

Te Kōrero mō ngā Tamariki

Exploring
the context
of middle
childhood
in Aotearoa
New Zealand



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Middle childhood – the "forgotten" years

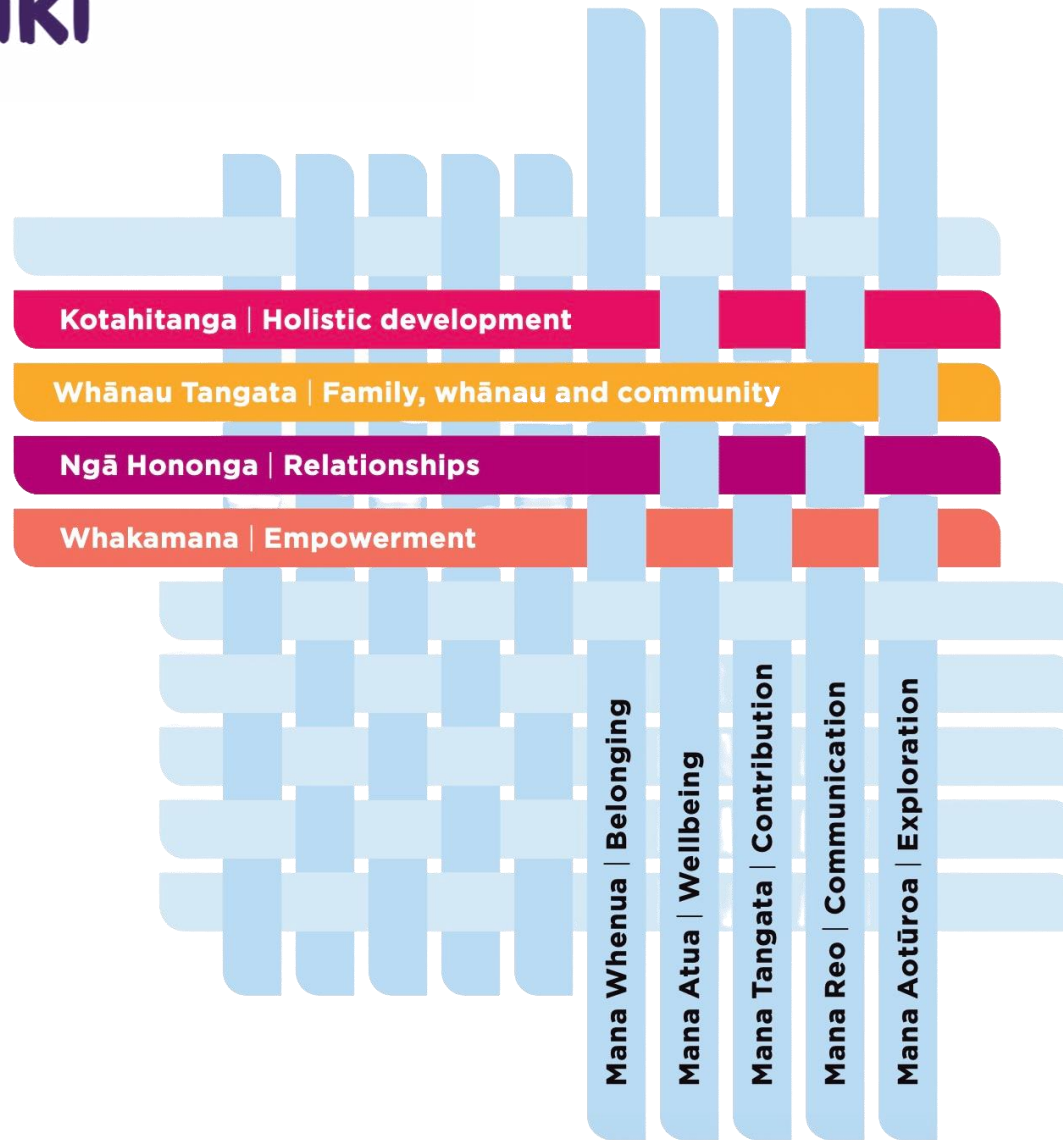
"Although the preschool years establish the base for future development, experiences in middle childhood can sustain, magnify, or reverse the advantages or disadvantages that children acquire in the preschool years. At the same time, middle childhood is a pathway to adolescence, setting trajectories that are not easily changed later."

(Huston & Ripke, 2006, p.2)



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Te Whāriki



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Source: Ministry of Education, 2017

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The first principle is Kotahitanga | Holistic Development

- Social & emotional development
- Physical development
- Models of development
- Traditional and emerging theories
- Research



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Your child between 2 and 3 years

Good to know

Helping your child learn and grow

- Spend time with your child, listen and talk to them. This grows the bond you, helps them feel loved and secure, and helps their language develop.
- Use words for feelings, both yours and theirs (e.g., happy, sad, angry).
- Notice when they are good and praise them.
- Read to them every day – limit time spent with the TV, DVDs, or electronic games to less than 1 hour a day.
- Play with your child inside and outside. Find safe places to crawl, walk, run, jump and climb.
- Show your child how to use a runner/balance bike.
- Show your child you are physically active, and they will learn from you – walking to the park, riding your bike, playing with a ball, etc.

Keeping your child healthy

- Young children need lots of small meals and healthy snacks. Home prepared food for your baby or toddler does not need salt or sugar added.
- If using commercially-prepared foods, choose those that are low in salt (sodium) and with no added sugars.
- Choose nutritious and tooth-friendly snacks.
- Water and milk are best to drink.
- Brush your child's teeth twice a day with half a pea-sized amount of regular-strength fluoride toothpaste. Your child needs your help to brush their teeth until they are 8 or 9 years old.
- Lift the lip once a month to check for signs of tooth decay – ask your Well Child Tamariki Ora nurse to show you how to do this.
- Make sure your child is enrolled for and attends regular visits at the Community Oral Health Service (0800 825 583).

Keeping your child safe

- Children can move quickly and need to be kept an eye on at all times, especially when there are lots of people around or they are in unfamiliar places.
- Fenced areas for outside play help to stop children getting on the driveway or road.
- Always hold your child's hand to cross the road.
- Know what your child can do physically, and supervise from an appropriate distance.
- Helmets and shoes protect heads and feet on trikes.

Olivia's Relationships Ngā Hononga

*He aroha whakatō, he aroha puta mai.
If kindness is sown than kindness you
shall receive*

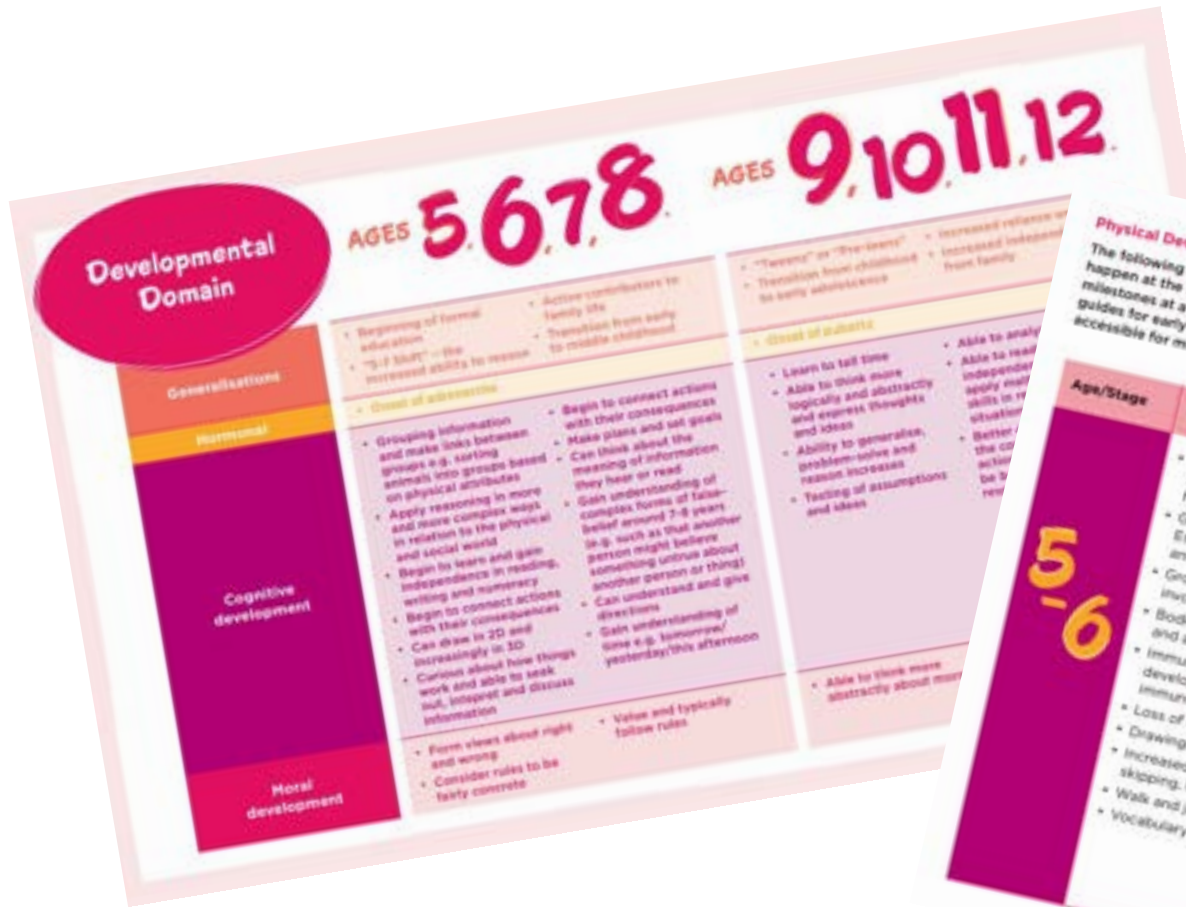


Olivia, you are blossoming here at kindergarten. Each day we see your confidence grow. Your kaiako have been supporting you as you develop skills to play and learn with other tamariki and build new relationships. This was a goal that mum wanted us to support you with. You are



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Source: Ministry of Education



Physical Development in Middle Childhood

The following are general developmental milestones that often happen at the specified ages. In reality, children will reach these milestones at a variety of ages. While developmental milestone guides for early childhood are prevalent, this information is less accessible for middle childhood.

Age/Stage	Key Developments
5-6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Growth slows and remains steady - typical annual growth rates: 5-6cm in height and 2-3kg in weight Gross and fine motor skills mature and cognition Gross motor skills improve through involvement in play and sport and agile Bodies grow stronger, more coordinated, immunity strengthened from natural development and completion of preschool immunisations Loss of first baby teeth Drawings become more detailed Increased bilateral coordination enables skipping, balancing on one foot etc Walk and jump backwards Vocabulary comprises over 2,000 words

Age/Stage	Key Developments
6-7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Muscles develop further and begin accumulating fat Boys tend to have slightly more muscle than girls do, while girls tend to have more body fat than boys Accurately colour in and cut out shapes Ability to run faster and longer due to increased lung capacity First permanent molars arrive Adrenarche begins (see page 15) Maturing of the tube that connects the ear to the nose (the Eustachian tube) resulting in fewer ear infections Can ride a bike without training wheels
7-8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brains reach their adult weight by age 7 The number of brain cells a person has (grey matter volume), representing the parts of the brain where processing occurs, peaks at age 7 Connections within the brain, enabling communication between different parts of the brain and the body, continue to grow throughout middle childhood Fine motor skills develop to the point of near maturity e.g. advances in their ability to write and draw etc Similar athletic ability irrespective of gender until around age 8 Ability to throw and catch improves with increased hand-eye coordination



"...the developmental process is initiated by genetics, but shaped by experience, making middle childhood a prime period to impact future change in a child's life."

Mah & Ford-Jones, 2012

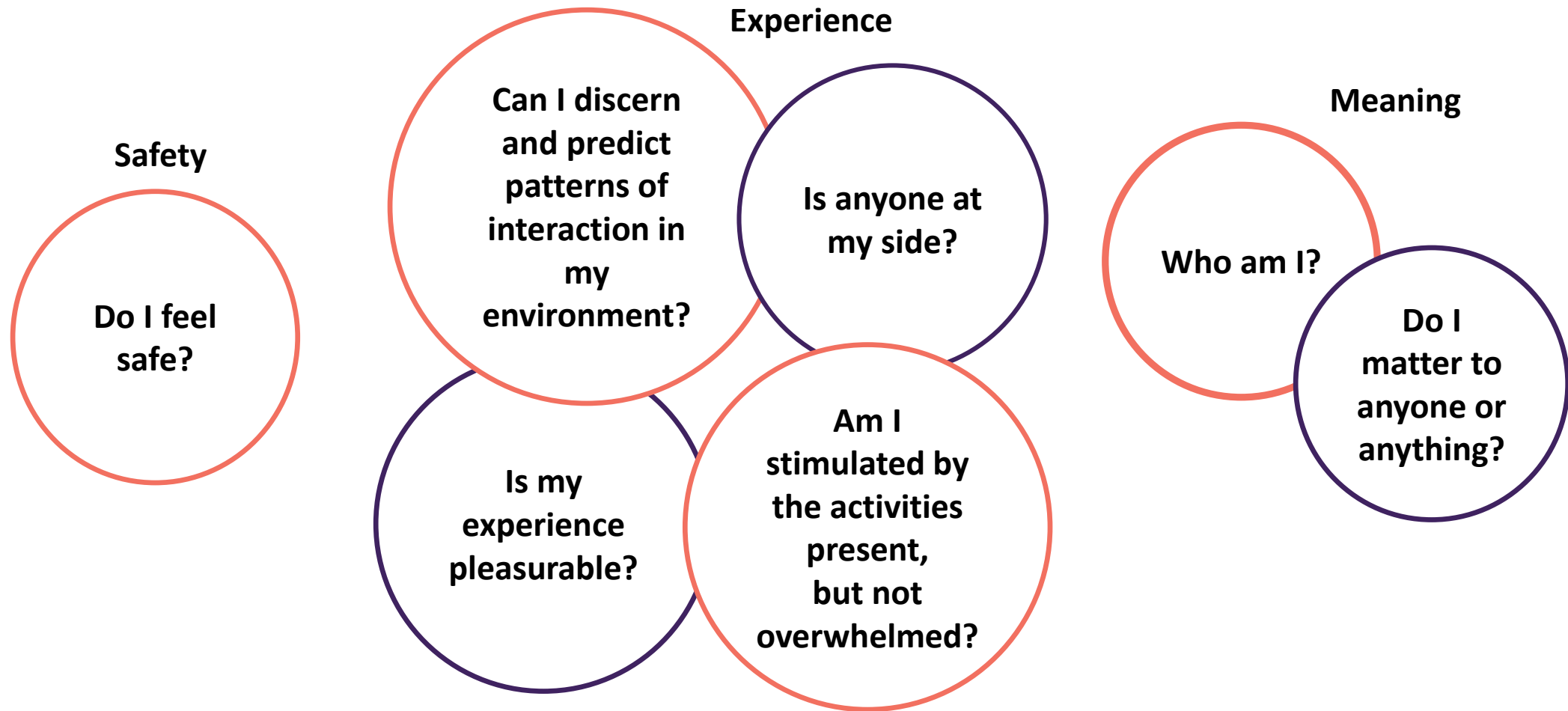


Friendships

- Friendship is a primary motivator for children's school attendance:
- 80% of students say that seeing and spending time with friends is a reason for attending school. (ERO, 2022)
- 46% of primary aged children report being bullied. (ERO, 2019)
- Bullying typically peaks around age 12 (Kljakovic et al., 2015; Mhuru, 2020)



Developmental Models



Member Spotlight

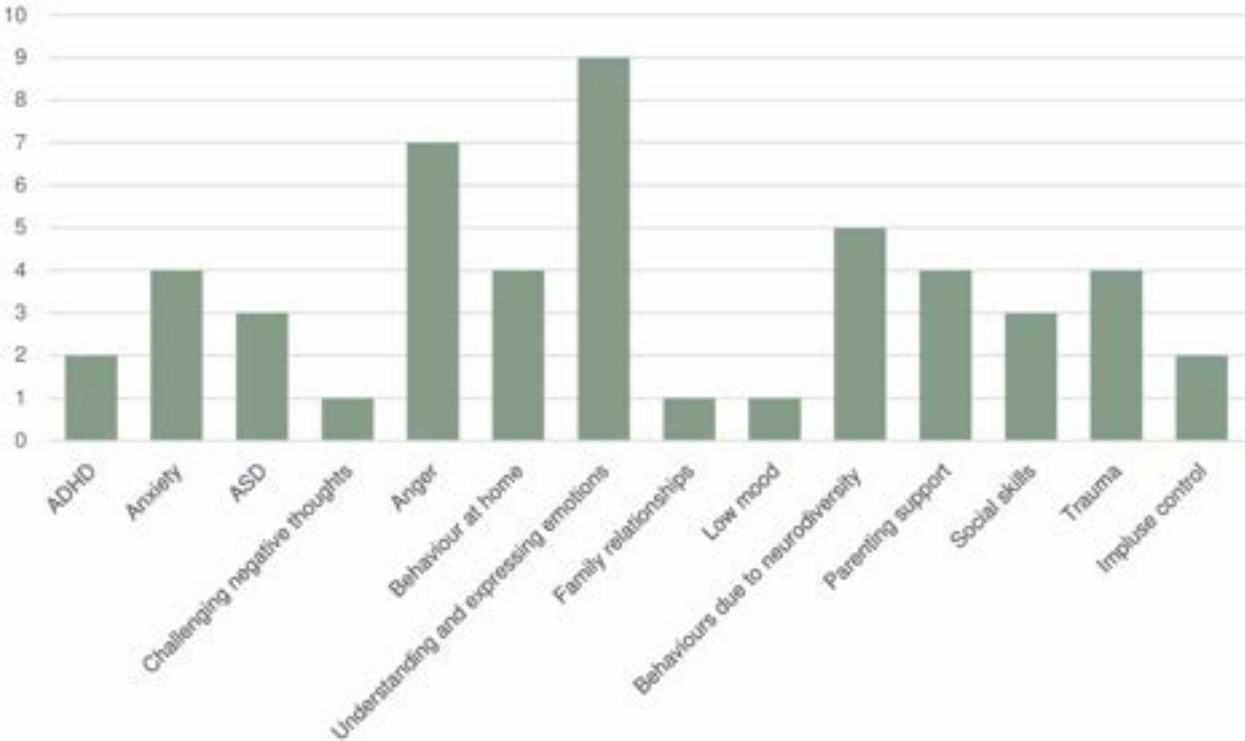
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Key Issues

Please note many students present with more than one key issue that is addressed during support



Member Spotlight

He found it so helpful to have a reason for his challenges at school, instead of thinking he was stupid. This report helps all of us view his challenges in a different way.

“Thank you for all your support, my other children never received this kind of support when they needed it at (my daughter)’s age, and now we are trying to get it for them as an adult. Getting (my daughter) help now will help her so much in the future”

– parent of a 7-year-old student



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The second principle is Whānau Tangata | Family & Community

- Play
- Transitions
- Extracurricular
- Leadership
- Child Poverty
- Safety



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Barriers to play:

- Busyness
- Safety
- Changing perspectives on play spaces
- Screen time
- Instant gratification
- Lack of understanding

Sport NZ, 2017

"Play allows tamariki and rangatahi to engage their manawa reka (curiosity, interest) and auahatanga (creativity) to weave together knowledge and skills, ways of being and belonging, and their tuakiri (identity) to enhance mana (influence, spiritual power)."

Play Aotearoa, 2022



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Extracurricular Activities

"If only education and other fun and cool activities didn't need to be paid for... having to go to places without worrying about money."

"Not being able to do out of school activities."

"... Fees for extracurricular activities need to come down."

Source: Mana Mokopuna, 2024



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Member Spotlight



Little Things Fund

"Stationery and lunches need more resourcing and costs too much."

"Not having them worry about school uniforms as they're really expensive."

"A roof over my head, because we'd be on the streets if we didn't have that."

Source: Mana Mokopuna, 2024



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The third principle is
Ngā Hononga | Relationships

- Workforce
- Parenting
- Bullying
- Intergenerational connection



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Parenting

“The strong relationship between children’s wellbeing and positive parent-child relationships is consistent across cultures, emphasising the universal importance of positive family dynamic in child development...”

(Morton et. al, 2020, p.53)



Member Spotlight



Te Waka Kotahi Intensive Caregiver Support



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The fourth principle is
Whakamana | Empowerment

- Legislation
- Government ministries
- Children's Rights
- Advocacy Groups
- Voice



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Children's Rights

"Knowing about their rights adds a protective layer where children understand they have the right to be protected from harm or to have a say on issues that are important to them... When children learn about their rights, they also learn about the rights of others. Research shows they are more likely to respect the rights of others and speak up when they see injustices or to offer support to those who need it."

(Jacqui Southey, Save the Children in Ministry of Education, 2022)



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Children's Voices



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Member Spotlight

iosis.



"By reaching these children early, we can ensure that little problems don't become bigger problems in later life."



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Feedback from the workforce

- We need **greater awareness of what services exist** to support children
- We need **support for the spectrum of children's needs**, not just the most severe
- **Training and retention of the children's workforce** needs to be prioritised
- We need **greater understanding of this stage** of children's development



Reflection

- What do you notice in your work about this age group?
- What are the challenges in supporting children during middle childhood?
- What information or resources would assist you or your team in engaging with tamariki in this age stage and their whānau?



Reflection

- Where are there opportunities to strengthen support?
- What would you advocate for in relation to middle childhood?

"Take care of our children. Take care of what they hear, take care of what they see, take care of what they feel."

Dame Whina Cooper

"...middle childhood should be valued as a window of opportunity...a good time to maximise the potential for positive growth..."

Huston et. al, 2006



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Quiz



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