

# ‘He Taonga nga Reo Katoa- All Languages are to be Treasured!’

(Primary Principals’ Sabbatical Inquiry 2019)

**Sabbatical Focus:** The author has a vested interest in languages having learnt Spanish whilst living in Argentina. He returned to New Zealand and implemented a ‘Learning Languages’ programme to the senior area of a large Canterbury primary school in the late 90’s. Having identified and discussed with a number of colleagues the notion that currently the feeling is our ‘localised curriculums’ are crowded, the author wanted to scrutinize the teaching of ‘International’ languages within local schools and what obstacles there may be that could hinder the successful facilitation of this important teaching and learning opportunity.

**Sabbatical Period:** Term 2 2019

**Author:** Andrew Kemp- Broomfield School

**Acknowledgements:** To begin, I would like to both acknowledge & thank the Broomfield School Board of Trustees for their positive support in my application for the sabbatical and approving my leave.

I would also like to express my gratitude and congratulate my Deputy Principal, Heidi Moeller for her positive enthusiasm and successes gained in taking on the responsibilities associated with principalship during my absence!

Lastly, I would like to thank the Ministry of Education for proffering this worthwhile rejuvenating opportunity that I believe all Principals should experience and take advantage of when able.

**Purpose:** The purpose of my ‘Languages’ focussed sabbatical was to investigate whether schools in the Canterbury and North Canterbury regions are offering their student’s the opportunity to learn a second language (international) that would help to support student engagement and promote learning and achievement.

**Methodology:** In the weeks leading up to the sabbatical period, I constructed/ developed a survey with questions that focussed on the following: School Decile Rating, School Type (Full Primary, Contributing, Intermediate or Area school), If the school taught a second language or not, Whether learning an international language was specifically timetabled at the school, If it is important for their school’s Year 7 & 8 students to learn an international language or not, If their Year 7 & 8 student’s were offered a language to learn, if so was it German, French, Spanish, Mandarin, Cantonese, Japanese, Italian, Samoan, Niue, Tongan Tokelau or other, what resources/ supporting documents the schools use e.g. ‘Si-An Introduction to Spanish’, Staff prior knowledge and or skill base in teaching languages, Community input regarding what languages are taught, specific barriers to including this within localised curriculums and whether the schools would like PLD support to help aid in the teaching of international languages. A total of 59 schools across both Canterbury and North Canterbury answered the provided survey.

## Key Findings Summary:

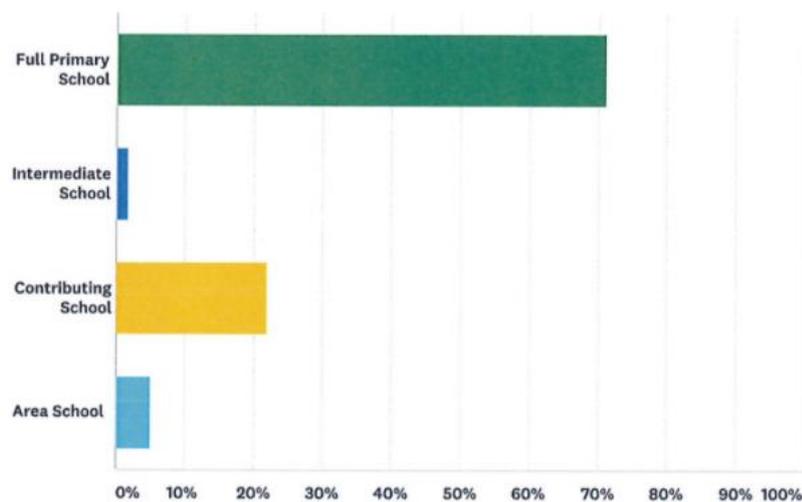
My key findings from the 'Survey Monkey Questionnaire' are as follows:

- Of the 59 schools who responded, 12% were Decile 1-3, 34% identified as Decile 6-7 & 47% as Decile 8-10. A small number of schools answered as: 'Independent' or 'Private'.
- The school's U Rating make-up who were surveyed and answered this question are as follows:
  - U1-U3 26%
  - U4-U6 58%
  - U7-U12 10%

Below illustrates the make-up of the school type that were involved in the study.

### Q4 Is your school a Full primary, Contributing, Intermediate or Area School?

Answered: 59 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Full Primary School	71.19%	42
Intermediate School	1.69%	1
Contributing School	22.03%	13
Area School	5.08%	3
TOTAL		59

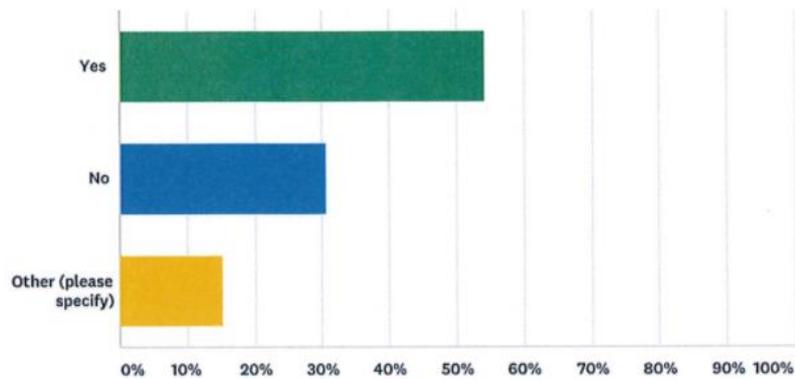
The category named below as 'Other', included answers such as: *Maori* and '*Sign language*'.

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### Q5 Does your school teach a second language (International)?

Answered: 59 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Yes	54.24% 32
No	30.51% 18
Other (please specify)	15.25% 9
TOTAL	59

A question was asked: 'Is learning an *International Language* specifically timetabled throughout the school year. It was an even split 50% answered yes and 50% no.

Schools were also asked if they thought that it was important for their year 7 & 8 students to learn an international language. 58% responded yes, 7% shared that they would like Te reo Maori taught first and then another language.

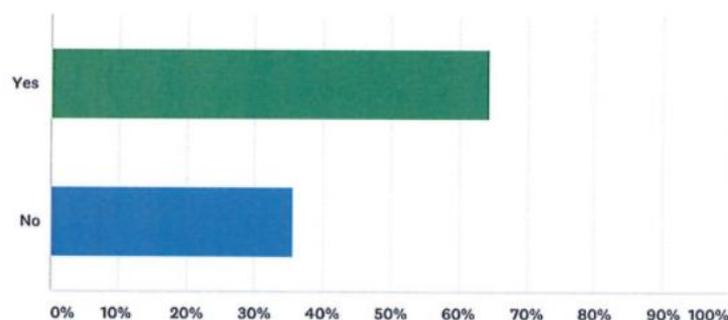
The question below was set to identify whether schools were carrying out their obligation to teach a second language at the Year 7 & 8 level.

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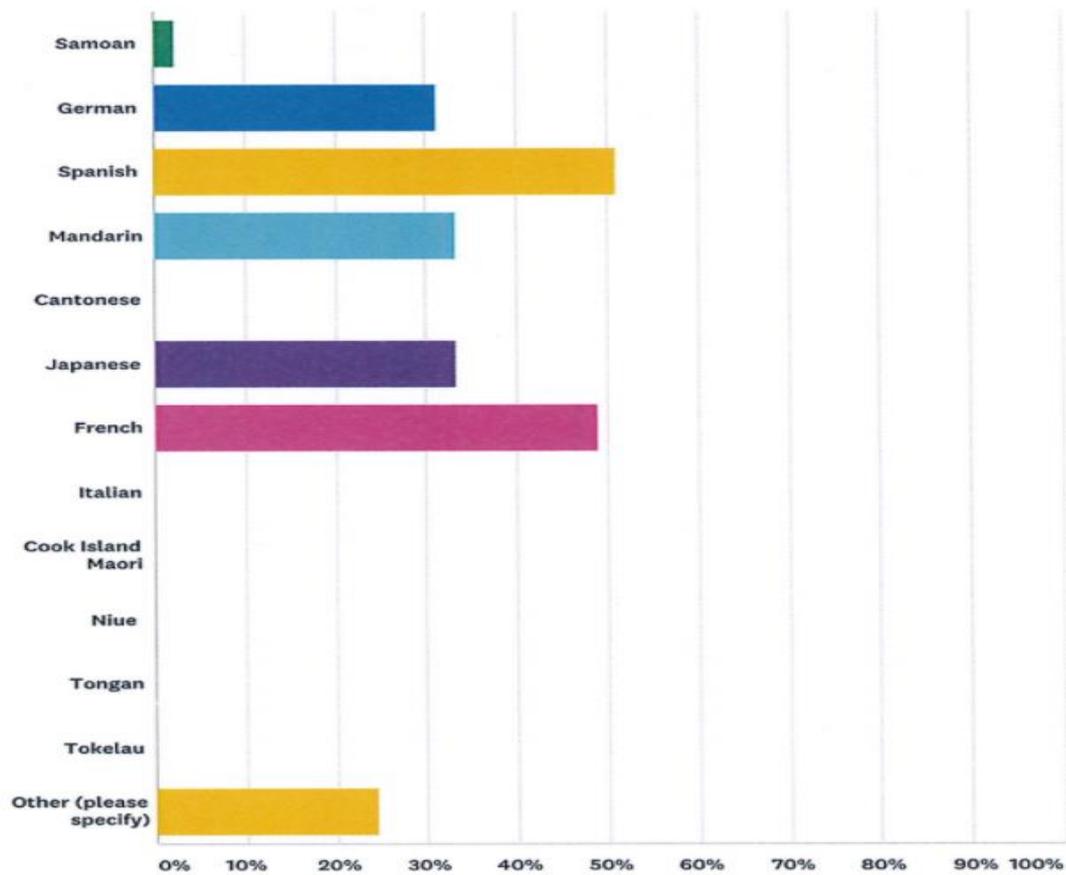
### Q8 Is this offered to all Year 7 & 8 students?

Answered: 59 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Yes	64.41% 38
No	35.59% 21
TOTAL	59

The following graph illustrates the various languages that are being taught across the schools.



- A number of schools shown above offer a range of languages
- Within the 'Other' category, Te Reo was the language of choice for 2 schools, Tagalog, Nepali and Sign Language were shared as well

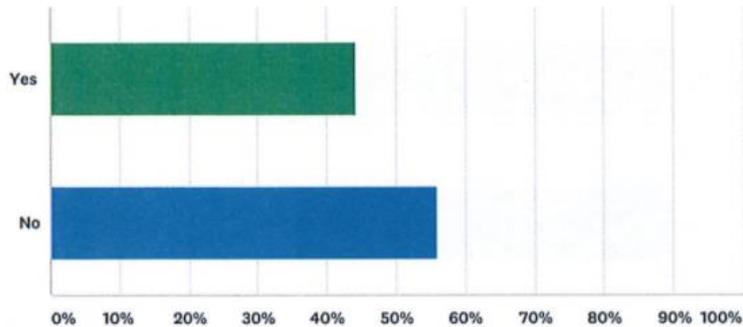
The chart below shows the use of NZC supporting documents across the surveyed schools.

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### Q10 Does your school utilise the available NZC second language supporting documents such as 'Si An introduction to Spanish?

Answered: 59 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	44.07%	26
No	55.93%	33
TOTAL		59

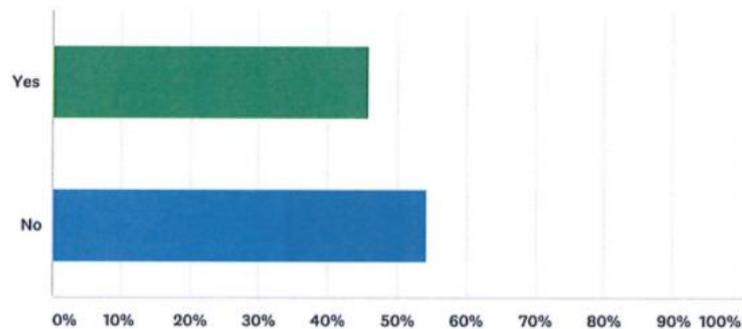
The next graph shares the prior knowledge/ expertise that teachers have in facilitating the teaching and learning of their chosen language.

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### Q11 Do the teaching staff have prior knowledge/ background/ experience with the language they are teaching?

Answered: 59 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	45.76%	27
No	54.24%	32
TOTAL		59

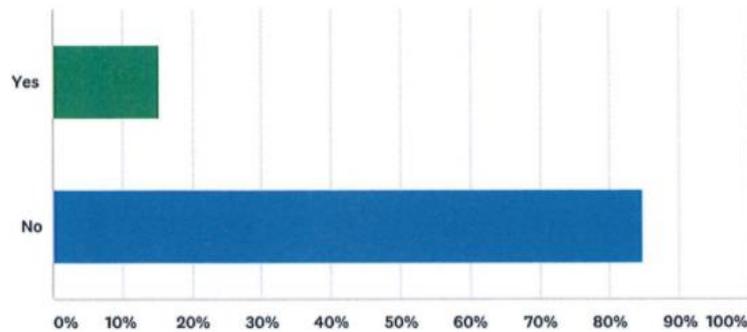
Question 12 focussed on the ‘Community Input’ if any with regard to the selection & choice of language offered.

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### Q12 Does your community have input regarding the selection/ choice of the language/s offered?

Answered: 59 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	15.25%	9
No	84.75%	50
TOTAL		59

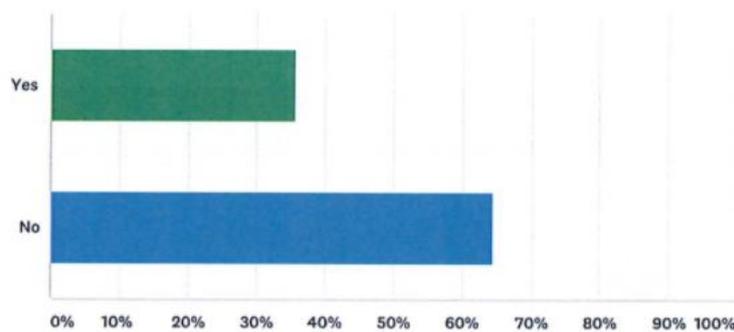
The following illustration shares whether the school/ teacher facilitating the programme would like PLD support for the teaching of their international language.

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### Q15 Would you like PLD support for the teaching of international languages through your Kahui Ako?

Answered: 59 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	35.59%	21
No	64.41%	38
TOTAL		59

## Conclusion & Future Implications:

The data shared above, illustrates that from the schools surveyed:

1. Just over 50% of the schools teach a second language
2. Approximately 65% of the schools teach an international language to their Year 7 & 8 cohorts
3. Both French and Spanish are the clear preferred language choices that schools offer to their student's
4. Less than half of the schools utilise the NZC resources that are on offer to support the teaching of other languages
5. Less than 50% of the schools/ staff answered that they had any experience or prior knowledge regarding the teaching of their particular language on offer
6. There is very little community involvement regarding the selection of languages taught at schools

A future point of interest would be to compare whether a school's 'Decile' or 'U' rating correlated to their ability/ inability to offer and teach an international language. A previous NEMP report in 2016 indicated that, 'Principals of high decile schools were more likely than those of low or mid decile schools to indicate all their Year 8 students have opportunities to learn an international language'. (NEMP Summary 'Learning Languages', 2016)

I believe that The NZ Curriculum shares quite clearly and fittingly, the need for schools to both offer and teach other languages to their tamariki because: 'Languages link people locally and globally. They are spoken in the community, used internationally, and play a role in shaping the world. Oral, written, and visual forms of language link us to the past and give us access to new and different streams of thought and to beliefs and cultural practices. By learning an additional language and its related culture(s), students come to appreciate that languages and cultures are systems that are organised and used in particular ways to achieve meaning. Learning a new language extends students' linguistic and cultural understanding and their ability to interact appropriately with other speakers. Interaction in a new language, whether face to face or technologically facilitated, introduces them to new ways of thinking about, questioning, and interpreting the world and their place in it. Through such interaction, students acquire knowledge, skills, and attitudes that equip them for living in a world of diverse peoples, languages, and cultures. As they move between, and respond to, different languages and different cultural practices, they are challenged to consider their own identities and assumptions. As they learn a language, students develop their understanding of the power of language. They discover new ways of learning, new ways of knowing, and more about their own capabilities. Learning a language provides students with the cognitive tools and strategies to learn further languages and to increase their understanding of their own language(s) and culture(s). (The New Zealand Curriculum, 2007 pg24)

The Eton Institute shares the following positive benefits with regard to learning a foreign language: Boosts Brain Power, Improves Memory, Enhances the Ability to Multi-Task, Sharpens the Mind, Enhances Decision Making, The First Language is Improved, Improves Performance in Other Academic Areas, Increases Networking Skills & Provides Better Career Choices too. Having learned another language myself *Spanish*, I can certainly attest to a number of the shared positive outcomes.

Speaking to a number of colleagues during my sabbatical, it was often shared and stated that we now have particularly ‘*Crowded*’ localised curricula making it harder to both offer and facilitate the teaching of another language. ‘It’s just another demand that eats away at the limited time we have to teach!’

To conclude, I believe that moving forward we need to make the time to plan, offer and implement international language programmes using high-interest resources that are already available to us. We also need to involve the community and students when making decisions about what languages we are going to provide and learn. Professional development for our kaiako is absolutely essential and an area that the Ministry of Education needs to look at very closely and support to achieve the best results moving forward.

### **References:**

- ‘NEMP’ *‘Summary of results from the 2016 National Monitoring Study of Student Achievement for teachers and principals’*
  - The New Zealand Curriculum 2007
  - Spanish in the NZ Curriculum 1995
  - Top 10 benefits of learning a Foreign Language- Eton Institute
  - Fluent Forever- How to Learn Any Language Fast and Never Forget it- Gabriel Wyner 2014
  - ¡Sí! An introduction to Spanish – Language Resource
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