

Build whanaungatanga

A suggestion for implementing the strategy
'Identify needs and ways to provide support'
from the Guide: [Autism and learning](#)

Includes:

- Act on whānau expertise
- Connect with culturally sustaining frameworks
- Find out what's important
- Innovate with getting to know your learner
- Find approaches that work at school and at home
- Useful resources

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From

Guide: [Autism and learning](#)

Strategy: [Identify needs and ways to provide support](#)

Suggestion: [Build whanaungatanga](#)

Date

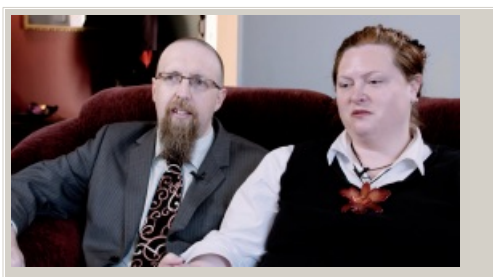
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inclusive.tki.org.nz/guides/autism-and-learning/build-whanaungatanga

Act on whānau expertise

Parents, Dayna and Phil, and class teacher Linda Ojala demonstrate the impact of working in close and responsive partnership.



Video hosted on Vimeo <http://vimeo.com/186358577>

Closed Captions

Source:

[Ministry of Education, inclusive education videos \(NZ\)](#)

<https://vimeo.com/186358577>

Connect with culturally sustaining frameworks

Learn from ākonga and whānau using culturally sustaining frameworks. Build a holistic learner profile to understand how to support ākonga wellbeing and learning.

For example, use dimensions from the Māori health model, Te Whare Tapa Whā

Taha Whānau – family, people and relationships

- whānau, friends, iwi and hapū
- cultural, religious, social and recreational connections
- professionals working with the family.

Taha Wairua – spiritual wellbeing or life force

- spiritually strengthening aspects, for example, faith, being in nature, creative activities and meditation
- special interests, hopes and priorities for ākonga and whānau.

Taha Tinana – physical wellbeing

- physical activity and recreation preferences
- physical abilities and challenges
- medications and allergies.

Taha Hinengaro – mental and emotional wellbeing

- strengths and talents
- dislikes, what can upset them
- signs that the learner is beginning to feel upset or anxious
- strategies used to calm ākonga.

Whenua – connection to the land and environment

- important places
- iwi and hapū, maunga and awa – mountains and rivers
- interests in the environment, plants and animals
- connections to people and ancestors.

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Find out what's important



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Innovate with getting to know your learner

Learner profiles can help school staff build relationships with ākonga and their whānau, understand their perspectives and design learning to meet learner needs. There are many creative and innovative ways to build knowledge about your learner.

Creative alternatives to learner profiles:

1. All About Me Interviews

- One-on-one chats with a teacher or peer using simple, structured questions.
- Use visuals or yes/no prompts.
- Record answers through voice, video, or drawing:
- "What do you like at school?"
- "What helps you learn?"

2. Video Introductions / Self-Presentations

- Learners record short videos introducing themselves.
- They can show their strengths, interests, and needs.
- Great for visual and verbal expression — use prompts or interview formats.

3. Photo Collages or Vision Boards

- Learners select photos of people, places, things, or activities they like.
- Use magazines, printed photos, or digital tools (like Canva or Book Creator).
- Add labels or short captions if appropriate.

4. Learning Choice Baskets

- Use a basket or box filled with objects that represent learning preferences (e.g., headphones, timer, picture of a friend, fidget, iPad).
- The learner selects what helps them learn best.
- You can record their choices as a profile.

5. Interactive Poster or Wall Display

Create a classroom wall or board where learners can add post-its or pictures under categories:

“I feel calm when...”

“I like learning with...”

“I want to get better at...”

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Find approaches that work at school and at home

Share approaches that are successful at home or at school to build continuity, strengthen engagement and facilitate learning.

Approaches or items that could be shared or aligned across home and school include:

- home routines that support ākongā.
- home supports for day-to-day life
- student interests, such as favourite topics, colours, sports and music
- phrases, visual cues, signs and other communication techniques
- visuals that support understanding
- strategies and solutions for specific issues
- objects and items that are meaningful and offer support
- calming strategies, for example, objects, cushions, dark spaces and headphones
- eating and personal routines
- furniture and physical supports, for example, chairs and table heights.

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Useful resources

Resources for developing a learner profile.



Stephen's letter

Stephen introduces himself to his teachers before starting at Garin College in Nelson.

[Download PDF \(69 KB\)](#)



Get to know students activities

A range of activities that can be used throughout the school year.

[Visit website](#)



Parent to Parent: Altogether Autism

A nationwide information and advisory service for people living on the autism spectrum, their families, whānau and learning support teams.

Publisher: Parent to Parent

[Visit website](#)

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