

CURRICULUM ACTIVITY: Kai Time Routine

At kai time, tamariki and kaiako prepare and share food together, giving thanks through karakia before eating. They pass food, pour water, and support one another with care and inclusion. Kotahitanga is lived through these acts of sharing and manaakitanga, reinforcing that everyone is part of one whānau.

Tikanga Practices: Kotahitanga can emerge from:

- Preparation and acknowledgement tamariki and kaiako prepare kai together, offering karakia as a shared expression of kotahitanga, respect and appreciation for the food and one another.
- Sharing and supporting each other: passing food, pouring water, asking younger tamariki if they need help or more food. Kotahitanga is about each person contributing to collective care, ensuring everyone is included.
- Strengthening whanaungatanga through kai: eating together (kaitahi) nurtures belonging and harmony, reminding tamariki that kotahitanga is lived daily through connections. Kōrero (conversations) and shared nourishment of body and spirit.

Kaiako: Questions for Reflection

1. How do you create kai routines that model kotahitanga where tamariki share responsibility, gratitude and inclusion in preparing and enjoy having kaitahi?
2. How can wā kai become a deeper expression of whanaungatanga and kotahitanga connecting taha wairua, taha hinengaro, taha whānau, taha tinana as a ECE centre whānau?



KARAKIA MŌ TE KAI

Nau mai e ngā hua o te wao
O te ngakinga, o te wai tai, o te wai Māori.
Nā Tāne, nā Rongo, nā Tangaroa, nā Maru
Ko Ranginui e tū iho nei
Ko Papatūānuku e takoto ake nei
Tūturu whakamaua kia tina, tina
Haumi-ē, hui-ē, tāiki ē!

I welcome the gifts of food from the sacred forest, from the cultivated gardens, from the sea, from the fresh waters.
The food of Tāne, of Rongo, of Tangaroa, of Maru.
I acknowledge Ranginui above and Papatūānuku below.
Let this be my commitment to them all.



Scan for pronunciation support

Whakapaingia ēnei kai
Hei oranga mō te tinana
Mō o mātou wairua
Hoki Āmine.

Bless these foods that give nourishment to our bodies and thoughtfulness to our minds, Amen.



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Cover image: Kaumātua Henare Edwards and Dr Ngaroma Williams led the blessing of Ōpāwaho Kindergarten's refurbishment.

Ngā Taonga Whakaako Tikanga Māori – Theory and Practice Early Childhood Education Contexts



KOTAHITANGA

UNITY & PURPOSE

UC
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Te Kāhui Pā Harakeke
Child Well-being
Research Institute

Ako
AOTEAROA

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KOTAHITANGA

UNITY & PURPOSE

Kotahitanga refers to the development and maintenance of unity of purpose, shared vision, and collective direction. It is about fostering harmony and avoiding actions or decisions that could cause division or discord.

Kotahitanga embodies a commitment by all to work together with one mind and in unison, ensuring that individual strengths and contributions are valued and directed towards a common goal. It encourages inclusive participation, where everyone has a voice and a role in shaping outcomes. Decisions guided by kotahitanga are made with the well-being of the collective in mind, supported by strategies that promote collaboration, consensus, and a deep sense of belonging and shared responsibility.



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CURRICULUM ACTIVITY: Architecture – Research and Blocks

“Let’s build the sky tower”, says Kelly. A group of tamariki in the block corner decided to join Kelly in her endeavour to build the biggest tower ever! Barry, Kelly, Tommy, Gemma, Grace and Lesley go to the indoor teacher and use the centre computer to find a picture of the sky tower. They print out the picture of the tower and the tamariki go back to the block corner to build the tower.



Tikanga Practices:

Kotahitanga is observed by:

- Sharing centre equipment: The tamariki demonstrate kotahitanga by willingly sharing blocks, space, and resources, showing respect and understanding that shared use strengthens relationships and supports collective learning experiences.
- Using technology to connect globally: By exploring images of the Sky Tower together, tamariki use technology as a bridge between their local learning and the wider world, nurturing curiosity and shared knowledge.
- Sense of purpose and collective goal: Working together towards a shared vision of building the tallest tower reflects unity, cooperation, and perseverance — essential aspects of kotahitanga that sustain teamwork and joy.
- Sustaining collective play: The ability of the tamariki to stay engaged, communicate, and problem-solve collaboratively shows how kotahitanga enhances resilience, focus, and a sense of belonging in group learning experiences.

Kaiaiko: Questions for Reflection

1. How do your teaching strategies nurture kotahitanga by encouraging tamariki to collaborate, share ideas, and celebrate collective success rather than individual achievement?
2. In what ways do you model and scaffold respectful communication and shared leadership within group play experiences?
3. How might you use technology and real-world connections to strengthen a sense of belonging and shared purpose for tamariki within their community?

CURRICULUM AREA: Wā whānau – Whānau time

During mat/circle/whānau time, kaiako and tamariki sit together in a circle, sharing stories, songs, and ideas as equals. Everyone’s voice is valued, creating a sense of collective learning and shared energy. Kotahitanga is shown through participation and unity, where each child contributes to the group’s wairua and success.

Tikanga Practices: Kotahitanga is applied as:

- Valuing all voices: each tamaiti is encouraged to share their ideas and stories, showing kotahitanga through respect, inclusion, and recognising that collective learning strengthens everyone’s understanding.
- Shared leadership and participation: Kaiako and tamariki contribute equally to kōrero and waiata, modelling kotahitanga where leadership, listening, and contribution are shared to maintain unity and mutual respect.
- Flowing of wairua: through shared songs and stories, the group nurtures a sense of belonging and positive wairua, reflecting kotahitanga as harmony and collective energy within the learning space.

Kaiaiko: Questions for Reflection

1. How do you ensure that all tamariki feel their voice and presence contribute meaningfully to the shared learning circle/mat session?
2. In what ways do you model kotahitanga through shared leadership, active listening, and equal participation during mat time?
3. How can you strengthen the group’s wairua to sustain unity, and collective engagement in your service’s daily programme/routines?

