

# Relationships and sexuality education **key learning** and the **underlying concepts** of **Health and Physical** **Education**

**Relationships and Sexuality Education**  
GUIDELINES | YEARS 1-13

**RESOURCE FOR TEACHERS**



The explanation of the underlying concepts in this document expands the understanding of the key learning in the *Relationships and Sexuality Education* guides, as connected to the Health and Physical Education learning area (HPE) in *The New Zealand Curriculum* (NZC).

The key learning statements across levels 1-8 ([🔗 Relationships and Sexuality Education guide Years 1-8 pages 30-33](#), and [🔗 Relationships and Sexuality Education guide Years 9-13 pages 35-39](#)) gives focus to the contextual (topic) related aspects of RSE, whereas this explanation of the way the HPE underlying concepts develop across NZC levels 1-8 aims to:

- Add conceptual depth to teachers' understanding of the RSE knowledge indicated in these key learning statements.
- Frame the scope and meaning of what is intended by these key learning statements, e.g. that learning about *physical* changes during puberty is still within a holistic understanding of wellbeing (*hauora*), or that learning about *personal* identity is still in consideration of those around us and our communities (socio-ecological perspective), or that taking action is about learning skills to know how to carry out a *wellbeing promotion* process (health promotion), or that to promote equity and *social justice* by being inclusive also requires consideration of what is fair for all (attitudes and values).
- Show in broad terms how RSE knowledge develops, steps up and progresses conceptually across the NZC levels (when this is not always apparent in the topic matter noted in the key learning statements — see also the relationships learning progressions). [🔗 link to our progressions](#)
- Establish RSE knowledge as HPE curriculum knowledge — because it is grounded in these underlying concepts.

When planning learning programmes, these underlying concepts explanations can be used in addition to the key learning statements as a way to:

- Identify 'big questions' or the overarching aims of programmes that frame RSE learning as part of local curriculum design, from which class- and learner-specific learning intentions and success criteria can be developed.
- Help 'pitch' the learning to reflect learner needs in relation to NZC levels, and select or adapt resources to align with these learning needs.
- Check on planning to ensure that the conceptual building blocks and transferable knowledge needed across all learning in health education (including mental health, food and nutrition, and body care and physical safety, as well as RSE) are being developed within and across the curriculum levels.
- Evaluate the suitability of RSE new resources, or judge the appropriateness of programmes being offered by external providers.

<p><b>HAUORA</b></p>	<p>The holistic approach to RSE is based on the concept of hauora. This approach recognises that all relationships have social, mental and emotional, and spiritual dimensions, as well as physical dimensions. These aspects are interrelated.</p>
<p><b>SOCIO-ECOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE</b></p>	<p>Through the socio-ecological perspective, ākonga examine the social and cultural contexts that affect how people learn about, understand and express their relationships, gender, and sexuality. This perspective enables ākonga to look critically at culturally-based values and beliefs, and how they affect individuals and society.</p>
<p><b>HEALTH PROMOTION</b></p>	<p>Ākonga can take health promotion action within schools and communities to advocate for access to services, to raise awareness of sexuality and gender issues, to work against discrimination, and to show support for diversity. Ākonga can be involved in communicating between schools and communities in relation to gender and sexuality issues and programmes.</p>
<p><b>ATTITUDES AND VALUES</b></p>	<p>RSE programmes are underpinned by the values of social justice and equity. Ākonga can explore diverse values, and learn about respect and about care and concern for themselves and other people. They can examine how values are expressed in relationships and in different groups and contexts. They can develop understandings around ethics, rights and responsibilities.</p>

These underlying concepts are used in combination to give shape and purpose to knowledge learning in RSE. As these underlying concepts are applied to RSE-related topics in developmentally more complex ways, it helps to show and understand learning progression in RSE.

These concepts are mutually defining, so that the learning of RSE subject knowledge in relation to one underlying concept then leads onto the way the learning develops through to the other concepts, giving a sense of overlapping ideas or, rather, a continuity and connectedness of ideas which is demonstrated in the following examples.

The application of the underlying concepts for curriculum levels 1-4 have been collapsed into just two levels, on the understanding that abstract conceptual ideas will generally develop more slowly at primary school levels and grow more quickly at secondary school as ākonga develop their capacity for critical thinking and literacy capabilities.

These ideas are indicative only and not an exhaustive list of possibilities. RSE teaching and learning resources expand these ideas. [link to MoE Sexuality curriculum in action titles](#)

**NZC LEVEL 1****HAUORA**

With support, ākonga are able to identify and name or describe aspects of wellbeing related to the dimensions of hauora. They can name feelings and express these, and talk about the benefits of having the support of friends and whānau. They can discuss the ways they are similar and different to other people and what they like about themselves and others. Ākonga know about body safety, including hygiene and appropriate touching. They can recognise body parts, including genitals, and name them (in te reo Māori and in English), and understand basic concepts about reproduction.

**SOCIO-ECOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE (SEP)**

Ākonga can talk about themselves in relation to a range of wellbeing situations, and share their ideas about their needs and wants in relationships with friends and whānau. They can describe aspects of their local environment (class, school or community) that connect with wellbeing, such as ways of belonging and manaakitanga, and about roles and responsibilities at school. They know how to be a good friend and communicate, learn, work and play with a diverse range of other people.

**HEALTH PROMOTION (HP)**

Actions are largely participatory, with ākonga growing their vocabulary around ways of working that promote wellbeing for themselves and others. They can contribute to teacher-supported planning of health promoting activities for their class or school community. Ākonga are able to express their own feelings and needs, and can listen and be sensitive to others by showing aroha, care, respect and manaakitanga in a range of contexts. They can demonstrate the use of personal and interpersonal skills that promote whanaungatanga and support wellbeing, like sharing and cooperating, listening and affirming. They can use strategies to keep themselves safe (including basic safety strategies online and on devices). Ākonga know who to trust and how to ask for help, and they know how to stand up for themselves and others (e.g. if there is unfairness, teasing, bullying, or inappropriate touching).

**ATTITUDES AND VALUES (A&V)**

Ākonga demonstrate a growing vocabulary to express ideas related to having a positive attitude to their wellbeing (and that of others), as well as ways of showing fairness, respect, and care and concern for self and others, and these values are demonstrated through learning activities. They are learning how to accept and celebrate difference in a range of contexts, including in games, play, classroom activities and at home.

**NZC LEVEL 2****HAUORA**

With support, ākongā are able to identify and name or describe aspects of wellbeing related to the dimensions of hauora. They can identify a range of feelings and express these, and talk about these in relation to wellbeing. They can discuss the ways they are similar and different to other people, and what they like about themselves and others. They understand that personal identities differ (e.g. in terms of gender, ethnicity, language, belief systems and whakapapa). They know about human anatomy, about how bodies are diverse and how they change over time, and about human reproductive processes.

**SOCIO-ECOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE (SEP)**

Ākongā can talk about themselves in relation to a range of wellbeing situations, and share their ideas about their needs and wants in relationships with friends and whānau. They are developing understanding around the meaning of consent in a range of contexts, including online situations. Ākongā can describe aspects of their local environment (class, school or community) and how these connect with wellbeing, such as being able to identify gender stereotypes. They are developing understanding about the difference between gender and sex, and know that there are diverse gender and sexual identities in society.

**HEALTH PROMOTION (HP)**

Actions are largely participatory, with ākongā growing their vocabulary around ways of working that promote wellbeing for themselves and others. They are able to name and express a wide range of feelings, and use skills to manage their feelings. They can demonstrate the use of personal and interpersonal skills that support wellbeing, as they engage positively with peers and others during play, games, classroom activities and online, such as through listening, affirming others, waiting, taking turns, recognising others' feelings and respecting them, and showing manaakitanga, aroha and responsibility). They are able to give and receive consent (e.g. at the doctor, in the playground or online). They can contribute to teacher-supported planning of health-promoting activities for their class or school community, such as contributing to and following guidelines that support inclusive environments in the classroom and school.

**ATTITUDES AND VALUES (A&V)**

Ākongā demonstrate a growing vocabulary to express ideas related to having a positive attitude to their wellbeing (and that of others), as well as ways of showing fairness, respect, and care and concern for self and others, and these values are demonstrated through learning activities. They are learning how to recognise what is fair and unfair in a range of contexts, including in games, play, classroom activities and at home.

**NZC LEVEL 3****HAUORA**

Ākonga are able to name all dimensions of hauora and wellbeing described by te whare tapa whā, using both English and te reo Māori terminology, and are developing understanding of the needs that relate to people's social, emotional, physical and spiritual growth and wellbeing. With support they can link ideas about pubertal change with the dimensions of hauora and how it is different for different people. They have a basic understanding of the need for balance between and across the dimensions.

**SOCIO-ECOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE (SEP)**

Ākonga show understanding mostly about the personal and interpersonal aspects of health and wellbeing issues. They are increasingly able to understand the links between their feelings, beliefs and values with identity and self-worth. They are developing understanding of different types of relationships (e.g. friendships, romantic relationships, relationships between whānau, teams, church members and online relationships) and understand how relationships influence their own wellbeing and that of others. As community/societal ideas are being introduced (e.g. media, culture, helping agencies, community resources), ākonga are also developing understanding of the ways communities develop and use inclusive policies and practices to support gender and sexual diversity, such as at public events, during physical activity and sports, within whānau, in community organisations and online. They are developing the ability to critique the ways in which social media and other media represent bodies and appearance, relationships and gender, and can identify a range of ways in which these affect wellbeing.

**HEALTH PROMOTION (HP)**

Health promoting actions focus on learning a range of personal and interpersonal skills for promoting wellbeing, such as understanding consent, pressure, coercion, and rights, and developing skills for giving or withholding consent, and for staying safe and engaging respectfully in a range of contexts, including online. They can demonstrate the use of strategies to address relationship challenges (in friendships, groups and teams, with whānau, and online) and as part of creating a safe and inclusive classroom or school community. As and where opportunity allows, ākonga contribute ideas and planning to school and/or community-based health promotion events and participate in these, such as taking part in collective action to implement school and community policies that support young people during pubertal change, affirm a range of gender and sexual identities, and build and sustain inclusive school communities. They also know about a range of health and community services and have strategies for seeking help (for themselves and others), including at school and within their whānau.

**ATTITUDES AND VALUES (A&V)**

Most of the focus on attitudes and values is around ideas to do with showing respect, care and concern for self and others in sexuality and gender contexts. Ideas about fairness feature across all contexts to provide the foundations for understanding inclusiveness.

**NZC LEVEL 4****HAUORA**

Ākonga are able to name all dimensions of hauora and wellbeing described by te whare tapa whā, using both English and te reo Māori terminology. They know about pubertal change, including hormonal changes, menstruation, body development and the development of gender identities. They have a basic understanding of the need for balance between and across the dimensions. Ākonga are developing a basic understanding of conception and the various and differing approaches to contraception.

**SOCIO-ECOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE (SEP)**

Ākonga show understanding mostly about the personal and interpersonal aspects of health and wellbeing issues. They are increasingly able to show understanding of the way pubertal change relates to social norms around gender and sexuality, as well as identify connections between wellbeing and media representations of relationships, gender and bodies (including representations in social media, in films and on television). They are able to relate understanding about the various forms of contraception to social norms, choice, consent and wellbeing. Ākonga are able to understand the effects of changing relationships on wellbeing and how to manage these changes. As community/societal ideas are being introduced they develop understanding of the ways school and community contexts link with people's gender and sexual identities, such as in relation to school procedures and rules, sports and physical activities, and community facilities and environments.

**HEALTH PROMOTION (HP)**

Health promoting actions focus on learning a range of personal and interpersonal skills for promoting wellbeing. These are demonstrated as part of creating a safe classroom or school community, such as skills for managing intimate relationships (involving attraction, desire, aroha and love) and relationship changes, including changes to relationships online and using social media. This includes developing knowledge and skills for exercising rights and responsibilities, the need to give and receive consent and to make informed choices, and assertive communication. Ākonga can make plans to support their own wellbeing and that of others. As and where opportunity allows, ākonga contribute ideas and planning to school and/or community-based health promotion events, and participate in these, such as taking action to promote an inclusive school community. They know how to access help for themselves and others, and know about a range of strategies and resources that support health and wellbeing and affirm diversity. They understand how these can enhance wellbeing, mitigate risk, support gender and sexual identity, and promote inclusion and acceptance.

**ATTITUDES AND VALUES (A&V)**

Most of the focus on attitudes and values is around ideas to do with showing respect, care and concern for self and others. Ideas about fairness feature across all contexts to develop knowledge of ways to recognise situations of discrimination or harassment, and what needs to change to create a more inclusive social environment.

**NZC LEVEL 5****HAUORA**

Ākonga are able to apply all dimensions of hauora and wellbeing described by te whare tapa whā to RSE contexts. They can confidently use the language of this model using both English and te reo Māori terminology. They have understanding of the need for balance between and across the dimensions, and they show some ability to explain how these dimensions are interconnected, for example, in relation to sexual and reproductive health and behaviours, intimate relationships, thoughts and feelings, and identity and self-worth.

**SOCIO-ECOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE (SEP)**

Ākonga are deepening their understanding of the personal and interpersonal aspects of the health and wellbeing issues in RSE contexts, and connecting these ideas with a developing understanding of a range of community/societal factors, such as media, culture, laws, helping agencies, community resources.

For example, ākonga are developing understanding of the way people's ideas about love, intimacy, attraction, desire, romance and pleasure are related to wellbeing and relationships, leading onto being able to analyse representations of sex, sexuality and relationships in social media, advertising and entertainment in terms of their impacts on relationships and wellbeing. They are developing knowledge about a range of cultural approaches to issues of gender and sexuality and how these relate to holistic understandings of wellbeing. This is, for example, in terms of varying perspectives on contraception and reproduction for different people, such as teens, heterosexual couples, same-sex couples, and single parents, as well as cultural, generational and personal values related to gender and sexual identities. They are also developing understanding of school and community policies, practices and events that support sex, gender, and sexual diversity, and know how to take action to support these policies.

**HEALTH PROMOTION (HP)**

Ākonga focus health promoting actions on learning a range of personal and interpersonal skills for promoting wellbeing at a personal and interpersonal level. These are demonstrated as part of creating a safe and inclusive school community. They have skills for enhancing relationships that reflect respectful attitudes and values, including skills for: strengthening personal identity, including effective communication, assertiveness, negotiating intimacy, giving and receiving consent, dealing with pressure, and demonstrating care and respect. As and where opportunities allow, ākonga contribute planning ideas to school and/or community-based health promotion events and participate in these, such as taking action when representations of sex, sexuality and relationships in social media and/or advertising affect their own wellbeing or that of others. They also take part in a range of practices and activities (e.g. physical activity and sport, school and community events, classroom activities, and interactions on social media) and reflect critically on how these practices connect with issues of body image and gender norms. Ākonga can also develop strategies to promote inclusion and wellbeing.

**ATTITUDES AND VALUES (A&V)**

Ākonga are able to understand how attitudes and values to do with respect, and care and concern for self and others, and community/society influence the wellbeing of self and others. Ideas about fairness feature across all RSE contexts, as does understanding about inclusiveness and being able to recognise situations that are fair and inclusive, or not.

**NZC LEVEL 6 (NCEA LEVEL 1)****HAUORA**

Ākonga are able to apply all dimensions of hauora and wellbeing described by te whare tapa whā to RSE contexts, and explain how these dimensions are interconnected. They show clear understanding of the need for balance between and across the dimensions. Added complexity of understanding is demonstrated, for example, through examining how gender and sexual identities can shift in different contexts and over time. They also understand how these identities can be affected by relationships, family, media, popular culture, religion, spirituality, and youth cultures.

**SOCIO-ECOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE (SEP)**

In addition to being able to apply all dimensions of hauora and wellbeing described by te whare tapa whā to RSE contexts, and explain how these dimensions are interconnected, some of the more abstract ideas related to spiritual wellbeing, such as identity, values and beliefs, and a having sense of belonging and connectedness, are well understood and ākonga can confidently express ideas related to these. They can recognise how different values affect people's behaviours in intimate relationships, and can develop interpersonal skills and plan strategies for responding to needs and challenges, solving problems and making decisions. Ākonga are able to compare concepts of love, attraction, romance, pleasure, and consent from different perspectives and in different situations, and can take ethical standpoints, e.g. by considering cultural values, church values, family values, and the values portrayed in social media and films. They are able to critique heteronormative messages and practices in the school or community and recommend actions to address these.

**HEALTH PROMOTION (HP)**

Ākonga focus health promoting actions on issues related to the learning featured with the socio-ecological perspective aspects of their RSE learning. Ākonga can name skills used for promoting wellbeing at a personal and interpersonal level, and identify community/society structures and organisations that could support wellbeing in a range of contexts. Individually, ākonga are able to decide a personal wellbeing goal and design a basic action plan to achieve this goal, implement their plan and reflect on their actions. They have knowledge and skills to enhance wellbeing in intimate relationships, including knowledge and skills about rights and responsibilities, consent, decision making and problem solving, and considering risks and safe sexual practices. This includes understanding which combination of skills are needed for promoting wellbeing in a specific situation. Ākonga can also develop more complex and critical strategies to promote inclusion and wellbeing.

**ATTITUDES AND VALUES (A&V)**

Ākonga continue to develop understanding how attitudes and values to do with respect, and care and concern for self and others, as well as community/society, influence the wellbeing of self and others, with more connections being made between these ideas. Ideas about fairness feature across all RSE contexts, as does understanding about inclusiveness and being able to recognise situations that are fair and inclusive, or not, and understand the reasons for this.

## NZC LEVEL 7 (NCEA LEVEL 2)

### HAUORA

The progression to levels 7 & 8 of the curriculum is shown through a holistic understanding of hauora and this is evident in all student learning artefacts produced in RSE learning contexts. While ākonga may still unpack and explore health and wellbeing contexts in relation to the dimensions and the inter-relatedness of these, the expectation is that a holistic understanding of wellbeing can be 'read' into student learning artefacts without them explicitly stating it like they have at lower levels. Added complexity of ideas may be shown, for example, though understanding how considerations of sex, gender and sexuality might change across the lifespan. They may also be examining physical changes across the lifespan for different people, including changes relating to fertility, menstruation and the menopause, and explore the impacts of people's choices relating to sexual health, e.g. choices about using contraceptives, hormone blockers or drugs, and about managing with STIs. Ākonga may also be exploring other theoretical, indigenous and cultural models of health and wellbeing to variously compare and contrast the features of each, evaluating their relevance and application to RSE, and for specific populations.

### SOCIO-ECOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE (SEP)

Ākonga focus their learning on the inter-relatedness of the personal/individual, interpersonal/others, and community/societal aspects of the RSE contexts being studied. They are able to analyse their own close friendships, partnerships, and social interactions, and identify risks arising from intimate relationships in online and offline environments, and can explain their personal values and needs (e.g. in relation to dating, the influence of pornography, or issues of consent). They can evaluate societal and cultural influences on partnerships, families, and childcare relationships. Overall they are developing the skill of sourcing and using quality evidence to support their analyses and ideas. It may not be the most critical data related to the issue, but the learning artefacts show these ideas are in development.

### HEALTH PROMOTION (HP)

Health promoting actions suggested for a range of issues reflect the SEP and show basic understanding of how these actions need to target the factors that caused or influenced the RSE issue in the first place. Actions could include, for example, analysing beliefs, attitudes and practices that influence choices by reinforcing stereotypes (such as sexism, homophobia and transphobia) and taking action to address these at school using the principles of social justice to advocate for inclusive practices, or planning actions to enhance communication and wellbeing in a range of RSE situations (including online situations and situations involving alcohol and other drugs). Using the processes of collection action, ākonga use data to decide a (school) community wellbeing goal and design an action plan to achieve this goal, implement the plan, then evaluate the process and impact of their actions.

### ATTITUDES AND VALUES (A&V)

Overall, ākonga have embedded ideas to do with respect, and care and concern for self and others across all RSE learning. The values of social justice become a key focus for learning, especially those values related to inclusiveness and non-discrimination. These are explicit among the health promoting actions recommended for addressing RSE issues studied.

**NZC LEVEL 8 (NCEA LEVEL 3)****HAUORA**

The progression to levels 7 & 8 of the curriculum is shown through a holistic understanding of hauora and this is evident in all student learning artefacts produced in RSE learning contexts. While ākonga may still unpack and explore health and wellbeing contexts in relation to the dimensions and the inter-relatedness of these, the expectation is that a holistic understanding of wellbeing can be 'read' into student learning artefacts without them explicitly stating it like they have at lower levels of the NZC. They are able to reflect on their personal identity (which will include their gender, sexuality, body, ethnicity, culture, location, ability and age). Ākonga may also be exploring other theoretical, indigenous and cultural models of health and wellbeing to variously compare and contrast the features of each, evaluating their relevance and application to particular wellbeing contexts, and for specific populations.

**SOCIO-  
ECOLOGICAL  
PERSPECTIVE  
(SEP)**

Ākonga focus their learning on the broader societal consideration of RSE situations and issues. Any consideration of interpersonal/others and individual/personal are in relation to those broader societal understandings. They are able to critically analyse values, practices, and legislation for promoting safer and more pleasurable sexual practices (e.g. by examining health promotion strategies, law changes, and health policies) and are able to explore desire, pleasure, consent, and attraction as interpersonal, social and ethical concepts. They are able to critically analyse a range of issues that affect relationships, gender identity and sexuality (e.g. by considering the social impacts of online dating and pornography, as well as the social and environmental impacts of menstrual products, contraceptive devices, fertility treatments, and pharmaceuticals). Ākonga explore identity politics and related issues in diverse contexts (including issues around labels such as "LGBTQI+", "rainbow", "takatāpui", and "MVPFAFF"). Where relevant to the RSE topic, consideration of the social determinants of health feature (e.g. sexual and reproductive health). Overall, a strong (critical) evidence base using quantitative and quantitative data adds to these understandings.

**HEALTH  
PROMOTION  
(HP)**

Ākonga learn about models of health promotion (e.g. charters framed around sets of principles, models developed from academic theory and research, and indigenous models) as a way to understand the approaches to health promotion that are more effective and more applicable to RSE contexts. They learn to analyse current health and wellbeing promotion campaigns or initiatives (of activist groups or 'social movements') related to RSE, and design health promotion approaches for their (school) community in consideration of these models and ideas. They are able to critically evaluate a range of data and devise strategies to meet their current and future sexual health needs and can plan to actively promote positive, equitable and supportive relationships. Ākonga are able to advocate for sexual and environmental justice and for inclusive cultures in relation to RSE issues, such the social impacts of online dating and pornography, as well as the social and environmental impacts of menstrual products, contraceptive devices, fertility treatments, and pharmaceuticals. They are able to critically evaluate societal attitudes to sex and sexuality (including attitudes in families, communities, religious contexts, and online), and can apply health promotion strategies to enhance sexual health and affirm diversity.

**ATTITUDES  
AND VALUES  
(A&V)**

Overall, akonga have embedded the values of social justice across all RSE learning. Most focus is given to attitudes and values linked to ideas about inequity and how and why some people do not have the same experience of health and wellbeing in RSE contexts as others. These ideas are most visible when explaining the factors that influence RSE-related health and wellbeing issues, and the actions needed to achieve more equitable health and wellbeing outcomes for all people. Ākonga also show an introductory understanding of thinking ethically and using ethical principles to explore different perspectives on RSE issues.