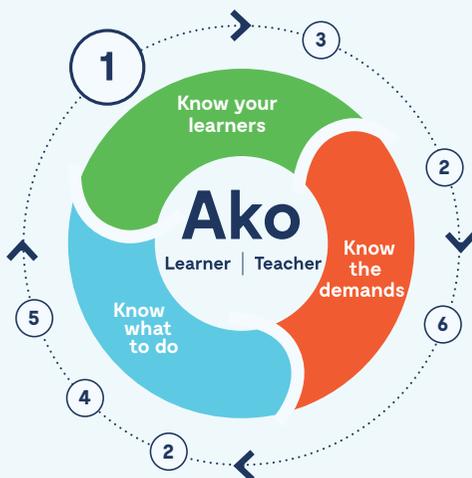


# Ako Explored

Six principles for learning and teaching – A suite of effective resources for improving learner outcomes



## Principle 1

The foundation of effective ako is in knowing ākonga, the strengths they bring, and the challenges they face in learning.

### What are the benefits?

Knowing your ākonga and the demands of the learning, provides the foundation for effective teaching and allows you to adapt as you go to create more successful outcomes.

### What might this look like in practice?

- Check out what universal design for learning practices might offer in terms of how you structure your learning for the diversity of ākonga in your cohort.
- Use the UDL principles to help identify barriers to learning, and remove these, when planning learning and teaching activities.

### Questions for consideration

What tools, strategies and activities can you use to get to know your learners better? Have you considered attitude surveys, soft skills surveys, focus groups, learner presentations?

## Where can I find out more?

- View the full document and resources on Ako Explored project page on the Ako Aotearoa website.  
<https://ako.ac.nz/ako-explored>
- See what the Ministry of Education has to say about UDL and inclusive education:  
<https://inclusive.tki.org.nz/guides/universal-design-for-learning/>
- Check out the UDL pathway on Ako Aotearoa's Pathways Awarua. <https://pathwaysawarua.com/educator/udl>
- Access the original book on Universal Design for Learning by Meyer, Rose, and Gordon. <https://www.cast.org/news/2022/read-universal-design-learning-udl-theory-practice-free-inclusive>
- Watch some educators talking about the ways in which they get to know and support ākongā.  
<https://ako.ac.nz/knowledge-centre/ako-explored/know-your-learners-associate-professor-christian-schott>,  
<https://ako.ac.nz/knowledge-centre/ako-explored/know-your-learners-dr-cami-sawyer>

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## Principle 2

**Knowing and using targeted and relevant practices to achieve successful outcomes with ākonga, will strengthen and improve ako.**

### What are the benefits?

Knowing your learners, the demands, and what to do sets a positive platform for learning and will likely improve learners' engagement and success.

### What might this look like in practice?

- Mix and match a range of different learning practices to engage all your learners and accommodate their learning preferences.
- Build in practices that encourage active participation and opportunities for your ākonga to engage with the content and each other, and to challenge thinking, fixed practices, or misunderstandings, including your own.

### Questions for consideration

How do you know if your teaching is having successful outcomes? What tools can you use to identify this? How do you decide when to make changes?

## Where can I find out more?

- View the full document and resources on the Ako Explored webpages on the Ako Aotearoa website. <https://ako.ac.nz/ako-explored>
- Check out the TEC’s Learner Success Framework <https://www.tec.govt.nz/oritetanga-learner-success/new-oritetanga-tertiary-success-for-everyone/learner-success-framework/>
- Look at what Ako Aotearoa courses and resources are available to help you enhance success for all learners. <https://ako.ac.nz/professional-learning/in-house-workshop/>
- See how BCITO | Te Pūkenga Workplace Learning Advisors are already using relevant practices to improve ako and learner outcomes. <https://ako.ac.nz/knowledge-centre/ako-explored/bcito-te-pukenga-relevance-of-the-principles>
- Are you a phenomenal teacher? Check out what works for Pacific People in learning environments. Chu-Fuluifaga, J. & Ikiua-Pasi, J. (2021). *From good to great: The 10 habits of phenomenal educators for Pacific learners in New Zealand tertiary education. Ako Aotearoa.* <https://ako.ac.nz/knowledge-centre/from-good-to-great-the-10-habits-of-phenomenal-educators-for-pacific-learners/full-report/>

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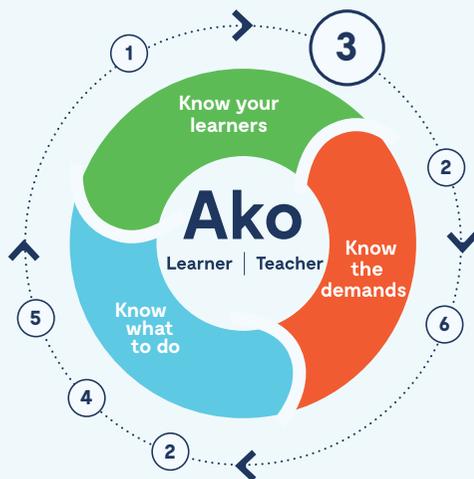


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## Principle 3

**Ako requires positive interpersonal relationships.**

### What are the benefits?

In a learning environment where relationships are central, ākonga are assisted to take joint responsibility for their learning and, in the process, develop deeper understanding of their subject and its impact in practice.

### What might this look like in practice?

- Build a warm learning climate where errors are not only tolerated but welcomed and used as a catalyst for learning, deeper understanding, and reducing anxiety.
- Celebrate, actively value, and support the voices of ākonga who think differently, using this as an opportunity for deepening understanding.

### Questions for consideration

What strategies do you have in your toolkit to ensure sharing, discussion, dialogue, or debate is solution-focused, respectful, honouring of diversity, productive, and leads to enhanced learning and outcomes for all? How do you handle any difficulties that arise?

## Where can I find out more?

- View the full document and Ako Explored webpages on the Ako Aotearoa website. <https://ako.ac.nz/ako-explored>
- Book a workshop on professional relationships and boundaries with the Ako Aotearoa Professional Learning team. <https://ako.ac.nz/professional-learning/in-house-workshop/teaching-practicestrategies/clarifying-boundaries-in-teacher-student-relationships-for-safe-practice>
- See how BCITO | Te Pūkenga Workplace Learning Advisors place relationships at the core of learning. <https://ako.ac.nz/knowledge-centre/ako-explored/bcito-te-pukenga-relevance-of-the-principles>
- Discover the importance of relationships in establishing and nurturing culturally responsive practice.  
Rātima, M.P., Smith, J.P., Macfarlane, A.H., Riki, N.M., Jones, K-L., & Davies, L.K. (2022) (Eds.). *Ngā hau e whā o Tāwhirimātea: Culturally responsive teaching and learning for the tertiary sector*. Canterbury University Press. <https://ir.canterbury.ac.nz/items/da826c9f-32f2-409f-8c98-117edd550fb0>

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## Principle 4

**A focus on experience, and the opportunity to reflect on it, complements and strengthens ako.**

### What are the benefits?

The inclusion of experience and reflection allows ākonga to connect new information to pre-existing knowledge and consider ways in which to accommodate it. It also allows for vibrant and challenging discussion when multiple viewpoints and experiences are shared.

### What might this look like in practice?

- Create an environment in which learning is an active experience. Make it clear that everyone's experience is respected.
- Model techniques for activating background knowledge, such as brainstorming, and graphic organisers, like mind maps and KWL charts. Practise activating background knowledge with learners on a regular basis, so they get into the habit of doing this whenever they are presented with new learning or ideas.

### Questions for consideration

In what ways do you create opportunities for ākonga to share their experiences that relate to the learning being explored? How do you challenge these appropriately and encourage them to think more critically when required?

## Where can I find out more?

- View the full document and Ako Explored webpages on the Ako Aotearoa website.  
<https://ako.ac.nz/ako-explored>
- Watch how 2021 awardee Hazel Tucker, uses a broad array of inclusive pedagogies to address very complex issues by maximising the experiences her diverse students bring to learning.  
<https://ako.ac.nz/knowledge-centre/ako-explored/experience-professor-hazel-tucker>
- Check out Work-Integrated Learning New Zealand’s website for multiple ways to incorporate experience into learning.  
<https://www.wilnz.nz/>
- View a simple example of activating prior knowledge to enhance learning.  
<https://ako.ac.nz/assets/Knowledge-centre/ALNACC-Resources/NCEA-Level-1-Literacy-and-Numeracy-Standards-Resources/TEACHING-AND-LEARNING-SEQUENCE-Activating-prior-knowledge.pdf>

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## Principle 5

**Ako is enhanced when there is clear alignment between intended learning outcomes, learning and teaching activities, and assessment.**

### What are the benefits?

If ākonga have a clear understanding of the intended outcome it allows them to focus more fully on their learning and use the teaching and learning activities to measure their own progress towards its achievement. When enacted well, constructive alignment leaves no real surprises when it comes to assessment.

### What might this look like in practice?

- From the beginning of the learning process, clearly identify what is expected of ākonga or what the learning involves and provide opportunities to clarify. Identify opportunities for co-constructing learning outcomes with learners, where appropriate.
- Summarise at the end of sessions so that everyone knows where they have got to and what needs to happen next.

### Questions for consideration

Do you make learning intentions and success criteria clear, evident, and linked to assessment tasks? In what ways do you make these visible to your ākonga?

## Where can I find out more?

- View the full document and Ako Explored webpages on the Ako Aotearoa website.  
<https://ako.ac.nz/ako-explored>
- See how one educator uses the analogy of a bridge to explain simply the constructive alignment purpose, process, and elements.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w6pDzc8V7RI>
- Read a brief document about how constructive alignment works – outlined by the original author, John Biggs.  
<https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/aligning-teaching-constructing-learning>
- Explore this comprehensive document on learning outcomes and their relationship to learning activities and assessment.  
<https://cora.ucc.ie/server/api/core/bitstreams/88bdd1f3-4e1c-4cf8-baf4-df28d4f094c5/content>

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## Principle 6

**Shared high expectations and challenging tasks are motivations for growth and development.**

### What are the benefits?

Practices that encourage intellectual challenge, within appropriate goals and with targeted support, help learners confront misconceptions and foster effort, engage more deeply, feel intrinsically motivated to do their best work, develop evaluation and critical thinking skills, and focus on deeper learning.

### What might this look like in practice?

- Make the demands and expectations of the learning process and outcomes highly visible and revisit this often to help your ākonga set their own goals and structure their learning.
- Use practices that move your ākonga from a position of spectator to active participation. Challenge them to apply their learning in active ways, even when it is formative.

### Questions for consideration

How does your own experience and identity as an educator determine how you view learners and what they are capable of? How does it influence your practice? Are there ways for you to reframe any elements of this?

## Where can I find out more?

- View the full document and Ako Explored webpages on the Ako Aotearoa website. <https://ako.ac.nz/ako-explored>
- Read what Dr Russell Bishop and his colleagues have to say about the importance of high expectations for Māori students. Bishop, R., Berryman, M., Cavanagh, T., & Teddy, L. (2007). *Te Kotahitanga Phase 3 Whanaungatanga: Establishing a culturally responsive pedagogy of relations in mainstream secondary school classrooms*. Report to the New Zealand Ministry of Education.
- Watch how 2021 awardee Dr Brendon Dunphy expressly states that he aims to challenge students but does so in a way that supports ākongā and sustains learning in the long term. <https://ako.ac.nz/knowledge-centre/ako-explored/high-expectations-dr-brendon-dunphy>
- Check out this handy infographic about teaching with high expectations set in the schooling context <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/expect-more-get-how-high-expectations-can-elevate-student-dickson>

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