

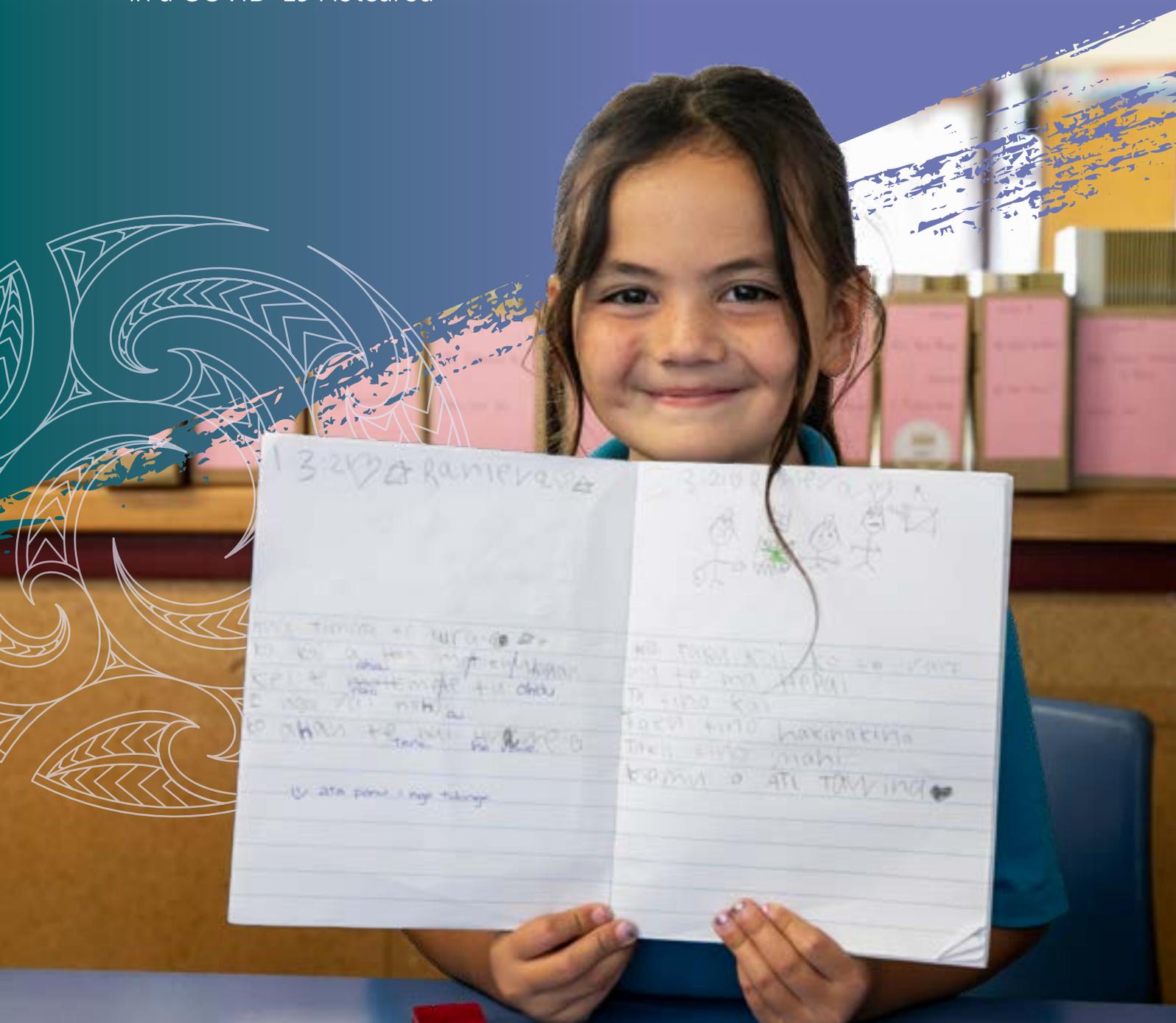


He Iho Ruruku

"The innate commitment that binds us, our connection and relationship to each other"

Te Aho Matua perspectives

Māori medium – Learning to learn, learning to live
in a COVID-19 Aotearoa



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 ākonga 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.

He Iho Ruruku 2021: Te Aho Matua Kura Kaupapa Māori perspective

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Kupu whakataki

Introduction

Whakatauāki

“He iho mauri tū, ka tina ki runga
He iho mauri ora, ka tāmōre ki raro
Whītiki rukutia
Ka puta ki te whai ao
Ki te ao mārama.”¹

In March 2020, the onset of COVID-19 caused major disruptions to key services in Aotearoa including the compulsory education sector. Māori medium education faced multiple complex challenges, and given the abruptness of the situation, tumuaki, kaiako and whānau whakahaere had to quickly prepare whānau and learners for a new mode of online learning. Tumuaki and kaiako responded well, given the limited time and resources available for distribution. Whanaungatanga was at the heart of their approach, working closely with their community to ensure whānau and learners had what they needed, to begin learning from home.

Despite a ‘digital divide’ and lack of other resources that learners would normally need, tumuaki and kaiako reported a rise in learner and whānau engagement in online learning. In December 2020, the Education Review Office (ERO) released *Te Kahu Whakahaumarū*. The focus of this report was on the wellbeing of mokopuna, tamariki, kaimahi, kaiako, and leaders involved in Māori medium education. Of significance was the strength of the kura and their communities to successfully navigate a difficult landscape.

In August 2021, Aotearoa went back into lockdown with the emergence of COVID-19 once again in the community. This report explores the perspectives of Te Runanganui o Ngā Kura Kaupapa Māori (TRN), tumuaki, kaiako, whānau whakahaere and whānau who had just six hours to prepare, organise and manage the distribution of hard packs, and devices in the lead-up to the country’s second lockdown.

1. The essence of care is to nurture the life force of others. The essence of wellbeing, binds and strengthens the collective. Our existence becomes clearer.

Why did we do this research?

Te Kahu Whakahaumarū provided major insights into the way Māori medium leaders worked through COVID-19, 2020.

He Iho Ruruku, is a longitudinal inquiry that focuses on the second wave of COVID-19, 2021, the Delta variant. This research is the first phase of this study which began in September 2021. It looks at the response of Te Aho Matua Kura Kaupapa tumuaki, kaiako, whānau and learners as they return to the provision of education online. This approach supported them to maintain working together while ensuring they upheld their kaupapa throughout this alternative teaching and learning environment.

ERO sought to better understand how and what Māori medium leaders and whānau do to support their communities. Te Aho Matua Kura Kaupapa Māori kura, worked in collaboration with ERO to ensure our evaluation insights reflect te ao Māori and demonstrate how their communities, use their collective strengths to support learning through COVID, influencing outcomes that benefit Māori.

The lessons learnt from the previous COVID-19 lockdown influence the tumuaki and whānau whakahaere as they consider the wellbeing of students, kaiako and whānau. This work will look at the transition of students to online learning and eventually back to kura with the scaling down of alert levels by the Ministry of Health (MoH).

Horopaki: The context for evaluation

ERO acknowledges the 11 kura that participated in the first phase of this research and the support from Te Rūnanganui o Ngā Kura Kaupapa Māori (TRN), the peak body for the collective of Ngā Kura Kaupapa Māori o Te Aho Matua. They are committed to the mātāpono as defined within the wāhanga of Te Aho Matua (TAM) which are broadly represented here as:

- Te Tino Uaratanga – long term student outcomes
- Te Ira Tangata – physical, spiritual and emotional well-being
- Ngā Iwi – ancestral links and hopes and aspirations of whānau, hapū and iwi
- Te Ao – contemporary and traditional views of te ao Māori, the wider and physical and natural worlds
- Āhuatanga ako – intellectually stimulating environments conducive to learning

The lessons from 2020

Te Kahu Whakahaumarū found that the Māori medium education paradigm was integral to providing authentic spaces for young learners, their whānau, hapū and iwi to interact; to feel innately and intrinsically connected; to have their holistic wellbeing acknowledged and cared for; to develop their linguistic and cultural capabilities and to be engaged, creative, and excited learners who can stand confidently and as Māori in this ever-changing world².

Discussions with tumuaki and kaiako revealed that the experiences of 2020 had strengthened their ability to innovate and adapt quickly to the unique challenges of COVID-19.

Tumuaki and leaders felt that supporting learners and whānau through the lockdowns of 2020 provided opportunities to learn and prepare for the inevitable second wave of COVID-19 in 2021. During 2021, all kura maintained a clear focus on wellbeing and whānau engagement, as they come to understand the impact of the exhaustion and fatigue experienced during 2020.

Generally, leaders noted a quicker response from support services during 2020 lockdowns than in 2021. It appeared as if the overall range of service providers had become limited and response times seemed much slower. This impacted upon whānau who were already struggling. All kura shared stories of how they responded to whānau in need and sourced a range of supports, such as kai and basic living needs. They were actively involved in seeking bespoke responses.

Forced kura closures illuminated the gaps. For all tumuaki, the lack of appropriate learning resources and the lack of access to devices was an ongoing concern. Nevertheless, the can-do approach prevailed.



2. Te Kahu Whakahaumarū, (ERO, 2021). Retrieved from: [Te Kahu Whakahaumarū – Ngā mahi a te rangai mātauranga Māori \(English\) | Education Review Office \(ero.govt.nz\)](https://www.ero.govt.nz/maori-medium/te-kahu-whakahaumaru-ngā-mahi-a-te-rangai-mātauranga-māori)

This experience meant most tumuaki and leaders were prepared for taking sole responsibility of the provision of devices and resources to support learners as needed. Tumuaki used a range of funds and other sources of finance to purchase appropriate equipment.



The adaptability and flexibility of kaiako was tested in 2020 as the immediate shift towards online learning created immense challenges. At that time, a majority of kaiako lacked the knowledge and experience to teach online. Kaiako learned technical skills in 2020 that would go on to prepare them well for implementing online learning in 2021.



As 2021 progressed, it became clear that kaiako and whānau had developed the necessary ‘knowledge’, to confidently use technology and online tools to support student learning.

Kura adapted learning programmes to meet the needs of different students across each year group. Teina attended Zoom learning opportunities in the mornings, and their hard-pack learning resources provided shared learning times with whānau in the afternoon. Wharekura students often attended Zoom classes in the afternoons, evenings or had weekend wānanga as kaiako understood the change in rangatahi sleep patterns and commitments when home.

3. The train (metaphor used for COVID-19) that is coming cannot be stopped.

Ngā Kitenga

Findings

Influence of COVID-19 2020 on current roles and responsibilities

Tumuaki and leaders were mindful of the lessons learnt in 2020 around wellbeing, and it remained a key focus during the 2021 lockdowns. Tumuaki closely monitored the directives from the Ministry of Education (MoE) and maintained a strong focus on remaining connected to students, kaiako and whānau.

There was an element of familiarity with government processes amongst tumuaki and kura leaders which created greater ease. Tumuaki were a central point of support for students, staff and whānau. Our findings in this area continue to highlight that leaders in Te Aho Matua education identify their success as being reliant upon the strength and unity of the collective.

“Ehara i te tiaki tamariki noa iho, ko ngā whānau hāpori hoki.”⁴

**TUMUAKI
VOICE**

Tumuaki and whānau whakahaere worked together to support kaimahi and the wider community, while kaiako were left to manage wellbeing, teaching, and learning for tamariki and their whānau. Kura report that this reduced stress and shared the workload across the kura. In the Far North, community groups were established with members from different agencies and organisations to better coordinate support services – kura tumuaki were key members in these groups.

The primary goal for kura was to find ways to support continued learning through COVID-19, whilst empowering whānau to decide what this looked like on their terms.

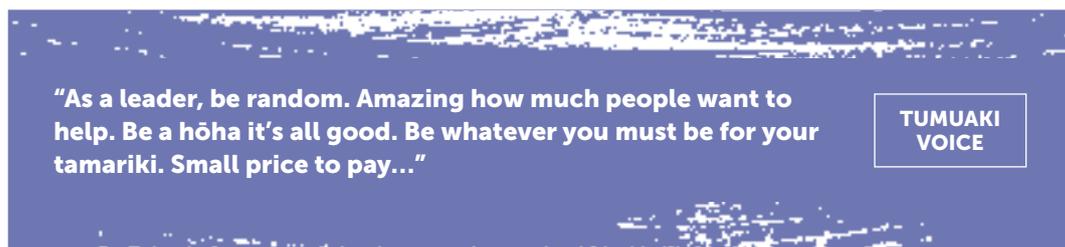
4. It's not just about caring for children but rather their whānau and the wider community.

Leadership

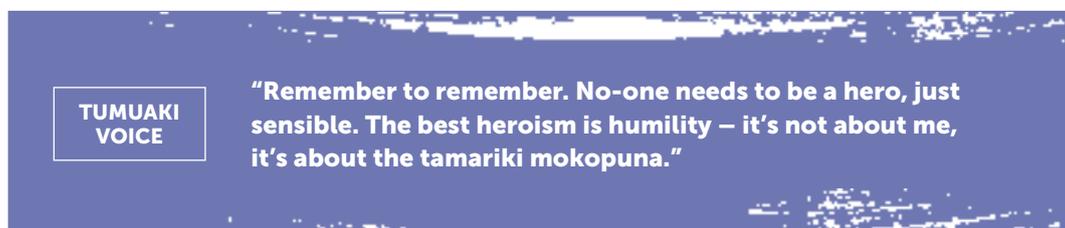
ERO's research continues to highlight that tumuaki are pivotal to the success of positive outcomes for tamariki, whānau, kaiako, kaimahi and the wider community. All tumuaki acknowledged that kura leadership was vital to providing guidance and advocacy.

The wider community looked to the kura for leadership and coordination. Tumuaki and other kura leaders understood that their roles included providing clear and frequent communication, strong leadership across a range of kaupapa and guidance for whānau. The focus for tumuaki and other leaders was around settling the wairua of uri, kaimahi and whānau, and to be united in their approach and care for each other. Relationships and connections remain paramount.

Tumuaki often became advocates for the community, negotiating with agencies and support services for assistance when needed. They acknowledged the importance of networking and remaining flexible in their approach so that diverse types of support could be accessed for whānau. Some tumuaki stated they felt a sense of urgency as they sought to ensure tamariki and whānau could access what they needed.



Throughout the interviews, tumuaki and kura leaders articulated and displayed characteristics heavily influenced by the teachings of Te Aho Matua. COVID-19 experiences highlighted visionary and strategic thinkers whose central focus was on the wellbeing and rights of their communities to have equitable access to resources. Despite facing continued challenges, they remain deeply committed, proactive and responsive to their whānau and communities. A tumuaki stated:



Communication

Past experiences showed how important communication was. The sheer amount of information and misinformation in 2020 was something to be avoided. Having one point of communication, often the tumuaki, was viewed as more favourable to reassure and build trust amongst whānau. It also served as a single point of contact and information for whānau. In almost all communities, the kura was viewed as the hub to provide clarity and unity. When talking to the range of tumuaki, communication strategies were planned to keep everyone well informed. These included:

- Facebook pages
- Zoom
- Dojo
- Video recordings of daily updates
- Google classrooms
- Texting
- Emails
- YouTube

These modes of communication ensured tumuaki remained connected to whānau. It was also an opportunity to communicate the latest developments, changes and strategies released by the Prime Minister and Secretary for Education, and to determine what that would mean for kura.

“It was an opportunity for the tamariki and whānau to hear from the tumuaki... Whānau were more settled this time and tended to be more attentive... understanding more about what was going on.”

TUMUAKI
VOICE



Wellbeing of staff

A majority of tumuaki noted a different wairua across the kura in 2021, as kaimahi and whānau had settled into a new way of working. Generally, kaimahi were at ease and experienced less pressure because the *change* had become the 'new norm'. In some kura, kaimahi were scared and tired from their efforts in 2020 and needed additional support from tumuaki and the whānau whakahaere to refresh and support their wellbeing.

Learning about exhaustion and fatigue in 2020, tumuaki ensured kaiako focused on their own whānau first and then tended to the needs of their students. All tumuaki were very mindful of the additional pressure for kaiako who had young children at home and made allowances for this.

All tumuaki are fully committed to their communities and work tirelessly to support them. Their concern was for others and not themselves. As a result, one worrying trend was of tumuaki working to support the community at the detriment of their own wellbeing. This was an area for whānau whakahaere to monitor to prevent burnout and exhaustion of tumuaki in the future.

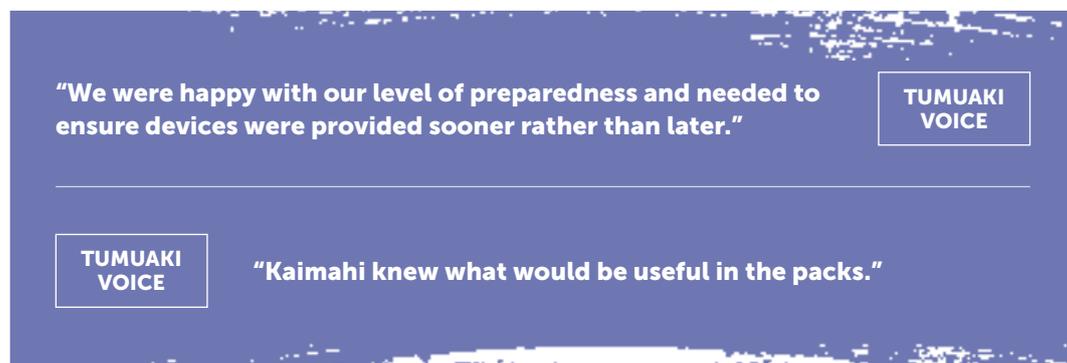
Tumuaki felt well supported by both the TRN forums and Kura Kaupapa Māori tumuaki forums. They reported that these connections enhanced their wellbeing and provided much needed collegiality, alongside peer advice and guidance.

Teaching and Learning

ERO found that much of the groundwork for teaching and learning was laid in 2020. Kaiako were able to rise above the experienced levels of stress, frustrations and anxiety and turn these into opportunities. A general comment from all tumuaki was that kaiako had anticipated further lockdowns and felt more prepared.

They were able to prepare learning packs in advance that were appropriate for students' learning needs and to ensure access to ample devices. As a Te Aho Matua collective, a support network of kaiako was created. They established platforms to share resources, support each other and to share tamariki learning. Some leaders noted a shift in kaiako mindset from using technology as a delivery tool to engaging and connecting with one another professionally.

The local kaitiaki of TRN would check in daily with tumuaki to offer support and assistance. Most tumuaki felt well prepared due to the collective efforts of the range of established networks:



"We were happy with our level of preparedness and needed to ensure devices were provided sooner rather than later."

TUMUAKI VOICE

TUMUAKI VOICE

"Kaimahi knew what would be useful in the packs."

Some tumuaki commented on how they used kaiako reflections from the previous lockdown to prepare for online teaching. They were able to assess the potential impacts of an overload of online learning and balance these with snippets of hard-pack learning and experiential learning that tamariki could do with whānau, such as gardening, artwork, cooking and construction.

“We were ready to deliver online learning from Day One of the lockdown.”

KAIAKO VOICE

LEADER VOICE

“It was better to keep ‘lessons’ shorter and sharper rather than to just persevere.”

The sample group clearly showed that isolated kura in remote rural regions, were less likely to have the same positive experiences. Internet connection and access to learning devices remained major issues. One tumuaki identified that tamariki were working late at night because that was the only time they could access devices and workspaces in the home. Connectivity was an issue for many whānau for a range of reasons. For whānau this was due to sharing devices across the household or lack of reliable internet connection.⁵



5. Participant schools stated that 57% of devices in the home were shared amongst whānau members.

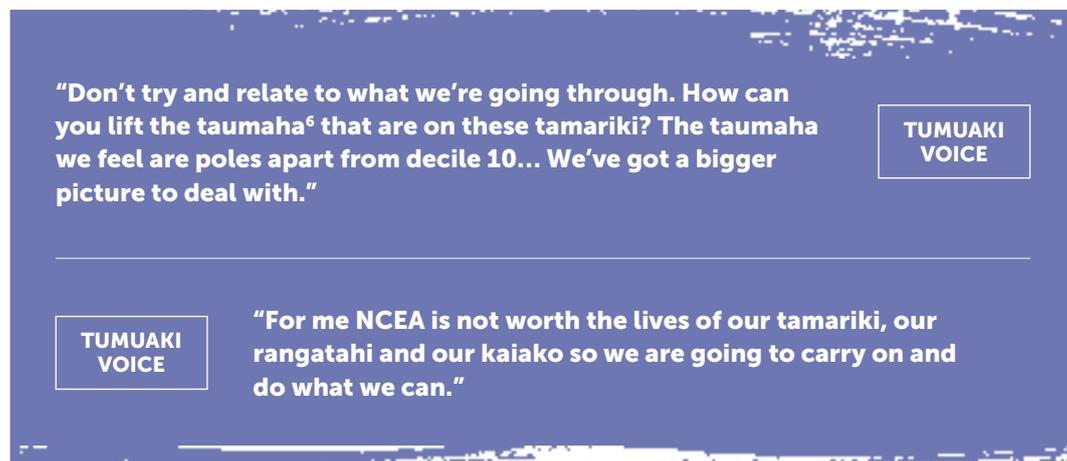
Wharekura Students

ERO identified that there were various views around the provision of online education for students at wharekura level. For kura who had limited access to devices, what they did have were allocated to the wharekura and kura takawaenga. Some kura were ready to deliver online as soon as they went into lockdown. Some kaiako identified that the best approach was to have one day of the week devoted to each different marau and these should be limited to between 30 – 60 minutes only. Some wharekura students were given the opportunity to self-manage their learning. Most engaged with kaiako but not until later in the evening, meaning that kaiako had to be on-call and flexible.

While online worked for some students, it did not work for all students. Several concerns were identified when it came to the older students. These included:

- Lack of motivation
- Students harder to engage during 2021 – especially after multiple back-to-back lockdowns
- The pressure of NCEA on students
- Lack of attendance in online classes
- Issues around depression (pre-COVID-19) exacerbated by the pandemic
- Less motivation to pursue their previous goals of attending university

Tumuaki worked with New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) to ensure assessment was equitable and fair for students. One tumuaki shared their interactions with NZQA:



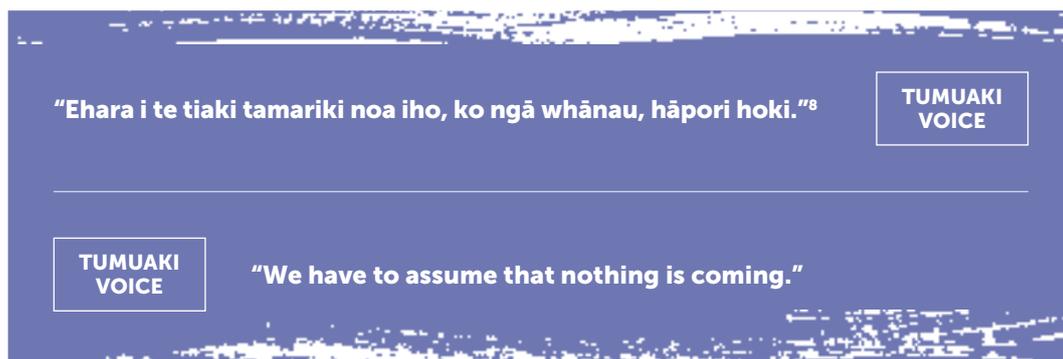
6. Burden, the weight.

Kura as a central support hub for the community

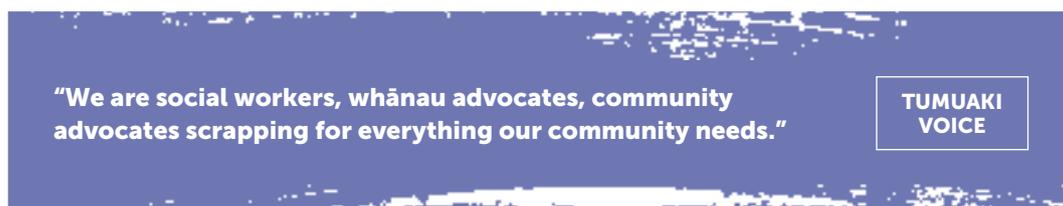
While most kura became self-managing in terms of online teaching and resource management, tumuaki and kura leaders were facing the social realities of many of their whānau members. Kura staff in most cases became the conduits between whānau and support services.



In 2020, homelessness and cases of poverty were exposed. It appears that for some urban and rural kura this trend became worse in 2021.



In most communities the kura became the sole support service. Close whakapapa connections enabled kura leaders to determine the whānau most in need and respond in a timely manner. Iwi initiatives clearly had an impact on the provision of kai and essential goods for many whānau. One kura put aside a sizeable fund for the sole purpose of providing much needed kai for their communities. Most tumuaki explained that supporting whānau and the wider community with wrap-around services would in turn benefit their tamariki. This meant that assistance was more accessible for whānau and the wider hapori, which was critical as social factors such as whakamā⁹ meant they did not engage with other government supports. For these whānau, the kura provided a safe avenue to receive support.



7. Embarrassment, shame, humiliation.

8. It is not only caring for the children, but rather their whānau and the wider community.

9. Embarrassment, shame, humiliation.

**TUMUAKI
VOICE**

“The main thing is knowing your tamariki and the needs of your community.”

The tumuaki of an isolated kura stated:

“In 2020 a range of providers made themselves available to support whānau with food and health packs... however in 2021, no providers came.”

**TUMUAKI
VOICE**

Transitions

All kura took a proactive approach and planned for both eventualities of online distance learning and in-class learning in 2021. This allowed students to make smooth transitions between lockdowns and eventually returning to kura.

For all tumuaki and kura leaders, the focus was on settling tamariki back into familiar routines and the kura environment. A range of strategies were used by kaiako and the kura whānau to support tamariki to self-settle. This included being able to reconnect and spend time together, as they had missed each other during the lockdown periods.

Karakia was consistent during lockdown and continued when tamariki returned to kura. This helped whānau to remain engaged and to support them spiritually. The emphasis was on uplifting the whānau physically, spiritually and mentally. The focus for all tumuaki was on the wellbeing of students and allowing them time to reconnect and celebrate with each other.

“When the level changed to 2, a big ceremony to lift the heaviness from the kura and whānau was held. Whānau who lost loved ones were celebrated at this ceremony as well.”

**TUMUAKI
VOICE****TUMUAKI
VOICE**

“We were more about settling the tamariki and not focused on academic results or timetables... tamariki were encouraged to play, draw and run around outside.”

In most cases, tumuaki reported that the transition of tamariki back to kura was smooth and effortless. One tumuaki implemented a gradual return to kura. Wharekura students were encouraged to continue to learn from home while the teina returned to kura. This worked as they had devices and could self-manage at home. Overall, tamariki were eager to return to kura.

Mandatory Vaccinations

All tumuaki and whānau were steadfast in their commitment to protecting tamariki. Vaccination was seen as a collective responsibility.



While most kaiako supported vaccination targets, a very small number were wary of the mandate and did not want to be vaccinated at the time of this research. Tumuaiki took this in their stride and supported kaiako, students and whānau by providing opportunities to discuss their information and concerns. While tumuaki were non-negotiable about the government mandate there was a focus on moving forward in a way which mana was protected.

Generally, tumuaki supported the whole kura vaccinated – including kaimahi and students aged 12 years and older. In a large majority of kura, tumuaki were discussing how to get a 100% vaccination rate for whānau, with the focus being on protecting whakapapa.



A small number of kura had up to 20 percent of staff who remained unvaccinated. For these kura, staffing was a part of the discussion on how to progress in a space where staffing was already difficult. Some tumuaki shared the growing angst and division in the community due to vaccination status. Kura are working hard to remain neutral, welcoming of all whānau and remaining a place where tikanga and mana was upheld during such challenging times.

10. "My victory is not my own but belongs to the collective, through collaboration, anything is possible". This quote reinforces the difference of rights according to te ao Māori and Pākehā in having a collective view.

The general themes regarding vaccinations include:

- 100% vaccination of staff
- proactive endorsement of the vaccination
- that the kura will assist in the education of the whānau and support them to become vaccinated
- an understanding that there are a range of beliefs, thoughts, and perspectives amongst the wider whānau that may be barriers
- that kura are not supportive of a divisive approach between vaccinated and non-vaccinated
- that there was a lack of guidance around consequences for non-vaccinated staff in January.

While tumuaki and leadership are keen to move forward with vaccinations, they understand that the vaccination stance will cause division and disruption in their communities. Despite this, they are clear that the health, safety and wellbeing of their tamariki are at the core of all their decisions.



Ngā kitenga me ngā āheinga anamata Insights and future opportunities

Tumuaki and leaders ensured that whānau were better prepared for online learning, but acknowledged that disparities created through the digital divide continue. Most of the kura in this research did not receive devices during either lockdowns. All tumuaki purchased devices and found ways to provide internet connection to homes.

All tumuaki shared their experiences of witnessing homelessness, poverty and the lack of essentials for whānau. Unfortunately, this was common across all kura. Through these interactions, tumuaki and kaimahi observed how vulnerable some students and their whānau were during these times. Although some students live with less than the bare essentials, they do not necessarily see themselves as living in poverty as they consider themselves as culturally wealthy. The concerns around poverty and homelessness are further compounded by the expectations related to vaccinations.

A concern for most kura is the necessity of kaimahi who work with tamariki to be fully vaccinated by the 1st January 2022. In addition to this, the current statistics show Māori are slower¹¹ to become vaccinated and may choose to remain unvaccinated which adds an additional layer of concern.

There was continued concern for both young children and the elderly that they may catch the COVID-19 virus and the wider impact this could then have on Māori whānau. Kura and whānau are mindful of vulnerable members in their communities.

These factors have had an impact on those teaching in Māori medium education. Generally, kura leaders held the view that COVID-19 is here to stay, and leaders are very clear about what this means for the future. They identify that there is a 'new norm', and tumuaki agree that vaccinations will protect their most vulnerable. Many of these are tamariki in their kura. All tumuaki believe that adults have a responsibility to create the best pandemic response management framework possible. One tumuaki believes:



He sees getting vaccinated as a 'selfless act' of caring for others.

11. As at 6 December 2021, 77% of eligible Māori (12years +/all ages) had received 2 doses of the COVID-19 vaccine and 87% had received their first dose of the vaccine. Retrieved from: <https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-data-and-statistics/covid-19-vaccine-data#ethnicity>

Whakarāpopoto

Summary

The past 17 months have demonstrated the resilience, determination and strength of Te Aho Matua kura kaupapa to overcome the many challenges of the pandemic, and the compounding social inequities affecting their most vulnerable whānau.

By drawing on the strength of their relationships and bonds of community, they have been able to support the ihonui and continued learning of every student and their whānau.

Tumuaki and kura leaders put in place innovations to support tamariki which include:

- ensuring the kaupapa of Te Aho Matua remains strong
- ensuring kaiako, students and whānau are fully prepared and resourced for online learning
- trialling new ways of working with students and their whānau to maximise engagement
- ongoing development of teaching and learning programmes to meet the needs of tamariki in a future where COVID-19 is present
- advocating for the community and co-ordinating whānau accessing support services

ERO found that kura have proven to be extremely innovative and practical with their resourcing and delivery of online learning. All kura agree that while they are more prepared now for online distance learning, *kanohi ki te kanohi* was the preferred mode of engagement for students. Wharekura noted the strain their senior students have been under with the additional stress of NCEA assessments.

Tumuaki and leaders identified the following supports required to better meet the needs of their learners when living with the challenges of COVID-19:

- a strategic pandemic plan which provides for living with COVID-19
- upholding the kaupapa and tikanga of Te Aho Matua
- providing more professional development and learning for kaiako
- equity of resources and funds to best cater for their students, kaiako, whānau and community
- provision of funding for kura to develop their own learning resources that are relevant to their curriculum and context
- providing students and whānau with the day-to-day necessities for future lockdowns such as kai, devices and internet connectivity

ERO noted the need to address social issues and inequities that have been exacerbated by COVID-19 and find ways to reduce the disparities these create.



TE TARI AROTAKE MĀTAURANGA
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