The new Kōwhiti Whakapae content helps our children start school and kura fully equipped with what they need to be successful in literacy and numeracy learning. Kōwhiti Whakapae gives kaiako and whānau the tools to strengthen effective teaching and learning in those early years, and better identify children who need additional support.

Recently ERO released *Let's Get Talking* – a report which looks at the development of children's oral language skills in the early years, and the ways that we can strengthen literacy learning to improve those outcomes. The new Kōwhiti Whakapae content directly supports a lot of the areas of action ERO identifies, and it also connects with other work we're doing to raise literacy and numeracy achievement in the early years. Evidence-based instruction grounded in the science of learning and effective formative assessment practices are fundamental aspects of the new Kōwhiti Whakapae content, which supports the embedding of Te Whāriki.

What is Kōwhiti Whakapae?

Kōwhiti Whakapae is an online resource that first launched in 2023 with the social & emotional area. It was designed in collaboration with early learning kaiako and sector experts to strengthen teaching and assessment practices in early learning, using the framework of Te Whāriki.

The new oral language & literacy, and maths areas complete the suite of Kōwhiti Whakapae tools and resources, to help kaiako and whānau understand and respond to their children's progress, and support their growing identity as learners. Each area helps kaiako to:

- **lay the groundwork** for an enabling environment, where all children are able to learn effectively;
- **notice and recognise** children's current capabilities and learning Progress;
- **respond** to children's learning at different phases of progress to support, consolidate, and expand on the learning that's happening; and
- **document and communicate** learning, so that kaiako and whānau have a clear picture of how children's learning is progressing.

Within each area, there are a set of resources to make that easier for kaiako and whānau, including:

- **effective teaching practices**, providing kaiako with specific ways to teach that are based on the science of learning and what we know works;
- **progressions**, describing children's learning progress across four phases and connecting with the progressions in The New Zealand Curriculum for a smooth transition into schooling and kura;
- **assessment examples**, giving kaiako ways to enhance their formative assessment practice, making it easier to identify children's capabilities and track their progress;
- **kaiako guides**, providing more information on each area of learning; and
- **whānau guides**, supporting conversations between kaiako and whānau, and making it clear how they can work together to help their children progress in their learning.

Oral language & literacy

This area is broken down into four key parts that ensure the development of strong oral language and literacy skills:

- **Understanding and using language**, which involves children's growing ability to understand what is said to them; and to use words, phrases, and sentences to communicate with others.
- **Emergent literacy**, which involves phonological and alphabet awareness, concepts of print, story comprehension, mark-making and emergent writing.
- **Forms and functions of literacy**, which involves an awareness and understanding of the wide range of different types of – and purposes for – literacy.

- **Learning an additional language**, which focuses on children expanding and using their existing language skills as they learn an additional language.

Each of those parts of the oral language & literacy area provide children with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed in the early years to lay the foundations for learning – including structured approaches to teaching literacy and maths at school or kura.

Connections with ERO's latest report on oral language development

As a part of their *Let's Get Talking* report, ERO also released good practice guides for early childhood kaiako and leaders. The oral language & literacy area of Kōwhiti Whakapae aligns with the practices laid out in those guides, making it easy for kaiako looking to strengthen their teaching approaches in line with what we know works for children. Here's a closer look at how the two resources support each other:

	ERO's good practice guides for kaiako and leaders	Oral language & literacy area of Kōwhiti Whakapae
Good practice	Clearly separates areas of kaiako practice (e.g., 'teaching new words and how to use them' and 'modelling how words make sentences').	Provides practices specifically focused on understanding and using language (e.g., 'expanding vocabulary with rich language', 'supporting complexity in language use' and 'communicating with others').
Assessment and progression	Emphasises the need for clear and useful assessment of children's progress to inform teacher practice.	Provides progressions that kaiako can use to notice and recognise children's capabilities and learning progress, and practices to scaffold, consolidate and expand that learning at each phase.
Specialist support	Sets out ways of seeking advice and working alongside specialists (e.g., speech-language therapists) when needed.	Clarifies when kaiako should seek additional support, giving them confidence to know when to reach out to other experts.
Exemplars	Provides examples, ideas, and strategies for good practice from early childhood services across New Zealand.	Provides practice examples, ideas and strategies, and downloadable exemplars to make it clear what good practice looks like.
Evidence	Strongly aligned to international and local evidence about what we know works for children's literacy learning.	Developed in collaboration with oral language and literacy learning experts and grounded in current international and national evidence, including the science of learning.

Maths

Like the oral language & literacy area, maths is broken down into four key parts that ensure the development of strong maths skills:

- **Space and measurement**, which involves concepts and language about shape, size, location, distance and spatial visualisation.
- **Number and measurement**, which involves using the number system for purposeful activity with objects and quantities.
- **Pattern and relationship**, which involves noticing, creating and using patterns for purposeful experiences.
- **Create and communicate maths**, which involves processes that represent mathematical thinking.

As children grow, maths knowledge, skills, and positive attitudes in these areas help them to explore and understand the world. They lay the foundations for success at school and kura and lifelong capabilities as critical thinkers and engaged citizens.

Social & Emotional

Social & Emotional focuses on children's growing social and emotional competence, engagement, and learning. Like the other areas of learning, it is broken down into four key parts:

- **Connected relationships & caring for others**, which involves children's ability to connect with family, friends, familiar and unfamiliar people in responsive and respectful ways.
- **Emotional awareness, regulation, and spiritual connectedness**, which involves children's growing awareness, understanding and connection to their inner-selves and their wider social and spiritual worlds.
- **Agency & adaptability**, which involves children's growing ability to make choices, set goals and plans and follow through, respond flexibly to different contexts and expectations.
- **Social inclusion & action**, which involves children's sense of belonging and participation and the actions they take to look after and stand up for self, others, and the natural world.

Social & Emotional supports the vision of *Te Whāriki* for children to grow to be "competent and confident learners and communicators, healthy in mind, body and spirit, secure in their sense of belonging in the knowledge that they make a valued contribution to society."

Supporting the transition to schooling

A smooth transition from early learning to schools and kura is important to keep up the momentum of learning, and make sure that children are consistently being taught using effective teaching practices throughout the learning journey.

The practices and progressions in Kōwhiti Whakapae help lay the groundwork for children's literacy and numeracy development, so that they can successfully build on those foundational skills as they start school. By shining a light on children's growing capabilities, Kōwhiti Whakapae supports the

transition from early learning into the first years of schooling. Practices and progressions contribute to supporting school readiness, and align with the development of the refreshed English and mathematics & statistics learning areas, including structured approaches to teaching literacy and maths.

With the progressions and assessment examples that strengthen formative assessment in early learning, Kōwhiti Whakapae also gives kaiako more tools to quickly recognise and respond to children's learning needs. Alongside other tools, Kōwhiti Whakapae will help kaiako and whānau know how and when to access additional, specialist support for their children when it is needed. Early identification and intervention can help young children early on in their learning journey, making the transition to school or kura easier to manage.



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