Leadership Coaching Programme

Final Report

ECE Leadership Coaching: A Valuable Investment

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Contents

Wayfinding

The vision for the Leadership Coaching Programme draws on the symbolism of waka hourua (double-hulled canoe) and the metaphors of wayfinding, voyaging, and navigating to guide leadership that supports people and practice. Inspiration for this vision came from Huinga Jackson-Greenland, who shared the *Wayfinding Leadership* book (Spiller et al., 2015) with the programme development and evaluation team. Through the lens of wayfinding and waka hourua, we sought to offer an approach to professional learning and development for leadership that was based in evidence, grounded in values, and offered choice to leaders. The vision foregrounds the weaving of indigenous and western knowledge to connect with and uplift leaders and kaiako. The approach is both structured and flexible. The Leadership Coaching Programme is designed to support implementation of *Te Whāriki* in ways that are responsive to early childhood education (ECE) settings.

As it is expected with Ministry of Education supported professional learning and development (PLD), our contract outlined key deliverables and desired outcomes. This report seeks to address the experiences and outcomes identified in the *Leadership Coaching Programme Drivers and Outcomes Framework* (see Appendix A).

Concurrently, we have been guided by the focus on transformation that is described in *Wayfinding Leadership*.

"… the purpose is what we become on the journey
— not simply the end goal of the destination …"

Wayfinding Leadership, p. 29.

As Spiller et al. (2015) describe throughout their book, "the destination is not the purpose" (p. 41), "purpose is a process of transformation, [and] our intention is our becoming" (p. 43). The 10-month Leadership Coaching Programme has led to numerous transformations for the programme development and evaluation team, coaches, leaders and kaiako involved. The programme has supported many of those involved to see new horizons in the ways PLD is considered and enacted in ECE. Where possible, we seek to illuminate these transformations throughout the report and the case story series.

We offer this report in thanks to the ECE leaders and kaiako who work to support whānau and tamariki in Aotearoa New Zealand. To the ECE leaders and kaiako, the incredible work you do is seen and valued. To the researchers and policymakers that influence ECE, we hope this report inspires and motivates you. There is a vital investment to be made in ECE, and that investment begins with a focus on people and their practice.

Executive summary

Introduction

A world-leading education system that prepares children for future success begins in early childhood. Research has well-established that the first five years of life build the foundation for later-in-life achievement, health and wellbeing[1]. The science of early learning has shown that education and care require a holistic approach in which children's relationships and secure attachments; culture and lived experiences; and opportunities for learning in everyday experiences, routines and play must be prioritised[2]. For this, New Zealand is uniquely positioned with an integrated and coherent system for education and care, an internationally recognised curriculum, and a workforce that is committed to improving the lives of children and families.

Yet, the ability to actualise the potential of New Zealand's early childhood education (ECE) system has been hampered by limited investment in workforce development. This includes insufficient investment in ECE leadership; in equipping leaders to be agents of change who drive effective curriculum implementation and cultivate resilient and sustainable teaching teams. When ECE investment has been made, it has tended to focus on time-limited, ad-hoc, domain-specific programmes that are only loosely connected to *Te Whāriki* and fail to have lasting impacts due to lack of effective implementation supports (i.e., lack of evidence-informed professional learning and development).

The present report describes the pilot and evaluation of a transformative solution to strengthen ECE leadership, develop internal capability building, and enhance curriculum implementation across a range of key learning areas that impact positive child outcomes. This solution, the Leadership Coaching Programme was funded by the Ministry of Education in 2023/2024 to explore effective PLD and coaching for ECE leaders. Programme evaluation evidence demonstrates the efficacy of the approach for strengthening ECE leaders' confidence and competence in leadership and coaching. Across a diverse range of ECE settings, leaders experienced the benefits of coaching and learned to use practice-based coaching to support kaiako in their teaching teams.

The programme has given me the confidence to be brave in leading people. The structured process [using] specific, achievable steps led to significant outcomes and contributed to my confidence. In terms of leading curriculum, practice-based coaching ensures a clear focus on what kaiako do and what outcomes this has for tamariki. The process provides a safe and transparent lens to reflect and provide feedback on practice and this builds confidence in leadership. (ECE leader)

Rationale

The rationale for the Leadership Coaching Programme focuses on the importance of ECE leaders and their pedagogical leadership. Effective pedagogical leadership supports teachers' understanding and implementation of curriculum, enabling teachers to enact the complexities and nuances of pedagogy that are embraced within *Te Whāriki.* In essence, increasing the capabilities of leaders to build teaching capability through job-embedded coaching strengthens responsive teaching and curriculum implementation, fostering positive outcomes for children.

The Leadership Coaching Programme is based on the science of adult learning, implementation science, and a sustained body of research evidence for coaching. Evidence shows that the effectiveness of professional learning and development (PLD) depends on several factors, including the context, cultural fit and intended outcomes[3]. Alignment of the purpose, participants, content and delivery method of PLD is vital for its success. Thus, PLD must be tailored to the unique needs of leaders and teachers, considering their prior knowledge and the specific requirements of their learning environments.

The Leadership Coaching Programme incorporates co-constructed coaching models to build the capacity of ECE leaders and kaiako. Co-constructed coaching models integrate systematic and structured cycles of support while also being flexible and responsive to coachees and local priorities. Tailored for New Zealand ECE leaders and kaiako, the programme also incorporates the principles of the early childhood curriculum framework, *Te Whāriki,* in design and implementation.

The Leadership Coaching Programme provides a manualised approach to PLD. A manualised approach involves the use of detailed manuals or guides that outline the programme's structure, content and procedures. Manuals, guides and clearly articulated protocols ensure the programme is delivered consistently and systematically, regardless of who is facilitating it.

The coaching logs and protocols help remind me of important aspects of the coaching process. (ECE leader)

Importantly, a manualised approach also allows for flexibility and responsiveness, supporting the intended implementation of the programme without restricting local judgment. The combination of structure and flexibility ensures key features of evidence-informed PLD and coaching are not left to chance, while also being responsive to expected variation within and across settings, to optimise opportunities and positive outcomes. Moreover, manualisation, flexibility and structure promote the potential of the programme and coaching approach to be scalable and self-sustaining.

Evaluation

The Leadership Coaching Programme is a PLD and coaching programme designed to support leaders in their work of leading people and practice; strengthen leaders' knowledge of PLD and coaching; and support leaders to coach kaiako in their team. For the ECE leaders in the programme, learning to coach involved experiencing coaching, being trained in a specific coaching model, having access to coaching support materials, and having the support of their own coach to get started with coaching. In other words, ECE leaders were coached to become coaches.

Knowing that I had a coach who was supporting me gave me a lot of confidence. It helped me to stay on task and gave me a lot to reflect on to help extend my learning. (ECE leader)

Forty-two pedagogical leaders associated with stand-alone ECE services engaged in the 10-month Leadership Coaching Programme, with 39 completing the programme. The leaders worked with dedicated PLD facilitators and engaged with other leaders and the wider programme development and evaluation team, through the following activities:

- Engagement in **coaching sessions based on the leadership coaching framework**, in which a dedicated PLD facilitator worked 1:1 with each leader to select and work toward tailored leadership goals.

- Support for ECE leaders to **learn about and use the practice-based coaching model to coach kaiako in their ECE setting**, helping kaiako strengthen curriculum implementation.

- A **facilitated professional book club**, in which reading groups discussed indigenous works in leadership and education. The primary text was *Wayfinding Leadership: Ground-Breaking Wisdom for Developing Leaders* by Chellie Spiller, Hoturoa Barclay-Kerr and John Panoho.

- **Online knowledge modules**, comprising a series of online resources that leaders accessed in their own time.

The programme was evaluated using a range of methods to gather stakeholder perspectives about experiences and outcomes. These methods included pre- and post-programme surveys with leaders and kaiako, case story interviews and PLD facilitators' reflections. Information about programme fidelity and dosage was systematically gathered and examined to better understand the outcomes and effectiveness of the approach.

Findings

Without exception, all leaders reported feeling extremely positive about working with their coach and reported a range of benefits from leadership coaching. Benefits included feeling valued and supported, growing their leadership capabilities related to supporting their team and curriculum implementation, and learning to use practice-based coaching. Implementation fidelity data showed that, overall, leaders had received a sufficient dosage of coaching with good levels of adherence to the planned approach. Sufficient dosage in this case means enough coaching for leaders to learn about, and benefit from, the leadership coaching process. It is important to note the adherence and dosage varied across leaders due to a range of factors, including maternity or medical leave, staff shortages that resulted in coaching session cancellations, and other competing demands or responsibilities for leaders. In addition, there were three intentional variations to the 1:1 coaching approach: group coaching; coaching and talanoa; and in one region, two coaches worked in a job-sharing role.

I have felt supported, validated and encouraged to grow and develop my confidence as a leader through coaching. (ECE leader)

The extent to which leaders participated in and benefited from other aspects of the programme varied. For example, book club attendance was low but for those who did engage in book club activities or with the *Wayfinding Leadership* book, there were significant benefits for growing cultural knowledge and responsiveness in their leadership practice. Leaders' engagement with online modules as a supplemental support also varied, with many leaders reporting these are resources they may rely on when the programme ends.

I felt confident in the practice-based coaching model. (ECE leader)

Overall, all leaders developed a good understanding about what practice-based coaching involves, however, the extent to which leaders had the opportunity to coach at least one kaiako in their ECE setting varied. Those leaders who did use practice-based coaching to support kaiako practice reported positive benefits for the kaiako and the setting overall. Findings described in this report also examine the experiences of participating kaiako and PLD facilitators.

Using practice-based coaching [the kaiako] was able to identify the amazing mahi she is already doing, share knowledge and ideas, and unpack all of that within our context. It gave her the confidence to look at the different ways she could promote learning for a tamaiti and how her approach and intentional teaching made a difference to intended learning outcomes. (ECE leader)

Key aspects of the coaching that made an important difference in leaders' experiences included: 1) valuing leaders' perspectives, experiences and culture; 2) using strengths-based, focused and flexible structures for goal setting, observation, reflection and feedback; 3) having access to guides and support materials; and 4) pairing the coaching approach with curriculum implementation support resources such as *Kōwhiti Whakapae.*

Leadership coaching and practice-based coaching were described as safe spaces for professional learning and development. Leaders and kaiako described the multiple ways that coaching supported them and in turn supported learning for tamariki.

[The programme elements] have collectively supported me in seeing things differently in relation to how I lead and how I can promote the strengthening of leadership capabilities within our team. (ECE leader)

Practice-based coaching is a game changer; it is relationship focused, adaptable, intentional and supportive of kaiako in their journey.
(ECE leader)

Overall, the Leadership Coaching Programme was seen by leaders as beneficial in terms of validating their leadership and enhancing their capabilities, particularly in supporting kaiako and curriculum implementation. Implementation fidelity data indicated that most leaders received enough coaching to understand and benefit from the process. Leaders' engagement with book clubs and online modules varied but those who participated reported significant benefits. Key elements contributing to the positive impact of coaching included using a manualised approach, valuing leaders' perspectives, engaging in focused goal setting and coaching support, and pairing coaching with curriculum support resources.

Conclusions and recommendations

Building a strong foundation for positive outcomes in education requires a multi-faceted approach, in which early childhood and early learning are prioritised. The science of early learning provides clear guidance on what is important for promoting positive outcomes for children. Implementation science gives insights into the ways policies and programmes can strengthen ECE leadership capacity through effective PLD and coaching to create the conditions that promote success.

Based on our Leadership Coaching Programme experiences and evidence, we present nine key messages for effective PLD and coaching:

1. The work of ECE PLD must be grounded in respect; respect for people, respect for their mahi, and respect for their whole being.

2. Connections to and blending of indigenous and western views of leadership and practice honour diverse perspectives, offer new insights and enhance collaboration.

3. Relationships form the foundation of coaching; strategies used to build relationships must be made explicit and be supported in the design of PLD.

4. The experience of being coached before coaching others strengthens leaders' learning and fosters confidence.

5. Providing evidence–informed, flexible structures can guide PLD and coaching processes to support coaches' competence.

6. Focusing on specific teaching practices paired with learner choice creates manageable and achievable pathways for learning, practice change and success.

7. Coaching can be complemented by a range of supports that are accessed by learners with flexibility and choice to strengthen overall learning.

8. When PLD is connected, meaningful and responsive, the intensive investment of leaders' time is energising and empowering.

9. Investing in ECE leaders with sustained, job–embedded and facilitated support creates momentum for transformation.

These messages can be adopted at all levels of the ECE system — practice, policy, and research. Recommendations from the present report identify multiple pathways to scale up leadership coaching and practice-based coaching in ECE.

Teachers in early childhood need the opportunity for coaching on the job.
(ECE leader)

Finally, we urge the government to make a more substantial, evidence-informed investment in ECE, particularly in enhancing pedagogical leadership. The links between leadership, pedagogy, curriculum implementation and outcomes for children are all part of a chain that begins with policy and meaningful investment in building leadership capacity. We offer this report to provide insights into key aspects of PLD and coaching that make a difference for delivering a world-leading education system that fosters valuable outcomes for children and their future success.

Executive Summary References

Research has well-established that the first five years of life build the foundation for later-in-life achievement, health and wellbeing[1].

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The science of early learning has shown that education and care require a holistic approach in which children's relationships and secure attachments; culture and lived experiences; and opportunities for learning in everyday experiences, routines and play must be prioritised[2].

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Introduction

Background

The People and Practice Focused Leadership, PLD, and Coaching Programme (hereafter referred to as the Leadership Coaching Programme) is an approach to professional learning and development (PLD) that is structured, flexible and responsive to leaders, kaiako and the early learning contexts in which they work. The Leadership Coaching Programme embraces a bi-cultural foundation to honour our *Te Tiriti o Waitangi* responsibilities and opportunities while being responsive to the multi-cultural contexts of early learning.

The Leadership Coaching Programme is designed to:

- strengthen and support pedagogical leadership in early childhood education.
- support pedagogical leaders to learn about and use coaching to support curriculum implementation.

The programme was funded by the Ministry of Education and aligned with the *Early Learning Action Plan*, action 3.6: Develop a sustained and planned approach to professional learning and development (PLD). Ministry requirements included developing, delivering and evaluating a tailored PLD with a coaching methodology. The programme also needed to be flexible and responsive to the diverse and specific needs of leaders and early learning services from different backgrounds and across cultural contexts.

The present report sets the context of PLD to support curriculum implementation. It starts with the rationale for a focus on coaching and on pedagogical leadership. This is followed by an overview of the Leadership Coaching Programme elements and the methods used to enact and monitor the programme. The manualised approach to PLD is then described. Information about programme participants and the schedule is provided.

The next section overviews the evaluation methods and reports the findings. Findings are organised under four categories: implementation fidelity; coaching experiences and outcomes; book club; and online knowledge modules. The report ends with key messages for PLD and coaching and recommendations for PLD research, policy and practice in ECE in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Throughout the report we incorporate the voices and insights of programme stakeholders. We also share quotes from *Wayfinding Leadership* and whakataukī to highlight inspiration, ideas and wisdom that can guide effective leadership, PLD and coaching.

Rationale

In Aotearoa New Zealand, tamariki are recognised as competent and confident learners, each on a unique journey in the context of their whānau and community, as they develop the knowledge, skills, attitudes and dispositions that support lifelong learning. Early childhood education (ECE) curriculum is designed to empower tamariki and whānau on this journey. The early childhood curriculum framework, *Te Whāriki* (MoE, 2017), builds on the science of early learning in which children's relationships and secure attachments, culture and lived experiences and opportunities for learning in everyday experiences, routines and play are prioritised.

Te Whāriki also emphasises the value of kaiako and describes the primary responsibility of kaiako as facilitating "children's learning and development through thoughtful and intentional pedagogy" (p. 59). *Te Whāriki* goes on to describe the wide range of capabilities that kaiako need in order to weave a curriculum that promotes learning for tamariki. The list of knowledge and abilities required by kaiako is vast, emphasising areas that include: understanding children's identity, language and culture; having strong curriculum domain and developmental knowledge; implementing effective pedagogies and use of play to promote learning for tamariki; working in partnership with whānau; using assessment and evaluation information effectively; being able to adjust and change pedagogy to inclusively support a wide range of learning strengths, interests, and needs; and enacting a range of professional responsibilities associated with collaboration, teaming, and their own professional learning and development.

To achieve the aspirations of Te Whāriki, kaiako require effective and responsive professional learning and development (PLD).

This list of kaiako capabilities highlights the complexity of teaching. To apply these skills within the dynamics of an early learning environment brings even more complexity, as kaiako need to adjust and adapt their practice to suit the tamariki they teach, whilst considering the subtleties in the unique contexts of their learning environments.

To achieve the aspirations of *Te Whāriki*, kaiako require effective and responsive professional learning and development (PLD) based on the science of adult learning. Evidence shows that the effectiveness of PLD depends on several factors, including the context, cultural fit and intended outcomes. Different PLD approaches can support kaiako in different ways. For example, a workshop or webinar might be used to increase teachers' awareness and knowledge of a new resource or policy. A community of practice might be effective to support local networking, connection making, and to inspire leaders and kaiako with new ideas for practice.

What is important for ECE leaders (and policymakers) to consider, is that some types of PLD may be more, or less, effective depending on: the intended outcomes or purpose of the PLD; the context; and the kaiako who are engaging in PLD, such as whether the PLD is a good cultural fit and whether it recognises teachers' prior knowledge. This can be described as having a good fit among the why, who, what, and how of PLD (see Clarke et al., 2021a; 2021b). As a general rule, the more complex the learning and application in practice is, the more intensive, personalised and context-embedded the support should be. Additional factors for affecting change are also highlighted increasing body of work related to implementation science (Hill et al., 2023).

The Leadership Coaching Programme was designed to support leaders to lead high quality curriculum implementation, which involves intentional, culturally responsive teaching in the context of meaningful play and routines in ECE settings. Given the complexity and nuances of supporting kaiako to implement *Te Whāriki,* the PLD support leaders provide to kaiako needs to be intensive, personalised and context-embedded. Practice-based coaching was selected as a coaching model for leaders to use with kaiako because practice-based coaching fits well with the complexity and sophistication involved in being a thoughtful and intentional kaiako (Snyder et al., 2015).

Effective leadership is essential in high quality ECE settings. Who the leader is, how they lead, and their focus on improvement goals is directly connected to outcomes for children's learning (Robinson & Timperley, 2007). To be effective, leadership must be purposeful, people-centred, and foster collective engagement to create and sustain improvements in teaching and learning (Education Council, 2018). Effective leaders lead systemic change within organisations, in ways that build on local strengths and capabilities to sustain change over time (Education Council, 2018).

Targeted PLD and coaching for pedagogical leaders supports leaders to build capacity within their local education settings (Robertson, 2009). Building the capacity of leaders, including teaching leaders how to coach, enables leaders to more effectively support kaiako to achieve goals that are embedded in everyday teaching and learning. Leaders' ongoing use of leadership and coaching capabilities helps build a culture of professional learning and growth that can be embedded throughout an ECE setting.

Through the effective use of an appropriate coaching model, leaders can support kaiako in their professional growth and practice change. Yet, coaching is not a common approach to PLD in ECE in Aotearoa New Zealand (Clarke, 2021a). Nonetheless, international literature supports the effectiveness of co-constructed models of coaching to strengthen teaching and learning (Elek & Page, 2019; Kraft et al., 2018). Co-constructed coaching includes systematic, structured

cycles of interaction between a coach and coachee, where both coaching partners contribute expertise whilst reflecting and discussing evidence-informed feedback to guide next steps. The Leadership Coaching Programme explored the potential of two co-constructed models of coaching to support ECE leaders in their pedagogical leadership.

Overview of programme

The Leadership Coaching Programme was designed to strengthen leaders' leadership and coaching capabilities in supporting high quality curriculum implementation. Two models of coaching feature in the programme. The first is the leadership coaching framework, used by the programme's PLD facilitators. The second is practice-based coaching, used by participating ECE leaders. Throughout the programme, PLD facilitators coached leaders to work towards focused leadership goals, including learning about and implementing a specific model of coaching, practice-based coaching. For leaders, learning to coach involved experiencing coaching, being trained in a specific coaching model, access to coaching support materials, and having the support of their own coach to get started with coaching. The programme's coaching elements were complemented by a professional book club focused on *Wayfinding Leadership: Ground-Breaking Wisdom for Developing Leaders* (Spiller et al., 2015) and online knowledge modules. Key elements of the Leadership Coaching Programme are further described in the upcoming section.

The programme involved a range of stakeholders including ECE leaders, kaiako, PLD facilitators, project advisors and the programme development and evaluation team. Programme participants, schedule, and support processes are also described below.

Key programme elements

The Leadership Coaching Programme included four key elements that were embedded within the programme metaphor and values: leadership coaching; practice-based coaching; a professional book club; and online knowledge modules. The programme was underpinned by key documents that support early childhood pedagogical leaders and the sector, including the *Education Leadership Capability Framework* (Education Council, 2018); and the understandings and expectations within *Te Tiriti o Waitangi* as a foundation for all educational practice in Aotearoa New Zealand.

The four programme elements interactively contributed to the experiences of leaders in the Leadership Coaching Programme in complementary ways and were designed to be responsive to the values, priorities and implementation of *Te Whāriki* in early learning settings. A core thread extending across each element is a focus on structure and flexibility. Structure and flexibility helped

make the programme effective and responsive to leaders, kaiako, and the early learning contexts in which they work. The four elements are described in more detail in the following section, beginning with an overview of the two models of coaching used in the programme.

Two models of coaching

Practice-based coaching (Aotearoa) and the leadership coaching framework were used in the Leadership Coaching Programme. Both models are adaptations of practice-based coaching (cf. Snyder et al., 2022), and have been designed by McLaughlin and Clarke (2023a; 2023b) for use in Aotearoa New Zealand with permission from Snyder and colleagues.

Practice-based coaching (Aotearoa) and the leadership coaching framework are co-constructed models of coaching. Co-constructed coaching models can be contrasted with models that are more reflective in nature and models that are more directive in nature. Co-constructed coaching involves systematic and structured cycles of interaction between a coach and coachee, with both parties sharing expertise, reflecting on, and discussing data-informed feedback to guide next steps for action. The coach-coachee relationship is a supportive partnership, with both parties collaborating to achieve goals. The co-constructed processes are structured and systematic but, at the same time, flexible and responsive to local priorities and preferences. These features of co-constructed coaching ensure key coaching components that influence change occur in ways that are meaningful and aligned with each person's authentic self.

Practice-based coaching (Aotearoa) and the leadership coaching framework are designed to align with a "culturally responsive pedagogy of relations" (Bishop et al., 2009, p. 736), where teaching and learning (and coaching) are seen as relational, interactive, and connected through a common vision, where power is shared, and culture, language, and identity matter.

Both models of coaching feature PLD practices recommended through research (Kraft et al., 2018; Mitchell & Cubey, 2003; Snyder et al., 2015). PLD research foregrounds the importance of having:

- clear specification of key PLD components (or active ingredients) including:
  - job-embedded support that is focused on teachers' goals.
  - use of observation and data about teaching practices.
  - opportunities for reflection and feedback to support, challenge and extend thinking and practice.
  - information and resources to support effective and responsive practices.
- consideration of the amount or dosage of coaching required to affect change, including intensity and duration of coaching.
- materials and training to support the intended use of PLD processes.
- clear focus on empowering people through responsive, ongoing, and co-constructed supports.

In the next section, we further describe the two coaching models and explain how each was applied in the Leadership Coaching Programme. Additional information about the two models of coaching is available in *Appendix B: Coaching Model Comparison.*

Leadership coaching framework

The leadership coaching framework was used throughout the Leadership Coaching Programme by the PLD facilitators, to guide a coaching approach that supported the development of confident and competent pedagogical leadership in ECE. The framework is founded on whakawhanaungatanga, which was practised as a process of sharing and developing relationships and connections. Within the leadership coaching framework, whakawhanaungatanga helped leaders and their coaches get to know each other, come together for a common purpose, understand responsibilities and expectations, and experience a sense of belonging and unity. With this collaborative foundation, the key components of the leadership coaching framework supported the programme's PLD facilitators and pedagogical leaders to work together for up to 13 leadership coaching sessions.

The focus of the coaching sessions was leadership competencies. A set of specific competencies was developed in consultation with the Ministry of Education and key project advisors. The competencies focus on leading people, leading practice and leading PLD and coaching, and were incorporated as a central component of the leadership coaching framework.

With the support of their coach (i.e., PLD facilitator), the leaders engaged in a strengths and opportunities reflection, focused on the leadership competencies. The strengths and opportunities reflection helped leaders work with their coach to identify professional goals and develop action plans. Each leader was asked to self-monitor the implementation of their action plan and progress toward their goal. Ongoing coaching sessions offered leaders opportunities to work towards their goals, engaging in reflection and receiving support from their coach. This coaching process between PLD facilitators and leaders continued in a cyclical way throughout the programme. Coaches and leaders reviewed goals and action steps during each coaching conversation, adapting action steps or identifying a new goal when necessary.

Practice–based coaching

Practice-based coaching is a structured and flexible process to support localised teaching practices that are likely to lead to positive outcomes for kaiako and tamariki. The term "localised teaching practices" refers to practices that are evidence-informed, connected to *Te Whāriki*, and responsive to the ECE setting's priorities and values.

The practice-based coaching (Aotearoa) design is founded in whakawhanaungatanga (as described in the leadership coaching framework section), with the aim of enhancing kaiako confidence and competence to plan for and enact localised teaching practices and promote positive outcomes for tamariki in key areas of learning.

The practice-based coaching processes began with the identification of a set of evidence-informed and specific teaching practices, which would become a central focus for coaching. Leaders were encouraged to work with their kaiako to select oral language or social-emotional teaching practices, given the available evidence-informed teaching and learning resources for these areas (e.g., *Kōwhiti Whakapae*, *He Māpuna te Tamaiti* and *Te Kōrerorero* (Ministry of Education, 2024; 2019; 2020).

The practice-based coaching partners (leaders and kaiako) engaged in a strengths and opportunities reflection on the selected teaching practices. With the support of the leader (i.e., their coach), kaiako identified goals and developed action plans based on their strengths and they identified areas for growth within their teaching. Kaiako then enacted their plan and tried out the teaching practices, with the support of their leaders. As part of the coaching cycle, leaders engaged in regular focused observations of teaching practice. Focused observation involved keeping a focus on the teaching practice directly related to the teacher's goal and action plan. Soon after each observation, the leader and kaiako engaged in a coaching conversation, reflecting on the goal and action plan, with the coach offering support and specific feedback based on evidence gathered through the focused observation. Leaders and kaiako reviewed goals and actions steps during each coaching conversation, adapting action steps or identifying a new goal when necessary.
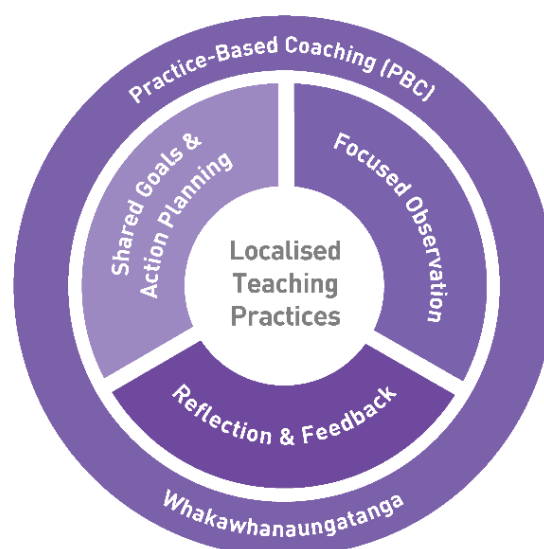
Book club

The professional book club was designed to provide a safe space for social connections, networking and learning. A key purpose of professional book clubs is to use reading to spark and mediate conversations on topics of shared interest, with the aim of promoting rigorous and robust discussions.

The Leadership Coaching Programme book club focused on leadership books by indigenous authors. The primary reading was *Wayfinding Leadership: Ground-Breaking Wisdom for Developing Leaders* (Spiller et al., 2015). This book and the knowledge within are also the inspiration for the overarching programme image and metaphor. The programme developers reached out to Spiller and colleagues to discuss the use of *Wayfinding Leadership* in the Leadership Coaching Programme. The book has been used with the support of its authors.

A key purpose of the book club was for leaders to engage directly with the words and wisdom shared by indigenous authors. Leaders were able to explore the book's content at their own pace, because book club groups were organised by the reading style preferences of the leaders. Within their groups, leaders could revisit their reading, kōrero, and connect with and support each other. Leaders were provided with an adaptable reading guide to record their emerging and evolving ideas and experiences. All book clubs were guided by a PLD facilitator.

Online knowledge modules

The Leadership Coaching Programme included supporting resources delivered and stored in an online learning management system. The online platform had four sections for programme related materials: 1) the programme overview, 2) the book club, 3) leadership coaching and competencies, and 4) practice-based coaching. Online materials (e.g., videos, readings, discussion forums) related to leadership knowledge and capabilities were available for leaders to access in their own time. The online space also acted as a digital repository for the materials that participants received in print form.
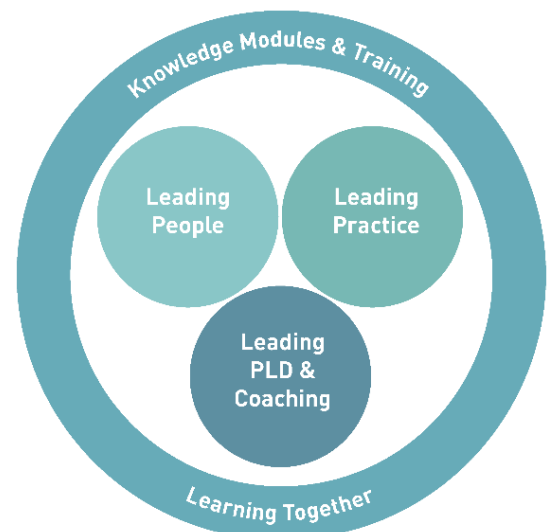
The online platform featured interactive, content specific knowledge modules focused on leadership competencies in the areas of leading people, leading practice, and leading PLD and coaching. Taking a deeper dive into practice-based coaching, a further set of knowledge modules was provided to support leaders to understand and enact the key components of practice-based coaching. These practice-based coaching modules were made available to leaders after they attended an online 90-minute

workshop to learn about practice-based coaching. All online modules and materials were offered in conjunction with the 1:1 support that each leader received from their PLD facilitator.

Programme participants

The Leadership Coaching Programme was designed for leaders in ECE. The programme targeted pedagogical leaders in stand-alone, community-based, or smaller private organisations, to support leaders across the diverse provision in early learning. The focus on pedagogical leadership meant that not all participating leaders held formal leadership positions within their organisation. Participating leaders were asked to nominate at least one kaiako from their team, whom they would work with in the second part of the programme. Leaders received ongoing support from PLD facilitators and the programme development and evaluation team. The programme development and evaluation team were supported by project advisors and Ministry of Education team members.

Mā mua ka kite a muri, mā muri ka ora a mua.

Those who lead give sight to those who follow, those who follow give life to those who lead.

All leaders, kaiako and PLD facilitators who participated in the programme were invited to contribute to the programme evaluation. Their stories and experiences will shape future iterations of the Leadership Coaching Programme. Kei te mihi ki a rātou.

ECE leaders

Forty-two leaders (from 42 settings) participated in the programme. Leaders worked in a wide range of early learning services associated with stand-alone, community-based, or smaller private organisations. Thirty-nine leaders completed the programme with three leaders withdrawing during the second half, for varying reasons. Demographic information is available for 40 of the 42 leaders. Leaders were female, came from a range of ethnic backgrounds and tended to be over the age of 35. Ethnicities are shown in Table 1.

There was wide variation in the years of leadership experience held, with 35% of leaders with 1 to 3 years of experience and 5% of leaders with 20+ years of experience. Thirty-nine leaders held relevant ECE teaching qualifications and three leaders held additional post-graduate teaching qualifications. Most leaders ($n = 31$) were centre managers. Four leaders were room leaders, one leader was a colleague providing support to other kaiako, and four leaders selected "other" without further specification.

Table 1. Leader Ethnicity

ECE Leader Ethnicity	N	%
NZ European/Pākehā	31	78%
Māori	5	13%
Samoan	3	8%
Fijian	1	3%
Tongan	1	3%
Southeast Asian	1	3%
Indian	4	10%
Chinese	1	3%

Note. Ethnicity data do not sum to 100 because five leaders identified with two ethnicities and one leader identified with three ethnicities.

Leaders led teams of various sizes, with about one third of leaders leading small teams (1–6 kaiako), just under a third of leaders leading medium sized teams (7–10 kaiako) and over a third of leaders leading large teams (11+ kaiako). Team stability was quite evenly spread, from teams that had been together a long time to very new teams. Twenty-three percent of leaders had teams that had been together a long time, 28% a medium length of time, 25% a short time, and 25% were new teams. Not all survey questions were answered by each leader and some questions allowed for multiple answers to be provided.

Leaders were recruited from specific regions across Aotearoa New Zealand. Table 2 outlines the regions and number of leaders from each region.

Table 2. Leader Regions

Regions	Leaders Enrolled
Te Tai Tokerau Northland	6
Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland	9
Te Whanga-nui-a-Tara Wellington & Horowhenua	5
Manawatū	8
Taranaki & Whanganui	4
Whakatū Nelson	4
Ōtepoti Dunedin & Waihōpa Invercargill	7

Kaiako

Each leader coached one kaiako from their setting, using practice-based coaching. Kaiako tended to be female qualified teachers with a range of ages and ethnic backgrounds. Additional information about kaiako is described in the kaiako section of the findings.

PLD facilitators

Five PLD facilitators worked as Leadership Coaching Programme coaches and book club group facilitators. One facilitator had more than 15 years of experience as a facilitator; three 1 to 4 years; and one 5 to 9 years.

All facilitators had formal tertiary qualifications in education or teaching, including bachelor's, post-graduate and master's degrees or diplomas. Only one facilitator had received formal training specifically to support facilitation work. All facilitators identified as female. Ethnicities included Pākehā, Māori, Tokelaun and Indian. Each facilitator was responsible for a different region/s, where they worked with leaders from four to nine ECE settings.

PLD facilitators contributed to programme development, implementation, and evaluation. The facilitators were the life force of the programme and their work with ECE leaders reflects their individual and unique skill sets and ways of working, combined with the programme structures and processes, which they were encouraged to use with flexibility and fidelity.

All PLD facilitators engaged in a two day, in-person training with the programme leads, to learn about the leadership coaching framework, practice-based coaching and the book club. PLD facilitators also engaged in monthly meetings with the programme leads and evaluation coordinator. The focus of these monthly meetings included general programme updates, addressing any arising challenges, making refinements to the programme, clarifying information and providing collaborative supports to PLD facilitators. Supports included reflective conversations, brainstorming ideas for supporting leaders, providing feedback on leaders' goals and action plans, sharing examples of effective coaching practices, celebrating coaching success, and sharing resources.

Ahakoa he iti, he pounamu.

Each contribution is a deeply appreciated taonga.

Project advisors

The programme development and evaluation team was supported by a range of project advisors, including Huinga Jackson Greenland (private consultant, previously Massey University), Lesieli Pelesikoti Tongati'o (Massey University), Julie Houghton (Massey University), and Ann Pairman (private consultant).

Project advisors provided important contributions in the design and development of the programme at early phases. Huinga supported the connections to *Wayfinding Leadership* and provided guidance to ensure the programme was responsive to the ECE sector. Lesieli offered her wisdom to help us better understand talanoa. Ann helped refine leadership competencies which were an essential and core component of the leadership coaching framework, and Julie suggested the adaptable reading guide for the book club. Kei te mihi ki a rātou.

Programme development and evaluation team

Associate Professor Tara McLaughlin (Massey University) served as the overall lead for the Leadership Coaching Programme development, delivery and evaluation. Tara has significant experience in leading research projects and PLD interventions and has worked with practice-based coaching models since 2007. Co-lead was Dr. Linda Clarke (Massey University; Kāi Tahu). Tara and Linda collaborated to design the Leadership Coaching Programme, train PLD facilitators, and ensure the programme's timely and effective implementation. They were supported by Project Manager Keri Cheetham (Tātai Angitu, Massey University). The programme evaluation was co-led by evaluation coordinator Vicki Gifkins (Massey University) with support from the project co-leads and Associate Professor Lucila Carvalho (Massey University). The evaluation process is described in a separate section of the report.

Overview of programme schedule

The Leadership Coaching Programme occurred during a 10-month period from September 2023 through to June 2024. Table 3 visualises key programme elements and how they occurred over the 10-month period.

An introductory welcome hui was held online in September. The hui outlined the programme structure and key phases for leaders. Forty leaders attended the hui, and a summary video was created to support the two leaders unable to attend, and for leaders wanting to recap key information. Following the hui, leaders received their programme binders by post and a copy of *Wayfinding Leadership* (binders included information about the programme elements; including coaching materials and guides).

Coaches (PLD facilitators) began visiting and coaching leaders in October 2023. On-site coaching visits were followed two weeks later by online coaching meetings. A combination of onsite and online coaching continued from October through to March 2024, for up to 13 coaching sessions. In April and May, coaching visits were online only. The focus of coaching sessions shifted over different phases of the programme.

- Phase one (October) focused on whakawhanaungatanga.
- Phase two (November and December) focused on leading people and leading teaching practice using the leadership coaching framework.
- Phase three (January – April/May) focused on leading practice-based coaching.
- Phase four (May/June) focused on sustaining leadership and coaching beyond the programme.

Table 3. Programme Schedule

Phase 1: Whakawhanaungatanga & Wayfinding – Orientation & Values			
September	Welcome Hui Learn About Programme:		
October	Coaching Visits Begin 1 Onsite Visit 2 Online Visit	First Book Club		
Phase 2: Leading People & Leading Practice – Human Dynamics			
November	3 Onsite Visit 4 Online Visit		Access to Online Modules for Leadership Competencies	
December	5 Online Visit	Second Book Club		
Phase 3: Leading PLD & Coaching – Deepening Practices			
January	6 Onsite Visit		Online Workshop about Practice-Based Coaching (PBC)	
February	7 Onsite Visit 8 Online Visit	Third Book Club	Access to Online Modules for PBC	Start Coaching Kaiako Locally
March	9 Onsite Visit 10 Online Visit			Local Coaching
April	11 Online Visit 12 Online Visit	Fourth Book Club		Local Coaching
Phase 4: Sustaining Leadership Destinations			
May	13 Online Visit	Final Book Club	Cont'd Access	Local Coaching
June	Wrap-Up: Review, Revisit, Connect, Plan and Share			

Each leader was assigned a coach, whom they worked with locally. Coaches may or may not have known the leaders from previous PLD in the region. Two facilitators worked with leaders in the Nelson region in a job-sharing role. These coaches alternated their coaching visits on a monthly schedule.

The professional book club began online in October. Book club groups ranged in size from eight to nine leaders and were based on leaders' preferred reading styles. Subsequent book club meetings were held every two months in December, February, April and May.

Practice-based coaching workshops were held online in January. Leaders selected one workshop to attend from four offerings. Forty leaders attended the workshops. Leaders received a PLD participation payment (1k to their ECE centre) to support their work in the programme.

The online learning platform was launched in November. Leaders had access to the general programme, book club, and leadership coaching competencies and knowledge modules sections of the platform. From January, leaders had access to the practice-based coaching section of the platform.

Key programme processes and supports

The Leadership Coaching Programme is a multi-element approach to PLD. In addition to the unique combination of programme elements, the programme is a manualised PLD approach. A manualised PLD approach involves using structures and systems that have been informed by evidence and experience, which is then described in manuals or guides to support the PLD being implemented as intended without restricting local judgment and flexibility. We can think of a manualised approach as having a flexible structure.

A manualised approach is intended to support the quality of PLD and coaching implementation in ways that balance local knowledge and values with clear guidance for effective processes. Each element of the Leadership Coaching Programme includes a manual, activity specific protocols, and logs to record programme and coaching activities (i.e., Clarke & McLaughlin, 2023; McLaughlin & Clarke, 2023a; 2023b). Manuals provide a comprehensive overview of each programme component. The protocols offer guidance about key aspects of the coaching interaction. The logs are checklists to track which indicators within the protocols have been completed. Together, the materials support wellbeing, transparency, and safety for those who experience coaching and promote success by ensuring that evidence-informed features of effective coaching are not left to chance.

Manuals, protocols and logs guided programme implementation, supporting fidelity and consistency across the programme, while also enabling the interpersonal skills and strengths of each PLD facilitator to enact the programme in ways that matched their authentic self. Given that manualised approaches to PLD are not common in ECE in Aotearoa New Zealand, all five facilitators were initially sceptical about the planned use of manuals, protocols and logs to guide coaching and book club activities. Nonetheless, PLD facilitators were asked to use these materials in their work. PLD facilitators were also asked to model their use of manuals, protocols and logs to the leaders they worked with, and complete and provide their coaching and book club logs for programme evaluation and reporting. The logs enabled PLD facilitators to document which specific components (protocol indicators) of coaching or book club they used during a session, and any protocol indicators they may have skipped or adapted.

The manualised approach was extended to pedagogical leaders who engaged in practice-based coaching. The practice-based coaching model included a manual, background guide, easy-to-use coaching protocols and logs. Leaders were modelled the use of these types of materials by their own coach. To support leader autonomy the protocols and logs were optional for pedagogical leaders and were not collected by the evaluation team. Making materials optional enhances intrinsic motivation, supports local ownership and adaptation, and ultimately, leads to higher levels of engagement and uptake than if use of the materials had been required.

Evaluation

Evaluation aims

The overall aim of the evaluation was to examine the effectiveness of the Leadership Coaching Programme in supporting sustained changes for strengthening leadership and the use of coaching to support curriculum implementation.

As noted, in the opening section on Wayfinding, we were also interested in understanding and describing participants' experiences to help illuminate transformations along their journey.

A further aim of the evaluation and this report was to focus on the two coaching models used and consider opportunities and challenges in scaling up the Leadership Coaching Programme approach.

The programme evaluation drew on five key methods for data gathering, which were: implementation fidelity tracking; facilitator and participant surveys; case interviews; reflection sessions with PLD facilitators; and online platform analytics.

Analysis of these data focused on:

- Implementation fidelity, including adherence and dosage.
- Programme experiences and outcomes related to:
    - Coaching for leaders, kaiako and PLD facilitators.
    - Book club for leaders and PLD facilitators.
    - Online knowledge modules for leaders.

Data gathering and analysis

Implementation fidelity tracking

Coaching logs were used to record information about coaching sessions between leaders and their coaches (PLD facilitators). There were three logs. The first log was for the first coaching session, which was typically longer than subsequent coaching sessions and included a stronger focus on whanaungatanga. The second log was used for online coaching, and the third log was used for onsite coaching visits after the first coaching session had occurred. Using the logs, coaches (PLD facilitators) recorded the date, time, which protocol indicators they did or did not use during the coaching session, information about which coaching strategies were used during the session, and whether a follow-up email was sent to the leader. There was also a section for coaches to write notes.

PLD facilitators were also asked to complete logs for book clubs. On the book club logs, facilitators recorded the date, time, who attended, which protocol indicators were used or not used during the book club, information about leader engagement, and whether a follow-up email was sent to the leaders. There was a section for facilitators to write notes.

Analysis of logs completed by the facilitators was used to report implementation fidelity of coaching protocols and to track the dosage of coaching, including the number and duration of coaching sessions. Analysis of book club logs focused on leaders' participation and engagement.

Because practice-based coaching protocols and logs were optional for ECE leaders to use in their coaching with kaiako, leaders were asked to self-report on their use of protocols and logs.

Participant surveys

Separate surveys were designed and conducted with PLD facilitators, leaders and kaiako. Surveys with leaders and facilitators were conducted at three points in time: prior to the programme (September); mid-point (December), and at the end of the programme (May/June). Surveys with kaiako were conducted at two points in time: initial (December) and at the end of the programme (May).

The initial and prior-to-programme surveys focused on participants' backgrounds; previous experiences as facilitators, leaders, and kaiako; previous experiences of coaching; and expectations of the programme.

Mid-point and final surveys focused on participants' experiences of the various components of the programme, including: being supported by a coach (leaders and kaiako) and/or being a coach (PLD facilitators and leaders); the online modules; book club; and experiences of professional learning and growth in relation to the programme. All surveys included a mix of multiple choice and open-ended questions. Overall response numbers are shown in Table 4 below.

Table 4. Survey Response Rates

Survey	Responses		
	Prior (September)	Mid or Initial (December)	End (May/June)
Leaders	40	34	36
Kaiako		19	12
Facilitator	5	5	5

As shown, response rates for the 42 leaders at the start of the programme were high. Only two leaders did not complete the prior-to-programme survey. One of these leaders did not complete any of the surveys and one of these leaders went on to complete the final survey. There were three leaders who completed the prior-to-programme survey but who later withdrew from the programme.

Survey data for ECE leaders presented in this report are from the 38 leaders who started and completed the programme. This represents:

- 35 leaders who completed the survey prior and at the end
- 2 leaders who completed the survey prior but not at the end, and
- 1 leader who completed the survey at the end but not prior.

End of programme response rates are also high (92%). This reflects both the commitment of the leaders in the programme and the work of the evaluation team to provide reminders and work with leaders, ensuring they had the opportunity to provide feedback while accounting for their various schedules.

It is important to note that individual question response rates vary so n is provided with survey data for accuracy of reporting.

Case interviews

Part of the programme evaluation involved gathering of case stories — the Ministry of Education sought three stories of practice to share with the ECE sector, to demonstrate some of the experience and impacts of coaching.

A request for participation as a case story leader was included in the mid-point leaders' survey. We also sought the input of PLD facilitators for recommendations and approached potential leaders to investigate their interest. We sought to curate a collection of stories that represented different aspects of the programme and leaders' experiences.

To become a case story, participants agreed to meet online (or in person in Manawatū) with a member of the project team to talk about their experiences in the programme. The case interviews were open to different formats: a leader; a leader and the kaiako they coached; a leader and their coach; groups of leaders who worked together; or some combination of these. Participating leaders had the opportunity to be interviewed more than once, if they wished. Case interviews were recorded and transcribed for analysis.

Participants were invited to tell their stories about the programme to the extent that was comfortable for them. Case story participants were invited to share examples of their learning and work in the programme as well as photos or reflections. Case interviews began at the end of March and were completed at the beginning of June.

Four written case stories were created and four are in development at the time of writing this report. Written case stories are included in *Appendix C Leadership Coaching Case Story Series* of this report. Case stories have been approved by leaders. In addition, leaders' stories and insights are integrated in this report.

PLD facilitator reflection sessions

PLD facilitators were collaborators for development and delivery of the programme. Facilitators also contributed to the evaluation by completing surveys, providing feedback, sharing insights and engaging in discussions during monthly meetings. Toward the end of the programme, facilitators engaged in individual reflection sessions with the programme lead. Individual reflection sessions were about 60 minutes long and conducted via Zoom and were recorded and transcribed. The reflection sessions offered additional insights to better understand how each facilitator navigated their ways of being and working with the manualised approach in the Leadership Coaching Programme.

Online platform analytics

The online modules were housed through a web-based learning management system (LMS). LMS can generate a range of analytics data that can provide valuable insights into user engagement, processes and, potentially, outcomes. Analytic data for the present report focus on:

- Login frequency to track how often users log into the system.
- Content access to track which materials were accessed most frequently.

The LMS information about online platform users' experiences is supplemented with information from the leaders' surveys and case interviews.

Evaluation disclosure

It is important to note that the evaluation of the Leadership Coaching Programme is not an independent review. The evaluation has been conducted by

a team that included those who were also responsible for development and delivery of the programme.

When programme development, implementation, and evaluation is conducted by the same team it presents advantages and limitations. Key advantages include deep understanding of programme features that may enhance interpretation of participant responses, a desire to better understand key mechanisms for programme effectiveness and the identification of barriers to improve programme delivery for future iterations. Limitations include potential bias or perceived conflicts of interest such as the desire to present the programme in a positive light or lack of independent review.

As programme developers, we declare that we do have a personal and professional investment in this work in relation to our desire for the programme to have a positive impact on ECE. To this end, we believe this increases the integrity and trustworthiness of the evaluation as our investment as researchers includes the desire to continually improve and iterate the approach based on evidence. We also declare we have gained no financial incentives from this work, which was conducted as part of our roles at Massey University.

To mitigate potential or perceived conflicts of interest we were guided by ethical principles in education and evaluation, we engaged in transparency of process, and where possible throughout this report, we draw on the voices of leaders, kaiako, and PLD facilitators to share their perspectives directly. We also partnered with our colleague, Associate Professor Lucila Carvalho, who has experience with research and evaluation of teacher networks and learning but who was not part of the development and delivery team. Lucila was, therefore, well positioned to provide peer review and feedback in the evaluation processes and reporting. A further step to support reporting was to be guided by the *Leadership Coaching Programme Drivers and Outcomes Framework* (Appendix A). The framework was agreed with the Ministry of Education at the start of the programme and guided the evaluation.

Findings

Implementation fidelity

Coaching adherence

Implementation fidelity is examined by adherence to the protocol and dosage. Adherence data are presented as a percentage of occurrences across all logs available. It is important to note that 100% adherence is not the expectation. In fact, 100% adherence might suggest that coaches were not being responsive to leaders' needs and preferences. The protocol outlines key indicators that should occur most of the time, as appropriate and in ways that match the local setting and situation. When adherence drops below the 70% threshold there is a need

to explore why something that is potentially important for supporting practice change is not regularly occurring.

Adherence information is available for the three types of coaching sessions:

1. Log 1 was for the first coaching visit, onsite.
2. Log 2 was used for online coaching.
3. Log 3 was used for onsite coaching visits after the first visit had occurred.

Adherence to the first coaching visit protocol (log 1) was high overall (*Mean* = 98% across all first coaching sessions, *std* = .04, *min* = 78%, *max* = 100%). Indicator specific analysis showed that all aspects of the protocol were completed at rates above 90% and there was a high use of recommended coaching strategies. There were 40 first coaching session logs available for analysis. Follow-up emails were sent for 100% of these sessions.

Adherence to the online coaching protocol (log 2) was good overall, with variability within and across coaches (*Mean* = 82% across all online coaching sessions, *std* = .17, *min* = 29%, *max* = 100%). Indicator specific analysis showed that most protocol indicators occurred at rates above 70% with three indicators below this threshold. These were:

- I invited the leader to share and discuss the data or information they gathered as part of self-monitoring (63%).
- We discussed and recorded the leader's plan for self-monitoring (50%).
- I recommended or provided resources to help the leader achieve their goals and action steps (59%).

There were 189 online coaching logs available for analysis. Follow-up emails were sent for 96% of these sessions.

Adherence to the onsite coaching protocol (log 3) was good overall, with variability within and across coaches (*Mean* = 84% across all onsite coaching sessions, *std* = .17, *min* = 41%, *max* = 100%). Indicator specific analysis showed that most indicators occurred at rates above 70% with three indicators below this threshold. These were:

- I asked the leader to share their goal/action plan with me (68%).
- I invited the leader to share and discuss the data or information they gathered as part of self-monitoring (64%).
- We discussed and recorded the leader's plan for self-monitoring (60%).

There were 135 onsite coaching logs available for analysis. Follow-up emails were sent for 99% of these coaching sessions.

Overall, adherence to the protocol is viewed as very good for a programme in which coaches (PLD facilitators) were being asked to adopt new ways of working with the manualised approaches and the tracking through logs. We observed variation in overall levels of adherence within and across coaches, but all within an expected range.

Coaching dosage

Dosage refers to the duration and intensity of coaching. Planned coaching dosage was for 13 coaching sessions, five onsite and seven online. Time allocations for coaching were 60 to 120 minutes for onsite visits and 40 to 60 minutes for online visits. This time allowed for coaches to meet and greet and orient themselves into the ECE service they were visiting, as well as engaging in a coaching conversation with the leader. Planned coaching dosage would total 620 minutes or 10 hours of coaching at a minimum, and 1080 minutes or 18 hours maximum if the planned session numbers and allocated timeframes were maintained.

Overall, leaders experienced an average of nine coaching sessions (four onsite, five online) for an average total time of 645 minutes, or 70 minutes per session. Variation data are shown in Table 5 below.

Table 5. Coaching Dosage for Leaders

	Number of Sessions	Onsite	Online	Total Time	Mean Session Time
Mean	9	4	5	645	70
SD	*2*	*1*	*2*	*172*	*21*
Min, Max	4, 12	1, 5	0, 7	315, 1087	45, 135

Note. Data are averaged across 39 leaders. Leaders who withdrew are not reflected in these numbers.

A review of leader specific data showed that 24 leaders received a total coaching time of at least 620 minutes, or 10 hours. A majority of these times were between 700 and 900 minutes and two leaders experienced more than 900 minutes. For these 24 leaders, coaching session numbers were between seven and 12 total sessions with mean session time between 59 and 135 minutes.

The remaining 15 leaders experienced a total coaching time of less than 620 minutes, or 10 hours. Eight of these 15 leaders received less than eight coaching sessions for a range of documented reasons (e.g., medical leave, maternity leave, restricted time due to role with leader cancelling sessions that were not rescheduled). In contrast, seven of these 15 leaders received between nine and 10 coaching sessions, with shorter lengths per session — this variation may be due the leader's or coach's personal preferences and interaction style or the dynamics of the day, such as leaders needing to work with tamariki.

Similar to adherence, the overall coaching dosage experienced by leaders was very good for a programme in which the intensity and duration of coaching was high and ECE leaders have multiple demands on their time.

Coaching variations

In general, the planned coaching approach was for each leader to work with a coach (1:1 coaching) across the 10-month programme. However, within the

Leadership Coaching Programme, we had the opportunity to explore three variations of the planned 1:1 coaching.

Working with two coaches

Because we did not have a PLD facilitator located in the Nelson region, the programme development and evaluation team made the decision to have two facilitators work with leaders in Nelson, in a job-sharing role. Job-sharing reduced the amount of travel for each facilitator and provided an opportunity to explore sharing the role of coach, with the two coaches alternating their coaching visits on a monthly schedule.

To support the success of this approach, a group hui was held with the Nelson leaders prior to their first coaching session. The leaders met both coaches and they talked about how the two-coach approach would work. The two coaches worked closely together throughout the programme, making use of coaching logs, notes and good communication to debrief and provide any updates between visits.

Group coaching

Throughout the PLD facilitators' training, it was emphasised that the leadership coaching framework was both structured and flexible. The PLD facilitators understood there were different ways coaching could be organised, such as peer coaching, coaching a team, group coaching or self-coaching. The programme development and evaluation team encouraged the PLD facilitators to share their ideas and suggestions for coaching.

Three months into the programme, one coach proposed that three of the leaders she was coaching begin engaging in their coaching sessions as a group. The three leaders worked for the same organisation, were in close geographical proximity and were open to engaging in a group coaching approach. Each leader maintained their own goal and action plan, and each received support from their coach. The difference was that the coaching conversations and support occurred in the context of a group meeting rather than individual meetings.

Group coaching occurred on three occasions, with duration of the group coaching sessions approximately 135 minutes. More details about the group coaching are available through the case story series.

Coaching and talanoa

Another variation to the planned 1:1 coaching occurred with two leaders from Pacific ECE settings in the same town. With ECE services in close proximity, the leaders knew each other well. The idea for meeting as a group (coach and two leaders) came from one of the leaders who suggested they invite the other leader over to engage in the coaching visit together. The coach, knowing there was room for flexibility, followed the leader's lead.

When they came together, the two leaders and their coach engaged in talanoa before focusing more specifically on coaching. Sessions that included talanoa and coaching occurred on three occasions. The duration of these sessions was between approximately 150 and 240 minutes. These longer durations reflect the

nature of talanoa. More details about coaching and talanoa are available through the case story series.

Leaders' reported use of coaching logs

Thirty-two leaders reported on their use of coaching logs in the final survey. Of those who reported, 30 leaders (94%) reported they did use the logs; while two leaders indicated they did not. Some leaders commented that the logs were useful overall, helped them keep on track and were particularly useful for the first few coaching sessions. A few leaders commented that they could have used them more.

Leaders were also asked which aspects of the programme helped them to learn about and use coaching. Thirty-four leaders responded to this question and all leaders indicated the coaching protocols and logs provided some level of helpfulness. As seen in Figure 1, most leaders reported protocols and logs were helpful or very helpful for learning about practice-based coaching.

Figure 1. Leaders' Use of Protocols and Logs to Learn about Coaching.
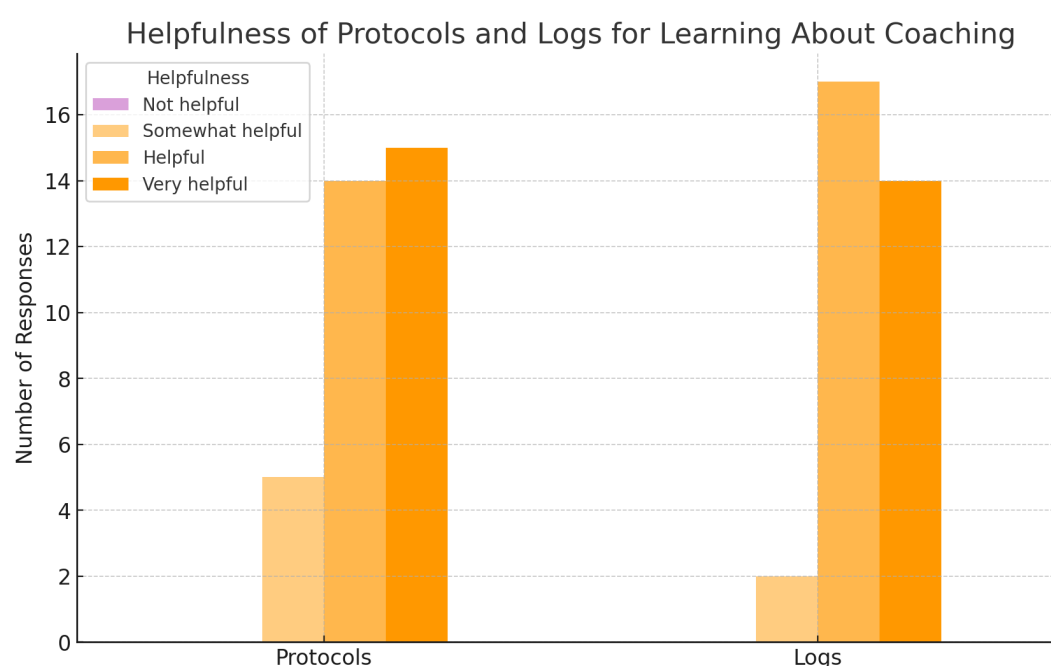
Note. Number of responses for leaders' perspectives about the helpfulness of protocols and logs for learning about coaching. (*n* = 34).

Book club participation and engagement

There were five book club groups. Five book club meetings were scheduled for each group. The groups were organised based on the leaders' preferred reading styles. Two groups were for those leaders who described themselves as leisurely readers; two groups were for steady readers; and one group for those leaders who described themselves as rapid readers. The groups were arranged to enable leaders to connect across regions; for example, leaders from Northland, Nelson and Invercargill may have been in the same book club group. Leaders may or

may not have had their coach also be the person who facilitated their book club group.

Overall participation in the book club was lower than expected. Specifically:

- No leaders attended all five book club meetings.
- 4 leaders attended four book club meetings.
- 4 leaders attended three book club meetings.
- 16 leaders attended two book club meetings.
- 14 leaders attended one book club meetings.
- 4 leaders did not attend any book club meetings.

Primary reasons for not attending the book club were related to time, competing demands, and holding the book club during non-work hours. While overall book club participation was low, PLD facilitators and leaders described high levels of engagement and depth of discussion for those who did attend. There are data in the survey and case stories that suggest, for some leaders, reading the book and making connections to their leadership through book club discussions and coaching was a powerful driver of change in leadership practice, even if leaders did not attend book club meetings regularly. Leaders' and facilitators' experiences of book club are explored further in the experiences and outcomes section of this report.

Each book club group read sections of *Wayfinding Leadership*, aiming to complete the book by the end of the programme. The rapid reading group completed the book by their fourth book club meeting and then focused on excerpts and videos from *Te Kai a te Rangatira* (Tapiata et al., 2022) for their final book club meeting (see https://www.tekaiaterangatira.com/).

Coaching experiences and outcomes

ECE leaders

Each ECE leader received coaching from a PLD facilitator (their coach) throughout the programme. As seen in the implementation fidelity data the amount of coaching received varied. Feedback from leaders and coaches suggests that almost all leaders received enough coaching to have some positive impact on their leadership.

Starting from January (close to the mid-point of the programme), leaders were trained in practice-based coaching and asked to coach at least one kaiako in their ECE setting, for eight coaching sessions. Eight sessions were suggested because this number of practice-based coaching sessions would provide leaders with sufficient opportunity to practise their skills and build confidence with the coaching approach. Although the primary focus was to support leaders to gain competence and confidence in the use of practice-based coaching, it was expected that kaiako being coached would experience some benefit from eight coaching sessions. Nonetheless, it was also expected that leaders would engage in different amounts of coaching depending on kaiako, scheduling and other

work demands. Thus, the number of coaching sessions leaders completed with kaiako varied significantly.

Leaders were invited to complete brief pre-, mid-, and post-programme surveys. Leaders were also invited to be interviewed for case stories, with eleven leaders taking part in interviews. The information below comes from the surveys and the case story interviews. This section of the report describes leaders' experiences and outcomes related to:

- the programme overall.
- being coached using the leadership coaching framework.
- using practice-based coaching to coach a kaiako from their teaching team.

Due to the varied and unique experiences of leaders within and across the programme there are numerous themes that this report is not able to cover. Rather than attempt to cover everything, we provide an overview of the types of experiences and outcomes leaders gained from the Leadership Coaching Programme. We also highlight some of the barriers to leaders' engagement in the programme and the challenges related to PLD and coaching.

In addition to the overview, leadership coaching case stories are available in Appendix C. The stories provide insights into the connected and unique experiences of leaders in the Leadership Coaching Programme.

The programme overall

Throughout the Leadership Coaching Programme leaders were positive about what the programme offered. Many leaders noted that the focus on leadership was a primary reason for signing up for the programme. Leaders also commented that the programme was free and they were interested to learn about coaching.

As part of the pre-programme survey, leaders were asked to describe how they were feeling about working in ECE lately, naming up to five words to describe their feelings. The range of words leaders used was both heartening and disheartening. Figure 2 is a word cloud that represents leaders' feelings. Some leaders provided words that all reflected positivity, such as inspiring, hopeful, rewarding, professional and integrity. Other leaders provided words that all reflected feelings of disheartenment, such as frustrated, uncertain, exhausted, undervalued and overwhelmed. Other leaders' words represented a mix of positivity, disheartenment and more neutral feelings. This information supports a consensus that the ECE is a sector under pressure, yet there is passion, hope and, for some leaders, a sense of reward in their work.

Figure 2. Word Cloud of Leaders' Feelings About Working in ECE

Given the challenges and pressures in the ECE sector, there were concerns that the intensity of the Leadership Coaching Programme would be too much, adding more demands on top of leaders' already busy and stressful roles. However, the programme development and evaluation team expected the opposite; that the Leadership Coaching Programme would be seen by leaders as a positive opportunity, something uniquely for leaders. We also understood that pressures in the ECE sector meant the programme must be flexible. In this intensive programme, it was important each leader knew whatever they could manage in their programme engagement was enough. If leaders needed to do less, it could be without guilt, without shame, and without feeling they were failing or not meeting the programme expectations. The programme development and evaluation team communicated these messages of flexibility and support to leaders and coaches. Leaders' potential to feel overwhelmed by programme intensity was also mitigated through a key component of the leadership coaching framework — the focus on small, specific goals and manageable steps. Further, within the coaching protocols there was always space for celebrating a leader's success, even if that success seemed like a very small step forward.

Leaders were asked how they were feeling about the Leadership Coaching Programme through the mid- and post-programme survey. Mean ratings show leaders were feeling positive about the programme with an increase in positive feelings at programme completion (see Figure 3).

Figure 3. Leaders' Feelings About the Programme at Midway and Programme Completion

Leaders' Feelings About the Leadership Coaching Programme
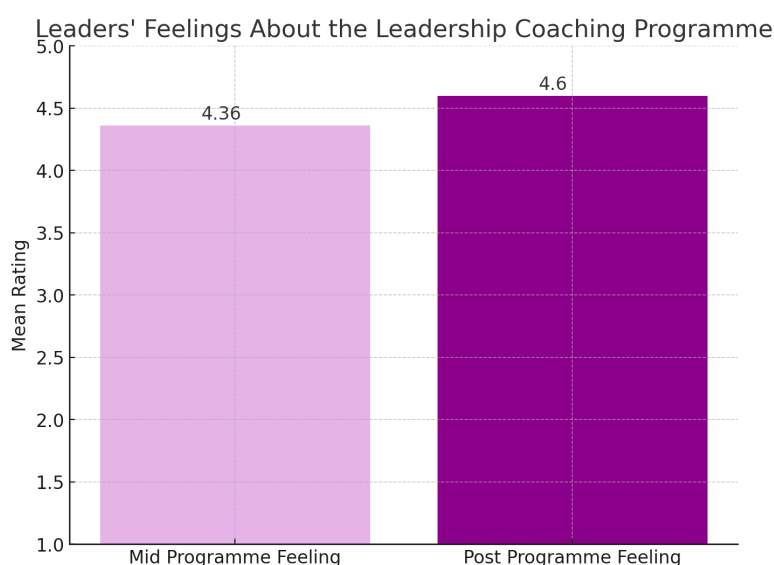
Note. Data for this question were gathered using a visual scale of 1 to 5. Leaders adjusted an emoji face from 1 (an upset face representing feeling negative or concerned) to 5 (a happy face representing feeling positive or enthusiastic). $n = 29$ for mid survey data and $n = 31$ for post survey data.

Leaders' comments throughout the surveys and case stories suggested they had gained a lot. Gains were achieved despite, or quite possibly because of, the intensity of the programme.

For example, one leader commented:

> I really enjoyed the programme. Thanks for the opportunity to participate. I definitely found it difficult timewise at times and feel I could have used more time to focus on it, however, I also did learn a lot and have ideas and ways to implement some of these strategies and things I learnt into my setting. I also feel more confident in the way I approach things with my team.

Leaders commented on the value of the investment in them, including the time their coaches spent with them, the importance of the stipend payment, valuing their perspectives and experiences, and the value of culturally responsive relationships.

> The time and support (coach, money for release, manual, interest in my thoughts and experiences) that I had with my leadership and coaching made me feel valued and that my leadership made a crucial difference in my centre.

> I appreciate the hard work that you have all put into this programme. Very grateful to my coach who has encouraged me and helped me through this process. She has been understanding, culturally responsive, caring, supportive, encouraging and nurturing.

> I wish I could permanently interact with my coach and have their guidance as a mentor to ensure I keep up the mahi I have learned from this programme. My experience has been motivating and inspiring. The cultural aspects of this leadership model resonated with me, and I feel encouraged to lead from this perspective going forward.

At least two leaders were considering leaving the teaching profession or their leadership roles before the programme, but the programme helped re-ignite their passion for ECE and leadership. One of these leaders commented:

> I think before I began this programme, I was reasonably considering a different job. And then when I saw this programme, it looked like a great investment for me as a leader. I'm really pleased that I committed to it, because it has been a commitment. It's a time commitment but it's been well worth the investment of time. I feel like my leadership skills have grown and will continue to grow. Especially the coaching side of it. That's been the most exciting bit for me is the growth in that.

In addition to the very personal experiences described above, survey ratings from pre- and post-programme suggest leaders believed the programme helped grow their confidence in leading a team, leading curriculum, and in culturally responsive leadership, as shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4. Leaders' Feelings of Confidence Before and After the Leadership Coaching Programme
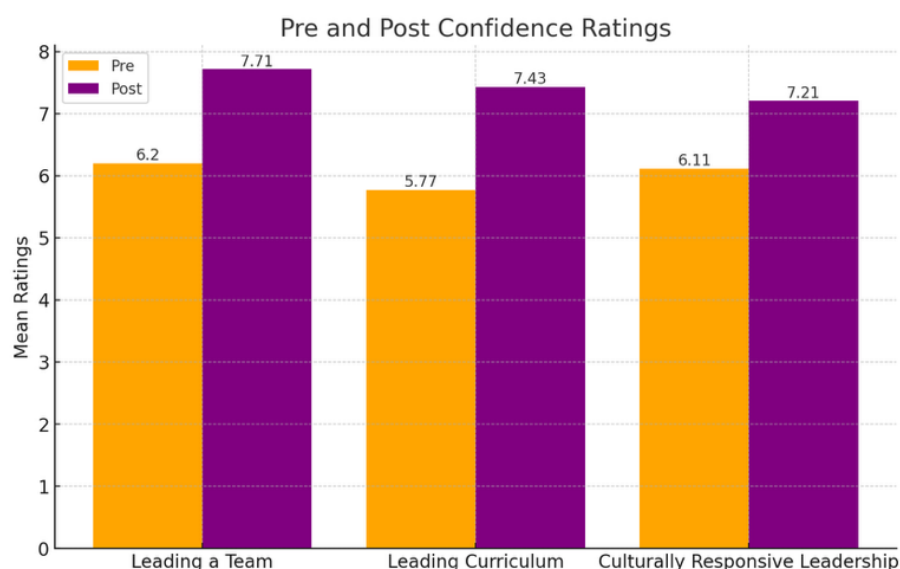
Note. Analysis conducted with pre- and post-programme survey data. Number of leaders' responses: *n* = 34 for leading a team; *n* = 34 for leading curriculum; *n* = 33 for culturally responsive leadership. Data represent mean ratings on a scale from *1 low confidence* to *10 high confidence*.

At the post-programme survey, there was very high agreement from leaders (n = 32) that the Leadership Coaching Programme met the following aspirations:

- The programme was aligned with *Te Tiriti o Waitangi*.

- The programme was aligned with *Te Whāriki*.

- This programme is appropriate for a range of leaders.

- I would recommend this programme to other leaders.

- The programme was well organised.

Leaders' comments about the Leadership Coaching Programme included the following:

> If I could to it again, I would!!! Highly recommended! I hope to pass on the course to others so they can be equipped and be inspired like I am.

> [The Leadership Coaching Programme] boosts my confidence and equipped me with the right knowledge, wisdom and skills. It ignited that passion in me towards leading people, curriculum and engaging in culturally responsive leadership. I feel that I have that skill, but the [programme] definitely pushed me and opened a new horizon for me to become a better future leader.

> The programme has given me the confidence to be brave in leading people. The structured process forced me to focus on specific, achievable steps which over time led to significant outcomes. I committed to the goal and action steps with my coach and so I had to take deep breaths and complete the steps. And each small step contributed to progress on the goal and my confidence. In terms of leading curriculum, practice-based coaching ensures a very clear focus on practice — what kaiako do and what outcomes this has for tamariki. The process provides a safe and transparent lens through which to reflect and provide feedback on practice and this builds confidence in leadership.

> I hope that more leaders in ECE get the opportunity to be part of the programme. E kā rakatira, naia tāhaku mihi atu ki a koutou.

Being coached using the leadership coaching framework

Without exception, all leaders reported extremely positive feelings about their coach and about being coached.

Leaders gave glowing praise such as:

> My coaches have been supportive, insightful, encouraging and generally awesome!

It's been such a wonderful journey. I'm very grateful and thankful for my coach/facilitator who guided me, challenged me and has given me lots of opportunities to grow and develop.

I loved working alongside [my coach]. She is a fantastic coach who I easily developed a working relationship with and learnt so much from.

I found the time spent with my coach to be collaborative and supportive.

Some leaders gave detailed descriptions about how their coach, and the coaching processes of the leadership coaching framework, supported them to grow:

Being held accountable for achieving my actions steps helped me keep on task to achieve the overall goal — having realistic action steps that were achievable and I had input into/ownership of.

Regular coaching sessions, time to reflect and co-construct goals, written email feedback.

Face-to-face meetings, having the folder and online platform to refer back to. The content of the online platform was very supportive.

Knowing that I had a coach who was supporting me gave me a lot of confidence. It helped me to stay on task. Gave me a lot to reflect on to help extend on my learning.

My kōrero with [my coach], her checking in and guidance and feedback. Honestly the readings really supported me a lot as well, made me more aware and purposeful with coaching techniques prior to going into coaching meetings.

The one-on-one face-to-face discussions were priceless for me. The ability to just talk and unearth what I was thinking and having someone not give me answers but dig and dig and ask the right questions for my own self-reflection and realisation was so valuable. It was after these sessions that I felt I had the most clarity on my own where to next but also reflecting on what I had done and what I would do differently.

> Definitely the chats with the coach, the coach being able to suggest different ideas and passing on different links or resources.

> Going through the process of being coached first was really helpful in terms of really understanding how to be a coach, having a great example and knowing how it should feel to be coached.

Across these responses, it is clear the influence of leaders' own coaches and the coaching process were primary drivers of success in the programme. Also notable across the above responses, is the way different aspects of the programme or support materials and processes resonated for different leaders — aspects such as accountability, focus, being able to review the supportive materials, and having someone model the process of the coaching.

Leaders described a range of positive outcomes and examples of change in their leadership. There were too many comments from leaders to detail all in this report, however, some detailed examples of outcomes can be seen in the case story series. Figure 5 shows leaders' mean ratings of different areas of their leadership they felt were impacted by the Leadership Coaching Programme.

Figure 5. Leaders' Views of the Impacts of the Leadership Coaching Programme

Leader Mean Agreement Ratings for Coaching Impact
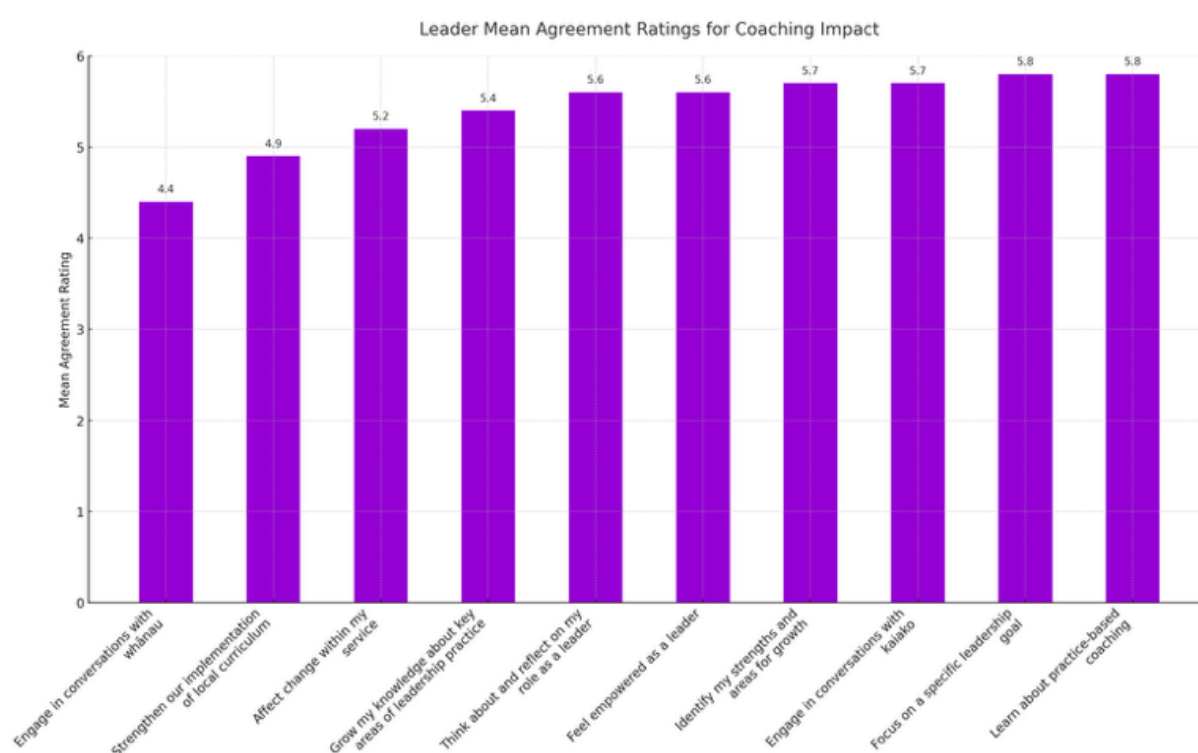
Note. Mean ratings for leaders' level of agreement, from *1 completely disagree* to *6 completely agree*, with each statement: Coaching sessions helped me to …
(*n* = 34).

Using practice–based coaching to coach a kaiako from the teaching team.

All leaders were asked to use the practice-based coaching model to coach at least one kaiako from their teaching team, aiming for eight coaching sessions to support their learning and benefit the kaiako. We are not able to specify with precision how many coaching sessions each leader and kaiako completed, however, we know the number of coaching sessions varied between leaders. Feedback from coaches and the leaders' survey responses suggests some leaders engaged in all eight coaching sessions, and possibly with more than one kaiako. Most leaders engaged in several coaching sessions but not the complete eight. Just a few leaders were not able to try out practice-based coaching, due to illness or injury.

Asked how they were feeling about using practice-based coaching, leaders shared the following ratings and responses in the post-programme survey.

How are you feeling about using practice-based coaching?		
😐	🙂	😀
n = 1	*n = 19*	*n = 14*

I feel good overall and feel that what I have learned from coaching one of my kaiako will be transferred into my everyday leadership and how I lead, support and coach the whole team.

I'm excited to keep going and eventually coach others.

I had to go through a challenge of choosing another kaiako in the middle of the coaching journey so I had to go back to zero. In the end, it turns out so much better when I was able to overcome the challenge and work with another kaiako who is very much eager to do the journey with me.

Due to many factors, I am a little behind where I would have liked to have been at this stage in the programme, however, the experiences that I have had and the protocols and resources that support practice-based coaching have been wonderful and I am already seeing the benefit of this approach.

I enjoyed the coaching and process around it more than I thought I would.

This was something I was a bit nervous about. Finding time to sit down with the kaiako was also challenging! Yet, it was a really positive experience for both of us.

It took a while to feel confident in the processes and feel like I was positively using the programme but once the confidence came and the frequency in sessions, I felt I was in a really good place with my own coaching.

I felt really well prepared with all the tools, support and workshops.
I knew exactly what I needed to do for practice-based coaching.

As well as overall positive feelings about practice-based coaching, many leaders' comments revealed sophistication in the ways they described practice-based coaching, revealing the depth of their understanding of coaching and how they could apply it to their work as pedagogical leaders. Many leaders also described the ways they planned to continue, extend and use practice-based coaching.

Leaders' descriptions of practice-based coaching included:

> Practice-based coaching is a game changer; it is relationship focused, adaptable, intentional and supportive of kaiako in their journey.

> Practice-based coaching is a supportive process that strengthens and enhances intentional teaching and effective curriculum implementation. Coach and coachee work together to observe practice and receive feedback and support.

> I would describe practice-based coaching as the individual identifying strengths and opportunities to improve with a lens of practice and localised curriculum indicators. Then setting goals and action steps to improve the practice with specific methods of observation and feedback for improvement.

> Practice-based coaching is a really supportive process in which a coach can work with someone in their team to focus on a particular area for growth. The coaching focuses on creating manageable goals and creates an easy process to keep the person accountable and being reflective together.

> A relatable model of coaching that is easy to work with, non-judgemental and flexible.

A key source of excitement for leaders was learning about *Kōwhiti Whakapae* as an available curriculum resource and having the opportunity to explore and use *Kōwhiti Whakapae* as part of practice-based coaching. Leader and PLD facilitator comments included:

> [*Kōwhiti Whakapae*] is one of the coolest documents that I've been engaged with since becoming a kaiako. I think the timing of it is right on cue with what we need in ECE at the moment. And it really matches the Leadership Coaching Programme and that [focus on] specificness by going into [a learning area] and looking at the ways teachers could implement that learning but also ways in which you could see children doing it. I had a teacher today say it's almost like the responding part *Te Whāriki* where it says that teachers can do this, this and this to support that learning but [*Kōwhiti Whakapae*] is more purposeful pinpointed, even broken down further into an achievable step. (ECE leader)

> I think [*Kōwhiti Whakapae*] is deepening and widening practice around strategies and outcomes for developing [children's] social and emotional competencies. [*Kōwhiti Whakapae*] is really supporting [kaiako] to have a deeper and wider understanding. And it's New Zealand and a New Zealand context which I think is so important. (PLD facilitator)

> I felt very guided in supporting my kaiako to choose a goal and guided in the right direction in relation to Te Ao Māori local curriculum. I love using this new resource, newish to me anyway. I have been using [*Kōwhiti Whakapae*] for practice-based coaching goal setting. I've really loved the examples in it, they've been quite helpful. [*Kōwhiti Whakapae*] showed really clear examples of what the action looked like in practice. It was much easier to connect with what it would look like in practice, to then feel like you can actually achieve it. (ECE leader)

Leaders' descriptions suggested that they valued the practice-based coaching approach and connected to key aspects of how to implement practice-based coaching. This sophisticated knowledge of practice-based coaching seemed to help leaders make plans to continue using the coaching model. Leaders said they planned to use practice-based coaching or elements of the model to:

- Support beginning kaiako.
- Guide existing kaiako with their professional growth cycles.
- Restructure professional growth cycles to be more focused and include focused observations.
- Develop a system of coaching within the centre.
- Work with organisation leaders to adopt practice-based coaching across more services.

Kaiako

Kaiako were coached by their ECE leader, using the practice-based coaching model. Leaders themselves were supported and coached to use practice-based coaching through the Leadership Coaching Programme. Leaders were encouraged to complete up to eight coaching sessions with their kaiako if possible, depending on their schedule and other demands. Not all leaders completed eight coaching sessions and the amount of coaching each kaiako received varied.

Kaiako were invited to complete brief pre- and post-coaching surveys. Nineteen kaiako completed the pre-coaching survey, which asked about experiences of coaching prior to the programme. Twelve kaiako completed the post-coaching survey, which asked about experiences of being coached. Ten of the kaiako who

completed the post-coaching survey had also completed the pre-coaching survey. In both surveys, not all kaiako chose to answer all questions.

All nineteen kaiako were certificated teachers: 14 fully certificated and five provisionally. Eighteen kaiako identified as female and one chose not to answer. Ages spanned from 18 to 64 years. Ethnicities included New Zealand European/Pākehā, Māori, Irish, Filipino and Indian.

In the post-coaching survey, kaiako reported experiencing between two and six focused observations and four and seven coaching conversations.

Key reported outcomes for kaiako include:

- Changes in kaiako knowledge about coaching.
- Positive feelings about the support received through coaching.
- Increased confidence or use of specific teaching practices.

We share this information from the perspectives of kaiako as well as the perspectives of the leaders who were coaching kaiako.

Coaching knowledge

Kaiako knowledge about coaching varied. In the first survey, 78% of kaiako indicated coaching in ECE was new to them and they had never been formally coached in their role before. Of the 22% who had coaching experience, coaching was used to support teacher registration, professional growth cycles, and appraisal processes. When asked to describe coaching, kaiako used basic descriptions such as "Coaching is helping me become a better teacher" or "Coaching provides guidance and helps a person to reach their full potential." There were a few responses in the pre-programme survey that highlighted support for goals. For example, "Coaching is led by a specific goal and outcome" or "I see coaching as more goal based, with a specific goal in mind to improve practice."

In the post-coaching survey, descriptions of practice-based coaching provided by kaiako suggested a range of understandings of practice-based coaching, with several detailed and specific descriptions that could reflect increased knowledge of coaching.

Descriptions of practice-based coaching included:

> Practice-based coaching is a cyclic process for supporting teachers to implement any practice that is identified to better the outcomes for children.

> Support and guidance about an area of practice that I have identified as being an area I would like to develop further.

> The opportunity to have someone in a leadership position offer guidance, support, and feedback regarding a chosen focus area within your teaching practice.

Other responses specifically highlighted a focus on teaching practices, goal setting, breaking goals down, feedback, and working collaboratively. It appears that, for some kaiako, understanding of practice-based coaching increased, possibly as a result of being coached and/or having their pedagogical leaders share information about practice-based coaching with them.

Feelings about coaching

All kaiako who participated in the survey felt positive or very positive about their practice-based coaching experiences.

How are you feeling about your coaching experience?	
n = 3	n = 8
"I really enjoyed the experience. I found it was great to take time to have professional and meaningful conversations that you don't always get time for on the floor during the day. I also felt it helped me to strengthen and reflect on some of my teaching practice." "Loving it."	

Kaiako responses to specific statements about the coaching showed that kaiako felt coaching was supportive and safe *(n = 11)*, supported them to improve their teaching practice *(n = 12)*, increased pedagogical knowledge *(n = 10)*, and was something other kaiako could benefit from *(n = 10)*.

Seven kaiako felt practice-based coaching was time-consuming but worthwhile and six kaiako felt practice-based coaching was not time consuming and was manageable. One kaiako reported, "The last few weeks have been chaotic for me so I haven't been able to engage in the coaching programme as fully as I would have liked". And another mentioned that practice-based coaching was "much the same as how we already do our professional growth cycles."

Growing teaching practice

Of the kaiako who answered the survey, most were coached in an area of social-emotional learning *(n = 9)* and used *He Māpuna te Tamaiti* and/or *Kōwhiti Whakapae* as supporting resources. Two kaiako focused on oral language using either *He Māpuna te Tamaiti* or *Te Kōrerorero*. All kaiako who answered the survey agreed that practice-based coaching supported them to increase their knowledge of effective teaching practices and reflect on their teaching practices in their chosen curriculum areas.

Kaiako shared the following examples of how they believed practice-based coaching had influenced their practice:

> It made me focus on strategies I could use to support tamariki, giving me ideas and extending what I know and do to improve outcomes for children.

> I found that by setting a goal and some teaching strategies it made me focus on those when engaging with tamariki and implement them into my practice.

> I was able to see what I was already doing and what I needed to bring more into my everyday teaching skills.

> The conversations I had with my coach helped me be more intentional and purposeful with my vocabulary and supporting the social and emotional wellbeing of the children.

Kaiako outcomes from leaders' perspectives

Leaders agreed that practice-based coaching helped kaiako improve teaching practice and increase kaiako confidence. In their final survey, leaders were asked to rate three statements about the impact of practice-based coaching on kaiako practice. As seen in Figure 6, almost all leaders agreed practice-based coaching helped kaiako apply new practices to strengthen curriculum implementation. Most leaders felt practice-based coaching increased kaiako confidence in their teaching.

Figure 6. Leaders' Perspectives of Kaiako Outcomes
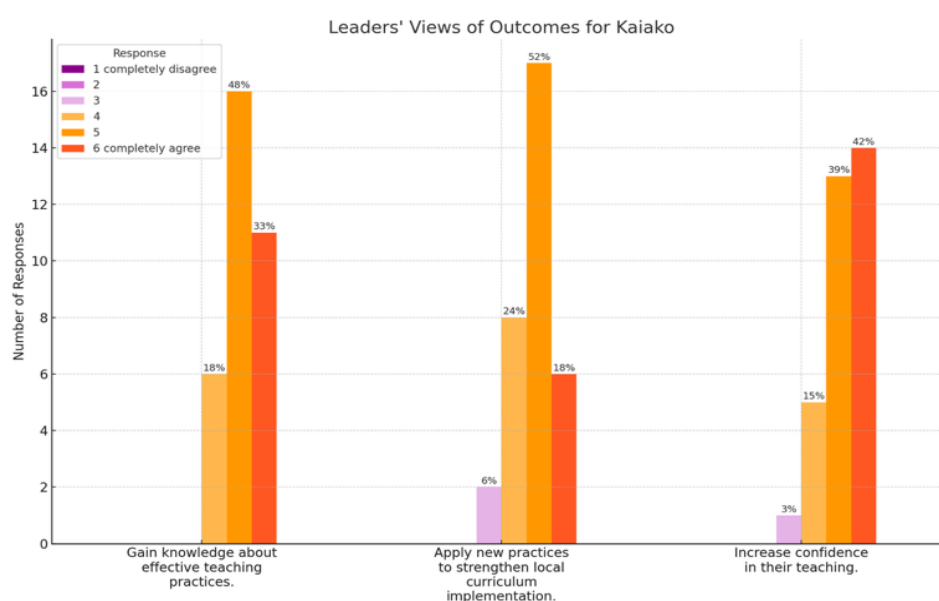
Note. Number of responses for leaders' perspectives of kaiako outcomes, with the percentage of responses shown for agreement categories. (*n* = 33).

Leaders were asked to share an example of how practice-based coaching influenced kaiako teaching practice. The comments below show different ways leaders saw practice-based coaching benefiting kaiako practice.

> It helped support reflective practice and introduced intentional teaching in a meaningful way.

> I saw my kaiako start to gain confidence using the te reo words for emotions and heard her using these more often in her daily interactions with tamariki.

> My kaiako was able to feel more confident about the way she was planning for children, because this was part of her coaching goal and was something she had been struggling with.

> My kaiako had a great shift in her teaching practice. From being very hands on and doing things for the tamariki, to learning what scaffolding actually is and taking a step back so she was present but letting the children learn to do it for themselves. Letting them know she was there if they needed her support.

> The kaiako I coached had a goal to be more intentional about making decisions about using conflicts as learning opportunities. Using video for observation data allowed us to see specific examples of teaching, the decisions underlying that teaching, and the outcomes for children — what worked, why and what different decisions could be made in the future.

> Practice-based coaching provided me with a way of guiding a kaiako towards a greater understanding of how she could develop strategies such as serve and return and using descriptive language to enhance oral language. Giving her feedback on how she was using these strategies gave her the opportunity to gain in confidence to use the strategies well, which led to tamariki developing their oral language. We received feedback from parents that they had noticed their tamariki had developed more vocabulary. The kaiako began to use examples of how she had developed oral language in her learning stories.

PLD facilitators

The Leadership Coaching Programme involved five facilitators who coached leaders across various regions in Aotearoa New Zealand. Each facilitator provided 1:1 coaching sessions, Zoom meetings, and email support to the leaders they coached. Two facilitators were also part of the coaching variations related to job-sharing, group coaching, and coaching and talanoa.

Facilitators were expected to enact the key components of the leadership coaching framework into their coaching partnerships with leaders, including whakawhanaungatanga, goal setting and action planning, self-monitoring, and reflection and support. Facilitators were also expected to use protocols to guide coaching sessions and to complete coaching logs to track implementation. There was flexibility and an expectation that facilitators could and would use the leadership coaching framework in ways that were authentic for themselves and responsive to the leaders they supported.

Prior to the programme none of the facilitators had used a specific model of coaching and none had encountered the leadership coaching framework before.

Facilitators were invited to complete prior-, mid-, and post-programme surveys and engage in end of programme reflection sessions. Monthly meetings also provide an opportunity for ongoing feedback with input from facilitators about what was working, what was not and what adjustments they were making.

Key outcomes for PLD facilitators highlighted in this report include:

- Coming to terms with a manualised approach to coaching.
- The highs and lows of working with protocols and logs over a 10-month, high-intensity programme.
- Building on and refining their coaching skills aligned with the components of the leadership coaching framework.
- Professional growth and satisfaction from sustained and focused PLD.

We also remind the reader of the perspectives ECE leaders shared about the PLD facilitators in their role as coaches, with comments of gratitude and specific descriptions of just how helpful and supportive the facilitators were. The PLD facilitators in their work as coaches were the lifeforce of the programme. As Tara, the programme development and evaluation team leader commented to the facilitators:

> Thanks for all your work to support leaders and their teams. I can tell you the data we are getting suggests that you are making a huge difference. Your work and support are so appreciated. As I have listened to each of the first case story interviews, I can see trends related to the general design of the programme that are making a difference … [*listing of notable components*]. What is also there is you! Your style, your way! The things that are unique to you that support leaders and have an impact. This is harder to capture as each of you is different, yet this idea that their coach's particular way has impacted the leaders greatly is definitely present.

Coming to terms with a manualised approach to coaching

Earlier in the report, we noted that PLD facilitators were sceptical about the manualised approach to coaching. It may also be accurate to say that facilitators felt a manualised approach and use of protocols was offensive at first or had deep concerns that it would have a negative impact on their work with leaders. For example, facilitators commented:

> I found it offensive in terms of thinking this was an attack … "Are you suggesting I don't do this?" What I loved was the next [explanation], the explicit nature of saying "You probably already do this, but this is a process …"

> I saw the protocols, and I was like, oh. I think this is going to make it really stilted. Because one thing about [the way I work] is its free flowing. I thought is this going to make this really stilted because it's very prescriptive.

Despite initial reservations, facilitators were encouraged to use the manual and protocols with flexibility, both for their own coaching but also to serve as a model for the ECE leaders they were working with. As this approach was used, facilitators began to find the value in having a manualised approach that provides structure and flexibility. Facilitators' comments included:

> It gave me this framework to work with and then the way I wanted to climb through the framework was up to me … there was flexibility within it but the framework was there, the planning was there and the guidance was there, the support was there. It was awesome and I could see that this process gave some good support to the leaders as well.

> The protocols guided me in the process of coaching and helped me to systematically record my interactions through emails.

> [The protocols] kept me and coachee focussed and supported with practical concrete strategies to use. I coach a lot from intuition, so it was a struggle to accept the protocols, however, I felt they kept me on track and accountable and were useful to have alongside in the coaching process.

> [It was important to] acknowledge that we probably do this [and then explain] this is a way we're presenting this mahi, how to coach through this process. I liked the explicit nature of it because I felt like it was going to be hard to get it wrong. It's interesting because it also gave me motivation and almost validation in terms of when I went on each visit.

In addition to the advantages seen for themselves, facilitators saw multiple advantages for ECE leaders, including transparency of process, modelling reciprocal learning, and the way that structure supported leaders' success. Facilitators' comments included:

> I don't normally work in such a structured way; e.g., following protocols and sending emails 24 hours after each visit and I have been surprised how these are enabling [leaders] to take actions.

> [During coaching conversations with leaders] I often would just have my folder open and go through the protocol. Up until probably the last two visits, I had my folder open every time and I think that was good role modelling but also that just allowed me to show people you don't have to know. You don't have to be an expert. I'm certainly not an expert and doing that learning alongside. The kind of symbiotic — I'm leading this bit of the process but I'm still learning too and the way the leaders responded helped a lot.

Not all facilitators came to appreciate the manualised approach and the need to continue 'coaching' leaders while they were starting to coach kaiako. For one facilitator there were continued concerns that the protocols and coaching restricted the flow of conversation. The facilitator noted:

> Initially I thought it was great because there was a protocol that I could follow [but] then I found, as the relationship grew, I'd be skipping things because the conversation was more organic.

> As we moved into the [practice-based coaching phase], I thought that maybe I was using the wrong log. Because I just didn't feel like it fitted well. At this stage of the programme my focus was more on ensuring the leader's success with the impetus now on the goal and action plan they have designed with their kaiako — adding our one alongside simply confuses.

For this facilitator and others, there were also concerns about the frequency of coaching visits and frustration about having to complete the logs. These concerns lead well into the next theme related to the highs and lows of working over a 10-month, high-intensity programme.

Highs and lows with logs and emails over the course of the programme
Moving beyond initial reservations, most facilitators appreciated the structured approach of the leadership coaching framework. Nonetheless, a common thread was that facilitators found the logs and follow-up emails time consuming to complete.

Despite these concerns, facilitators could see value in the coaching logs as a tool for their own reflection:

> What I liked about the protocol log was it was interesting for me to see the different strategies that I was using constantly and the ones that I didn't use constantly. It was good for me to reflect on those and I did reflect on them sometimes to say well "Why didn't I use that?" or "I'm using this …"

Other facilitators commented that it was useful to revisit their logs and emails prior to the next coaching session with a leader. Revisiting logs was particularly important for the two facilitators working in the Nelson region in job-sharing

roles. In addition to their catch-up conversations the logs and emails served as useful tools to support consistency for their leaders.

> [The emails] helped me to analyse what was going on for that leader. It also supported my analytical thinking … I think I'm pretty good at my analysis and it really honed me in on analysis … And then I realised how useful they were when you came to prepare for the next session. You just go back to that summary email. It just told you what was going on and what happened. Over time, I've refined them really well. I think I'm down to about 20, sometimes 15 minutes now.

Despite the time it took to complete coaching logs and summary emails, four of the five facilitators kept up to date with their logs, emails, and maintained online files for the programme leaders to access (including the facilitator with concerns and frustrations). The one facilitator who struggled to keep up with completing the logs and updating files commented: "The logs were good. It's just me keeping up with them."

Facilitators' varied experiences and perspectives regarding the manualised approach and use of protocols and logs, offer valuable insights for developing, adapting and delivering programmes such as the Leadership Coaching programme. In the context of Aotearoa New Zealand ECE and PLD, some of the processes used in the Leadership Coaching Programme are not common and may be met with suspicion. Not all PLD facilitators will come to embrace manualised or new approaches to PLD. The insights from facilitators enable the programme development and evaluation team to better understand how to improve and streamline leadership coaching processes, including protocols and logs, to mitigate time demands, while maintaining benefits.

Building on and refining coaching skills

As described above, the leadership coaching framework, with its manualised approach could be perceived as an accusation that PLD facilitators were not already using a range of relational and facilitation strategies to support the leaders and kaiako they worked with. Yet, that was not the intention. It was very important to highlight that PLD facilitators likely do many, if not all, of the different strategies included on protocols and logs. What we were offering was a systematic process to make the coaching strategies explicit and transparent. Transparency means both coaching partners, the coach and coachee, know what to expect from every coaching session.

The PLD facilitators brought numerous strengths, skills, and different ways of thinking and working that were integral to the Leadership Coaching Programme. In the many ways the facilitators engaged in their own learning and support of each other as well as supporting ECE leaders.

A particular strength across all facilitators was a focus on relationships and whakawhanaungatanga throughout the process of PLD. Facilitators commented:

> [My facilitation style involves] leading with whakawhanaungatanga. I aim to develop trusting relationships and create collaborative environments which build on what leaders and kaiako already know.

> We create safe environments for people to bring their knowledge and strengths to our mahi while being sensitive to where they are in their journey. There is always a space for people to share themselves and their culture.

Other facilitator strengths included cultural competence and responsiveness; being learner-focused; strong communication; and having commitment and passion for ECE.

Some of the areas PLD facilitators identified as opportunities for their own growth and learning included the notion of goal setting in a more focused way; the importance of action plans; and different ways to support leaders to self-monitor. For example, one facilitator commented that she felt "stuck" with the self-monitoring data. Another facilitator commented, "I think the first action plan I did with leaders, that was real learning for me."

One facilitator described the transformations she had made from the beginning to the end of the Leadership Coaching Programme, outlining shifts in thinking from initial reservations to engaging in the leadership coaching and finding value in the manualised approach.

> My initial thinking was sort of a pushback. Am I going to be allowed to use my [own style] because I'm good at that? I know that. I'm not sure about this process at all and then I was like, well, let's give it a go. It's there. Let's give it a go. I think [the change] for me is seeing it in action. Following those protocols has been really strong for me and the flexibility within it has supported me to use my [style] still but having it all written down for you in terms of the process that you follow [has been useful] and a key thing for me is that focus at the start. Refocussing from one session to another, making sure we recap the previous session going into the next session. You're really focussed on what that goal is.

Positive outcomes for PLD facilitators

Each facilitator brought with them a wealth of experience, prior knowledge and their own unique facilitation styles. At the end of the programme, all agreed they had been able to draw from, and make connections with, their prior knowledge and experience while using the leadership coaching framework, as well as bringing their unique selves into the programme.

By the end of the Leadership Coaching Programme, all five facilitators indicated having very positive feelings about coaching. This represented a shift from the midpoint of the programme when facilitators indicated mixed feelings, ranging from neutral to very positive.

Facilitators' comments included:

> I feel empowered as a coach. I can guide my leaders when needed and am always motivated to be in the ako mode to do so, which helps me do research and learn.

> Thoroughly enjoyed the journey and seeing the progress in my leaders' coaching skills and my own coaching skills.

> I've loved the relationships forged and hearing how impactful the programme has been personally and professionally.

Overall, the facilitators found the programme transformative, enhancing their coaching skills, fostering relationships with leaders and promoting shifts in leaders' understanding and practice. In the words of one facilitator:

> Working with these leaders was a rewarding experience. So many times I heard from leaders that they felt they had no one to talk to about the challenges of their roles, they felt there is limited, insufficient and unappealing PLD available to them, particularly anything more than the one off workshops or seminar style offerings. The mix of onsite and online visits really supported the whakawhanaungatanga and trust that was necessary to ensure their engagement with the process and, for most, they found the framework easy to understand and put into place.

Book club

Leaders

At the beginning of the programme, 39 leaders reported they had never participated in a professional book club or reading group before, and one leader reported they had.

For a few leaders, the book club was an incentive for enrolling in the Leadership Coaching Programme. For some leaders the book itself, *Wayfinding Leadership,* was of particular interest.

> The book club idea from this course was a big selling point. One of my favourite parts of previous PLD (sharing of good books, however, never a book club before).

> I've never come across a book club as part of an actual leadership professional development. I think the programme itself would still have been

> really beneficial and would still have been instrumental in a lot of change, but I think the book that was chosen really complemented the programme and complemented my goals and what I wanted to achieve out of this.

Leaders' feelings about the book and book club were mixed, aligning to some extent with the low participation rates in book club meetings.

Some leaders loved the book and the book club and reflected on the significant impact both had on their overall experience in the programme.

> Overnight I was thinking about book club, and how important the book is to the course as a whole.

> I loved the book, and think it is integral to the programme

> LOVED IT! So inspiring and looking at it from different perspectives!

> This [book] impacted me immensely and I have recommended the book on to others in my setting to develop their reflective practices around leadership from an indigenous perspective.

> It was such a delight to be part of the book club. I love meeting leaders and educators who have shared their insights, knowledges and experiences that equipped me to become a better leader in the future and be more reflective.

There were some leaders who enjoyed the book and gained valuable insights from the knowledge within *Wayfinding Leadership* but did not enjoy the book club experience.

> First time in a book club and came away thinking views were so diverse over the first book that I wasn't comfortable to go back to book club — not sure how you can meet my needs, as I understand people all have differing opinions — more for me to find how comfortable I can be being uncomfortable in those situations.

There were a few leaders for whom the book did not connect.

> The book is quite hard to read. I can only read a few pages at a time. The ideas when they are stated are interesting but, in general, I don't find the writing style very engaging.

For many leaders, however, they were interested in the book and the book club but limited time was a barrier.

> [The book club] was the hardest thing to commit to in the end. Life just got too busy! I definitely did not make the most out of this opportunity.

Holding the book club meetings in the evenings meant that many leaders who might have wanted to attend would have to sacrifice personal or family time, which was neither realistic nor fair. Leaders' comments in the final survey highlighted this tension.

> For me, it was time. I have other commitments some evenings during the week and I really struggled to get there. I think for me, during work hours would almost be easier, but I guess there is no real solution to that. It's just a personal preference for myself, given my out of work commitments.

> For me it was a time thing. My husband works away a lot so 6:30 pm was the worst time for me with dinner and bath time. I just couldn't get there with three children.

> Book club was amazing, and well worth attending. Sadly in my situation, the timing wasn't always ideal, juggling a toddler and a job that doesn't fit 9 to 5.

> Would have been nice to be able to do these during the day. I found night times hard especially after a long day at work.

PLD facilitators' experiences of book club

None of the PLD facilitators had facilitated a book club before. Overall, they were excited about this new experience but also expressed some questions about the way book club was structured with reading groups organised by preferred reading style rather than by region.

Book clubs got off to a strong start. One facilitator reflected:

> I was so impressed with and excited by the enthusiasm leaders brought to our first hui and the strong desire to see and understand things from a different perspective.

Several facilitators were excited to see how the different elements of the programme might work together and complement leaders' learning. For example, two facilitators commented:

> I am excited to see how the different components of the project will work together — I think this will give leaders a different way of thinking about and learning about leadership outside the managerial side of their role.

> I am excited about the triangulation of visits, online modules and book club. I am also excited about the passing on of knowledge by leader to kaiako.

While the complementary elements of the programme were viewed as exciting, PLD facilitators' concerns related to book club included doubts about their ability to "fit everything in within the time and space so everything is done with the integrity it deserves". PLD facilitators also noted the "pressures on leaders" within the sector and that leaders may "pull out of opportunities due to time and other commitments."

In many ways both the excitement and concern that PLD facilitators expressed about book club came to pass. For those leaders who engaged in book club or committed to reading the book during the programme, the connections, growth and learning were very powerful.

For those leaders who did not connect with the text or did not regularly engage in the book club, the potential benefits book club had to offer did not outweigh the pressures and other demands.

Online knowledge modules

The online platform and knowledge modules were the final part of the multi-element Leadership Coaching Programme. The online knowledge modules were designed to complement the coaching and book club by providing an online repository of resources and materials for leadership. The modules contained supplemental training resources and materials related to the leadership coaching framework competencies of leading people, leading practice, and leading PLD and coaching. A focus of the online platform was the complete suite of resources for practice-based coaching and each of the key practice-based coaching components.

All leaders were informed that these resources were optional and that the programme team did not have expectations about how, when, or what they engaged with in the online platform. At the same time, the coaches were encouraged to show leaders the range of resources, so they knew what was available. In the final survey, 29 leaders reported their coach supported them to engage with the online platform and three leaders said their coaches had not supported them; the remaining leaders did not respond to the question.

The decision not to stipulate how leaders should engage with the online platform was twofold. First, making engagement optional supports leaders' autonomy (similar to the optional nature of protocols and logs). Second, the online

platform is intended to be complementary to the coaching support and we wanted leaders to prioritise their time engaging with their coach, noting the online modules would be a resource that leaders could continue to access after coaching ended.

Similar to the book club, uptake and enthusiasm for the online resources was variable. Learning Management System analytics showed that 33 of the 42 leaders logged into the online platform at some point during the programme. Eleven of these leaders logged in once and did not return. The other 22 leaders logged in at least twice, with most of these leaders logging in between 3 and 6 times. One leader logged in seven times and one leader logged in 11 times.

In addition to logins, we tracked how many and which resources leaders accessed. As shown in the figure below, an increase in visits was associated with the number and range of resources accessed.

Figure 7. Online Learning Platform: Visits and Resources Accessed
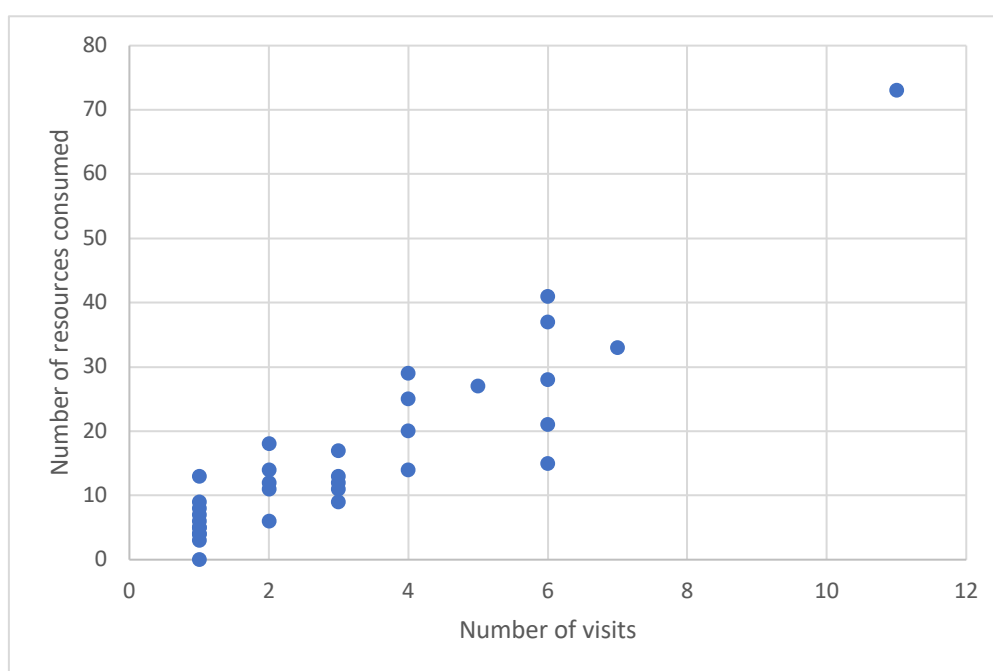
Note. Data shown for 33 of the 42 leaders logged into the online platform at some point during the programme. A visit refers to logging in to the online platform on any given day. If a leader logged in twice on the same day, this was considered one visit. Resources refers to the number of unique resources the leader accessed on that day. Leaders may have returned to the same resource across days.

A detailed analysis of the resources accessed is shown in Table 6. Interactive modules for practice-based coaching were the most accessed resources, along with practice-based coaching forms and course page. Interactive modules for leading people, practice, and PLD were also highly engaged with but not as high as the practice-based coaching resources.

Notably, the forums for leader discussion in each section of the online platform were visited by leaders but no leaders posted in these forums. The forums were set up and described as forums for leaders to connect and engage in online discussions. The forums were not, however, monitored by the programme development and evaluation team and not actively promoted.

Table 6. Analytic User Data for Online Platform

# of access points for leaders	Focus	Resource	Type
103	PBC	Interactive Module: Shared Goals & Action Planning	SCORM
94	PBC	Interactive Module: Focused Observation	SCORM
86	PBC	Interactive Module: Localised Teaching Practices	SCORM
86	PBC	Interactive Module: Reflection and Feedback	SCORM
82	PBC	Interactive Module: Overview PBC	SCORM
81	PBC	Interactive Module: Whakawhanaungatanga	SCORM
50	PBC	Practice-Based Coaching	Land Page
80	PBC	Forum for Leaders: Discuss using PBC	Forum
93	PBC	PBC Meeting Guides, Protocols and Logs	Forms
90	PBC	Folder: Strengths and Opportunities Reflection	Forms
139	PBC	Overview, Resources and Forms	Course Page
73	LCF	Interactive Module: Leading PLD and Coaching	SCORM
69	LCF	Interactive Module: Leading People	SCORM
54	LCF	Interactive Module: Leading Practice	SCORM
40	LCF	Leadership Coaching, Competencies & Knowledge	Land Page
30	LCF	Book: LCF Overview	Guide/Information
55	LCF	Forum: Coaching Forum for Leaders	Forum
52	LCF	File: LCF SOR (Fillable)	Forms
51	LCF	File: LCF SOR (Word)	Forms
88	LCF	Overview, Resources and Forms	Course Page
37	General	General Programme	Land Page
59	General	General Programme Overview	Guide/Information
59	General	General: Overview, Resources and Information	Course Page
57	Book	Book Club Forum for Leaders	Forum
48	Book	File: Reading Guide Template (Word)	Forms
26	Book	Book Club	Land Page
21	Book	Book Club Overview Guide	Guide/Information
66	Book	Book Club Reading Groups	Form/Information
47	Book	Book Club: Overview, Resources and Forms	Course Page

Note: LCF = leadership coaching framework; PBC = practice-based coaching; SOR = strengths and opportunities reflection

In addition to the analytic data, we asked leaders to report on their engagement with the online platform and resources.

Of the 24 leaders who responded to the question:

- 4 leaders reported deep engagement with content.

- 9 leaders reported moderate engagement with content.

- 11 leaders reported light engagement or skimming/reviewing content.

While the uptake and enthusiasm for the online resources was variable, similar to the book club, those who found the online platform useful said it was very useful and described gaining a lot of knowledge from the online materials. For example, a leader commented:

> The online resources are amazing, and I really enjoyed the variety. There were videos, the audio, things to read, the templates, really easy to follow and find. Lots of new stuff as well as affirming things I knew. Lots of new ideas and resources, so I think that was the valuable part of the programme as well and I continue to use those.

Other leaders felt the resources could be useful but did not have the time to engage with them. For many of these leaders, the support of their coach was more valuable to them, and they knew they would continue to have access to the online platform after the programme ended. For example, a leader commented:

> I am looking forward to continued access [of the online resources] now that my face-to-face coaching has finished. I think they will be really useful to revisit.

The extent to which leaders continue to, or begin to, access the online platform is something we will continue to monitor. For example, shortly after the analytic data were downloaded and analysed for this report, two leaders logged into the platform. It was the first time one of these leaders had accessed the site. The leader engaged with resources related to the book club.

A primary intention of the online resources was for leaders to explore and use the resources throughout the programme, but also to provide leaders with continued access to resources for leadership and practice-based coaching after their last visit with their coach.

The programme

The Leadership Coaching Programme included four elements that were integrated throughout the 10-month intensive programme. The four elements were designed to contribute to the experiences of leaders in complementary ways. A core thread across each element is a combination of structure and

flexibility. Flexibility means each element is effective for and responsive to leaders, kaiako, and the early childhood education contexts in which they work. Structure means the inclusion of key evidence-informed features of successful coaching are not left to chance and that consistency is maintained.

A primary aim of the programme was to support pedagogical leaders to learn about and use coaching to support curriculum implementation by strengthening teachers' use of effective teaching practices.

The findings presented in this report suggest that being coached was a highlight for all leaders engaged in the programme. The support of their coach was invaluable. Leaders' engagement in other aspects of the Leadership Coaching Programme was more variable. Most leaders engaged in coaching a kaiako from their team but to varying degrees. Leaders engaged in the book club and the online modules to varying degrees. Each of these programme elements and combinations of the elements impacted individual leaders in different ways. Yet, for some leaders, the intended ripple effect of the coaching will be ongoing. As one leader summed up:

> I was really excited to see [this PLD] offered because like I say there hasn't been anything [for leaders]. The things that I really enjoy about it are that one-to-one support from the PLD facilitator. Having someone as skilled as [my coach] has been fantastic. [Also] having the online knowledge modules, I love dipping in and out of those. Watching the little vignettes or the videos or reading the notes and going back to the protocols. I really like that there are protocols for everything. I can follow that and feel confident that I'm doing it right. The book club as well. I like reading but of late haven't probably read a lot, so being given the opportunity to reflect on leadership through the book has been fantastic and the sharing with the other leaders. The leaders from throughout the country who might live in Northland in somewhere, but we all have things in common. And the length of the programme has been so good [for] sustaining and building the knowledge over time. Not just the one off and park it up 'cos life happens, but I can see this as being something. [For example] our team leaders — the ones who I've coached so far, will then be able to go on and coach their kaiako and so to continue that role and continue to grow coaching at the centre, which is fantastic.

Conclusion

Summary

The Leadership Coaching Programme was funded by the Ministry of Education related to the objective of developing a sustained and planned approach to PLD, including a focus on leadership capability and curriculum implementation.

The programme demonstrates an approach to professional learning and development (PLD) and coaching that is structured, flexible and responsive to leaders, kaiako and the early learning contexts in which they work. The programme's combination of structure, flexibility and responsiveness means it can be applied in diverse early childhood education services and can effectively support leaders from different backgrounds and cultural contexts.

Of the 42 pedagogical leaders who began the 10-month intensive programme, 39 leaders completed. The programme involved two models of coaching: 1) the leadership coaching framework, which PLD facilitators used to support and coach ECE leaders, and 2) practice-based coaching, which ECE leaders used to support kaiako and strengthen implementation of *Te Whāriki*, in their own ECE settings. A feature of programme design was that ECE leaders experienced being coached as one of the ways to learn how to coach. The programme's coaching elements were complemented by a professional book club focused on *Wayfinding Leadership: Ground-Breaking Wisdom for Developing Leaders* (Spiller et al., 2015). Leaders also had access to resources, through a series of online knowledge modules. The ECE leaders were supported by five experienced PLD facilitators, who were guided by the leadership coaching framework and who received professional support throughout the programme. Each PLD facilitator supported leaders in an allocated region, with facilitators providing 1:1 support and coaching to leaders.

A notable feature of the Leadership Coaching Programme is that it is a manualised approached to PLD and coaching, which means clear guidance is provided about key components and expected dosage for implementation, while supporting flexibility in each setting and context. The manualised approach supports the recording and reporting of implementation fidelity. Implementation fidelity refers to the degree to which a programme was implemented as intended, including dosage and adherence to the key components and protocols. Overall, leaders received a sufficient dosage of coaching with good levels of adherence. In other words, leaders received enough coaching with effective, evidence-informed coaching strategies to learn about, and benefit from, the leadership coaching process. However, adherence and dosage varied significantly across leaders, due to a range of factors. Reasons for variations in the dosage or amount of coaching included maternity or medical leave, staff shortages that resulted in coaching session cancellations, and other competing demands or responsibilities. In addition, three variations to the overall coaching approach were explored: group coaching; coaching and talanoa; and for one region, two coaches working in a job-sharing role.

The programme was evaluated using a range of methods to gather stakeholder perspectives. The evaluation was guided by the *Leadership Coaching Programme Drivers and Outcomes Framework.* A review of this framework suggests that most, if not all, of the intended outcomes for the programme were met for most of the participants. To evidence these outcomes in the report, we have converged a range of participant ratings and quotes from surveys, case interviews and reflection sessions. Below is a summary of these outcomes.

Outcomes for leaders:

- Grow cultural knowledge and responsiveness in their leadership practice.
- Gain knowledge about leading people, leading practice and leading PLD and coaching.
- Apply new knowledge to leading and supporting their team with local curriculum design and implementation.
- Use practice-based coaching to support kaiako practice in ways that are responsive to the priorities of their setting.
- Increase confidence as a leader.

Outcomes for kaiako:

- Gain knowledge about effective teaching practices.
- Grow capability to identify opportunities for intentional teaching and respond to individual children's learning.
- Apply new teaching practices to strengthen curriculum implementation.
- Increase confidence in their teaching.
- Feel supported by their leader.

Outcomes for PLD facilitators:

- Gain knowledge about specific and manualised models of PLD.
- Gain competencies in book club facilitation.
- Gain competencies in coaching.
- Gain competencies in tracking integrity data.
- Increase confidence as a PLD facilitator.

Key messages for PLD and coaching

Effective and responsive PLD for ECE leaders and kaiako is essential. Coaching is a PLD approach that has been shown to be effective in supporting leadership and kaiako practice, fostering a positive impact on children's learning. Based on the Leadership Coaching Programme experiences and related research, we present nine key messages for effective PLD and coaching in ECE.

Each message is supported either by the words of ECE leaders and PLD facilitators who participated in the programme and gifted us their wisdom, or by a description from research or relevant texts.

The work of ECE PLD must be grounded in respect; respect for people, respect for their mahi, and respect for their whole being.

> Years ago, I came across a definition for respect. And it's a check for me — respect. It's asking yourself, "Am I doing this *with* someone else or am I doing it *to* someone else? And I definitely feel the respect in this process. This is something that you do *with* someone else. (ECE leader)

Connections to and blending of indigenous and western views of leadership and practice honour diverse perspectives, offer new insights and enhance collaboration.

> Wayfinding is as relevant for our times as it has been throughout time. Its principles have been developed through action and practice in intimacy with an ever-changing world — it's a human story of journey through life sustainably, collectively, equitably, and respectfully. It's as much about the journey as it is about making landfall. Today more than ever we need leaders who can read the signs and become wayfinders if we are to survive and thrive. (*Wayfinding Leadership*, Spiller et al., 2015)

Relationships form the foundation of coaching; strategies used to build relationships must be made explicit and be supported in the design of PLD.

> What's important is the connection. Being able to make a connection, because without that connection I don't think there's space for learning, and it supports their wellbeing. I'm just thinking of the process in which I go through and it's being explicit. It's being explicit about the purpose, about my purpose. This is what makes [this] unique you know, being really explicit and saying this is a safe space. (PLD facilitator)

> I think one of the most positive things for leaders was to redefine their relationship with their kaiako through the [coaching] process: "Hey, I'm not the manager, not the head teacher. I'm your coach and this is what that relationship looks like." Having that space to define the relationship, the coaching contacts, what that means, what that looks like in this space. (PLD facilitator).

The experience of being coached before coaching others strengthens leaders' learning and fosters confidence.

> I was really lucky with both my coaches because they were able to role model the coaching conversations and how that practice-based coaching thing works really well for me, so it gave me confidence. (ECE leader)

Providing evidence-informed, flexible structures can guide PLD and coaching processes to support coaches' competence.

> Manuals, protocols, and logs support the use of key coaching components, which have been informed by research evidence and experience. Within this structure, flexibility supports the use of key components in ways that are responsive and connected to the local setting's priorities and values. (Authors)

> [The protocols] weren't compulsory to use but I liked that it gave me a flow of this is what I do next, so when I was meeting with the person I was coaching, I looked through it beforehand, prepared myself, then I also had it with me, so I was ticking off or writing notes or just referring back to know that this was the next step. This was the flow of what needed to happen in the conversation. (ECE leader)

Focusing on specific teaching practices paired with learner choice creates manageable and achievable pathways for learning, practice change and success.

> I've loved the package because part of my learning in this, one of the key things that I've focused on is being unambiguous. I think [being ambiguous] is a trait that I see in lots of the people I work with. You know we're in a nurturing caring profession, which is fabulous, but having the skills to, or having the tools to, to actually give clarity to an idea or to focus a goal, or to actually be able to pinpoint where you need to go for me is really helpful. I tend to go, "Well, what do you think? What were you thinking? Where would you like to take it?" but not in a positive way; in a way that doesn't support people identifying what's important to them. Everything is too wide, and I found the tools a great way to support myself and the people that I'm working with to bring things into focus, but still in a way that is working with them not dictating to them. (ECE leader)

Coaching can be complemented by a range of supports that are accessed by learners with flexibility and choice to strengthen overall learning.

> I absolutely love all the guides and the online stuff. I'm in and out of that stuff just reminding myself so I feel comfortable, and I think the more comfortable I am with it, the more natural it becomes in the process. You wean yourself off a little bit but it's all still there and you've got that guide and for me, that's just helped the whole process go really smoothly. (ECE leader)

When PLD is connected, meaningful and responsive, the intensive investment of leaders' time is energising and empowering.

> There is a common belief or misconception that an intensive PLD programme will add more stress to already stressed leaders. Yet, we found the opposite, stress and tired leaders can be rejuvenated and inspired by meaningful intensive PLD. The stress (and frustration) is not a lack of time, it's the lack of investment in leaders and the lack of investment in their time. (Authors).

> You know a frustration for me is that I got so much learning from the course. It's so important, it's transformational and yet it's frustrating for me that that quality of time isn't available in terms of funding generally. This is the kind of process for me that stops you from kind of getting caught in the grind of getting through the day. You know it's exciting to have goals and it's exciting to be working with people and seeing transformation, which ultimately has incredible impacts for our tamariki. And yet, it's frustrating for me that the importance of that is not really acknowledged in ECE, you know in our ratios and the funding that supports all that kind of stuff. (ECE leader)

Investing in ECE leaders with sustained, job-embedded and facilitated support creates momentum for transformation.

> When the leadership coaching opportunity came up, I was excited because it's important to me to feel like I'm doing my job well. I've done webinars and the odd two-day course and you take bits out, but it's not supported. You do the course, and then you're left on your own. That is where this differs. It's not about just change for me, it's about inviting other people to take part in that process. And you get momentum. In the past I found it's hard to maintain momentum, especially if you're the only one heading off to a course. You can come back with ideas, but you don't necessarily get the buy-in from others. Whereas this literally invites other people to be part of the process. It's an important aspect and it's where the transformation comes in. (ECE leader)

Lessons learnt from the Leadership Coaching Programme

As programme developers, a key objective is to learn and improve the elements associated with the Leadership Coaching Programme, for overall refinement and to better understand necessary adaptations to the programme's elements and the approach in each new context. This is a continual process of consultation, experimentation and iteration based on evidence and wisdom.

Based on the present evaluation and lessons learnt, potential immediate refinements include:

- Adaptations to the professional book club, especially to make it easier for leaders to attend book club meetings.

- A longer time period for leaders to learn about and use practice-based coaching, without compromising the important foundational learning that is necessary before leaders begin coaching — to do this we would advocate for a 12-month programme.

- Across the 12 months of programme implementation, changes to the sequence and timing of face-to-face and online coaching sessions.

- Adaptations to coaching logs and filing systems to streamline implementation fidelity data gathering processes.

- Continued refinement of evaluation processes, including survey tools.

- Formal incorporation and acknowledgement of Simon Breakspear's Boulder, Pebble, Sand concept (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0) to help focus teaching practices and goals. Our adapted version of the analogy has been Boulder, Rock, Pebble, with pebbles for goals and sand for action steps. This analogy proved useful for ECE leaders and kaiako to support identification of focused, specific goals and action steps.

There are numerous points of interest we would research further. These include:

- Further exploration of the coaching variations, including those explored in this project (group coaching, coaching and talanoa, and having two coaches job-share).

- Exploration of processes for PLD facilitators to connect with mana whenua, local people and places when they visit a new rohe; looking into these connections as a core aspect of planned PLD implementation. (A potential case story for this is pending).

- Systems to bring the Leadership Coaching Programme and its four key elements to scale. In doing so, supporting a larger number and a diverse range of facilitators to implement the programme with fidelity, while also bringing their unique and authentic styles to their facilitation and coaching.

- Investigating the potential of different levels of support for PLD facilitators, including more intensive coaching to support facilitators in using the leadership coaching framework.

- Investigation of if/how coaching is maintained, generalised or adapted post-programme (e.g., what is happening for leaders 3 months, 6 months, and 18 months after the programme), and further investigation of kaiako experiences and tamariki outcomes when kaiako have experienced more practice-based coaching.

Recommendations

The science of early learning suggests there is a need for policy and programmes that support effective PLD to strengthen ECE pedagogical leadership, support curriculum implementation and enhance teachers' use of effective teaching practices to foster positive learning outcomes for children. The present evaluation aligns with the body of research evidence that has shown coaching is an effective driver of change. Through the Leadership Coaching Programme, leaders were supported to build internal capability by coaching kaiako in their teams.

Key recommendations for research, practice, and policy for PLD and leadership are offered below.

Recommendation for Research: Consider the use of implementation fidelity measures to better understand key features of PLD and how these relate to outcomes.

Knowing the details of how each aspect of the planned process was enacted, including any adaptations that were made, strengthens understanding of what is effective, and what may need to be adapted to promote better outcomes for leaders, kaiako and children. Conversely, it is not possible to make informed statements about the extent a programme worked or did not work, if the details about what or how much of the PLD components the participants received are unknown.

Recommendation for Practice: Align PLD to the desired outcomes. Find the right fit between process and purpose.

Different types of PLD are effective for different purposes. For example, a workshop can be effective for sharing knowledge, however, if the desired outcome is a change in teaching practice, more intensive job-embedded PLD is likely to be a more effective approach. Co-constructed models of coaching, such as practice-based coaching, are a good fit for supporting and strengthening kaiako teaching practice and curriculum implementation. Practice-based coaching approaches can complement and support the use of curriculum resources, such as *Kōwhiti Whakapae*, to further enhance high quality curriculum

implementation. The ability to sustain coaching is supported by investing in models, such as leadership coaching, that strengthen internal capacity building and effective leadership.

Recommendation for Policy/Practice: Provide a stipend and sufficient funding for ECE leaders and kaiako to participate in PLD and coaching.

[The stipend] is an attractive feature — not for the money aspect but for the value, valuing leaders' time, valuing the different hats they wear, how they have to move things around to make this possible, and when you input that money into that financial relief to them, it shows that you value their time.
(PLD facilitator)

Recommendation for Policy: Explore multiple pathways to scale leadership coaching at a national level.

- Develop models or exemplars that demonstrate how co-constructed models of coaching can be embedded into existing ECE systems such as professional growth cycles.

- Invest in training for PLD providers, focused on strengthening the coaching capabilities of PLD facilitators.

- Invest in evidence-informed models of coaching.

- Consider manualised approaches to PLD and coaching, ensuring that the structure of a manualised approach is used with flexibility and responsiveness to best meet the needs of learners and support the desired outcomes.

- Align investment in PLD with other teaching and learning initiatives and resources such as *Kōwhiti Whakapae*.

Investment in workforce development that supports a world-leading education system must include evidence-informed PLD and coaching. To optimise the investment for the biggest gains we encourage the government to explore models of PLD and coaching that focus on enhancing pedagogical leadership and internal capacity building. This focus creates the opportunity for holistic programmes that nurture staff wellbeing, cultivate resilient teaching teams, strengthen implementation of *Te Whāriki*, and foster valuable outcomes for children and their future success.

Whakataukī

To end the Leadership Coaching Programme report we offer the whakataukī, ki ngā whakaeke haumi. Referring to the considerable skill required to join sections of a waka, ki ngā whakaeke haumi provides a metaphor for seeking and strengthening leaders, to bring together diverse groups or people into successful combinations (Mead & Grove, 2003). We acknowledge and thank Shelley Nikora (Ngati Kahu ki Whangaroa) and Linda Clarke (Kāi Tahu) for their inspiration and vision to end this report with this offering.

Ki ngā whakaeke haumi

Join those who can join sections of a canoe

This whakataukī reflects the collaborative nature of early childhood education in Aotearoa. Ki ngā whakaeke haumi reflects the design choice of a structured programme that was implemented by a range of PLD facilitators, who each brought their unique selves into their roles while working to deliver the programme as intended. Ki ngā whakaeke haumi reflects our commitment to deliver a programme responsive to diverse leaders, and the whakataukī reflects the work of ECE leaders who bring their teachers and communities together to implement pedagogy and curriculum that matters most in each of their unique early childhood education settings.

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Appendix A: Leadership Coaching Programme Drivers and Outcomes Framework

LEADERSHIP COACHING PROGRAMME DRIVERS AND OUTCOMES

ECE CONTEXT	LCP PROGRAMME QUALITY	PLD FACILITATORS	ECE LEADERS	KAIAKO
Government priorities: • Implementation of Te Whāriki and local curriculum • Support resources for intentional teaching and play-based learning • Linked initiatives – Tātaiako, Tapasā, NELP, CY Wellbeing Strategy, He Pikorua, Educational leadership capability framework, ERO review process ECE setting characteristics: • Service size, support structure, funding and resourcing • Teacher qualifications • Team/staffing stability • Local community priorities and aspirations	• Localised and evidence informed approach for PLD • Coherent and responsive PLD structure • Manualised (flexible) models of programme components • Accessible knowledge and practice support resources • Successive cycles of facilitative support • Clear communication systems with stakeholders • Ongoing collection and review of integrity data for trends and adjustments • Project leaders oversight of the programme	• Induction of PLD facilitators to LCP programme • Activation and contribution of prior knowledge and experience • Systematic capability and capacity building for PLD facilitators for programme components • Engagement in tracking PLD integrity data • Reflect on PLD facilitation style and strategies • Positive and rewarding engagement with ECE leaders • Ongoing support from project leads	• Systematic capability and capacity building for leading local curriculum implementation • Reflect on their own values and leadership practices to identify and strengthen leadership, including indigenous views of leadership • Engage with resources and materials to grow leadership knowledge and practice • Be supported to deliver practice-based coaching, with the support of a PLD facilitator • Network with other leaders	• Reflect on their practices to identify and strengthen local curriculum implementation • Set goals and develop practice-implementation plans • Have teaching practice observed • Receive feedback and support in culturally responsive and safe environment for PLD
Factors ↕	**Experience** ↕	**Experience** ↕	**Experience** ↕	**Experience** ↕
Influences ↕	**Integrity/fidelity** ↕	**Outcome** ↕	**Outcome** ↕	**Outcome** ↕
• Focus and priorities for the setting • Allocated time, resource and support for PLD and kaiako collaboration and planning • Whānau engagement • Kaiako wellbeing and professional satisfaction • Coherence of curriculum, pedagogy, planning and assessment • Localised curriculum implementation	• PLD facilitator fidelity to programme • Sufficient time allocated and available for programme engagement (all parties)	• Gain knowledge about specific and manualised models of PLD • Gain competencies in book club facilitation • Gain competencies in coaching • Gain competencies in tracking integrity data • Increase confidence as a PLD facilitator	• Grow cultural knowledge and responsiveness in their leadership practice • Gain knowledge about leading people, leading practice and leading PLD and coaching • Apply new knowledge to leading/supporting their team with local curriculum design and implementation • Use practice-based coaching to support kaiako practice in ways that are responsive to the priorities of their setting • Increase confidence as a leader	• Gain knowledge about effective teaching practices. • Grow capability to identify opportunities for intentional teaching and respond to individual children's learning • Apply new practices to strengthen local curriculum implementation • Increase confidence in their teaching • Feel supported by their leader

Appendix B: Two Models of Coaching

Two models of co-constructed coaching were used in the Leadership Coaching Programme. The overarching methodology for each coaching approach was based on the same foundational research-informed evidence of effective and culturally responsive PLD and coaching to support and strengthen practice. The use of these methodologies in Aotearoa New Zealand was grounded in a commitment to *Te Tiriti o Waitangi* as the foundation for educational practice, with bi-cultural leadership competencies and localised teaching practices. Coaching approaches draw on indigenous and western knowledge to inform how the coaching is enacted.

1. **Leadership Coaching Framework (LCF)**
   The LCF involved a PLD facilitator as coach and a pedagogical leader as coachee. The coaching focused on leadership competencies. Goals, related to the competencies, were identified based on the priorities and needs of the pedagogical leader and their ECE setting. The LCF coaching occurred both face-to-face and online.

2. **Practice-based Coaching (PBC)**
   PBC involved pedagogical leaders and a kaiako from their setting. The pedagogical leader was the coach and the kaiako was the coachee. PBC occurred face-to-face, in the local ECE setting.

The frameworks were intentionally designed with key structures and flexibility built in. The structure ensured components that impact practice change were used with integrity, while flexibility provided for local responsiveness and adaptability. Within the structures of each framework, it was important to individualise and tailor the coaching to ensure the coachees' needs were met in mana-enhancing ways. Tailored supports, such as more information about a competency or modelling a leadership practice, were offered as needed. The interpersonal nature of the coaching was responsive and flexible. As a manualised approach to coaching, processes to record the application of implementation nuances are well established to support effective reporting.

The table below provides a side-by-side comparison of the two models showing their similarities and differences based on the different coaching relationships and purposes.

Key Components of Coaching Models

Leadership Coaching Framework (LCF)	Practice-Based Coaching (PBC)
Who	
PLD Facilitators Pedagogical Leaders	Pedagogical Leaders Kaiako
Key Components	
• Whakawhanaungatanga • Collaborative connections • Strengths and needs assessment focused on leadership competencies • Leader guided goal setting • Action planning • Self-Monitoring • Reflective conversations • Tailored supports and resources • Cyclical	• Whakawhanaungatanga • Coaching partnerships • Strengths and needs assessments focused on localised teaching practices • Shared goal setting • Action planning • Focused observation • Reflective conversations • Observation-informed supportive and constructive feedback • Tailored supports and resources • Cyclical
How	
1. Facilitator and leader began building their relationship in the Leadership Programme activities and continued to strengthen this relationship within the structure of the LCF. 2. Leader completed the strengths and needs assessment related to leadership competencies. 3. Facilitator and leader used the assessment to develop a leadership competency goal and action plan. 4. The leader worked towards the goal. 5. At 3-5 weekly intervals, the facilitator and leader engaged in reflective discussions centred on the competency goal and the leader's progress. Depending on the leader's progress and needs, a new goal may have been developed or the leader continued to work on the initial goal, with tailored support from the facilitator.	1. Kaiako and leader already worked together and continued to strengthen their collaborative partnership for PBC. 2. Kaiako completed the strengths and needs assessment related to the set of localised teaching practices. 3. Kaiako and coach used the assessment to develop a teaching practice goal and action plan. 4. The kaiako worked towards the goal. 5. Leader observed the kaiako, with observation firmly focused on the teaching practice goal (~fortnightly). 6. Leader and kaiako met after each observation for a 15-minute coaching conversation with reflective discussion, feedback and identification of any support needed, all focused on the teaching practice goal. Depending on kaiako progress and needs, a new goal may have been developed or work on the initial goal continued, with tailored support from their leader.
Way of working underpinned by values: Whanaungatanga, Pono, Manaakitanga, and Whakamana	

Appendix C: Leadership Coaching Programme Case Story Series

Leadership Coaching Programme Case Stories Series

The series is a curated collection of stories that describe leaders' experiences and learning from the Leadership Coaching Programme (2023/2024). The programme was a multi-component 10-month professional learning and development (PLD) that involved being coached before learning to coach others. Leaders were also supported through a book club focused on Wayfinding Leadership and access to online modules to support their use of coaching.

The coaching models used in the programme are referred to as the leadership coaching framework and practice-based coaching — both are co-constructed models of coaching.

The Early Learning Team at Massey University (Early Years Research Lab and Tātai Angitu) worked in partnership with the Ministry of Education to offer the Leadership Coaching Programme. We thank all the leaders for their amazing mahi and commitment to the programme. A very special thank you to leaders who graciously gave their time and told their stories to share some of the insights, learning, and outcomes for practice.

The stories are based on real examples from a wide range of early learning services. We have aimed to keep stories short, engaging, and written in plain language. Where possible, we have emphasised the voices of the leaders, kaiako, and PLD facilitators to share their experiences in their own words.

1. Culture, Connection, and Coaching: Creating Space for Pacific Kaupapa
2. Practice-Based Coaching to Support Focused Professional Growth
3. Coaching and Data-Informed Feedback: A Value-Added Approach
4. Group Coaching: Connection and Vulnerability
5. The Difference of a Specific Focused Goal
6. Leading Together, Learning Together
7. Developing a Leadership Identity
8. Pedagogical Leadership: A Renewed Sense of Purpose

Culture, Connection, and Coaching:
Creating Space for Pacific Kaupapa

Epenesa (Epe) is the centre leader at Malamalama Moni Aoga Amata EFKS (Samoan Early Childhood Education) in Te Papaioea, Palmerston North. When Epe saw the information about the Leadership Coaching Programme she was interested because the book Wayfinding Leadership was part of the programme. Epe felt this would offer an opportunity to explore leadership in a way she could relate to, because of the programme's connection with Pacific views of leadership.

Epe told her friend Ana about the programme. Ana is the centre leader at Lalanga Mo'ui Tongan ECE Centre in Palmerston North. Ana was unsure about the programme and its focus on coaching. For Ana, "Coaching was a new strategy for Pacific Islanders and mostly associated with sports and performance ... with a focus on someone checking to see if you were getting it right." Ana was concerned coaching might not be a good fit for her setting. For Epe, the word coaching was more neutral, and she saw it as an extension of the ways kaiako coach or support a tamaitiiti in their learning.

Being friends and professional supports for each other, Ana and Epe decided, "Why not give it a go!" Ana and Epe had each taken on leadership roles in their settings and service. They were keen to grow their leadership knowledge and practice and importantly, grow and support their staff.

Culture

As the programme got underway, Ana and Epe met Kayla, their coach. As a PLD facilitator, Kayla has a strong focus on implementation of curriculum through a Pacific lens and draws on her own culture as a Tokelauan and Pākehā woman to make connections across Pacific contexts. Quickly, Ana recognised that the coaching in this programme was not about performance or being judged, but that Kayla was there to support and help her with the things she wanted to focus on. Ana felt she could let go of the image of trying to be the perfect leader and that it was safe to acknowledge things she wanted to work on.

> This programme is not about changing you. It's not telling you that this is what I should be doing. It's for me to see, it is for me to be the best I can be and that's through learning all these strategies that have been given. I have to choose which one suits me, suits my audience, suits my community, suits my culture, and I think that's the best part.

This in turn increased Ana's feelings of confidence, knowing there was support for her to

address the complexities of her leadership role, including understanding and connecting to culture. As Ana explained,

> Unless you understand our culture, you don't understand our values, but you know, [Kayla] understood where we were coming from. She was actively supporting us, and she knew the commitment as a Pacific Islander — you're committed to your job, to your parents, to your church, to your community. It's a whole heap of commitment and it's time consuming … She understood that we were busy and she came prepared.

Connection

At the January meeting with Epe and Kayla, Epe suggested they call Ana and the three of them meet together, optimising their time with Kayla and continuing to strengthen how they support each other professionally. For Epe, this created the space for connection and shared learning. "In leadership sometimes you are left by yourself, and you do feel alone sometimes. And it was good to actually speak to both of them in the sense of 'have you gone through this?' and getting that practical feedback and support."

Kayla knew that the leadership coaching framework is intended to be responsive and flexible and so she followed Epe and Ana's lead to meet together for their future visits. Kayla sought to create a genuine space for talanoa around leadership while also supporting Epe and Ana to grow their own coaching skills through goals and action plans.

Reflecting on their time together as talanoa, Ana said:

> I'm glad you are referring to it as talanoa, because that's exactly what we did. We talked about everything. We put everything on that table, we didn't hide any problems and it was safe because I was comfortable to talk about the issues we were having at our centre and Epe was as well because we both know that what we talked about here stayed here. But that wasn't the point. We weren't comparing issues. We were looking for a solution, so the only way we could get a solution was to be honest and transparent and put it all on the table. With Kayla's help, we came up with solutions and that's what we did.

Epe added to the reflection:

> Very important issues too, and sometimes you don't get that time. This gave us a space to be able to have time and actually focus on some of these issues because sometimes you just get caught up and sometimes, you're right in the middle of it. And it's nice to have other people's perspectives on it … Also, Pasifika are very community orientated and group orientated, and it was really nice to have that as a group.

Looking back, both Ana and Epe felt that the support of the programme and the space for talanoa "came right at the time when we needed it most with our centres." The programme created a space for their own well-being as well as solutions for their centres.

Coaching

Moving forward, Epe and Ana are extending their coaching skills to support their staff. Ana has changed the way she views coaching. Sometimes she describes entering a situation and saying to herself: "What would a good coach do?" Her answer, "It's someone who actively

supports you. Coaching is about encouraging you to do your best."

As Ana describes,

> I have to think like a coach instead of a supervisor. So instead of just saying right, you need to do this and do that, now it's more like I want the best out of her instead, I want her to start thinking about herself in her role and for me stop giving directions. And for her to find her own feet in our programme.

Similar to her own initial reluctance to use the word coaching, Ana is aware that her staff share feelings about the word coaching and being judged. To help her staff gain confidence with coaching processes, Ana has been focusing on coaching her staff as a team, through support and encouragement and by drawing on four core Tongan values — the four golden strands: Faka'apa'apa (respect); loto tō (humility); tauhi vā (nurturing relationships); and mamahi'i me'a (loyalty/passion).

> And so it's good to draw on those [values] and then use that to coach them as a coach. Just like, "Let's have a look at this value here. How can we strengthen our centre with our four core values, what do we need to do?"

For Epe, coaching always felt like a safe space for support, building on her awareness and strength of relationships. Epe talked about Vā as the space for things or relationships.

> It's very, very important because sometimes you are not the person to step into that space, or sometimes you are the person to step into that space. And so I think knowing that and building that relationship with when you're coaching someone or with your team is very important because they're either going to let you in or they won't, and so usually time is really, really important for building or forming that relationship.

In her own coaching, Epe has found the programme helped her be more intentional.

> I met up with my person that I was coaching. We made the time and you definitely do need to make time for people. We were making space and making it intentional to do this practice because sometimes you get a whole lot of things going on. It's like you don't even know where to start. The [practice-based coaching] gave us a starting point and a focus.

Key Messages

- Cultural connection and understanding supported leaders to engage in ways that were responsive to their ways of working and being.
- Together, the leaders and their coach, created a space for talanoa to address important issues; while also making time for focused coaching and to create meaningful action steps.
- Drawing on the collective by being together and working together strengthened each leader's ability to work on their personal goals.
- Coaching was not about "getting it right" or being judged but about actively supporting team members to grow teaching practice and confidence.

Practice-Based Coaching to Support Focused Professional Growth

Claire is an experienced leader at Andersons Bay Community Kindergarten in Ōtepoti, Dunedin. Claire describes herself as a value-driven and "quiet" leader who promotes distributed leadership within her teaching team. This story is about Claire's shifts in leadership practice during the Leadership Coaching Programme, especially her experiences of learning to use practice-based coaching to support one of the kindergarten's kaiako, Abby. Abby has been teaching and working with Claire for about 5 years. Claire describes Abby as a dedicated and reflective kaiako.

The Coaching Partnership

Within their coaching partnership, Claire and Abby focused on teaching practices from Kōwhiti Whakapae. First, they discussed which aspects of Kōwhiti Whakapae were most relevant to their local curriculum, including to their group of children and learning priorities. Based on what mattered in their kindergarten, Claire and Abby selected specific teaching practices from Kōwhiti Whakapae as a focus for coaching. They collaborated to identify Abby's strengths and opportunities for growth across the teaching practices. They also linked the strengths and opportunities to Abby's professional growth cycle.

Based on strengths and opportunities, Claire helped Abby craft specific teaching goals. The first goal involved reflecting on the nuanced ways sunhat rules are applied in day-to-day teaching. Later, a second goal focused on teaching decisions in situations of children's peer conflicts.

Claire and Abby worked together to make each goal focused and achievable. To ensure goals were specific, Claire and Abby drew on the analogy of "boulder, rock, pebble," that Claire's own coach Helen had shared with her to help break bigger ideas down into something more achievable and focused. From each focused goal, they developed an action plan and worked out specific action steps.

Using the action plan as a guiding document, Claire and Abby worked through multiple cycles of focused observations and coaching conversations. The focused observations involved the gathering of data which were specific and relevant to the goal. In their coaching conversations, Claire and Abby unpacked and analysed the data to support reflective discussion and feedback.

From Mentoring to Coaching

A shift in Claire's leadership practice came through the use of practice-based coaching. The processes of practice-based coaching, including learning to give constructive feedback, added a layer to Claire's extensive knowledge and experience as a mentor.

Claire noted that mentoring emphasises reflection; supporting people to reflect on their own teaching. Practice-based coaching also involves reflection but key differences include the focus on specific teaching practice goals and data-driven conversations that include constructive feedback. Claire reflected that the clear process of linking reflections and feedback to what was noticed in the observation meant there was always something specific and focused to connect the "noticings" to.

To extend the tools used for focused observation and support data-informed reflection and feedback, Claire tried out video observation. Video proved to be a powerful way to gather specific details and nuances of teachers' practice and the impact that practice was having on outcomes for children. As Abby explained, through focused observation, including video observation, there is "a snapshot of your teaching to then have some evidence to have a conversation with."

A key for Claire was to stay focused on the teacher's goal and action plan. Being more focused was a shift in practice for Claire. She commented:

> I liked how it was focused. I've done quite a lot of observations in the past with students mainly and it's all very much just everything. I've done a lot of just running records, and [the practice-based coaching focused observation] is so much more valuable for that feedback process. Really, they're specific and so that you can both know what's being looked at and what's being observed, and so, the analysis of that is just so much deeper.

Building on the impact of PLD that is focused on teaching practices, Claire reflected:

> The in-depth focus on practice and quite a small goal can really change practice, and then that has such great outcomes for tamariki. Watching Abby working with the children, I could just see everything she's thinking about and making those decisions about how to respond to different children, and what strategies to use. And you can see their learning progressing with that great teaching. The team being supportive of each other makes a huge difference for tamariki as well.

Abby believes that practice-based coaching has given her time to focus on an aspect of teaching and see the outcomes for the children.

Having gained knowledge, confidence and experience using practice-based coaching, Claire plans to continue coaching other kaiako in her team. Having been coached, Abby has gained experience and learnt strategies that she plans to apply to her work and collaboration with other teachers.

Bringing the Team Into Focus and Accelerating Growth

Claire believes the Leadership Coaching Programme has supported her to be more intentional and prepared, by focusing on small and specific steps. She feels this has helped her facilitate team discussions more effectively, fostering greater progress for herself and the teaching team.

One of the ways Claire collaborated with her team was to always include an action step that involved talking with the teaching team about her work in the Leadership Coaching Programme, and inviting the team's input into her leadership goals. For Claire, this was a specific way to support distributed leadership. Sharing with the team was an action step Claire encouraged Abby to use to support collaboration and growth across the team.

In Claire's words:

> The coaching and how we've defined it in this programme is quite focussed on strategies and very much focussed on practice and improvement. The iterative process builds trust and transparency. Making sure that things are small and manageable and having check-ins regularly means that there's a lot of impetus for movement and progress.

Highlights

- ◯ Engaging in the Leadership Coaching Programme strengthened an experienced leader's intentionality and added practice-based coaching to her repertoire of ways to support kaiako and her team.

- ◯ Specific teaching practice goals and data-driven reflective conversations that included constructive feedback contributed to the success of the coaching partnership.

- ◯ The in-depth focus on specific teaching practices, manageable goals, and having an action plan helped grow practice and promoted positive outcomes for tamariki.

- ◯ Coaching can be used in a distributed model of leadership.

Coaching and Data-Informed Feedback:
A Value-Added Approach

Karen is head teacher at Surrey Park Early Learning Centre in Waihōpai, Invercargill. She is an experienced teacher who moved into the formal head teacher leadership role 6 years ago. Karen is engaged in leading curriculum, leading staff and mentoring kaiako. Throughout the Leadership Coaching Programme, Karen was supported and coached by Helen. Helen has extensive skills and experience as a PLD facilitator, which were complemented by the processes and protocols used in the programme.

Within the Leadership Coaching Programme there are two models of coaching. The first is the leadership coaching framework — this model was used by PLD facilitators such as Helen, to support leaders like Karen. The second is practice-based coaching — this model was used by leaders to support kaiako in their team. The two models share similarities in process but are distinguished by their purpose.

This story is about Karen's experiences of being coached and of being a coach, and the role of data as catalysts for change at multiple levels. In this story, "data" include the information and evidence Karen collected as she worked towards her own leadership goals and the information that was collected through observation of a teacher's practice as part of practice-based coaching.

Learning to Coach by Being Coached

Previous to the Leadership Coaching Programme, Karen had engaged in leadership training, such as one-off training events or three day conferences. Coaching kaiako is part of Karen's job description but, until the Leadership Coaching Programme, there had been no formal training to teach her how to coach. Karen says, "Unless you've had some intensive training, it's all very well to say you go and observe and then give some feedback, but actually, it needs to be focused and there needs to be steps in place."

Using the leadership coaching framework, Helen and Karen engaged in regular coaching conversations and email contact. Their coaching conversations, which included reflection and data analysis, were focused on Karen's leadership goals and guided by the action plans Helen and Karen had developed together.

As their coaching relationship grew, Helen and Karen gave and received feedback and asked deeper questions of each other. Karen felt that having Helen alongside her at regular scheduled times was useful for her own accountability, as were Helen's follow-up emails which outlined

the main points of their coaching conversations and the next steps.

Helen's coaching also served as a model for Karen when Karen began using practice-based coaching. Karen described how Helen was very transparent and modelled using the protocols during their coaching conversations.

> [She would tell me] this was the protocol and this is what she was doing which then encouraged me to do the same with the person I was coaching. I would make sure to have [the protocol] out and explain to [the kaiako I was coaching] and show her that this is what I was doing. It kept us on track and kept us making sure that we covered all the elements that we needed for the coaching.

Specific, Relevant Data Drives Practice Change

Karen and Helen described the use of data as a growth point in Karen's leadership and coaching. Karen explained that a small amount of specific data made a huge difference in supporting reflection on her leadership and her abilities to coach kaiako in ways that strengthen their teaching practices. Specific and relevant data, collected through a focused observation or video of practice, provided the evidence needed to inform feedback and to find the nuanced (but important) moments in teaching that offered a focus for coaching and practice change. Data highlighted specific teaching strategies that Karen and the kaiako she coached discussed reflectively during their coaching conversations. For example, as they watched a video observation together, Karen could point out exactly how the kaiako anticipated a child's potential frustration and provided appropriate support, or they could reflect on how the kaiako had praised a child.

Being Valued, Feeling Valued

Coaching and data-informed feedback not only played a role in strengthening leadership and teaching but had an important role to play in how Karen helped her team feel valued and excited about their practice. Karen and Helen explained how the process of practice-based coaching and the use of data can help kaiako feel valued. For example, Karen noted the importance of observing kaiako, having a professional discussion and providing positive feedback:

> Having the work that they do be valued and someone taking the time to notice and recognise that work ... sometimes in the past, people have said, "Can you observe me and give me some feedback?" When that doesn't happen, I guess it makes [kaiako] think, "Was I not worthy of that?" The fact that ... a colleague wants to come and observe and then together, you have a professional conversation ... it just makes [kaiako] feel good and someone gave them some positive feedback. Because in the beginning, it really is all about the positive as you build that relationship. Someone taking the time to come and observe your professional practice. It values you as a teacher.

Helen further highlighted the importance of focused observation and linking feedback to specific teaching practices and children's outcomes.

> Value is shown when we are specific. Rather than just saying "that was a great mat time," collecting data about the specific teaching strategies that made the mat time great, and connecting those with the impact and learning outcomes for children. To be able to see that specific practice and have it acknowledged and valued by a coach, is what Karen has achieved — one of the big outcomes for her and the centre. That's the stuff that keeps teachers going.

Likewise, when leaders are valued and when value is shown through sustained and specific professional support and feedback — that's the stuff that keeps leaders going. As Karen described:

> For me, one of the highlights is my coach. Having someone as skilled as [my coach] has been fantastic. And the ongoing contact, emails, Zooms and face-to-face has been really good. And the length of the programme has been so good [for] sustaining and building the knowledge over time.

Key Messages

- ○ Sustained and intensive professional learning fosters leadership change.
- ○ Clearly described coaching processes support leaders to use coaching with their kaiako.
- ○ A small amount of data that is specific and focused can make a big difference to help strengthen teaching practice and children's outcomes.
- ○ Practice-based coaching, especially the provision of data-informed feedback, fosters teachers' feelings of being valued.

Group Coaching:
Connection and Vulnerability

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Brooke, Jade and Emily are centre managers for Busy Bees Aotearoa in Te Tai Tokerau, Northland. Brooke and Jade work at centres across the street from each other in Kerikeri. They had previously met Emily, who is the manager at Busy Bees Whau Valley in Whangarei. Each leader had a different ECE background and pathway into leadership, yet they faced many similar challenges and opportunities for celebrations. They have each experienced the pressure on leaders to manage, support, and lead through the multiple complexities of managing ECE centres. The Leadership Coaching Programme offered them opportunities to connect as leaders, exploring leadership and to see how coaching could be used to support and empower their teams.

Throughout the Leadership Coaching Programme, Brooke, Jade and Emily were supported by Shelley (Ngati Kahu ki Whangaroa) who feels at home when she heads north. Shelley seeks out ways for connecting through relationships with people and with places in Te Tai Tokerau or in any rohe she enters. Shelley knew she would need to connect with and build a relationship with each leader. With Shelley's support, each leader set a goal focused on wellbeing and crafted an action plan to support their own wellbeing and wellbeing across their team. As she met with the leaders individually, Shelley sensed an opportunity to extend the individual coaching by adding a group coaching component to foster connection and support across the leaders. Building on Jade and Brooke's existing relationship, Shelley suggested a group coaching meet-up with herself, Emily, Jade and Brooke. The group coaching was arranged at the time when the leaders were beginning to learn how to use practice-based coaching.

When they met, the group spent time connecting and addressing some of the things that were on top for each leader. This was followed by time for each leader's kōrero about their individual goal and action plan for using practice-based coaching. The time together and the time working through each leader's focus was viewed as an invaluable resource and support. Jade, Emily and Brooke benefited from sharing their learning journeys with each other.

For example, Jade noted:

> It's really been great getting to know the other managers a lot more and then having them as sounding boards. This has been helpful, you know, I might say something, and they might have another idea of how it can be achieved. Having Shelley connect us and having kōrero as a group, it's been fantastic and we've been able to share our own experiences with one another.

Emily expressed similar feelings.

> I agree, the times that we got to meet together in each other's settings were really nice. Listening to each person go through where they were at in their coaching journey, it was like sitting at professional development, because there were all these ideas that that person was working on and I was taking notes because it opened up all of these different avenues that wasn't my priority or focus but areas that I could look at later on. And the

> sharing of resources, that meant that we had four of us sitting there with Shelley included and the resources that were shared were really amazing.

Brooke also described the positives.

> It's opened the lines of communication with us. Often, especially after the visits we had together with Shelley, the three of us were messaging each other the next day to say "oh we did this or we did that." Or we've sent photos of our action plans or shared articles and things like that. And you know what the surprising thing was, we organised one of the visits down to Whangarei, and me and Jade went down, [and I realised] I've worked for Busy Bees for six years and I'd never been to Emily's centre, so it just bridged the gap straight away and it was nice to visit her space.

They met three times across January, February and March, alternating between Kerikeri and Whangarei for the coaching visits to be hosted in each leader's space. A key aspect of their time together was the ability to be open, honest and, ultimately, vulnerable. In turn, having a safe space and process to connect supported resilience and compassion, and strengthened relationships.

For example, Emily described the moment when she realised:

> Oh wow, you're struggling with something similar to me or I should say challenged, but you know [recognising the difficulties with] time management and consistency and it made me feel not so bad about the realities of the mahi that we do. And I think this is a really good starting point to improving it — acknowledging that that's been a challenge for us has been really good for me.

Brooke also described:

> [Meeting together] has broken down barriers for us in the sense that thankfully both Emily and Jade, and I are quite open with sharing barriers. Things that are going on in the centres that we're not quite comfortable with, that we want to change, that we're not quite happy so it's been quite nice that all three of us have had this focus, being on this leadership course, to then go actually let's look at ourselves honestly and put us in a vulnerable position and what do we want to work on. And the other two have been amazing at sharing that, and I guess it's just grown our relationship.

Connecting and working as a group has been a unique and special part of the Leadership Coaching Programme for Brooke, Emily and Jade. The support for their learning and collaboration was maximised through the group experience. Prioritising time to meet all together in person meant that they could schedule individual sessions with Shelley online. Yet, this onsite group coaching paired with online personal coaching was not something available to other leaders in the programme.

To understand the viability of a group coaching approach for other settings and situations we explored some of the factors that the leaders felt made their group work. These included:

- Going through a coaching cycle with Shelley as individuals before entering the group coaching helped the leaders to have a sense of what to expect and made them feel

comfortable with the coaching process.

- Shelley's skilled facilitation. Shelley worked very hard to understand and use the key coaching components in consistent and responsive ways for each leader in the group environment while also providing transparency of the process.

- The leaders felt that working for the same company enabled them to be open and more vulnerable about issues in their settings. It is possible that some leaders may feel a reluctance to be as open and honest about issues within their settings when connecting with leaders from different organisations.

- Working for the same company also meant that some of the structural aspects that were affecting them as leaders were shared and solutions generated would work across the group.

- Knowing each other, at least a bit, beforehand was important. Being across the street from each other meant that Brooke and Jade knew each other. For Emily, there was more distance and less existing connection, yet, she described knowing Brooke and Jade well enough that she felt entering into group coaching would be okay.

In the end, Emily, Jade and Brooke all described group coaching as "hugely valuable." They feel the stronger relationships they have developed will help them continue to collaborate well beyond the programme and they have strengthened their confidence in approaching and working with other leaders.

Key Messages

○ Group coaching offers a way to increase learning and access to new resources and ideas, while also having an individualised leadership goal and personalised support.

○ Leaders benefit when they can make connections and work with other leaders to share experiences, ideas and resources.

○ There are key conditions to consider to help make a group coaching format feel safe so that genuine connections can be made and authentic learning and growth can occur.

The Difference of a Specific Focused Goal

Keelia is the infant and toddler head teacher at Dunedin Hospital Early Childhood Centre, Ōtepoti. During the Leadership Coaching Programme Keelia used practice-based coaching to coach Julia, another head teacher from Dunedin Hospital Early Childhood Centre. This story focuses on the importance of goal setting to support coaching processes and drive change.

Crafting a Goal

At their first coaching meeting, Keelia and Julia unpacked a written strengths and opportunities reflection that Julia had completed beforehand. The reflection was focused on teaching practices from the social-emotional area of Kōwhiti Whakapae. Talking about Julia's written reflection was key to providing a foundation for goal setting. As they talked, Julia and Keelia explored Kōwhiti Whakapae. Julia noticed many of the Kōwhiti Whakapae teaching practices they were drawn to aligned with strengths identified in her written reflection. In that moment, Keelia reminded Julia that setting a coaching goal wasn't necessarily about finding something she was "bad" at but could involve finding something Julia was doing well and could extend.

With support from Keelia, Julia created a goal focused on an aspect of practice that she wanted to continue to strengthen. Keelia asked questions like, "How are we going to do this?" and "When will you find time in the day to explore what you talked about?" As Julia and Keelia talked, the goal became more and more specific.

This was supported by using Kōwhiti Whakapae. Keelia noted:

> [Using] the tool of Kōwhiti Whakapae you could actually go into each section and get a [description of the practice] and then find out more. It was really useful [to have] those examples.

Once a goal was developed, Keelia and Julia set action steps for Julia to take to achieve her goal. They agreed on an observation plan for Keelia to observe Julia's progress.

Julia was excited to have a meaningful goal that reflected an area of passion and that would lead to change. Julia said:

> It was quite hard to believe that just from that process you were going to come up with this goal. But it was just amazing.

One thing that really stood out was how specifically the goal was focused on teaching practice, which proved to be powerful and which, for Julia and Keelia, represented a shift from previous goals more focused on child outcomes.

Transformation

Goal setting was a transformative aspect of coaching for Keelia and Julia because it made all the coaching components that followed clear and possible. Like the goal and action steps, the focus of the observations was discussed and agreed upon by both Julia and Keelia. The observational focus and subsequent feedback was specific.

Keelia reflected:

> I think sometimes you get used to people just saying, "Oh you did a good job." Whereas I could sit down and actually tell Julia the sentences she said that made a parent smile.

Reflecting on the overall goal setting process, Keelia said:

> I think one of the things that really sticks out is the idea that it's not necessarily what goal they've chosen when you're coaching or being coached ... it wasn't necessarily about the content that they chose. It was how I could encourage them to delve deeper into that content or make a revelation or build on that.

Keelia knows it is very easy to get caught up in the busyness of ECE and for things to get pushed out without clear timeframes. The goal setting and practice-based coaching structure meant Keelia and Julia could hold each other accountable for the things they said they would do. The timeframes, small steps and tight focus made the goal achievable and enjoyable which promoted accomplishment. Because Julia's goal and action plan were specific and measurable, the success was visible and sustained. Julia and Keelia reflected that sometimes goals can be too big. Big goals cannot be easily achieved, leaving kaiako feeling like they failed when really the issue was the size of the goal.

Keelia and Julia plan to continue using the practice-based coaching goal-setting and Kōwhiti Whakapae resources with their teams. They want all their kaiako setting specific goals and action plans to create meaningful change.

Highlights

- ○ Goals can be focused on a teacher's strengths, with potential to delve more deeply into teaching by growing or adapting strong practice.

- ○ Kōwhiti Whakapae is a resource designed to deepen understanding of key areas in teaching and learning, and it can be used to help set goals focused on enhancing teaching practices.

- ○ Setting focused and specific goals provides guidance, direction and timeframes which support coaching processes and success.

Leading Together, Learning Together

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Lisa is an experienced teacher and pedagogical leader at YKids Early Learning Centre, Whakatū, Nelson. Throughout the Leadership Coaching Programme Lisa was supported by two coaches, Shelley and Kayla. This story is about Lisa's shifts in leadership practice.

Relationships, listening, feedback and critical reflection

Lisa has always valued relationships. Through the Leadership Coaching Programme, Lisa realised she had not recently been using intentional strategies to strengthen relationships and empower kaiako. Working with her coaches helped her unpack this realisation further and bring intentionality back into the ways she builds relationships. For example, Lisa described how she now tries to talk less, present information in multiple ways, and make space and time to listen to kaiako. As Lisa began coaching a kaiako from her setting, the practice-based coaching protocols continued to support shifts in her leadership practice. Lisa noted:

> The protocols are really helpful. I found them really useful to keep me on track. I'm learning a lot about my strategies, how I give feedback and when to stop talking. I feel like I was speaking for them a lot of the time and filling in the gaps. [Using] the protocol, going through it and thinking, "Oh did you give them time?" And I was like, "No!"

The protocols were also useful in promoting a robust and more critically reflective conversation. Lisa described how she was familiar with the process of observing kaiako and giving feedback, however, the protocols reminded her of specific strategies she could use to support reflection and feedback.

> In previous experiences where I've done observation and unpacked it alongside kaiako, I feel it's a little bit across the surface. I found when I was doing my coaching conversation with my kaiako that by reframing the question with guidance from the protocol, the conversation was a bit deeper, more reflective and more critical. That criticality had been missing, so it was really interesting to have a conversation where all of a sudden a teacher was being more critical about what was going on, or we were unpacking at just that next level to what might have been happening had I approached it the same way that I've done in the past.

Lisa pointed out that having a focus on a teacher's specific teaching practice goal also promoted a deeper and more critically reflective conversation. The specific focus helped her to hone in on what was important and relevant during observation and to unpack that area of practice with kaiako.

The leader as a learner

Lisa and the kaiako she coached used Kōwhiti Whakapae as a resource to support implementation of social-emotional teaching practices. Lisa was excited to have the opportunity to use Kōwhiti Whakapae for the first time, and acknowledged that she would be learning about the resource as she used it throughout the coaching process. For Lisa, this was a great opportunity to show that she was a leader and a learner.

> It was really exciting to be able to do that alongside my kaiako. In the beginning I said, "I haven't looked at Kōwhiti Whakapae either so we're learning this and we're unpacking it together." Being open about that and having the opportunity to be a leader but be a learner — and just because I'm a leader doesn't mean that I know everything and look we can do this together — is a really useful tool.

Positioning herself as a learner, Lisa also reflected on her experience of helping a kaiako set a goal during practice-based coaching. Lisa felt she had missed the mark when she first helped her kaiako to set a goal. Lisa talked to one of her own coaches about this and, with the coach's support, Lisa went back to the kaiako and they changed the goal.

> I was really honest with my kaiako again and said, "Look I think I might have steered you wrong. How do you feel about coming back and just having another wee look at this to see if we feel like we're moving in the right direction." And we tweaked [the goal] a little bit, and then we've carried on which has been really cool. So, it's been an awesome learning experience and learning as I go with the support from my coaches to be able to be like, "Oh I think I've missed something here."

As the programme comes to an end, Lisa plans to continue to use the tools and skills she has developed in other aspects of her mahi, including in centre reviews and for professional growth. Reflecting on her shifts, Lisa said, "It's like a little lightbulb's gone off in my brain. I can do that here and I can do it here. And the team having input in it a little bit more and being more empowered too."

Highlights

○ Leaders are learners too.

○ Intentional use of communication and leadership strategies promotes effective leader–kaiako relationships.

○ Resources that help provide focus, such as protocols and Kōwhiti Whakapae, can support intentionality in coaching and teaching practice.

○ Being coached and learning to coach supports leaders to develop a repertoire of skills to use in ongoing ways.

Developing a Leadership Identity

Shenae is a kaiako who teaches toddlers at Kindercare in Papaioea, Palmerston North. Shenae joined the Leadership Coaching Programme to support her aspirations of moving into a formal leadership role. During the programme, Shenae met with her coach, Michelle, for coaching sessions and participated in an online professional book club, exploring the book Wayfinding Leadership by Chellie Spiller, Hoturoa Barclay-Kerr and John Panoho.

One thing Shenae loved about the Leadership Coaching Programme was that you did not need to be a centre manager to participate. Entry was open to all kaiako who saw themselves as leaders, whether in a formal position or informally leading others. The programme's view of leadership aligned with Shenae's view of kaiako as leaders. This story is about Shenae's journey as she strengthened her identity as a leader.

Identity Shift

Shenae's leadership outlook has changed because of her engagement in the Leadership Coaching Programme. The programme has strengthened Shenae's understanding of the value of communication and working to uplift the mana of her team, recognising teachers' diverse experiences and expertise. She sees all team members as leaders and strives to create a sense of belonging and empowerment where everyone's voice is heard and the team comes together — this involves creating space to uplift others, stepping back to let others shine. Shenae describes leadership as "not about a crown held over the head of one individual, but rather a result of a collective of all efforts together."
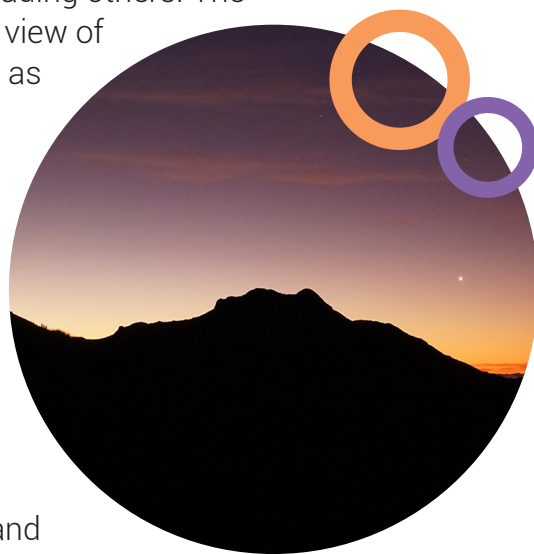
Learning with a Coach

The shifts in Shenae's leadership identity were supported through her work with her coach, Michelle. Michelle helped Shenae set a goal and specific action steps focused on empowering kaiako to feel confident and competent within their practice. At each coaching meeting, Shenae and Michelle reviewed the action steps and progress made. If something wasn't going to plan or wasn't working, Shenae would touch base with Michelle, and they would problem solve to keep momentum and keep the goal on track. An early action step was for Shenae to meet with kaiako to hear their stories and what was important to them as individuals, identifying the strengths each kaiako brought to the team. This helped Shenae begin creating space for kaiako strengths to shine in the team.

Shenae found the strengths-focused approach to setting and achieving her goal uplifting, refreshing and inspiring, leaving her feeling proud, positive, and with a clear focus of her next leadership steps. A series of significant challenges during the programme meant Shenae practised flexibility and adaptability to achieve her goal, with her action steps changing many times.

The Impact of a Professional Book Club

Participating in a professional book club was new for Shenae. Book club was a great opportunity to connect and learn with other leaders.

> The book club was a great opportunity to work within small groups ... it gave us time to listen to different perspectives and share and listen to each other's stories, challenge our thinking, and to look through a different lens and inspire each other through our own individual leadership journeys.

Shenae said the book and book club discussions helped her expand her ideas about leadership. She reflected:

> Wayfinding Leadership looked at leadership from a different lens that really got me thinking about leadership not just within ECE, but in a [deeper, broader sense]. Is this what I'm actually doing in the centre? Should I be thinking this way? What are the things I need to be mindful of? How am I inspiring my team? How am I making them feel valued and an important part of the centre and the team? Looking at it that way really made me have a lot of ideas about how I can bring all this knowledge into my team.

Shenae felt strongly that people do not have to have a leadership position to learn and benefit from reading Wayfinding Leadership. Anyone, whether in a formal leadership position or not, can learn from the book.

For Shenae the most valuable takeaway of the Leadership Coaching Programme has been the importance of openness, kindness, communication and truly getting to know her team. She feels once trust within the team is developed, kaiako feel more comfortable contributing and sharing information, and as a result the team feel empowered and inspired. Openness, kindness and communication are important priorities for all leaders, new and experienced, who want to create thriving, cohesive teams.

Highlights

- Leadership in ECE is for everyone! Kaiako are an important part of leading in ECE.
- Networking through a professional book club can provide leaders with opportunities to connect, exchange perspectives, challenge thinking and inspire each other.
- The book, Wayfinding Leadership, offers a view that is grounded in values and supports leadership practices that grow and develop cohesive teams.
- When leadership is focused on building and empowering the team, everyone benefits.

Pedagogical Leadership: A Renewed Sense of Purpose

Sue is the centre manager of the Farmyard Preschool in Te Whanganui-a-Tara, Wellington. Sue describes herself as an experienced leader who values relationships with her team, tamariki and whānau. This story is about how the Leadership Coaching Programme helped Sue re-establish her role as a pedagogical leader.

Finding a Space for Pedagogical Leadership

Although all aspects of leadership are important, engaging in the Leadership Coaching Programme and becoming a coach helped Sue to focus on her pedagogical leadership, a focus that had become somewhat elusive amidst the busyness and noise of managerial tasks.

Sue explained how she noticed her constant attention on managerial tasks had made her less aware of the teaching, learning and people around her, as well as less purposeful in her support of kaiako.

> I'm conscious now that whenever I walk into any of the environments I'm a teacher first, not the manager. That took me by surprise when I first thought about it a few weeks ago. It was definitely a lightbulb moment because it suddenly hit me … you walk into a room, and you think, "How many teachers have we got? How many children have we got?" … checking compliance things. I've started making a purposeful point of going in and sitting in a room, or going in and sitting at the sandpit, or going over to where our rabbits are in their enclosures and the free range area and just spending time and not worrying about the five minutes extra I might be there for.

Sue isn't saying that management is not important. Rather she had realised that to be a pedagogical leader, she needed to find ways to focus on her role of supporting kaiako in their teaching. She explained how she started intentionally prioritising her time and delegating tasks which helped her find space for pedagogical leadership.

> [Letting go of] the pressures of being a manager. Not sweating the small stuff too much and being more relaxed and being more open. I've had to learn to delegate within the team … "I'm doing an observation; can you mind the phone?" That sort of thing. This is my priority. I'm doing an observation. This is my priority. I'm giving feedback. This is my priority.

The Transformative Power of Coaching

Participating in the Leadership Coaching Programme helped Sue make the shifts required to support kaiako and teaching practice. The experience of coaching a kaiako in her team reignited Sue's passion and motivation for leading, providing further momentum for pedagogical leadership.

> For me, having gone into the [coaching] role reignited what I get out of teaching because [the kaiako I coached] was my tamariki as it were and I was role modelling how to be a teacher kaiako, and I could see the learning evolving. I thought, "Yeah, that's why I went teaching!" That, for me, is the best bit, that sort of sense that somebody's had the opportunity and you've been able to support them to discover their own qualities as a kaiako. I think seeing the change in practice, and this person went from not saying a word in staff meeting to actually talking about what they were doing in staff hui. It's like, whoa. There was this contribution. There it was, this confidence. Because we'd talked about what she was doing and how well she did it and what the value was for the child, she talked about it in staff hui.
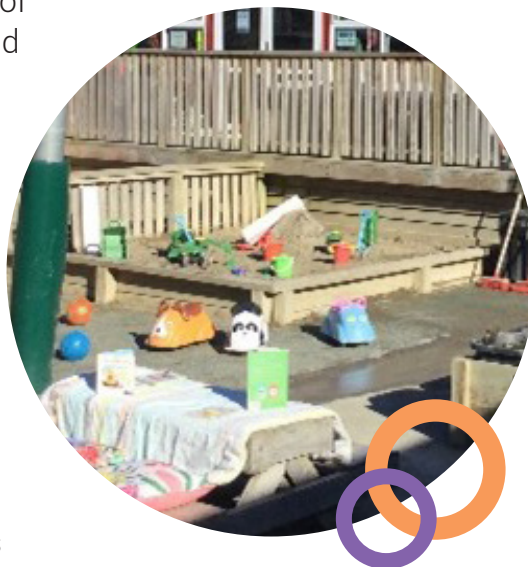
Sue plans to continue to coach kaiako within her team and, after seeing the impact of coaching for her kaiako, Sue hopes the Leadership Coaching Programme expands across the sector so more leaders and kaiako can benefit from experiences like hers.

Highlights

○ When pedagogical leadership is prioritised, the focus shifts from administrative tasks to creating a culture centred around teaching and learning.

○ When leaders learn to coach kaiako and witness tangible growth in their teaching, a passion for leadership can be reignited.