



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

What we learned

The Role of Whānau

[Te reo Māori] is an intrinsic need for my son, that's a part of his make-up, his whakapapa I guess, and also, as an adult, knowing the sense of loss that you carry, the feeling of being bereft and not complete without knowledge of your language and your culture, that is the taumaha we carry.

Principal, English-medium primary school, 2018

Whānau have a unique role and contribution to make when it comes to the teaching and learning of te reo Māori. Within this context a strong foundation for an authentic relationship with whānau, hapū and iwi can grow.

As a kaupapa important to both whānau and schools, te reo Māori provides the ideal opportunity to build or strengthen a mutually beneficial relationship. When schools involve whānau in establishing and maintaining te reo Māori programmes in schools, they are putting their commitment to whānau, hapū and iwi into action. It is just this type of action that is required to build reciprocal relationships.

Some schools have approached this by convening a whānau group charged with responsibility for fleshing out the strategies needed to create the conditions required to validate and advance Māori language outcomes in the school.¹ Whānau groups that have included students, parents, teachers, board of trustee members, iwi, hapū, and community representatives have been able to carry out this role. They consider all perspectives and eliminate barriers that might otherwise emerge further down the track. While setting up a whānau group may start the process, sustaining such group can be more challenging. Still, it is worth the effort. A vibrant whānau group can mean longstanding relationships with whānau, over generations, that shape the way in which the school supports the learning and achievement of Māori students. In part, it the success of this relies on having clear responsibilities with an agreed level of decision-making ability and regular hui which have meaningful and mutually worthwhile agendas.

Involving whānau in school events is an effective mechanism too. These events can be good for strengthening and building the relationship, especially events where whānau can be involved in their children's successes or share the lead in organising and shaping the event. Prizegiving ceremonies or planning Te Wiki o te Reo Māori events to include Māori language awards for children, whānau and teachers are possibilities. Other ideas include a school production that brings voice to a hapū or iwi story or normalises te reo Māori in a meaningful context.

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.

While te reo Māori can provide the foundation for a productive relationship with whānau that serves a broader purpose for the school, losing sight of whānau, hapū and iwi aspirations for te reo Māori can become a point of contention. Keeping to the fore a shared vision for te reo Māori in the school can provide a consistent touchpoint for an enduring discussion and a relationship that values both the role of the school and that of whānau.

Ko koe kei tēnā kīwai o te kete, ko au kei tēnei kīwai o te kete.

You carry your handle of our kete, and I'll carry my handle of our kete.

Key messages for whānau

- You are entitled to have expectations for your child's learning.
- Let the school know your aspirations for te reo Māori.
- Offer support – schools need support.
- You have an important role to play in your child's education.
- Do not be fearful to be involved.

Key messages for schools

- Whānau have clear aspirations for their children and te reo Māori.
- Te reo Māori offers mutual benefits for schools and whānau.
- Whānau have knowledge to draw on if they are invited to contribute.
- Be realistic in your expectations of whānau.
- Be open to learning.

Reflect

To what extent is your Māori language programme meeting whānau expectations?

How do you know the value that whānau could add to your te reo Māori programme?

'Kia ita!'

Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori
MĀORI LANGUAGE COMMISSION



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