

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

What we learned

'Kia ita!'
Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori
MAORI LANGUAGE COMMISSION



Haemata[™]

New Zealand's Language

In 2040 we will commemorate 200 years since the signing of that Treaty. It will be a milestone that can only be truly celebrated if the language and cultures of both treaty partners are alive and flourishing.

Nanaia Mahuta, Minister for Māori Development¹

So, how can schools contribute to making this milestone a true celebration? Research into the teaching and learning of Māori language in English-medium schools in 2018,² found that many schools are well on the way to ensuring that their students, at the very least, value te reo Māori as central to their identity as New Zealanders. As one of our official languages, along with Sign Language and English, te reo Māori is special to our country and distinguishes us from the rest of the world.

While Māori language is especially important for Māori student identity, it is also important for non-Māori students. Schools are shifting their thinking from Māori language for Māori students, to Māori language for everyone. The schools who participated in the research were not schools with high Māori student rolls. Typically, their Māori student population was less than a quarter of their total roll. So while their Māori language programmes were definitely part of the strategy for improving outcomes for Māori students, the application and benefits of having a Māori language programme were far broader. For example, one school in the study was proud that the winner of their Māori language award the previous year had gone to a foreign student.

The face of New Zealand has changed considerably. New Zealand's citizens have diverse ethnic and linguistic backgrounds. Interestingly, the study found that interviewees (students, parents, and school leaders) who had migrated to Aotearoa were some of the most supportive of the Māori language programme in their schools. For them, teaching and learning Māori language was a given. They needed no reason nor justification for teaching or learning te reo Māori. That it is the language of the country they have chosen to live in was enough. Their acceptance of te reo Māori as the indigenous language of Aotearoa was founded on the inherent value that language and culture have in a global society.

¹Te Puni Kōkiri (2019). *Maihi Karauna: The Crown's Strategy for Māori Language Revitalisation, 2019–2023*. Wellington: Te Puni Kōkiri (p. 3).

²Haemata 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.

English-medium schools find numerous ways of embedding Māori language into their school culture. They find that it is a way of fostering the special place that te reo Māori deserves in our country and embedding valuing the language as a natural part of our national identity.

This is one of the biggest contributions English-medium schools are making to the revitalisation of te reo Māori. They are making a significant impact on the status and value that future generations give our indigenous language. While students may not learn more than basic greetings, waiata, or everyday words, schools are making an important impact on lifting the status that the Māori language has in our society. It is important to increase the status of the language by normalising it as part of everyday communication inside and outside the classroom, making te reo Māori increasingly visible in the environment, and setting expectations that everyone will learn the language to some extent. This was evident in the way that students, teachers and whānau described te reo Māori as being central to our national identity. It makes us unique.

E kore e wheko, he mea iri ki runga ki te whēnako, e kore e wheko.³

*The yearning for something cannot be easily
extinguished.*

³Mead, H. M. & Grove, N., (2001). *Ngā Pepeha a ngā Tīpuna*. Wellington: Victoria University Press (p. 34).

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Reflect

*How does your school promote and value te reo
Māori as a unique part of our national identity?*