

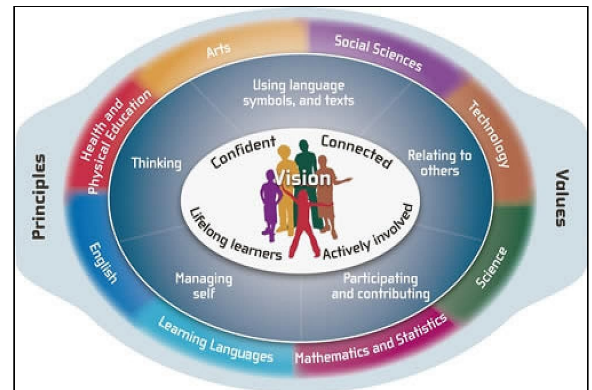
KEY COMPETENCIES

During your child's time at school they will develop a range of skills and capabilities (key competencies) that will help them to do well in life. The world is different these days. It's an exciting time for children to grow up in. It's not enough for children to just keep learning more information at the expense of learning how to use that information and work with others. As well as learning about a variety of subjects, children need to learn how to learn, how to think for themselves, think alongside others, and be motivated to keep on learning throughout their lives - so that they can do well in their world. Key competencies help your child learn these things. They are included in the New Zealand Curriculum and are woven into all the teaching that goes on at school.

The key competencies are:

- **thinking**
- **using language, symbols, and texts**
- **managing self**
- **relating to others**
- **participating and contributing.**

They are not just for school, but for life. Once you know about them, you will be able to see that your child uses these key competencies in many different situations - at home, at sport, at church, at cultural occasions, and eventually at work.



How do schools teach key competencies?

The key competencies are at the core of all the teaching that goes on. Your child's teacher thinks about the key competencies when planning their teaching programme, the resources they use, their choice of language and topic, and the role that they get children to take in their own learning. When it comes to key competencies your child's teacher takes on both a teaching and coaching role. They use their expert knowledge of how students learn to build the key competencies into all learning areas. Your child's teacher will:

- encourage your child to find and answer their own questions and problems
- sometimes answer your child's questions with another question, to get them thinking about how to find out an answer by using the skills they already have – rather than just providing the answer
- coach your child in specific skills that build on your child's current skills in each of the competencies
- support your child to set and monitor their own learning goals
- use their knowledge to work out how to help your child to set their own ideal next learning steps
- design tasks that bring knowledge from home into the classroom (and vice versa)

Thinking

Is about developing the sort of thinking skills that children need in the world today, using creative and critical ways of thinking to make sense of information, experiences and ideas. We give your child support to practice different types of thinking, like:

- meta-cognition - this is thinking about thinking itself. An example can be your child being encouraged to reflect on what they are doing, how that helps their learning, and what they can do differently to improve their learning
- mathematical and logical thinking
- knowing how to find out some of the ways we think that are not helpful (such as assuming something is true just because you've seen a few examples)
- cause and effect thinking - sometimes this involves exploring how different actions cause changes that can be predicted or understanding what actions in the past caused a change to happen
- mindfulness (being more aware of how our habits and feelings are influencing how we think and act)
- understanding how some patterns of thinking can lead to problems (e.g. the difficulty people have in making decisions about risk or how stereotypes stop us from understanding a situation)
- self knowledge of our own strengths and passions

Using language, symbols, and texts

Is about the different ways to communicate and understand information, experiences and ideas. This includes the foundation skills of literacy and numeracy, but is much more. It's about how we make meaning of things, based on what we already know, or think we know, and our experiences and beliefs.

There are many examples of this key competency in action at school, like:

- maths – where numbers and symbols communicate ideas
- dance, drama and kapa haka – where your child is learning about movement as a language, or way of communicating
- science – where your child is learning how to think, read and write in scientific language, investigating, gathering evidence, drawing conclusions and justifying explanations

Managing self

This means being self motivated, having a can-do attitude and understanding yourself as a learner. Being good at managing self means your child will be more persistent and resilient, and more likely to be a successful learner. Your child will get better at managing self as they develop a good understanding about how they learn. Examples of managing self are:

- working to complete an activity or project by a deadline, and to a certain standard
- setting a challenging goal with help from the teacher, and then working towards it independently
- being willing to take learning risks, try new things, make mistakes, learn from them, and try again
- your child understanding how their ideas and skills are changing over time and why they think, act and respond in the way they do
- understanding that it's okay to make mistakes – they are an essential and important part of learning – so your child doesn't give up when school becomes difficult
- understanding that sometimes there is no one "right" answer, and that you have to make decisions even when you don't have perfect information (you then need to be aware of how those decisions are working out and be willing and able to change tack as you gain information).

Relating to others

Is about relating well to a diverse range of people. This includes things like being able to listen well, see different points of view, negotiate and share ideas. Relating to others involves knowledge as well as skills, for example, your child will learn how and why people are all different from each other. Your child's teacher develops this key competency by doing things like:

- providing opportunities to work in different groups on tasks where different points of view can be heard, thought about, and acted on
- In a technology class, or study, a group of children working on developing a product will need to think about the needs of a range of users
- For literacy time, using a novel that has characters from a different era or country, and encouraging the children to think about why different people think and behave as they do in the story

Participating and contributing

Means being involved in things that are going on, being a good group member, contributing, including and creating opportunities for others. We all enjoy participating and contributing – it makes us feel connected, and helps us to get the most out of our lives. The teacher gets your child involved in real activities that are personal and meaningful to them. It is affirming for children to get to show their skills and expertise in something that they're keen on.

The teacher also challenges your child and guides them to be involved in things that they may have some untapped potential in, or that they might not have thought to get involved in. This all helps your child build up what is used "action competence" – being ready, willing, and able to step up, take action, and be involved in situations and in life. Teachers foster this key competency by:

- Leadership opportunities that your child is given, in class, or in the wider school. For example, being a reading buddy to a junior child, maintaining a worm farm, helping to organise a fundraiser for the school
- And, even, through 'simple' things like asking children to work with a wide range of classmates and guiding them to understand what makes working together successful and how they can do it even better.

This page was developed from information prepared by the New Zealand Council for Education Research (NZCER).

Further information:

Visit the [key competencies area of the Te Kete Ipurangi website](#). This is a website developed for teachers and educators but anyone is welcome to visit it. It provides a more detailed look into the key competencies. Read about how schools are bringing key competencies into the learning areas of the New Zealand Curriculum on the [key competencies and effective pedagogy page](#).

Find out more about the [New Zealand Curriculum \(the curriculum framework that schools use to plan their teaching\) on Te Kete Ipurangi](#). This includes more in depth information about the vision, principles, values, key competencies and learning areas.