



FUNDAMENTAL SUPPORT

Te Kura Māori o Ngā Tapuwāe

This is a case study of kaiarahi i te reo and kai tautoko (teacher aides) at Te Kura Māori o Ngā Tapuwāe, a kura based in Mangere East in Auckland



Summary

What's this document for?

This is a case study of kaiarahi i te reo and kai tautoko (teacher aides) at Te Kura Māori o Ngā Tapuwae, a kura based in Mangere East in Auckland. This case study is part of the Support Staff Working Group final report.

What are the key themes of this case study?

- Designing support roles that reflect the vision and philosophy of the school.
- Tapping into the full range of skills of support staff.

Why did the school change its approach to support staff?

The evolutionary changes at the kura have been led from the top to achieve the involvement of whānau, support the broader activities of the school that assist in student achievement, and to free up teachers' time so they can spend more time focusing on teaching.

What did they do?

The kura has designed the teacher aide roles carefully, recruited well, developed clear systems for induction, performance appraisal and professional development, and developed a culture where these staff are an integral part of the team.

What was the result?

The teacher aides have benefited through having broader roles that provide greater career development and an opportunity for steadier pay. The school has benefited from more targeted and efficient use of resources to support student learning and more effective teaching.

What the support staff said

- “We are support staff—but we are also mums and nanas in the kura.”
- “You can tell this is a place of respect by the way the kids and their whānau speak to you.”
- “There are huge benefits for the kids in having two adults in the classroom; but it is more than this—we are part of all events, such as whānau hui and report evenings with parents.”

Discussion questions

1. How well do we recognise and value the full contribution that support staff make to our school?
2. How effective is the induction our school provides for support staff?
3. Do we have a clear expectation, and real opportunities, for teacher aides to get relevant professional development?

Fundamental support

Te Kura Māori o Ngā Tapuwāe relies heavily on its kaiarahi i te reo and kai tautoko (teacher aides). The school knows it can do this comfortably because of the way these support staff have been incorporated into the school. The kura has designed the roles carefully, recruited well, developed clear systems for induction, performance appraisal and professional development, and developed a culture where these staff are an integral part of the team. The results have been to the advantage of the school, the students and the support staff.

The kura employs four kaiarahi i te reo, whose roles are primarily to support the quality of language spoken in the classroom by the teachers and students, and one kai tautoko, a special needs teacher aide. Although the way that Te Kura Māori o Ngā Tapuwāe is organised is based on Māori tikanga and values, many of the lessons they have learnt are applicable to all schools.

Guiding principles

The vision of Ngā Tapuwāe is for the students to achieve and to be strong in their Māori identity. To accomplish that, everything the kura does is geared towards teaching and learning. But not all teaching and learning occurs in the classroom. The tumuaki states, “We know that the more children participate in a range of things like sport, kapa haka and other cultural events, the more connected they are to their school and community, the better they are likely to do academically.”

The success of students also depends on the involvement of whānau. When they enrol their child at Ngā Tapuwāe, whānau commit to a contract to attend monthly whānau hui. People who do not attend are followed up and reminded. Whānau are expected to support their children and all school activities—and they do.

Ngā Tapuwāe relies on both teachers and support staff to put these principles into action. All support staff are expected to attend all school meetings, and all kaiarahi i te reo are expected to do all teaching and learning professional development. This ensures that all kura staff participate in all behaviour management discussions and standards of the kura to ensure a united front to all pastoral care systems, with everyone ‘singing from the same song sheet’.

Designing jobs that work

The core elements of each of the kaiarahi i te reo and the kai tautoko roles are similar. Their job descriptions clearly state that they are to “support teachers in the classroom by helping individual students with the lesson or a specific programme”. This is followed by a range of possible roles and responsibilities that are to be negotiated depending on the needs of the students and the teachers and the skills of the staff.

The kaiarahi i te reo role goes outside the classroom as well. One of the kaiarahi i te reo comments, “There are huge benefits for the kids in having two adults in the classroom; but it is more than this—we are part of all events, such as whānau hui and report evenings with parents.”

In addition to their core language role (all have at least a diploma in te reo Māori), each kaiarahi i te reo has other specific responsibilities—all of which have taken ‘extra’ tasks off the teachers or whānau that are crucial to the kaupapa of the school. This has made tasks such as applying for grants, having a well organised system for sports uniforms, and organising and directing kapa haka practice, visible as contributors to learning. It makes more space for teachers to focus on teaching. All of these tasks are considered ‘core business’ for the school. As they involve time out of school hours—after school or at weekends—this time is credited so that staff can be paid in the school holidays.

The kura deliberately provides for overlaps between roles in the school, including the support staff. This helps them manage the risks and ensure stability for the students in their learning when people leave or are absent. All of the kaiarahi i te reo hold Limited Authority to Teach (LAT), which allows them to cover teachers’ absences. Finding relief teachers in a rumaki reo setting is always difficult, so the ability to use kaiarahi i te reo who are familiar to the students is invaluable. Although the core of the four roles is similar, each job holder has additional responsibilities which play to their strengths.

Getting the right people

Having staff who understand and value the kura and the community makes their jobs much easier. The kura has deliberately looked first to former students and people in the local community when recruiting. As one support staff member commented, “We are support staff—but we are also mums and nanas in the kura.”

The tumuaki has fostered in the kura an approach to ‘growing’ their own staff—looking for promising volunteers, providing development opportunities and encouraging students to train as teachers or take up paid positions. The result has been a group of skilled, committed support staff, many of whom have tertiary qualifications.

The tumuaki, and other staff, are always ‘on the lookout’ for talented volunteers, senior pupils and whānau who can step into paid roles or for existing staff who may be able to further develop their careers. The tumuaki calls it ‘succession thinking’.

Getting off to a good start

The kura recognises that for the kaiarahi i te reo to contribute fully, both they and the teachers they work with need to know what is expected of them and how to best utilise this resource. To help, clear guidelines have been

developed for teachers on working effectively with their kaiarahi i te reo. Teachers are encouraged to formally negotiate and document expectations, share their approach to managing their classroom, have regular timetabled meetings to review progress and to work with the kaiarahi i te reo to foster students’ independent learning. As the deputy principal said, “The most important part of using the kaiarahi i te reo is the way teachers involve them in the classroom programme and how they communicate with them.”

Expectations of the kaiarahi i te reo are also spelt out, with guidance on their role and responsibilities, what to do if there are behaviour issues, strategies for effective one-to-one teaching, guidance on how they can contribute to students’ individual education plans and who they can go to if they have a problem.

Ongoing support and feedback

The kura has found that all staff, including support staff, can operate most effectively when they have access to regular and ongoing feedback. The kura has designed a performance management system where people know where they stand and expect observation, feedback and regular meetings with their manager or classroom teacher. It is a continuous, transparent and well documented process.



Building skills and confidence

All kura staff are expected to undertake professional development. This involves not only opportunities to grow in their role but also to expand further. The commitment to this for kaiarahi i te reo is clearly stated in all relevant job descriptions and guidelines. “Each kaiarahi i te reo will have the opportunity to access training and to self reflect. The kaiarahi i te reo will take on the responsibility of establishing personal professional goals and receive feedback from peers, class teachers and the person with the key responsibility for the professional development of kaiarahi i te reo.”

Each Monday the kura closes at 2.30pm and the time is dedicated to professional development. This can be focused on curriculum, systems, ICT or relationships. Every fortnight the focus of professional development is strongly associated with the teaching of te reo Māori. Whatever professional development is available to teaching staff is available to support staff, in particular kaiarahi i te reo.

Recognising and supporting the value of support staff

There is no doubt that the teachers value and respect the support staff. They acknowledge the direct impact on learning that the kaiarahi i te reo have in the classroom—including the support they offer to new teachers who may not have as high a level of te reo competence. The support staff believe it goes wider. One commented, “You can tell this is a place of respect by the way the kids and their whānau speak to you.” This makes a difference. One support staff member, when describing why she does the job, was clear, “It’s not the money, it is definitely the people.”

This has been led from the top, by the vision and practice of the tumuaki. Twice weekly staff briefings are just that—for all staff. The overall result is a team of support staff who give wholeheartedly to the school and the students. As another support staff member put it, “I would not trade this job for anything.”

Documentation you might find useful:

- Job description for kaiarahi i te reo/tautoko
- Kaiarahi i te reo/tautoko and relieving kaiarahi i te reo/tautoko confidentiality agreement
- Guide to kaiarahi i te reo/tautoko working in class
- Teachers’ guide to kaiarahi i te reo/tautoko working in class
- Performance appraisal guidelines for kaiarahi i te reo/awhina/tautoko

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Te Kura Māori o Ngā Tapuwae is a kura-a-iwi that co-exists with Southern Cross Campus on one site in Mangere East, Auckland. The kura has about 300 students, whilst the Southern Cross College and Junior School as a whole have 1,400 students.

The kura, along with the other two schools on the campus, has a principal and a corporate commitment to shared or common areas. These principals and directors meet weekly and manage the strategic decision making in conjunction with the Board of Trustees.

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