

SECTION 3

THE ELEMENTS OF EFFECTIVE REVIEW

NGĀ HUĀNGA O TE AROHAEHAE TŌTIKA

Ko te rito te pū kāmeheheha, awheawhe te pā ki tōna tauranga.

Nurturing the ritorito – the developing leaves at the heart – ensures the survival of the flax bush as a whole. The pā, or the outer leaves, and other elements, such as soil, wind, and sun, together provide the ritorito with a sturdy foundation. Only the healthiest leaves are selected from the harakeke to weave a quality whāriki.

Like the impact of healthy harakeke on the quality of a weaving, there are key elements that contribute to the quality of review and its potential to transform practice. These elements offer a source of strength and insight, thereby increasing the effectiveness of review processes and the quality of our curriculum whāriki.



rā

energy, power, force, influence, strength, intensity, growth generated by the sun

ara

direction, method, process, technique, approach, procedure, system

rara

be scattered, to have an effect, shoal of fish

ranga

weave, unite, merge, connect, bond, join together

anga

framework, support, structure, scaffold

ngā

plural, more than one, communal, shared, co-operation

RARANGA

In this section, we introduce six elements of effective review:

- **r**elationships
- **e**vidence
- **v**ision
- **i**mprovement
- **e**thics
- **w**isdom.

Relationships

The way we engage and involve others is central to the process and outcome of our review. The richness of diverse perspectives and views within each learning community has the potential to challenge current practice through review. It also provides opportunities to explore new and innovative approaches to practice.

Relationships are a source of learning, empowerment, and identity for all of us. This is reflected in the concept of whanaungatanga. Paul Hirini (1997) describes whanaungatanga as “a value, which reinforces the commitment whānau members have to each other”(page 44). Such commitment is expressed through a process of caring, sharing, respecting, helping, assisting, relieving, reciprocating, balancing, nurturing, and guardianship. Hirini goes on to suggest that involvement through whanaungatanga “generates observable behavioural processes through which whānau functioning is promoted and enhanced”. Whakawhanaungatanga, building a collaborative learning community, establishes an environment of trust and reciprocity as an essential base for effective review.

Ngā – plural, more than one, communal, shared co-operation.

The “ngā” in raranga emphasises the importance of togetherness. It reminds us of the co-operative nature of learning. Strong relationships, based on respect, reciprocity, and trust, are essential to effective review.



Mason Durie's capacity framework is a way of exploring the strength of our relationships that contribute to effective review:

- The **capacity to care** invites us to ask "How do we care for one another in review?"
- The **capacity to share** is about looking at our review process and asking "How do we share the responsibility for review with everyone in our service?"
- The **capacity for guardianship** invites us to ask "How effectively does our leadership in review reflect community aspirations, professional insights, the role of tangata whenua, and our collective priorities for children's learning?"
- The **capacity to empower** is about looking at our expectations for involvement in review and the way we communicate these. Our question may be "What messages do we give to our community about their role in review?"
- The **capacity to plan** ahead is concerned with the attention we are able to give to the future of our service, and the extent to which our aspirations are reflected in review. We could ask "How do we know that our service priorities are shared by everyone? What if they are not?"
- The **capacity to promote culture** challenges us to understand, respect and acknowledge the cultural values and practices of our community. We could ask "In what ways do we promote culture through review?"

Durie, 2001, pages 200–202

Central to whakawhanaungatanga is the way we treat others. In effective review, we take the time to draw together the ideas of all members of our learning community. We recognise that there is a wide range of information sources and ways of analysing information that have the potential to generate evidence in review and to assist us in making wise judgments about our practice.

Rita Walker (2003) highlights the importance of indigenous community members contributing to the generation of an effective curriculum as "more than just letting community members voice their concerns, more than just acknowledging diversity. The non-indigenous partners must listen with their hearts and not merely their ears."

Taking the time to listen and respond, rather than persuade and coerce others to see things in the same way as we do, enriches the effectiveness of review.

Evidence

Evidence is generated from the information we have analysed. Evidence informs the judgments we make about our practice. If asked "How do you know?", we should be able to show how we reached our judgments by drawing on our evidence. [Pages 31–32 discuss the relationship between information and evidence.]

In effective review, we generate evidence we can have confidence in.

Michael Eraut (2004) says that the process of generating evidence "is situated within the context, practices and thinking patterns of its creators" (page 91).

When the review process is shared, it builds everyone's capacity.

Education and care service

We can evaluate the quality of our evidence by questioning its validity and reliability:

- Is our evidence valid? Is it based on sound information?
- Is our evidence reliable? Would we generate the same outcome if we repeated the process?
- Can we explain (to ourselves and others) how evidence enabled us to reach judgments in review?

By making review as transparent as possible through documenting the process as we go along, we are able to demonstrate to others what we have done and why. Pages 26–31 outline the process of making sense of information and highlight different approaches to analysis.

The following table helps us to consider different kinds of information as evidence and its likely value in informing our judgments:

Kinds of Evidence	One-off observations or comments	Information gathered on the run or that is in progress	External sources of evidence that support the information we have analysed	Conclusive evidence
Leading us to:	<p>Inspiration</p> <p>This kind of information may be a trigger for review but, in itself, does not provide sufficient evidence to make judgments about our practice.</p>	<p>Hunch</p> <p>Again, information may be a trigger for review or a source of information that contributes to a base of evidence to inform the review.</p>	<p>Rational belief</p> <p>Different sources of information (including research evidence or evidence from external review processes) confirm, support, or strengthen our analysis. However, on their own, they do not constitute evidence in review.</p>	<p>Understanding</p> <p>Information that enables us to state with confidence that our evidence represents “reality”. This means that the information has undergone rigorous analysis and is reliable. As a result, we can make well-informed judgments about our practice.</p>

ara – direction, method, process, technique, approach, procedure.

The “ara” in raranga emphasises the significance of procedures and systems in achieving our goals. In the context of effective review, such procedures and systems are evident through systematic and robust approaches to preparing, gathering, making sense, and deciding. By rigorous analysis of relevant information, we generate evidence that we can draw on to inform the decisions we make and then make changes to our practice accordingly.

We have developed a clear awareness of the need to gather a lot more information before coming to conclusions.

Kindergarten

The extent to which we use evidence to inform judgments and transform our practice is influenced by our commitment to making a difference to children and their learning through effective review.

Philippa Cordingley (2004) suggests that the potential of evidence to effectively inform practice will only be realised “through better listening to teachers, ensuring that they have a strong voice in figuring out the processes needed to make it work” (page 871).

In effective review, the voices of all members of our early childhood community contribute to the generation of evidence.

Vision

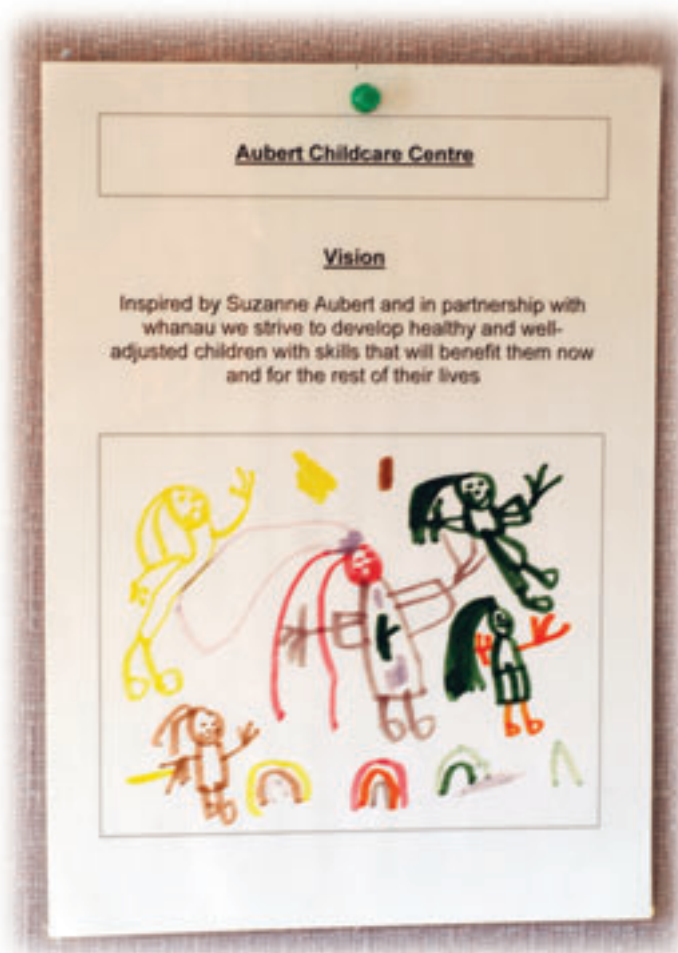
Vision can best be described as the overall design of our curriculum whāriki. Our shared vision for children sets out our aspirations for their achievement as learners. It describes:

- what we value and why;
- what we are trying to achieve for children – both now and in their future.

Working towards our vision involves developing and setting goals that describe what we need to do to get there. When we are clear about our goals, we can plan for them. These goals can inform our priorities for review and provide a starting place for developing indicators. In effective review, we regularly revisit our shared vision to check we are making improvements that are taking us in our agreed direction. We work together towards a unique design for our curriculum whāriki that truly reflects who we are, what we do, and how and why we do it.

rā – energy, power, force, influence, strength, intensity, growth.

The “rā” in raranga refers to the energy and growth influenced by the sun. In effective review, energy is derived from the vision that each early childhood education service holds for children. Our vision therefore has the potential to both shape and be shaped by the process of review.



In revisiting our shared vision through review, we want to ensure that everyone has had an opportunity to contribute their knowledge to the process. To achieve this, we return to our service philosophy.

Our service philosophy is influenced by a number of factors, including:

- the beliefs and values engendered by our individual experiences of growing up;
- the principles and strands of *Te Whāriki*;
- the founding beliefs of our organisation;
- national and international research and theory;
- nationally and internationally agreed conventions (for example, the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of the Child*).

Sometimes we are unaware of the impact of these factors on our practice. In effective review, we want to know that our beliefs, values, and assumptions about children are consistent with our practice. We consider the impact of our philosophy on our practice and how this influences children's learning. We can talk about:

- the words we use to describe children and why;
- our hopes and dreams for children as they grow up;
- the way we interact with children through our practice;
- the extent to which our practices align with *Te Whāriki* and with relevant research describing quality education for children in Aotearoa New Zealand.

It is critical to effective review that we discuss and debate our service philosophy so that we can develop a shared vision to guide our practice.

Anne Grey (1999) suggests that it is of utmost importance that this vision is “articulated, then owned by those who formed it”(page 126). She cites Bertacchi, who describes a vision as “a point of reference which can be re-visited regularly, especially in times of change or stress”(page 127).

Improvement

The “anga” in raranga refers to a framework or scaffold. In effective review, we structure the process to maintain our overarching purpose of working together towards improvement. Effective review enables us to explore our practice critically and to consider how we might become even better through knowing what we do well and what we need to improve.

In effective review, we are always open to possibilities that there is more to learn about our practice. We seek to continually enhance our practice to provide relevant and meaningful learning opportunities for children. Review gives us a way of knowing what we do well and what needs to be improved in order to act on this knowledge. Our commitment to ongoing improvement contributes to the capacity of our learning community to determine its own direction and future. This is sometimes expressed as self-determination or tino rangatiratanga.

Knowing that the purpose of review is to improve our practice enables us to celebrate achievements and highlight aspects of practice for change. In doing so, we create an environment of enquiry in which we seek to acknowledge and act on areas for improvement rather than justify our practice through review.

Inevitably there will be challenges to face and change to manage when we engage in effective review that is underpinned by a commitment to improve our practice. The strength of our relationships will determine our ability to sustain these challenges and face change. Change is always easier to cope with when we have been part of the review process and especially when we are involved in the decision making. We can manage the changes together, knowing what led us to make decisions and why. We accept that there is more to learn and that we all play a part in building the capacity of our learning community to improve the quality of our curriculum whāriki for children. We embrace a culture of shared responsibility and critical reflection as we move forward together. We have a process that allows us to be confident in answering these questions:

- What aspects of our practice are we doing well?
- What aspects of our practice do we need to improve?
- What do we need to do as a result of what we have learned about our practice?

Our answers are informed by evidence that we have generated through preparing, gathering, making sense, and deciding. Improvement that takes place as a result of effective review is based on judgments that we have made about our practice in order to be accountable to others and to reach higher standards of education for our children.

According to David Hopkins (2001), effective review is not determined merely by how much or how well we gather information: “There needs to be a commitment to scrutinize such data, to make sense of it, and to plan and act differently as a result.” (page 101)

It is our commitment to making sense of the information and deciding what to do as a result of the evidence that impacts on the extent to which review can bring about improvement.

Throughout the process, we were moving back and forth between preparing and gathering and could go on doing that forever. It’s very easy to forget that eventually you have an obligation to make sense of it all and to do something with that information!

Rudolf Steiner kindergarten

Ethics

Ethics are concerned with the care and attention we give to the people, and to the associated information that they have contributed to review. Effective review leaves everyone feeling heard and valued. We consider the implications of our actions on others, both now and in the future, by recognising our obligation to uphold their rights in all aspects of review.

It is important that everyone in the review process is treated with dignity and respect. The information we gather, the way we analyse the information, and what we find out as a result also need to be treated with the same care. The four fundamental principles for teachers that guide us to act ethically are justice, autonomy, responsible care, and truth (New Zealand Teachers' Council, 2004).

Acting ethically also requires us to consider the factors associated with the context-based relationships (Cullen, 2005) that comprise our learning community – culture, gender, age, ethnicity, community, and geographical location. These principles and relationship factors are important aspects of ethics, which make up one of the key elements of review.

Principles

Justice

How are processes fair for everyone? Whose views get heard? Is there anyone not being heard? Are processes transparent? Do we do what we say we will do? Whose permission do we seek?

Autonomy

In what ways do we ensure that our process enables important issues to be raised? Who owns this information and why?

Responsible care

What are our moral, legal, and social responsibilities as advocates for children in review? How do we protect and preserve the information? How do we share it? How do we preserve confidentiality?

Truth

How do we ensure that we gather, analyse, and report the outcomes of our review truthfully whilst doing no harm?

Relationships

Culture

What is our service culture, and how does it influence the way we go about review? Are there aspects of power and privilege that we need to address in our relationships to support review?

Gender and age

How do we avoid making assumptions about who will be involved, based on gender or age?

Ethnicity

What do we know about each ethnic group in our service, and how do we work appropriately with each group? How do we ensure that the special rights of tangata whenua are upheld?

Community

What are our unique relationship obligations within our local community and the various groups that we belong to?

Geographical location

What are the unique aspects of our location that might influence the way we go about review?

ranga – weave, unite, merge, connect, bond, join.

The “ranga” in raranga relates to the concept of joining together or bonding. In the context of review, it can remind us to weave together the process of preparing, gathering, making sense, and deciding with the people who make up our learning community. Being ethical in review requires us to consider the rights of everyone and to ensure that review considers the well-being of all participants. At all times, we seek to ensure that everyone is safe.

rara – be scattered, to have an effect, shoal of fish.

The “rara” in raranga can be interpreted to mean “to have an effect” or to shake things up. The effect that we are able to have on children’s learning through review is greatly influenced by our ability to make wise judgments and act accordingly. In making wise judgments, we need to be able to look at our practice critically.

Wisdom

When we engage in effective review, we draw on our combined wisdom.

Joy Goodfellow (2001) describes wisdom as “a way of knowing”. She suggests that wisdom involves a combination of experience, knowledge, and action with these characteristics:

- reasoning ability;
- an expression of concern for others;
- an ability to learn from ideas and environment;
- an ability to make sound judgments (moral issues);
- the expeditious use of experience; and
- intuition through which an ability to see through things, read between the lines, and interpret the environment is displayed.

In effective review, wisdom is achieved through reflection and reflexivity. These actions require a level of self-awareness coupled with an ability to share our discoveries with others in the learning community. Reflection and reflexivity allow us to scrutinise our practice honestly and openly, without blame.

Reflection enables us to see beyond the taken-for-granted ways of doing things and explore alternatives for our practice. Reflection supports us in developing an understanding of the way in which we make decisions and of the values and beliefs that underpin them. Becoming aware of how we make these decisions is a way of clarifying our thinking.

Reflection in review allows us to use what we know (sometimes called tacit knowledge) and what we find out through the process of review to discover new theories. These theories have the potential to influence and challenge our practice. In this way, reflection opens up possibilities and opportunities to change and improve. We can look critically at ourselves in the light of what we learn about our practice.

Reflexivity is described by John Quicke (2000) as the way “organizations ‘turn around’ upon themselves, critically examine their rationales and values and, if necessary, deliberately reorder or reinvent their identities and structures” (pages 299–230).

Reflexivity reminds us that knowledge is located within a context and is therefore never free from bias.

Reflexivity in review enables us to suspend our judgments by accepting the fact that there are many ways of knowing and coming to know. We can then respond to different kinds of information coming from a range of perspectives. Rather than dismissing these insights because they are different from our commonly held beliefs, we explore them through the process of preparing, gathering, making sense, and deciding.

Reflecting deeply requires three increasingly challenging processes.

Reflection-in-action:

Thinking “on your feet” and responding “on the spot”.

Reflection-on-action:

Examining what happened by asking others, questioning ourselves, and reading different theories about it. At this point, we begin to critically examine ourselves.⁵

Reflection-for-action:

Developing new theories and consolidating, adapting, or changing practice as a result.

Margaret Carr (2004) suggests that, in reflection, we are “expecting to be surprised, and prepared to change our minds” (page 45). In this way, reflection can be viewed as a disposition to enquire and not give up. We remain open to possibilities amidst the challenge! By being openly reflexive, we have the opportunity to discover new insights about ourselves, our practice, and our human condition. We can make the most astounding discoveries at the most unlikely times because we are focused on making meaning rather than being proven “right”.

Throughout this process, we were always reflecting by working through the questions and thinking about what they mean and how they look from the child’s perspective. We realised that there was no way that we could ever fully understand their perspective, but we would always endeavour to try.

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⁵ The first two processes are adapted from Schön, 1983.

Some questions to think about

Hei whakaaro iho

How do our relationships contribute to and strengthen our review process and outcomes?

What is the quality of our evidence? How do we use evidence to inform and transform our practice?

How valid and reliable is our evidence?

What opportunities does review give us to share and debate our personal philosophies?

What does our service philosophy say about our image of children as learners?

How well does our shared vision for children reflect our beliefs, values, and attitudes?

What is the link between our vision and goals and the priorities we establish in review?

What opportunities do we have to revisit our vision as a result of review?

To what extent does review improve our practice? What is the impact on children's learning?

How well do we manage change in our service? What are the challenges we face?

What strategies do we have for overcoming these challenges?

How well do we work together? Who gets to have a say in review? How often do children, families, and members of our wider community contribute to review?

Do we feel safe? How do we ensure that we behave ethically in review?

How does our collective wisdom contribute to effective review?

How reflexive and reflective are we in review? How do we know?

To what extent are we able to critically reflect on our evidence in order to make sound judgments in review?





Conclusion

Whakamutunga

Te Whāriki suggests that we, as members of our early childhood education service, belong to a community of weavers. Review involves us in a process of raranga as we systematically look back, check, and refine our whāriki for children. Raranga brings to mind feelings of unity and togetherness, weaving together children, their families, whānau, and communities into the life of our early childhood education service. Raranga reminds us that we are weaving together a curriculum that has at its core our best intentions for children.

When we take the time to pause and look back critically at our practice, we are making sure that what we do matches up with what we set out to achieve for children. As a result, we have the opportunity to transform our practice, based on strong evidence and sound judgments.

Review therefore involves us in:

-  **Preparing:** being clear about what we are wanting to find out;
-  **Gathering:** collecting information that helps us to find out;
-  **Making sense:** analysing that information and generating evidence;
-  **Deciding:** making judgments, deciding what to do as a result, and acting accordingly.

Through the process of effective review, our practice has the potential to be transformed. Children are the ultimate beneficiaries of such transformation because their learning is enhanced as a result. Effective review allows us to be more confident that the curriculum whāriki we weave for children is robust and strong and that we have a clear design to work with in the future together.

The weaver sees herself as a repository, linking the knowledge of the past with that of the future. It strengthens the fabric of our extended family. It adds creative energy and colour to our community and keeps the link with the past and future strong.

Puketapu-Hetet, 1999

Me hoki whakamuri, kia ahu whakamua, kaneke.

In order to improve, evolve, and move forward, we must reflect back to what has been.