

What is Hope?

This resource was originally created to support teacher engagement with the 2025 Out of the Box Festival, Queensland Performing Arts Centre. The theme of the festival is hope.

Designed for Ages	3 – 8 years old
Adaptable for ages	2 – 12 years old
Learning Experience Summary:	This learning sequence is designed to help children (and teachers) gain greater insight into the notion of hope. The sequence begins with the educator sharing a picture book or short animated film. The educator then employs the teacher in role convention and acts as one of the characters from the book/film. The sequence concludes with the children selecting an arts activity from their chosen genre (i.e. drama, music, dance, visual arts) to further explore hope.
Te Whāriki (Aotearoa New Zealand Early Childhood Curriculum):	Mana aotūroa – exploration
Te Whare Tapa Whā (Māori model for well-being):	Taha tinana – physical well-being Taha hinengaro – mental & emotional well-being
Te Whare o Oro (Māori framework for understanding the brain):	Cortex Goal: abstract reasoning, creativity, respect, & moral and spiritual foundation. Needs: ako/learning, complex conversations, social interactions & exploratory play.
Tapasā (Cultural competency resource for teachers working with Pacific learners):	Turu 1: Identities, languages and cultures
Context: <p>Before moving on to the learning experiences, let's briefly consider what hope is.</p> <p>Hope is elusive as you cannot actually see, touch, taste or smell it...but evidence of it is everywhere - if you look hard enough! Fortunately, artists and authors have gifted us with some beautiful works to help us as we look, drawing upon symbols, images and metaphors to capture the essence of hope. These include: rainbows, butterflies, stars, the horizon, seeds, flowers and light.</p>	

In the case of light, hope might be, a tiny spot of light in the darkness, like a single light suddenly coming on and glowing golden in the darkest window of a very dark house. It might also be a bright light, like a lighthouse for sailors lost at sea.

If we were to dance hopefully, our dance would most likely have a lightness about it, a floating quality like a balloon drifting over a garden. Music that sounds like hope might help us to feel calm, reminding us of wonderful memories, friends or promises. This music might make us want to dance, smile or laugh, or even cry from relief.

Hope may be personal – we might hold our hopes close to our hearts, not letting anyone else know what we are hoping for. Or hope may be something we share with our friends, with our family, with our community, with others from across the world. Hope may also be a gift we give to someone else – a kind word, an invitation, a story, an outstretched hand.

The Te Rito Toi resource itself is an example of hope – a coming together of artists, children, educators and friends to explore ideas, learning experiences and stories that make us all feel lighter, happier and more connected to each other.

Materials:

- ☐ Choose a picture book or short animated film about hope to share with your children. Suggestions are listed in [Picture Book & Film Resources](#).
- ☐ A prop or costume item for the teacher to use when they go into the role of the character the children select. See **Step 4**.
- ☐ Have some materials ready for the art activities in **Step 9**.

Things to consider:

- While age groups for the various activities and steps in this sequence have been indicated, as an educator you will know best what will engage the children you work with and care for. Please feel free to use and adapt the activities in whatever way you choose. These are simply some suggestions to get you started.
- There are further resources that can be useful for this learning experience.
 - o [Picture Book & Film Resources](#): this is a descriptive list of picture books and short animated films that explore hope.
 - o [Play Space Ideas](#): is a detailed table with additional ideas of how to facilitate the play space.
- In **Step 2** - for older children (6-8), this discussion might take place as a whole group activity, but for younger children (3-5) we recommend conversations in small groups or even with individuals.

Prepare ahead:

- If you are not experienced with the drama convention of Teacher in Role, we recommend watching the [Teacher In Role short video](#) which discusses what Teacher in Role is and answers frequently asked questions.

Instructions:

Step 1 – Resource Sharing

This step is designed for children 3-8, but please select the resource/resources most appropriate for your children, their capabilities and interests.

Share with the children one of the short, animated films or one of the stories above (or any other resource you might have that relate to the theme of hope). Explain that the book/film you have chosen is about hope – something we can't see or touch, taste or smell yet is something that makes us feel happy or joyful. Explain that we **can** see and feel that!

Step 2 – Discussion

For older children (6-8), this discussion might take place as a whole group activity, but for younger children (3-5) we recommend conversations in small groups or even with individuals.

Following the reading/viewing, ask the children some of the following questions, or others that you can think of that will prompt the children's interest and engagement:

- Have you ever heard the word hope before? Have you ever heard someone say: "I hope so!"
- You might have heard someone say, "I hope the rain stops soon" or "I hope you feel better soon", or "I hope you had a lovely birthday"? What else have you heard?
- Have you ever said, "I hope so!"
- If so, what have you hoped for? (Some examples might be: Mummy or Daddy would come home soon or come to collect you soon; that you feel better soon when you have been sick; that your cousins or friends might come to play with you at your house; that your birthday comes soon; etc.)
- Did anyone in the story we just read/viewed seem like they felt hopeful or in need of some hope?
- How were they different before they found hope compared to afterwards?
- What changed for the characters in the story/animation when they felt the joy of hope? (for example: the little mole smiled; the girl in Raindance danced; Mrs

McGinty's back straightened up and she laughed; the little boy in Wisp saw colours and light and smiles on people's faces; the little dog felt proud; the turtle started a new life).

Step 3 – Decide who the children want to meet

Explain to the children that today we have the special chance to meet and talk to one of the characters from the film/story reviewed in Steps 1 and 2. Explain that this person/animal may not be the main character, or even one that appears in the story or film. They may instead be someone who saw what was happening. Who would they like to meet to find out more about hope?

Based on the children's responses, or if they don't have any in particular, possible teacher roles for each of the resources above might include:

- *Never Lose Hope*: one of the other dogs; one of the trainers.
- *Hope*: a human on the beach who watched the young turtle's troubles and eventually saw it reach the sea; an adult turtle whose young ones had already made it to the sea and was watching.
- *Mrs McGinty and the Bizarre Plant*: Mrs McGinty herself; one of the children in the community (that did or didn't put stones in her letterbox); one of her next-door neighbours; a local shopkeeper.
- *The Red Tree*: The young girl herself; one of the people who lives in her building; her teacher (she didn't come to school yesterday, but today she came and told me what happened yesterday).
- *Raindance*: the girl; her mother; the girl's father who had gone to sell the farm.
- *Little Mole finds Hope*: Little mole; her mother.
- *Wisp*: the young boy; one of the people he helps; the local community leader who witnesses the changes.

Step 4 - Introduce Teacher in Role as Character

Teacher then explains how they are going to become that character by putting on a costume item or by holding a prop of some kind. They will also explain that they will be sitting in a special seat that will transform them into that character...but only if everyone tries very hard to pretend.

Step 5 – Prepare questions

To prepare to meet the character, invite children to think very hard on their own or with a partner and come up with some questions for the character. What would you like to ask them? They might want to know how they felt before and after finding hope; or why hope can be difficult; what they had to do to feel joy and hope again; are they still feeling hopeful?

Step 6 - Step into the role of the character

Using the hot seat strategy*, provide opportunities for the children to ask the teacher in role questions. Try to answer as sincerely as you can and remember to stay in role. If you have to redirect a child's behaviour, stand up and remove your costume or prop. Do not do this in role. Try to be a bit different, but don't put on an accent or funny voice. Also, add lots more detail, after all, you were there. It either happened to you or you saw it, so you know a lot more than we heard about in the story.

**Here is [a video by Katie Dawson that discusses the hot seating strategy](#). You will notice in the video that the children are in the hot seat. Whereas in this learning experience, the teacher is in the hot seat.*

Step 7 – Debrief with the children

After the teacher has stepped out of role, invite the children to talk about what they just heard. Do they need to talk to anyone else to find out more? Repeat as required.

Step 8 – Acting out Hope

Now that the children know a lot more about hope, ask them to use their bodies and facial expressions to show two images: what the character looked like/felt like before they found hope and what they looked like after they found it. Talk about these images.

Step 9 – Exploring Hope through Arts activities

Talk to the children about some of the Arts activities they might choose to engage in as a response to the steps above. Explain that you want them to explore the idea of hope and have provide a range of resources for them to use. Remember though that quality arts education in the early years requires that children have agency, so try to avoid directing them too much. Instead, make some suggestions and then be ready to guide their responses:

Dance

- Invite the children to listen to a piece of music that is likely to make them feel calm, happy and hopeful. For example:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tR5Vy4ijuSQ> (first track).
- Provide lengths of material/fabric and invite the children to create a dance of hope. Remind them that they could work with a friend or on their own and that they need to be careful not to run into other people. Explain that they might move high and low, fast and slow, together and apart, in circles and in lines, using their material in different ways.
- Film some of the children's dances using your smart phone and share them with the children. Invite them to respond to the dances and ask if they can see hope!

Music

- Explore sounds using percussion instruments, including glockenspiels and xylophones. Can you make music that sounds hopeful?
- Listen to a variety of songs and pieces of music. Ask the children which ones make them feel happy and hopeful? Invite them to ask their parents for the names of the songs they like that make them feel hopeful and joyous. Make a list where possible.

Visual Arts

- Invite children 3-5 to help create a Hope Box. How would we decorate the box? What hopes could we put inside? Would we draw them or paint them? What would we draw/paint? Could we just use colours that make us feel hopeful?
- Using one large piece of calico fabric, invite the children to use felt pens or glitter pens to draw their hopes and create a Cloth of Hope. Explain that when it is finished, we might use it when we dance Hope!

Dramatic Play (3-6 years)

- Suggest that the children might want to use play to explore hope by either creating a shoe shop where you can try on different kinds of emotions – including hope, or a garden centre where they sell plants and seeds that might grow help (but not guaranteed). See [Play Space Ideas](#) for detailed ideas.
 - A) For the Shoe Shop of Hope, wonder with the children about:
 - what this shop might be like
 - how we might create it
 - the kinds of shoes on sale
 - how the shoes might be arranged (by style or by kind of hope – self, family, school, community, world!)
 - who might work there and what they would wear or do
 - what kinds of customers might come into the shop and what they might ask for
 - what might go wrong in the shop (for example might people end up trying on the wrong kind of feeling, or mismatched feelings from two different shoes??)
 - B) For the Garden Centre of Blooming Hope, wonder with the children about:
 - what might make this garden centre different to a normal nursery
 - what might be sold (seeds, soil, plants, tools, watering cans etc)
 - how the seeds or plants might be arranged (by style or by kind of hope – self, family, school, community, world!)
 - who might work there and what they would wear or do
 - what kinds of customers might come into the garden centre and what they might ask for

- what might go wrong in the shop (for example what if the seeds don't grow or the plants die?)

Creative Writing for Ages 6-8

- As a class, create a Hope Chest...decorating it as you like. Once decorated, leave a slot at the top for the children to post messages about their hopes. Explain to the children that their hopes should be anonymous...we want to know what people are hoping for, not who is hoping for what!
- After a week or so, read the hopes that have been placed in the chest and try to arrange them by: personal hopes, family hopes, school hopes, community hopes etc.
- Write a letter to one of the characters, describing how you feel about them and about hope.
- Create a poster that explains to others what hope is and where they can find it.
- Retell the story of one of the characters as a newspaper article with the title: X (dog, child, old woman, turtle etc.) finds Hope! In the article, use the five W's (who, what, where, when and why) to explain what happened and what hope means to the character now. As part of the story, try to explain what hope is/means to them.