

Ka whānau mai te reo

Kia rite!

Getting ready to move
Te reo Māori and transitions

Kia rite! is the second report from the kaupapa Māori project Ka whānau mai te reo. It explores how whānau make decisions about Māori-language development at three key transition points: aged four years going into Year 1, moving to secondary school, and beyond secondary school. It also looks at what supports whānau to kōrero Māori. This is a summary of our findings.

WHY TRANSITIONS?

Transitions are a time to think about your hopes and dreams for your reo - and which educational pathways are going to help you get there.

Transitions are more likely to be successful in supporting reo development if everyone (whānau, kaiako, schools) is involved in planning for them.

DIVERSE WHĀNAU HAVE DIVERSE ASPIRATIONS FOR THEIR REO

Whānau aspirations for their reo are as varied and diverse as whānau themselves. Some whānau want their tamariki to become highly fluent reo speakers who are knowledgeable about tikanga. Others are satisfied with whatever level of reo their tamariki obtain as long as they feel confident in who they are and where they are from. Whānau may have different reo aspirations for each of their tamariki, and tamariki themselves may have different aspirations from their parents. For many whānau, future aspirations for supporting their reo include making sure that their children's connections with whānau, hapū, iwi and their home marae stay strong.

CHOOSING A MĀORI LANGUAGE EDUCATION PATHWAY CAN BE DIFFICULT

In Aotearoa, most whānau do not have easy access to all reo Māori education options. To do so, there would have to be at least as many Māori-medium learning environments as there are English medium and this is certainly not the case. Whānau choice is

for the most part limited to the options available in the areas they choose to live, and most are choosing English-medium schools.

CONTINUE TO BUILD ON YOUR REO KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS

Reo learning continuity (learning that keeps building on your knowledge and skills) can easily be disrupted during transitions or the move from one place to another. If there aren't good options for reo Māori education or links between existing reo programmes then reo learning can suffer. And this can happen again and again as whānau move through the compulsory education system.

For some whānau, learning Māori through the education system, and particularly through English medium, can be like playing a game of snakes and ladders. Success relies on the roll of a dice, or in this context, on the choice of a school or series of schools.

You can have a couple of really good years and then a year with nothing and it's sort of going up and down. I know it's a real pipe dream, but for me, this would be a non-issue if it was compulsory to have te reo Māori for every child right the way through school.

Although it can be difficult to access the education options and pathways that are right for your whānau, it can be done, and some whānau are actively making it happen.

THINGS THAT WHĀNAU TOLD US MADE TRANSITIONS EASIER FOR THEM

Whānau focused suggestions

Include the whole whānau

I would like to help out with something focused on te reo Māori, but I can't because I still have preschoolers who aren't able to attend with me.

Get to know other whānau

It would be awesome if local kura and schools could set up a day where all the kōhanga reo within the area come, and we have a pānui or concert or whatever just to build those relationships ... with the other whānau that have tamariki starting at the same time because it's a huge thing when your baby goes to school.

More interaction between kōhanga/ECE and kura/schools

Have regular hui with schools and whānau, focus on tamariki and the reo they bring.

Teachers from other primary schools with reo could come into the kōhanga reo and work with the transition class—or we could go there.

Bring down some of the new entrant class down to kōhanga and just have some kai or just a bit of a whanaungatanga. On teacher release days, kaiako could come down to kōhanga to strengthen the relationship.

Get teachers from the bilingual schools to come in and have a talk to the parents and say, 'This is what we do and this is where we are'.

School/kura focused suggestions

Communication and relationships

Maintain good communication with parents.

Forge better relationships between schools.

Organise school visits for small groups of whānau and regular pānui.

Share models for transition processes among schools.

Hold regular whānau hui to talk with whānau about what will be learnt.

Provide opportunities for ākongā from the same school to come together again in Year 9.

Recognition of first and second language learner needs

Create college qualifications that are appropriate for immersion learners as well as second-language learners.

Provide bilingual resources.

Reo Māori within English-medium schools

Address the isolation of kaiako in English-medium schools by creating networks between Māori-medium and English-medium kaiako.

Address the isolation of reo Māori and tikanga Māori within English-medium schools by taking a whole school approach to supporting reo Māori.

Establish more rumaki in mainstream schools that are supported by the entire school.

Whānau taking charge

A whānau moved to a primary school where there was little if any emphasis on reo and tikanga. This situation did not fit with the high aspirations this whānau had for their reo, so a parent decided to challenge the school.

We had no te reo Māori ... I wrote a letter to the school saying, 'What are you doing to provide te reo me tikanga Māori in your school? What are you guys doing, why should I keep my daughter here if it's not happening?'

This was only the beginning. She rallied together a group of like-minded whānau who challenged the school to meet their aspirations, and in doing so changed how that school viewed reo Māori education. By the end of the first year they had a kaiako teach te reo Māori in each class for an hour a week. The next challenge was to get the school to form a bilingual unit. It took persistence, good relationship building and hard work, but they finally achieved their goal for a bilingual unit within an English-medium school.

[We had to fight] to have a bilingual unit. We had to talk to other bilingual units around the rohe to find out how we were to go about it, how we were to put a proposal to the Board of Trustees. We had to go to the Ministry of Education and get ... well we didn't have to go to the Ministry, but we wanted to show them that we were serious so we went to the Ministry and said, 'What do we need to put into place?' and Maraea is 11 now so the unit's been going for 5 years.

What supports whānau to kōrero Māori?

Lots of things help whānau to kōrero Māori - environment, disposition, skill and opportunity, necessity, attitudes to reo Māori and being Māori, language bonds and the culture of learning.

POSITIVE LANGUAGE ENVIRONMENTS

In countries where bilingualism or multilingualism is the norm, speakers easily switch between languages according to context. Māori is one of the official languages of Aotearoa New Zealand. If reo Māori is to flourish, it is important to continue challenging society's language beliefs and boundaries to create environments that support reo use.

I expect that in the future my kids will be multilingual – not bilingual – and successful in whatever they do.

DISPOSITION, SKILLS AND OPPORTUNITIES

For whānau, a child's personality and confidence, their skills and knowledge, and access to other speakers (who are themselves keen to kōrero) contribute to whether they choose to kōrero.

Disposition or inclination to use the language is not enough on its own. You may be inclined to speak Māori, but you also need the reo skills and opportunities to talk with other reo speakers. Likewise, you need to be disposed to kōrero to make the most of your skills and opportunities.

Some whānau were actively addressing their lack of reo by learning Māori at night classes. Some created opportunities to kōrero by inviting other reo speakers to their homes or by participating in Māori medium. Some whānau overcame their initial disposition not to kōrero by finding something important enough (like having tamariki themselves) that would force them to commit to making the effort. Or by putting themselves in environments where speaking Māori was a necessity, not an option.

CREATING A 'NEED' TO KŌRERO

The challenge for whānau (who have varying levels of reo ability) is to create environments where tamariki and their caregivers have to speak Māori

to each other. This is why it is so important for whānau to learn Māori together. It creates 'a need' within the home for everyone to kōrero: adults with tamariki, and adults with other adults. In this way the language shifts from being 'optional' to being a valued and prioritised way of expressing yourself.

POSITIVE ATTITUDES ABOUT TE REO MĀORI AND BEING MĀORI

Learning that is enjoyable and fun supports tamariki to kōrero Māori. The joy that tamariki find in learning Māori was a strong theme throughout all the learning environments that whānau were participating in. Tamariki who were enjoying the process of learning to speak Māori were happy, positive, enthusiastic interested, focused, excited, and full of ideas and curiosity. There is also merit in looking at how to make joy in learning the reo more a part of adult learning as well.

When whānau and kaiako were passionate, enthusiastic and having fun with the reo, tamariki

Ākonga

Suggestions from ākonga to support reo learning included:

- attending marae stays
- festivals
- sports
- Māori television, movies, iwi radio
- reading books in Māori
- night reo classes, kura reo
- adult kapa haka
- keeping in contact with Māori-speaking friends
- speaking Māori with younger tamariki in the whānau
- using fun reo Māori teaching and learning pedagogies (i.e., the kura reo model and the rākau method)
- 'high' 'medium' and 'low' language groups in reo classes, where there is a wide range of skill among the class.



were too. This is important: enjoying learning is a whānau activity. This is quite different from an individual focus on the learner. The attitudes to learning of everyone involved are an important aspect of what enables tamariki to kōrero.

LANGUAGE BONDS - REO RELATIONSHIPS

Tamariki were more likely to speak Māori with those they knew would always speak Māori to them. Ākonga were very clear that they needed more people to speak Māori to them. Particularly people from within their own whānau, although this was not always possible.

CREATING A CULTURE OF LEARNING

Whānau talked about needing a culture of learning Māori where everyone sees themselves as learners in a supportive environment. This reinforces the benefits that learning as a whānau can have, especially if you create a positive learning culture within your home.

The idea that you learn by making mistakes came through very strongly among whānau participating in high immersion environments. So did the idea that learning goes both ways. They helped ākonga, whānau and kaiako to kōrero Māori with confidence.

Whānau

Suggestions from whānau to support reo learning included:

- parent education programmes about reo and tikanga
- weekly night classes at wānanga, or in their homes and community
- reo courses with a focus on contextual learning
- bilingual books
- dictionaries
- online resources
- basic phrases for everyday things
- explanations of tikanga.

Kaiako

Suggestions from kaiako to support reo learning included:

- professional development courses
- kura reo (one-week-long Māori-language immersion live-ins, usually on a marae, with structured daily language classes)
- reo rumaki immersion classes
- opportunities to kōrero Māori with other adults
- mentors/tutors to visit kaiako in class to identify and correct their reo mistakes and provide language role models
- kaumātua involvement.

This report along with our first report in the Ka Whānau mai te Reo series is available on our website. <http://www.nzcer.org.nz/research/ka-whanau-mai-te-reo-honouring-whanau-upholding-reo-maori>

The final report will be also be available in 2015.
Contact: Nicola Bright,
Te Wāhanga, NZCER
Nicola.Bright@nzcer.org.nz