



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

What we learned

Innovation

*Innovation, by definition, requires us to make changes –
to do things in a new way.*

There has been no previous time when the call for innovation in teaching has been louder. In the 2018 study of the teaching of te reo Māori in English-medium schools,¹ the pursuit of innovation was obvious in Māori language classes. In some cases, innovation in planning, resourcing or delivering the Māori language programme was borne out of necessity, in others, from a genuine desire to make a greater difference for te reo Māori and Māori students. Whatever the driver, innovation in each of the schools was positive for everyone involved – the schools, their leaders, teachers, students and whānau.

Staffing

Attracting and retaining Māori language speaking teachers is often one of the first challenges faced by schools who want to offer Māori language programmes. One primary school addressed this ongoing challenge by making te reo Māori one of the desirable skills for any teaching vacancies. While it did not always result in fluent speakers of Māori being appointed, it did attract applications from candidates who were, at the very least, open to learning and supporting te reo Māori in the school. This had the potential to change the face of the school, and to create one of the conditions necessary for a school-wide language programme.

Another primary school was challenged to meet a request by students for te reo Māori extension support. This was done by appointing a tertiary student as a teacher aide. Not only did this fill a learning support need, but the person appointed was a former student who provided a positive role model for the current students.

Leadership and capability building

Having a Māori language programme can offer an opportunity to grow and expand leadership capability amongst the teaching staff. Appointing a lead teacher of te reo Māori or allocating lead teacher responsibilities is relatively common. These roles are, however, usually on top of a normal full-time teaching role. One primary school took a different approach by appointing a lead teacher of te reo Māori whose role solely focused on supporting the implementation of the Māori language programme across the school. The lead teacher role modelled lessons, and provided resources and professional support for classroom teachers to embed te reo Māori in their day-to-day teaching programme. This gave the teachers the confidence to implement the programme within their classrooms.

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.

Working smarter for student gains

Helping students to make greater gains in language learning can also have real benefits for teachers. That is what they found when the heads of the Māori and English departments in one secondary school decided to align their teaching programmes. The intent behind this was to support student mastery in common areas of language development such as crafted writing, speechmaking and essay writing. Not only did this approach prove to make the learning easier for students, but it also meant the teachers were working smarter, could share resources, and teaching approaches and explicitly help the students transfer what they were learning in one language into the other. Their professional relationships across departments grew, and some positive spin-offs for students included seamless learning across subjects and the opportunity for integrated or parallel assessments.

Vision drives strategy

Starting their Māori language commitment by having a specific reference to te reo Māori in the school's vision has paid off for one composite school. This strategic move has resulted in further innovation in terms of the development of a full Māori language strategy and a school-based Māori language curriculum. It hasn't stopped there though. A set of Māori language progressions that span Years 1–10 has been developed to provide a scaffolded approach to learning and to guide both teachers and students through their Māori language learning journeys. Enabling Māori whānau to develop and drive a strategy that supports this vision has meant each of these developments has been possible in a school with a low Māori roll and few Māori speaking staff.

In another school where whānau are active in achieving their vision for te reo Māori, instituting a Parents Day has been a way of 'paying it back'. On this day, parents come to class and are taught te reo Māori by their children – an opportunity that enables parents to share in their children's learning and successes.

Resourcing teacher development

Frequently, the highest presenting need for teachers is support with their own Māori language development. Schools meet this need in a variety of ways from centrally-funded professional learning and development to school-funded Māori language lessons. Māori language classes where the principal and senior teaching staff learn alongside classroom teachers (and whānau) are particularly powerful in signaling a 'whole school' commitment to learning te reo Māori. More common, however, is for small groups of teachers in a school to enrol in Māori language and tikanga classes with tertiary providers. Some schools support their professional learning by covering the costs as part of the professional development budget. Most important, though, is the collegial support that comes with learning te reo Māori together which can lead to real innovation and change in a school. It is the power of the collective.

**Whāia ngā pae o te māramatanga, e puta ai
ki te whai ao, ki te ao mārama.**

*Search in the innermost recesses of the intellect for
new knowledge and understanding to emerge.*

Reflect

*What new things could you try that will make your
Māori language programme fun, innovative,
and more effective?*

*How might you think differently about ways
to support teachers and students in
learning te reo Māori?*

'Kia ita!'

Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori
MĀORI LANGUAGE COMMISSION



Haemata Ltd