

## CURRICULUM ACTIVITY: Block Play and Construction

Tamariki work together to build a bridge with wooden blocks, experimenting with balance and weight. Kaiako guide discussions about what works and why, helping children connect hands-on problem-solving with learning concepts. Mātauranga is expressed as tamariki gain practical knowledge and apply it creatively to solve challenges.

### Tikanga Practices: Mātauranga can be seen through:

- Ako Ngātahi (Collaborative learning) as tamariki and kaiako learn alongside one another, exploring ideas through shared inquiry and experimentation. Mātauranga is strengthened through collective discovery and cooperation.
- Reflective thinking as kaiako encourage tamariki to think critically about what they observe, what worked, what didn't, and why. This reflection helps transform experience into enduring knowledge.
- Whakamana through applied knowledge: by testing, adjusting and reimagining their bridge designs, the tamariki experience the value of learning through action and perseverance, this is a living expression of mātauranga in practice.

### Kaiako: Questions for Reflection

1. How did you support tamariki to explore and test their own ideas while guiding them toward understanding key concepts?
2. In what ways did you acknowledge and value the knowledge that emerged from the collaborative problem-solving processes of the tamariki?
3. How can you strengthen opportunities for tamariki to connect practical learning experiences to broader understandings of mātauranga Māori?



## WAIATA: NGĀ ATUA MĀORI

(Kaitito: Rotu Mihaka)

Ranginui

Tangaroa

Tāne Mahuta

Tawhirimātea

Tūmatauenga

Haumietiketike

Rongomātāne

Ruaumoko

Papatūānuku e x2.

Skyfather, Guardians of the sea, forest, weather,  
man/war, uncultivated foods, cultivated foods,  
earthquakes/volcanoes, Mother Earth.



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## Ngā Taonga Whakaako Tikanga Māori – Theory and Practice

Early Childhood Education Contexts



# MĀTAURANGA WAYS OF KNOWING

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Child Well-being  
Research Institute

Ako  
AOTEAROA

Authors: Ngaroma M. Williams, Tracy Dayman, Lana R. Williams, 2025.

# MĀTAURANGA

## WAYS OF KNOWING

**Mātauranga** refers to knowledge, wisdom, and understanding that is both inherited and developed through lived experience, observation, and reflection. In teaching and learning, mātauranga represents the rich, holistic knowledge system of Māori that encompasses physical, spiritual, environmental, and cultural dimensions.

Mātauranga is not limited to facts or skills; it weaves together values, relationships, histories, and practices that guide how knowledge is applied in everyday life. It is dynamic and continuously shaped by interactions between people, their environments, and the changing world. In the classroom, mātauranga fosters learning that is contextual, relevant, and grounded in te ao Māori, empowering learners to honour and apply Indigenous knowledge responsibly.



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## CURRICULUM ACTIVITY:

### Pūrākau: Literacy Area – Storytelling

Kaiako share pūrākau with tamariki, inviting them to retell stories or act them out in their own words. Tamariki learn new vocabulary, concepts, and cultural practices embedded within the stories. Mātauranga is practised as knowledge flows both ways: children learn from stories and contribute their own insights.

#### Tikanga Practices: Mātauranga can be viewed as:

- Reciprocal sharing of knowledge: Kaiako and tamariki exchange ideas through understanding the pūrākau, acknowledging that everyone holds valuable knowledge. Mātauranga is enriched when both the teacher and child contribute to collective learning.
- Whakapapa – origins of the knowledge: Kaiako highlight the tūpuna and cultural roots of the pūrākau helping tamariki understand that knowledge carries history, identity, language, tikanga and responsibilities.
- Empowering learning through understanding through storytelling and retelling, tamariki develop confidence to interpret and express ideas in their own ways. This shows how knowledge grows when it is shared and reimagined.

#### Kaiako: Questions for Reflection

1. How did you recognise and respond to the knowledge that tamariki brought into the storytelling and discussion?
2. In what ways did you connect the pūrākau to its whakapapa, ensuring tamariki understood both the story and its cultural significance?

## CURRICULUM AREA:

### Gardening – Plant Science

Tamariki plant seeds and observe their growth over several weeks, recording changes in height, leaf colour, and soil moisture. Kaiako discuss patterns and cycles with tamariki, linking observations to traditional knowledge and scientific understanding. Mātauranga is enacted as children deepen their comprehension of the natural world and the principles behind growth and care.

#### Tikanga Practices: Mātauranga can be seen here through:

- Connecting to Te Taiao the natural world: kaiako guide tamariki to learn from the environment as a living teacher eg: Papatūānuku, Tāne, Tangaroa. Observing the growth of plants allow tamariki to see mātauranga in action. Understanding cycles, balance and the interdependence of all living things.
- Reciprocal exchange of knowledge as kaiako share both traditional and scientific insights. Tamariki contribute their own observations and wonderings. Mātauranga grows through this dialogue, where Indigenous and scientific perspectives sit alongside one another.
- Reflective learning through observation as tamariki record, compare, and question what they see, learning that knowledge develops through curiosity, care observation, and reflection.

#### Kaiako: Questions for Reflection

3. How did you integrate both mātauranga Māori and scientific perspectives to help tamariki make sense of what they observed in te taiao?
4. In what ways did you encourage tamariki to see themselves as knowledge holders and contributors within this learning process?

