

Ngā Tohu Manawa Ora - Kōhungahunga

Insights from talking to whānau, kaiako,
and stakeholders on how the Healthy Heart Award
can better serve tamariki and whānau Māori.

October 2019



He mihi aroha ki a koutou ngā whānau, ngā
kaiako hoki i ā koutou pūrākau, i ō koutou
whakaaro, i tō koutou āwhina.

Thank you to:

the generous whānau, kaiako within Kōhanga Reo, Puna Reo, early learning services, and stakeholders who shared their whakaaro, pūrākau and hopes for this kaupapa, the Healthy Heart Award.



This report explores the findings of a rapid social innovation project commissioned by the Heart Foundation and led by Kataraina Davis (Ngāti Whātua, Ngāti Hine, Ngāti Kahu) and Aimee Hadrup from Innovation Unit.

Innovation Unit is a not-for-profit social enterprise that grows new solutions to complex social challenges. By making innovation happen, we help create a world where more people belong and contribute to thriving societies. We build alliances with ambitious places, organisations and systems around the world to adapt, adopt and scale innovations that deliver lasting impact.

innovationunit.org

Background

The Heart Foundation's mission is to stop all people in New Zealand dying prematurely from heart disease and enable people with heart disease to live full lives.

The Heart Foundation Education Team provide teaching resources, programmes and initiatives, with a range of educational tools to help teachers educate children about food, nutrition, physical activity and making healthy choices.

A key aspect of the Education Team's current work is the Healthy Heart Award, which is delivered in early learning services across Aotearoa. The Education Team initiated this project out of a strong desire to increase the impact of their efforts on tamariki Māori and their whānau. With a deep commitment to meaningful change, this social innovation process was undertaken to understand the biggest opportunities for change from the perspective of whānau, early learning service kaiako, and other key stakeholders working in early learning environments.

The key priorities for this work were to:

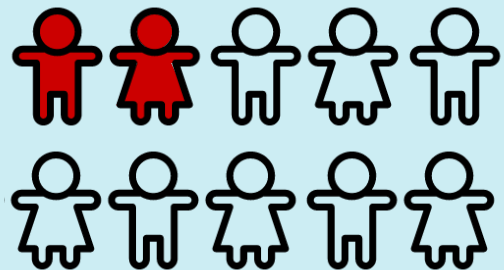
- understand what specific and practical changes can be made to the Healthy Heart Award to maximise its responsiveness to Māori and its contribution to more equitable outcomes in Aotearoa
- build the capability of the Education Team to engage in culturally appropriate ways with Māori, and
- strengthen relationships with key stakeholders and achieve increased clarity on the Heart Foundation's role in Kaupapa Māori early learning environments.

44,742

tamariki Māori enrolled in early learning services in Aotearoa

9,955

tamariki Māori currently reached by the Healthy Heart Award



78% of tamariki Māori in Aotearoa currently not reached by the Healthy Heart Award

Social innovation process

Our approach to this work was designed to rapidly identify critical insights and tangible recommendations for how the Healthy Heart Award can achieve greater impact on the wellbeing of tamariki Māori. In line with the Heart Foundation's ambition to build its capability, we have taken a partnership approach to completing this work. This involved us establishing a core design team including members of the Education Team, who played a key role in driving the project.

Discovery questions

To define the scope of what we wanted to understand, we created the following overarching questions to guide our discovery process:

How might the Healthy Heart Award achieve greater impact for tamariki Māori and their whānau?

1. What early learning services are tamariki Māori in, and how many of these are engaged in the Healthy Heart Award?
2. What are the biggest challenges and priorities around wellbeing for these early learning services? How does kai and physical activity relate to wellbeing in practice?
3. How does the Healthy Heart Award currently meet or not meet the needs of these early learning services? What is the current experience of the Healthy Heart Award?
4. What are the barriers and enablers for whānau around healthy eating and physical activity?
5. What is the role of the Healthy Heart Award in the wider ecosystem of support to early learning services? What are the perceived benefits and limitations of the Healthy Heart Award?

Methodology

The design team worked together to undertake the following range of activities that helped us deeply understand the challenge from a Te Ao Māori perspective.

Empathy focussed engagement with kaiako:

The design team and a number of Nutrition Advisors from the Education Team were supported to undertake empathy interviews with a range of kaupapa Māori and mainstream early learning services with a high proportion of tamariki Māori.

To ensure a breadth of experiences were heard, interviews were held with early learning services who were both engaged and not engaged with the Healthy Heart Award programme. We also ensured a mix of the level of engagement with the Healthy Heart Award (classified as 'thriving' or 'not thriving'). We included a specific focus on hearing from kaupapa Māori early learning services. In total, 20 empathy interviews were conducted with a range of kaiako across the regions of Northland, Auckland, Waikato, Rotorua and Gisborne.

The empathy interviews focussed on understanding life within these early learning services, their priorities for tamariki wellbeing and where kai and physical activity fit within this. For early learning services that were engaged in the Healthy Heart Award, views on the enablers and barriers to implementing the initiative were also explored.



Empathy interviews with whānau:

Six empathy interviews with whānau Māori who have tamariki attending an early learning service were completed, to understand their perspectives on wellbeing and their experiences and needs around kai and physical activity.

Key informant interviews:

To help us understand the role of the Healthy Heart Award in the wider ecosystem of support to early learning services, four key stakeholders were prioritised for key informant interviews. This included organisations delivering related wellbeing initiatives in early learning services and a funder of the Healthy Heart Award programme.

Rapid information review:

To inform our approach to this work, we rapidly reviewed existing information to identify early learning services with a high proportion of Māori enrollments across Aotearoa, and to understand the current number of tamariki Māori reached through the Healthy Heart Award.

Synthesis:

For the first phase of analysis, we worked with the Nutrition Advisors and the core design team to bring together the findings from their empathy interviews with kaiako.

After all data was collected, we undertook a second phase of analysis, which included a design synthesis process to identify the key insights and recommendations that follow.



Images taken during the first phase of analysis including Nutrition Advisors and Project Team

Key insights

Priorities differ for whānau, kaupapa Māori early learning services, mainstream early learning services, and the Healthy Heart Award — but tamariki wellbeing brings them all together.

Providing the basics, like love and a safe space, was a priority for both mainstream and kaupapa Māori services. Sometimes this included feeding tamariki that seemed hungry and/or thirsty.

Kaupapa Māori

Te Ao Māori and tikanga Māori way of being was at the centre of importance for kaupapa Māori services. This was demonstrated through the importance placed on exercising the values of kaitiakitanga, whanaungatanga and manaakitanga. In practice, this often looked like time for karakia and mihi mihi every morning, and mihi whakatau for new whānau, enabling tamariki and staff to feel settled. Kaupapa Māori services used these practices to protect Māori processes and uplift Māori identity through embedding these ways of being into their everyday lives. They also found ways to connect tamariki to place and people, through inviting kaumātua and whānau to share their knowledge with tamariki.

The Healthy Heart Award is informed by the Early Childhood Curriculum Te Whāriki, and while there are many that do use Te Whāriki and can see which strands kai and physical activity can fit within, it was not the only model or framework kaupapa Māori services were using. Kaupapa Māori services often used other Māori models of wellbeing to inform their practice, such as Te Korowai, Te Whare Tapa Wha and Maramataka.

Mainstream

Priorities for mainstream services looked like meeting and greeting tamariki and whānau. Emphasis was placed on staff wellbeing, and making sure kaiako had what they needed to do their job well. Enough space for tamariki to work, play and explore alongside kaiako, to learn, grow and lead was important.

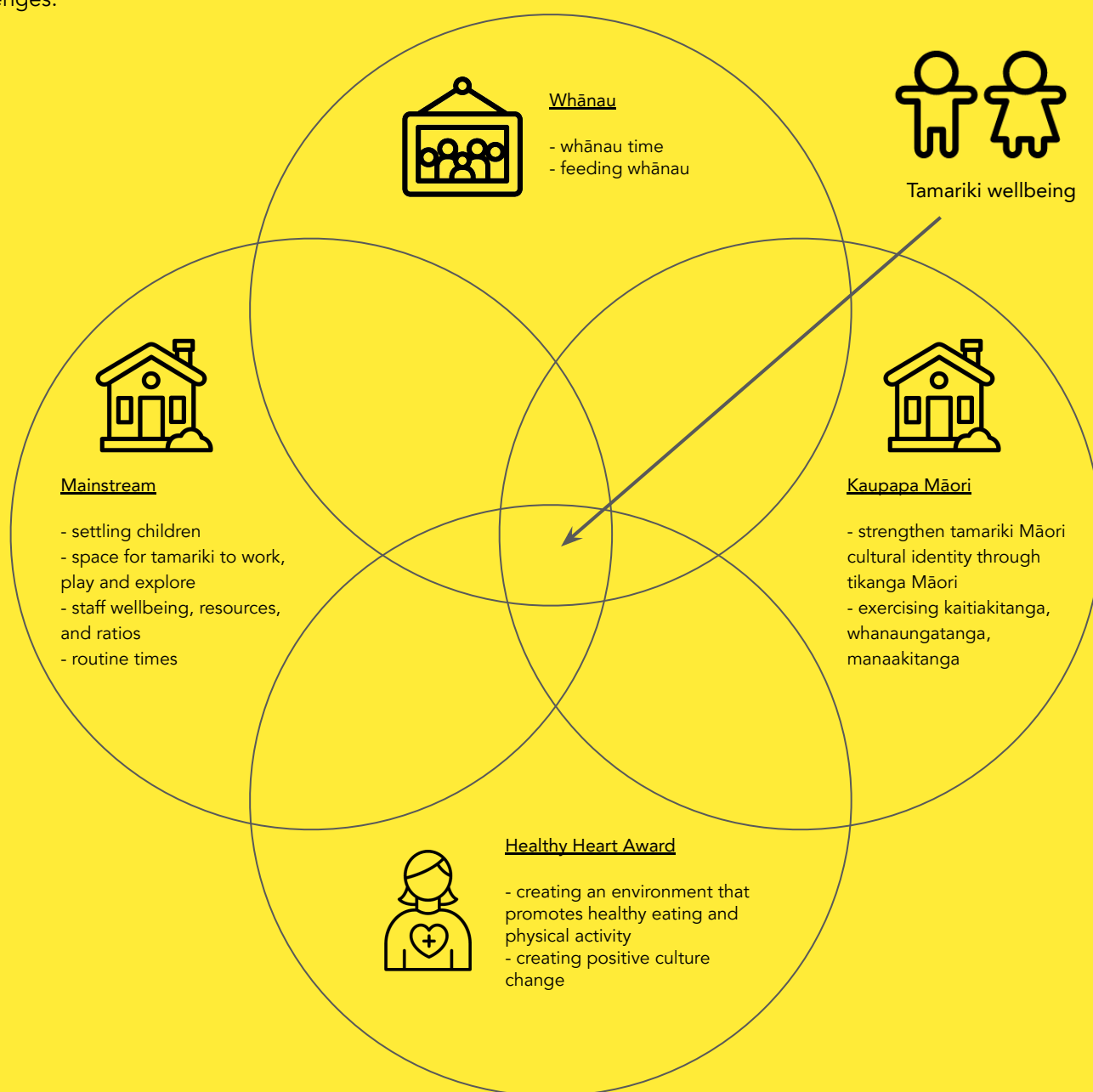
Routine times were also important, this included nappy time, lunch time and sleep times. These times were also seen as pressured times for mainstream services as there was a need for more one-to-one work taking kaiako off the floor.

“Morning karakia when everyone is together, mums, parents and children. It is so important so that everyone is settled and on the same page” - Kōhanga Reo Manager

Whānau

Priorities for the whānau we spoke to revolved around having time for tamariki, finding time for whānau to be together and being 'fed'. Many of these whānau live busy lives and being 'fed', as opposed to eating healthy, was the priority. Busyness often found whānau looking for more convenient and time efficient kai, as opposed to healthy kai. Money and time were identified as key barriers for whānau to eat healthy. Some talked about finding themselves in hard positions when receiving communication from their early learning service about unsuitable kai in lunchboxes. They did not relate to the presentations and would avoid attending, as they felt judgement and saw disconnect with their everyday challenges.

"Just my normal day is hard, week to week we are living from pay to pay. I can never get ahead so I'm not going to think about healthy kai when I'm trying to pay the power bill." - Whānau member



The Healthy Heart Award has the ability to create positive culture change in early learning services.

Mainstream early learning services and key informants felt that there is a place for the Healthy Heart Award within the ecosystem of support to early learning services, and that it does have the ability to create positive culture change. In some instances this has also been the case for Kōhanga Reo and Puna Reo, however, they often experience challenges that hinder their engagement in the programme. Key challenges included strict criteria and a detailed workload that doesn't allow for flexibility, movement and creativity.

Below outlines some of the common enablers and barriers experienced by early learning services to implement the Healthy Heart Award.

Key enablers

- A Nutrition Advisor who is open to a Te Ao Māori way of working, that supports leadership within the early learning services and enables whole service involvement.
- Finding ways to document activities that fit within the way the service itself documents, for example, creating whakapapa ako, as opposed to learning stories.
- Placing the tamariki as leaders to share information from the service and bring ideas from home.
- Strong links between the centre and home.

Key barriers

- The Healthy Heart Award's current lack of connection to Te Ao Māori.
- Cost, time, kaiako availability and lack of knowledge about healthy kai in the early learning service and home.
- Managing food coming in from the home especially around celebration times (birthdays).
- Unrealistic workload that interferes with the priorities for Kōhanga Reo and Puna Reo.
- Engaging with and educating whānau was identified as a barrier to the success of the Healthy Heart Award.

"I love that kids have taken the healthy menu planning off my hands."
- Centre Manager

"We are limited by our budget, that makes it hard as well" - Centre Manager

"Our Nutrition Advisor is very open minded to our unique way of doing things, using whakapapa ako instead of learning stories" - Centre Manager

"Our playground is condemned and we can't even afford to take that down"
- Kōhanga Reo Kaiako

Cultural identity and aroha are the foundations for tamariki Māori wellbeing.

Kaupapa Māori and some mainstream early learning services saw their key priority for addressing the wellbeing of tamariki Māori as providing a loving safe space, that enables them to grow strong in their Māori identity.

This looked like:

- warm welcomes for children and whānau, including greeting the children with cuddles and love, prioritising relationships between staff and whānau, providing kai for hungry tummies and a safe space for tamariki to be
- making time for bonding and maintaining trust between staff and tamariki (to the point where they saw themselves as whānau), and
- keeping tamariki clean, fed, dry, and happy.

By addressing these fundamental needs first, they were then able to help tamariki strengthen their cultural identity, by providing opportunities for them to learn about, participate in and lead. This included:

- tikanga Māori every morning through karakia, mihi, pepeha, helped to settle tamariki,
- connecting to *their* place tribally, through interaction with the environment, and
- intergenerational learning e.g. learning from kaumatua.

Kai was seen as an enabler of the foundations of wellbeing, alongside physical activity and healthy relationships, rather than the key priority itself.

Although the Healthy Heart Award talks about holistic wellbeing in its communications, when implemented the components of the Healthy Heart Award can isolate the programme away from the broader aspects of wellbeing, such as cultural identity.

“Cultural identity — once they know who they are, self actualisation will happen or mana motuhake” - Kōhanga Reo Manager

“Children are not able to function if there isn’t any love” - Kōhanga Reo Manager

The Healthy Heart Award has a clear focus on kai and physical activity, which can create a disconnect from a Te Ao Māori approach.

Using a card sorting activity, Kaiako were asked to prioritise what is important when it comes to tamariki wellbeing, and where they saw kai and physical activity fitting in. Kai and physical activity were not seen as key priorities for mainstream services, kaupapa Māori services or whānau. The key priorities were love, safety and whānau – with kai being a contributor to these. Kaiako within kaupapa Māori services also made it clear that they found it hard to prioritise where kai and physical activity featured, as all aspects of wellbeing have whakapapa and are interconnected.

Many agreed kai is important to being Māori, and within Te Ao Māori all things are connected to kai. Many spoke about the importance of staying connected to Te Ao Māori, and kai enabling this through connecting tamariki to people and place. There was an emphasis placed on the value of 'kaitiakitanga' and the kaupapa Māori teachings to tamariki in their centre, with intergenerational knowledge being shared by kaumātua who would visit. It was important to connect tamariki to place, via the protection of whenua, understanding where kai comes from and their role in this cycle. Kai was also seen as an important means to exercise manaakitanga and to bring people together, whether it be for celebration or to show support during times of grief.

"Kai = Māori everything is centred around kai" - Kōhanga Reo Manager

"Kai and Te Ao Māori means connection to place and people, your turangawaewae. Kainga, home your eating place." - Kōhanga Reo Manager



Perceived Healthy Heart Award priorities



Te Ao Māori perspective

Engaging with whānau is the biggest barrier for early learning services to achieve a Healthy Heart Award, however, the reasons behind this differ.

While many kaiako showed empathy for whānau, whānau were also seen as the biggest barrier to achieving a Healthy Heart Award by both mainstream and kaupapa Māori services. The reasons behind this sometimes differed between the two centre types. Mainstream early learning services shared that even though they would try to educate parents and share with them the reasons why 'packet food and cakes' are not healthy, they would continue to find these in lunchboxes and unhealthy kai during celebration times. Efforts to bring whānau into a centre to have these conversations were often seen as tricky. Kaiako would attempt to share information with whānau via messages in lunchboxes, or messages from tamariki to their parents.

Although there were resources and guidance around ways to engage with whānau and community, there was a sense that these could be improved to make them more mana-enhancing, ensuring they resonated with whānau and didn't come across as judgemental.

Kaupapa Māori services also reported that having courageous discussions with whānau around the food provided for their tamariki was a key barrier, and that this was in conflict with their values around whanaungatanga and manaakitanga. Relationships with whānau were more important to kaiako, and they did not want to come across as judgmental or not understanding the lives of whānau, before asking them to change their behaviours around kai. This theme was also reflected by key informants, who mentioned the importance of relationships with whānau, to generate buy-in for a kaupapa.

Some kaiako identified that tamariki were often advocates for change in their household. In an ideal situation, tamariki were able to share information and learnings from their early learning service to home, and were also able to bring ideas from home to their early learning service.

"Who am I to confiscate food off tamariki when this might be all they have?"
- Kōhanga Reo Manager

"I always get stuff sent home in the lunch box which is annoying cause sometimes that is all I have in the house"
- Whānau member

"They try and talk to me about it when all I want to do is get out of there"
- Whānau member

"Our daycare tells me to stop putting packet foods into my kids lunch boxes, but to me they're eating and that's the main thing" - Whānau member

Recommendations

Based on these insights there are a range of short and long term recommendations to consider around how the Healthy Heart Award might increase its engagement with and impact on tamariki Māori and their whānau.

In the short term:

- Consider the name of the Healthy Heart Award and the focus placed on gaining an award.
- Gain increased clarity on the whakapapa of the Te Reo Māori name for the Healthy Heart Award 'Ngā Tohu Manawa Ora - Kōhungahunga' and the award names Te Rito, Whānau, Pā-Harakeke and ensure all Nutrition Advisors are able to articulate where these names come from and why.
- Continue to build the cultural competency of existing Nutrition Advisors.
- Further strengthen Māori leadership in the Education Team into the future, through intentional recruitment of Māori staff.
- Amplify existing good practice by encouraging Nutrition Advisors to learn from and support each other.
- Continue building a culture of responsiveness to Māori, through ongoing reflective practice sessions and reframing KPIs to reinforce the value of relationships. Celebrate efforts and small wins — we're all on a journey.
- Consider how culturally competent and responsive practice might be embedded in the induction process for any new Nutrition Advisors. Ultimately, it could be useful to develop a cultural competency framework to make clear what 'good' looks like in practice.
- Continue to prioritise the development of resources that serve Māori, including but not limited to resources in Te Reo Māori. We have heard that conversations with whānau around kai is a key challenge, so this could be a good area to explore and co-design tools to help make things easier and mana-enhancing for all.
- Use the provision of resources as a way of demonstrating manaakitanga, rather than using them as incentives.

In the long term:

- Re-structure the Healthy Heart Award so it is better able to meet early learning services where they are at. Create a more centre, tamariki and whānau-based process for engaging early learning services into the programme that works to listen to the needs of the early learning service, their tamariki and whānau first, rather than focussing on the requirements of achieving an Healthy Heart Award award.
- Change assessment requirements in line with starting point for early learning services, employing a more flexible approach than one size fits all. Use empathy-focussed engagement to routinely gain a deep understanding of the needs and aspirations of early learning services, their tamariki and whānau and use this to adapt the programme requirements in response.
- Consider the way in which early learning services are asked to demonstrate change. Taking a storytelling approach rather than paper based assessments could work better, particularly in a kaupapa Māori setting.
- Take time to consider the values that underpin the Healthy Heart Award — what are these and how are they reflected internally and externally? Many talked about the importance of manaakitanga, whanaungatanga, and kaitiakitanga. How might these form the foundation of the Healthy Heart Award into the future?
- Recruit Te Reo Māori speaking staff to increase engagement with Kōhanga Reo and Puna Reo.
- Understand and articulate how the Healthy Heart Award shows commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

Glossary

.....

Tamariki Māori	Māori children
Whānau	Family, extended family, family group
Kaupapa Māori	Māori approach
Kai	Food
Te Ao Māori	Māori world view
Kaitiakitanga	Guardianship
Whanaungatanga	Kinship
Manaakitanga	Hospitality, generosity
Karakia	Creating space, intention
Mihimihi	Greeting
Mihi whakatau	Official welcome
Kaumatua	Elder
Te Whāriki	Early Childhood Curriculum
Te Korowai	Te Kōhanga Reo cloak of learning
Te Whare Tapa Wha	Māori wellbeing model
Maramataka	Māori lunar calendar
Kōhanga Reo	Māori language nest
Puna Reo	Māori language spring
Whakapapa ako	Learning whakapapa
Mana motuhake	Independence, mana through self-determination
Whenua	Land

