



Helping teachers work with children when they first return to education following major traumatic or life-changing events

Visiting the Star Family

Designed for Ages	3 - 5 years
Adaptable for Ages	2 - 8 years
Learning Experience Description:	This learning experience takes the children on an imaginary trip to Space where they meet with a Star Family, exploring the topic of caring for families, having dreams and wishes, and navigating change.
Te Whāriki (Aotearoa New Zealand Early Childhood Curriculum):	Mana whenua – belonging and Mana Aotūroa – exploration .
Te Whare Tapa Whā (Māori model for well-being):	Taha whānau – family & social well-being
Te Whare o Oro (Māori framework for understanding the brain):	Limbic system: whanaungatanga/emotional engagement, social connections and experiences.
Tapasā (Cultural competency resource for teachers working with Pacific learners):	Turu 1 – Identities, languages and cultures
Materials: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Optional:</i> Music and speaker to play the song “When you wish upon a star.” https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pguMUFyJ3_U <input type="checkbox"/> Invitation from the star family (see step one or prepare ahead) <input type="checkbox"/> Props or pieces of costume to wear one for each of the following roles: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Spaceship Driver ○ Star Family member <input type="checkbox"/> Tape, chalk or a piece of material to mark where the spaceship is on the floor. <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Optional:</i> Paper stars; enough for each child. Large enough for the children to write or draw on them. See last page of this document for a Star template. 	
Things to consider: <p>This learning experience engages the Teacher In Role convention. Here is an instructional video to explain this teaching convention.</p> <p>Although this activity appears to be quite long, it can be facilitated within 25-40 minutes.</p>	



Prepare ahead:

1. Create an invitation from the Star Family ahead of the activity. This is to be a friendly, attractive invite where the star family asks the children to come visit them. You may want to make this invite as a video or a written page with a map attached, your creativity is welcomed!
If you are going to film yourself as the person from the star family wear the piece of costume that you're attributing to the star family (see **Materials**).

A template for the invitation as below:

Hello people from [insert school]!

My name is [create name]. I am from the Star Family in space. I was wondering if you could help me. I want to know about families and whether the families in your community are the same as up in space. I look after other stars in my family. I hear your school is like a family. I was wondering how you take care of your school family? I was hoping you could come visit me in space and share about how you care for your school family. I've sent a spaceship to pick you up. Your teacher knows how to drive it. Hope to see you soon! Don't forget to pack what you need for the trip – it's a long journey!

2. Put tape or chalk on the floor to mark out the spaceship. A piece of fabric will work well also. Make sure the space is big enough for all the children and yourself to fit in.
3. There are two options for Step #21. Decide ahead of time what is best for your children.

Instructions:

1. **Share with the children that you received a message from the Star Family from outer space.** Share the invitation with the students (see **Prepare Ahead** above).
2. Let the children know that when you are wearing the prop/costume, they will know you are acting as the Spaceship Driver. And when you take that prop off, you are back to being their teacher.
3. Using the **teacher in role teaching convention, put the costume on and sit with the children as the Spaceship Driver.**
4. Ask the children if they want to visit the Star Family and share with them about their school family? **Share that we are going on an imaginary trip to visit our**



star family members who are all the way up in space! Our star family lives together in a community called a constellation.

5. **Ask the children some questions about the star family:**
 - a. “Who do you think we might meet from our star family?”
 - b. “What do you think our star family will look like?”
 - c. “Do we think they will have any star pets?”
 - d. “What do we think the constellation will look like? Does the constellation have any landmarks like in our community?”
 - e. “What do you think the star family members like to do?”
6. Share with the children that families can differ from each other. Ask the children: **“If families can look different, what makes a family a family?”**
7. Share with the children: **“If we are going into outer space, we’ll have to get a space suit and pack our bags to bring on the spaceship with us.”** Suggest to the children they pack their bags first. Ask the children to brainstorm what they can bring to remind them of home and to make them feel safe and comfortable when they are away. **Encourage the children to share about what they are bringing and why.** Reinforce with the children that it is okay to want things that make us feel safe, comfortable, and remind us of home when we are away from home. Let the children know that at any time they are feeling nervous they can reach for what they have brought with them.
8. **Ask the children: “what should we wear as part of our spacesuits?”** Prompt the children to share why they need certain gear

Optional: if you have access to costumes or props, you can ask the children to gather physical objectives for their spacesuit and luggage. OR the children can draw a picture of their spacesuit and luggage.
9. **Invite the children to (either physically or using their imagination) put their space suit on and pack their bags.**
10. Still as teacher in role (as the driver of the spaceship), **invite the children to sit within the boundaries of the spaceship.** Tell the children: **“Before we blast off we have to make sure we have our seat belts on and they are on tightly!”** Count down from 10 and prepare for blastoff, get the children to hold on tightly and act out their blast off in the spaceship into space.

Optional: you may want to play the song “When you wish upon a star” when the spaceship is in motion.
11. **As you are pretending to be travelling through space, you might want to point out interesting landmarks in the sky.** i.e. the moon, the milky way, etc. Let the children know its going to get bumpy/ fast/ slow and act out all of these different motions while seated in the spaceship.
12. **Let the children know that they are so far into space that they can look behind them and see Earth.** Ask the children:
 - a. “Can they see their house/school/community?”
 - b. “What does earth look like to you from space?”



- c. “How does it make you feel seeing Earth so far away?”
 - d. “How does it feel to be travelling with their school family?”
 - e. “How does it feel knowing they will meet the star family soon?”
13. Still in role as the driver of the spaceship (make sure you still have your costume/prop on!), let the children know that we are about to land and meet our star family. Share with them that their star family is a constellation of stars.
14. **Remind the children that if they are feeling nervous they can always hold onto (physically or with their imaginations) what they brought with them to feel safe in their luggage.**
15. Let the children know that the stars are suspended in space. **Invite the children to use their bodies to show what a star might look like or how a star may sparkle.** The children can dance or move around the space acting out what they think a star might look like and how a star might move.
16. Let the children know, that when they get out of the spaceship they will almost be floating through space. **Ask the children to demonstrate how it might look like to float as they move around in space.**
17. **Act out the landing of the spaceship with the children, preparing with another countdown to land.**
18. **Remove the spaceship driver costume and** explain to the children that you have a different/ new costume that indicates when you are acting as the member of the star family that invited the children to come visit. Put on that costume piece, greet the children, and introduce yourself.
19. **In role as the member of the star family, ask the children some questions about family.** The following questions are to get you started, but feel free to adapt and come up with your own additional questions to keep the interaction engaging and relative to your children.
- a. “Are you the children from earth that I sent a message to?”
 - b. “How did you get here?”
 - c. “What did you see in space when you travelled here?”
 - d. “Are you able to tell me about your school/ ECE family? How do you take care of each other?”
 - e. “How do you show your school/ ECE family that you love them and will take care of them?”
 - f. “What would you like to know about my star family?”
20. Still in role as the star family member, **thank the children for sharing about families and how they take care of their school family.**
21. Tell the children **“What you shared with me has been such a gift, that I want to give you a gift!”** Share with the children that you have arranged for them to fly by the Wishing Star on their journey back to Earth. Share how in Māori culture the Wishing Star is called Hiwa-i-te-rangi and speaks to hopes, dreams and aspirations. Let the children know that the Wishing Star has magical powers and how people can make a wish when they see the Wishing Star and the Wishing Star



will try to make it come true. The Wishing Star isn't always able to make the wish come true, but they will try their best.

Note: you can also share about what the wishing star means for your culture.

Option A: Give each child one of **the paper stars**. Share with the children: "These are special magical stars. You need to keep the stars safe until you see the Wishing Star on your journey back to Earth. Once you get to the wishing star, the driver of the spaceship will stop so you can whisper your wish on this star. Hopefully your wish will come true!"

Note: you may want to explore the concept of wishes with the children.

Option B: Share with the children: "I have arranged for you to fly by the Wishing Star on your journey back to Earth. When you pass by the Wishing Star, your Spaceship Driver will pause so you can make a wish. To make a wish you can whisper your wish in your hand and then blow on your hand. This will offer your wish to the Wishing Star!"

Note: you may want to explore the concept of wishes with the children.

22. **Say goodbye to the children and remove your star family costume and put your spaceship driver costume back on.**
23. As the driver of the spaceship, let the children know that we need to go back to the spaceship and start our journey back to Earth. Ask the children how they would like to express their thanks to the star family for sharing all they did? There is no right or wrong answer and children could choose to sing a song, perform a haka, send pictures, write a letter, or make a video later
24. **Invite the children to make sure they have their luggage as they return to their seat on the ship.** Invite the children to **act out the spaceship blasting off again.**
25. In role as the driver of the spaceship, while your group is journeying back to Earth, **tell them when passing by the Wishing Star.** Share with the children that the Wishing Star is a very special star and we are so lucky to be passing so close to it.
26. Invite the children to (either) pick up the star that the star family member gave them or put the palm of their hand out. **Ask the children to think of a wish. Invite the whole group to whisper their wish into the star in their stars/hands.** Then as a group, they can **blow on their star to send their wish to the Wishing Star.**
27. Ask the children:
 - a. "When might we want to make a wish?"
 - b. "What did it feel like to make your wish?"
 - c. "Did you feel anything in your body when you made the wish?"
 - d. "Does your family or your community have any ways that they make wishes?" (i.e. wishbones, blowing out a candle).
28. Still in role as the spaceship driver, **invite the children to wave goodbye to the Wishing Star** and continue on your journey to Earth. Invite the children to make sure they are sitting in their spaceship seats for the landing. Tell the children:



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“Make sure your seat belt is on tight! Check your friends have their seat belts on! And make sure your luggage is stowed beneath your seat!”

29. Act out **landing on Earth** with the children.

30. Once you have landed back on Earth, **invite the children to grab their luggage and exit the spaceship.**

31. **Remove your spaceship driver costume. Once you remove it, you are back to being your teacher self and you can pretend that you don’t know what journey the children have been on.** You can say things like:

- a. “Where have you all been? I’ve been looking for you?!”
- b. “Did you really meet the star family?!”
- c. “What did the star family want? What did you share with them?”
- d. “What part of their space journey did they like the most?”
- e. “Did anything in space remind them of their home/community?”

Star Template



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