



TE TARI AROTAKE MĀTAURANGA
Education Review Office

Te Muka Here Tangata

The strand that binds people

Case study: Supporting Māori learners in English-medium schools during the Covid-19 events of 2020.



Ko te tamaiti te pūtake o te kaupapa

ERO's vision is grounded in New Zealanders' aspirations for education and our ambition of Equity and Excellence in outcomes for Māori learners.

Quality education is the right of every child and young person in Aotearoa and is underpinned by learning environments that place the learner and learner outcomes at the centre of all activity.

Successful learning organisations are those that are on a continuous, deliberate and future-focused journey of improvement, using evidence to shape their direction and decision making.

Ko te tamaiti te pūtake o te kaupapa.

Ko te mātauranga kounga tētahi mōtika mā ia tamaiti, mā ia rangatahi kei Aotearoa, ā, ko te tūāpapa o taua mātauranga kounga, ko ngā taiao e noho ai te ākongā me ōna huanga ki te pūtake o te kaupapa.

Ko ngā ratonga mātauranga angitu, ko ērā ka manawanui ki te kōkiri i ngā kaupapa kia anga whakamua ai, ā, mā ngā taunakitanga e whai ahunga, e whai whakataunga.

Te Muka Here Tangata – The strand that binds people

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Wāhinga Kōrero

Foreword

No one could have anticipated what unfolded at the beginning of 2020. Covid-19 represented a substantial and alarming threat to health and livelihoods throughout Aotearoa and the world. The global pandemic resulted in a nationwide state of emergency.

On 25 March 2020, New Zealand went into lockdown under Alert Level 4 with very little warning. For the education sector, this meant all educational facilities were closed, which caused short-term disruption to students' learning and wellbeing.

With little to no indication of how long it would be before the sector could return to normal, it was important for everyone to adjust quickly to the changes and do what was required to ensure student learning and wellbeing could continue as best as possible from home.

Understanding the impacts of Covid-19

In response, Te Pou Mataaho – Education Review Office's (ERO's) evaluation and research group and Te Uepū ā-Motu – ERO's national evaluation and review team, undertook research to understand how Māori learners were supported during the unprecedented circumstances of 2020.

Te Muka Here Tangata – The strand that binds people focuses on the impact on Māori learners at eight English-medium schools with high populations of Māori students. That work is supported by research conducted in partnership with the Māori-medium sector for [Te Kahu Whakahaumarū – Ngā mahi a te rangai mātauranga Māori](#).

Both reports outline the common challenges and many shared successes of leaders, teachers, whānau, hapū and iwi as they adapted to changing Alert levels during the Covid-19 events of 2020.

Further investigation into the impacts of Covid-19 on all learners in the English-Medium sector can be found as part of the '[Learning in a Covid-19 World](#)' research on ERO's website.

ERO acknowledges the eight school communities that participated in this evaluation. The generosity and willingness of the leaders, teachers, learners and their whānau has resulted in valuable insights and a model for best practice that will build our collective knowledge of effective distance teaching and learning, with particular focus on supporting Māori to enjoy and achieve education success as Māori.



He kupu whakataki

Introduction

Why did we undertake this research?

Most Māori learners, 97%, attend English medium schools in Aotearoa New Zealand.

To report on how Māori learners were supported in English-medium education during Alert Levels 4 to 2, ERO invited eight schools with high percentage Māori rolls in the Bay of Plenty and East Coast to work with us as research partners.

We wanted to learn how well these schools responded to COVID-19. And, how the actions they put in place supported Māori learners' wellbeing, engagement and learning progress during the lockdown and on their return to school.

We also wanted to learn what could be done differently if schools should be in the unenviable situation of returning to lockdown in the future.

How did we do this research?

Te Pou Mataaho – ERO's evaluation and research group, and Te Uepū ā-Motu – ERO's national evaluation and review team, conducted interviews with eight English-medium school communities for this report.

The sample group consisted of Kaiti School, Brookfield School, Merivale School, Gate Pa School and Te Akau ki Papamoa School (Years 1-6), Hiruharama School and Whangara School (Years 1-8), and Tolaga Bay Area School (Years 1-15).

The schools are low decile and range from large urban to small rural. Five of the eight schools offer rūmaki education (immersion). All schools integrate daily te reo and tikanga Māori in their Aoraki classes (English medium).

Many of the schools had Māori leadership teams, staff and boards of trustees.

We interviewed learners, whānau and leaders and teachers from each school community. We explored:

- Learner engagement in distance learning and re-engagement to in-school learning
- Wellbeing of learners and whānau.

Qualitative data was collected from structured interviews carried out in the schools. The focus groups were leaders and teachers, Māori learners and whānau.

Of the 129 learners interviewed, 65 were in rūmaki immersion Māori classes. Many leaders and teachers participated, and we also heard from 49 whānau members.

Ngā Kitenga Findings

Overall, we found that all of the schools' actions supported whānau wellbeing and learner engagement and progress during COVID-19 Alert Levels 4 to 2.

Consistently, ERO's research across the English-medium sector has shown that lower decile schools reported more challenges than higher decile education sites. These challenges included lack of resources, inadequate access to digital devices and internet connectivity, and greater financial pressure placed on whānau.

How leaders and teachers responded to COVID-19

The health, safety and wellbeing of learners and their whānau was at the forefront of decision-making

A culture of care and moral responsibility underpinned the schools' actions. Leaders and teachers prioritised wellbeing and easing any anxiety and stress whānau might be experiencing due to COVID-19. Ensuring ongoing communication would continue between home and schools was a priority, as was keeping their school communities safe.

Learners and whānau were given hygiene, care and kai packs. Some of the schools had very strong associations with community groups, iwi and hapū, and together they were able to ensure emotional support was available and kai was provided during lockdown.

"We felt well supported from the first phone call from the school"

WHĀNAU
VOICE

WHĀNAU
VOICE

"Hard packs and kai were available to all of us. There was a drive-through here for us to come and collect the packs and those without cars got them delivered to their front step. There was daily lunches for the first week as well for us to come and collect"

School staff quickly put strategies in place to maintain regular contact with whānau

Learners and their whānau were well informed of what home learning would involve. Many schools were using digital learning as an integral part of their curriculum prior to lockdown. Software applications and apps on mobile phones were invaluable in assuring whānau that staff were available to assist them and keep connected.

Many of the schools we spoke to were well prepared to transition to distance learning and teaching. For many learners, using technology and online learning apps was the norm. Most schools knew, or sought to know, if learners and whānau had access to devices and connectivity to the internet. When whānau didn't, almost all the schools were able to supply devices.

For some whānau the prospect of becoming the teacher, and the home becoming the learning environment, proved stressful. Generally, the uncertainty associated with distance learning was quickly alleviated once families and schools settled into routine and established ways of communicating. Many whānau viewed the lockdown as an opportunity to spend quality time together.

What whānau felt and experienced:

"Teachers rang all of us to ask what we needed – hard packs or computers or modems or connectivity – they sorted us out with whatever we wanted, but we all got the activity packs with the essentials (abridged)"

"The school website was amazing – it had all the class pages on there and in just one click we could get into Zoom. Not difficult to navigate"

"I have five kids all with different Zooms – the school giving out iPads for us to use during lockdown was a godsend as we didn't have one each. Kōkā delivered them all around the town and country, masked and gloved-up"

"Teachers did Zooms twice a week to set up the week of activities and then again at the end of the week. They used Facebook to post videos of how to do stuff and we posted videos or photos of us doing the mahi. We could comment on each other's work which was great"

While schools and whānau who participated in this research did not identify issues and were more appreciative of communities supporting one another, ERO's other Covid-19 schools report provides insight into what other schools found challenging to cop with.

Creative curriculum changes kept most learners motivated and maintained tikanga and school values

Some whānau preferred a structured approach to distance learning. Routines for Zoom hui were appreciated by many. All schools factored in regular check-ins to ensure established tikanga like karakia, and school values like manaakitanga and whanaungatanga continued to be enacted. Many whānau expressed gratitude for this. Most believed planned learning taking place in the morning worked best for their whānau. This left afternoons for learners to pursue their own interests, and/or undertake projects that included reading, writing, mathematics and te reo Māori in authentic ways.

Some schools responded to whānau requests for more flexibility in learning timetables. Not having to wake up or chase up their children to do schoolwork eased anxiety for many whānau. Some learners preferred to engage with programmes in their own time. Both whānau and teachers were generally positive about the ability of learners to lead their own learning.

This research brought to light new insights around supporting Māori learners from a curriculum perspective which builds on from ERO's previous Covid-19 schools report.

"We loved the focus on te reo and karakia and mindfulness and meditation – that kept us sane. And the whānau wero of the week kept us connected and motivated as a whanau"

WHĀNAU
VOICE

WHĀNAU
VOICE

"Papa (name removed) had his own YouTube channel for reading, my kids loved it and tuned all the time. They love being read to and he is such an animated reader"

"Earning the points for her class through the interclass competition for enacting the values, that kept my girl motivated – doing house work and good deeds"

WHĀNAU
VOICE

"We did lots of baking with our whānau and that was a lot of learning – reading the recipe and doing the weighing/ measuring and then we had to write a report on how it went"

STUDENT
VOICE

Projects, research and inquiry learning engaged and motivated learners

Learners often talked positively about game apps, video making and challenges where they could be creative and expressive as a fun way to learn. Videos and photographs of learning were shared online. Activities such as 'Wero o te Wiki' ensured many whānau engaged in kaitiakitanga. Growing and harvesting vegetables and fruit, and cooking for and sharing kai became a context for learning and for demonstrating manaakitanga.

"Project work is what kept us engaged: Matariki, Solar System, ANZAC day etc. Some classes got a project a week every week like the Porourangi generation by generation project"

STUDENT
VOICE

"The weekly wero, exercise, gardening and conversations reinforced the school values of manaakitanga, whanaungatanga and kaitiakitanga"

WHĀNAU
VOICE

WHĀNAU
VOICE

"My daughter in the rūmaki loved taking photos of things around the house as she learnt the Māori alphabet"



Not all learners had devices or connectivity to the internet. For this group, important aspects of their school's curriculum became less accessible

All the schools we interviewed used their own resources to give out hard packs of stationery, paints, sports equipment, puzzles, readers and activity packs. These were made available either on the last day before lockdown or the following days using social distancing methods for collection.

Due to national demand, leaders were unsure how long it would take for the ministry hard packs to arrive. Schools used what they had available to ensure students and whānau were well prepared for home learning from Day 1 or soon after.

Some whānau felt the ministry hardcopy material packs for primary students did not always match their children's learning levels, and that there were insufficient resources in te reo Māori, and reflecting te ao Māori, for Māori learners.

The ministry packs almost always arrived late or after lockdown or for a few, not at all. NCEA students, however, found hard copy materials from the ministry generally arrived on time and were appropriate for learning levels.

Along with whole-class online learning, most schools offered one-to-one options for learners who required or requested this. Some teachers produced creative and motivating learning videos that could be revisited by learners.

Children with additional learning needs were almost always well catered for. Schools provided differentiated hard material packs. Staff regularly had one-to-one Zoom hui with these learners and some schools continued reading recovery programmes digitally.

Some learners utilised ministry website learning platforms, Māori Television and Papa Kāinga TV | Home Learning TV to access learning in te reo Māori.

"As a family of five it was hard to share devices – it was really hard at the beginning"

WHĀNAU
VOICE

WHĀNAU
VOICE

"We used the home learning channel Papa Kāinga for engagement and focus-learning activities"

"I used my smart TV and my books. I didn't have my teacher to help me – Dad helped me"

STUDENT
VOICE

STUDENT
VOICE

"I live 100 metres from school, but a pack didn't arrive. We needed devices (abridged)"

Whānau became more involved in children's learning and progress during lockdown

Generally, parents thought learning levels were maintained or progressed. Their insights came from observing children working on assigned programmes, seeing and participating in home life-learning projects, and seeing learning shared during Zoom hui.

Some schools already had well established digital platforms for sharing learning and continued to report learner outcomes through these. Some whānau had opportunities offered for parent-teacher conferences.

Some learners confidently expressed they knew their learning and progress was being supported. Learning was viewed as more interesting when they had choice, the work was manageable, and the learning was taking place through relevant and authentic contexts. Flexibility of when work could be undertaken was also appreciated. Some structure was viewed as helpful for some learners.

Learners, whānau and teachers all expressed the significant progress made in the key competencies of self-management, communication and participation. All believed that the most significant progress they made was in digital learning. Many learners and whānau said they increased their knowledge and understanding of how to enact the school values such as manaakitanga, kaitiakitanga and manahautanga. Learners undertaking NCEA were keen to know their progress and what to do to stay on track.

Post lockdown, learners generally expressed a sense that their progress had been maintained. This differed to findings in ERO's *Learning in Covid-19 World* research which showed two thirds of principals in low decile schools were concerned about learning progress post lockdown.



“My daughter made accelerated progress in science and maths during lockdown – she was behind and now she is at the right level for her age (abridged)”

WHĀNAU
VOICE

WHĀNAU
VOICE

“Big ups to Mātua (name removed) for his work with getting our kids though NCEA during lockdown”

“The regular baking – I could see that my son was learning his fractions and his ability to measure and weigh – he got really good at it and didn’t even realise it was maths till we did the work sheets to show how the fractions worked”

WHĀNAU
VOICE



Learners' wellbeing was best supported when teachers were confident using digital technology as an effective teaching and learning tool

Most students experienced continuity of learning, particularly if their class had used digital learning platforms for communication, and teaching and learning prior to lockdown. For most whānau who had access to devices and internet connectivity, the transitions seemed almost seamless.

Hauora and wellbeing was well supported through ongoing communication and help and assistance available for those who required it. The health, safety and wellbeing of learners was again to the fore as Alert Levels lessened. The few schools who didn't already have pandemic plans in place, did so. Hygiene and social distancing practices were known and followed. Generally, whānau viewed transitions back to school as well-managed.

Most schools focused on learners, their peers and staff reconnecting and whanaungatanga on learners' return to school. Reinforcing the values of whanaungatanga and manaakitanga was highly valued.

Some students were encouraged to reflect on their experiences in lockdown and express how their creativity and strategies, like mindfulness, heightened their resilience and assisted their learning at home.

"I was excited to see my friends"

STUDENT
VOICE

STUDENT
VOICE

"We had to go outside and do whakatau wairua to
calm ourselves"



“Children’s wellbeing was supported by making lockdown fun and flexible with the right mix of ways to connect. Learning and living – making the most of whānau time”

WHĀNAU
VOICE

WHĀNAU
VOICE

“Karakia every morning and afternoon kept me grounded”

“My child has autism and the school provided him with his own desk and chair and we set up his workspace. He loves it and so do I”

WHĀNAU
VOICE

KAIAKO
VOICE

“All the whanau rooms were set up with toasters and jugs and microwaves, so we were our own little family unit. We only were in contact with kids in our class whānau bubble”



Ngā Kitenga me ngā Āheinga Anamata Insights & Future Opportunities

ERO's findings show leaders and school staff were better prepared to support distance learning and whānau wellbeing when certain systems, practices and conditions were evident prior to, and during COVID-19 Alert Levels 1-4. These included:

- strong leadership and governance practice, shared responsibility and decision-making driven by collaborative school communities with effective communication practices
- learners' access to meaningful and differentiated learning experiences and resources that developed their linguistic and cultural capabilities, and their ability to participate in te ao Māori
- teachers and whānau having access to appropriate hard copy learning materials, digital technology, adequate devices and reliable internet connections
- evolving digital curriculums and teacher capability to use technology effectively as a teaching and learning tool.

ERO and the participating schools will use the insights from this evaluation to assist them to be better prepared to deliver distance learning in what continues to be uncertain times.

ERO will continue to facilitate discussions within the sector about improving access to technology and resources which reflect learning steeped in te ao Māori. The findings highlight the opportunity to harness and share more broadly, in the education sector, the effective digital teaching and learning practices that support Māori learners in English-medium education.

ERO will further explore the correlation between strong Māori leadership, in English medium schools, and genuine connections with their Māori communities, iwi and hapū, and how this communal commitment enhances Māori learners' wellbeing and learning opportunities.





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