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**STEINER EDUCATION**  
AOTEAROA • NEW ZEALAND

# Steiner/Waldorf Early Childhood Essentials for Aotearoa/New Zealand

**“Receive the child in Reverence,  
Educate the child with Love,  
Let each go forth in Freedom”**

Rudolf Steiner

**“Kia rangatira ai te tamaiti  
Tohua ki te aroha  
Tukuna tōna mana, kia rere”**

Translated by Jade Te Moni Flavell

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Steiner Education Aotearoa New Zealand (SEANZ)

Please Note: This is a document which describes the Essentials of Steiner/Waldorf Education in Aotearoa New Zealand rather than being a Curriculum Document.

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# Introduction

‘The Essentials for Aotearoa/New Zealand’ has been developed by Waekura, the early childhood group of Steiner/Waldorf Education Aotearoa/New Zealand (SEANZ). It is intended as a working reference document for Steiner/Waldorf early childhood centres, to stand alongside Te Whāriki, He whāriki mātauranga mō ngā mokopuna o Aotearoa, The New Zealand Early Childhood Curriculum.

The document draws on internationally recognised key characteristics of Steiner/Waldorf early childhood education (Howard 2006) and is designed to be used as a resource for teachers to support the development, implementation, review and internal evaluation of the philosophy. It includes priorities for learning and reflects on the principles and strands of Te Whāriki with an aim to assisting in the process and practice of weaving a Steiner/Waldorf early childhood curriculum for Aotearoa/New Zealand.

The Education (Early Childhood Services) Regulations 2008, state the Licensing Criteria for Early Childhood Education and Care Centres in Aotearoa/New Zealand. The regulations require early childhood centres to implement a curriculum consistent with the prescribed curriculum framework (Ministry of Education 2017,p7). The framework comprises the principles/Ngā Kaupapa Whakahaere and strands/ NgāTaumata of Te Whāriki.

An engagement with the full breadth of the guidance provided in Te Whāriki is an essential for early childhood centres in Aotearoa/New Zealand but centres are encouraged not to be limited by it. There is a clear expectation in Te Whāriki that centres will have diverse philosophical emphases and each centre will weave a distinctive curriculum.

In accordance with the three Treaty principles of protection, participation and partnership, the guidelines in the ‘Essentials for Aotearoa/ New Zealand’ are also responsive to the ongoing localisation of Steiner /Waldorf education in Aotearoa/New Zealand. (Ministry of Education 2017, p3.) They embrace the premise that kaupapa Māori and Te Reo Māori are an essential part of learning,

recognising that all children benefit from a bicultural education and that Māori children in particular, have a right to it. (Rau and Richie p.795 -817).

The elements in the ‘Essentials for Aotearoa/New Zealand’ document have been organised under the headings of the 4 principles of Te Whāriki; Empowerment, Holistic Development, Family and Community and Relationships, so that the links between the Steiner/Waldorf curriculum essentials and the Aotearoa/New Zealand curriculum framework are evident.



# Historical Overview

Kotahi te kākano, he nui ngā hua o te rākau

A tree comes from one seed but bears many fruit.

Ministry of Education 2017 p.8

The first Rudolf Steiner Waldorf school was opened in Stuttgart, Germany in 1919 for the children of the Waldorf Astoria factory. It is from this origin that Steiner schools are still often referred to as Waldorf schools. The first official kindergarten was founded 18 months after Rudolf Steiner's death in 1926. (Howard 2005)

Waldorf schools were founded on a curriculum to which Rudolf Steiner gave direct indications and which rested on his philosophy of the development of the growing child. The kindergarten curriculum, likewise, was developed from the many suggestions Steiner gave to teachers during meetings and lectures. But, as Caroline von Heydebrand, one of the founding kindergarten teachers in the first Steiner kindergarten, remarks, the curriculum must also be fitting to the time and place in which it is applied.

*“The ideal curriculum must be modelled on the changing image of the human being passing through different phases while growing up. But, like any ideal, it is confronted by the reality of life and must accommodate itself accordingly. This reality comprises many things: the individuality of the teacher, the class itself with all the peculiarities of every pupil in it, the moment in history, the education authorities and education laws prevailing at the place where the school that is wanting to implement the curriculum is located. All these factors modify the ideal curriculum and call for transformation and discussion. The educational task with which the growing human being confronts us can only be achieved if the curriculum remains mobile and pliable.” (Hydebrand, 1989 p.32)*



Susan Howard comments further:

*“Many practices that have come to be associated with Waldorf early childhood education settings have the potential to become doctrinal or dogmatic when imposed without genuine reference to the aspirations and context of the centre. There is a parallel concern at the other end of the spectrum that the freedom which Steiner Waldorf education offers to each individual centre and teacher to determine the practices of his or her early childhood programme, can be misinterpreted to mean ‘anything goes, according to personal preference and style.’” (Howard 2006)*

From the above quotes there arise relevant questions for reflection for Steiner early childhood centres operating in Aotearoa/New Zealand considering whether historically inherited practices are still in the best interests of children and their whānau. Likewise, such inherited practices require teachers to explore the underlying philosophy behind historical practices and their relevance in time and place.

# Steiner/Waldorf Education in Aotearoa/New Zealand

“He taonga te mokopuna, kia whāngaia, kia tipu, kia rea”.

“A child is a treasure, to be nurtured, to grow, to flourish”

Ministry of Education 2017 p.4

In Aotearoa/New Zealand, Steiner early childhood education began in Hastings in 1950 as part of the growth of the Steiner School movement. At this time, in most cases, early childhood centres shared management and governance structures with schools. When Steiner schools attained an integration agreement with the Ministry of Education, the Steiner/Waldorf kindergartens were viewed as part of the schools and as such the Special Character outlined in the Schools Integration Agreements remains applicable to early childhood centres attached to integrated schools today.

The enactment of Philosophy and Special Character is not confined to any single aspect of a school or early childhood centre’s activity. It is expressed in all educational aims, curriculum content and delivery, teaching approaches and organisational structures, as well as in the social, cultural, spiritual and physical environment. It is essentially an integrated approach with all aspects interconnected in a mutually supportive way.

Steiner Waldorf pedagogy holds at its centre the question of what it means to be human, and strives to honour the unique developmental pathway of each child. The insights and ethos of Rudolf Steiner provide kaiako with a body of ideas from which they can derive inspiration for curriculum as it pertains to Steiner education in a contemporary Aotearoa/New Zealand context. The ongoing renewal of Steiner education is based on the insights of Rudolf Steiner and the continuing research of Waldorf/Steiner educators and other compatible pedagogical approaches.

Each Steiner school and early childhood centre in Aotearoa/New Zealand is autonomous and reflects the unique qualities of the culture and place in which it has developed. Steiner settings in Aotearoa/New Zealand strive to imbue their curricula with the unique spirit and history of this land and its peoples. The

principles that are fundamental to Steiner education are intended to be accessible and to be responsive to cultural context, enabling the exploration of a wide variety of cultural traditions and world views. The education is open to all faiths (or none), free of dogma or sectarianism, and includes the celebration of Christian, seasonal and relevant cultural festivals.

Aotearoa/New Zealand Steiner centres and schools are part of a global education movement. There are currently more than 1000 Steiner Waldorf schools and approximately 2000 kindergartens in more than 65 countries worldwide. In 2013 the early childhood members of SEANZ became an independent member of the International Association for Steiner Waldorf Early Childhood Education (IASWECE), who are licensure for The Hague Circle who own the Steiner/Waldorf brand worldwide. ‘The Essentials for Aotearoa/New Zealand’ references the international key characteristics of Steiner education.



# Weaving Te Whāriki with Steiner Principles

## A Purposeful Education

*“Children are competent and confident learners and communicators, healthy in mind, body, and spirit, secure in their sense of belonging and in the knowledge that they make a valued contribution to society”*

*Ministry of Education 2017, p. 4*

Steiner education is based on an understanding that every human being is a spiritual being on a purposeful life journey and that during this journey distinctive, progressive phases of development unfold. While a child “grows up” in its physical body, it also “grows down” from the spiritual world and creates in this meeting ground its own unique world of soul. (Masters, 2007, p. 185). A core task in Steiner education is to accompany and support each child’s process of gradually anchoring this individuality into body, soul and spirit, in a manner that is healthy and well balanced.

Steiner education recognises the emergence of three soul faculties; thinking (head), feeling (heart) and willing (hands), which are all present in different stages of maturation at every point in a child’s development. Approximately every seven years a new soul “faculty” emerges, and then matures during the following period. In early childhood (0-7) the primary focus is on the facilitation of, and immersion in, creative will activity and physical development through play. During the primary school (7-14) years, engagement is more through feelings and imagination. The focus in the high school (14-21) is toward developing the thinking capacities. A healthy Steiner education makes best use of these sensitive periods, gives consideration for this trajectory when shaping the continuities between early childhood and school, and appears consistent with the coherence principles outlined in Te Whāriki. (Ministry of Education 2017, p. 58.)

This kind of attunement of body, soul and spirit is seen as serving the purpose and intentionality (destiny) with which every child arrives. It is dispositional in nature and over time emerges as guiding ideals and themes that carry through life. (Mitchell, 2007, p .19). The ‘art of education’, often referred to in Steiner education, is to ‘impart to each child the ability to meet the challenges of this process and overcome the obstacles’, so that their full potential has the opportunity to be realised. (Mitchell, 2007, p .20). Viewing the human being and the purpose of education in this way could be considered alongside the Te Whāriki aspirational statement that acknowledges the spiritual dimension of children, recognises their immense potential and is orientated toward positive outcomes from education for life and for society. (Ministry of Education 2017, p. 2.)



# The Essential Elements of Steiner Early Childhood Education

## Whakamana – Empowerment

### Essential Element 1

**The Spiritual Core of each child is seen as inviolable, unique and individual, irrespective of abilities, culture, family values, gender or personality.**

*‘Viewed from a Māori perspective all children are born with mana inherited from their tīpuna. Mana is the power of being and must be upheld and enhanced.’*

(Ministry of Education 2017. P18)

#### Essential Element 1.1

Teachers/kaiako and staff show loving interest and warm acceptance of each individual child.

*“Loving warmth, more than any programmatic approach to early education, creates the basis for development.”* (Susan Howard)

Evidence of essential element:

- Children show trust and warmth towards their teachers.
- Children are comfortable in the early childhood environment.

*“Our highest endeavour must be to develop free human beings who are able, out of their initiative, to impart purpose and direction to their lives.”*

Rudolf Steiner quoted in Ogletree, 1979, p. 18



# Learning as a process of self-education

*“Essentially there is no education other than self-education, whatever the level may be. Every education is self-education and, as teachers, we can only provide the environment for children’s self-education. We have to provide the most favourable conditions where, through our agency, children can educate themselves according to their own destinies. This is the attitude that teachers should have toward children.”*

(Rudof Stiener, The Child’s Changing Consciousness)

## Essential element 2

**Approaches to learning are based on the understanding that children have the essential capacity and desire for both education and self-education. In Steiner education, children are viewed as active learners with agency, particularly in their self-selected, free and imaginative play.**

*“In the child’s play activity, we can only provide the conditions for education. What is gained through play, through everything that cannot be determined by fixed rules, stems fundamentally from the self-activity of the child. The real educational value of play lives in the fact that we ignore our rules and regulations, our educational theory, and allow the child free rein.”*

(Rudolf Steiner, Self Education in the Light of Anthroposophy)



*“In an empowering environment, children have agency to create and act on their own ideas, develop knowledge and skills in areas that interest them and, increasingly, to make decisions and judgments on matters that relate to them. Play and playfulness are valued and kaiako-initiated experiences are inviting and enjoyable.”*

(Ministry of Education)

**2.1 A Steiner early childhood environment recognises children’s self-directed play as a childhood right (WHO) and provides opportunities for children to create and act on their own ideas.**

**Evidence of essential element:**

- The environment of the centre is set up for a range of free play opportunities.
- The rhythm of the day allows enough time for free play sessions.
- A variety of larger social group play and individual play is evident
- Children’s play is active, dynamic, healthy and creative.
- Children are self-directed in play.

*“Children approach play out of their entirely individual ways, out of their unique configuration of soul and spirit, and out of their unique experiences of the world in which they live. The manner in which a child plays may offer a picture of how they will take up their destiny as an adult”*

(Howard, 2008)



**2.2 Teachers facilitate self-directed play through a range of teaching strategies which may include close observation and listening to children as well as thoughtful decision making around when to encourage, provide positive solutions, make open-ended suggestions or provide a spark or invitation to play.**

**Evidence of essential element:**

- Kaiako show skills in supporting children to play independently and socially.

*“Children can experience themselves as increasingly capable and competent and able to direct their own play and lives.”*

(Ministry of Education, 2017, p18)

**2.3 Teachers encourage independent play, removing barriers and creating favourable conditions and then stepping back to allow children to self-direct.**

**Evidence of essential element:**

- Kaiako know when to step back to allow play to develop and children to discover their own ideas.

*“Play is regarded as being the place where the most complex thinking emerges and where positive dispositions and working theories are likely to be visible.”*

(Ministry of Education, 2017, p18)

### Essential Element 3

**An unhurried curriculum is viewed as a matter of empowerment. Children have the right to an unhurried childhood.**

*“The principle of readiness stands true right through the early childhood, primary and high school years, and is supported by research suggesting a school starting age of at least 6 years.”*

(Whitebread, 2011, Moyles, 2012)

**3.1. The child’s early years are considered to reach a developmental threshold in the seventh year. Appropriate education for the early years takes place in the kindergarten where learning occurs through play.**

*“Although it is recognised that children can be taught to do many things before this time of physical and soul readiness, this is seen to come at a cost that will become apparent in later years.”*

(House, 2012; Suggate, 2010, 2014).

#### Evidence of essential element:

- There is a mixed age range in the early childhood centre that includes 6 year olds
- Tuakana/Teina relationships are evident.



*“In play nothing is rushed, there is nothing to fail and nothing to fear.”*

(Sally Jenkinson)

# Kotahitanga – Holistic Development Engagement of body, soul and spirit

*“When entering earthly life, human beings not only receive what is passed down by heredity through their fathers and mothers, but they also descend as spirit beings from the spiritual world into this earthly world. This fact can be applied practically in education when we have living insight into the human being. “*

*Rudolf Steiner quoted in Jaffke 2005*

Steiner’s holistic picture of the human being includes the concept of four ‘bodies’ (4-fold human), the physical body, the etheric body, the astral body and the ego which interact and work together as part of the growth and development of the body, soul and spirit of the person.

The physical body is infused with the invisible life forces of the etheric body which is responsible for the health and processes of the physical body including the immune system. The etheric body also maintains habits and body-based memories.

The astral body brings sensation, emotion and consciousness to the soul of the human being. Steiner used the term ego to refer to the unique individuality of each person’s spirit and the capacity that brought for humans to experience self-consciousness.

An understanding of Steiner’s 4-fold human being and the development of the body, soul and spirit of a growing child, underscores many of the key practices associated with Steiner education. This understanding is consistent with the way Te Whāriki focuses on the ‘whole learner’.

*“Human development can be thought of in terms of cognitive, (hinengaro), physical (tinana), emotional (whatumanawa), spiritual (wairua) and social and cultural dimensions, but these dimensions need to be viewed holistically, as closely interwoven and interdependent. For Māori the spiritual dimension is fundamental to holistic development because it connects the other dimensions across time and space”*

Ministry of Education 2017

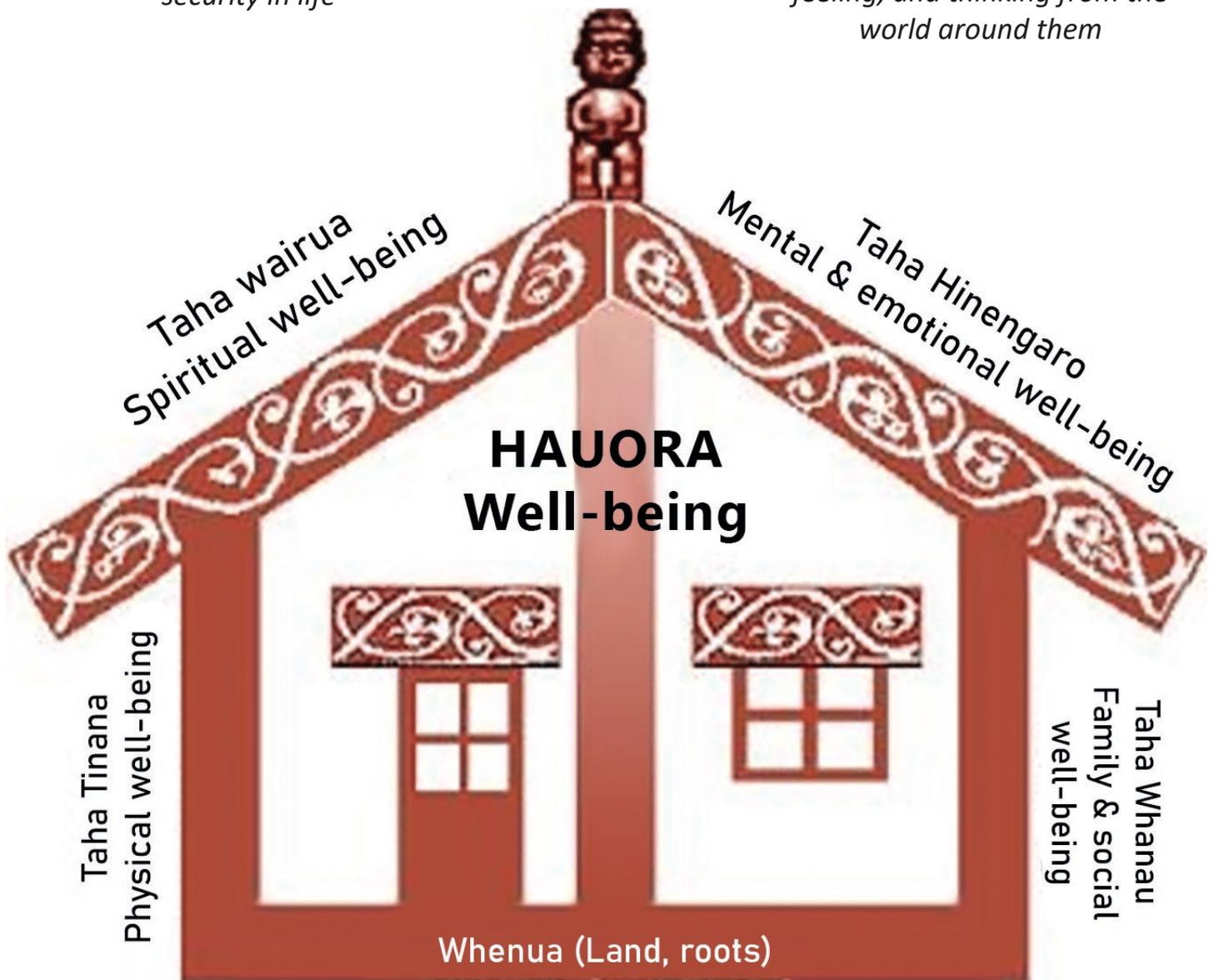


# Te Whare Tapa Whā

## Applied to Steiner Early Childhood Settings

*Resilience; courage and security in life*

*A secure feeling of connection to the world. Coherent action, feeling, and thinking from the world around them*



*Strength in the physical body, vitality in the life forces*

*Guardianship, authentic, connections, whakapapa*

*Active engagement in family and community*

# A Holistic Curriculum

*“Because children develop holistically, they need a broad and rich curriculum that enables them to grow their capabilities across all dimensions.”*

(Ministry of Education, 2017, p.19)

Te Whāriki defines curriculum as ‘including all the experiences, activities and events both direct and indirect which occur within an ECE setting. (Ministry of Education 2017, p.19)

Likewise in Steiner education curriculum refers to everything in the centre setting including the physical, sensory, temporal, experiential and human environments.



*“The essential task of the kindergarten teacher is to create the proper physical environment around the children. Physical environment must be understood in the widest sense imaginable. It includes not just what happens around children in the material sense, but everything that occurs in their environment, everything that can be perceived by their senses, that can work on the inner powers of children from the surrounding physical space. This includes all moral or immoral actions, all the meaningful and meaningless behaviours that children witness.”*

(Rudolf Steiner quoted in AWSNA,p.17)

## Essential Element 4

All environments created in Steiner settings are intended to cultivate a strong sense of belonging and well-being for children.

### 4.1 The physical environment and ambiance of the centre is purposefully home-like.

Care, love and intention are expressed through the materials and furnishings of the environment.

#### Evidence of essential element:

- Furnishings are comfortable and homely.
- Natural materials are used wherever possible.
- Colours in the room are soft and warm.
- There is natural lighting.
- The room is cared for and tidy.

#### Contra- indicators to avoid might be:

- a room that feels institutional.

### 4.2 Outdoor areas include gardens that nurture a connection with nature.

#### Evidence of essential element

- The outdoor area includes natural green spaces with plants, trees and flowers.
- Play equipment is integrated with the natural outdoor environment.
- Play equipment is made from natural materials as much as is possible.
- Vegetable gardens are cultivated and use organic or biodynamic principles.
- Children have opportunities to work alongside adults in the gardens and experience the transformation of food from garden to table.
- Children have opportunities to help care for, nourish and protect the gardens and natural environment.



## Essential Element 5

**Protection and nourishment of the senses is considered essential in all aspects of the environment and curriculum.**



Steiner education recognises 12 interrelated senses in the human being; touch, life, movement, balance, smell, taste, vision, warmth, hearing, language, concept and ego.

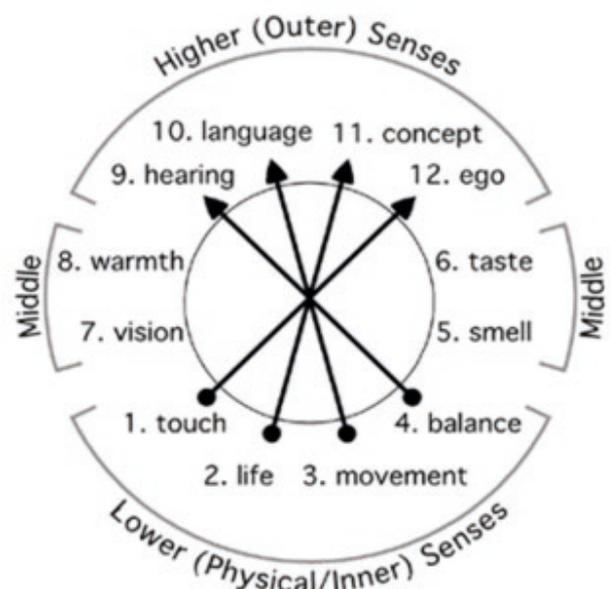
In early childhood, particular attention is given to the four lower senses of touch (which is associated with experience of the self as a separate body and a sense of trust), sense of life (an awareness of health and well-being in the body), self-movement (associated with self-control and a sense of freedom) and balance (orientation in space). (Glockler, 2002,p.25)

The twelve senses can be seen as the doorways through which we relate to our body, the world around us and to other human beings.

Young children's senses are new and sensitive and vulnerable to the world of sense perceptions around them. As we grow older, we learn to screen out various sense impressions but young children do not have this ability and so Steiner centres seek to provide an environment that nourishes the senses without overwhelming them.

*“During the first period of life, the child is in the highest degree and by its whole nature a being of sense. The child is like a sense organ. The surrounding impressions ripple, echo and sound through the whole organism... “*

(Rudolf Steiner quoted in Jaffke, 2004)



## 5.1 The environment is designed to protect and not to overwhelm the senses.

### Evidence of essential element

- Colours of the room are warm and soft.
- Furnishings and toys are made of natural materials.
- Art supplies such as crayons and paints are made of quality, natural materials e.g beeswax crayons, natural pigmented watercolours.
- Lighting is natural or soft.
- Smells are natural such as baking or flowers.
- Music comes through singing or gentle hand-played instrument such as the lyre.
- The room is ordered and attractive.

### Contra-indicators to avoid might be:

- Background recorded music.
- Television or computer screens visible.
- Toys that are plastic that all feel the same to the sense of touch.
- Fluorescent lighting.
- Artificial perfumes worn by teachers or air fresheners.
- A chaotic room.

## 5.2 The environment offers diverse opportunities for nourishing experiences in the realm of touch, self-movement, balance and wellbeing (life).

### Evidence of essential element

- Toys are made from natural materials and have a multitude of textural surfaces e.g. bark, polished wood, stones, pinecones, wool fleece, silk, shells.
- There is a circle time or mat time that offers opportunities for exploring both gross and fine motor movement.
- There is space for movement on the floor such as crawling.
- There is space and equipment outside for climbing, swinging, running and digging etc.
- A daily rhythm which includes times to eat and rest supports the sense of life.



## Essential Element 6

### Rhythm is essential to the health of all ākonga/learners

Rhythm is seen as crucial for protecting the life forces (etheric) of the child, which could be considered as similar to the concept of mauri; the child's energetic life force.

Secure daily, weekly, monthly rhythms and smooth transitions with a comfortable flow between experiences harmonise the physiological needs and learning processes of children. Consistent, reliable rhythms also provide children with a secure framework for revisiting previous learning and for modifying working theories so that learning dispositions strengthen and become habitual. Habits develop not only in the physical body but also in the feeling life, thinking and actions of children. (Boogerd,2009, p.105)

The teacher strives to find a continuous balance between the poles of concentration and relaxation, between focused activity and practical or artistic activity, between movement and rest, between teacher-led and child-led group and individual activity.



**6.1 Secure daily, weekly, monthly and annual rhythms are part of the early childhood curriculum.**

**Evidence of essential element:**

- A daily and consistent rhythm underlies the centre curriculum with a healthy flow between active and quieter, more focused times.
- Indoor and outdoor play, meals, circle times, story and rest occur at regular times and are anticipated by the children.
- There are regular weekly events or activities such as bread baking, painting etc.
- There is evidence of repetition over an extended interval in curriculum choices such as songs, stories and movement games.
- Annual and seasonal rhythms are included in planning as well as in celebrations and festivals.

**6.2 Smooth transitions form part of the rhythm of the day.**

**Evidence of essential element:**

- There are recognisable strategies such as songs and rhymes to facilitate transitions between activities.



## Essential Element 7

### Creative and artistic experiences are part of a holistic curriculum.

*“In order to become true educators, the essential thing is to be able to see the truly aesthetic element in the work, to bring artistic quality into our tasks. If we bring this aesthetic element, we then begin to come closer to what the child wills out of its own nature.”*

(Rudolf Steiner, quoted in Howard, 2008).

Offering children artistic experiences gives them the opportunity to broaden and strengthen their interests across all the strands of Te Whāriki. In Steiner settings, teachers incorporate singing and music, movement and gesture, art, crafts, eurythmy and rhythmic games into the curriculum.

Creative speech and language is experienced on a daily basis by children through the use of verses, puppetry and story-telling.

Including hand-crafted toys or equipment and the opportunity to observe adults engaged in crafts such as spinning, mahi raranga (harakeke weaving), carpentry, sewing and knitting, allows children to experience adult creativity for useful purposes in an increasingly factory-made consumerist world.



*“Kaiako may draw on a range of sources to grow content, responsive to children’s culture, language and identity and are expected to include Te Reo and tikanga in everyday living.”*

(Ministry of Education 2017,p.12)

## 7.1 Creative and artistic experiences suitable for children's development are evident in the centre.

### Evidence of essential element

- Singing, verse and movement are part of the daily rhythm.
- Te Reo is included in a variety of ways, e.g. waiata, stories, karakia.
- Te Ao Māori is incorporated.
- Storytelling is practiced by teachers and imitated by children.
- Paper and crayons are available.
- Watercolour wet-on-wet painting is offered as an experience of colour.
- Seasonal crafts are offered.

## 7.2 Hand-crafted toys, furniture and equipment allow children to experience adult creative and artistic endeavours.

### Evidence of essential element:

- There are toys available created by kaiako or parents.
- There are opportunities for children to observe adult crafts.



*“Languages are the means by which we think and communicate with each other. We typically think of languages as consisting of words, sentences and stories, but there are also languages of sign, mathematics, visual imagery, art, dance, drama, rhythm, music and movement.*

(Ministry of Education 2017,p.12)

## Essential Element 8

### The child's imagination is fostered.

*"The need for imagination, a sense of truth, and a feeling of responsibility—these three forces are the very nerve of education."*

Rudolf Steiner

The development of the imagination into what later becomes creative thinking is a key task of the early childhood years. The imagination develops through continuous and active use in children's play. Imagination has a transformative quality therefore it can be best supported by a simple environment where toys are rudimentary, open-ended and have multiple imaginative possibilities. Storytelling sessions allow children to use their imaginations to create their own inner pictures.

#### 8.1 Imagination is fostered through an environment that is simple and open-ended.

##### Evidence of essential element:

- Toys are simple and have multiple imaginative possibilities.
- Basic equipment is available for children to construct e.g. planks, large cloths.

*"The child's imagination is a crucial inner capacity with whose help we define and constantly reinvent ourselves. It is our most essential tool of self-development."*

Horst Kornberger, The power of stories, p.87



# Whānau Tangata – Family and Community

## Learning in Community

Steiner/Waldorf education recognises that children learn best in the context of a community with healthy social relationships among parents, teachers and children. Consistent warm relationships that connect everyone together are a cornerstone of practice.



*“The healthy social life is found only, when in the mirror of each soul the whole community finds its reflection, and when in the whole community the virtue of each one is living.”*

Rudolf Steiner – Motto of the Social Ethic

## Essential Element 9

**Developing meaningful relationships with whānau and fostering positive human values within the community forms a crucial part of the work of teachers.**

“As well as working with the spiritual individuality of each child, Steiner education also aims to work with the traditions and values of families and cultural community.”

(IASWECE 2014)

It is essential that the curriculum is embedded within the context of each early childhood centre’s local community and the broader environment of Aotearoa, with its particular history, geography and culture. This will require early childhood centres to connect with whānau and the wider community to ensure that the curriculum reflects the unique characteristics of the community and location, utilises the resources of the community and draws on the strengths and cultural competencies of parents and whānau. Teachers are expected to work with the concept of Whanaungatanga: actively engaging in respectful working relationships with Māori learners, parents and whānau, hapū, iwi and the Māori community.

(Ministry of Education 2011)

A fundamental element of the child-whānau-centre partnership is the positive support contributed by parents in the educational process and in the cultural life of the early childhood centre. Parent interest, understanding and participation in the nature of Steiner education and of what is conducive to healthy child development strengthens the partnership between home and early childhood centre and gives congruence to the child’s life experience.



## 9.1 Respectful relationships between children, teachers and whānau support and protect children's interests.

### Evidence of essential element:

- Kaiako are familiar with each child's biography including understanding the whakapapa of tamariki
- Kaiako acknowledge and work with family diversity.
- Whānau and tamariki have opportunities to contribute to the life of the centre.
- Teachers are developing an understanding of te Ao Māori and Te Reo Māori.



## 9.2 There are opportunities for parents and whānau to learn about Steiner education.

### Evidence of essential element:

- Enrolment interviews promote and establish the understanding of the philosophy.
- Enrolment interviews and packs suggest how to support the education at home.
- There are regular parent education events such as parent evenings or invited speakers.
- There is a parent library.
- Study groups are encouraged and supported.

## Essential Element 10

**Teachers work actively to inspire a disposition of wonder, reverence and gratitude.**

*“Out of these early, all pervading experiences of gratitude, the first tender capacity for love, which is deeply embedded in each and every child, begins to sprout in earthly life. If, during the first period of life, we create an atmosphere of gratitude around the children, then out of this gratitude toward the world, toward the entire universe, and also devotion will arise... upright, honest and true.”*

Rudolf Steiner, *The Child’s Changing Consciousness*

The reverence of the young child for the natural world and for the spirit in nature manifests later in life as responsibility for the environment. Reverence for the human spirit transforms into conscience and compassion for humanity. From wonder springs an open disposition of curiosity, interest, healthy inquiry and lifelong learning. Gratitude leads to the will to be of service to the world. At a deeper level one could say that the qualities of wonder, reverence and gratitude become the ‘basis for what will become a capacity for deep, intimate love and commitment in later life, for dedication and loyalty, for true admiration of others, for spiritual devotion and for placing oneself wholeheartedly in the service of the world’ (Howard 2006)

**10.1 A sense of wonder and reverence for the natural world is fostered.**

**Evidence of essential element:**

- Respect and care for the outside environment is evident.
- The classroom includes seasonal reflections such as flowers, leaves, decorations.
- Stories and verses celebrate the seasons and nature.
- Karakia and tikanga are practiced.
- Festivals celebrate the spirit of the land and its people.



**10.2 Gratitude and respect are modelled by teachers daily.**

**Evidence of essential element**

- Karakia before mealtimes
- A morning verse
- Tikanga is practised on an everyday basis.



# Ngā Hononga – Relationships

*“Parents and whānau trust that their early childhood education service will provide an environment where respectful relationships, encouragement, warmth and acceptance are the norm.”*

Ministry of Education 2017, p.121

In a world where children in their daily lives are surrounded by the tools of information technology there is a growing body of research which outlines the negative social, physical and mental health effects of this on young children. (Ben Sasson, 2010; Campaign for a Commercial-free Childhood, 2012; Sigman, 2008, 2015).

The emphasis in Steiner early childhood settings is on hands-on learning and on meaningful interactions with real people.

Engaging in the living world develops a sense for truth and authenticity; it keeps children connected with reality and what it means to be human.

Direct face-to-face communication is seen as vital for the development of language, social competence and empathy. Social and emotional competencies are highly valued in Steiner settings. This begins with the loving attention of adults within reliable relationships and this helps provide the foundation for children to trust in the world.



*“Children who learn in an atmosphere of love and warmth, and who have around them truly good examples to imitate, are living in their proper element.”*

Rudolf Steiner quoted in Howard 2008

## Essential Element 11

The emphasis in Steiner early childhood settings is on hands-on learning and on meaningful interactions with real people.

**11.1 Real, meaningful and purposeful work, adjusted appropriately for children, such as baking, gardening, caring and cleaning creates a relationship-based environment for children.**

### Evidence of essential element:

- Teachers are engaged with purposeful work around the centre.
- Children help teachers with a variety of tasks involved in the daily care of the room and children: e.g. cooking, sweeping, polishing,
- There are creative projects such as carpentry, gardening, festival preparation that children can work alongside an adult and contribute to.
- Children are learning through doing, not through watching screens.

### Contra-indications to avoid might be:

- All background care work such as cooking, cleaning is done invisibly by adults with no opportunities for children to assist.
- There are computers/iPads as learning tools



**11.2 Tuākana/ Tēina relationships are fostered.**

### Evidence of essential element:

- Older tamariki are given opportunities to take responsibility with daily tasks and to help younger children.
- Children stay in the same class for 2 to 3 years.
- There are 4-, 5- and 6-year-olds in the kindergarten class.



*“The quality of authenticity of relationships, right down to the ways in which a teacher thinks about a child and their family, their interest and understanding of each child, and their life contexts, including their language and culture and the way in which this is reflected outwardly, all contribute to children’s learning. This approach may be seen as consistent with ‘manaakitanga’.”*

(Ministry of Education 2011)

## Essential Element 12

### Young children learn through imitation.

*“The task of the early childhood educator is to adapt the practical activities of daily life so that they are suitable for the child’s imitation through play...The activities of children in early childhood must be derived directly from life itself rather than being ‘thought out’ by the intellectualized culture of adults...The most important thing is to give children the opportunity to directly imitate life itself.”*

Rudolf Steiner, *The Child’s Changing Consciousness*

In a Steiner setting, teachers strive to create an imitative learning environment and to be themselves ‘worthy of imitation.’

A child may choose to imitate a teacher’s actions directly or may imitate the intent behind the teacher’s actions e.g. exploring approaches to problems, sustaining a task over time, practising a skill, organising resources.

Children not only imitate actions, but also imitate inner attitudes such as devotion, sense of care, sense of purpose, engagement, focus, perseverance or attentiveness.

Children learn whilst in the proximity of adults involved in projects or work experiences even when they are not directly involved. Children have a participatory consciousness; an empathetic, non-verbal learning climate that soaks in and encompasses the sum total of all the child’s experiences both visible and non-visible.

#### **12.1 As learners, teachers are the greatest role models of life-long learning and should strive to be ‘worthy of imitation’.**

##### **Evidence of essential element:**

- Teachers engage in professional and personal development.
- Teachers reflect personally and with colleagues on practice.
- Teachers recognise capacities they are developing.



Rudolf Steiner consistently emphasised the importance of who the teacher is, as opposed to what they know or can do. He gave many exercises that can be used by teachers to develop their mindfulness, perception and self-knowledge. Teachers are encouraged to utilise these and to engage with the anthroposophical world view whilst proceeding on a path of inner personal and professional development.



*“It’s essential that teachers recognise the capacities that they have and those that they need to develop in order to work in a healthy way with the children. This may be seen as in alignment with the concept of ‘Ako’: taking responsibility for their own learning and that of Māori learners.”*

(Ministry of Education, 2011)

*“Ultimately, the most profound influence on the child is who we are as human beings – and who we are becoming and how.”*

(Howard 2006)

# Waekura

Waekura is comprised of 10 regional representatives, each with responsibility for the local centres in their area, plus representatives from the Early Childhood Diploma course. There are two co-chairs, one of whom represents Waekura on the SEANZ Board and on the international organisation IASWECE. The second representative on behalf of Waekura on the SEANZ Board represents the stand-alone centres, not attached to schools. Waekura works parallel to the schools' Fellowship and reports to SEANZ through the board representatives. Waekura is responsible for:

- Identifying strategic priorities in consultation with wider membership
- Developing collaborative local, regional and national networks
- Promoting, supporting and monitoring the ECE diploma course and providing opportunities for professional learning and development
- Developing and reviewing 'The Essentials for Aotearoa/New Zealand', situating the internationally identified common characteristics of Steiner early childhood education within our local Aotearoa/New Zealand context
- Strengthening leadership, management and pedagogical practice in centres
- Providing representation and advocacy to government and professional bodies on areas of national concern in collaboration with the SEANZ board

## Current Strategic Priorities

Increased Membership	Well Trained Teachers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Constitutional change to include ECE</li> <li>• The Essentials reviewed</li> <li>• Membership process clarified</li> <li>• Growth strategies developing</li> <li>• Positive public profile and visibility</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Course Structure</li> <li>• Sustainability</li> <li>• Federation overview</li> <li>• Increased enrolments</li> <li>• Improved mentoring</li> </ul>
A Steiner Education for Aotearoa/New Zealand	Strengthened Management and Leadership Capacity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research</li> <li>• To articulate connections between Te Ao Maori and Steiner philosophy</li> <li>• Professional development and conferences</li> <li>• Deepening of anthroposophical understanding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support and communication</li> <li>• Strengthening national and international networks</li> <li>• Building relationships with ERO and MOE</li> <li>• Support for at-risk initiatives</li> </ul>

The name Waekura (the NZ umbrella fern) arose firstly from the impulse to provide an organisation inclusive of all Steiner early childhood education in Aotearoa/New Zealand. It is visualised as a shelter ensuring that no services are overlooked and positive connections continue to be forged throughout the country. Secondly, choosing the name Waekura acknowledges the importance of the bi-cultural nature of Aotearoa/New Zealand and the bond we share with Māori through our connections with the spiritual and natural worlds. Waekura is one of the Māori names for the umbrella fern. The fern has delicate green fronds rising up to three tiers, each forking three to four times in star-like patterns creating an umbrella effect. When breaking down the word we have 'Wae' which means to divide, part or separate and 'Kura' to educate, teach or glow. When you look at the umbrella fern the fronds start curled up in a tight central cluster of eight, each in its own perfect tightly coiled spiral. These fronds unfurl together creating the umbrella shape and bringing separation and definition to each frond. The separation of the individual fronds can be seen as the diversity of our services that are all firmly linked in at a central point. The unfurling fronds can be seen as our beautiful tamariki growing and developing to their full potential. The concept 'to educate/teach' is a perfect fit for our early childhood group and the meaning 'to glow' fits with the star like quality of each umbrella fern. The three tiered nature of the fern can also be representative of a threefold quality. This name has been chosen in consultation with our local iwi.



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