

# Te Kura Māori o Ngā Tapuwae

*Mana motubaketanga, equity,  
and the Equity Index*

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# He karakia

*Tēnei au, tēnei au  
Te hōkai nei i taku tapuwae  
Ko te hōkai nuku  
Ko te hōkai rangi  
Ko te hōkai o te tipuna  
Ā Tāne-nui-a-rangi  
I pikitia ai  
Ki ngā rangi-tūhāhā  
Ki Tihi-i-Manono  
I rokohina atu rā  
Ko Io-Matua-Kore anake  
I riro iho ai  
Ngā kete o te wānanga  
Ko te kete tuauri  
Ko te kete tuatea  
Ko te kete aronui  
Ka tiritiria, ka poupoua  
Ki a Papatūānuku  
Ka puta te ira tangata  
Ki te whai ao  
Ki te ao mārama  
Tīhei mauri ora!*

This karakia celebrates the achievements made by atua Māori and tūpuna. Tāne-nui-a-rangi ascended to the uppermost realms, those inhabited only by Io-Matua-Kore, to acquire the three baskets of knowledge. Upon his return to the world of light, Tāne created humankind from the sacred earth. Tāne became a significant source of inspiration for tūpuna.

The narratives and whakapapa passed down through generations have become foundational pillars for kura mana motuhake.

These traditions also serve as a source of inspiration for researchers, encouraging them to seek enlightenment as evidence to support aspirations for self-determination, both in the present day and for the future.

# Ngā kupu whakamānawa

## *Acknowledgements*

We pay homage to Kui Pani Stirling, the guiding hand, who composed this karakia for Te Kura Māori o Ngā Tapuwae. These were her guiding words to the students:

... Kia mārie, kia ngāwari noa  
Kia whakawhirinaki ahau ki tōu kaha nui  
I runga i te whakapono, i te whakaāio  
Ki te whanga, ki te whakakite, i tāu e pai ai  
I te mārie, i te mahurutanga  
Ki te tūtaki i ētahi atu  
I runga i te rangimarie, i te ngākau hari  
Ki te anga atu ki āpōpō  
I runga i te manawatanga, i te māiatanga.

We also acknowledge the leadership and knowledge of Papa Te Kepa Stirling, and the working whānau of Te Kura Māori o Ngā Tapuwae.

We pay special thanks to the research team and the whānau o Te Kura Māori o Ngā Tapuwae who were interviewed, including, students, whānau (parents, elderly), the Board of Trustees, the principal, senior leadership, the alumni, and teachers.

We must also mention the guidance of NZCER and those who supported this project from the beginning through to the end. Thank you, Sheridan McKinley and Keita Durie.

Finally, we also pay special thanks to the Ministry of Education who funded this project, allowing the experiences of mana motuhake in kura mana motuhake and a more in-depth understanding of what equity means in kura mana motuhake to be showcased.

# 1. Te whakarāpopototanga

## *Executive summary*

This report analyses equity, as viewed through the lens of Te Kura Māori o Ngā Tapuwae (hereafter “Ngā Tapuwae”), a kura mana motuhake. According to Fortune et al. (2024), the more appropriate terms for equity from a Māori perspective are mana motuhake or tino rangatiratanga (self-determination).

Ngā Tapuwae is one of many kura mana motuhake that have high NCEA attainment rates in comparison to English-medium schools even though they face more socioeconomic barriers (Gerritsen, 2024). In 2023, Ngā Tapuwae held the highest NCEA pass rate in the country and has continued to maintain high levels of success since its inception. They credit their achievement to their cultural values and approach to learning.

The purpose of this case study is to provide evidence of the challenges faced and overcome by Ngā Tapuwae to ensure all ākonga have access to an education that meets their aspirations.

The following research questions were designed by Ngā Tapuwae, in collaboration with Te Wāhanga, the New Zealand Council for Educational Research (NZCER) kaupapa Māori research team:

1. How is the EQI understood at Ngā Tapuwae?
2. How much support has the EQI provided to Ngā Tapuwae to achieve equity for its students and whānau?
3. What is the importance of equity to Ngā Tapuwae?
4. What strategies does Ngā Tapuwae use to achieve its educational aspirations?
5. What resources are required to implement these strategies, and what challenges exist in securing these resources?

A total of 28 individuals from the school community were interviewed, and the interviews were divided into eight groups. The references are categorised by their roles: Ākonga (7), Hikuroa (4), Poumarumarū (2), Kaiako (4), Tumuaki & Ohu Whakahaere (3), Kaiarataki (2) and some Whānau (6).

Ngā Tapuwae embraces and supports every student and family, no matter their background. They place a strong emphasis on equity and create a level playing field. For Ngā Tapuwae, equity is “not just about everyone having the same pair of shoes but making sure that the shoes fit” (Tumuaki, 2024).

The Ministry of Education allocates funding to schools nationwide to alleviate social pressures on students and their achievements. The initiative is known as the Equity Index (EQI). The financial support provided by the EQI is insufficient to fully address equity or mana motuhake outcomes for students and whānau at Ngā Tapuwae.

Ongoing challenges require the kura whānau to seek additional resources and implement the following strategies to achieve its educational aspirations and mana motuhaketanga:

- kura ā-iwi membership
- a clear vision and strategic plan
- uphold intergenerational values
- Māori culture, identity and love
- leadership
- collective effort and generosity.

These strategies work for Ngā Tapuwae, which is a shining example of the tireless efforts of a school community to mitigate social challenges, remain resilient, and support their students to achieve excellence.

However, for the important issue of equity there is strong belief among the Ngā Tapuwae leadership that the Ministry of Education needs to support all kura to be unique and strong in their context specific approach to mana motuhaketanga, rather than expecting all kura to follow Ngā Tapuwae's approach or create a template approach. For example, South Auckland has the largest Māori population and the largest rangatahi population, many of whom are isolated from their hapū and iwi. Whānau like Ngā Tapuwae find themselves in a unique situation of being too Māori for South Auckland, but not Māori enough for their hapū, iwi and marae communities.

Ngā Tapuwae hopes the EQI system will consider the persistent inequities within communities across Aotearoa, particularly in South Auckland, and the significant negative impacts these inequities have on students, whānau, hapū, iwi, Māori communities, and kura mana motuhake. They also hope the Ministry of Education will develop greater awareness of and responsiveness to mana motuhake and tino rangatiratanga.

The Ngā Tapuwae whānau is clear that their approach suits their context and their why. They encourage other kura mana motuhake to be clear about their why and design their unique approach or “shoe to fit” the community that they serve.



## 2. He kupu whakataki—he takenga

### *Introduction*

Te Kura Māori o Ngā Tapuwae (Ngā Tapuwae) was established in Māngere in 1996. Ngā Tapuwae is a kura ā-iwi. The school's foundation is built on the core principles of the iwi and the values and ethics of te ao Māori. The school's pepeha is as follows:

Ko Puketaapapa me Te Ara Puueru ngaa maunga  
Ko Te Maanukanuka oo Hoturoa te moana  
Ko Puukaki, ko Makaurau, ko Te Puea ngaa marae  
Ko Te Waiohua, ko Te Akitai, ko Te Ahiwaru ngaa hapuu  
Ko Waikato te iwi.<sup>1</sup>

Ngā Tapuwae has a roll of 300 students, spanning from primary school (Year 0) to senior secondary school (Year 13). Most of the teachers at the kura are graduates (or alumni), fostering a strong sense of connection.

A rainbow-like stained glass window, Uenuku Te Pou, was designed to recognise the traditional name of the rohe, Te Whaitua o Uenuku. This stained-glass window represents the link between Kaiwhare, the guardian, and Hape, the ancestor. Additionally, the four classroom blocks of the kura are named Hiaroa, Hoturoa, Takataka o-Rangi, and Takawhenua.

Hape and his guardian, Kaiwhare, serve as symbolic figures for Ngā Tapuwae. According to pūrākau, Kaiwhare, a kaitiaki, brought Hape to Aotearoa. It is said that Hape, destined to be the chief tohunga of the Tainui waka, was left behind due to the deception of Taikehu. In response, Hape called upon Kaiwhare, and together they traversed the Pacific Ocean to reach Aotearoa. The many footprints of Hape across the land resulted in the name Ngā Tapuwae.

In addition to these ancestral names, the original name of the region is also acknowledged, Ngā Hau o Māngere. This name, given by Taikehu, refers to the gentle winds of the area that enriched the soil and gardens. Māngere is one of the key regions in South Auckland, traditionally inhabited by Ngāti Te Ata, Te Akitai, Te Waiohua and Te Ahiwaru. It is also home to significant landmarks, including Te Pane o Mataaho, Ihumātao, and the volcanic stonefields of Ōtuataua.

When Governor Grey started moving everybody out of Ihumātao, they all came and congregated here [where Ngā Tapuwae is]. There's an old tōtara tree where the swimming pool is. This was where all the rangatira of this place came and they waited for their people as they cleared their lands. And while they were here, Ngāti Whātua used to come over and they would share kai on this whenua. This whenua is called Ngā Tapuwae o ngā Tūpuna, or Ngā Tapuwae o Mataoho. Mataoho was the volcano god for this whole rohe, Tāmaki Makaurau. And so, we've kept all the names. The wharekai is called Ngā Hau Mangere. The whare hākinakina is Te Hau Kotahi Tuarua, because Te Atairangikaahu named our Ngā

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1 A double vowel is used in accord with Waikato Tainui preferences.

Tapuwae College gym Te Hau Kotahi. We then had her son Kīngi Tūheitia open our new school including our whare, Te Whare Wānanga Pupuri Kōrero o Ngā Tapuwae Tuarua. So, that's our history. We thought about everything that connects with our iwi and Te Whaitua o Uenuku. (Tumuaki)

We keep learning about all the local maunga named after Mataoho. We have all the maps that show where Mataoho lived and moved between. Examples include Te Ipu o Mataoho (Mt Eden's crater), Te Pane o Mataoho (Māngere Mountain) and Te Ihu-a-Mataoho (the nose of Mataaho which can be seen in the profile of Maungataketake). The ākonga also know the whakapapa and there's a hononga to the history. For example, "they'll go out to the stone fields at Ihumātao and they talk about the tūpuna there". (Tumuaki)

The school's proverb, 'Inā te mahi, he Rangatira', was inherited from Ngā Tapuwae College which was given by the old people at the time. It was chosen to inspire students to strive for excellence. In addition to this, aroha and whānau support are central to all school activities, ensuring that tamariki, caregivers, and the wider whānau feel a strong sense of belonging, love, and safety within the kura.

Most students at Ngā Tapuwae come from low-income households (Tumuaki). Despite this, Ngā Tapuwae's focus on education and holistic whānau wellbeing saw the kura celebrated in 2023 for the highest percentage of students passing NCEA.

Ngā Tapuwae firmly believes that its commitment to Māori culture, and an inclusive Māori learning environment has been key to the students' academic success.

Another goal for Ngā Tapuwae is to ensure they have and maintain a beautiful school.

Because kids should know what beautiful things look like. They deserve to. They deserve beautiful things. That's love for us. They should know it's their home and how to look after it ... A tidy home is beautiful. (Tumuaki)

## **Ngā kura ā-iwi—mō tātou, mā tātou, e ai ki a tātou**

Since the establishment of kura ā-iwi in 2007, the educational outcomes of Māori children have significantly improved. The primary focus of kura ā-iwi is to unite their descendants to ensure the enduring wellbeing of whānau, communities, and future generations. Furthermore, foundational principles such as mana motuhake, kotahitanga, and tukuihotanga will guide learning and practice. This explanation is provided by Fortune et al:

Mana motuhake means the power of iwi and kura communities to decide what is best for themselves, their mokopuna, and whānau (2024, p. 11).

These schools provide spaces where students thrive within the unique cultural context of their iwi. By learning ancestral knowledge, whakapapa, songs, prayers, and their own regional dialect, students grow into strong and flourishing contributors to their iwi.

Kura ā-iwi provide tamariki with opportunities to understand their origins and pursue pathways grounded in their identity as Māori and mana motuhaketanga.

## He tuhinga arotake mō te mana tautika | *A literature review of equity*

The Ministry of Education (2024, 17 o Hepetema) states that the EQI provides funding to schools across the country to alleviate social pressures on children. The EQI was under development for several years, and implemented in 2022. The Ministry of Education told schools what they would get in September 2022, and the first funding payout was in January 2023.

However, Fortune et al. (2024) say that inequities faced by Māori stem from the historical suppression of te reo Māori and tikanga Māori, mātauranga Māori, and the mana motuhake of Māori. To fully understand these challenges faced by whānau of kura mana motuhake, readers must acknowledge the impacts of land confiscation and colonial educational systems imposed by the government. Fortune et al. discuss a Māori view of equity, along with an account of oppression. Their main focus, however, is on the path towards equity for tamariki Māori.

Efforts to revitalise te reo Māori, including kōhanga reo and kura mana motuhake, are among the key strategies to address inequities. Additionally, integrating mātauranga Māori within kura mana motuhake is a critical approach to enhancing the learning environment and achieving excellent outcomes for students.

Mana Māori motuhake is nurtured, empowering students of kura mana motuhake to thrive as Māori in the modern world. This is achieved by embedding the principles of mana atua (spiritual authority), mana whenua (connection to land), mana reo (language authority), mana whānau (family authority), and mana ako (learning authority). Strong connections to whānau, hapū, and marae are central to the identity and success of kura mana motuhake.

According to the literature review by Fortune et al. (2024), the most appropriate terms for equity from a Māori perspective are mana motuhake or tino rangatiratanga. The review was specific in proposing a way forward for kura mana motuhake to achieve equity:

Through equitable resourcing that allows full exercise of tino rangatiratanga, for Māori to lead and govern kaupapa Māori education. This represents a different conception of equity as distributive justice than what is captured in the Ministry's current EQI approach. (2024, p. 2)

The review was also specific in highlighting the voice of Te Matakahuki.

Equitable funding and resourcing of kaupapa Māori education must be both relative to need, and sufficiently more, for te reo Māori to be sustained and grown if the Crown is to discharge its duty of active protection towards te reo and kaupapa Māori education. (2024, p. 2)

## Aronga rangahau | *Research purpose*

The purpose of this case study is to provide evidence of the challenges faced and overcome by Ngā Tapuwae to ensure all ākonga have access to an education that meets their aspirations. It provides details of a kura mana motuhake, their unique context and the effectiveness of its unique equity framework.

The audiences for this report includes the whānau of Ngā Tapuwae, kura mana motuhake, communities who want to build their resilience, as well as the Ministry of Education. It is hoped that the Ministry of Education and government will better understand and evaluate the EQI and its impact on whānau Māori. Central to the analysis is identifying a pathway towards equitable opportunities for tamariki Māori and their whānau.

## **Pātai rangahau | *Research questions***

Ngā Tapuwae, in collaboration with the NZCER, developed research questions to assess the challenges associated with the school's EQI.

Five key areas are explored to provide readers with a clear understanding of the strategies employed to enable students to achieve educational excellence:

1. How is the EQI understood at Ngā Tapuwae?
2. How much support has the EQI provided to Ngā Tapuwae to achieve equity for its students and whānau?
3. What is the importance of equity to Ngā Tapuwae?
4. What strategies does Ngā Tapuwae use to achieve its educational aspirations?
5. What resources are required to implement these strategies, and what challenges exist in securing these resources?

## **Whakatakotoranga o te pūrongo | *Report structure***

The following sections of the report carefully analyse the research approach and key findings arising from the research questions.

Section four addresses the five research questions in two parts. Part 4a, *Te Whakaawenga Nui a te Tauine Tautika ki Ngā Tapuwae | Impact of the EQI*, presents the findings to questions 1, 2, and 3 by exploring the perspectives and experiences of the kura whānau regarding the EQI, equity and mana motuhaketanga. Part 4b, *Te Mana Motuhaketanga—Ngā Rautaki me ngā Ritenga | Mana Motuhaketanga—Strategies and Practices*, presents the findings to questions 4 and 5, particularly the practices and strategies implemented by Ngā Tapuwae to achieve mana motuhake, including intergenerational whānau values, identity, love, leadership, and resilience of collective efforts.

Finally, Section 5 discusses the findings to provide understanding of a mana motuhake pathway towards equitable opportunities for tamariki Māori and their whānau.

### 3. Te huarahi rangahau *Methodology*

This is a case study on equity at Ngā Tapuwae. It takes a case-study approach that is based on kaupapa Māori methodology. NZCER was contracted to implement the project.

The project was divided into three main stages.

1. Develop a plan for the case study.
2. Develop the research questions, methodology, and project framework.
3. Implement the project.

The overarching goal was to ensure a former student of Ngā Tapuwae served as the interviewer and author of the report. Dr Parehau Richards undertook this role, supported by colleagues Kiriwaitangi Rei and Mai Io Hiini from GHA Consulting. Key contributions were also made by Keita Durie, Rachel Bolstad, and Sheridan McKinley. NZCER managed the ethical aspects of the research process.

#### **Te hunga i uiuitia** | *Interview participants*

Ngā Tapuwae informed the kura whānau about the research project, clarifying connections with key stakeholders and the primary purpose of the report—to inform the evaluation of the EQI. Ngā Tapuwae also organised the participants, dates, and times for the interviews. A total of 28 individuals from the kura whānau participated (see Table 1).

TABLE 1. **Research participants**

Ākonga	7
Kaumātua and whānau	6
Poumarumarū	2
Hikuroa	4
Kaiako	4
Tumuaki & Ohu Whakahaere	3
Kaiarataki	2



## **Ngā uiuitanga | The interviews**

The whānau interviews were divided into eight groups, all conducted on the 29th and 30th of August 2024. Each interview lasted between 40 and 70 minutes, and all participants consented to their conversations being recorded. The recorded data was then transcribed and analysed using NVivo software. The interview questions are included in Appendix 1.

In this report, references to participants are identified by the following titles—ākonga (students); hikuroa (graduates); poumarumarū (board members); kaiako (teachers); tumuaki & ohu whakahaere (principal & management team); whānau (mothers, fathers, and grandparents).

## 4. He kitenga | *Insights*

### 4a. Te whakaawenga nui a te Tauine Tautika | *Impact of the EQI*

This section delves into Ngā Tapuwae’s collective understanding of the EQI and its impact. Responses to research questions 1, 2, and 3 are presented in a case-study format that is guided by kura values and where the voices of whānau members are privileged. The research questions are:

1. How is the EQI understood at Ngā Tapuwae?
2. How much support has the EQI provided to Ngā Tapuwae to achieve equity for its students and whānau?
3. What is the importance of equity to Ngā Tapuwae?

The way in which Ngā Tapuwae expresses mana motuhaketanga and its context are explained first, followed by an overview of what the EQI assessment means for Ngā Tapuwae. The school’s understanding of the EQI is also provided.

#### Te whakapuakitanga o te mana motuhaketanga ki te whānau | Whānau expression of mana motuhaketanga

Ngā Tapuwae is both a kura and a whānau. Supported strongly by the iwi and whānau, Ngā Tapuwae actively implements mana motuhake by encouraging its students and their whānau to grow and excel in all areas, to thrive as “Māori citizens of the world” (Te Kura Māori o Ngā Tapuwae, September 6, 2024) Students and whānau at Ngā Tapuwae are encouraged and expected to believe that they “should be all of the things you are, and wherever you go in the world because we are global citizens, you should be able to utilise your whakapapa”. (Te Kura Māori o Ngā Tapuwae, September 6, 2024).

#### Te horopaki o te mana motuhaketanga | The context of mana motuhaketanga

Although the primary focus of EQI funding is equity, not mana motuhaketanga, it is important for readers to consider the foundation upon which Ngā Tapuwae was built and the pillars that uphold the shared aspirations and practices of mana motuhaketanga between the kura and the whānau.

Ngā Tapuwae believes that funding aimed at equity does not address the significant responsibilities required to fulfil mana motuhaketanga for its students. This belief drives the whānau to continuously gather and pull together resources and funds to realise the mana motuhaketanga aspirations of the kura.

To understand how the kura enacts mana motuhaketanga, one must also understand the management practices and aspirations guiding them. The following insights were shared by students, parents, and the principal:

Here in Māngere, just in South Auckland in general, because a lot of our ākonga come from the whole of South Auckland, not all of us have had the easiest start of the race. I think what the kura provides, and is very good at, is giving a head start for many of us who are in unfortunate spaces ... (Ākonga)

Many are urban Māori and do not have a lot of connections to their whānau back home ... (Whānau)

A high number of boys are raised by their mothers, without fathers, or a male role model ... (Tumuaki & Ohu Whakahaere)

Forty percent of our kids are bicultural ... people don't think about how hard it is for bicultural or dual-heritage students to exist, because they're constantly feeling guilty or constantly thinking, 'Am I doing too many Māori things and not enough Niuean things? And for some of them, that parent is very unconfident too in their identity... we want them to feel the power of their Māoriness, even though they live in a Tongan world. We want students and whānau to feel comfortable and confident with all of their whakapapa. It was Tongan language week last week, and they were allowed to wear and celebrate their cultural identity ... (Tumuaki & Ohu Whakahaere)

[Auckland] is the largest Māori population in the country. The youngest Māori population that is going to be a strong population, and our other population is Pasifika. And I think politically, Māori need to get together because if we want support as tangata whenua, we will get support from tangata moana, ... they actually asked us, how do we support each other? (Tumuaki & Ohu Whakahaere)

Whakapapa inequity is a real thing here in South Auckland and we're a kura that believes you should be all of the things you are, and wherever you go in the world because we are global citizens, you should be able to utilise your whakapapa. (Tumuaki & Ohu Whakahaere)

Over the years, Ngā Tapuwae has significantly deepened its understanding of the impact of these factors on the kura and its whānau. By following the paths paved by elders, they empower their students to succeed as “citizens of the world”.

## **Te māramatanga o te whānau | The whānau understanding of EQI**

This section answers research question two with an overview of what the EQI assessment means for Ngā Tapuwae, and what the whānau understanding of the EQI is.

The Equity Scale measures the social pressures impacting students and their whānau. These scores range from 344 to 569, with higher numbers indicating greater social challenges faced by students. The scale includes 37 indicators to calculate a school's EQI number, which determines the level of funding allocated to schools. Ngā Tapuwae's score is 492.

While the whānau of Ngā Tapuwae have limited knowledge about the EQI system itself, they know the considerable effort required to achieve equity among all their students and families. Mā Stirling remarked, “it ends up being an extra \$4 for each ākonga”.

The kura whānau is led by parents, alumni, and dedicated workers, who manage key groups such as Te Huarahi Hou, Ngā Tapuwae o Mataoho, and the School Committee. Additionally, a specialised role has been created within the kura to focus on seeking and securing funding opportunities. These measures aim to develop the full potential of their students.

if it doesn't come from the Ministry, it's going to have to come from somewhere, from different funding organisations ... money must not be an issue for our students. (Tumuaki)

There is a strong sense of pride and gratitude among the whānau. They attribute their success at attaining funding to their “relationships through our tumuaki ... [and] her knowledge of opportunities”, as well as their well-established infrastructure.

In this context, Ngā Tapuwae has considered several strategies to enhance the support they receive under the EQI, including, assessing housing affordability and availability; addressing travel costs and logistical challenges; evaluating the safety and wellbeing of whānau; and considering broader issues affecting Māori, such as health funding and structural inequities.

These strategies are responses to the challenges listed by Fortune et al. (2024) of “limited access”, “whānau engagement expectations”, “gaining te reo Māori fluency”, “lack of learning and teaching resources” as well as “property and buildings” (p. 12).

A notable challenge is the limited housing availability in Māngere, which forces some students to live in expensive or overcrowded households, often in distant communities. As one example:

We'll have a whānau of 6 living in a house for 4, and their salary altogether for the household will be \$120,000. Whereas their neighbour next door will be making \$120,000 each, per person. (Tumuaki)

Similarly, travel costs and safety concerns highlight the lack of equity faced by the kura whānau.

We might have to use vans instead [of buses], and they're faster. And the formula for transport needs to understand congestion. ... I get the same amount of funding that someone on the coast gets, per ākonga ... people in town don't get town or congestion funding, and the stress of being on the bus.

The four extra dollars [from EQI] goes to our transport funding because we have a congestion problem in Auckland. So, instead of having three buses to get here on time, we have to run five buses so the kids get here on time. Our transport budget doesn't meet the needs of where our kids come from.

We run a bus from Papakura, a bus from Manurewa, a bus from Ōtāhuhu, East Auckland, Papatoetoe to Māngere, and a bus for Māngere.

The other thing is security for Māori schools in town. If our Māori kids go and use the public transport, they'll get beaten.

If you're dressed in our uniform, and you're in the public transport there's a lot of racism towards being mana motuhake ... it's hard being a Māori here ... we are so not welcomed to be Māori outside of our little kāinga. (Tumuaki)

Many Ngā Tapuwae whānau have had to move out of Māngere to other parts of South and East Auckland, due to lack of housing and increased housing costs. Therefore, transport is a significant access issue for the kura whānau. The Ministry of Education recently cut a lot of school bus services on the basis that public transport routes are available. However, public transport is not suitable or reliable for Ngā Tapuwae students who need to leave home very early due to bus timetables and traffic congestion. More importantly, the students are not safe.

This section of the report outlined the Ngā Tapuwae whānau understanding of the EQI and the level of support they receive through the EQI. Importantly, it also provided an overview of how Ngā Tapuwae expresses mana motuhaketanga and their context of equity (and inequity), with specific examples of access to housing and transport.

## **4b. Te mana motuhaketanga—ngā rautaki me ngā ritenga** ***Mana motuhaketanga—strategies and practices***

Responses to research questions four and five are presented in this section. The research questions are:

4. What strategies does Ngā Tapuwae use to achieve its educational aspirations?
5. What resources are required to implement these strategies? What challenges exist in securing these resources?

Ngā Tapuwae has firmly embedded the principles of whānau, identity, leadership, and excellence into its foundation. These teachings create a safe environment where students can reach their full potential. The concept of whānau is deeply rooted in every student, becoming a focal point of this report to give readers a clear understanding of Ngā Tapuwae's approach to mana motuhaketanga.

### **He whānau tuku iho | Intergenerational whānau**

E kore au e ngaro, te kākano i ruia mai i Rangiātea.

Below is an explanation of this proverb from the *Tū Rangatira* report:

embedded in this whakataukī is the vision that a Māori identity will not fade: it is derived from ancestors, passed down from generation to generation, and lives on in our mokopuna. (Te Tāhūhū o te Mātauranga, 2010, p. 10)

Te Kura Māori o Ngā Tapuwae was established by Te Kepa and Pani Stirling, grounded in the principles and values of te ao Māori. Today, under the innovative leadership of Arihia Stirling (Mā Stirling), the kura continues to nurture intergenerational growth within the broader whānau.

Students and whānau describe Mā Stirling as a compassionate and insightful leader who prioritises their needs. In her words:

I think it comes from a place of living in it. Living in, teaching in, the rohe all my life. I've seen the pōharatanga all my life, and as I see these babies come through, you've got to break that intergenerational thing of 'that's how you live'. (Tumuaki)

The principles of love, leadership, and relationships are entrenched in every student and whānau, making Ngā Tapuwae, not just a school, but a united and thriving whānau.

The school's strategic plan highlights the importance of fostering intergenerational connections while placing the development of Māori identity at the forefront for both students and whānau.

According to one student:

My whānau all came here, my cousins came here, my siblings were here too. I enjoy being at a Māori school, being surrounded by Māori people—they are my people, and we are whānau here. I like my friends here. (Ākongā)

Mā Stirling spoke of the impact of the kura over the years, sharing her pride in a gang-affiliated whānau who gave up alcohol, improving the wellbeing of their whānau and future generations.

Here is a parent's perspective:

It's our tūrangawaewae here and it's just like our foundation for all the whānau who come through our kura and they're not left out or they're not above or below anyone else. And I think it's just having the role models we do have in our kura and all ... and just being able to look up when you're actually in kura. (Whānau)



Many students come from large families, with some having three children and others up to nine. Despite societal disparities, the Ngā Tapuwae whānau embraces and supports every student and family, no matter their background.

so, you don't have a choice but to be fair and equitable with all the students and we get to cherish these kids for 13 years and a whole whānau. (Tumuaki & Ohu Whakahaere)

Ngā Tapuwae places a strong emphasis on equity, ensuring all students have access to uniforms and technology, creating a level playing field. This approach also extends to students with autism. The kura supports approximately 20 autistic students, with around five facing significant challenges. Teachers continuously develop their skills and strategies to provide the best support.

Everyone is equal, everyone looks the same. ... As small as it is, the uniform is a big thing here .... It's not any kind of financial stress on the family. ... When we go on sports trips, we're looking top notch. We went to kapa haka nationals, and everyone gets the same that the teachers wear. (Tumuaki & Ohu Whakahaere)

If you can see our kids that have certain challenges, then we're not doing our job. We do not isolate kids. (Tumuaki & Ohu Whakahaere)

Everyone is normal in our family. You just do the things, you have different challenges, you have difficult things, you are normal. ... We have one of our nannies from the Pā that comes in. She's in her chair, she's got her tongue poked out ... she's the oldest kuia there and all the kids just love her. So, anybody that looks a bit different, that's OK. We teach that it's OK. (Tumuaki & Ohu Whakahaere)

Acknowledging that some strict policies may not suit every student, allowances are made. For instance, while tutu skirts are generally not allowed, they are permitted for certain autistic students when necessary.

They should look like every other normal child in our school... Even our playground is about that. We know that children with autism really need to rock a lot, so we have a swinging basket. Sometimes you will see a child rocking on the basket during class time. We also have lots of bean bags and we build stuff. (Tumuaki & Ohu Whakahaere)

Kapa haka and sports are central to reinforcing the values of kotahitanga and whakawhanaungatanga. Ngā Tapuwae encourages all students to participate in sports throughout the year, regardless of the season. This fosters opportunities for personal growth, whānau engagement, and enjoyment within the kura whānau.

We have clubs that we send all our kids to. So, they play team sports. League is a big one for us and we try to get them all to go to the same club, so our parents feel that camaraderie of team and we bring it back here and feel the team spirit. (Tumuaki & Ohu Whakahaere)

You tell the kaiako you want to play and then the kura support you. Even if it's only one person who wants to do something, they will do their best to make something happen for you. (Ākonga)

The kaiako have passions outside of kura like sports, which opens other opportunities for our kids. Making a dream tangible. (Tumuaki & Ohu Whakahaere)

Ngā Tapuwae is firm in saying that they are not a kapa haka academy, although they participate in competitive haka they teach and learn kapa haka daily through tikanga such as pōhiri and waiata. For many ākonga and their whānau, kapa haka is a learning tool and practice they love. One matua said that kapa haka is her daughter's realm and that "her kaiako are amazing ... it's resource in itself that you can't buy". Kapa haka continues to have impact on students and whānau understanding of who they are:

Kapa haka has really helped us understand who we are, that we are Māori, and that we're very capable. It's not just a schooling system where we come here and get our assessments done, it's actually a whole other world that we're coming to ... we've got mātauranga here, but then we've got everything else ready for us, our whole other world waiting for us. (Whānau)

Well, when you take sixty 9- to 11-year-olds to Nelson, it's an experience and they were amazing. These little people were amazing and then they did it this year with sixty teenagers. So, like you know, those experiences you wouldn't necessarily go on because of the economics. And I work, my husband works, but without the awhi that our kura was able to provide us, our boy was given that opportunity to be able to go hei kanohi mō te kura. Hei kanohi mō tōna whānau, anō nei mō tana kura. (Whānau)

During the recent kapa haka competition, high expectations were set for the students to adopt a healthy lifestyle. As a result, some students have lost weight, and others have joined CrossFit gyms, training as early as 6 a.m. This is an excellent example of how kapa haka and sports contribute not only to students' educational success but also to their physical and overall wellbeing.

Now, it's their fitness diary because they did it through kapa, and now they've got to finish it off, and that's part of their Physical Education assessment for NCEA. (Tumuaki & Ohu Whakahaere)

[We have put] up a rock wall in the gym. ... One of our teachers is a CrossFit trainer, and we do that with some of our big kids because it's an individual sport. They don't have to feel like that other people are depending on them to do something. It's just about self-love. That's really big for our kids, and the amount of weight our boys have taken off is astounding. Because traditionally, our men have big statures and with double Polynesian whakapapa it can make a difference. So having our big boys be able to do CrossFit training together but as individuals makes a very positive difference. (Tumuaki & Ohu Whakahaere)

Additionally, a parent reflected on the efforts of Ngā Tapuwae to support them and their unique talents, emphasising how consistently the school goes above and beyond to offer opportunities, often with support from other families as well.

The education at Ngā Tapuwae starts everyone off on a level playing field within the kura walls. Everyone is equal. When you step outside of these walls, Ngā Tapuwae prepares our tamariki for the outside world. For example, I had opportunities at university and the kura supported me in those endeavours. (Hikuroa)

Ngā Tapuwae goes above and beyond looking for opportunities because they want our kids to have access to it all. They truly care about them—that's the aroha. Every ākonga is given the opportunity regardless of pūtea. Equity is actually lived here, it's practiced, not just talked about. (Whānau)

It's a constant here, our teachers always make us feel really supported. When we go outside of school, they check in on us and always make sure that what we are doing is safe. In school, we have a little amount of bullying, teachers are there for us. We are like whānau. (Ākonga)

For most teachers, Ngā Tapuwae becomes a second home. The majority of the kura staff (85%) are former students who have returned to their kura, their second home.

One kaiako is a dentist by trade and we're all highly qualified. Another kaiako was a New Zealand Touch player. So, we've come back with lots of skills and when COVID went down, we got a whole lot of ex-people back because they were in industries that stopped. One of our teachers worked for Television New Zealand ... and he has a degree in Graphic Art Design, and so he re-trained as a teacher and now he's here. (Tumuaki & Ohu Whakahaere)

This is our kāinga rua. We can always come back. And because the foundation's already been laid down, we just have to follow through ... our leaders push us to be our best for our ākonga. (Kaiako)

Ngā Tapuwae is also a kāinga rua for students. For the older siblings who are the caregivers at home, kaiako try and make kura a space where they're students and they're not mum, or dad and all those responsibilities ... they're teenagers when they're at school

Kao pēpi. Waihō i a ia. He mahi āna. He mahi anō āu ... So, trying to make sure that here, they have six hours of just being themselves ... the kids are used to that. The babies know to stay out of their older siblings' faces and then the older ones know they're ok. Leave them alone. (Tumuaki & Ohu Whakahaere)

We even have boundaries about where the kids can play. So, different reanga play in the front. ... Years 6, 7 and 8s next to the wharekai. The big kids are on the other side of the whare. ... so, the big kids get time out from the little kids. Kāre e whakararu i a rātou or whakahōha i a rātou. So, they know, they can mix and mingle, and they do, but they know when they're in those spaces that that's their time out and the babies, 'Kaua e haere ki reira'. The big kids know, 'Kaua koe e haere ki reira'. (Tumuaki & Ohu Whakahaere)

Parents and their tamariki know that they're being looked after at Ngā Tapuwae, just like a whānau. Mā Stirling and the kaiako think, with intent, about the holistic wellness of each student and their whānau, as well as their kura whānau. The words of one māmā encapsulate the impact of Ngā Tapuwae as a kura and a whānau:

Being part of the Ngā Tapuwae movement and whānau has empowered me and now has become a lifestyle and as a community. Equity here means being part of a community of learners. My tamaiti has the opportunity to learn ngā puna o te mātauranga, she has the safety net to learn under the values that are important to us as a people and a whānau. (Whānau)

### Te ahurea tuakiritanga | Cultural identity

Tā ia tamaiti tō rātou ake mana. Ko tā mātou mahi, he hoatu i ngā rawa hei whakapuawai i ēna o ngā pukenga a te tamaiti.

Since the development of kōhanga reo, kura kaupapa Māori, whare wānanga, and kura ā-iwi, Māori communities have had the opportunity to weave their own cloaks as a protective and empowering garment for their own wellbeing.

The principle of equity within Māori schools, whether kura kaupapa Māori or kura ā-iwi, is to nurture the child within a learning environment where their Māori culture, language, identity, and aspirations for the world can flourish. Above all, this is the Māori pathway to support the success of Māori children.

At the heart of Māori educational initiatives is the aim to be advocates for Māori children to achieve success. These initiatives challenge Western systems and perspectives on education while promoting the significance of Māori culture through educational outcomes.

By enhancing Māori culture and identity, Māori educational initiatives aim to fill the basket of knowledge in a uniquely Māori way, empowering Māori students to stand with pride and strength in their Māori world.

Ko tā te titiro o te tamaiti ngohengohe ki kōnei, ko tēnei mea te equity, ka tino rongu a wairua nei. Ka kitea i te tamaiti e tipu ana ki Hiaroa, ki Hoturoa. Ka tipu ake, pēnei i ētahi o mātou ngā raukura o te kura. Aē. Ko te tuakiritanga Māori tā tātou tūāpapa. Nō reira, tā wena ahuatanga kua whangaihia ki a mātou, ka tipu pai ake ... mō mātou anake tēna mana, nē? Tā ia tamaiti tō rātou ake mana. Ko tā mātou mahi, me hoatu i ngā rawa hei whakapuawai i ēna o ngā pukenga a te tamaiti. So, I think it's the essence in which we are Māori that really brings out the equity. (Kaiako)

[Our ākonga] learn how to swim in a pool, but our job is to put them back into natural water. So, we sent our kids to scuba dive this year, and that was \$1,500 each, and that was for forty ākonga. Where does that resource come from? It's all funded. So, we've got to apply for it. (Tumuaki & Ohu Whakahaere)

Like the Waka Ama programme that we run. We received funding ... even that application took years to progress. But now, we're sustainable. We've got our own waka; we've got our own trailers. We build our coaches within our senior students to come back and give back to the kura, and we pay them. We know how to work... We're experts at funding. Which is so necessary ... because you can't afford it otherwise. (Tumuaki & Ohu Whakahaere)

An urban mum whose family has minimal connections to their ancestral homeland explained equity as:

Knowing where you come from, where you belong, and who you are, and that you have the support of all of your people behind you, and that you're doing the right thing because Nanny and Pāpā taught you that that's the right thing to do ...the kura being here allows tamariki Māori who don't have that kind of thing in their lives ... a base for them. We are not a family that often has a connection to a marae or that has a chance to go back to the East Cape very often. But my tamariki know who they are as Māori because of being at this kura ... it gives them a sense of where they're from. So, I feel like they won't feel lost in the world. (Whānau)

One of the science teachers often sees students who feel they don't have a place within the science department or a future in a science position. For her, an equity focus is about:

Making sure [those] students finish their time here feeling that they belong in a science context and that they've always belonged in a science context ... helping them to make the links between the context they already exist in and a science context ... connections that they are familiar with. So the waka, our focus this year, has been on connecting science as it's presented to us by NZQA with context that makes sense for our students and feels important to our students. We've done traditional Waka Hourua design, looking at it from a physics perspective, and then doing their own designs, making a model, testing their models. We have also done microorganisms in food, so we made rewana bugs. (Kaiako)

At Ngā Tapuwae, the kaiako aspire their students to be their best selves. When they step outside the kura gates their tuakiritanga Māori, their whakapapa, their tikanga and their mātauranga provide them with a strong foundation to be great people and leaders.

Here they explore, what do these subjects actually mean and what is the whakapapa and how do they relate to you as a whole person, and to your whakapapa, and to you as a representative of your culture. I think it's really important and I think that it would be a lot harder to draw that out in a mainstream setting where you don't have as much depth in one culture as we have here. (Kaiako)

The maths and science teachers believe it is important that their students are learning the STEM subjects in a Māori environment, because it's common for the students to come in and say maths is a Pākehā thing.

And I'm like, you think the decimal was invented in England? You think our numbers come from England? You think the zero comes from England? We talked a bit about the iwi taketake that developed all of these. The whakapapa of knowledge systems. (Kaiako)

We look at, how Pāngarau was used traditionally by Māori. We've talked about different ways of measurement. I've done art ... last year we did transformation geometry ... using tohu Māori, which you had to reflect and rotate and things like that, which was really cool with the help of our maths department and our art department. So, being able to find themselves in those STEM spaces. (Kaiako)

And we've done some work around sustainability and healthy waterways. We visited [a local] stream, which is just down the road. And we did leaky homes and some construction because they all love construction. (Kaiako)

Teachers also take it to another level in regard to sustainability and innovation. They focus on questions and opportunities such as:

Where can you make a difference, and how can you help our communities, particularly within science contexts? They've got all the pieces, but sometimes I think they just need the permission to see themselves as scientists and people who belong in that space. (Kaiako)

Our tuakana are the actual teachers too. They've come into our classes, and they've shared their experiences of Hau. Our kaupapa was Tāwhirimātea and we did a balloon... and we learnt about air. Our tuakana were the ones that led that wheako. It's all about how we know everything and it's about we all know everything and we're just bringing our bits and pieces to make it a whole. (Kaiako)

Te reo me ngā tikanga Māori take a senior role for kaiako teaching and growing their students. Underlying principles of whakapapa, whanaungatanga, kotahitanga, manaakitanga, kaitiakitanga as well as aroha are the foundations of identity and culture for Ngā Tapuwae as a kura ā-iwi and a kura mana motuhake.

### Te taumata o te aroha | The pinnacle of love

Poipoia te kākano kia puāwai

According to one mum, Ngā Tapuwae embodies equity, which she describes as “the pinnacle of love.” She added, “it involves empowerment and trust, ensuring our tamariki receive the best opportunities, which reflects and is a credit to the kura’s leadership”.

The principal is frequently spoken of with high regard for her leadership and compassion towards the students:

Mā Stirling knows all of her tamariki at her kura, she treats them the way that's unique for each of them ... I see how much aroha our tamariki have for [her]. (Whānau)

Mā Stirling and her team carry out their work with intent.

Everything that our big kids get, our little kids get ... so what it means to me, is that everyone feels like they are a special part of the character of this school, and they can do everything that we offer ... it's making sure that everyone makes everyone feel like their job is important. So, schoolwide, that's what we've tried to push, sport, and culture and academic as well as health and wellbeing. (Tumuaki & Ohu Whakahaere)

All the different programmes, all the different initiatives, the day-to-day, even just how our staff treat each other, down to that, just being nice people, decent people. For me, I look at the older kids and yes, that's where I want my kids to be. They're going to be there in a few years. And we just trust the process and how they've been doing things, and they are the experts. They've got massive input from the students, as well as kaiako and the leadership team. ... And the whole wairua in our kura is there. Everything without complaint. (Whānau)

Every term the kura makes a time, particularly in Term 1, when students come back after the holidays and they have one whole week where it's just love yourself week. It's a non-curriculum week and the aim is to lift students up from post-holiday drag. When they go on trips, the kaiako select places that their whānau cannot afford to go to.



It is about bringing the wairua of 'we're back at school' and reminding ākonga how to enjoy it. Their main kaupapa is random acts of kindness. That's what everyone does. How do you speak kindly to each other, how do you look after each other and that's all you have to practice, that's your main practice. (Tumuaki & Ohu Whakahaere)

You bring the sunshine, or the rain and the attitude to your children. We are intentional with that. We get paid to do this job. We don't get paid to put our wairua on our kids ... we're intentional about saying that to each other. Leave your stuff behind and love these kids ... and it's happening at this house. This is our home (Tumuaki & Ohu Whakahaere)

Our kaiako are the pinnacle of equity. They instil values and teach our kids to be mindful and respectful, mana tangata—ko tērā te ihi. (Whānau)

They deliver the teaching the same way I would. Sometimes they need aroha and awhi and then they need a, 'hey! don't muck around'. (Whānau)

The overarching approach and effort by leadership and staff is recognised and appreciated by mātua and students.

Every staff member goes above and beyond their call of duty, time and time again. It's a collective approach about putting the kids at the forefront of their whakaaro. You never get a sense that this is a 9-3 job, kids are an extension of the adults here ... And you do, you just have this core group of teachers that will do everything. Everything without complaint. ... Even for teachers to actually push themselves to tautoko our kids, and not even our kids, but our whānau. (Whānau)

The kura 100% backs you. They don't set you up for failure, they'll make sure that if you're going to do it, they're going to put you in 100%. And you're one big family here, it's amazing. (Ākonga)

They make sure we have enough time—our pūtaiao teacher has made special booklets for us so we always know what we are learning and if we are away then we can use that to follow up. They are always there when we need to ask questions. (Ākonga)

We follow the maramataka—so if it is a low-energy day, our timetable and kai will reflect that. I believe it really makes a difference, and I know to take it easy on those days. (Kaiako)

Staff are very responsive to individual and whānau needs. For example, teachers talk about how kind their boys are and how much they love to sing. Teachers explained that on the one hand they do not raise their voices, but on the other they are intentional about being loud across the kura. They also explained that this helps the boys who have a lot of responsibilities at home to hear themselves, because they know that the boys do a lot of self-talk and it's not always positive. As mentioned earlier, a high number of boys are raised by their mothers, without fathers, or a male role model. Teachers make sure that they do things to lift the confidence of their boys and model positive self-talk in an environment where "girls are more kamakama and more assertive ... [and] because being a good man around good women is important".

We get worried about their health with all the pressures they have. We have a lot of boys that are the oldest brothers in their family, and they only have mothers, and they are relied on lots. So, we do things like... random acts of kindness, and the other thing is to let the world hear your voice. And how we experience that, we do that on a daily basis. ... We try and catch each other and say hello first, 'Kia ora Mā', and like, the teachers are quite intentional. Especially to kids that are our quite soft boys, 'Mōrena [name]', 'Mōrena Mā', and so their job is to raise their voice and try and say something louder than you've said it. (Tumuaki & Ohu Whakahaere)

It is clear that if there's a problem at Ngā Tapuwae they think about, consider and analyse the root cause of that problem and decide about how they will solve it quickly. They are innovative and

solutions focused. The Te Waioira o Rona Health and Wellbeing strategy has been an important focus for their whānau. Te Waioira o Rona includes ngā wāhanga katoa o te tangata and Mason Durie's tapa whā model that looks at tinana, wairua, hinengaro and whānau. It's been a wānanga with students at the kura tuarua level too.

The Tumuaki and senior leadership team clearly understand that a student's success is dependent on their overall wellbeing. Data collected by Ngā Tapuwae over the past three years showed that only 3% of the school's students lived in homes where both parents were well. In the homes of 97% of students, at least one parent or adult was unwell. As a result, students were strongly encouraged to prioritise health and to recognise that if they were sick or in pain, they should visit a doctor or nurse. This focus led to an increased awareness among children about throat infections and greater concern about rheumatic fever and its high prevalence among Māori.

Student attendance at school has significantly improved, with one of the key factors being student health. In recent years, a formal agreement was established between Ngā Tapuwae, Turuki Health, and the Ministry of Health, enabling a nurse and a doctor to be present at the school. This is a significant response to some of the social challenges faced by families, including illness, long-term health conditions, school attendance, and employment opportunities.

Māmā or Pāpā don't have to sit at the doctor's for 2 hours, which means that the ongoing effect of what that may cause in the long run might be that Mama or Papa can't go to work, because they're at the doctor's for so long. (Tumuaki & Ohu Whakahaere)

And it was a no brainer, really. Instead of our whānau having to go out, why don't we bring someone in ... that's only one person that we need to bring in, as opposed to 5–10 tamariki during winter having to go out, which means that education levels drop ... just all of those things. So, just practicalities, and realities. (Poumarumaru)

They can come in, meet, and go through a process with our doctor and nurse. I think it's created an environment where the whānau are, you know, a bit short this week or "I can't do this". We can actually kōrero about it. And you know, the school does have, you know, either funds available or there's the ex-students whānau that help with different things. ... We're just not missing out on things, because ... we can do stuff for our students. We want to make sure our students are achieving and doing as much as they can within our kura. ... all our tamariki can achieve without those sorts of barriers from outside the gates. (Tumuaki & Ohu Whakahaere)

Ka Ora, Ka Ako—Health School Lunches Programme also required some thinking to ensure the kai was relevant for the students. Ngā Tapuwae has gone from packed lunches to hot lunches. The packed lunches were a cold lunch including a sandwich, a muesli bar, a piece of fruit, and a pot of yoghurt. Now hot lunches are cooked onsite by a graduate who says she cooks with aroha. Kai is seen as an important part of their whānau wellbeing and environmental sustainability values. Students and staff are involved in planning and designing the menus. Hot meal plans align with the maramataka and the energy output of the students for their schoolwork, their sport and kapa haka. This has been a successful initiative for the kura whānau in addition to the breakfast club, which also includes toast and a hot dish during winter.

We make it so that it's relatable to te ao Māori ... and there's that cultural lens that we put in as teachers. And I think the kai is a perfect reflection. Our kai journey from the packed lunches to now is a perfect reflection of our teaching. That didn't suit us. This is what we do and it's nice when everything kind of comes in together, because then you know the kids are going to come to school and going to get the mahi done. (Kaiako)

Me te mea nei, ko tā mātou kai i whāngaihia ki ngā tamariki. Ko mātou hoki tēra e kaingia nā te reka. Ko te mea nui kia tātou, he kai e mōhiotio nei mātou me o mātou tamariki. Ehara i te mea he hanawiti mai te pekeri, ehara he mea tipu mai te toa. He kai kua tunua ki konei. Nō mātou te maringanui ki tēnei taha o tātou, he kai tunu. He ringa rehe, he ringa reka, he Māori. (Kaiako)

Ko ngā kai, he kai hauora hoki. Ehara he mea me parae i te inu. He nui ngā huarākau, he nui ngā pīnati ki ētahi o ngā pākete. He pītiti, he panana, he pea, he āporo, he kerepi ētahi wā. Nā runga i tēna, e pai ake. (Kaiako)

He orite te kai. And I think that that's a really, really important thing for equity, that everyone is eating the same thing. Then everyone should have similar energy levels in the afternoon, and they have the same shared experience of being nourished and coming together. And most countries in the world that I know of have a hot lunch for the kids at noon. (Whānau)

The taumata o te aroha approach, including a chef, a nurse, and a doctor, ensures students and whānau are well nourished and healthy so that they attend kura and achieve.

## **Te rangatiratanga**

Inā te mahi he rangatira

This is the kura proverb. The kura, with the support of the local iwi, Waikato, seeks to enable every student to reach his or her own potential. Every student is a leader and every student has potential. When you visit Ngā Tapuwae you can feel a vibe that tells you the students and the kura whānau know that they are good enough.

The kura embraces the *Tū Rangatira* strands of leadership to prepare for the future with strength in their students knowing that they can live and learn as Māori and that being Māori has advantages. The roles and focus areas of practice in leadership from a Māori standpoint is achievable at any age and for all stakeholders of their whānau, hapū, iwi and community.

Leadership is clearly modelled by the Board. All board members have links to the kura, either through their children, or as graduates of the kura, or as supporters of the kura. They are confident and practical when they explain how they are there to support their Tumuaki and the leadership team. Their main goal is excellence. They celebrate achievements and innovation. They are not there to restrict or inhibit their success. Senior leadership present business cases to the Board and they show them their plan to deliver them. Board members are often amazed and there is a high level of trust among the kura whānau.

Cases are always very well thought out. All the t's are crossed, all the i's are dotted, and it's almost hard to find fault in the plan. It's a well-oiled machine.

Because our kura is doing a great job. We wouldn't change things ... don't fix what's not broke. (Poumarumarū)

A very well-designed school, in terms of resources. Very structured, so that we all have equal access to everything. (Whānau)

They're innovative too. There's innovation happening all the time. It's not just 'We want to stay in this place'. We want to grow. We want to do other stuff. (Poumarumarū)

Ngā Tapuwae values the leadership focus areas of ngā kura ā-iwi and the *Tū Rangatira: Māori Medium Educational Leadership* report (Te Tāhūhū o te Mātauranga, 2010). Parents and students appreciate the clear articulation and role modelling of leadership across the kura that expands the potential and the achievement of their kura whānau.

I chose this kura because I knew that my kids would be surrounded by successful Māori leaders ... to have a strong sense of their cultural identity, personal growth, a lot of room for development for leadership with the kaiako we have here. (Whānau)

They do leadership well here ... it's happening right now with our student-led conferences, where our kids have to get up and talk about their learning. One student who got up did a whole presentation in a whaikōrero kind-of style. (Whānau)

At Ngā Tapuwāe they do not talk about credits, they talk about educational whakapapa which means students have earned it, and it's something to be proud of.

[Ākonga have] got to tell their parents where they are, what they're doing, where they're going. What are your achievements? What's your educational whakapapa? Because NCEA is very important. He taumata anō, not just the credit, and he did his and it's quite phenomenal. You go through, I've got NCEA Level 1 in distinction endorsement, and we make them use those words because they're really important, 'endorsed with Merit'. 'I did Science, I got endorsed with Merit or Excellence', because when you go through that, when the kids hear that, it sounds important and then it lifts their respect of their own learning. (Tumuaki & Ohu Whakahaere)

At student-whānau conferences, when the students talk to their whānau about their educational whakapapa, they are taught by their teachers to stand proud. One young man presented to his whānau using a whaikōrero format. He explained his educational whakapapa, his sporting achievements and his employability status. Kaiako have been proud of him and his achievements in attaining a first aid certificate and a work site safety certificate. The young man is also going to complete a forklift licence these holidays. He's doing MYTO and he also has his driver's licence. This is a fine example of a Ngā Tapuwāe exit plan, to make sure that their students are employable. It is particularly important at the kura for all of their male students to pass their full drivers' licences before they leave kura. The main reason for this is because young Māori men (18-22 years old) are the largest cohort in Aotearoa New Zealand who do not have drivers' licences. Ngā Tapuwāe is actively turning this statistic around with intent.

Mā Stirling also explained how important the forklift licence is for her students and graduates to gain an advantage in the workplace while they are at kura and when they leave. There are lots of warehouses in Māngere and Manukau City as well as the biggest ports in Aotearoa New Zealand and therefore the largest cargo logistics movement in the country. If you drive a forklift, you move higher up the ranks.

The best thing about that licence though, is you can work at any time of the day. So, if you're at university, you can make your own money and you're not a burden on your family. And they love that, that they become independent and financially powerful. And we do, we work with them about how to manage money properly. So, everyone leaves with a passport and a licence. (Tumuaki & Ohu Whakahaere)

Aroha is the key to empowering rangatiratanga at Ngā Tapuwāe. The kura wants students to know their own identity, and through te reo me ōna tikanga, and the culture and mātauranga Māori, students will grow within their Māori identity as tangata whenua of Aotearoa, and citizens of the world.

## **He mātauranga ahau, e tika ana kia tino mātauranga ahau**

He mātauranga ahau

E tika ana kia tino mātauranga ahau

He momoho ahau

*I am intelligent*

*I deserve knowledge*

*I am successful*

This kura proverb is recited several times each day. It is a kura affirmation or mantra. Mā Stirling expresses it is “the reason for our success because our kids have said it for 13 years. It must get into your soul somehow”.

Ngā Tapuwae students have been achieving excellent NCEA results for many years. They say it is normal. Students are taught that great results open doors to “everything and anything you want to do” (Tumuaki). Students are also expected to think much wider about “what makes their hearts sing” (Tumuaki). It is evident that leadership and staff are not only successful in growing positive mindsets from the young students through to senior students but also aligning curriculum and activities across all levels, tailoring teaching to individual student’s needs.

You can go to university, and you can be the best lawyer. You make sure you are the best lawyer, but also if you want to be a truck driver, you be the best truck driver there is. ... Our biggest industries now are all the driving, couriering, forklifting, and that’s cool but we say, this is your side hustle, OK? Let’s aim for uni, and if you decide after your first year you don’t want to do uni, at least you’ve got tickets. ... the industries that are pumping the most are at the airport. So, they don’t have to go too far, and we also have been able to get some work experience out at the airport in aviation. (Tumuaki & Ohu Whakahaere)

We design our curriculum for Year 1 right through. ... content is the only thing we teach from Year 9 onwards. We expect Year 10 to be doing Level 1 NCEA. (Tumuaki & Ohu Whakahaere)

And the other thing we’re really quite good at is getting our kids to learn and study in areas that their iwi needs. (Tumuaki & Ohu Whakahaere)

In addition to the kura proverb, leadership and staff are acknowledged by students and whānau for encouraging and supporting them to achieve.

The kura helped me get to where I am today and who I am today. And it’s just everything from our whakatauki, down to just the simple things, doing karakia every day, learning about our te ao Māori and our rohe, our kawa of Tainui, and just being able to explore more and get all the opportunities ... to go out, find work experience through the kura. So, it was always the kura who pushed us to get out there. (Hikuroa)

[The kura] entered the Minecraft competition for our tamariki who are very passionate in this. They travelled down to the competition, and we found out that you can actually have a career in that space. The kura saw an opportunity and then did a tono to the tamariki if they were interested in it. ... Our kura goes above and beyond looking for opportunities because they want our kids to have access to it all. They truly care about them—that’s the aroha I was talking about. (Whānau)

One of the programmes that the kura went above and beyond was my participation in Young Enterprise. The kura went above and beyond to ensure that we had that option set up for us ... And through that, I went on many trips with different organisations and many opportunities that I took and that is all because of the kura. (Hikuroa, Kaimahi)



Another affirmation that staff teach students and parents highlights a strong correlation between education, choices and making money. They believe, “the more educated you are, the more choices you have. The more choices you have, the more money you make”. (Whānau)

We’re really lucky that mum and dad have really taught us to make sure that your education is beneficial to your family. Degrees always give you a \$25,000 start up the ladder for money and I like that it’s that basic, and don’t waste your brains. (Tumuaki & Ohu Whakahaere)

They support you 100%, and what I learnt last year was they hold onto you for as long as you can, and they make sure you don’t leave without being prepared ... our last 2 weeks of school last year, Mā said to me, you’ve got to have your 5-year plan. I’m not letting you walk out of the school without your 5-year plan. (Hikuroa)

‘We got this, and you can go to this university, and you can apply for this scholarship, and you can do that’, and then I’ll come back to her the next day, ‘I don’t want to do that’, and she’s like, ‘Okay, we can do this instead, and we got this for you’, and I’m like, ‘Oh, okay’. (Ākonga)

They support you 100%, and what I learnt last year was they hold onto you for as long as you can, and they make sure you don’t leave without being prepared. (Ākonga)

The kids think with a lot of hope because they’re smart. (Tumuaki & Ohu Whakahaere)

Encouraging students to do things that make their hearts sing comes with challenges because many mātua still think traditionally and encourage their tamariki to “Be a doctor, a lawyer and you’re going to make it”. One Pāpā with clear aspirations said:

I want my kids to be academics—I don’t want them to go back to kura at 32 and feel like they have to play catch up. The game plan for my kids is to get their PhD by the time they’re 23 then they can take on the world. Education is everything. (Whānau)

Mā Stirling and teaching staff emphasised how important attendance is, especially in the secondary school. They set timelines and deadlines for their students. They know that if students attend kura every day then they will achieve above and beyond expectations. Te Waioira o Rona is important to the bigger picture of understanding absences.

If they are sick, then we’ve got such a good record in our admin for the health side for Te Waioira o Rona that we’re able to tap in and say, this child is presenting too many times with these symptoms. Can he please or she please see a doctor? And we’re able to work that out and get that dealt with quickly. And it means that our kids can continue to come to school, because they’re getting better faster. (Tumuaki & Ohu Whakahaere)

Online exams for NCEA literacy and numeracy, with little notice, could have disadvantaged students at Ngā Tapuwae significantly because whānau cannot afford devices. There were also a lot of rules which made it very stressful. However, the kura was successful in sourcing external funding for laptops for all students and they were able to sit the exams effortlessly.

I thought there was a lot of pressure put on quite suddenly as well. However, because we have everything here, it made the whole system so much easier and manageable and bearable. Not only that we are going through a new change, but then we also have the tools for the new change, and I was really happy that our kids didn’t get behind. (Kaiako)

At Ngā Tapuwae, they have momentum with their parents, students and kaiako. Mā Stirling believes, “they’re here to win ... this is the mindset of the culture across the kura whānau”.

This section can be summarised by a whānau member who said:

Equity looks like every one of our kids knows that they can achieve and will achieve in whatever makes their hearts sing. Everybody is whānau. We have so much on offer here that they feel there is nothing other than being successful. I know it's not the reality outside the gates... the kura does lots to even the level playing field. Equity is non-existent when we compare ourselves to other schools. There is so much that gets done here to ensure our kids have the best opportunities and chances. (Whānau)

This section of the report highlights Ngā Tapuwae's strong commitment to upholding the principles of whānau, including identity, leadership, and excellence, to achieve aspirations for self-determination and the safety of all students, regardless of who they are.

The Ngā Tapuwae leadership and whānau go above and beyond to guarantee the success of every student. That is mana motuhaketanga. Striving for mana motuhaketanga differs from the Western notion of equity where the focus is on redistributing some resource to even out socioeconomic differences.

## 5. He kupu whakakapi | Conclusion

This report supports the literature review (Fortune et al., 2024) that states, “Equity must be defined within a kaupapa Māori framework that emphasises fundamental values and ingrained approaches” (p. 3).

This case study has explored Ngā Tapuwae’s strategies that promote mana Māori motuhake by enabling students and their whānau to reach their potential. Their approach is intentional, and they implement strategies with a clear understanding of their purpose and context. Ngā Tapuwae explains that equity is about, “ensuring that all their students have pairs of shoes that fit”. (Tumuaki)

Ngā Tapuwae has established a nurturing environment that protects their students and families from significant socioeconomic challenges and systemic racism. One of their core treasures is the pā harakeke, which embodies love, care and guidance for students and families. The strategic plan states:

We celebrate the mana of each person and seek to develop each other and all our talents. We want our students to experience the joy of being successful as Māori within their own community and globally, so they are prepared to navigate the next phase of their lives with the skills to be resilient, purposeful and strong enough to rise to the challenges that life brings in order to experience positive living and personal fulfilment. (Te Kura Māori o Ngā Tapuwae, Hepetema 2024)

What is also very important to Ngā Tapuwae leadership is how important it is to maintain the significance of equity issues relating to kura mana motuhake so that their mana is strengthened not diminished. There should not be a “one shoe club” for all kura mana motuhake where it is expected that one size fits all. Each kura mana motuhake is unique and should be recognised for their uniqueness.

Ngā Tapuwae is deeply aware of the extensive work required to achieve equity among all students and whānau. Their strategies to fulfil educational aspirations and self-determination include the following:

- Kura-ā-iwi—building relationships with schools that uphold shared principles and values to ensure positive outcomes for iwi.
- Vision and strategy—mana motuhaketanga is at the heart of the school’s vision and strategic plan, serving as a vehicle to achieve unity and student success, enabling students to stand as global Māori citizens.
- Intergenerational whānau values—the kura whānau includes students, teachers, and alumni, with some spanning four generations. Ngā Tapuwae functions as a whānau that fosters resilience and wellbeing for everyone and ensures support for students and whānau to overcome contemporary challenges.
- Identity and love—whakapapa Māori and values, particularly love, serve as the foundation for identity, culture, and daily practices. Ngā Tapuwae grounds students in their learning journey of Māori language and knowledge.

- Leadership—leadership pathways are actively promoted throughout the school. Everyone is a leader, and everyone has potential.
- Frequently cited proverbs uplift the school’s spirit and teachers tailor their teaching to the learning styles of each student.

Ngā Tapuwae exudes an atmosphere of care and hospitality for children and their whānau, resembling an extended family.

Empowering whānau and the community is at the forefront of Ngā Tapuwae’s goals. This report demonstrates the work of Ngā Tapuwae in achieving self-determination and its aspirations for kura mana motuhake (self-determining schools) nationwide. The school leadership collaborates and advocates for funding to support the needs of all students and their whānau. Ngā Tapuwae’s commitment to advancing equitable pathways for all students is evident.

This report supports the notion that:

The way forward to achieving equity is through equitable resourcing that allows full exercise of tino rangatiratanga, for Māori to lead and govern kaupapa Māori education. This represents a different conception of equity as distributive justice than what is captured in the Ministry’s current EQI approach (Fortune et al., 2024, p. 2)

A key finding of this research is that the amount of funding and resource that Ngā Tapuwae needs in order to offer everything they do to support their students’ success is much greater than what they are eligible for through EQI funding.

Therefore, for Ngā Tapuwae and other kura mana motuhake to continue their focus on student achievement, it would be advantageous if the EQI criteria and assessment was reviewed to genuinely consider kaupapa highlighted in this case study such as:

- culture, identity and values
- whānau wellbeing and health issues
- student safety
- distance of homes from schools
- reasons for distance of homes
- number of family members living in homes
- family income
- transport policy
- relevant public transport issues e.g. timetables and congestion
- the impact of decreased contestable funding for te reo māori and kura mana motuhake.

The Ministry of Education should collaborate with kura mana motuhake to identify and understand how funding can support solutions that work to not only overcome barriers to equity but support them to achieve mana motuhaketanga.

Ngā Tapuwae hopes that the EQI system will give due consideration to the principle of mana motuhaketanga as a priority, as well as to the persistent inequities within communities across Aotearoa, particularly in South Auckland. Furthermore, they acknowledge the significant adverse impacts these inequities have on students, whānau, hapū, iwi, Māori communities, and kura mana motuhake.

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# Āpītitanga tuatahi | *Appendix one*

## Ngā pātai uiui—Ākonga

1. Can you tell me about a time when you felt really supported by your kaiako or the kura?
2. Do you think Ngā Tapuwāe does things to make sure everyone has what they need to succeed? Can you give an example?
3. What kind of help do you get when you need it (e.g., with schoolwork, uniform, personal problems)?
4. Do you have access to everything you need at Ngā Tapuwāe to do well in school (like books, devices, or extra help)? If not, what's missing?
5. In what ways does Ngā Tapuwāe cater to the range of diverse learners?
6. What does fairness look like at Ngā Tapuwāe? Can you share some examples of how everyone is supported here?
7. Are there things outside of Ngā Tapuwāe that affect your ability to do well in school? Can you give an example?
8. Do you think students at Ngā Tapuwāe have the same opportunities as students in schools that have a higher socioeconomic community? What do you think could be done to make sure everyone has the same opportunities?
9. We understand that you have the Ka Ora Ka Ako School Lunches, Breakfast Club and KidsCan here. Can you tell us how you feel about these programs and any other special classes or programs you think help you succeed?
10. If Ngā Tapuwāe could get more funding or resources, do you think they could do more to help the range of learners here be more successful? Can you describe how that could possibly happen?
11. Have you heard of something called the Equity Index (EQI)? If yes, what do you know about it?
12. Is there anything else that you would like us to know about equity or success at Ngā Tapuwāe?

## Ngā pātai uiui—Hikuroa (Ākonga o mua)

### Te tautuhia me te māramatia o te tautika—Defining and understanding equity

1. How would you define “equity” based on your experience at Ngā Tapuwāe?
2. In what ways did you see Ngā Tapuwāe ensuring that all ākonga received fair and equal opportunities during your time there?



### **Ngā tikanga me ngā mahi—Practices and activities**

3. How did Ngā Tapuwae support your educational goals and aspirations? Were there any particular activities, programs or initiatives that stood out to you?
4. In what ways did Ngā Tapuwae cater to the range of diverse learners?

### **Ngā rawa me ngā wero—Resourcing and challenges**

5. What resources were available at Ngā Tapuwae to support equity-focused practices during your time here?
6. What challenges did you observe that the kura faced in securing the necessary resources to support equity?

### **Tō te Tauine Tautika—The Equity Index**

7. Are you familiar with the Equity Index (EQI)? If so, how do you think it impacts Ngā Tapuwae's ability to achieve equity for ākonga and whānau?

### **Te tūoho o te Tauine Tautika—Perception of the EQI**

8. What are your views on how the EQI is being implemented and its effectiveness in supporting equity at Ngā Tapuwae?

### **Pātai tāpiripiri—Additional pātai**

9. Can you share any personal experiences that highlight how Ngā Tapuwae supported your educational journey?
10. What are your aspirations now, and how do you think your education at Ngā Tapuwae has helped you achieve these goals?
11. What changes or improvements would you suggest to further support equity at Ngā Tapuwae?

## **Ngā pātai uiui—Te Poumarumarū (Poari) o Ngā Tapuwae**

### **Te tautuhia me te māramatia o te tautika—Defining and understanding equity**

1. How do you understand the concept of “equity” within Ngā Tapuwae?
2. In what ways does the board prioritise equity in its decision-making processes?

### **Ngā tikanga me ngā mahi—Practices and activities**

3. Can you describe the specific practices or activities that Ngā Tapuwae implements to ensure all ākonga can access an education that aligns with their aspirations? (e.g. Ka Ora, Ka Ako—School Lunch Programme)
4. How does the board support these practices and ensure they are effectively implemented?
5. From the board's perspective, how have these practices impacted ākonga and their whānau?

### **Ngā rawa me ngā wero—Resourcing and challenges**

6. What steps does the board take to support the Senior Leadership Team secure resources?
7. What challenges has Ngā Tapuwae encountered in obtaining these resources, and how have they been addressed?

### **Te tūoho o te Tauine Tautika—Perception of the EQI**

8. How well do you think the EQI (Equity Index—that replaced the old decile system for funding allocation) is understood by the board and the wider kura hapori/community?
9. As board members—what are your thoughts about the effectiveness of the EQI?

### **Tō te Tauine Tautika—The Equity Index**

10. How does the board view the EQI in supporting Ngā Tapuwae to achieve equity for ākonga and whānau?
11. Can you provide examples of how the board's policies or decisions have been influenced by equity?

### **Pātai tāpiripiri—Additional pātai**

12. What improvements or changes would the board suggest to enhance equity for Ngā Tapuwae?

## **Ngā pātai uiui—Kaiako**

### **Te tautuhia me te māramatia o te tautika—Defining and understanding equity**

1. How do you understand the concept of “equity” within Ngā Tapuwae?
2. How is the concept of equity reflected in your teaching practices and interactions with ākonga?

### **Ngā tikanga me ngā mahi—Practices and activities**

3. Can you describe specific practices or activities that you implement to ensure all ākonga can access an education that aligns with their aspirations?
4. How do you address the diverse needs of ākonga in your classroom to promote equity?

### **Ngā rawa me ngā wero—Resourcing and challenges**

5. What resources are available to support these practices in your teaching?
6. What challenges have you faced in obtaining these resources, and how have you addressed them?

### **Te tūoho o te Tauine Tautika—Perception of the EQI**

7. How well do you think the EQI (Equity Index—that replaced the old decile system for funding allocation) is understood by you and your colleagues?

### **Tō te Tauine Tautika—The Equity Index**

8. How do you view the EQI in supporting your efforts to achieve equity for ākonga and whānau?
9. Can you provide examples of how the EQI has influenced your teaching practices or approach to equity?

### **Pātai tāpiripiri—Additional pātai**

10. What improvements or changes would you suggest to enhance equity within Ngā Tapuwae?

## Ngā pātai uiui—Tumuaki me te Ohu Whakahaere

### Te tautuhia me te māramatia o te tautika—Defining and understanding equity

1. What does equity mean to you as a Tumuaki/Senior Leader, and more broadly for your kura?
2. Can you describe specific frameworks or principles that guide your understanding of equity?

### Ngā tikanga me ngā mahi—Practices and activities

3. What specific practices or activities are in place at Ngā Tapuwae to ensure all ākonga can achieve their educational aspirations?
4. How do these practices cater to the diverse needs of your ākonga?
5. In what ways have these initiatives (e.g. Ka ora ka ako) impacted ākonga and their whānau?

### Ngā rawa me ngā wero—Resourcing and challenges

6. How are the resources allocated to support the practices aimed at achieving equity?
7. What challenges, if any, do you encounter in securing or managing these resources?

### Tō te Tauine Tautika—The Equity Index

8. In what ways does the EQI contribute to supporting Ngā Tapuwae in achieving equity for ākonga and whānau?
9. Can you provide examples of how the EQI has made a tangible impact?
10. Do you see any need for changes to be made to the EQI to support Ngā Tapuwae to achieve equity for ākonga and whānau?

### Te tūoho o te Tauine Tautika—Perception of the EQI

11. How do you and your staff perceive the EQI?
12. What feedback or concerns have you received from your team regarding the EQI?

### Pātai tāpiripiri—Additional pātai

13. What improvements or changes would you suggest to better support equity within Ngā Tapuwae?

## Ngā pātai uiui—Whānau

### Te tautuhia me te māramatia o te tautika—Defining and understanding equity

1. How do you define “equity” in the context of education at Ngā Tapuwae?
2. In what ways do you see Ngā Tapuwae ensuring that all ākonga receive fair and equal opportunities?

### Ngā tikanga me ngā mahi—Practices and activities

3. We understand that you have the Ka Ora Ka Ako School Lunches, Breakfast Club and KidsCan here. Can you tell us how you feel about these programs and any other special classes or programs you think help ensure your tamariki can achieve their aspirations?
4. How effective do you think these practices are in supporting all ākonga to succeed?

### **Ngā rawa me ngā wero—Resourcing and challenges**

5. Do you think there are adequate resources available to the kura to support equity-focused practices?
6. What challenges do you think the kura faces in securing the necessary resources to support equity?

### **Tō te Tauine Taurite, & te tūoho o te Tauine Taurite—The EQI, & perception of the EQI**

7. Are you familiar with the Equity Index (EQI)? If so, how do you think it impacts Ngā Tapuwae's ability to achieve equity for ākonga and whānau?
8. Do you see any need for changes to be made to the EQI to support Ngā Tapuwae to achieve equity for ākonga and whānau?

### **Pātai tāpiripiri—Additional pātai**

9. How does the kura involve whānau in decisions about equity and educational practices?
10. Can you share any personal experiences that highlight how Ngā Tapuwae has supported your tamaiti in their educational journey?
11. What are the aspirations for your tamaiti in education, and how is Ngā Tapuwae helping to achieve these goals?
12. What changes or improvements would you suggest to further support equity at Ngā Tapuwae?

