

CLOVERLEA SCHOOL

SOFT START

A soft start is an approach where the first few minutes of the school day are dedicated to activities that promote a smooth transition into the learning environment.



They include calm, low -pressure activities like reading, drawing, playing a game or chatting with peers. This simple yet powerful technique offers so many benefits for both LEGENDs and kaiako, fostering a conducive atmosphere for effective teaching and learning.

This is a slow and gentle start to the school day. LEGENDs are welcomed to their akomanga with a warm smile from their kaiako and are able to complete low stakes, calming activities, often to some gentle music. It sets a positive tone and lays the foundation for meaningful learning.

IT IS IMPORTANT BECAUSE:

A soft start enhances focus and attention by giving LEGENDs time to settle into the school environment and mentally preparing for learning. It fosters increased motivation as LEGENDs feel seen and valued through positive interactions with kaiako and peers, creating a sense of belonging and eagerness to participate. Over time, this supportive routine contributes to improved academic performance, as LEGENDs begin their day feeling calm, engaged and ready to tackle challenges with confidence. It establishes clear routines and expectations, which provide LEGENDs with a sense of security and predictability. Building positive relationships during this time fosters trust and cooperation, encouraging engagement and minimising behavioural issues.

A soft start encourages creativity and critical thinking by allowing LEGENDs to engage in open-ended, low-pressure activities that stimulate imagination and problem-solving. This relaxed environment fosters exploration and curiosity, setting a positive tone for innovative and thoughtful learning over the day.

The principle of "Maslow before Bloom" emphasises the importance of addressing LEGENDs' basic needs (Maslow's hierarchy) before expecting them to engage in higher-order thinking and learning (Bloom's taxonomy). LEGENDs need to feel safe, valued, and supported emotionally, socially, and physically to fully access their cognitive abilities. At Cloverlea Kura we prioritise creating a nurturing environment where LEGENDs' well-being is the focus. By meeting these foundational needs first, kaiako can help LEGENDs feel secure and ready to engage in deep, meaningful learning experiences for the day.

CURRICULUM LINKS:

The concept of a soft start aligns closely with the Curriculum, particularly in areas like student well-being, relationships, and engagement. A soft start fosters a safe, supportive environment, reflecting the curriculum's emphasis on holistic education and the need for students to feel secure before engaging in learning. By encouraging positive teacher-student relationships and a sense of belonging, the soft start supports the curriculum's vision of LEGENDs being confident, connected, and actively involved in their learning journey. This approach also links to the **Key Competencies**, particularly "Relating to Others" and "Managing Self," by providing opportunities for LEGENDs to build trust and engage with others in a positive, purposeful way.

Through the deliberate acts of teaching LEGENDs will:

- Have time to transition gently into the school day to be ready for learning;
- Building confidence as members of this class;
- Build relationships with the kaiako and their peers;
- Have opportunities to talk through any problems or worries that might otherwise impact learning through the day.

WHANAUNGATANGA

During soft start, kaiako can check in with LEGENDs, fostering a strong relationship and showing genuine care and interest in their well-being. It helps them to connect with each other. It creates a calm and welcoming environment, allowing LEGENDs to transition smoothly from home to kura, which is particularly important for those that might feel anxious or stressed. A soft start encourages social interaction among peers, helping to establish a sense of community and belonging.

LINKS TO OUR LEGEND VALUES:

- L**ead - LEGENDs making the right choices at the right time;
- E**xcellence - LEGENDs doing the best they can to have the right noise level for soft start;
- o**r**G**anised - Knowing what they want to do for soft start;
- r**esilience - LEGENDs showing resilience if there is an activity they wanted to do and its not available that day;
- i**n**C**lusive - Sharing and completing their quiet activity with other LEGENDs;
- D**etermined- Determined to whakapai their own activity when the kaiako has asked to pack up for Pae Kōrero.

ENACTING TE TIRITI O WAITANGI:

Mauri tau is what we associated with the term 'soft start'. Tau refers to being settled, calm, landed, or arrived at a destination. Mauri tau means that you have landed in a state of calm and balance. Like the tide, this state ebbs and flows and requires regular awareness and practice. Tau can be expressed as a settled state where you are aware of your kare-a-roto, your thoughts, feelings and emotions, your environment, and your relationships. Soft start helps LEGENDs to be in a state of tau so that they are ready for learning.

RESEARCH & EVIDENCE:

- <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/unlocking-success-benefits-soft-start-classroom-teachervision#:~:text=A%20soft%20start%2C%20on%20the,or%20exhibit%20school%2Davoidant%20behavior>
- <https://blog.heinemann.com/begin-the-school-day-with-soft-starts-try-it-yourself>
- <https://smallsteps.blog/2017/08/10/more-on-soft-starts/>

Ārahi, Kairangi, Nahanaha, Manawaroa, Kotahitanga, Rae Pakari

LEAD, EXCELLENCE, ORGANISED, RESILIENCE, INCLUSIVE, DETERMINED