

Opportunities for action around school and kindergarten

The purpose of the following ideas list is to support teachers to surround their students with as many positive experiences of being in nature as possible. If this is done on a regular basis and becomes part of their everyday experience, we will foster a lifelong connection with nature for all our young people.

Nature-based self-directed play

Natural environments to explore, climb over and jump from are very important, especially for our younger students. These areas are not manicured or necessarily neat and tidy gardens but natural places where sticks, logs and trees set the scene.

- ◇ You may not yet have a nature-based play area in your school grounds, but this is a perfect opportunity to design/plan and create your own.

Nature and bush kindergarten or field trips

Visit a local park, bush, beach, stream or reserve. These places provide a multitude of learning opportunities.

- ◇ Play is nature-based and self-directed.
- ◇ Measure biodiversity and collect data that can be used to inform learning and action back at school.
- ◇ Compare biodiversity data and observations with other locations (including school grounds).

Being outdoors in all weather

Learn about mitigating risks and plan for fun and safe outdoor adventures and learning.

Te Ao Māori/the Māori world view

What are the local stories of your place? Who was first to settle here?

- ◇ What are the local landmarks that Māori whakapapa to?
- ◇ How is Matariki/Puaka celebrated?
- ◇ What local te maramataka/Māori lunar calendar knowledge can be applied to your project?

Developing and practising conservation skills

- ◇ Measure and map your school or local biodiversity.
- ◇ Plan and set up ways to collect data to better understand what lives in your backyard (numbers of wētā in wētā hotels, bird numbers, numbers and types of both native and pest plants, tracking tunnel information, etc).
- ◇ Analyse data and make decisions on what action you can take.
- ◇ Participate in local community days – plant, mulch, weed planting sites with local experts and volunteers.
- ◇ Clean-up days at local sites.
- ◇ Propagate native plants – collect local seed, propagate and grow on native plants ready for the next planting season.

Sustainable growing

- ◇ Mārakai – practise maramataka principles through growing and harvesting your own food.
- ◇ Re-use organic waste to create new soil (compost, worm farming) for native gardens.

Observing the night sky

- ◇ Plant and grow by te maramataka/the lunar calendar.
- ◇ Celebrate the arrival of Matariki/Puaka.

Learning equipment and resources

Consider purchasing equipment and resources made from natural materials (wood, wool, shells, etc) that can be mended rather than thrown away when broken.

Working alongside community partners

There are a multitude of experts and experienced and skilled professionals in every local community. These people are often happy to support local schools and their students with meaningful project work and are just waiting to be asked to support your special project work.