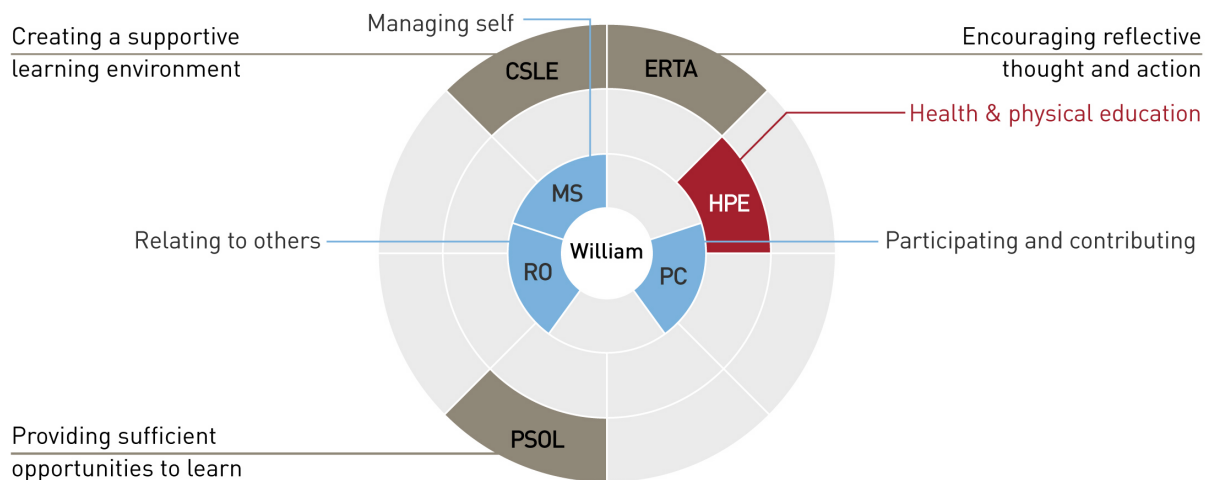


# Bill – from “villain” to “hero”

## Links to the curriculum



## Student background

<b>Name</b>	Bill	Bill attends a special school and is in a class with eight other students with special education needs. This class of nine has a teacher and two full-time teaching assistants.
<b>Age</b>	13	
<b>School</b>	Secondary	

Bill is on the autism spectrum. Over time, he had developed a range of friendships with his male peers. These story strings are about the way Bill has developed a broader range of relationships and relationship skills. The stories demonstrate Bill’s willingness to form and value new relationships, and ways he has assumed a more responsible and positive social role.

Although Bill is academically able, and his excellent creative writing is an instance of this, he does not see the point of certain social graces. For example, Bill often forgets things, such as greeting before he starts to discuss the adventures he has been having since he last saw you.

Bill has also been reluctant to express positive emotions or say pleasant things about the people in his life. In the past, Bill has chosen to play the role of “the villain”. The villain is an anti-social model who revels in his negative attitudes towards others. Bill has not always been comfortable with social situations and he found that assuming this role could justify anti-social behaviour. This year, we have witnessed a breakthrough in Bill’s attitudes towards others. He has become far more positive in his social interactions and in the expression of his feelings and emotions.

## String one: Appreciating people and making new friends

1. **Missing friends** 17 March 2008
2. **You know, I can be friends with a girl!** 19 May 2008
3. **It's nice to say nice things** 10 June 2008
4. **Parting is such sweet sorrow** 4 July 2008
5. **"That beautiful girl with the blonde hair"** 23 September 2008

## String two: Standing tall

1. **Dealing with bullies** 12 May 2008
2. **Persisting with bullies** 19 May 2008
3. **The day I became a hero** 15 August 2008

## String three: Knowing when to co-operate

1. **It's okay to smile** 20 May 2008
2. **Time to accept responsibility** 29 May 2008

These three strings of learning stories show Bill learning to relate to others in more socially acceptable ways over a six-month period. We see him develop an appreciation of the value of positive relationships and accepting social interactions. We also see Bill showing that he understands ideas that are new to him, about what makes social relationships work, and seeking advice and information when he is uncertain. Bill begins to put some of these new ideas into practice in his social interactions, where his openness to these concepts enable him to participate and contribute more fully at school.

## Missing friends

<b>Student</b>	Bill	<b>Date</b>	17 March 2008
		<b>Observer</b>	Graeme (teacher)

In the school environment, Bill has been reluctant to form friendships with females. He has often referred to them in a derogatory fashion. Over the past year, Bill's attitudes have begun to change. Just why, we are not certain; however, it seems likely this attitude change may be a result of both his maturing and having developed a trusting relationship with me. Today, we were discussing the exotic travels of Briony, Bill's female teacher of the previous year. Without any prompt or other model, Bill clearly stated that he missed Briony and had really enjoyed having her as a teacher. This was a big new step for Bill and one that is pleasing to see.

## Analysis – what learning is happening here?

Bill has clearly initiated comments that reflect positive emotions about another person. Bill is demonstrating a change in his attitudes towards a woman and is saying nice things about the people in his life.

## Key competencies

### Relating to others

- I can be kind to others.

## Learning areas

### Level 1 health and physical education: Relationships with Other People: relationships

Bill is sharing ideas about relationships with other people.

### Level 1 health and physical education: Relationships with Other People: interpersonal skills

Bill is also expressing his own ideas and feelings.

## Where to next?

The teaching staff will continue to encourage and model the expression of positive emotions amongst the whole class.

We will encourage Bill to more openly express positive feelings about social situations he has enjoyed and the benefits of having friends.

### Development 1 April 2008 – Missing Shelley

For the past two weeks we have had a nursing student in our class. Shelley was a gregarious student whose company we enjoyed during our two weeks together. Today, the first day after Shelley's departure, Bill expressed the fact that he missed Shelley and had really enjoyed having her in our class.

## You know, I can be friends with a girl!

<b>Student</b>	Bill	<b>Date</b>	19 May 2008
		<b>Observer</b>	Graeme (teacher)

This term, Bill has begun to form a new friendship with a girl in our class. Before this year, it would have been unlikely for Bill to form a friendship with a female. The initial indication of the developing friendship came in one of Bill's stories. Bill is an excellent creative writer and spends many hours of his own time documenting adventures in his fantasy world called Farerun. One day, when Bill was describing a princess in this world he said that, "She was as beautiful as Micayla".

### Development 5 June 2008

This initial display of interest in Micayla has developed into a friendship. This has been a problem for some of Bill's other friends, who have attempted to stop him from spending time with Micayla. In spite of these protests, Bill has continued to spend time with Micayla and foster their friendship. In developing the 'Spike' game on the playground (where Bill pretends he is a great cat and chases anyone and everyone who says his name), Bill and Micayla have also invited a number of other younger peers to join their play.

## Analysis – what learning is happening here?

The comparison of the princess's beauty and Micayla's further demonstrates Bill's ability to express positive things about the people in his life.

Bill continues to demonstrate a change in attitude towards females.

Bill is broadening his social group and developing new friendships.

## Key competencies

### Relating to others

- I can be kind to others.
- I can share.

### Participating and contributing

- I can join in.
- I am interested in my friends.

## Learning areas

### Level 1 health and physical education: Relationships with Other People: relationships

Bill is sharing ideas about relationships with other people.

### Level 1 health and physical education: Relationships with Other People: identity, sensitivity, and respect

Bill is demonstrating respect through co-operation and sharing in groups.

## Where to next?

We will commend Bill for his willingness to enlarge his circle of friends.

We will discuss with Bill the benefits of having new and different friends and how the different interests of these friends can allow us to explore other things that enrich our lives. For example, Micayla enjoys playing chasing in the playground, whereas Ryan shares Bill's love of playing on the computer.

The negative response of some of Bill's other friends necessitates a discussion on bullying. Bill needs to be reassured that attempts to stop him playing with Micayla are inappropriate and we need to discuss strategies that he can use should this occur again.

## It's nice to say nice things

<b>Student</b>	Bill	<b>Date</b>	10 June 2008
		<b>Observer</b>	Graeme (teacher)

This term, our integrated theme has been sexuality education. The initial part of this programme has focused on the development of a range of social skills. As part of this social skills programme, I have established a new activity dubbed "daily niceness". This is an activity adapted from "Kotahitanga (Curriculum in Action: Years 1-3)". At the start of the day, each person in the class, adults and students, get a picture of someone else in the class. At the end of the day we all sit together and say something nice about that person.

In spite of some initial reluctance, Bill has adapted well to this new activity. Every day now Bill continues to give specific and genuine comments about the people in his class. Today, Bill gave an unprompted comment, outside of "daily niceness", about one of the teaching assistants in our class. Sadly, the person in question was sick that day. We praised Bill for his kind words and encouraged him to express the same sentiment on the following day. Upon Sarah's return the next day, he did exactly that.

### Analysis – what learning is happening here?

Taking a lead from a class activity, Bill has made an unprompted compliment about someone.

Bill continues to demonstrate a change in attitude towards females.

Bill continues to demonstrate an improving ability to express his feelings about the people in his class.

### Key competencies

#### Relating to others

- I can be kind to others.
- I can share.

#### Using languages, symbols, and texts

- I can tell you how I feel.

### Learning areas

#### Level 1 health and physical education: Relationships with Other People: relationships

Bill is sharing ideas about relationships with other people.

#### Level 1 health and physical education: Relationships with Other People: interpersonal skills

Bill is expressing his own ideas and feelings.

## Where to next?

We will praise Bill and continue with the existing activity.

Teachers and teacher aides will continue to model saying nice things about people outside of the “daily niceness” context. This will, we hope, demonstrate that we do not need to wait for a specific time to say nice things and that these expressions can be more immediate to the event that made us happy.

## Parting is such sweet sorrow

<b>Student</b>	Bill	<b>Date</b>	4 July 2008
		<b>Observer</b>	Graeme (teacher)

Today, Bill learned that next term Micayla will be moving to a satellite classroom in another school. Bill openly said that this made him sad and that he would miss her once she was gone. Although awkward, Bill was able to blurt out his feelings directly to Micayla on her final day.

### Development

Bill continues to express the fact that he misses Micayla. He also requests opportunities to spend time with her when she does visit the base school.

## Analysis – what learning is happening here?

Bill is consolidating his development toward becoming a more expressive and socially aware young man.

## Key competencies

### Using languages, symbols, and texts

— I can tell you how I feel.

## Learning areas

### Level 1 health and physical education: Relationships with Other People: relationships

Bill is exploring and sharing ideas about relationships with other people.

## Where to next?

We will discuss with Bill the benefits of forming new friendships. We will also discuss the things we can do to stay in touch when our friends move away, such as sending pictures or emails.

## "That beautiful girl with the blonde hair"

<b>Student</b>	Bill	<b>Date</b>	23 September 2008
		<b>Observer</b>	Meegan (teacher)

While we were waiting for taxis, Bill sat beside me and we started to chat. Historically, Bill would not have done this. On a number of previous occasions when I have tried to talk to Bill he has been unwilling to talk to me even when I have asked him about things I know are of interest to him.

He asked, "Do you know the white girl with blonde hair called Gina"? "Yes," I replied. "She is very beautiful," said Bill. I agreed, adding that she was a very kind, sweet girl.

He asked, "How can I be friends with her?" I said that it was a good idea to talk to her about things that she likes. I added that she was quite quiet and he may need to be a patient friend and wait for her to respond.

He seemed happy with this response.

### **Development 26 September 2008 by Graeme (teacher)**

After discussing this story with Meegan, I thought that I should talk to Bill about how he could approach Gina. I decided to begin by asking Bill about what he thought was a good way to approach her. Skipping over a simple greeting, his first idea was to give her a gift. Initially, I thought this was a great idea! He then explained that the gift could be a book about the evil cats from his imaginary world. When I suggested that she might not like such a gift, his face was awash with surprise. We then discussed that different people often like different things. I explained that just because he likes evil cats, it was not certain that she would. I further suggested that he should find out what she likes if he wanted to give her a gift. After overcoming the shock that someone might not like a book about evil cats, he happily considered my suggestions.

### **Analysis – what learning is happening here?**

Bill wants to make new friends. He is taking the initiative and approaching someone for advice on making friends. He shows that he knows where to go when he needs information and support.

### **Key competencies**

#### **Participating and contributing**

I am interested in the world around me and the people in it!

### **Learning areas**

#### **Level 1 health and physical education: Relationships with Other People: relationships**

Bill is sharing ideas about relationships with other people.

#### **Level 1 health and physical education: Relationships with Other People: interpersonal skills**

Bill is expressing his own ideas and wants.

## Where to next?

We need to discuss with Bill that there are simple things he can do, such as smiling or saying hello, that may be more appropriate than starting with a gift.

It will be useful to have a class discussion about making new friends. "Friendly kids, friendly classrooms" and "Kotahitanga" both have good lessons relating to this.

## Dealing with bullies

<b>Student</b>	Bill	<b>Date</b>	12 May 2008
		<b>Observer</b>	Sarah (teacher assistant)

During lunchtime play, Bill told me that he was being teased by other students. He told the bullies how he felt and then came to talk to me. I told him that I would watch them and talk to them if any problems persisted. Bill accepted this and went away to play with his friends.

## Analysis – what learning is happening here?

Even though angry and upset, Bill followed a previously discussed strategy to resolve the issue.

Bill accepted the outcome without complaint.

Bill has continued to demonstrate that he can clearly express his feelings.

## Key competencies

### Managing self

- I can be upset and still be safe.
- I can follow the rules.

## Learning areas

### Level 1 health and physical education: Relationships with Other People: relationships

Bill is sharing ideas about relationships with other people.

### Level 1 health and physical education: Personal Health and Physical Development; safety management

Bill has identified and used a safe practice and a person who can help.

## Where to next?

We will help Bill to develop new positive and satisfying strategies that he can use independently in the absence of adults.

We will discuss again the concept of bullies and the fact that we cannot control the actions of others. We will empower Bill with strategies to help him manage his own behaviour in these times of stress.

## Persisting with bullies

<b>Student</b>	Bill	<b>Date</b>	19 May 2008
		<b>Observer</b>	Graeme (teacher)

As a part of our social skills unit, and in response to some playground behaviour, we decided to focus on the issue of bullying. One of my specific aims was to tackle the issue of excluding people from games and activities. We discussed how everyone wants to have friends and that this was therefore one of the worst kinds of bullying.

As Bill has developed friendships with a younger girl in our class, he has been challenged by one peer who feels that this relationship is inappropriate. Over a couple of weeks, we revisited the issue of bullying and Bill found himself in a social dilemma: please old friends and alienate the new, or vice versa.

Today, Bill made a decision. He came to me and described how another student had been seeking to exclude his new friend. He recognised that this was bullying and expressed this to the peer in question. Furthermore, Bill chose to continue with his new friendship and not give in to the demands of a bully!

### Development 4 June 2008

Over the past couple of weeks, Bill has sought reassurance that he is doing the right thing in his social dilemma. With encouragement, and in spite of alienating one peer, Bill continues to defend his new friendship. Bill knows "what is right" and accepts the consequences of defending what is right.

### Analysis – what learning is happening here?

Bill has demonstrated an understanding of the concept of exclusion.

With reassurance, Bill has overcome social pressures to make a moral stand.

### Key competencies

#### Managing self

– I can make good choices even when others do not.

#### Thinking

– I can figure it out.

### Learning areas

#### Level 1 health and physical education: Relationships with Other People: relationships

Bill is exploring and sharing ideas about relationships with other people.

#### Level 1 health and physical education: Personal Health and Physical Development: personal growth and development

Bill has asked questions about his social needs and wants.

### Where to next?

We will praise Bill for good social choices and continue to reinforce positive, social values.

We will work with the other peer to promote positive social problem-solving.

## The day I became a hero

<b>Student</b>	Bill	<b>Date</b>	15 August 2008
		<b>Observer</b>	Graeme (teacher)

Today, Bill assumed the role of the hero to defend his friend in the playground. When someone tried to bully Bill's friend, he stood in the way of the bullies. After the incident was over Bill, in great distress, came to me to explain what happened. Bill emphasised that he knew he needed to be a hero and stop the bullies. Bill is very familiar with a range of strategies and assessed that this situation required him to protect his friend. Even though he was in both physical and emotional distress, he assessed what was most important to him and was proud of his self-sacrifice.

### Analysis – what learning is happening here?

Bill clearly demonstrates a complete break away from his previous persona of "the villain", opting instead for the more affable role of the hero.

Bill clearly makes a considerable personal sacrifice (e.g. getting hit and teased by a former friend) in order to protect the physical safety and emotions of another person.

### Key competencies

#### Managing self

- I can follow the rules.
- I can be angry/upset and still be safe.

#### Relating to others

- I can take care of my friends.

### Learning areas

#### **Level 1 health and physical education: Personal Health and Physical Development: personal identity**

Bill is describing a new role for himself in a new context.

#### **Level 1 health and physical education: Relationships with Other People: identity, sensitivity, and respect**

Bill is demonstrating respect through co-operation.

#### **Level 1 health and physical education: Relationships with Other People: interpersonal skills**

Bill is clearly identifying the needs of another person and placing them over and above his own.

### Where to next?

We will celebrate and consolidate Bill's choice of sticking up for others. This could be done by highlighting the benefits of a more positive role. For example, Bill shows how being nice to people promotes friendships.

It might be useful to do a video interview with Bill so that he can reflect on his social development throughout this year.

## It's okay to smile

<b>Student</b>	Bill	<b>Date</b>	20 May 2008
		<b>Observer</b>	Graeme (teacher)

Today's social skills activity, also adapted from "Kotahitanga (Curriculum in Action: Years 1-3)", was about identifying and expressing different emotions. We decided to start with happy, sad, and angry. After discussing what the different emotions looked like and some things that evoked these emotions, we decided to take photographs of each student expressing the three emotions. Traditionally, Bill has not allowed people to take photographs of him smiling. Smiling in photos does not fit with his preferred persona of "the villain". Today, Bill consented to us taking photographs of him smiling.

### Development 30 July 2008

Bill's Mum has also faced a similar challenge in getting photos of Bill with anything but a blank face or grimace. She was so pleased with this small breakthrough that we have sent the photos home.



### Analysis – what learning is happening here?

Bill's willingness to be photographed smiling demonstrates:

- a move away from reluctance to openly display positive emotions
- a divergence from the role of the villain
- a recognition and acceptance of teacher expectations without complaint.

### Key competencies

#### Participating and contributing

- I can give it a go even when I don't want to.

### Learning areas

#### Level 1 health and physical education: Relationships with Other People: identity, sensitivity, and respect

Bill has identified the importance of co-operation within certain contexts.

### Where to next?

It may be useful to encourage Bill to develop a new persona as an alternative to the villain. Perhaps a more heroic and friendly persona might allow him to safely smile without compromising his own sense of integrity. I guess the aim is to find some middle ground between "the villain" and expressing himself as "Bill the Good", human from earth.

## Time to accept responsibility

<b>Student</b>	Bill	<b>Date</b>	29 May 2008
		<b>Observer</b>	Graeme (teacher)

After drama rehearsal finished today, Bill took the opportunity to share his thoughts about his role: "Graeme, I don't like dancing but I know that I have to, so I am just going to do it". Bill used a reasonable tone and went on about his business after making the comment.

### Analysis – what learning is happening here?

Bill has recognised that sometimes we have to do things that we do not want to and that complaining cannot change this. This may seem innocuous, but it is a significant step to accepting that in the real world we sometimes have to do what we do not want to in order to gain privileges or benefits.

### Key competencies

#### Participating and contributing

– I can give it a go even when I don't want to.

### Learning areas

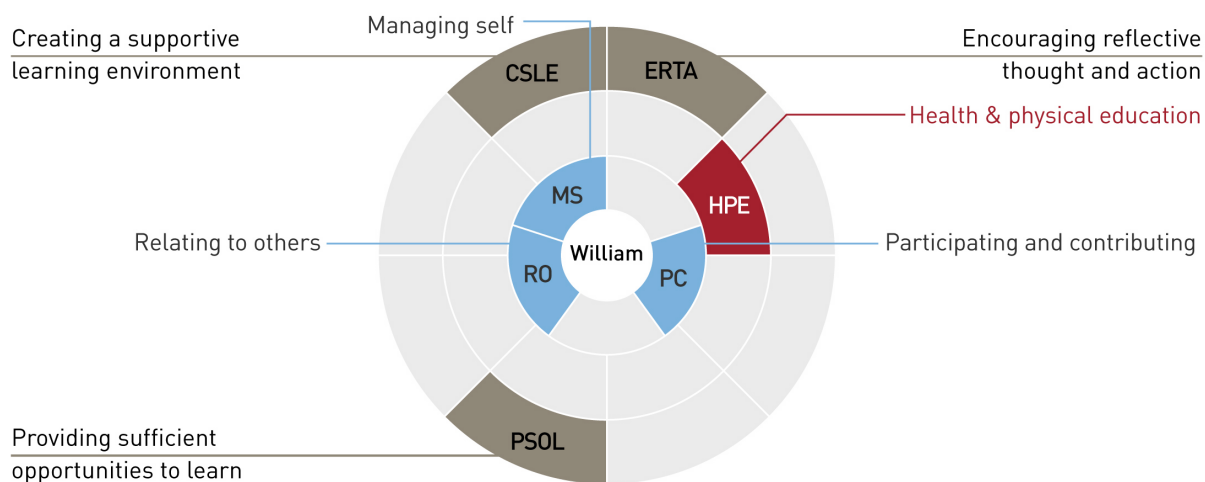
#### Level 1 health and physical education: Relationships with Other People: identity, sensitivity, and respect

Bill has identified the importance of co-operation within certain contexts.

### Where to next?

We will discuss how everyone in society has rights and responsibilities. Sometimes you have to do things you do not want to if you want to enjoy benefits or privileges. For example, at school you have to work to achieve preferred activity time, at work you have to do what you are told to get your pay. We will plan to include events in the day when students can practise giving new and challenging activities a go.

## Reflection – what these stories exemplify



### Key competencies

Bill has seen the need to learn better ways of relating to others and managing himself through recognition that particular people in his school life, both fellow students and teachers, are important to him. These stories demonstrate Bill’s developing ability to address and respond to others in ever more independent ways that are both positive and supporting. We see Bill participating with an increased awareness of the roles and responsibilities of being a member of a group. We see a student who has moved from self-focus to someone who takes actions that are valued by others and affirms his own appreciation of the most positive actions that build relationships.

#### How might these stories strengthen Bill’s identity as a learner?

When Bill realises that those around him in his school environment appreciate his greetings and positive comments, he increasingly initiates these himself (agency and depth). He also develops the ability to take his appreciation of the values of friendship beyond the classroom into the playground, the drama rehearsal, and while waiting for taxis. Bill shows his understanding of appropriate actions that support those friendships (breadth and continuity).

For more information on the four dimensions of agency, breadth, continuity, and depth (ABCDs), refer to *Narrative assessment: a guide for teachers*.

### Learning areas

#### Level 1 health and physical education

The learning shown in these stories occurs within health education. Bill is sharing ideas about relationships with others, expressing his own ideas and feelings, and demonstrating respect through co-operation and identifying the needs of others. Additionally, Bill has sought answers to questions about his social needs, identifying a person who can help, and identifying and using safe practices.

## Effective pedagogy

### **What does this tell us about teaching and learning in this setting?**

Bill's learning is fostered by creating a supportive learning environment where he is encouraged by his teacher and others to say what he thinks and feels, and to develop friendships. His teacher has used many strategies and resources, including language that Bill is familiar with from his creative writing, to help Bill explore new ways of relating. Bill is also given repeated opportunities to discuss and practise the skills he is learning. Student reflection is an integral part of this teacher's classroom programme ([Click here](#) to view the video clip online) (encouraging reflective thought and action).

### **Reflective questions for the reader**

"What resources can I access to help my students develop their social skills at school and beyond?"

"How do I build trust with my students to share what is on their minds so I can assist with their learning and development?"

### **Useful resources**

Ministry of Education (2001). *Kotahitanga = Getting on together: social relationships years 1-3, key area of learning, mental health*. Wellington, N.Z.: Learning Media.

McGrath, H., & Francey, S. (1991). *Friendly kids, friendly classrooms: teaching social skills and confidence in the classroom*. South Melbourne: Longman Cheshire.