

Tuia Te Here Tangata – Making meaningful connections

“By coming here my child is being prepared as a lifelong learner.”



Ngā puna whakatupu are kaupapa Māori-based early childhood centres committed to nurturing children on their path to becoming lifelong learners.

This ERO report describes how five puna whakatupu successfully work with whānau to improve participation in, and quality of, early childhood education for Māori children and their whānau.

The report builds on a 2012 ERO evaluation, *Partnership with Whānau Māori*, which found Māori have a growing expectation that the education system promotes whānau partnership and is culturally responsive.

Research shows that children who are involved in high quality early childhood education benefit in many ways and these benefits also extend to their whānau and wider community. At puna whakatupu, whānau are focused on their children’s education. They believe that for every child involved, a whānau will be engaged. Ngā puna whakatupu have become places where whānau learn with, and alongside, their children.

“I notice my two-year-old girl does this thing before kai time at home... she shakes her hands and sways and calls. We think she’s doing karakia but that’s not how they do karakia at centre. She has been doing this thing for a while. I asked whaea. She told me that the centre follows Tainui protocol and what she was doing was a karanga to bring everyone to the table. I learnt so much from that simple question... I am learning alongside my daughter. How wonderful is that?”

Key factors that influence positive outcomes for children in puna whakatapu:

- Tikanga Māori.
- Culture and identity.
- Meaningful and loving relationships that are both valued and valuable.
- Language learning strategies.
- Learning environments that promote exploration and provide challenge.
- Learning expectations and learner opportunities.

The five puna whakatupu share similar kaupapa Māori philosophies that influence the way they work with children and their whānau. Common approaches and practices found across the five Puna Whakatupu included:

- Learning environments that reflect whanungatanga (relationships, sense of family connection) as the foundation for all interactions
- Children establishing meaningful relationships with other children, including tuakana teina relationships (interactions between older and younger)
- Children following what interests them, with support from kaiako (teachers)
- The strong affirmation of culture and identity
- A focus on language - children hear both te reo Māori and English
- Whānau feel valued by staff and know they are integral to their children’s learning journey

“My girl is both Chinese and Māori...it is so good that she learns about her whakapapa here.”