

A Spotlight on Waitara East School

Te Reo me ona tikanga – utilising
hybrid learning context during
COVID-19 lockdown



This spotlight shares Waitara East School's journey to ensure the acquisition of Te Reo Māori continued during COVID-19 lockdowns. The project, led by Whaea Whetū and supported by ākonga and whānau, involved the setup and implementation of a hybrid learning model.

This spotlight is penned by Whetū Maunsell, lead kaiako of the Waitara East School's bilingual unit which sits within the mainstream school. Kura adopted the 'Manaiakalani Digital Learning' program during the COVID-19 lockdowns.

Waitara East Primary school has three classrooms in the unit from years 1 to 6, two of which are fully digital, collaborative learning environments.



‘Ehara taku toa i te toa takitahi, Engari, he toa takitini’

‘I come not with my own strengths, but bring with me the gifts, talents, and strengths of my family, tribe, and ancestors’

What we did

At the onset of the COVID-19 lockdowns in New Zealand, my team and I discussed what was the most important thing that we have to upkeep and establish with our whānau. It was agreed whakawhanaungatanga, and how we were going to make that happen was our first priority.

Considerations

Things that we took into consideration included:

- » The availability of WiFi, smartphones, and digital devices to our whānau.
- » The available types of digital platforms that would keep us in close contact with our whānau, and keep us all safe.
- » How digital savvy are our whānau?

Some of our whānau are very private people and so we discussed whether they would be open to us keeping in close contact with them and their tamariki/mokopuna.

We explored using platforms such as Google Meets, Zoom hui, and messenger video calls, as well as video phone calls. It was important for us to acknowledge that we would be entering their space and to give consideration to this.

2020 COVID-19 Lockdown

For the first lockdown in 2020, we made up work boxes that whānau either collected from kura or we delivered to their whare. Within those workboxes were worksheets, reading books, activity books, and the utensils they would need to carry out their mahi. Where we could, we kept in contact using text messaging, phone calls, class websites, Facebook pages, emailing, and video calling.

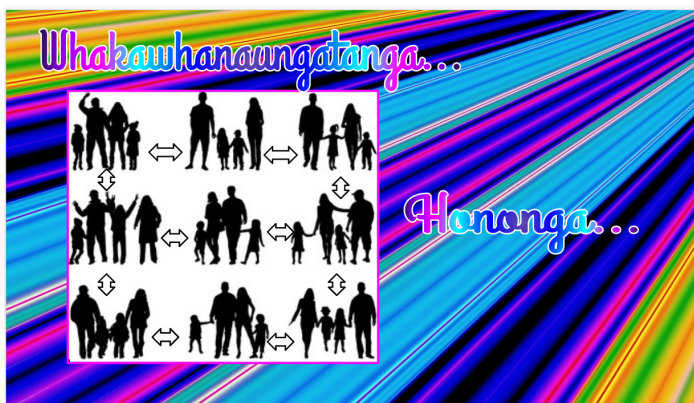
2021 COVID-19 Lockdown

When the second lockdown happened we were more prepared and so were our whānau. We placed guidelines on the “Kawa of care” for our devices in the home, including the appropriate platforms our tamariki/mokopuna were allowed to use. Most of our whānau were on board and welcomed this.

Our 'Whakawhānaunga' platforms

We attained all the information we needed to achieve an open platform for 'Whakawhānaungatanga' with our whānau and our kura community. This included: emailing, Facebook messaging and video calling, syndicate Facebook pages, classroom websites, our Kura website, Facebook page, Google Meet, texting, and video calling.

Through these platforms, we were able to discuss and show our learning content with whānau and their tamariki on a daily basis. We were able to continue with our daily 'Whakaminenga' kaupapa (karakia, mihihihi, waiata) and this helped sustain our whānau connection.



Planning for at-home/hybrid learning

As a team we took into consideration the availability of resources in the home, natural resources in and around their kainga, as well as whakapapa expert resources. We would set whānau challenges both daily and weekly. Such as gardening challenges i.e. growing rōpere, carrots, cabbages, the biggest zucchini, etc. Homemade cooking challenges, TikTok and voice-over movie character challenges. Lots and lots of fun things to do at home with your whānau. We created lockdown daily diaries as well as waiata and poetry composing challenges. We kept some of our regular classroom routines going to cover core curriculum areas and integrated them into the challenges we set.

Workboxes were also available and distributed to those whānau who asked for them.

We are living in an ever-changing world and environment, not only with the COVID-19 pandemic but as educators we also have to adapt our skills and knowledge accordingly.

Reflections, observations, and learnings

- » If we were to send our kura devices home, it was important that we set clear guidelines for their use and care. We asked ourselves the following questions:
 - › Will they be used appropriately, for mahi/projects and video huihiti?
 - › Will tamariki misuse their devices, go on inappropriate platforms or just do gaming all day every day?
 - › Will whānau take co-responsibility for the devices with their tamariki and for the platforms/websites their tamariki will use?
 - › Will our whānau be able to help their tamariki/mokopuna with their mahi?
 - › Would it cause a barrier between whānau and us kaiako, or their tamariki?
- » It was a lot of hard work and commitment from us as a team. Working together definitely made our jobs much easier.
- » Our next step is to support whānau who choose to go to hybrid learning for their mokopuna and/or rangatahi through the systems and processes we have successfully set up. We know that we have the resources to continue the acquisition of Te Reo Māori and tikanga through a hybrid learning model.
- » All in all, we had a successful experience with most of our whānau engaged and enjoying our daily contact and whānau projects. Not all whānau brought into our challenges or projects but the majority did.

