

AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND

PHYSICAL EDUCATOR

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HE AO KORI,
HE AO MARAMA

*A World of Movement is A World of Learning
The Value of Physical Education in Aotearoa New Zealand*

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The Physical Educator welcomes
contributions that share practice,
research, and critical perspectives
that support strong, culturally
grounded Physical Education in
Aotearoa.

Material for publication welcome and
can be sent to editor@penz.org.nz.

Purpose

The Physical Educator is the professional practice journal of Physical Education New Zealand (PENZ). It exists to support strong, coherent, and future-focused Health and Physical Education across Aotearoa. The journal provides a platform for critical reflection, practitioner insight, and sector leadership, with a clear commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi and culturally sustaining practice.

The Physical Educator Aims To:

- Strengthen professional practice.
- Elevate Māori knowledge and leadership within Physical Education.
- Support critical engagement with curriculum, pedagogy, and policy.
- Connect research, practice, and advocacy across the sector.

About this Edition

This edition of the Physical Educator outlines the value of Physical Education in Aotearoa New Zealand. This work has been led by Physical Education New Zealand (PENZ) and shaped through sector-wide consultation. Grounded in and informed by research, mātauranga Māori, and practitioner voice, it affirms the distinctive contribution of Physical Education in the lives and learning of tamariki and rangatahi.

We acknowledge the support of Ihi Aotearoa - Sport New Zealand through its Strengthen and Adapt funding, which has enabled this work. This edition stands as both a clear statement of value and a call to collective and ongoing advocacy for Physical Education in Aotearoa New Zealand.

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**He Ao Kori, He Ao
Mātauranga**

A model for movement and learning.

EDITORIAL

There's something powerful about watching young people move.

Not just performing a skill or completing a task, but genuinely engaged. You see it in the small moments. A learner figuring something out for the first time. A group working together to solve a challenge. Someone finding confidence in a space where they didn't expect to.

Those moments remind me why physical education matters. And they remind me what this work sets out to do: widen the lens on what physical education is, what it offers, and why it belongs at the heart of every young person's education.

Over the past few years, there has been significant debate about what Physical Education should be. These debates have been shaped by curriculum reform, pressure to demonstrate measurable outcomes, and a tendency to reduce PE to sport delivery or fitness activity. Some of that conversation has sharpened our thinking. Some of it has narrowed what we believe PE can and should be.

This value proposition is grounded in a simple idea. Physical Education is not defined by the activities we teach. It is defined by the learning that happens through movement.

That learning is rich, but not in the way it is often described. It is rich because it is lived, experienced, and felt. It is social, cultural, environmental, and deeply human. It sits in the body as much as it sits in the mind.

In Aotearoa New Zealand, we have a strong foundation to build from. Our curriculum has long recognised the importance of hauora, of relationships, of critical thinking, and of learning in, through, and about movement. We have teachers who understand how to bring this to life in ways that are inclusive, creative, and responsive to the learners in front of them.

This value proposition draws on that strength.

This piece is written to be read and used broadly, by teachers, leaders, whānau, and anyone who cares about the learning and wellbeing of young people. The ideas are grounded in an established body of research, much of it from Aotearoa New Zealand, and a full reference list is included at the end for those who want to explore further.

It also reflects a reality we know well. Physical Education is often misunderstood. Sometimes reduced to sport. Sometimes reduced to fitness. Sometimes positioned as something that sits on the edge of the curriculum rather than at its core.

We can do better than that. And in many places, we already are.

Across the country, we see examples of powerful physical education every week. Programmes that include a wide range of movement experiences. Teachers adapting tasks so all learners can participate. Spaces where competition is used well, where culture is visible, and where learning is clear.

This is not about reinventing physical education. It is about recognising and strengthening what quality practice already looks like.

It is also about being clear. Clear about the role of Physical Education as a discipline. Clear about its relationship with sport, not in opposition, but in partnership. Clear about what quality looks like in practice.

And clear about what we want for young people.

We want them to leave school with the confidence to move. With the ability to make informed choices. With experiences that have helped shape who they are.

That is the opportunity in front of us.

This value proposition is not an end point. It is a shared reference. Something to support conversations, inform practice, and strengthen the place of Physical Education in our system.

Most importantly, it is a reminder.

A world of movement is a world of learning.

Ngā mihi,
Heemi



HE AO KORI HE AO MĀTAURANGA

A World of Movement is a World of Learning

Physical Education enables ākonga to develop confidence and capability in movement, build understanding of themselves and others, and experience wellbeing through meaningful participation in personal, social, cultural, and environmental contexts.

INTRODUCTION

He Ao Kori, He Ao Mātauranga, a world of movement is a world of learning, is the organising idea of this value proposition. It is not a metaphor. It is a claim about the nature of learning itself: that movement is a primary way human beings come to know themselves, connect with others, and make sense of the world around them.

This document sets out what that means for Physical Education in Aotearoa New Zealand. It articulates the purpose and distinctive contribution of Physical Education, and describes what quality practice looks like in our schools and kura.

In an ever-changing world, Physical Education offers something essential. It connects learning to the body. It supports wellbeing. It builds relationships. It creates space for ākonga to explore identity, culture, language, and place through movement.

Through movement, ākonga respond to challenge, make decisions, and work with others. These experiences build resilience and adaptability. They support learning that extends beyond the physical and into how young people live and engage in the world.

This position statement outlines the inherent value of Physical Education. It clarifies its purpose, strengthens its identity, and champions consistent, high-quality practice.

In Aotearoa New Zealand, Physical Education is shaped by a bicultural foundation. Te Tiriti o Waitangi calls us to recognise and honour te ao Māori, including mātauranga Māori, te reo, and tikanga, as integral to how we understand movement, learning, and wellbeing. This document reflects that commitment throughout.

Evidence and Terms

This position statement draws on a wide range of voices and sources. It has been informed by the perspectives of:

- young people
- teachers and school leaders working across primary, secondary, and kura Māori settings
- academics and researchers in physical education and related fields within Aotearoa New Zealand
- passionate and life-long advocates of physical education

Together, these voices and sources ensure that this position is grounded in both research and practice, and reflects the lived experiences of those engaged in Physical Education across Aotearoa New Zealand.

Key terms used throughout this document are used deliberately and consistently.

- *Movement* refers to purposeful physical action in personal, social, cultural, and environmental contexts. It is both a way of doing and a way of knowing.
- *Hauora* reflects a holistic understanding of wellbeing drawn from Te Ao Māori, most commonly expressed through Te Whare Tapa Whā, where taha tinana, taha hinengaro, taha whānau, and taha wairua are interconnected and interdependent.
- *Physical education* is the structured teaching and learning of movement within the Health and Physical Education learning area, focused on developing capability, understanding, and confidence through movement.

DEFINING PHYSICAL EDUCATION

What physical education is and what it is not.

Physical Education is the structured teaching and learning of movement. It focuses on developing movement competence, understanding, and confidence. It supports ākonga to engage with movement in ways that are purposeful and meaningful.

Physical Education is more than organised activity. Its purpose is not simply to keep students moving or to prepare them for competitive performance. It is to use movement as a context for learning that is rich, purposeful, and connected to the lives of young people. Physical Education is about learning in, through and about movement.

This includes:

- developing physical skills and capabilities
- understanding how and why movement works
- exploring how movement connects to identity, culture, environment and society
- experiencing hauora through participation

Physical Education provides a space where ākonga learn through doing, thinking, and

reflecting. These elements are interconnected and shape how the subject is taught and experienced.

Physical Education is inclusive by design.

This means more than providing access. It means that all ākonga, regardless of ability, background, gender, culture, or prior experience, are supported to participate meaningfully, experience genuine success, and see themselves reflected in the learning. Inclusive design requires teachers to adapt tasks, environments, and expectations so that the breadth of what movement means is available to everyone.”



“

Physical education sits within the Health and Physical Education learning area in Aotearoa New Zealand. It supports a holistic understanding of movement, where learning is connected to overall wellbeing, not just physical performance. In this context, Physical Education serves two key purposes.

The Participatory Purpose: Physical Education supports ākonga to make meaning in their movement and understand how movement contributes to their lives. All learners, regardless of their abilities or experiences, are supported to explore how movement can enhance a full and active life.

The Critical Purpose: Physical Education supports ākonga to engage critically with movement. They learn to reflect on their decisions, recognise influences, and understand how social, cultural, and environmental factors shape the way movement is experienced and valued.

Together, these purposes ensure that Physical Education is both personally meaningful and socially informed.



PHYSICAL EDUCATION AS A DISCIPLINE

Movement as a way of knowing and being.

Physical education is a distinct discipline centred on **movement**. It focuses on how people move, how they experience movement, and how movement shapes their lives.

It draws on knowledge from areas such as biomechanics, physiology, psychology, and sociology. However, it is not defined by any one of these. What defines Physical Education as a discipline is movement itself, specifically the lived, embodied experience of moving and what that experience makes possible for learning, identity, and wellbeing. Its strength lies in how

diverse forms of knowledge are brought together and made meaningful through that experience.

At its core, Physical Education develops the ability to move with confidence, control, and purpose. Across the following pages, five dimensions of movement illuminate the breadth of what this means: movement as lived experience, as meaning-making, as social and cultural practice, as knowledge in practice, and as hauora and wellbeing. Together, these dimensions define what makes Physical Education a distinctive and essential learning area.

movement as...

MEANING-MAKING

KNOWLEDGE IN PRACTICE

LIVED EXPERIENCE

SOCIAL, CULTURAL & ENVIRONMENTAL

HAUORA & WELLBEING



MOVEMENT AS A LIVED EXPERIENCE

Developing confidence, control, and capability.

Movement is felt as much as it is seen.

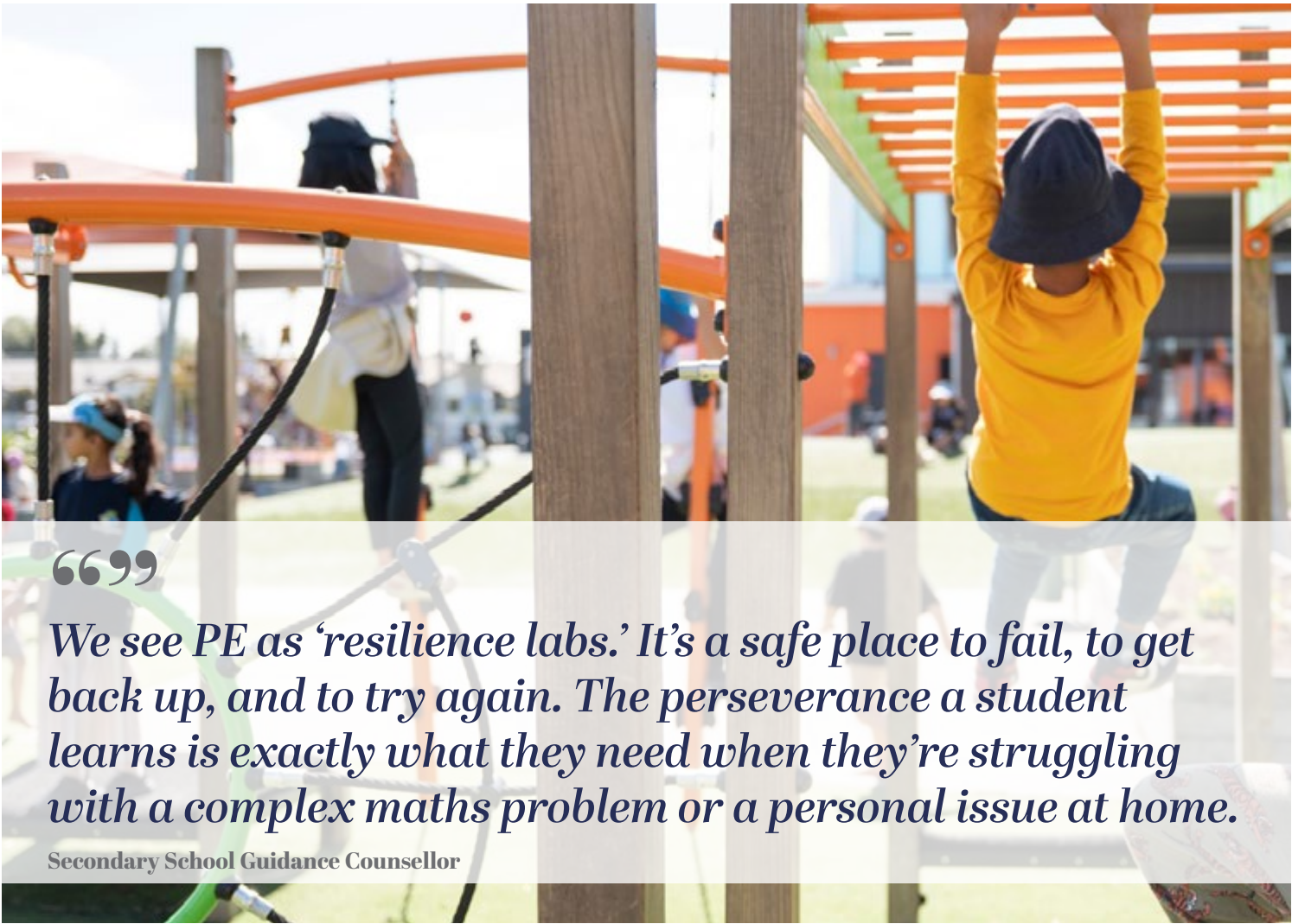
Ākonga experience balance, rhythm, timing, effort, and coordination in real time. Through these experiences, they develop confidence and control. They learn how their bodies move and respond.

Physical Education supports ākonga to:

- develop **coordination, balance, and control** across varied movement contexts
- **respond** and **adapt** their movement to different tasks, environments, and challenges
- experience **effort, progress, and the satisfaction of improvement**
- explore a range of **ways of moving**, including **creative and expressive forms**

These experiences shape identity and influence future participation. Moments of enjoyment, discomfort, success, and exclusion contribute to how learners understand movement and themselves.

Learning in Physical Education is grounded in the lived body, where movement is experienced through sensation, emotion, and interaction.



“““

We see PE as ‘resilience labs.’ It’s a safe place to fail, to get back up, and to try again. The perseverance a student learns is exactly what they need when they’re struggling with a complex maths problem or a personal issue at home.

Secondary School Guidance Counsellor



MOVEMENT AS MEANING-MAKING

Understanding self, identity, and experience.

Movement can become more meaningful through experience and reflection.

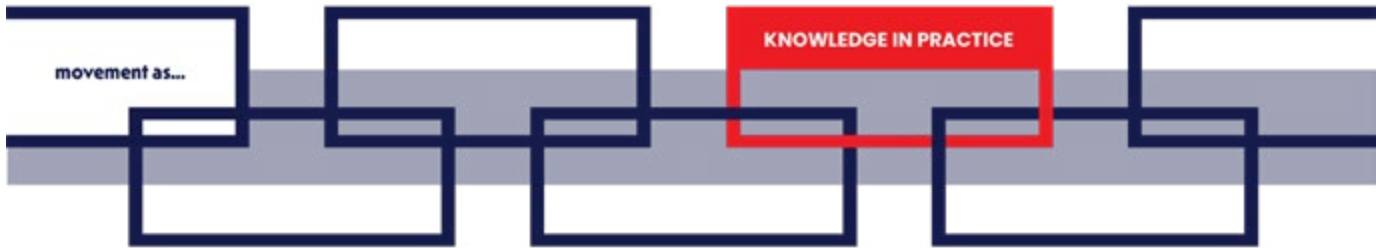
Ākonga interpret their experiences and develop an understanding of what movement means to them. This includes what they enjoy, where they feel confident, and how they respond to challenge.

Physical Education supports ākonga to:

- **interpret** how movement experiences **influence their sense of self**
- recognise what they **value in movement and why**
- respond to **challenge, success, and failure** in ways that **build personal insight**
- make **connections** between movement and their **identity, interests, and motivations**

Through participation, they develop resilience, confidence, and relational awareness. Movement becomes a context for learning about themselves and others.

Experiences of joy, novelty, and unpredictability also contribute to meaning-making, reinforcing the importance of designing engaging and inclusive movement experiences.



MOVEMENT AS SOCIAL, CULTURAL & ENVIRONMENTAL

Learning through relationships, place, and participation.

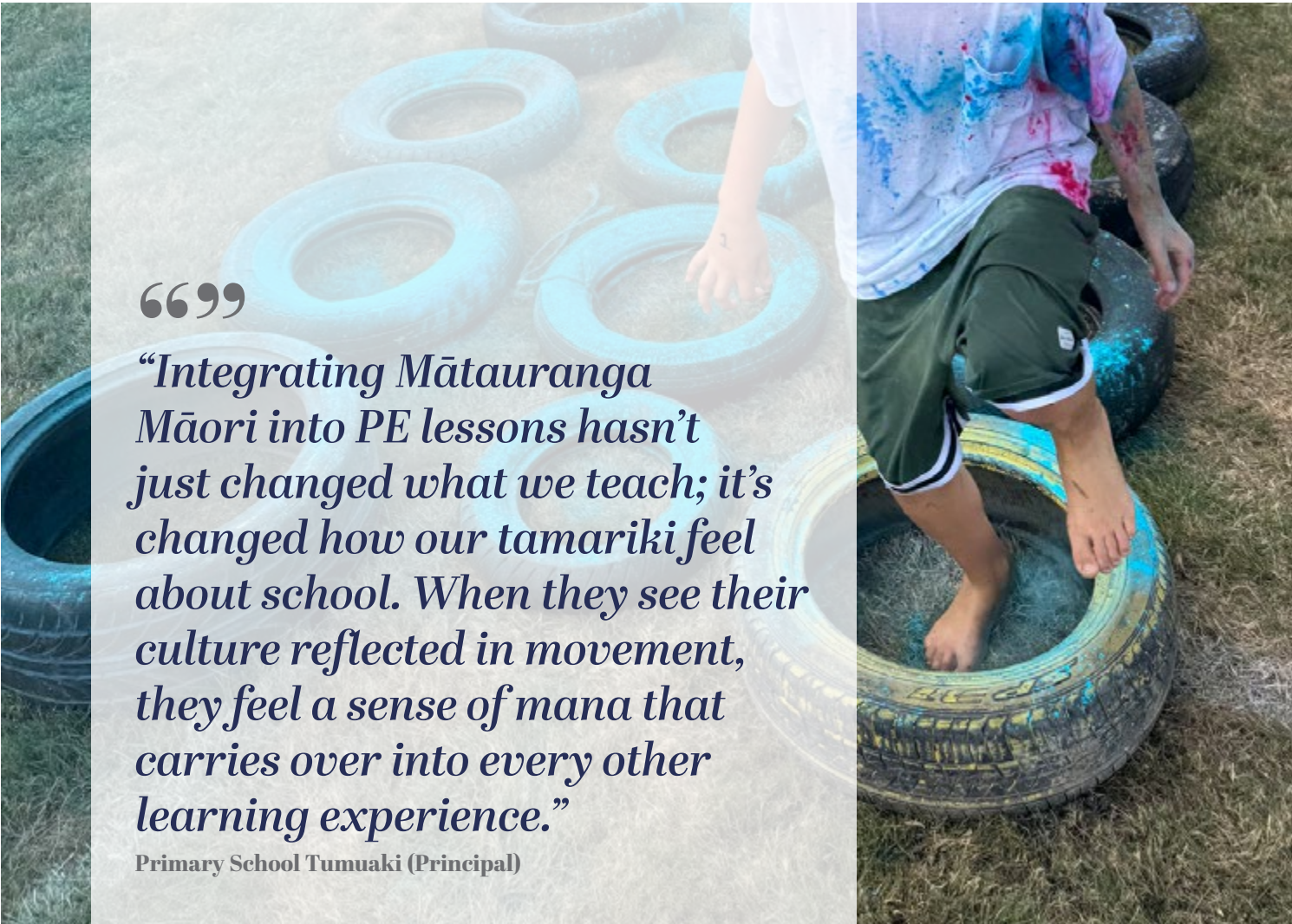
Movement is shaped by social, cultural, and environmental relationships.

Ākonga learn to move with others, within places, and in response to the natural world. They develop cooperation, respect, and responsibility, while navigating roles, relationships, and shared experiences. They also come to understand how movement is influenced by whakapapa, culture, and environment, and how these shape meaning and participation.

Physical Education supports ākonga to:

- **collaborate, negotiate, compete,** and **contribute** across movement contexts
- recognise how **culture, identity,** and **whakapapa** shape movement **practices** and **participation**
- **respond** and **adapt** their movement to different environments and conditions
- examine how **access, inclusion,** and **opportunity** vary across social, cultural, and environmental contexts
- reflect on how **movement connects** to **identity, belonging,** and **place**

Movement contexts act as sites for ethical learning and character development, where values such as fairness, respect, responsibility, and care for others and the environment are explored through experience.



“Integrating Mātauranga Māori into PE lessons hasn’t just changed what we teach; it’s changed how our tamariki feel about school. When they see their culture reflected in movement, they feel a sense of mana that carries over into every other learning experience.”

Primary School Tumuaki (Principal)

MOVEMENT AS KNOWLEDGE IN PRACTICE

Applying understanding in dynamic situations.

Physical education develops understanding through movement.

Ākonga learn how the body moves, how skills are developed, and how decisions are made in dynamic situations.

In Physical Education ākonga learn:

- how the body **moves** and **responds**
- how **skills are developed and refined**
- how to make **decisions** in dynamic environments
- how psychological factors influence **participation**
- how social and cultural **contexts shape movement experiences**

This learning is developed through participation, feedback, and application. It reflects the intent of Physical Education in Aotearoa New Zealand, where knowledge is developed through doing, reflecting, and applying learning in context.

When ākonga understand how and why movement works, not just that it works, they are equipped to engage with movement independently, critically, and for life.



MOVEMENT AS HAUORA & WELLBEING

Experiencing wellbeing through movement.

Physical Education supports hauora through movement.

In Aotearoa New Zealand, hauora reflects a holistic understanding of wellbeing, most commonly expressed through Te Whare Tapa Whā, where taha tinana (physical), taha hinengaro (mental and emotional), taha whānau (social), and taha wairua (spiritual) are interconnected and interdependent.

Within Physical Education, these dimensions are not taught in isolation. They are experienced, shaped, and understood through movement. Movement provides a unique context where these dimensions come together.

Through participation, ākonga experience physical challenge, emotional response, social connection, and a developing sense of identity and purpose.

These are not separate outcomes. They are intertwined and mutually reinforcing.

Physical Education supports ākonga to:

- experience the **interconnection** between physical, social, emotional, and spiritual dimensions of wellbeing through movement
- recognise how different movement contexts influence their **sense of balance, connection, and identity**
- develop strategies to **manage challenge, build resilience, and sustain participation**
- understand how their wellbeing is shaped by **relationships, environments**, and the **choices** they make

Through this integration, hauora becomes something ākonga live and feel, not just something they learn about. Movement allows them to test ideas, explore limits, and build connections that contribute to their overall wellbeing.

Wellbeing, in this sense, is not an outcome that sits beyond movement. It is developed through it, shaped by it, and sustained through ongoing, meaningful engagement in movement across the full span of a person's life.



“““

PE is the only subject that explicitly teaches a child how to live well in their own skin. In an era of high anxiety and digital saturation, the PE shed is a sanctuary for authentic, face-to-face human connection.”

Secondary PE Teacher (Auckland)

BRINGING IT TOGETHER

Learning In, Through and About Movement.

Taken together, these elements define the distinctive contribution of Physical Education. It is the learning area where movement becomes a site of knowledge, wellbeing, and connection.

This integration is most clearly understood through the framework of **learning in, through, and about movement**, first articulated by Peter Arnold in his 1979 work *Meaning in Movement, Sport and Physical Education*. While Physical Education continues to evolve, Arnold's framework remains influential in shaping how movement is understood as a rich and multidimensional context for learning.

IN MOVEMENT, ākonga develop physical competence, coordination, confidence, and a sense of capability. They experience challenge, progress, and the satisfaction of movement.

THROUGH MOVEMENT, ākonga develop social, emotional, and ethical capabilities. They learn to work with others, manage challenge, show empathy, and build resilience.

ABOUT MOVEMENT, ākonga engage with the knowledge that shapes movement. They explore how bodies work, how cultures influence participation, and how values, identity, and society shape movement experiences.

These dimensions are not separate. They are interdependent and mutually reinforcing.

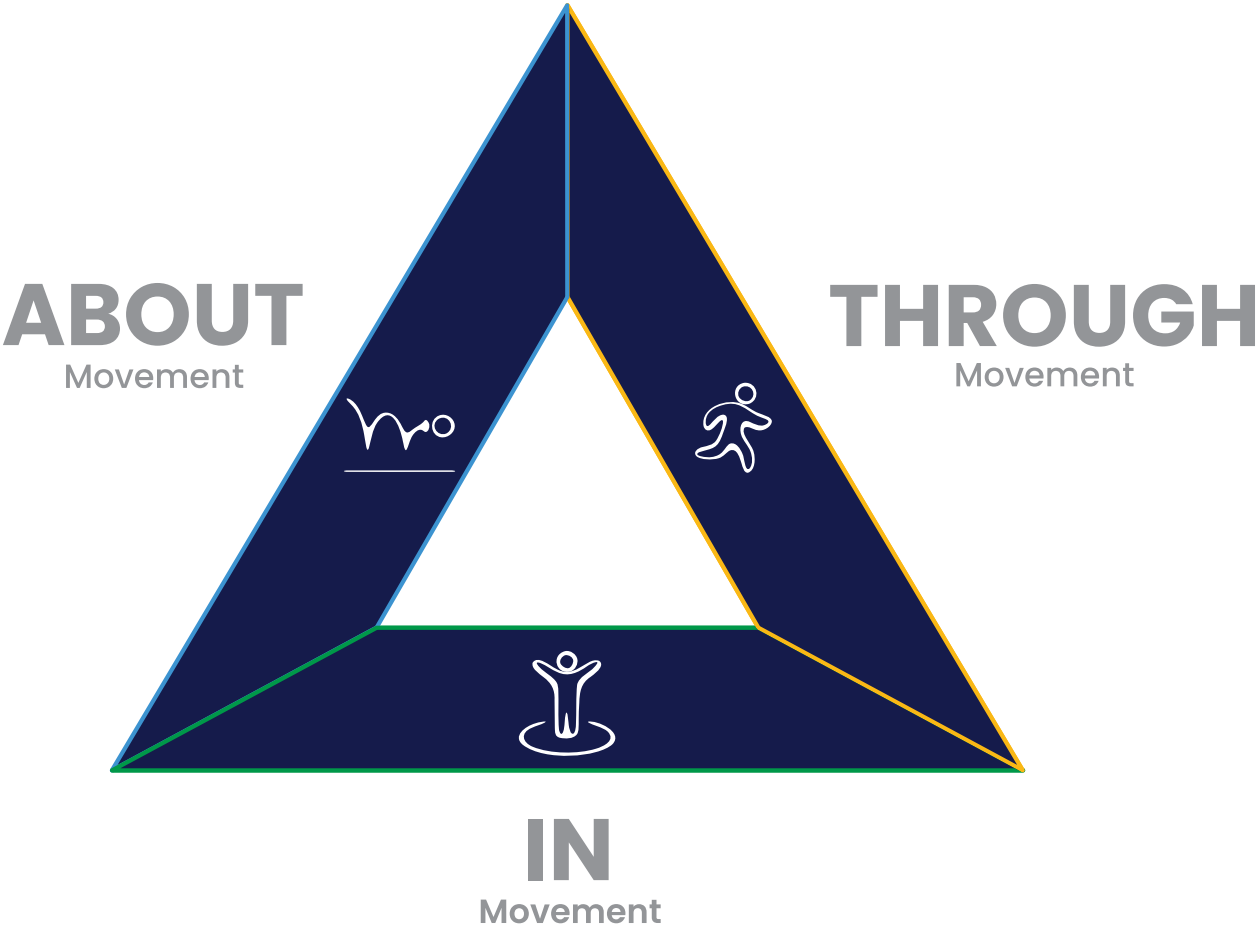
When Physical Education focuses only on skill development, movement can become narrow and performative. When learning is disconnected from lived experience, it loses depth and relevance. Quality Physical Education intentionally brings these elements together.

This reflects what we know about learning more broadly. Movement is not separate from thinking.

The body plays a central role in how we learn, feel, and make decisions.

When learning is designed in this way, Physical Education supports more than participation. It equips ākonga with the understanding, skills, and dispositions needed to engage thoughtfully and confidently with movement across their lives.

In an Aotearoa New Zealand context, learning in, through, and about movement must also reflect the environments in which movement occurs. This includes recognising the significance of place, the natural world, and the relationships people hold with them. Movement experiences are shaped by these connections, and Physical Education provides opportunities for ākonga to engage with, understand, and respond to their environments in meaningful ways. In this sense, learning in, through, and about movement is not only personal and social, but also cultural and environmental, reflecting the unique contexts of Aotearoa New Zealand.



PLANNING AND INTEGRATION

Plan learning experiences that bring doing, thinking, and relating together. When these elements are combined well, a single lesson can develop physical skill, deepen understanding, and strengthen relationships at the same time.

DESIGNING LEARNING

Design tasks where ākonga are moving, making decisions, and reflecting on their experiences. Ask yourself whether the learning you intend is actually occurring, not just whether the activity is running smoothly.

PRACTICE BALANCE

Check that your programme offers ākonga opportunities to develop physical capability, work with others, and engage with movement knowledge more deeply.

INTENTIONALITY

Be deliberate in how you design and guide learning. What ākonga gain from movement depends significantly on how it is taught. A well-chosen task with clear learning intent will always achieve more than activity for its own sake.

Learning ‘IN’

In Physical Education, learning in movement is experienced through doing. This includes developing skills such as controlling a basketball dribble, refining balance and coordination, or exploring movement through dance and other expressive forms.

Through these experiences, ākongā build confidence in what their bodies can do and develop greater control, fluency, and adaptability.

Teachers design practical learning experiences that prioritise exploration, challenge, and success. Tasks are adapted so all ākongā can participate meaningfully, regardless of ability or prior experience. These environments support ākongā to experience progress, respond to feedback, and find enjoyment in movement.

Sometimes this learning occurs through sport, and sometimes through a wider range of movement contexts.

Examples of learning ‘IN’ movement:

- developing balance, coordination, and control through a range of activities
- refining movement skills such as running, jumping, throwing, or swimming
- exploring rhythm and expression through dance or creative movement
- adapting movement across different environments and conditions
- practising skills in modified or small-sided contexts to support success
- building confidence through repeated practice and feedback

Learning ‘THROUGH’

In Physical Education, learning through movement occurs as ākongā interact with others and navigate shared experiences. Movement becomes a context for developing social, emotional, and ethical understanding. Through participation, ākongā learn how to communicate, cooperate, make decisions, and respond to challenge alongside others.

Teachers design learning experiences that bring these dimensions to the surface. This includes cooperative challenges where ākongā work together towards a shared outcome, as well as structured opportunities to reflect on how they responded to success, frustration, inclusion, and competition. These moments help ākongā understand different perspectives, values, and ways of being.

The role of the teacher is critical. They shape the environment, select appropriate contexts, and adjust the level of challenge so that learning is accessible and meaningful. Tasks that are too difficult can lead to disengagement or embarrassment, while tasks that are too simple can limit growth. Thoughtful design helps create environments that promote inclusion, respect, and a sense of belonging, while avoiding experiences of exclusion, shame, or elitism.

Examples of learning ‘THROUGH’ movement:

- working together to solve group challenges that require communication and shared decision making
- rotating roles to understand different responsibilities
- reflecting on how individuals and groups responded to success, failure, or conflict, and identifying what they would do differently
- supporting peers to participate
- negotiating strategies and roles
- designing or modifying game rules as a group to improve fairness and inclusion for all participants
- giving and receiving feedback in ways that support others to improve and feel valued

Learning ‘ABOUT’

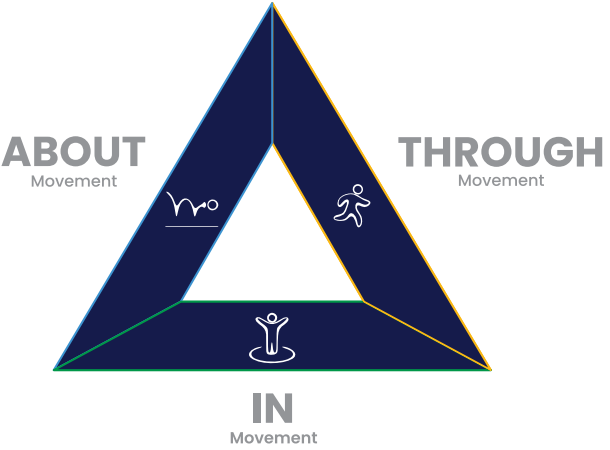
In Physical Education, learning about movement involves thinking critically about movement and the contexts that shape it. Ākongā explore how movement is influenced by science, culture, technology, and the environment. They examine how bodies work, how skills develop, and how ideas about movement are formed and challenged.

Teachers create opportunities for ākongā to question, investigate, and apply knowledge. This may include exploring biomechanics and exercise physiology, examining the impact of technology such as AI, e-sports, or virtual environments, or engaging with cultural movement practices, including indigenous games. Through this, ākongā begin to understand how movement is shaped by wider systems and influences.

This learning supports ākongā to think critically about their own participation and the world around them. It is how traditions evolve, how practices are adapted, and how more inclusive and responsive movement environments are created.

Examples of learning ‘ABOUT’ movement:

- exploring how the body moves and responds to training
- investigating how technology is changing movement, such as wearable tech, e-sports, or virtual environments
- examining issues such as performance enhancement, fairness, and ethics in sport
- learning about the origins and meanings of cultural and indigenous movement practices
- analysing how rules, uniforms, or structures can be adapted to better include all participants
- understanding how environmental factors influence movement opportunities and spaces



PHYSICAL EDUCATION & SPORT

Understanding the Relationship

Physical Education and sport are closely connected, but they are not the same.

Sport provides rich and meaningful contexts for learning in Physical Education. It offers opportunities to experience competition, cooperation, skill development, and shared cultural practices. Many ākonga engage with sport in and beyond school, making it a familiar and motivating context for learning.

Physical Education, however, is broader in purpose. **It uses sport as one of many contexts through which learning occurs.** The focus is not solely on performance or outcomes, but on what ākonga learn through their participation. This includes how they develop movement capability, understand themselves and others, and think critically about the experiences they are part of.

A quality Physical Education programme draws on sport intentionally. It may modify, adapt, or reimagine sporting contexts to better support inclusion, learning, and engagement. This ensures that all ākonga can participate meaningfully, regardless of prior experience or ability.

At times, physical education moves beyond traditional sport contexts altogether. It includes a wide range of movement experiences such as dance, outdoor experiences, fitness, recreational activities, cultural practices, and everyday forms of movement. This breadth ensures that learning remains relevant and accessible to all ākonga.

Sport also provides opportunities for critical engagement. Through Physical Education, ākonga can explore questions about fairness, inclusion, identity, and the values that shape sporting environments. They can examine how rules, structures, and traditions influence who participates and how.

In this way, sport becomes both a context for participation and a site for learning.



Sport is one context for movement. Physical Education is the learning area that gives movement educational meaning.

For Educators

Using sport in Physical Education:

- Use sport as a context for learning, not the end goal.
- Modify rules, roles, and environments to support inclusion.
- Focus on what ākongā are learning, not just how they perform.
- Provide multiple entry points so all learners can participate meaningfully.
- Include non-sport contexts to broaden movement experiences.

For Leaders

Designing balanced programmes:

- Ensure Physical Education programmes are not limited to traditional sports.
- Support a range of movement contexts that reflect diverse learners and communities.
- Recognise the different purposes of curriculum learning and extracurricular sport.
- Resource programmes that prioritise inclusion, engagement, and learning.

For Sporting Organisations

Supporting learning through sport:

- Recognise that sport can be a powerful context for learning, not just performance
- Work alongside schools to support inclusive and developmentally appropriate experiences
- Value participation, enjoyment, and growth alongside competition and outcomes
- Adapt formats, rules, and expectations to meet the needs of diverse learners
- Create environments that promote respect, belonging, and positive relationships
- Support pathways that allow all young people to engage with movement, not just those in competitive settings.

“““

Physical Education and sport both make important contributions to the lives of young people in Aotearoa New Zealand, but they serve different roles. Physical Education is an educative curriculum learning area, guided by learning intentions, pedagogy, and assessment. Sport provides pathways for participation, competition, and community connection beyond the curriculum.

WHAT IS QUALITY PHYSICAL EDUCATION?

Clarifying what matters in practice.

Quality Physical Education is deliberate, inclusive, and grounded in learning. It is not defined by the activity being taught, but by the learning that occurs through it.

A lesson involving sport, dance, fitness, or outdoor experiences can all be high quality when teaching is purposeful and responsive to learners.

At its core, quality Physical Education reflects the integration of learning in, through, and about movement. It supports ākonga to develop capability, understand themselves and others, and engage thoughtfully with movement in a range of contexts.

Quality Physical Education is visible in the decisions teachers make. It is shaped by how learning is designed, how environments are created, and how ākonga are supported to engage and succeed.

It is not a fixed model or a checklist to be applied uniformly. The following characteristics describe what quality Physical Education looks like when it is working well. They are a framework for reflection and professional conversation, not a set of prescriptions. Quality practice is responsive, evolving, and grounded in the needs and contexts of learners and communities.

Quality Physical Education is characterised by:

Intentional Design: Learning experiences are planned with clear purpose. Teachers make deliberate choices about tasks, environments, and progression to support meaningful learning.

Culturally Responsive Practice: Experiences reflect the identities, values, and contexts of ākonga. This includes recognising mātauranga Māori and the importance of place, relationships, and environment.

Inclusive Practice: All ākonga are supported to participate and experience success. Tasks are adapted to reflect different abilities, backgrounds, and needs.

Focus on Hauora: Wellbeing is developed through participation. Ākonga experience connection, confidence, and engagement as part of their learning.

Appropriate Challenge: Learning is structured to stretch ākonga without overwhelming them. Teachers carefully calibrate challenge to maintain engagement, confidence, and progress.

Integration of Knowledge & Experience: Learning connects physical participation with understanding. Ākonga are supported to reflect, question, and apply what they learn.

Breadth of Movement Experience: Programmes include a wide range of contexts, not limited to traditional sport. This ensures relevance for all learners and supports ongoing participation beyond school.

Purposeful Use of Competition: Competition is used to support learning, challenge, and growth, not as an end in itself. In quality Physical Education, competitive contexts are deliberately structured. All ākonga are supported to learn from both success and failure. Where competition risks excluding, discouraging, or shaming learners, teachers adapt the format, modify the rules, or redesign the task. Competition is a powerful tool in Physical Education when it is used with care and intention.



Checking for Quality

A Physical Education programme is likely to be high quality if:

- all ākonga are actively engaged and supported to participate meaningfully, regardless of ability or background
- learning is visible beyond physical performance alone, and includes social, emotional, and critical dimensions
- tasks are deliberately designed and adapted to support both success and appropriate challenge
- ākonga can explain what they are learning and why it matters to them
- the programme includes a wide range of movement contexts, not only traditional sport
- culture and identity are visible in the learning, and ākonga see themselves reflected in the content
- competition, where used, is structured to promote fairness, inclusion, and learning rather than performance outcomes alone
- wellbeing is experienced through participation, not treated as a separate outcome



IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

What this means for Teachers, Leaders and the System.

This value proposition positions Physical Education as a discipline with a clear and distinctive contribution. Realising this in practice requires alignment across teaching, leadership, and system design.

For Teachers

Teachers play a critical role in shaping the quality of Physical Education. This requires:

- designing learning that integrates doing, relating, and understanding
- selecting and adapting contexts to support inclusion and engagement
- prioritising learning over activity or performance outcomes
- using reflection and feedback to deepen understanding
- recognising and responding to the diverse needs of ākonga

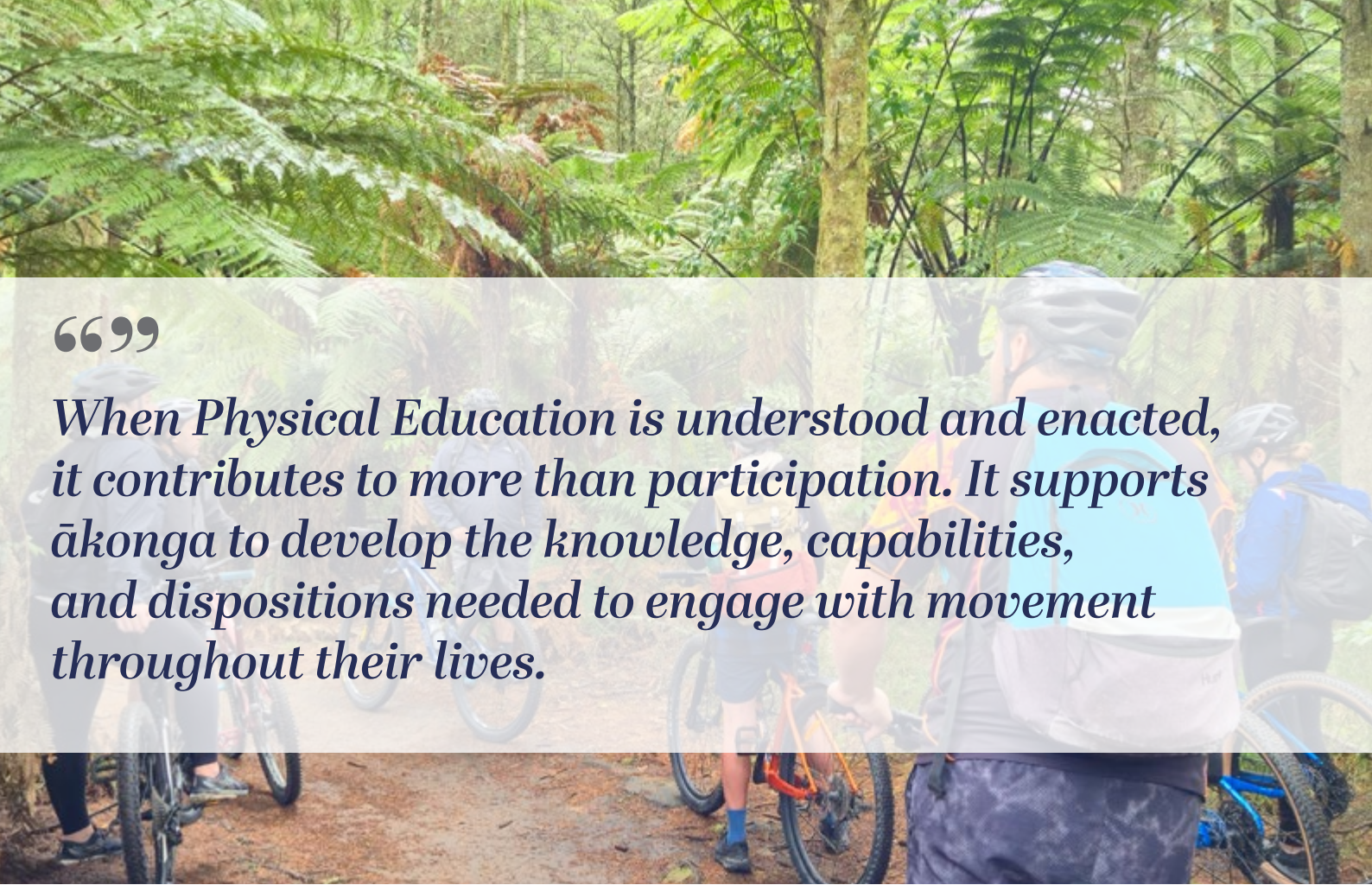
Quality teaching in Physical Education is not about delivering activities. It is about creating learning experiences that are meaningful, challenging, and accessible.

For School Leaders

School leaders influence the conditions that enable quality Physical Education. This includes:

- ensuring sufficient time is allocated for physical education
- supporting professional learning and subject expertise
- valuing Physical Education as a core part of the curriculum
- enabling programmes that reflect the breadth of movement contexts
- resourcing inclusive and culturally responsive practice

Leadership decisions shape whether Physical Education is marginal or meaningful within a school.



“”

When Physical Education is understood and enacted, it contributes to more than participation. It supports ākonga to develop the knowledge, capabilities, and dispositions needed to engage with movement throughout their lives.

For the Education System

System-level decisions must support clarity, coherence, and integrity. This requires:

- recognising Physical Education as a distinct discipline within HPE
- ensuring curriculum design reflects contemporary understanding of movement
- avoiding narrow or overly prescriptive approaches that limit learning
- supporting subject associations and professional networks
- investing in resources and guidance that reflect quality practice

A coherent system enables consistency while allowing flexibility for local context.

For Communities & Whānau

Physical Education connects beyond the school, and its value is strengthened when whānau, hapū, iwi, and communities are genuine partners in the learning. This includes:

- recognising that movement is woven into the everyday life of whānau and community, and that this knowledge has value in the classroom and the kura
- engaging whānau as partners in understanding what physical education is and what it offers their tamariki
- drawing on the movement practices, games, and physical traditions of local communities as meaningful contexts for learning
- creating pathways between school-based physical education and community movement opportunities

Strong community partnerships do not happen by accident. They require intentional outreach, genuine respect for community knowledge, and a shared commitment to the wellbeing of young people.

HE AO KORI HE AO MĀTAURANGA

A World of Movement is a World of Learning

Physical Education offers a unique and essential contribution to the learning and lives of young people in Aotearoa New Zealand.

It is the learning area where movement becomes a way of knowing and being. Through Physical Education, ākonga come to understand themselves, connect with others, and engage with the world around them. They develop the capability to move with confidence, the awareness to make informed choices, and the dispositions to participate in ways that support their wellbeing.

This value proposition affirms that Physical Education is not defined by activity alone. It is defined by the learning that occurs through movement. It is shaped by the experiences we design, the relationships we foster, and the contexts we create.

When Physical Education is understood in this way, its impact extends beyond the gymnasium, field, or classroom. It supports ākonga to navigate a changing world with adaptability, resilience, and a strong sense of identity. It enables them to engage with movement across their lives in ways that are meaningful, inclusive, and sustainable.

In Aotearoa New Zealand, this learning is grounded in place, culture, and relationships. It reflects the bicultural foundations of our education system and the diverse identities of our communities. It recognises that movement is personal, social, cultural, and environmental.

He ao kori, he ao mātauranga. When we value and enact Physical Education in this way, we create opportunities for all ākonga to experience success, connection, and growth through movement. That is the opportunity, and the responsibility, in front of us.

The challenge ahead is not to justify physical education, but to ensure every ākonga experiences its full potential.

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