

CURRICULUM ACTIVITY: Excursions: Exploring Local Waterscapes

Tamariki explore a local waterscape such as the awa, tātahi, pūroto, or hāroto, searching for shells, driftwood, small fish, and insects living among the rocks and reeds. Kaiako encourage tamariki to observe carefully, ask questions, and share discoveries with others. They discuss how water connects people, places, and living things, highlighting its importance for both wellbeing and the environment. Through this guided exploration, tamariki deepen their understanding of Te Taiao and develop respect for its life-sustaining balance.

Tikanga Practices: Te taiao is portrayed within this scenario through:

- Listening, as tamariki tune in to the sounds of flowing water, birds, and wind, recognising the rhythms and voices of Te Taiao.
- Observation: tamariki notice patterns, textures, and movements in the environment, seeing beauty and diversity in natural treasures.
- Exploration opportunities for tamariki to engage their senses and to make new discoveries, learning about the habitats and mauri of living things in and around the water.

Kaiako: Questions for Reflection

1. How do you provide enough unhurried time for tamariki to explore, notice, and connect with the local waterscape?
2. How can you use rich descriptive language and open-ended questions to enrich understandings of Te Taiao and how tamariki have roles and responsibilities as tangata tiaki?

NGĀ KUPU O TE TAI AO Words Associated to Te Taiao

Ngā Tangata Tiaki Guardians	Ngā Manu Birds	Hīkoi Excursion
Te Taiao Natural World	Ngā Pēpeke Insects	Haruru Sea rumbles
Awa River	Ngāi Kīrehe Fauna	Tūātea Breaking waves
Tātahi Beach	Ngāi Tipu Flora	Kōmiro swirling water
Hāroto Rock pools	Ngā Rākau Trees	Arawaru rapid sounds
Pūroto Lagoon	Haumākū damp, moist	Hou sound of water
Kōhatu Stones	Ngā Huruhuru Feathers	Ngā Kota shells
Kōhiwi Skeleton	Rāpihi Rubbish	Repo swamp, bog

RERENGA KŌRERO – Phrases

1. **Titiro mai ki tēnei anga.**
Look at this shell/skeleton.
2. **Ka pēhea te rongo?**
What does it feel like?
3. **Ki ō whakaaro, nō hea tēnei mea?**
Where do you think it came from?
4. **Ka hoki ō mahara ki tētahi mea, ki tētahi wāhi rānei kua kitea e koe?**
Does it remind you of anything or any place you have been?
5. **Ka ahu mai tēnei taonga i hea?**
I wonder where this came from?
6. **Ka kite i tōna āhua/ka rongo i tōna tangi.**
Can you see its shape/hear its sound?
7. **E pai ana kia pā atu?**
Is it safe to touch?
8. **Me pēhea tātou e tiaki/e whakaruruhau i tēnei taonga?**
How can we look after it/keep it safe?
9. **Ka pēhea te kakara?**
What does it smell like?
10. **Ki ōu whakaaro i ahu mai tēnei taonga i hea?**
How do you think it got there?



Scan here for pronunciation support

Ngā Taonga Whakaako Tikanga Māori – Theory and Practice

Early Childhood Education Contexts



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AOTEAROA

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TE TAI AO NATURAL WORLD

Te Taiao refers to the natural world — all living and non-living things, including the land, sky, waters, forests, animals, and people. It is a deeply interconnected system where everything has mauri (life force) and must be cared for with respect and balance.

In te ao Māori, different aspects of Te Taiao are connected to atua Māori (spiritual guardians), such as Tāne Mahuta (atua of the forest), Tangaroa (atua of the sea), Ranginui (sky father), and Papatūānuku (earth mother). Understanding and protecting Te Taiao is a key part of kaitiakitanga (enacting acts of guardianships or being custodians), helping tamariki learn to care for the world around them.



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CURRICULUM ACTIVITY: Learning with Nature: Journeys into Te Taiao

On a hīkoi to a nearby reserve, kaiako guide tamariki to notice the songs of birds, the shapes of trees, and the movements of insects around them. Tamariki are encouraged to ask questions, share what they observe, and wonder about how each part of nature depends on another. Kaiako weave in kōrero about local iwi and their connection to the whenua, helping tamariki see the cultural and spiritual significance of the environment. They discuss how small actions, such as picking up litter or walking gently, can help protect these living systems. Te Taiao is experienced as tamariki broadening their appreciation for the mauri (life force) in all living things and recognise their role as tangata tiaki of the natural world.

Tikanga Practices: Te taiao enables exploration and engagement:

- Tamariki listen carefully to the singing of the native birds, learning their names and recognising their roles within the ecosystem.
- Through close observation of insects, tamariki begin to understand how every living creature has a purpose.
- The sense and imaginations of tamariki are used to touch, sound, sight and creativity to explore te taiao – these become evident in their storying, movement and art inspired by their discoveries.

Kaiako: Questions for Reflection

1. How do you foster genuine curiosity and deep noticing so that tamariki develop both scientific and spiritual understandings of Te Taiao?
2. In what ways do your actions, language, and stories model kaitiakitanga and encourage tamariki to see themselves as active tangata tiaki of the natural world?

CURRICULUM AREA: Ako or Tuakana Teina approach planting activity

Older tamariki guide the younger tamariki in planting seeds, tending soil, and watering garden beds, supported by kaiako who encourage clear explanation, demonstration, and gentle collaboration. The garden becomes a shared learning space where everyone contributes and learns from one another. Kaiako highlight the importance of timing, care, and respect for the plants, connecting their work to the cycles of the maramataka and seasonal change. As the plants begin to grow, tamariki observe how nurture and patience lead to life and growth. Te Taiao is enacted through mentorship and collective responsibility, as tamariki strengthen relationships with both people and the living world.

Tikanga Practices: Te taiao is explored through:

- Tamariki learning about kai sources, gaining further understandings of where food comes from, connecting the act of planting and harvesting to whakapapa, whenua, and community wellbeing.
- Tuakana-teina relationships, the older tamariki model care, patience, and guidance, while younger ones learn through observation and participation, fostering manaakitanga and ako.
- Through observing natural cycles, the tamariki notice patterns of growth, the influence of weather, and seasonal change, linking their experiences to maramataka and the rhythms of Te Taiao.

Kaiako: Questions for Reflection

1. How do you nurture tuakana teina relationships so that mentoring and shared learning occur naturally?
2. How can you provide opportunities for tamariki to see and experience Māori perspectives of Te Taiao and its atua in everyday practice?
3. Do you make connections between gardening activities, maramataka, and wider understandings of kaitiakitanga and sustainability?

