

Kōrero pūrākau o Matariki

Matariki teaching resource 2016

Part 2: Storytelling through dance

Suitable for early childhood,
primary, and keen storytellers
of any age.

This is the second instalment of
our Matariki resource for 2016.

Blog links

[Part 1: A tradition of storytelling](#)

[Part 3: Storytelling through sand art](#)



Right

Haka at Te Marae
2015. Photograph
by Norm Heke.
Te Papa.



In Part 1, we explored storytelling as a Māori tradition full of drama, imagery and action. In Part 2, you'll learn how to bring creative movement and dance into your classroom, building your knowledge and confidence so that you can encourage children to get moving this Matariki (Māori New Year).

Overview

This resource helps you access elements of Te Papa's Matariki [education programmes](#), no matter where you are in Aotearoa New Zealand.

In this blog post

- Why creative dance?
- Guidelines for practice
- Activities: Bring dance into your classroom
- Case study: Expressing story through dance in Te Papa's 2016 education programme
- Further reading

Image Caption

Kids get creative with dance at Te Papa. Photograph by Kate Whitley. Te Papa.



Why creative dance?

Creative dance is an empowering, student-centred approach to dance. Children undertake their own physical exploration of movement as a way to express ideas and meaning.

When facilitated effectively in a safe environment, students

- increase their body confidence
- develop their kinaesthetic intelligence
- strengthen kotahitanga (social cohesion) when exploring within and as a group

Right

Making our movement bigger in size. Photograph by Kate Whitley. Te Papa.



Guidelines for practice

We recommend you keep the following in mind when exploring creative dance in your classroom.

Make dance feel safe

Set up routines and clear expectations for behaviour. This will ensure children's physical safety, and protect their emotional and mental well-being as they express themselves. In general, children need gentle, positive support and encouragement to learn through dance.

Be culturally responsive

Dance offers a fantastic way for children to express their own culture and to explore that of others. You might try to incorporate traditional or contemporary Māori dance forms and use te reo Māori (Māori language), including kupu (words) for movement.

Explore dance from your students' own ethnic heritages to broaden their experiences. Multicultural Aotearoa New Zealand has a rich and diverse range of dance traditions to draw on.

Incorporate the elements of dance

The elements of dance are foundational components: body awareness, locomotion, space, energy, and timing. When teaching creative dance, you should incorporate these elements. You'll find a helpful outline of them on the TKI website: [The elements of dance](#)

Explore different perspectives

The book *Creative Dance in New Zealand Primary Schools* recommends that students experience dance from three different perspectives:

- as dancer (performer)
- as creator (choreographer)
- as viewer (audience member).

Each is equally important for providing students with a rich and balanced dance education.

Activities

Bring dance into your classroom

Here's a selection of simple activity ideas shared with us by Liz Melchior, Lecturer in Dance Education at Victoria University of Wellington. We think you'll find them easy to teach, even if you're not yet comfortable with this area of the curriculum.

Note: the framework of warming up (and warming down where possible) and reflecting should be retained, but it's not necessary to teach all the activities in one session. Rather, move through them over several sessions, repeating some activities to scaffold students' learning.

1. Pre-activity discussion: Supporting safe exploration

Have a discussion about both emotional and physical safety before activity commences, and make sure students know the boundaries and expectations for behaviour. This can be achieved through open-ended discussion, with questions such as:

- What do we need so everyone really enjoys our dance session today?
- How can we keep ourselves safe?

2. Warm-ups

Warming up prepares students for the physical activity of dance, and tunes them in to an awareness of their own and others' bodies. Shared group activities also support team building and positive attitudes. Here are some ideas.

Rhythm of names

Form a circle. Each person calls out their name in turn and claps out its syllables. Everyone else echoes the name and action.

Copycat

One person goes into the middle of the circle and performs an action. Everyone else copies and repeats the action until someone else chooses to go in and change it. For an example, see this clip of the singing game [Punchinella](#).

Energising activities

While music plays, students walk around the room, finding empty spaces to travel into while staying on the move. You direct them to make movements according to various [elements of dance](#). You could incorporate te reo Māori, for example:

- kia iti (small), kia rahi (big)
- ki runga (high), ki raro (low), ki waenga (in the middle)
- kia tere (quickly), kia pōturi (slowly)
- me ō wae/ringa anahe (with your legs/arms only)

Follow the leader

In this school-ground game, children form a conga-like line and move through different spaces, following and copying the leader, and taking turns to lead.

Activities

Bring dance into your classroom

3. Action word activities

As a group, come up with as many English and te reo Māori action words as you can. Make a set of cards, one for each action word, and use them in the following activities.

- Call out various action words (eg, run, jump, creep, flop) in English and te reo Māori, and have the whole group respond spontaneously. Alternatively, students could take turns calling out the words.
- Spread the cards out on the floor, and invite students to respond to a word near them. Encourage both locomotive (travelling) and non-locomotive (on the spot) actions by bringing in the elements of dance. For example, make an action heavy or light, sudden or sustained, large or small, fast or slow, high or low. Ask children to shuffle positions and repeat the activity for their new word using different [elements of dance](#).
- Have each student choose three action word cards to make a 'movement phrase' (sequence), then explore different combinations. This could include both locomotive and non-locomotive movement. To take this further, get students to pair up and learn each other's movement phrase, then combine all six actions and perform them in unison. They could share this new sequence with another pair, becoming a group of four.

4. Exploring themes with whakataukī (Māori proverbs), Years 3–8

Students select a whakataukī (see [Massey University's web page of examples](#) for inspiration), and plan how to express its message as a group using choreographed movements. Movements should incorporate the elements of dance explored previously (including both locomotive and non-locomotive movement).

Example process

1. In groups of four, students discuss the meaning of their chosen whakataukī and brainstorm to come up with a list of relevant action words.
2. Each student creates a movement phrase, either by selecting three action words from their list, or three movement variations based on one action word.
3. Each student teaches their movement phrase to the rest of their group.
4. The group combines their movement phrases using contrasting elements of dance. They begin and end with everyone connected in a still shape.
5. All the groups share their dances with the rest of the class (with or without music).

You could do this exercise using a variety of source materials, such as other cultural proverbs, idioms, story books, Māori legends, or the children's own stories arising from the Matariki theme outlined in Part 1 of this resource.

Right

Manaia class (Years 3 and 4) students from Mount Cook School explore our recommended dance activities with a Te Papa educator. Filmed by Kate Whitley. Te Papa



Right

Preparing for warm down. Photograph by Kate Whitley. Te Papa.



Activities

Bring dance into your classroom

5. Warm down

Warming down reduces muscle soreness and helps students prepare for a less physically active time.

These examples come from the book *Creative Dance in New Zealand Primary Schools*:

Melting snowman

You call out body parts, eg, ūpoko (head), pokohiwi (shoulders), and ringa (arms). Children 'melt' each body part, one after the other, until they feel like a pool of water on the floor. They lie on their backs and stretch out from top to toe, then relax. Repeat two or three times.

Shrinking circle

Children stand in a circle with hands joined and move slowly into the centre until the circle is as small as it can be. They move to expand the circle, slowly, without letting go of each other's hands. Repeat, changing the expansion shape each time. To finish, everyone melts slowly to the floor.

6. Reflection

Reflecting on what they've learned helps students draw out their thoughts and observations, maximising learning within the session.

Ask the tamariki:

- what did you notice about the dance sequences your peers created?
- what do you think you and your group did well today, and what do you think you could improve?

Encourage children to be specific and reflect on how what they noticed relates to the intentions for the activity.

Critiquing needs to be done carefully, particularly when considering others' performances. Keep the focus positive and encourage comments that describe what students liked and why, or what they found interesting.

Right

Our group of magical tigers get down low, ready to start the dance in unison with a rere (leap) and a roar, as decided by the children. Photograph by Kate Whitley. Te Papa.



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When we created our Matariki programme *Whakatinana Mai! | Dance it Out!*, we focused on dance as a way to create and express story.

Case study

Expressing story through dance in Te Papa's 2016 education programme

When we created our Matariki programme [Whakatinana Mai! | Dance it Out!](#), we focused on dance as a way to create and express story.

Exploring the story

In the programme, we start by sharing the well-loved children's story [Watercress Tuna and the Children of Champion Street](#) by Ngāti Toa author Patricia Grace. This story has many great links to Matariki, but we especially like how it reflects on the importance of taonga (treasures), place, native animals, and community. It encourages us to celebrate ourselves and those around us. There's also lots of great dancing going on! We use the book as a base from which tamariki can explore movement.

The following images show Tai Tamariki Kindergarten and Pikopiko Clyde Quay Kindergarten children (aged 3–5 years) exploring the story using associated props.

Left

Opening our mouths wide like Tuna.
Photograph by Kate Whitley. Te Papa.

Right

Pulling a pate (drum) from Tuna's mouth.
Photograph by Kate Whitley. Te Papa.

**Left**

Dancing like the character Hirini with a piupiu (a type of skirt used in kapa haka). Photograph by Kate Whitley. Te Papa

Right

Admiring the ailao afi (fire stick). Photograph by Kate Whitley. Te Papa



Left

Tuna can pīoioi (sway) up and down too. Photograph by Kate Whitley. Te Papa.

Right

Huri huri (turning) ki raro (up high). Photograph by Kate Whitley. Te Papa.



Case study

Recalling the story

In the first activity, we ask the children to share their memories about how Tuna (named after the Māori word for eel) moved in the story. We invite them to give ideas about other movements he could make as a magical eel – using words or actions.

Everyone in the group practises doing these movements simultaneously. We encourage them to explore a variety of approaches for each movement.

This is a good time to introduce some of the elements of dance. We experiment, making our movements fast and slow, high and low, big and small.

After the practice, we invite the children to dance their combinations of tuna (eel) movements when they hear music playing.

Left

Dancing like a
T. rex on the spot
(non locomotive).
Photograph by Kate
Whitley. Te Papa.

Right

Dancing like a
T. rex on the move!
(locomotive).
Photograph by Kate
Whitley. Te Papa.



Case study

Building a new story

In the second activity, we use the story of *Watercress Tuna* as a model to build a new story, based around the taonga, places, animals, and community specific to the visiting education group.

In the book, *Watercress Tuna* visits the children of Champion Street in Porirua because that's close to his home of Cannons Creek. To get to the street, he needs to move past a number of local landmarks, such as Cannons Creek School.

We ask

- what is a special animal that could be living in your area?
- how would it move to get to your centre or school to visit?

For example, our participants from Tai Tamariki Kindergarten chose a *T. rex* – one that had lived in Te Papa's past exhibition *Tyrannosaurs – Meet the Family*. After practising some of the movements they thought it would make, the children danced to music in the way the *T. rex* might have done while going to the kindergarten.

Right

A Te Papa educator starts as the tiger, roaming round the circle. Photograph by Kate Whitley. Te Papa.



Case study

Giving and receiving taonga

Next, the children think about how they might meet their animal, and be gifted a special taonga of significance to them or their whānau.

Remember, whānau includes extended family, so taonga important to your class, centre, or school could apply.

Prior to starting this next dance, the tamariki each think of a taonga that relates to Matariki. They're reminded that a taonga doesn't need to be something worth a lot of money to have importance.

The group forms a circle, with one child starting in the middle as the animal. While the music is playing, the animal dances around in the middle of the circle, as if it's on its journey. When the music stops, the animal goes to the person closest and gestures the giving of a Matariki taonga.

The recipient accepts the taonga, and tells the group (or at least the magical animal) what that taonga is. The recipient then becomes a magical animal too, and joins the first child in the middle of the circle to dance.

These two animals dance during the music, and gift taonga when it stops. This continues until the whole group has been transformed. Each child gets the chance to be gifted a taonga by the magical creature, and to gift a taonga as the magical creature. The teacher can step in to help the first and last child explore both roles.

The following pictures show a dance in which a magical tiger (from Wellington Zoo) visits the tamariki, kaiako (teachers) and mātua (parents) from Pikopiko Clyde Quay Kindergarten. It gifts them wonderful taonga for Matariki: shells, trains, and hugs.

Right

A magical tiger gestures the gifting of taonga to one of the accompanying adults, and the adult gestures thanks. Photograph by Kate Whitley. Te Papa.



The best way to develop your confidence in using dance as a story exploration or creation tool is to do it – take risks and learn from your successes and challenges! Here are some helpful resources

Further reading

[*Creative Dance in New Zealand Primary Schools \(1998\)*](#)

This book is an introductory resource for primary teachers.

[*Dance Upon a Time \(2004\)*](#)

This book is aimed at teachers working with young children (Early Childhood – Year 2).

[*Teaching and Learning Dance in a Culturally Inclusive Classroom \(2011\)*](#)

This online article suggests a methodology framework for making dance culturally inclusive from a Māori world view.

Ideas for movement

Locomotive and non locomotive words

Pēhi

Press

Tiango

Collapse

Tūpeke

Leap

Matike

Rise

Pīoioi

Sway

Hinga

Flop

Takahuri

Rotate

Porotiti

Twirl

Porohita

Circle

Tūngāwiri

Shiver

Whakaoreore

Jiggle

Whātoro

Lunge

Whakarewa

Melt

Tītakataka

Shimmy

Kakapa

Quiver

Takapori

Roll

Huri

Turn

Ngōki

Crawl

Pahū

Explode

E noho

Dob (down)

Hīkaikai

Twist

Āta toro

Creep

Hūrokuroku

Jog

Tūpana

Bounce

Rūrū

Shake

Meke

Punch

Mānu

Float

Māwewe

Flutter

Kōkiri

Thrust

Kia Mau!

Freeze

E peke

Jump

Kōneke

Slide

Wheta

Dodge

Iriiri

Hang

E heke ki raro

Drop

Takahi

Stamp

Tūhikihiki

Skip

Totohu

Sink

Kauhuri

Swing

Next up...

Ki a koe e Liz, ngā mihi mahana ki a koe e whae me tō kaha ki te hāpai i tēnei kaupapa whakamana tamariki – warm thanks for all your support in making this resource

Big thanks also go to the tamariki, kaiako, and whānau from Tai Tamariki Kindergarten, Pikopiko Clyde Quay Kindergarten, Early Years Leeds Street, and Mount Cook School.

In Part 3, we explore sand art in kōrero pūrākau (storytelling).

In Part 1, we explored kōrero pūrākau (storytelling) and te whare tapere (the traditional Māori house of entertainment).

Matariki at Te Papa
Events: Matariki 2016

