

# Kia Puāwaitia Ngā Tūmanako

## Summary: Critical Issues for Whānau in Māori Education

### HE MIHI

*Tihei mauri ora ki a tātou e takatū ora nei i te mata o te whenua, ki a koutou e ngā mātāwaka o Aotearoa. Kia huri ake ki te kaupapa mātauranga nei kua whakawhārikitia ki runga i te papa o te kōrero, arā ko ngā tumanako o ngā whānau tērā.*

*E rere kau atu ana ngā mihi ki ngā whānau i whakatangetange riaka, i whai wāhi ki te āwhina i tēnei kaupapa. Nā koutou hoki i akiaki mai kia eke atu tātou ki ngā keokeonga o te mātauranga. Kāti, ānei ā mātou pitopito kōrero mō koutou mā, tēnā koutou katoa.*



### OUR METHOD

We used the kaupapa Māori approach of whanaungatanga and the method of kōrero ā-whānau to work directly with whānau in ways that upheld their integrity and authority. Kōrero ā-whānau ensures the voices and day-to-day experiences of whānau in education are heard. It acknowledges their diverse priorities and aspirations. This summary draws from kōrero ā-whānau in Māori and Pākehā educational settings, and from two wānanga or meetings held with diverse whānau from across the country.

### SOME KEY MESSAGES FROM THE PROJECT

Three overarching themes connected the many issues raised by whānau. These are *Ngā Moemoeā* (whānau aspirations), *Rangatiratanga* (whānau autonomy and authority) and *Te Reo Rangatira* (learning and maintenance of te reo Māori).

- Whānau are drawn to centres and schools that have a clear educational philosophy which they can believe in and where Māori student “success” encompasses academic, cultural and general life skills.
- Whānau want more say over initiatives and access to appropriate management and governance processes.
- More kōhanga reo and kura are needed.
- More te reo Māori and tikanga Māori support in the home and community is vital.
- Structural racism and a lack of understanding and recognition of Māori world-views are continual barriers to Māori education.
- Whānau need high-quality information in order to make informed decisions about Māori education.

### ABOUT THE PROJECT

Whānau are integral to the educational wellbeing of Māori students, yet little educational research has been done with an explicit whānau focus. Te Wāhanga, the Māori research team within the New Zealand Council for Educational Research (NZCER), set out to help fill that gap by asking whānau their views on the critical issues in Māori education. This summary captures some of the key ideas from those discussions. The full report is available at:

[www.nzcer.org.nz/research/publications/kia-puawaitia-nga-tumanako-critical-issues-whanau-maori-education](http://www.nzcer.org.nz/research/publications/kia-puawaitia-nga-tumanako-critical-issues-whanau-maori-education)

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TE WĀHANGA  
HE WHĀNAU MĀTAU HE WHĀNAU ORA



# VIEWS FROM THE KŌRERO Ā-WHĀNAU

## TE KŌHANGA REO

The participants in this kōrero ā-whānau were urban-based. They were strongly committed to te kōhanga reo, valuing in particular te reo and tikanga Māori, the location, philosophy and the sense of empowerment they gained from involvement in kōhanga reo.

We asked what would strengthen te kōhanga reo and Māori education generally and we asked about whānau aspirations. They were clear about the need for:

- wānanga to support parents and whānau who want to learn te reo Māori.
- choice, options and information for whānau; for example, about the types of te reo Māori education available.

*“Whānau continue to struggle within kōhanga to get access to a range of opportunities and resources that are provided in Pākehā early childhood centres.”*

- te reo Māori resources for all ages. A high priority was to strengthen te reo Māori in the home. They were also interested in workshops on the kaupapa of kōhanga and kura kaupapa.

Whānau saw kaiako as critical to the success of kōhanga—they referred to them as “the rocks” and they wanted more of them. Kaiako

can provide consistency and positive energy and have a passion for te reo Māori, tikanga Māori and tamariki.

Whānau wanted more control over initiatives and access to appropriate management and governance processes.

They reported long waiting lists for Māori immersion education options and voiced concern about transitions from and across Māori-medium settings. They wanted greater continuity of provision and quality from kōhanga to whare wānanga.

## WHAREKURA

The participants in this kōrero ā-whānau were involved with a wharekura attended by graduates from several kura kaupapa and Māori-medium primary schools in its region.

The students were clear that being at a wharekura meant learning about, as well as through, te reo and mātauranga Māori. They were clear they were attending wharekura because of a whānau decision and aspiration to learn and value te reo Māori.

Wharekura helped whānau realise their aspirations through:

- fostering a whānau environment
- caring for the whole person
- quality teachers
- strong leadership.

Students stressed the importance of feeling welcome, comfortable and supported. They appreciated the emphasis on the development of the whole person—te tangata—and their potential.

Quality staff and high expectations for the students were highly valued. Tumuaki leadership was also important, particularly the ability to collaborate and genuinely care for students.

*“Kids talk about the heart-to-hearts that he [the tumuaki] has with them and with the kura, and he’ll do what he has to do as a tumuaki; he’ll growl at them but he never lets them walk out of here without giving them a hug.”*

Whānau had ideas about what needed strengthening at wharekura. These included:

- extending the range of subjects
- strengthening careers programmes
- boosting relationships with tertiary institutions
- including te ao Māori in all aspects of the curriculum
- increasing the usage and quality of te reo Māori
- extending sports and cultural activities
- providing opportunities for leadership development, preparation and transition.

Participants recognised there were financial constraints and noted that more resources would strengthen the educational possibilities at the wharekura.

## Early childhood education (English-medium)

This section is drawn from discussions with whānau participating in five early childhood education (ECE) centres, two of them bicultural providers. Most of the teachers were Pākehā/European, while the majority of whānau identified as Māori.

Whānau identified three clear aspirations: creating a positive sense of belonging and identity; trusting and feeling confident in kaiako; and supporting strong ECE relationships with Māori communities.

*“All whānau want to have healthy, happy children, who gain an understanding of the wider world and are receiving high-quality education in two worlds, te ao Pākehā and te ao Māori.”*

Whānau highly value relationships between ECEs and local Māori communities and see how those relationships can positively impact on children’s learning and development.

Four factors were seen as barriers in the ECE sector:

- a shortage of quality and well-supported kaiako
- an uneven spread of Māori-based learning material and low use of te reo and tikanga Māori
- lack of co-operation across

ECEs and poor physical learning environments

- the cost of attending ECE.

## Pākehā schools

This kōrero ā-whānau was with whānau involved with four Pākehā schools. The majority of the whānau spoken to used the term Pākehā schools or Pākehā education when describing English-medium models of education.

All whānau held clear aspirations for success for their tamariki and mokopuna. The notion of “success” went beyond the academic to encompass cultural and general life-skills.

Only a small number of whānau members were positive about their experiences with Pākehā schools and the outcomes for their whānau.

Pākehā schools could enhance education for whānau by:

- perceiving “success” in holistic terms
- developing values-based education
- increasing Māori teacher numbers
- encouraging greater whānau–school engagement.

The understandings of “success” were perceived by whānau as limited by dominant non-Māori definitions, which they perceived as grounded solely on notions of academic achievement.

Whānau believe more must be done to get Māori teachers in front of Māori children. They need teachers who are culturally

responsive to the whole person and who are positive role models for tamariki.

They see many school-specific and wider structural areas that need strengthening. For example, whānau identified structural racism and a lack of understanding and recognition of Māori world-views.

*“It’s not just kupu and it’s not just kapa haka, there is a whole other side of Māori culture that they’re not really tapping into.”*

Examples of racism included: a lack of commitment to te reo and tikanga Māori; a view of Māori as deficient; mispronunciation of Māori names; construction of Māori children as “problem” children and a lack of inclusion of Māori knowledge and history within the curriculum.

These issues were consistently raised by whānau, and are areas that need to be addressed urgently.

Whānau explained that their tamariki were confronted with schooling experiences that did not recognise their Māori cultural backgrounds and heritage. Examples included teacher practices that demonstrated a low level of awareness of te ao Māori world-views, and teachers disciplining Māori students because they did not understand them.

# VIEWS FROM WĀNANGA

Alongside kōrero ā-whānau the project involved two wānanga or meetings with whānau from around the country, including Māori community leaders, kaiako from kaupapa Māori and Pākehā schools and Māori educational researchers. We wanted to know what they saw as the significant questions and critical issues for Māori throughout all stages of education.

Five broad themes emerged.

## Revising a philosophy for Māori education

If the current education system is not meeting whānau aspirations, or providing the diversity of provision and choice that tamariki need to succeed, then what has to change?

Participants saw a way forward in identifying the key characteristics and factors that lead to “success” by Māori as defined by Māori. This could be done, for example, by:

- examining student achievement in kura kaupapa Māori, kura auraki, bilingual units and other schooling models.
- learning from the stories of tamariki who are navigating barriers and succeeding both academically and culturally.

## Equity, access and resources to support Māori wellbeing and success

Whānau strongly believe that ensuring equity and fair treatment in education depends on the policies, attitudes and practices of the decision makers who shape the education system. Whānau discussed how Te Tiriti o Waitangi offers ways of identifying and addressing institutional barriers that impede whānau wellbeing.

## Identity and curriculum

Knowing who you are and where you are from is one of the facets of being Māori that gives tamariki security. That cultural knowledge and self-confidence has positive flow-on effects in education and personal development. Whānau

are interested in using the curriculum to co-construct lessons to ensure they are inclusive of the world of tamariki and whānau.

## Informed decisions about transitions through accessible information

Whānau and tamariki participation in education at all levels is important. To participate effectively and to make decisions about their children’s education, whānau need good information and access to the choices they have.

## Quality te reo Māori at all levels of learning, including in the home

Te reo Māori remains a critical issue for Māori, with some feeling the situation is continuing to worsen. Issues include whānau and kura commitment to te reo Māori, the need for more fluent Māori language teachers, remuneration for the language skills of fluent speakers and the demographic profile of te reo Māori speakers.

## WHERE TO FROM HERE?

We identified three overarching themes among the many issues raised by whānau. These are *Ngā Moemoeā* (whānau aspirations), *Rangatiratanga* (whānau autonomy and authority) and *Te Reo Rangatira* (learning and maintenance of reo Māori).

We are interested in exploring these themes through the lens of

whānau transitions between different education settings. We think exploring *whānau transitions* through these multidimensional kaupapa holds possibilities for a holistic and aspirational whānau-led agenda that is concerned with whānau self-determination and contributes to the revitalisation efforts of te reo Māori.

Whānau also made it clear they want to see continued research that is:

- strengths-based, focusing particularly on how Māori kids like to learn
- based within the kaupapa Māori philosophy of whanaungatanga, upholding relationships with whānau and extending research

relationships to new whānau

- linked to Te Tiriti o Waitangi and rights-based approaches such as the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
- addressing structural problems, such as racism, that encumber whānau aspirations, autonomy and te reo Māori.

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