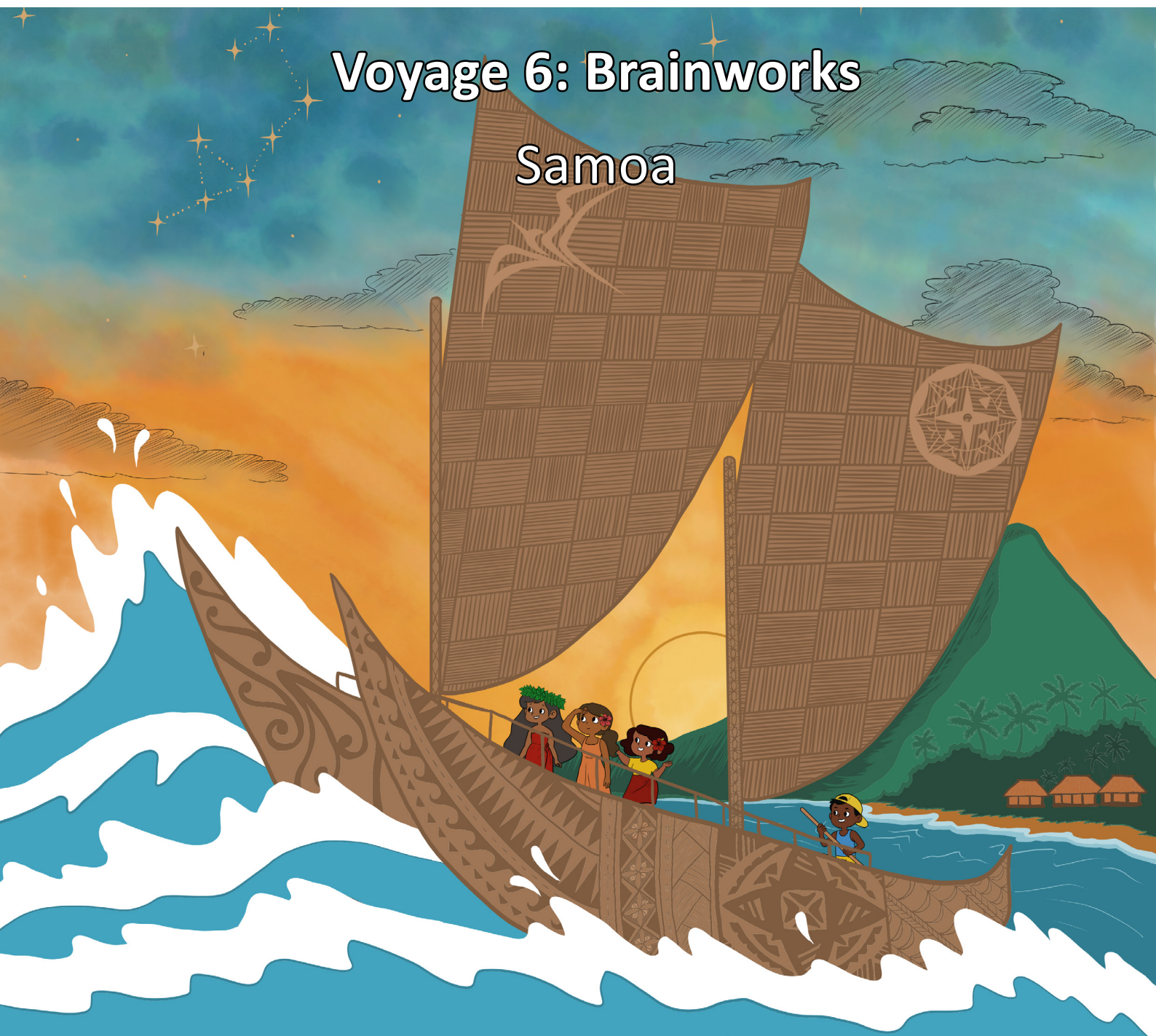


Nesian Narratives Toolkit

Voyage 6: Brainworks

Samoa



A Pacific-Led Educational Resource for Kaiako Supporting Identity and Wellbeing of Tamariki Aged 4-5 in Early Childhood Education (ECE) Settings across Aotearoa New Zealand.

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Nesian Narratives Toolkit

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1. About this topic

During childhood, the brain grows and changes rapidly, making it an optimal time to build important skills. This stage helps children develop thinking abilities, emotional awareness, social connections, and physical coordination—setting them up for future learning and success. Key areas to focus on include problem-solving, communication, understanding emotions, movement and physical activities, math skills, and curiosity about the world. Alongside learning about how the brain works, children will also explore Samoa—its culture, language, and traditions—helping them connect with identity and diversity while building cognitive and social skills. By encouraging children to engage in playful, hands-on activities that nurture brain development while exploring Samoa’s rich culture and traditions, we can help them grow in ways that strengthen cognitive skills, social connections, and a sense of identity.

2. Learning Outcomes

Over time, with guidance and encouragement, tamariki will become increasingly capable of:

1. Exploring and sharing fascinating facts about Samoa, including its people, culture, history, geography, and values, to understand what makes it special.
2. Discovering how their brain works, understanding it as a powerful “supercomputer” that helps them think, feel, and learn. Identifying different roles of the brain, in relation to movement, emotions, and learning, and recognising how each function supports their daily experiences.
3. Understanding the importance of healthy habits—such as eating well, getting enough sleep, and staying active—to support their brain’s growth and wellbeing.

3. Curriculum Planning

1. Learning and sharing interesting facts about Samoa

Principle: Family and Community | Whanau Tangata

Strand: Belonging | Mana Whenua

Goal: Tamariki experience an environment where they feel comfortable with the routines, customs, and regular events

Objective: Tamariki develop a sense of belonging by learning and sharing about their cultural heritage, enhancing their understanding of diversity and identity.

Planned Learning Experience:

- a) Sina and the Eel
- b) Voices of the Village: Songs and Dances from Home
- c) Cultural Creations: Patterns of me

2. Discovering How Their Brain Works

Principle: Holistic Development | Kotahitanga

Strand: Exploration | Mana Aoturoa

Goal: Tamariki experience an environment where they learn strategies for active exploration, thinking, and reasoning

Objective: Tamariki develop an understanding of basic brain functions and how they relate to movement, emotions, and learning.

Planned Learning Experience:

- a) My Brain Helps Me Move
- b) Feelings and My Brain
- c) Learning Lights Up My Brain!

3. Understanding Healthy Habits for Brain Growth and Wellbeing

Principle: Relationships | Ngā Hononga

Strand: Wellbeing | Mana Atua

Goal: Tamariki experience an environment where their health is promoted.

Objective: Tamariki gain knowledge about healthy foods, sleep, and safety habits that support brain development and energy.

Planned Learning Experience:

- a) Rainbow Plate Picnic: Eating for Energy
- b) Sweet Dreams, Smart Brains
- c) Brain Power Safety Walk

4. Connections to Curriculum

The topic “Brainworks” is aligned with *Te Whāriki* and *Tapasā*, as both emphasise holistic development, which includes helping tamariki understand how their brain has the capacity to grow, learn, and adapt in safe, nurturing environments (Ministry of Education, 2017; Ministry of Education, 2018).

1. Learning and Sharing Interesting Facts About Samoa

Te Whāriki: Supports tamariki in developing a sense of belonging (*Mana Whenua*) by exploring their cultural heritage, deepening their understanding of diversity and identity.

Tapasā: Encourages educators to foster awareness of Pacific identities, helping tamariki appreciate Samoan culture, traditions, and values, strengthening their connection to their heritage and community.

2. Discovering How Their Brain Works

Te Whāriki: Encourages tamariki to explore and make sense of the world through curiosity, creativity, and problem-solving (*Mana Aotūroa*).

Tapasā: Recognises the impact of cultural identity on cognitive and emotional development, fostering a deeper understanding of thinking and learning.

3. Understanding Healthy Habits for Brain Growth and Wellbeing

Te Whāriki: Guides tamariki in building awareness of strategies that support healthy living and overall wellbeing (*Mana Atua*).

Tapasā: Strengthens tamariki’s understanding of self-care and emotional balance, promoting lifelong wellbeing practices.

5. Assessment and Evaluation

Kaiako can assess and evaluate tamariki’s learning about Brainworks using a range of methods aligned with *Te Whāriki*. These methods include, but are not limited to:

- Observations
- Learning stories
- Group discussions
- Portfolio/Diary entries
- Child-friendly self-assessment
- Quizzes (e.g., on iPad)
- Group projects and presentations
- Parent and whānau feedback

6. Essential Facts for Kaiako

Here are some essential facts to support kaiako in guiding tamariki through this learning journey. Additional information can be found in Section 10.

1. Learning and Sharing Interesting Facts About Samoa

- **Culture:** Samoan culture is rooted in *fa'a Samoa*—“The Samoan Way”—which values respect, whānau, and community. Traditions, ceremonies, and strong connections with elders are central.
- **History:** Samoa gained independence from New Zealand in 1962, a significant milestone in Pacific history that highlights resilience and identity.
- **Geography:** Samoa consists of nine inhabited islands, with Savai'i and Upolu being the largest. The capital city, Apia, is located on Upolu.
- **Values:** Core values such as respect, family, and service guide daily life and social interactions in Samoa.

2. Discovering How Their Brain Works

- **Movement:** The motor cortex helps tamariki control physical actions like walking, writing, and jumping.
- **Emotions:** The amygdala and prefrontal cortex process feelings such as joy, anger, and fear, helping tamariki understand and manage emotions.
- **Learning and Memory:** The hippocampus plays a key role in learning new information and remembering experiences, supporting tamariki's growth and development.

3. Understanding Healthy Habits for Brain Growth and Wellbeing

- **Nutrition:** Foods rich in protein, iron, and omega-3 support brain development. A balanced diet with fruits, vegetables, and whole grains keeps the brain strong.
- **Sleep:** Sleep helps regulate emotions, strengthen memory, and improve thinking. According to the [Ministry of Health](#) Preschoolers (age 3-4 years) need 10–13 hours of sleep daily, including naps.
- **Physical Activity:** Movement such as running, dancing, and stretching boosts brain function, supports emotional regulation, and enhances learning.

7. Information to share with Parents and Caregivers

Supporting Your Child's Learning about how their Brain works

Parents play an important role in helping their child understand how their brain works and supporting their development at home. The brain functions like a “supercomputer,” handling different tasks, and parents can encourage understanding through interactive activities like acting out stories or playing ball games to strengthen thinking and coordination.

New experiences, practice, and learning from mistakes help the brain grow, so engaging in activities such as map-making and counting games supports problem-solving skills and cognitive development. By weaving these activities into daily routines, parents can create meaningful learning experiences that nurture their child's development in a fun and engaging way.

How You Can Support Learning at Home

- 1. Encourage cultural learning** – Share stories, cook traditional kai, and listen to Samoan music to strengthen identity and belonging.
- 2. Make learning interactive** – Use games, storytelling, and movement-based activities to help tamariki understand brain functions and thinking skills.
- 3. Promote problem-solving** – Try activities like map-making, puzzles, and counting games to build logic and cognitive development.
- 4. Teach emotional regulation** – Practice deep breathing, mindfulness, and positive self-talk to support tamariki in managing emotions.
- 5. Support healthy habits** – Provide nutritious food, ensure consistent sleep routines, and encourage physical activity to help brain development.

8. Professional Development

ECE kaiako play a vital role in nurturing tamariki's self-awareness, critical thinking, and cultural identity. Professional development in brain science, emotional intelligence, and Samoan cultural knowledge equips kaiako with tools to support tamariki's wellbeing and resilience.

Opportunities in Aotearoa include:

- [Brainwave Trust Aotearoa](https://brainwave.org.nz/) offers professional development opportunities focused on child brain development, particularly in the early years. Their workshops and wānanga, resources, research articles and whānau-focused education provide insights into how tamariki develop and how their experiences shape their wellbeing.
<https://brainwave.org.nz/>
- [Pepe Meamea Framework](#): This initiative is developing Aotearoa's first Samoan Indigenous framework for infant and toddler pedagogy. Grounded in Samoan epistemologies and values, it views the child as a holistic, relational being. The framework challenges dominant ECE discourses by prioritising collective wellbeing and cultural identity. It supports both Aoga Amata and mainstream ECE kaiako to implement culturally affirming practices.
- A YouTube presentation shares findings from a two-year TLRI research project led by Dr. Jacoba Matapo, Dr. Salā Faasaulala Tagoilelagi-Leota, and Dr. Tafili Utumapu-McBride. The presentation explores Samoan conceptualisations of infant and toddler development, highlighting the importance of relational ethics, cultural identity, and holistic wellbeing. It introduces the Pepe Meamea pedagogical framework and discusses its relevance for ECE practice in Aotearoa. Watch here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mmWfZiIXCDI>

9. Health, Safety and Quality Practice

When supporting tamariki to explore brain development, healthy habits, and Samoan culture, it's important to align teaching practices with relevant ECE health and safety regulations. Below are key guidelines that support each learning outcome:

1. Learning and Sharing Interesting Facts About Samoa

- *Education (Early Childhood Services) Regulations 2008, Regulation 46:* Encourages culturally responsive teaching and safe environments that celebrate diversity and identity.

2. Discovering How Their Brain Works

- *Health and Safety at Work Act 2015:* Ensures safe, engaging environments for tamariki to explore cognitive development.
- *Education (Early Childhood Services) Regulations 2008, Regulation 46:* Supports safe practices for learning about brain functions and emotional wellbeing.

3. Understanding Healthy Habits for Brain Growth and Wellbeing

- *ECE Licensing Criteria – Food and Drink (HS19–HS23):* Promotes nutrition, sleep, and physical activity to support brain development.
- *Health and Safety at Work Act 2015:* Reinforces the importance of safe environments that encourage healthy routines.

10. Island Nation Spotlight: Key Facts About Samoa

1. Host / Guide*

* Kaiako may wish to use the following character as a host or guide to lead tamariki through the voyage learning experiences, helping make the journey engaging, relatable, and culturally meaningful.

Sina, a beautiful Samoan maiden, befriends an eel that grows fond of her. As the eel matures, it reveals its love for Sina. Frightened by the eel's advances, Sina seeks help from her village. The villagers kill the eel, but before dying, the eel asks Sina to bury its head. From the buried head, a coconut tree grows.

2. Animal / Puppet

A traditional animal from Samoa is the **manumea**, also known as the tooth-billed pigeon. This bird is endemic to Samoa and is considered the national bird. The manumea is unique due to its close genetic relation to the extinct dodo.

Unfortunately, it is critically endangered and efforts are ongoing to protect its habitat and population.

3. Landmarks

- **To-Sua Ocean Trench:** This is a stunning natural swimming hole located on the island of Upolu, featuring crystal-clear waters, lush tropical gardens, and a 30-metre deep pool accessible by a long ladder. It's a must-visit spot for its unique beauty and serene atmosphere.
- **Alofaaga Blowholes:** Located on Savai'i Island, these blowholes create spectacular water jets when waves crash into the volcanic rock.
- **Robert Louis Stevenson's Final Home (Villa Vailima):** The former residence of the famous author, now a museum dedicated to his life and works.

4. Famous People

- **Tupua Tamasese:** A paramount chiefly title in Samoa, held by one of the four highest-ranking chiefs in the country. The title is part of the Sā Tupua royal family, which descends from Queen Salamasina. The current holder, Tui Ātua Tupua Tamasese Efi, has served as both Prime Minister and Head of State of Samoa. This title is significant in Samoan culture and politics, symbolising leadership and historical lineage.
- **Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson:** An internationally famous actor and former professional wrestler, with Samoan heritage.
- **David Tua:** A renowned professional boxer, known for his powerful punches and successful career.

5. Common phrases

Hello *Talofa lava*

Goodbye *Tofa Soifua*

Thank you *Fa'afetai lava*

How are you? *O a mai oe?*

Please? *Fa'amolemole?*

6. Cultural artefacts

- **Ula:** In Samoan culture, an ula is a traditional necklace often made from natural materials like flowers, shells, or seeds. One well-known type is the ula fala, crafted from the dried fruit of the pandanus tree. The ula fala is typically worn by high-ranking individuals during important cultural ceremonies and symbolises respect, honour, and status.
- **Tapa Cloth (Siapo):** Made from the inner bark of the paper mulberry tree, tapa cloth is decorated with intricate patterns and designs using natural dyes. Used in various ceremonies and as customary attire, it represents Samoan artistry and cultural identity.

7. Cultural practices

- **To'onai:** In Samoan culture, to'onai is a traditional Sunday lunch that brings family and friends together not only to share a meal but also to prepare it collectively. Each family member typically has a specific role in the preparation process. The meal often includes traditional dishes like palusami (coconut cream baked in taro leaves) and food cooked in an umu (an above-ground oven made with hot volcanic stones).
- **Tatau:** Tattooing is a significant art form in Samoa, with males undergoing the prolonged and often painful process of receiving tattoos from waist to knee as a rite of passage. Tattoos symbolise strength, courage, and cultural identity, and are an important part of Samoan tradition.
- **Weaving:** Weaving is used to create mats, baskets, and other items from natural materials like pandanus leaves. These woven items are essential in daily life and ceremonies, showcasing the skill and craftsmanship of Samoan artisans.

8. Easy songs to learn

Pasifika Beatz Samoan Songs is a vibrant and educational playlist created by Loopy Tunes Preschool Music in collaboration with Whānau Āwhina Plunket, celebrating the beauty of the Pacific language through music. As part of the wider Pasifika Beatz project marking its 10th anniversary, this collection features 10 Samoan songs designed especially for young children. Each song pairs well-known melodies with Samoan lyrics to support language learning, strengthen cultural identity, and encourage joyful singing and movement. The project was proudly supported by the Ministry of Pacific Peoples.

Here are the 10 songs included in the playlist:

- **Talofa Lava** – A cheerful greeting song introducing the Samoan way to say hello.
- **Fiafia Time** – A fun action song encouraging movement and celebration.
- **Savalivali** – A walking song that teaches basic verbs and directions.
- **Tausi Tama** – A gentle lullaby about caring for children.

- **O Le Pepe** – A playful butterfly song with simple nature vocabulary.
- **Tautua** – A song about service and helping others, reinforcing cultural values.
- **Aso Fiafia** – A birthday song celebrating special occasions in Samoan.
- **Le La** – A song about the sun and weather, perfect for daily routines.
- **Tama Ma Teine** – A song that introduces boys and girls in Samoan.
- **Toe Feiloa'i** – A farewell song to end the day or say goodbye.

Access song resources:

Action videos for each song are available on Whānau Āwhina Plunket's YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LZNiUo22gs&list=PLJvV-nHPEmml0l6luBOnKs9Q77QBUEvsn>

Lyrics for the Samoan songs can be found on the Loopy Tunes Preschool Music website: <https://www.loopytunespreschoolmusic.com/pasifika-beatz/>

9. Cultural attire

- **Lavalava:** A versatile, unisex garment made from cotton or tapa cloth, often adorned with bold, intricate patterns. It can be worn as a skirt, wrap, or head covering by men, women, and children.
- **Puletasi:** A traditional outfit for women, consisting of a long skirt and matching tunic, often decorated with floral or cultural motifs. It's typically worn on formal occasions.
- **le Faitaga:** A formal version of the lavalava for men, featuring pockets and usually paired with a white shirt and tie. It's worn during ceremonies, church services, and other formal events.
- **Accessories:** Such as floral garlands, coconut leaf crowns, and traditional jewellery made from shells, wood, or bones often complement these garments. Additionally, traditional Samoan tattoos, known as pe'a for men and malu for women, are integral to cultural attire, symbolising strength, courage, and social status.

10. Cultural food

- **Palusami:** Taro leaves cooked in coconut cream, often baked in an umu (traditional earth oven). It's a creamy and flavourful dish that's a staple at many Samoan gatherings.
- **Oka:** Raw fish marinated in coconut cream, lime juice, and spices. It's a refreshing and popular dish, similar to ceviche.
- **Sapasui:** Samoan-style chop suey made with vermicelli noodles, vegetables, and meat, often flavoured with soy sauce and garlic.
- **Faiai Eleni:** Fish baked in coconut cream with taro leaves, onions, and spices. This dish highlights the use of fresh, local ingredients.
- **Panikeke:** Sweet banana fritters that are deep-fried and enjoyed as a snack or dessert.
- **Pani Popo:** Soft bread rolls baked with a sweet coconut sauce, making for a delicious treat.
- **Faalifu Fa'i:** Boiled green bananas cooked in coconut milk, often served as a side dish.
- **Keke Pua'a:** Savory pork buns that are steamed or baked, similar to Chinese baozi.

11. Flag / Flag description

- The flag of Samoa features a red field with a blue rectangle in the upper hoist-side corner, which contains the Southern Cross constellation represented by five white stars. The colours and symbols on the flag hold significant meanings:
- Red symbolises courage, blue represents freedom, white stands for purity.
- The Southern Cross constellation is a common emblem in the Southern Hemisphere, also appearing on the flags of Australia and New Zealand.

12. Sports

Traditional Sports:

- **Kilikiti:** A Samoan version of cricket, played with a wooden bat and a rubber ball. It's a popular sport during village festivals and gatherings.
- **Aulama:** Similar to rugby, this game involves passing a ball using hands instead of feet. It holds both physical and spiritual significance.
- **Lape:** A traditional Samoan game similar to dodgeball, where players try to hit opponents with a ball while avoiding being hit themselves.

13. Myths / legends specific to this island nation

- **Tagaloa:** The supreme god in Samoan mythology, Tagaloa is credited with creating the islands and the people. He is a central figure in many creation myths.
- **Nafanua:** A revered warrior goddess from the village of Falealupo on the island of Savai'i. Nafanua is known for her role in bringing peace to Samoa by winning wars between different regions.
- **Sina and the Eel:** This legend tells the story of Sina, a beautiful maiden, and her relationship with an eel that transforms into a prince. The tale explains the origin of the coconut tree, which is said to have grown from the eel's head.
- **Ti'iti'i:** A hero who challenged the god of earthquakes, Mafui'e, and won. As a result, Ti'iti'i gained control over fire, which he shared with humanity.
- **Tilafaiga and Taema:** Twin sisters who are credited with bringing the art of tattooing (tatau) to Samoa from Fiji. Their journey and the spread of tattooing are central to Samoan cultural identity.

14. Proverb

- **“E felelei manu ae ma’au i o latou ofaga”:** Birds migrate to environments where they survive and thrive. This proverb refers to the migration of birds to habitats that enable them to survive and thrive. Their migrations require them to adapt to new surroundings. In the same way, ancestors from Pacific Nations journeyed across the ocean in search of knowledge, prosperity and growth.
- **“A malu i fale, e malu i fafo.”:** Protection for the family, protection for all. This proverb emphasises the importance of ensuring safety within the home, which extends to the broader community.
- **“E pala le ma’a, ae le pala le upu.”:** Stone and rocks decay, but words do not. This proverb emphasises the enduring power of knowledge and spoken words, suggesting that wisdom and knowledge outlast physical objects.
- **“La malu le vai i lou finagalo.”:** May your mind be like cool water. This proverb advocates for a calm and clear mind, suggesting that a peaceful mind leads to better decision-making and understanding.

15. Other Facts

- **Independence:** Samoa gained independence from New Zealand in 1962.
- **Main Islands:** The country consists of two main islands, Upolu and Savai'i, along with several smaller islands.

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11. Additional Resources

Here are some helpful resources to support tamariki in learning about Samoan culture and how their brains work (Brainworks). *Please note that while many of these resources are free, some may require payment.*

NZ Government Resources

- **Ministry of Education (Te Tāhuhu o te Mātauranga)** – Provides curriculum guidelines and learning materials for early childhood and primary education: www.education.govt.nz
- **Ministry of Education – Weaving Samoan Culture with Te Whāriki** – A story of practice from Punavai o le Gagana Samoa ECE service, integrating Samoan values into Te Whāriki curriculum. [Explore the resource.](#)
- **Teaching and Learning Gagana Sāmoa – Ministry of Education** – Includes storybooks, teacher support materials, and guidelines for teaching Samoan language and culture. [Access the materials.](#)
- **Sāmoan Language Week Resource – Te Papa & Ministry for Pacific Peoples** – Activity book, pronunciation guides, songs, and stories for classroom or home use. [Download the resource.](#)
- **Tapasā Framework – Teaching Council NZ** – A cultural competency framework for teachers of Pacific learners, including Samoan students. [Learn about Tapasā.](#)

Brainworks / Neuroscience Resources

- **Brainwave Trust Aotearoa** – Offers research-based insights into early brain development and practical resources for whānau and educators. [Explore Brainwave.](#)
- **Te Whāriki – Learning and the Brain** – Ministry of Education resource explaining neuroscience in early childhood education, with videos in Pacific languages. [View the resource.](#)
- **Neurodiversity in Education Project** – Provides tools, training, and advocacy for neuroinclusive education, including resources for tamariki and educators. [Visit the project.](#)
- **NZMA – Certificate in Supporting Diverse Learners** – A formal programme for educators and caregivers to support neurodivergent children. [Learn more.](#)
- **The Education Hub – Neurodiversity in ECE** – Strengths-based approach to neurodiversity in early childhood education, with practical strategies and guiding questions. [Explore the hub.](#)

VOYAGE 6.1

Planned Learning Experience: Learning and Sharing Interesting Facts About Samoa

a) Sina and the Eel

Principle:	Family and Community I Whānau Tangata
Strand:	Belonging I Mana Whenua
Goal:	Tamariki experience an environment where they know they have a place and feel comfortable with routines, customs, and regular events.
Objective:	Tamariki will learn and share interesting facts about Tonga, including its people, culture, history, geography, and values, to understand what makes it special.

Background:

This learning experience invites tamariki to explore the cherished Samoan legend of Sina and the Eel, which explains the origin of the coconut tree. Through storytelling, art, and sensory play, children will learn about Samoan culture, language, and values. The activity reflects tala fa'asolopito (oral tradition), gagana (language), and fa'aaloalo (respect), helping tamariki build a strong sense of identity and belonging. It also celebrates alofa (love) and sootaga (relationships) by encouraging tamariki to share their own cultural stories, strengthening connections with whānau and the wider community.

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Materials Needed:

- A retelling or picture book version of Sina and the Eel
- Real coconuts for sensory exploration (touch, smell, taste)
- Drawing tools and brown paper for tapa-inspired art
- Natural materials (leaves, shells, coconut fibres)
- Visuals of Samoan tapa cloth and traditional motifs
- A display board or wall for “Interesting Facts About Samoa”
- Optional: talking stick or shell for storytelling circle

Activity Steps:

- 1. Introducing the Story** - Gather tamariki in a circle and introduce the legend of Sina and the Eel. Use a picture book or oral retelling, supported by a talking stick or shell to signal turn-taking and listening. For example, [The Legend of Sina and the Eel – The First Coconut Tree in Samoa](#). Pause to ask reflective questions: “*Why do you think Sina planted the eel’s head?*” “*What do coconuts remind you of?*”
- 2. Sensory Exploration – Discovering the Coconut** - Present real coconuts for tamariki to explore: Touch the rough shell and soft flesh, smell the coconut scent, taste coconut water or flakes (check allergies first). Link back to the story: “This is the tree that grew from Sina’s love and care.”
- 3. Art Activity – Tapa-Inspired Creations** - Provide brown paper, white paint, and black markers. Show visuals of Samoan tapa cloth and traditional motifs. For example, see: [Tapa from Sāmoa | Collections Online - Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa](#). Invite tamariki to create their own tapa-style patterns: Include symbols from the story (eel, coconut tree, stars). Use natural materials like leaves, shells, and coconut fibres for texture
- 4. Cultural Fact Sharing – Building Knowledge Together** - Set up a display board titled “Interesting Facts About Samoa”. Add visuals, drawings, and tamariki contributions: “Coconuts are used in Samoan cooking” “Tapa cloth tells stories” “Sina is a name from Samoa.” Encourage whānau to contribute photos, messages, or facts from home.
- 5. Story Reflection – Identity and Belonging** - Invite tamariki to draw or write about what they learned or felt: “What part of the story did you like best?” “What do you know about your own culture?” Add these reflections to their “Ko Au!” identity books or journals.
- 6. Celebration Circle – Sharing and Affirming** - Revisit the story in a weekly circle. Use the talking stick to invite tamariki to share a tapa artwork, a coconut fact, or a story from their own family. Affirm each child’s voice and connection: “Your story helps us learn more about Samoa.” “Your drawing shows how proud you are.”
- 7. Aiga / Whānau / Family Engagement – Strengthening Community Ties** - Share photos or quotes from the experience with families. Invite whānau to join a storytelling session or contribute to the display. Celebrate the collective learning with a mini fiafia (joyful gathering) featuring music, dance, and shared stories.

VOYAGE 6.1

Planned Learning

Experience: Learning and Sharing Interesting Facts About Samoa

b) Voices of the Village: Songs and Dances from Home

Principle:	Family and Community I Whānau Tangata
Strand:	Belonging I Mana Whenua
Goal:	Tamariki experience an environment where they know they have a place and feel comfortable with routines, customs, and regular events.
Objective:	Tamariki will learn and share interesting facts about Tonga, including its people, culture, history, geography, and values, to understand what makes it special.

Background:

This planned learning experience invites tamariki to explore songs and dances from their own and others' cultures. Through joyful movement, shared rhythms, and expressive performance, children build a sense of belonging, pride, and appreciation for diversity. The activity celebrates Samoa's vibrant traditions of music and dance, which are central to family and community life.

Learning a simple action song like "Savalivali means go for a walk" helps tamariki understand how music is used to welcome others, celebrate achievements, and bring people together—reflecting the Samoan values of fa'aaloalo (respect), alofa (love), and fealofani (harmony). This experience also supports tamariki to feel confident with cultural routines and strengthens connections with whānau and community.

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Materials Needed:

- Music player or live instruments (e.g., pate, ukulele, drums)
- Traditional costumes or accessories (flowers, lavalava, leis)
- Open space for dancing and group movement
- Song lyrics in different languages (including Gagana Samoa)
- Optional: microphone or talking stick for introductions and sharing

Activity Steps

1. **Setting the Scene** - Begin with a talanoa (conversation/discussion) about music in different cultures. Ask tamariki: "What songs do you sing at home?" "How does music make you feel?"
2. **Introducing the Samoan Song** - Teach the action song "Savalivali means go for a walk" with simple movements. For example, see: [Savalivali Samoan](#). Break down the lyrics and actions slowly, using visual cues. Encourage tamariki to sing and move together, building rhythm and confidence

- 3. Cultural Dance Demonstration** - Invite a Samoan parent or elder to share a traditional siva or chant. For example, [How To Siva Samoa with MaryJane Mckibbin-Schwenke](#). Provide accessories like lavalava, leis, or flowers to enhance the experience. Celebrate the performance with clapping and affirmations.
- 4. Sharing and Reflection** - Use a talking stick or microphone to invite tamariki to share a song from their culture or a dance they know or enjoy. Record their contributions on a “Voices of the Village” wall or display.
- 5. Aiga / Whānau / Family Engagement** - Invite families to contribute songs, dances, or cultural music traditions. Host a mini fiafia celebration where tamariki perform and whānau join in. Share photos or recordings (with consent) to celebrate the experience.
- 6. Reflective Extension** - Integrate music and movement into daily transitions or emotional regulation routines. Use cultural songs to support language learning and identity development.

VOYAGE 6.1

Planned Learning
Experience: Learning
and Sharing Interesting
Facts About Samoa

c) Cultural Creations: Patterns of me

Principle:	Family and Community I Whānau Tangata
Strand:	Belonging I Mana Whenua
Goal:	Tamariki experience an environment where they know they have a place and feel comfortable with routines, customs, and regular events.
Objective:	Tamariki will learn and share interesting facts about Tonga, including its people, culture, history, geography, and values, to understand what makes it special.

Background:

This creative art experience invites tamariki to express their cultural identity using patterns, symbols, and colours. It encourages conversations about heritage, uniqueness, and shared values. The activity reflects Samoan values of fa'asinomaga (identity), sootaga (connection), and mitamitaga (cultural pride), supporting tamariki to feel confident in who they are and proud of their cultural backgrounds.

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Materials Needed:

- Fabric scraps, tapa designs, and natural materials
- Paint, markers, glue, and collage paper
- Visuals of traditional patterns from different cultures (e.g., Samoan siapo, Māori kowhaiwhai)
- Mirrors for self-portraits

Activity Steps:

- 1. Introducing Cultural Patterns** - Begin with a group talanoa about patterns in nature and culture. Show visuals of siapo and kowhaiwhai designs, for example: [KAPA & SIAPO Connecting Hawai'i & Samoa Through TAPA](#) and/or [Laufatu o mamanu Symbols and patterns](#). Ask tamariki: "What patterns do you see in your clothes or at home?" "What colours remind you of your family or culture?"
- 2. Self-Reflection – Mirror and Identity Talk** - Provide mirrors and invite tamariki to look at themselves. Prompt reflection: "What makes you special?" "What do you love about your family?" Encourage them to think about symbols or colours that represent their identity.
- 3. Creating the Identity Cloth** - Provide collage paper or fabric scraps as the base. Tamariki use paint, markers, and natural materials to design their "identity cloth". Include patterns inspired by siapo or personal symbols (e.g., hearts, stars, waves). Use Gagana Samoa words during creation: "Choose a mumu (red) colour for something that makes you happy." "Draw a li'o (circle) to show your family circle."

- 4. Sharing and Storytelling** - Invite tamariki to share their creations with the group. Use a talking stick or shell to support turn-taking. Encourage storytelling: "This star is for my nana." "I chose blue because it's the colour of the ocean in Samoa."
- 5. Display and Whānau Engagement** - Create "Patterns of Me" wall or hanging display in the centre. Invite whānau to view the artwork and contribute messages or symbols from home. Share photos or quotes with families to celebrate the experience.
- 6. Reflective Extension** - Revisit the identity cloths during transitions or emotional check-ins. Use the Gagana Samoa words in daily routines to reinforce language learning. Pair with storytelling books about cultural identity or Pacific art.

VOYAGE 6.2

Planned Learning

Experience: Discovering How Their Brain Works

a) My Brain Helps Me Move

Principle:	Holistic Development Kotahitanga
Strand:	Exploration Mana Aoturoa
Goal:	Tamariki experience an environment where they learn strategies for active exploration, thinking, and reasoning.
Objective:	Tamariki develop an understanding of basic brain functions and how they relate to movement, emotions, and learning.

Background:

This learning experience helps tamariki understand how their brain sends messages to their body to help them move, balance, and coordinate. Through movement games and body awareness, children explore how the brain and body work as a team. The activity reflects Samoan values of galuega (contribution), sootaga (relationships), and fa'aaloalo (respect). Using words like savali (walk) and exploring traditional games or dances, tamariki connect movement to everyday life in Samoa—building language, cultural pride, and a sense of belonging.

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Materials Needed:

- Simple obstacle course setup (cones, tunnels, balance beams)
- Brain diagram or puppet
- Music for movement
- Samoan action song (e.g., “Savalivali means go for a walk”)

Activity Steps:

- 1. Introducing the Brain and Body** - Show a brain diagram or puppet and explain simply: “Your brain is like a boss—it sends messages to your body to help you move!” [How Your Brain Works? - The Dr. Binocs Show | Best Learning Videos For Kids | Peekaboo Kidz](#) and/or [What is the Brain? For Kids | Information and Resources](#). Use hand motions to show how signals travel from the brain to the feet, arms, and eyes.
- 2. Movement Vocabulary and Warm-Up** - Introduce Gagana Samoa movement words with actions: “Let’s savali (walk) like we’re going to church.” “Let’s siva (dance) like we’re at a fiafia! (joyful gathering)” Play a short movement song and invite tamariki to copy actions.
- 3. Obstacle Course Challenge** - Set up a simple obstacle course with cones, tunnels, and balance beams. Encourage tamariki to think about how their brain helps them:
 - Balance on the beam
 - Crawl through the tunnel
 - Step over cones

Use prompts like: “Your brain is helping your feet step carefully!” “Can you savali slowly like Sina from the story?”

4. Samoan Action Song and Dance Teach

“Savalivali means go for a walk” with simple movements. Invite tamariki to wear lavalava or leis and dance together. Emphasise rhythm and coordination: “Feel the beat—your brain is helping your body move to the music!”

5. Reflection and Body Awareness - Gather

tamariki in a circle and ask: “What part of your body helped you balance?” “How did your brain help you dance?” Use mirrors or body outlines to identify body parts involved in movement.

6. Aiga/ Whānau/ Family Engagement - Share

photos or quotes from the activity with families. Invite whānau to share traditional movement games or dances from their culture. Encourage tamariki to demonstrate their favourite movement at home.

7. Reflective Extension - Use movement games

during transitions or emotional regulation routines. Revisit Gagana Samoa words in daily routines to reinforce language and cultural pride.

VOYAGE 6.2

Planned Learning

Experience: Discovering How Their Brain Works

b) Feelings and My Brain

Principle:	Holistic Development Kotahitanga
Strand:	Exploration Mana Aoturoa
Goal:	Tamariki experience an environment where they learn strategies for active exploration, thinking, and reasoning.
Objective:	Tamariki develop an understanding of basic brain functions and how they relate to movement, emotions, and learning.

Background:

In this activity, tamariki will learn that their brain helps them feel emotions like happy, sad, and angry. They will practice naming emotions, noticing how they feel in their bodies, and using calming strategies.

We will use Samoan values of alofa (love), fa'aaloalo (respect), and lotu (spiritual connection) to guide our learning. Tamariki will learn emotion words in Samoan and use them in play to express feelings respectfully. Through prayer, song, and storytelling, children will explore how emotions are shared in Samoan families. Practicing lotu helps tamariki feel calm and connected.

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Materials Needed:

- Emotion cards with facial expressions
- Mirrors for self-reflection
- Calm-down tools (e.g., breathing ball, soft toys)
- Storybook about emotions (e.g., *The Color Monster*)
- Samoan emotion words chart (e.g., fiafia – happy, ita – angry, fa'anoanoa – sad)

Activity Steps:

- 1. Introducing the Brain and Emotions** - Begin with a group talanoa: “Did you know your brain helps you feel emotions?” Show a simple brain diagram or puppet and explain: “Your brain sends messages to your body when you feel happy, sad, or angry.” Use gestures to show where we feel emotions (e.g., heart, tummy, face).
- 2. Emotion Naming with Cards and Mirrors** - Show emotion cards and name each feeling in English and Gagana Samoa. For example, [Sāmoan language activity book | Te Papa](#). Provide mirrors and invite tamariki to make faces: “Can you show me a fiafia (happy) face?” “What does (angry) look like on your face?” Encourage tamariki to describe how their body feels with each emotion.
- 3. Storytime – Exploring Feelings Through Books** - Read a story about emotions – for example, [The Color Monster - Read Aloud by Mr. Joshua Brooks](#). Pause to discuss each feeling: “What colour is fa'anoanoa (sad)?” “What helps the monster feel calm again?”
Alternative option: *How is she feeling* video clip [Inside Out: Guessing the feelings. - YouTube](#)

- 4. Calm-Down Tools and Strategies** - Introduce calming tools: breathing ball, soft toys, glitter jars. Practise calming strategies together: Deep breathing with a visual cue (e.g., “Smell the frangipani, blow out the sea breeze”). Gentle stretching or rocking. Lotu – invite tamariki to sit quietly, close their eyes, and listen to soft music or a short prayer.
- 5. Emotion in Action – Role Play and Movement**
 - Set up simple role-play scenarios: “What can we do when we feel ita (angry)?” “How can we help a friend who feels fa’anoanoa?” (sad). Use movement or music to express feelings (e.g., slow swaying for sadness, jumping for joy).
- 6. Reflection and Sharing** - Gather tamariki in a circle and ask: “What feeling did you learn today?” “What helps you feel calm?” Encourage tamariki to use Gagana Samoa words when sharing.
- 7. Aiga/ Whānau/ Family Engagement** - Share the Samoan emotion word chart with families. Invite whānau to share calming strategies or songs they use at home. Display children’s drawings or quotes about feelings in a “How I Feel” wall.
- 8. Reflective Extension** - Use emotion cards during daily check-ins or transitions. Revisit lotu or calming tools when tamariki need emotional support. Pair with identity-building activities like “Ko Au!” to deepen emotional self-awareness.

VOYAGE 6.2

Planned Learning

Experience: Discovering How Their Brain Works

c) Learning Lights Up My Brain!

Principle:	Holistic Development Kotahitanga
Strand:	Exploration Mana Aoturoa
Goal:	Tamariki experience an environment where they learn strategies for active exploration, thinking, and reasoning.
Objective:	Tamariki develop an understanding of basic brain functions and how they relate to movement, emotions, and learning.

Background:

In this experience, tamariki will discover that learning new things—like reading, counting, and solving problems—helps their brains grow strong. They will explore how curiosity and practice activate their brains and support learning.

This activity is guided by Samoan values of gagana (language), tala fa'asolopito (oral tradition), and fiafia (celebration). Tamariki will use Samoan numbers and letters in fun learning games, listen to a traditional legend to learn through storytelling, and celebrate their achievements with group siva (dance) or song.

Together, we will build joyful learning moments that strengthen brains, language, and cultural pride.

Materials Needed:

- Brain hat or crown craft materials
- Puzzles and matching games
- Books and counting tools
- Visual of a “brain light” turning on when learning
- Samoan alphabet and number posters

Activity Steps:

- 1. Welcome and Introduction** - Gather tamariki in a circle and introduce the idea that learning helps our brains grow strong. Show a visual of a “brain light” turning on to represent how learning activates our minds. Use simple language: “Every time we learn something new, our brain lights up!”
- 2. Make a Brain Hat or Crown** - Provide craft materials for tamariki to create their own “brain hat” or crown. Encourage them to decorate with symbols of things they love to learn (e.g., books, numbers, puzzles). Use Samoan words for colours and shapes during the activity (e.g., mumu for red, lapotopoto for circle).
- 3. Areas of play - learning stations** - Set up small group stations with different learning activities:
 - Puzzle Station – Matching games and problem-solving tasks.
 - Book Station – Read aloud stories and encourage tamariki to explore books independently.
 - Counting Station – Use counting tools and Samoan number posters (tasi, lua, tolu...) to practice numbers.
 - Alphabet Station – Explore Samoan letters and sounds through playful games.

- 4. Storytelling Circle** - Share a traditional Samoan legend or story to highlight tala fa'asolopito (oral tradition). Encourage tamariki to ask questions and retell parts of the story in their own words.
- 5. Celebrate with Siva or Song** - End the session with a group siva (dance) or song to celebrate learning. Reinforce the value of fiafia (joy) and gagana (language) by singing in Samoan or using Samoan phrases like "Manuia le aso!" (Have a good day!).
- 6. Reflection and Farewell** - Invite tamariki to share one thing they learned that "lit up their brain." Reinforce the message: "The more we learn, the stronger our brains become!"

VOYAGE 6.3

Planned Learning

Experience: Understanding Healthy Habits for Brain Growth and Wellbeing

a) Rainbow Plate Picnic: Eating for Energy

Principle: Relationships | Ngā Hononga

Strand: Wellbeing | Mana Atua

Goal: Tamariki experience an environment where their health is promoted.

Objective: Tamariki gains knowledge about healthy foods, sleep, and safety habits that support brain development and energy.

Background:

In this experience, tamariki will learn that eating a variety of colourful, healthy foods helps their bodies grow strong and gives their brains energy to learn and play. They will explore food groups, colours, and cultural connections through hands-on activities and storytelling.

This activity supports Samoan values of alofa (love), fa'aaloalo (respect), and fealofani (sharing and togetherness). Tamariki will explore traditional Samoan foods, learn their names in Samoan, and build language and cultural knowledge.

Through stories about family meals and discussions about how food is grown and shared, children will deepen their understanding of care, respect, and connection in Samoan family life.

Materials Needed:

- Toy food sets or laminated food pictures (including Samoan foods like talo (taro), fa'i (banana), esi (papaya), niu (coconut))
- Large paper plates
- Glue sticks or tape
- Crayons or markers
- Storybook about healthy eating (e.g., The Very Hungry Caterpillar)
- Real fruits for tasting (e.g., banana, papaya, pineapple)

Activity Steps:

1. Welcome and Introduction - Gather tamariki and introduce the idea that colourful, healthy foods help our bodies grow strong and give our brains energy. Use simple language: "Eating lots of colours helps us learn, play, and feel good!"

2. Explore Food Colours and Groups - Show toy food sets or laminated pictures, including Samoan foods like talo (taro), fa'i (banana), esi (papaya), and niu (coconut). Talk about the colours and names in Samoan, encouraging tamariki to repeat and identify them.

3. Create a Rainbow Plate - Give each child a large paper plate and invite them to glue or tape food pictures onto it to make a "rainbow plate." Use crayons or markers to decorate and label with Samoan food names. Discuss which foods help our brain and body feel strong and happy.

4. Storytime - Read a storybook about healthy eating (e.g., The Very Hungry Caterpillar). Pause to talk about the foods in the story and how they help us grow. Link to Samoan values by discussing how families share meals with alofa (love) and fa'aaloalo (respect).

5. Fruit Tasting Picnic - Offer real fruits like banana, papaya, and pineapple for tasting (check for allergies). Encourage tamariki to use Samoan words and share stories about their favourite family meals. Reinforce fe'alofani (sharing and togetherness) by enjoying the picnic as a group.

6. Reflection and Farewell - Invite tamariki to share one colourful food they enjoyed and how it helps their brain or body. Celebrate with a short song or movement activity to close the experience with joy.

VOYAGE 6.3

Planned Learning

Experience: Understanding Healthy Habits for Brain Growth and Wellbeing

b) Sweet Dreams, Smart Brains

Principle: Relationships | Ngā Hononga

Strand: Wellbeing | Mana Atua

Goal: Tamariki experience an environment where their health is promoted.

Objective: Tamariki gains knowledge about healthy foods, sleep, and safety habits that support brain development and energy.

Background:

In this experience, tamariki will learn how sleep helps their brains grow, supports their emotions, and gives them energy to learn and play each day. Through role play and building bedtime routines, they will explore calming habits and cultural practices around sleep.

This activity reflects Samoan values of lotu (spiritual connection), fa'aaloalo (respect), and sootaga (relationships). Tamariki will take part in a bedtime role play that includes evening prayer, learn to say "Manuia le moe" (Good night), and sing a Samoan lullaby.

By listening to elders and creating peaceful routines, children will build emotional wellbeing and strengthen their connection to Samoan culture.

Materials Needed:

- Pajamas, toothbrushes, washcloths
- Stuffed animals or dolls
- Picture cards showing bedtime steps (e.g., bath, brush teeth, prayer, storytime)
- Calm music or Samoan lullabies
- "My Bedtime Chart" template for children to decorate and take home

Activity Steps:

- 1. Welcome and Introduction** - Gather tamariki and introduce the idea that sleep helps our brains grow, keeps our feelings balanced, and gives us energy for the day. Use simple language: "Sleep helps our brain get ready to learn and play!"
- 2. Bedtime Role Play** - Set up a pretend bedtime area with pajamas, toothbrushes, washcloths, and stuffed animals. Use picture cards to guide tamariki through calming bedtime steps: bath, brush teeth, prayer (lotu), storytime. Teach the phrase "Manuia le moe" (Good night) and encourage tamariki to say it to each other.
- 3. Create a Bedtime Chart** - Give each child a "My Bedtime Chart" template to decorate with drawings or stickers showing their bedtime routine. Include Samoan words for key steps and encourage children to share what they do at home.
- 4. Storytime and Lullabies** - Read a gentle bedtime story and play calm music or a Samoan lullaby. Talk about how families in Samoa use prayer, song, and storytelling to prepare for sleep. Reinforce fa'aaloalo (respect) and so'otaga (relationships) by discussing how listening to elders helps create peaceful routines.
- 5. Reflection and Farewell** - Invite tamariki to share one thing they do to get ready for sleep. Reinforce the message: "Sleep helps our brain stay smart and our heart feel calm."

VOYAGE 6.3

Planned Learning

Experience: Understanding Healthy Habits for Brain Growth and Wellbeing

c) Brain Power Safety Walk

Principle: Relationships | Ngā Hononga

Strand: Wellbeing | Mana Atua

Goal: Tamariki experience an environment where their health is promoted.

Objective: Tamariki gains knowledge about healthy foods, sleep, and safety habits that support brain development and energy.

Background:

In this experience, tamariki will learn how safety habits—like wearing helmets and following road rules—protect their brains and help them make smart choices. They will practice safety through movement, role play, and connecting with their community.

This activity supports Samoan values of va fealoa'i (respectful relationships), fa'aaloalo (respect), and saogalemu (safety). Tamariki will learn Samoan words like "taofi" (stop), "savali" (walk), and "saogalemu" (safe), and explore how caring for others means keeping each other safe.

Stories about walking safely to church or school in Samoa, and a visit from a Samoan community helper, will help tamariki understand that safety is part of love, respect, and everyday connection.

Materials Needed:

- Toy traffic signs and cones
- Helmets and high-visibility vests
- Tape to create crosswalks or paths
- Storybook about safety (e.g., Officer Buckle and Gloria)
- Brain stickers or "Safety Star" badges

Activity Steps:

1. Welcome and Introduction - Gather tamariki and introduce the idea that keeping safe helps protect our brains and shows care for others. Use simple language: "When we follow safety rules, we keep our brains safe and make smart choices!"

2. Set Up a Safety Walk - Create a mini road layout using tape for crosswalks and paths. Add toy traffic signs, cones, helmets, and high-visibility vests. Introduce Samoan safety words like taofi (stop), savali (walk), and saogalemu (safe), encouraging tamariki to use them during the activity.

3. Role Play and Movement - Invite tamariki to take turns being pedestrians, cyclists, and traffic helpers. Practice stopping, looking both ways, and walking safely across the crosswalk. Reinforce va fealoa'i (respectful relationships) and fa'aaloalo (respect) by discussing how we keep each other safe.

4. Storytime Read a storybook about safety (e.g., Officer Buckle and Gloria). Pause to discuss how the characters show care and make safe choices. Link to Samoan life by sharing stories of walking safely to church or school.

5. Community Connection - Invite a Samoan community helper (e.g., police officer, road safety educator) to visit and talk about safety in the community. Encourage tamariki to ask questions and share what they've learned.

6. Celebrate with Stickers or Badges - Give each child a "Safety Star" badge or brain sticker to celebrate their learning. Reinforce the message: "When we keep each other safe, we show love and respect."