



TEACHING AND LEARNING TE REO MĀORI IN ENGLISH-MEDIUM SCHOOLS IN NEW ZEALAND:

What we learned

Leadership Matters

We have to show respect for te reo Māori to give it status here.

Principal, English-medium primary school, 2018

The successful introduction and implementation of a te reo Māori programme in New Zealand schools needs strong leadership. Research into the teaching and learning of te reo Māori in English-medium schools in 2018¹ showed the importance of a principal leading from the front when establishing a Māori language programme. Whānau and teachers also have a very important place too! A leader who fronts the discussion with their community articulates a clear vision for Māori language in their school. They also clarify the moral obligation to contribute to our nationhood, and inspire and motivate staff and students to learn te reo Māori. The goal, as one principal put it is “To be a bicultural citizen, for Māori students to be strong in their identity and their language, for non-Māori students to be strong in our national identity”.

Leaders interviewed for the study spoke about their pride in seeing Māori student identity strengthened and all their students growing a sense of nationhood as a result of the Māori language programmes in their schools. Teachers in these schools spoke of how important it has been for them to have leaders who create the conditions necessary for the Māori language programme to become a central part of the school curriculum. Leading by example and showing practical ways in which Māori language is valued in the school has driven a deeper commitment from teachers, students and whānau alike.

It is a familiar story – committed and willing leaders and teachers, together, can make good gains in shaping a narrative that promotes and values te reo Māori as part of our nationhood, and as the foundation for strengthening Māori student identity. They find ways around the many barriers that can prevent the less committed from making these gains; they resource the Māori language programme appropriately; and things that would otherwise not be possible, become possible. This can happen even in the least likely education contexts.

¹ Haemata Ltd (2019). *WHAKANUIA TE REO KIA ORA: Evaluation of te reo Māori in English-medium compulsory education*. Unpublished report prepared for Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori.

Common ways in which leaders showed their commitment included:

- **using Māori greetings** in their verbal and written communications, at assembly, and when addressing meetings
- **using te reo Māori as a normal part of their daily interactions** with students and teachers
- **supporting their teachers to engage** in Māori language tuition, and learning alongside their staff
- **ensuring te reo Māori is visible** throughout the school
- **making Māori Language Week a key part** of the school calendar each year and having their own additional school Māori language days
- **building a stronger relationship** with local whānau, hapū and iwi to espouse an unwavering commitment to work together toward a shared vision for their children and the language.

While role modelling their commitment may have been driven by a desire to support better outcomes for Māori students, leaders also spoke of the many benefits gained personally and as a school from their “Māori language journey”. For many, the experiences they had gained through participating alongside their staff in learning Māori language, and by forming closer relationships with whānau and iwi based on a shared commitment to the language, had offered both professional challenges and personal growth. It had also led to a more “Aotearoa New Zealand school,” with students who appreciated the uniqueness of schooling in our country.

The unwavering commitment evident amongst school leaders comes from a steadfast resolve to deliver schooling in a way that supports better outcomes for Māori students. It also actively recognises the value proposition that all students who are grounded in their unique national identity can offer the world.

He toka tū moana.

A rock that stands firm in all conditions.

'Kia ita!'

Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori
MĀORI LANGUAGE COMMISSION



Haemata Ltd

Reflect

What role does school leadership currently have in contributing to the revitalisation of te reo Māori?

How could the conditions required to validate Māori language in your school be strengthened?