

RARANGA IN A MONTESSORI PRESCHOOL

APPLICATION FOR THE DR. NICOLA CHISNALL AWARD 2023

| Wā Ora Montessori School |

Where you started from: What did you see as needing action or help? Where did you get your idea for action from? Who did you consult with before deciding on the action?

We have been implementing many ideas and strategies as a preschool to become more bicultural in our akomanga, so that it is our way of being rather than feeling prescribed or tokenistic. Many of us have taken te reo Māori courses, belong to our school Whānau Hui rōpū, and have fully embraced new learning around PD on documents such as Ka Hikitia and Te Whatu Pōkeka.

To enhance our preschool even further, we were looking into ways that we could learn and share more about Māori culture and the arts. This would give a good context for te reo Māori and would provide the opportunity for tamariki to experience more about the indigenous culture here in Aotearoa.

A local raranga (weaving) course was found and two of our kaiako were interested in this; for themselves as well as to share with tamariki. Being at a local marae also provided the opportunity for making links with tangata whenua. They have attended every Monday night since March this year.

What you did: What you set out to do and what actions did you take? How did you carry out these actions and what did you do differently? What roles did people in your community play?

Ingrid and Krista have attended these evenings, learning about raranga. This has also included learning about and experiencing karakia, te reo Māori, the whakapapa of raranga and Te Whare Pora, and how to hauhake (harvest); all within the tikanga around raranga.

We have brought this mātauranga into our akomanga and shared it with tamariki me ngā whānau. They are now aware of tikanga around these times and this practice, as well as the importance of harakeke to iwi around Aotearoa and traditional uses of harakeke.

Tamariki have been able to see what can be produced using harakeke and we are looking to implement it in our long term planning.

Progress you have seen: What did you learn and discover? What evidence do you have of positive change or that your actions made difference? Were the changes as you had planned and expected, or did you have unexpected outcomes?

Given a rau (leaf), tamariki can now independently prepare it for raranga by splitting the rau, removing the hard spine, and splitting it into strips of different widths. The actual process of hāpine, working te harakeke to soften it and ready it for weaving, and the weaving itself is mostly still being done by kaiako as it takes strength and coordination, which ngā tamariki are still developing. Some of our older tamariki have had one on one akoranga (lessons) weaving putiputi, and are working towards mastering this. To open this up to more tamariki and to include our whānau community, we have held after school and in school sessions when whānau are able to come in and learn and work alongside us. This has meant that some tamariki who have been eager to do this mahi raranga at home, can be supported in it by their whānau.

With a Matariki event coming up at the end of June, we are working towards having a putiputi or whetū to gift to each manuhiri. As a class community of kaiako, tamariki me ngā whānau, we are all working towards this shared goal. It is helping tamariki learn about manaakitanga as they selflessly give away something that they are so proud of, understanding the purpose of this mahi.

What you may do next: What did you learn that may provide strategies to build on your success? What potential is there to gain

additional support from other partners in your community? Do the actions and outcomes have application to wider communities than your own?

Although we have invested in some "Flax Dye" and have done this with tamariki, to have full effect it needs to be boiling whilst we are dyeing. We are not wanting to do this in our kai kitchen as this goes against the tikanga of practice; instead we have just added water to the dye and used this. Although the outcome is good, it is not the way we have been shown to get maximum colouring effect. Our long term goal is to set up an outdoor station where tamariki from all four akomanga can prepare harakeke, and have it include a set up in which a pot of dye can be heated for dyeing as well as a drying rack.

Alongside this we hope to plant and maintain our own pā harakeke so that tamariki can be involved in this stage of raranga also. Currently they only see the rau when we adults have been out to hauhake out of school hours. Having a pā harakeke on site would open up many opportunities for learning, preparing for planting and then caring for and maintaining it. Tamariki could then choose to raranga and have the knowledge and skills themselves to hauhake, prepare, hāpine, and weave the harakeke. What an amazing experience that would be for them!

Another goal that we have as a preschool is to start a Kapa Haka/Pasifika group, looking to be included at the ECE day of annual Hutfest event that is huge in the Hutt Valley, with most schools entering a Kapa Haka and/or Pasifika group to perform. We will look into the viability of ngā tamariki using their raranga skills to be included in making piupiu or tāpeka for this rōpū.

Tāpeka for congress:

We have made a tāpeka (shoulder cloak) for teachers from Aotearoa attending the 2024 congress in Thailand to take with them, as cultural items from attendees are asked for and appreciated. It will be included in a display and then gifted to local school. (NB: the hand stitching was done by kaiako).