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SUMMER 2020 | **THE LANGUAGE ISSUE**

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THE AKO TEAM

MANAGING EDITOR

Stephanie Mills
stephanie.mills@nzei.org.nz

EDITOR

Jane Arthur
ako@nzei.org.nz

DESIGN

Alice Bell, Meredith Biberstein

CONTRIBUTORS

Leonie Agnew, Jane Arthur,
Jane Blaikie, Pisa Fua, John McRae,
Vincent Olsen-Reeder, Liam Rutherford,
Byron Sanders, Melissa Schwalger,
Lynda Stuart

PHOTOGRAPHY

Meredith Biberstein, Distant Sea
Photography, Naomi Madeiros

COVER PHOTO

May Road School, Naomi Madeiros

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akoadvertising@nzei.org.nz

ADDRESS

13th Floor, Education House
West Building, 178 Willis St
Wellington 6140, New Zealand

WEBSITE

akojournal.org.nz

NZEI HELP

0800 693 443

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EDITORIAL

Asking the big questions

Kia ora koutou.

It is great to have the opportunity to contribute to *Ako*. I am really pleased that this issue is focussed on language, as it is top of mind for me.

As I write, I am transitioning into the role of President after being a teacher at Ross Intermediate. During 2019, I helped lead the development of our local curriculum, and the downside to my new role is that I won't be there to help with the implementation of it – but I back our team at school.

Language became a central concept as we went through our process. We asked all the big questions – what is a curriculum, what should tamariki be learning, what is the role of parents, what is our role in preparing ākonga for high school? – and after all that, we agreed that a local curriculum needs to put ākonga at the centre.

By this, we didn't mean generic ākonga – I'm not sure if those even exist. What we meant is that we had to develop a curriculum to meet the needs of every ākonga we are lucky enough to have come through our door. This required us to start from where they were and, just as importantly, where their whānau was. Language made up a big part of this, but should not be seen as separate from culture and identity. We also made sure to work from the passions and interests of ākonga. This point is well made in the *New Zealand Curriculum*: "Every language has its own ways of expressing meanings; each has intrinsic value and special significance for its users."



It is this approach that has seen us go firmly down a pathway of personalising learning, putting the onus on us – as education professionals – to make sure that our school is ready to cater for the unique and special character that each and every ākonga brings.

This issue of *Ako* explores, in a range of ways, the importance of language for kaiako and ākonga. Central to the issue of language in Aotearoa is the exploration of Māori immersion schooling and the important role this has played in the survival of te reo. Other areas of language are also explored throughout this issue, ranging from oral language in early childhood, to ensuring schools are ready to meet the needs of deaf students.

Ngā mihi,

Liam Rutherford
National President/Te Manukura
NZEI Te Riu Roa



The language issue

*"It's only through
the words that
children know and
use that they're
able to think, have
ideas and make
sense of their world
and their lives."
– Dee Caswell*

This issue explores how language and communication contribute to a child's learning and sense of identity.





FEATURE | THE LANGUAGE ISSUE

Talking the talk

Oral language learning in early childhood is critical to success in later life. But how well do we do it in New Zealand?



01

“Everyone has something to say, but it depends on being able to communicate ideas,” says Dee Caswell, head kaiako at Rachel Reynolds Kindergarten in South Dunedin. “It’s only through the words that children know and use that they’re able to think, have ideas and make sense of their world and their lives.”

Oral language learning is a focus at the kindergarten, and research links it to success in school and later life¹. But research also suggests only 19 percent of early learning services in New Zealand have been “well focussed” on supporting oral language development².

Caswell says the kindergarten’s practices changed after its philosophy was reviewed. “We talked to every family and the response to one question, ‘What is important to you?’, stood out. Really strongly, the answer was ‘reading and writing’.”

This challenged the kindergarten’s existing teaching philosophy and led to its focus on oral language learning, which will enable children to meet whānau aspirations.

“It’s about children knowing they have a voice, and having it heard – even our non-verbal children and our non-English speakers,” says Caswell. The children, aged two to five, come from diverse backgrounds, including Tongan, Tuvaluan, Indian, Māori, Pākehā, Cook Island Māori and Fijian.

“It’s a matter of working out what the child is saying and going from there. It means [observing] body language, eye movement, gestures, seeing what routines they’ve developed. It might be asking the parent, ‘When the child does this, what does it mean?’”

It’s about working closely with families. “Whānau know their children best,” Caswell says. “A child may speak very little at kindergarten, but the parent will tell you, ‘They never stop at home.’”

“A child may speak very little at kindergarten, but the parent will tell you, ‘They never stop at home.’”

1. Page 7, ero.govt.nz/assets/Uploads/Extending-their-language-expanding-their-world2.pdf
 2. Page 48, ero.govt.nz/assets/Uploads/Extending-their-language-expanding-their-world2.pdf
 3. lilliputlibraries.wordpress.com/2017/05/14/97-is-up-and-running/

It is also important to make sure children are comfortable in their home languages. “We greet each child in their home language, even if we do it badly and they laugh!” Language weeks are celebrated – children and kaiako have learnt songs in Tongan, Tuvaluan and te reo Māori, and they sing at the Otago Polyfest.

The whānau room “wasn’t used much”, so has been turned into a library for reading. “Children have to hear words so many times before they can absorb and use them in context,” says Caswell. “Sharing at least three books a day with a young child helps in them hearing words and learning new words.”

Children read aloud too – that is, they stand in front of their peers and talk about the stories and pictures in their profile books. Sometimes they do this with their favourite books from home, too.

The kindergarten has a Lilliput Library³ at its front gate (a book-swap scheme) and the children are responsible for it. They take turns at wearing the lanyard and being the kaitiaki (guardian).

Kaiako also act like sensitive radars to children’s speech. “Children might be sitting in the sandpit talking and working things out – we won’t speak, we won’t impose. But we might get the broom and sweep the path alongside so we can listen. Then we can say to a parent, ‘Do you notice this or that about your child’s speech?’ If they also have concerns, then it’s time to intervene.”

Caswell believes in putting a child on the waiting list for speech-language services as soon as possible, because the list is so long. The issue might resolve and the child can drop off the list, but if it doesn’t resolve they will get help faster.

She worries that some parents can be reluctant to get help because of the fear of “getting a label”, but she works hard to make the process positive.

Kaiako make a point of “gifting” language. “A child might say to me, ‘Pen’, and I’ll say, ‘Yes, it’s a grey pen’, and later on, ‘Yes, it’s a grey pen writing in a black line.’”

Social language is important too. “A child might ask another child if they can play with them, and the other child’s automatic response is, ‘No’. So we say to the first child, ‘Ask the other child what they’re doing’, and then they’re off.”

Caswell says it’s about supplying language and asking questions – “How did that make you feel? Could you tell them how it made you feel?” – so children learn how to be social beings. Sometimes it’s enough for an older child to be supported to explain the social problem they’re facing and then they can work it out for themselves.



02





“It’s about children knowing they have a voice, and having it heard – even our non-verbal children and our non-English speakers.”

– DEE CASWELL





Dr Jannie van Hees is an Auckland-based consultant and researcher in the field of oral language in early childhood. She emphasises the importance of intentionality and high levels of interaction with children when it comes to oral language learning in early childhood settings.

“Exposure is not enough. The environment in which children are situated as they ‘action’ their day needs to be conversational and to involve them,” she says. “A baby, toddler and child has an immense capacity to learn. But having language optimally available to them is critical to ‘wire and fire’ their brain neurons and synapses. Language is the means to shaping their capabilities. Deliberate and scaffolded language moments are the key.”

A child is born with unique gifts and a unique capacity to learn, van Hees says, but mostly a brain is shaped by the child’s environment. “It’s not a question of some children being born clever and some not – language that is accessible and that involves the child is the meaning- and capability-maker.”

Interacting with others day-to-day offers a child reasoning, logic, description, “on-the-spot” explanations, relationship-building and socialisation capability, negotiation capability and resilience – learning to cope with the cut and thrust of communicating and being “of and in community.”

Van Hees explains, “Overdosing on devices takes away these important developmental learnings. People might think language is available, for example, when a child is on an iPad, but unless children are exchanging meaningfully with ‘real’ people, interacting with others, language uptake is minimal.”

There is a sense in the sector that teachers’ concerns about the poor oral language of younger children in some settings have been swept under the carpet. The politics of the rapid commercialisation of early childhood services, the smorgasbord of teacher training and a reluctance to panic parents have all been put forward as reasons for this, although various government-sector reports have hinted at the problem. According to a 2015 Education Review Office report, “Early childhood services gave priority to establishing warm and nurturing relationships with infants and toddlers and had less emphasis on communication and exploration”⁴. A 2017 report, *Extending their language – expanding their world*, which was partially informed by van Hees’ research, has specific and detailed advice for services⁵.

Also in 2017, the Ministry of Education launched its Oral Language and Literacy initiative

“Overdosing on devices takes away important developmental learnings ...

[Unless] children are exchanging meaningfully with ‘real’ people, interacting with others, language uptake is minimal.”

4. ero.govt.nz/publications/infants-and-toddlers-competent-and-confident-communicators-and-explorers/

5. ero.govt.nz/publications/extending-their-language-expanding-their-world/

(OLLi), a pilot programme that has been rolled out to 442 centres that meet eligibility criteria. A review of the pilot has been positive, and it is likely to be rolled out further. The ministry is working with Te Kōhanga Reo Trust on a related programme for te reo-led services.

For the small, rural Marton Junction Community Preschool, near Whanganui, OLLi has been transformative. The centre has a roll of 80 percent Māori and Samoan students, along with Tongan, Fijian-Indian and Pākehā tamariki. Many parents work at one of the two local meat works.

“The increase in language has been huge with tamariki and their curiosity towards learning new words. They want to tell their stories and find names in written text,” says kaiako Nithuainia Lowrie. She is hugely enthusiastic about the programme, as is head teacher Karen Kennedy.

For a fees-free community preschool, completing OLLi required whānau support. Families agreed to pick up their children early once a fortnight so the two teachers could get to



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Palmerston North for workshops with a speech language therapist. The workshops ran for six months from the start of 2019 and were followed up by three videoed sessions at the centre, after which kaiako practices were critiqued.

“It was so intense,” says Kennedy, who’s 66 and began her training in ECE in 2012 after hearing a talk on child brain development. She’d previously been a nurse. “Each fortnight there was a new element to incorporate into our practice. But it’s been amazing. We’ve decided to make the programme the basis for our review. We’ll revisit each element over the next three years.”

One of the biggest differences at the centre is in how, when and what kaiako and whānau read with children.

“We’re much more critical in purchasing and choosing books to put on the shelves for children – in particular, do the words and pictures match? We used to read to the children. Now, we open the book and ask the children to tell us about it,” says Kennedy.

“So many ideas and words and conversations are coming from tamariki. And this travels to home – it’s a complete reversal of the way we did things.”

Alicia Ingley is the parent of three-year-old

“We used to read to the children. Now, we open the book and ask the children to tell us about it – it’s a complete reversal of the way we did things.”

6. Have You Filled a Bucket Today? A Guide to Daily Happiness for Kids, by Carol McCloud and illustrated by David Messing (Bucket Fillosophy)

Luca, who attends the centre, and she agrees that OLLi has been transformative. “After being involved in OLLi, Luca has been mentioning the ‘filling my bucket’ book at home.” This book, *Have You Filled a Bucket Today? A Guide to Daily Happiness for Kids*⁶, has been integral to the centre’s OLLi work. “Luca will tell me he is going to fill my bucket by helping me at home. He also tells me when his brother is being unkind and not filling his bucket! Luca has seemed more interested in reading books to himself at home and will mimic his teachers from preschool by asking me questions about the pictures.”

The centre has also adopted best practice from research that supports the speaking of first languages at home. “Tamariki will pick up English here, but it’s better to speak their home languages at home,” says Kennedy. “This is a key to bilingualism – and that has many advantages for tamariki.”

Some children attend a regular session at the te reo Māori immersion class at their nearby school. “One Samoan family has decided to send their children there. They want to learn more languages. We’ve been amazed about where [OLLi has] taken us and everybody else.” ●



REFLECTIONS OF A PRESIDENT

Lynda Stuart

When asked to share some reflections on my three years as NZEI Te Riu Roa President, I was prompted to think back to the very beginning of this journey.

I have attended many annual meetings over the years and seen many presidents presiding over them. I would watch them weave their magic over debates and questions, and manage tense moments. I used to marvel at their skill and wisdom. In those early years, not once did I think it would one day be me in that place.

The last three years have been an absolute rollercoaster ride. It wasn't easy, but I wouldn't trade it for the world. The opportunity to represent and advocate for our members and our tamariki locally, nationally and internationally is a great privilege.

The dumping of National Standards and charter schools brought us hope of change from a neoliberal and market-driven "one-size-fits-all" approach to education. The conversations about a 30-year vision for education with the review of Tomorrow's Schools and a 10-year strategic plan for early childhood education, a focus on those children who have additional needs and the valuing of language, culture and identity all rang resoundingly true for me and gave me hope.

The time was absolutely right for change – the undervaluing of teachers, principals and support staff, alongside those professionals who work with children with special needs, whether they be in schools or early childhood centres, could not continue.



I am so proud of all the NZEI Te Riu Roa members and staff who have worked tirelessly towards the change that is needed.

Of course, we have not yet achieved everything. We are still working hard to replace broken systems. We're still working hard to achieve pay equity and pay parity, to ensure there is job security and that privatisation does not undermine quality public education, and to make sure we attract and retain excellent people in the profession. This will take absolutely all of us working together. It will also require us to continue working with our allies, communities and politicians to achieve our goals.

This is not simply for us as individuals – this is for our tamariki and our colleagues, both now and in the future.

He waka eke noa.
We are all in this together.

Thank you all for the part you have played in my journey as President. I look forward to continuing to work with many of you as we move forward, albeit in a different role. Kia kaha.

Arohanui,

Lynda Stuart
National President/Te Manukura
2017–2019

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FEATURE | THE LANGUAGE ISSUE

Jumping into Māori immersion learning

Over the past 30 years, the demand for Māori immersion learning has increased, being a pivotal way to strengthen te reo Māori. What effect do immersion units have on mainstream schools and their communities?

Nestled into the bush on the north-western fringes of suburban Wellington, Otari School draws students from 26 suburbs across the city.

Alongside mainstream and Montessori strands, there is a Māori immersion unit, Ngā Uara o te Whenu, which was set up in 1992 following lobbying by Māori parents and the community.

Previously, the school was struggling and had dropped to just 50 students, but those days are now a distant memory at the school. Api Nathan, deputy principal and Māori immersion strand leader, gets calls almost every day from parents who want Māori immersion learning for their tamariki.

"I feel the demand. Every day we're getting phone calls from families that maybe have no reo at all, but they'd really like their tamariki in that environment – and they're brave enough to jump into total immersion," she says.

Only a handful of schools across the region offer Level 1 immersion learning, which means te reo Māori is used for communication and instruction more than 80 percent of the time. The immersion unit at Otari School is just about at its capacity of 80 students across three classes, and follows *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa*, the Māori curriculum.

There is no requirement for students to have any te reo Māori ability at all when they

enrol in the school's immersion stream. When applying, parents or caregivers fill out a form outlining the level of te reo Māori that they and their children have, what they're doing about their own language development and how they might support their children's learning. This information is used to assist the school, not decide enrolment, so kaiako see the full range of abilities – from those who have te reo Māori as their first language, through to those who can only speak English.

"As kaiako, we have ongoing discussions about what to do, how we [can] handle these kids coming in. We are having to tweak things every year," says Nathan.

The unit was bilingual for the first few years before becoming full immersion for Years 0 to 5. "However, we have moments of English to clarify concepts in all aspects of our curriculum [and] to create a solid understanding," says Nathan.

When students get to Nathan's class in Year 6, they are formally introduced to some English language instruction and the *New Zealand Curriculum*. Nathan says this is when some parents "get the wobbles" as they worry whether their child will have strong enough English going into secondary school.

In the past, there was a trend for some parents to take their children out and put them into a mainstream intermediate class.

"I feel the demand. Every day we're getting phone calls from families that maybe have no reo at all, but they'd really like their tamariki in that environment – and they're brave enough to jump into total immersion."
– Api Nathan

WRITER
Melissa Schwalger

PHOTOGRAPHER
Naomi Madeiros

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“That happens not as much now, and I’m really glad, because we are able to see the tamariki who go right through to Year 8 in our immersion units. They’re doing fine – really fine, actually – at high school,” says Nathan.

When Anita and Peter Lowry were choosing a school for their son, six-year-old Atticus, they visited Otari School and saw the senior immersion students having English lessons. This was reassuring and seemed to them a sensible approach.

Parents of tamariki in immersion units can’t help but look to the future, and Anita Lowry says they had observed that children could need extra help with English after leaving immersion learning environments. That was the case for their 17-year-old daughter, who went through kura kaupapa.

Peter Lowry, who is originally from Ireland, saw immersion learning within a mainstream school as a “little less pressure” than kura kaupapa for a beginning te reo Māori speaker like himself.

“Kōhanga Reo was a little bit of a struggle [for me] to interact on day-to-day things, because there was absolutely no English spoken at all. Everyone was very lovely, [but] at Otari now, I can have a sneaky ‘how do I pay for these photos’ conversation early in the morning in English,” he laughs.

Otari School principal Clifford Wicks says that for immersion education to be fully successful, students need to stay right through to Year 8 to develop full fluency.

“I think we can address [parents’] concerns about English ourselves. Also, I think, generally parents worry too much about being prepared for high school,” he says.

Because of the Level 1 immersion requirements, te reo in class is fiercely protected, but students can interact with their peers across the rest of the school in English. Wicks says they ensure plenty of opportunity for inter-strand activities, “as we could become three little islands otherwise”.

The older students will have technology classes and senior camp in English with students from the other strands, along with school hui, playground interaction and activities like Life Education.

But the language crossover goes both ways, and Wicks says the students immersed in te reo have a wonderful influence on the whole school.

For the past three years, everyone from Otari School has gone into the city to march in the hikoi for Te Wiki o te Reo Māori, because “the other kids wanted to do that”.

Immersion students practice kapa haka daily so are at a more advanced level, but all students

learn some kapa haka and can perform at festivals. Students from the other strands are also welcome to join in the unit’s daily kapa haka, waiata and karakia.

Wicks says that he takes very seriously the mandate as principal to promote and support all three strands.

“That doesn’t mean [I need] to be a qualified Montessori teacher or a fluent te reo speaker – it’d be great if I was – but it does mean finding and working with people who are, [and] supporting people who are.”

When the opportunity arose in 2012 to appoint an assistant principal, Wicks tied this position to the immersion strand to ensure that the school would always have either an assistant or deputy principal position from that strand. The board has parent representatives from each strand as well.

“But you have got three communities and sometimes they need to be reminded that this is one school, and our board and our staff are serving all children. If a certain group only cared about their strand, it weakens everybody,” says Wicks. “I think that whanaungatanga, which the community chose as their overarching value, is so important. It’s more than just a word.”

A number of mainstream schools like Otari can date their Māori immersion units back to the late 1980s and early 1990s, developing alongside the Kura Kaupapa Māori movement.

The first Kōhanga Reo was established in Wainuiomata in 1982. Three years later, the first Kura Kaupapa Māori, Te Kura Kaupapa Māori o Hoani Waititi, opened in West Auckland. Official government support and funding for Kura Kaupapa Māori as state schools began with the Education Act 1989.

However, the recorded history of Māori immersion units within mainstream schools is sparse. Their origins tend to be similar to Otari School’s: schools would set up units where their communities and local iwi requested and supported it, often starting as bilingual units and moving to full immersion depending on demand and the availability of fluent teachers and kaiārahi i te reo.

Ministry of Education data suggests that, today, around 100 mainstream primary and intermediate schools have at least one Level 1 or 2 Māori immersion unit.

One of the newest units is Toitōi Manawa o Fairhaven at Fairhaven School in Te Puke. An Education Review Office (ERO) report in 2013

“I think that whanaungatanga, which the community chose as their overarching value, is so important. It’s more than just a word.”

– CLIFFORD WICKS



01

01 Api Nathan, deputy principal and Māori immersion strand leader at Otari School.



02

02 Peter, Anita and Atticus Lowry. (Photo: Meredith Biberstein)

highlighted a community desire for stronger te reo Māori and taha Māori presence in the school. The unit launched in 2015, following extensive research and consultation with local Tapuika and Waitaha iwi. It has three classes covering Years 0 to 6 at immersion Levels 1 and 2, with at least 51 percent of instruction in te reo Māori.

Principal Paul Hunt says that in establishing the unit, the school staff and board have moved along a “continuum of understanding”. They now realise that the very “mono-cultural European setup” in schools must change to be more inclusive and ensure that all students feel that they and their culture are valued.

“That’s a big move from just starting up an immersion unit,” he says.

The teachers who helped to develop Toitoti Manawa and their local curriculum, Marau-a-kura, are now using what they’ve learned to help integrate te reo within the rest of the school as well.

“We’ve identified that the parents of Māori children on the English-medium side would like a high level of te reo Māori. So that’s a whole-



“Parents of Māori children on the English-medium side would like a high level of te reo Māori.” – Paul Hunt

school thing we have – karakia and waiata in our assemblies, and within our classes we often have karakia and they’ll use a basic level of te reo Māori. We want to increase that,” says Hunt.

All staff members are participating in professional learning and development around cultural and inclusive practices.

Crucially, Hunt says, they realised they had to address the things that might be barriers to Māori parents getting involved in school meetings and events. Offering childcare and catering and holding events at the local marae have resulted in almost 100 percent whānau attendance at hui.




ERO reviewed the school again in late 2019 and found that achievement had increased, particularly for students in Toitoti Manawa. Attendance is also up, and it was observed that parents felt included, valued and welcomed at the school.

“Education isn’t just somebody coming into a room and being taught something and going home,” says Hunt. “It’s embracing the whole culture [of the student]. It’s vitally important.” ●

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Vincent Olsen-Reeder

Compulsory te reo in schools – what does it look like?

Ah, compulsory te reo Māori in mainstream schools. It's a grazing table for politician-elects and a fear-inducing topic for overworked teachers. It's been on the cards since 1972, when 33,000 people signed a petition approaching Government on the topic, but so far, it's been a fruit too high to harvest.

Compulsion for me isn't about language, but citizenship. We're a country at a standstill on unified progression and, in my view, that standstill is caused by the ignorance that there's only one single way to live a life. Ignorance leads to fear and scaremongering. The last decade or so has seen legislation questionably enacted, racism in schools and the New Zealand Police brought to light, prejudice in the legal system exposed and some pretty shocking behaviour from incoming local politicians. All these things leave just one thought in my head: if we're going to fix what is broken, every individual in this country must be able to exercise great citizenship in their decision-making. We need to extinguish individual ignorance before it enters an institution capable of harm. To me, language compulsion seems one crucial way to ensure everyone gets some basic level of mutual communicative understanding, as well as the linguistic benefit.

I do think we need to be clear about what we expect from the process. There seems to be a misunderstanding it will make everyone fluent. It won't. The life of the language is never going to reside entirely in the education space. There are gains to make there, sure, but fluency isn't one of them. No one becomes seriously proficient in another language

without support external to the school, so we'd do well to abandon that goal for more realistic ones. What we could achieve is great pronunciation, basic communication and a thorough understanding of place names, student names and culture. That would be an excellent outcome.

There is a legitimate fear from (mostly primary) teachers that they will need to get fluent, and quickly, in order to teach. That's fair – teachers are already overworked and underpaid. A graduated, well-thought-out scaffolding of professional development is absolutely necessary to ensure they feel welcome, confident and able to participate, and that needs to exist before we enter the classroom.

I am worried that compulsion will land everything on the few Māori teachers around the country. They're already overstretched and required to perform extra activities that are commonly requested in a disrespectful manner and also go unrewarded. We need to understand our own role in this, and be aware that we're all required to contribute something meaningful. Leaving it to the few Māori people around isn't meaningful, it's merely perpetuation of the situation we already have.

Great citizens are ones who make meaningful attempts to learn about themselves, which can only come from being learned in the land they walk on. Too many of us are still exposed to unfounded and overexaggerated pub myths about Māori people and culture. It's a deficit we could do without. A basic understanding of these tenets of our nation could move mountains for generations of souls currently being raised in the dark. Compulsion of the language would be a start.

Ko te whakapūmau i te reo ki te kura – ka pēhea hoki?

Ko te whakapūmau i te reo ki te kura auraki. He whakapai kanohi mō te kaitōrangapū, he whakamataku hoki mō te kaiako pau te kaha. I tīmata tōna tohea i te tau 1972, i te hainatanga o te petihana e te 33,000, e rāhiri ana i te Kāwanatanga ki te kaupapa. Ā moroki nei, he hua teitei rawa kia katohia.

Mōku ake, ko te whakapūmau reo he whakapūmau tangata ki tōna whenua, engari ki te reo. Kua wehe rua tātou e kore e taea te anga whakamua, ko te pūtake o taua wehe rua, ko te kūware o te whakaaro kotahi anake te huarahi ora i tēnei ao. Nā kūware, ko matakū, ko whakamataku. I te ngahuru tau nei kua hē te whakatinana i te ture, kua kitea mai te kaikiri i te kura me Ngā Pirihimana o Aotearoa, kua mārama te tūkino i ngā kōti, me te kino hoki a ētahi kaitōrangapū kaunihera ā-rohe. Kotahi tonu taku whakaaro: e tika ai ēnei hara, me tika ngā whakataunga a tēnā tangata, a tēnā tangata i tēnei motu. Me whakamoe i tōna kūware, i mua rawa i tōna kuhunga ki tētahi whare pēnei, e taea ai te tūkino. Ki ahau nei, ko te whakapūmau i te reo tētahi huarahi matua e rite ai te mana o te tangata, i tua atu i ngā hua o te mōhio ki tētahi atu reo.

Me mārama tonu ki te hua ka puta i te whakapūmautanga. Tērā e pōhēhētia ka tohunga te katoa ki te reo, engari e kore rawa. E kore te reo e ora i te noho anake ki te kura. He hua ka taea, engari te matatau. E kore te matatau e taea ki te kore e āta tautokona ki waho o te kura, nā reira me tuku i taua pae tawhiti kia whai pae tata. Ko ngā

whāinga pai pea ko te whakahua i te reo kia tika, kia rere, kia mārama ngā ingoa wāhi me ngā ingoa tauira, me te ahurea hoki. Kātahi te pai o ērā hua.

E kitea ana te māharahara i ētahi kaiako (kei te kura tuatahi pea te nuinga) me tohunga ki te reo i te wā poto, e taea ai te whakaako atu. E mārama ana – kua pau kē ō rātou kaha, mō te moni iti. Me whai i tētahi ara poutama e pakari haere ai rātou, e māia ai te tū, e kaha ai te hiahia ki te whakaako, ā, me eke aua wawata ā mua i te kuhu ki te rūma whakaako.

He āwangawanga ōku ka utaina ngā mahi nei ki ngā pokohiwi o ngā kaiako Māori tokoiti nei. He nui noa atu ā rātou mahi, he rite tonu hoki tā rātou karangahia kia tutuki ētahi atu mahi, me te takahi hoki o ō rātou mana i ētahi wā. Ka kore hoki e āta mihia aua mahi. Me mārama tātou, nō tātou katoa tēnei kaupapa, mā tātou katoa e whakatinana. Ko te waiho i te kaupapa ki te tokoiti he takahi noa iho i ō rātou mana, he tōai noa i ngā tūkino mau roa o te wā.

Ko te tangata pai o tētahi motu, he tangata e whai ana kia mau ngā akoranga mōna ake, mā te mōhio anake ki tōna whenua e pēnei ai. He rite tonu hoki tō tātou whāngaihia ki ngā kōrero pāparakāuta mō te Māori, ko te mutunga mārīka mai o te hē. He tūkino tēnei me whakamoe. Mā te ako i ētahi kōrero iti noa ka taea ngā maunga whakahihī te hiki kia tanuku, e tōia mai ai ngā reanga i te pōuri ki te ao mārama. Ko te whakapūmau i te reo te tīmatanga pai.

Dr Vincent Olsen-Reeder (Ngā Pōtiki a Tamapahore, Ngāti Pūkenga, Ngāi Te Rangi, Te Arawa) is a te reo Māori lecturer at Victoria University. He is a published fiction author, poet, songwriter and licensed translator.



Sign language and support systems

The landscape of Deaf education in New Zealand has changed a lot over the last 20 years. We look at the options now available to deaf children who are starting primary school.

Until a couple of years ago, Redwood School in Christchurch had little experience of teaching deaf students. But now, the students and teachers are enthusiastic about sign language, and seven-year-old Courtney Burcher has no problem communicating with her hearing friends.

Before Courtney started school, her New Entrant teacher and her teacher for the following year took lessons in New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL), as did other staff.

Principal John Stackhouse said they also spent a lot of time preparing the children and teaching them some sign language, especially those who would be in the same class as Courtney. He says it was important that they understood Courtney is the same as any other child, except that she is deaf.

“She has the same needs, same feelings and she would be learning very similar things. We made the point that she was just another kid,” he says.

Now in Year 3, Courtney is the fifth deaf generation in her family and communicates solely via NZSL. Her mum, Priscilla Buzzard, is Deaf and her dad, Ryan Burcher, is a CODA (a hearing Child of a Deaf Adult).

Through an NZSL interpreter, Buzzard says that when they were looking at local schools for their older hearing daughter, it was important to make sure that the school would be supportive of Courtney when her time came.

Buzzard’s memories of mainstream education are something she’d rather put behind her, but she says Courtney’s experience has been much more positive and they were very fortunate to find Redwood School.

“Maybe [it’s] to do with the other students being more understanding? For Courtney, other students realise that she’s deaf, she uses sign language, but that’s absolutely fine. I think in the old days that wasn’t so accepted, perhaps.”

Courtney is identified as having high learning needs because she communicates solely in NZSL, so she has a communication/education support worker, Gemma Williams, with her in class. Williams has the invaluable and quite rare ability to sign fluently.

Stackhouse says Williams is worth her weight in gold. “She’s just a brilliant staff member all round, really. From the point of view of flexibility, sense of humour and ability to work with both the Deaf community and the general school community, she’s one out of the bag.”

Along with Williams to support her learning and upskill her teacher and classmates in NZSL, Courtney also has five hours a week with Scott McDonnell, a Resource Teacher of the Deaf employed by van Asch Deaf Education Centre. Van Asch was established in Christchurch in 1880 and is the world’s oldest fully government-funded residential school for the Deaf.

McDonnell started his teaching career in



01



01 Courtney Burcher (left) with her sister Chloe at Redwood School.



“For Courtney, other students realise that she’s deaf, she uses sign language, but that’s absolutely fine. I think in the old days that wasn’t so accepted, perhaps.”

– PRISCILLA BUZZARD



02

mainstream schools, and it was 12 years before he had a deaf child in his class for the first time.

“I was kind of intrigued. How could I help this boy in my class? He wasn’t [a sign language user because he had a cochlear implant], but he needed adaptations to the curriculum,” he says.

McDonnell had been looking for a career change within education, and when a Resource Teacher of the Deaf encouraged him to apply for a study award, he took the plunge.

McDonnell spent three years teaching at van Asch’s unit at Wharenui School in Riccarton, where about 15 deaf children learn in two purpose-built classrooms, joining their mainstream peers for social and recreational events and some classes. These children tend to be profoundly deaf and may have an additional learning need such as autism or global developmental delay.

However, the majority of deaf and hard of hearing students at Wharenui are in mainstream classes, like Courtney, with varying levels of in-class and itinerant support, depending on the student.

“Wharenui School has an amazing atmosphere; it’s very multicultural and all the kids are amazing. If someone’s a bit different, they don’t see that as a problem, it’s just accepted,” says McDonnell.

These days, McDonnell will visit at least two schools each day. He says he can communicate effectively through sign language, but wouldn’t call himself fluent.



03



“I’m only there for a short time, so the more I can upskill the teacher on how they can help that child, the more likely I will be successful. I’m there to help the teachers, not just the students.”

– Scott McDonnell

1. www.phonak.com/nz/en/hearing-aids/accessories/roger-pen.html

Sometimes he will do one-to-one teaching with a child, focussing on communication or literacy. He may also work with the classroom teacher, or take a group of hearing students so the classroom teacher can work one-on-one with the child.

“Sometimes it might be just giving examples on how to use the Roger Pen¹ [a microphone that transmits the teacher’s voice directly to a hearing aid or cochlear implant] or adapting some curriculum [material]. I’m only there for a short time, so the more I can upskill the teacher on how they can help that child, the more likely I will be successful. I’m there to help the teachers, not just the students,” he says.

McDonnell has been assisting Courtney since 2019 and gives her support worker advice on making resources that will help Courtney.

“Her first language – NZSL – is quite a rich language, but she doesn’t have as much exposure to English,” he says. “Even when it comes to writing, she’ll have a lot of visual pictures to prompt her. Or for retelling a reading book, I’ll photocopy the pictures and she’ll have to put them in the right order and explain to me what’s going on.”

An NZSL dictionary app that contains diagrams and videos for more than 4,000 words and phrases is an invaluable resource for Courtney and those teaching her.

Each year, McDonnell assists about one deaf or hard of hearing child with the transition to school.



“One of my students that I have on my caseload, with bilateral hearing aids, was at an early childhood centre (ECE), just an everyday one. I got given more hours with him when he transitioned to New Entrants in a mainstream school, and I helped the teacher in the class know how to help this particular boy. Now, he’s one of the highest-succeeding students in the class, reading and writing, maths – a real success story,” he says.

McDonnell says getting in early with support really pays dividends for the child, as well as their hearing classmates. “For the kids in the class who aren’t deaf, they’re going to get to learn [NZSL], they get to understand some of the Deaf culture ways, like getting the teacher’s attention [using] body language and things like that,” he says.

“Many adaptations that support the deaf child also help hearing students, such as [using] a visual timetable.”

This service for deaf children and their families is centred at van Asch Deaf Education Centre in Christchurch and Kelston Deaf Education Centre in Auckland. Van Asch provides services for the South Island and lower North Island, and Kelston covers from Taupō north, although a merger is underway that will result in a single nationwide service from 20 July 2020. The centres already have a combined Board of Trustees and work closely together to support more than 2,800 deaf and hard of hearing children, of whom about 1,100 are currently covered by van Asch.²

2. Van Asch provided this statement: “Since 2012, many efforts have been made to align the work of the two Deaf Education Centres to provide a nationally consistent schooling and support programme. [In 2020], the merger of both Centres will herald an exciting era of change in Deaf Education, with the opportunity to provide services that allow every Deaf and Hard of Hearing learner to Belong, Grow, Excel and Choose.”

3. firstsigns.co.nz

4. deaf.org.nz

Like Courtney, some of those children will start their education journey at van Asch’s Early Intervention Centre (EIC) in Sumner, which is a licensed ECE centre. Head teacher Helen King says an important part of the service is supporting parents, many of whom had no experience of the Deaf community before having their own deaf child. About 95 percent of deaf children are born to hearing parents.

The EIC currently has 17 deaf or hard of hearing children enrolled and about a quarter of them have one or both parents who are also deaf – a much higher proportion than might usually be expected.

Local families usually attend the EIC once a week and hearing siblings are also welcome. The centre also runs sessions for CODAs, who attend with their parents or caregivers.

King says the parent-to-parent support is important to the families. The parents are required to stay so they can connect and join in story and music mat times. They also make use of sessions with NZSL tutors and other experts, such as audiologists.

Families attending the EIC weekly may also have an individual session with a Teacher of the Deaf or a speech language therapist focussed on developing communication strategies that can be followed up at home.

Most of the families also access First Signs³, a service provided by Deaf Aotearoa⁴ in which NZSL tutors go into the home every few weeks to support hearing families to learn sign language.

By the age of three, children usually have an Individual Plan, which is put together by ministry-employed Advisors on Deaf Children. Advisors on Deaf Children are Teachers of the Deaf or speech language therapists who have undertaken additional qualifications, such as a master’s degree in Deaf Education. They work with families and specialists to assist children from birth to Year 3 at school. The majority of children at the van Asch EIC also attend a mainstream ECE centre. Once a child turns three, if they communicate solely by NZSL, they may be eligible for support from a Resource Teacher of the Deaf at their ECE centre.

All families throughout New Zealand get support from Advisors on Deaf Children in their own mainstream ECEs and in the home. Regional families can also attend residential sessions at Sumner twice before starting school. While staying onsite for four days at a time, they receive



04

“We offer to all students a Deaf Bilingual approach. This means we switch between spoken and signed languages during our programme.”

— HELEN KING



04 Courtney’s mother and brother, Priscilla Buzzard and Connor.



05



06

05 Van Asch EIC teacher Lydia Heard.

06 Van Asch EIC head teacher Helen King.



input from an audiologist, a speech language therapist, a Deaf NZSL tutor and an early literacy specialist. Van Asch runs 10 residential sessions each year, for up to three families per visit. It also runs eight four-day courses for school-aged children and their families.

King says one of the things they do at the EIC is educate parents about their child's learning style, in terms of access to learning either spoken or signed languages, so they can advocate for and explain the types of adaptations and services that might be needed. Teachers and the speech language therapist at the centre help advisors with preparing children and parents for the move to school.

There are many considerations for families when choosing a school, including wanting all of their children together. King assures parents that they can always change to or from mainstream learning if their first choice doesn't work well. "Learning pathways are flexible and school enrolment can be reviewed at any time," she says. Outside Christchurch and Auckland, though, mainstream schooling is the only option.

The level of support both in ECE and at school varies depending on the child. It can be

Cochlear implants have been a contentious issue in the Deaf community in the past, as some felt it was an assault on their culture, but that attitude is changing.



advice and guidance or scaffolded teaching in relation to classroom learning.

King says most children who are eligible have received cochlear implants as babies and the majority who come through the centre were implanted at nine to 10 months old.

"But that's still nine to 10 months they haven't been listening, so [they're] still learning to make use of the listening. But we do have the range of students who have mild to profound hearing loss," she says. "We offer to all students a Deaf Bilingual approach. This means we switch between spoken and signed languages during our programme."

Cochlear implants have been a contentious issue in the Deaf community in the past, as some felt it was an assault on their culture, but that attitude is changing.

Dr David McKee is Research Director of the Deaf Studies Research Unit and Senior Lecturer in Applied Linguistics at Victoria University of Wellington. As a Deaf person, he observes that cochlear implants are becoming the technological norm, but Deaf people are often concerned about how implant information is presented to parents.

"If I had a deaf child myself, I might, for example, choose to give that child a cochlear implant if I decided it would be useful for them to have the option to be able to hear and have spoken language. But they'd still have sign language and Deaf culture [from me]," he says, through an NZSL interpreter. "In the past, maybe 10 or 20 years ago, I might have been completely resistant, but I think people are more open now."

McKee says that with cochlear implants comes a very strong focus on the development of speech. "That is natural and I understand that, but sometimes it's to the exclusion of sign language, with the kind of approach that if the child doesn't develop good speech or auditory language skills, then use sign language as a last resort.

"But what Deaf people would say is why not give the child bilingualism from the beginning, have access to both speech and sign language? If the child later feels they don't need sign language, or they don't want to use it, then that's their choice. But at the moment, that choice is in the hands of parents who may not have the full spectrum of information," he says.

McKee sees first year university students with cochlear implants who are learning NZSL for the first time, and he senses that some of them wish they had had that opportunity earlier in life.

"There are, of course, people with cochlear implants for whom it is really successful and they function really well in spoken language, but not all," he says.

McKee says that almost every child with profound hearing loss will be encouraged to have a cochlear implant, and he estimates that about 95 percent of parents choose that option. He believes the other five percent will be made up of Deaf parents who choose not to, or situations where the child has other physical issues or learning disabilities that might make an implant unsuccessful. The widespread use of cochlear implants and other hearing aids means there are far fewer profoundly deaf children than in the past.

McKee says that in the past, all deaf children would attend a School for the Deaf, rather than mainstream. "Unfortunately, during that era, deaf children were not allowed to use sign language in the classroom, so that's part of our history – they had to use speech in the classroom, but signed surreptitiously out of the classroom," he says.

"In the 1980s, a signing system was introduced into schools, and in the past 20 years there has been more and more acceptance of NZSL – but also deaf children have mostly been

enrolled in mainstream schools, so the Deaf schools have declined."

McKee says the Deaf community has always strongly advocated for having groups of deaf children together in schools to socialise and for more natural sign language transmission. He says a lot of Deaf adults are concerned that there are many deaf children in mainstream schools without a sign language environment or access to qualified interpreters. In most cases, teacher aides fulfil an interpreting role, despite no formal training.

A pilot programme at Redwood School that is connecting Courtney with other deaf students from around the city may eventually address some of those concerns.

Working in partnership with van Asch, the school has established an NZSL hub for deaf and hard of hearing students. Every second Friday for just over a year, up to nine students have travelled to Redwood School from all over Christchurch to spend the day together with specialist van Asch teachers. They interact with the other Redwood students at break times.

NZSL hubs are increasingly being set up throughout New Zealand by the Deaf Education Centres in partnership with local schools, meaning deaf students can come together regularly.

Stackhouse says the goal is that deaf tamariki could be permanently enrolled at a hub school and become more connected with each other through mutual use of NZSL, with more ready access to learning support onsite. They would have mainstream time but interact regularly with peers who are also deaf.

It’s a goal that will enable Courtney and other deaf students to socialise much more with each other and learn about Deaf culture and Deaf history.

“Feedback from parents of deaf tamariki has been that having them using [NZSL] in our current hub has grown their confidence and security in who they are,” says Stackhouse.

If you ask Courtney whether she enjoys getting together with her friends at the hub, you’ll get a big smile and an emphatic nod.

07 Courtney at the Redwood School hub.



“I think it’s a sense of common identity. People really value the collective, being connected with other Deaf people.”
– Rachel McKee

Deaf language and culture

New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL) is a unique language, with a vocabulary that includes Māori concepts, such as marae and tangi. It has signs for place names, such as “mudpools” for Rotorua, and “W” with “windy breeze” for Wellington.

NZSL became an official language of New Zealand in 2006, and in the 2018 Census there were 22,986 people (or 0.5 percent) who reported the ability to have a conversation in NZSL.

Like British Sign Language (BSL) and Australian Sign Language (Auslan), NZSL has its roots in a deaf sign language used in Britain during the 19th century and uses the same two-handed manual alphabet. Today, BSL has 62.5 percent similarity to the signs of NZSL. American Sign Language, however, has its roots in French Sign Language and has only a third of signs in common with NZSL.

NZSL also uses lip-patterns in conjunction with signs, reflecting New Zealand’s history of oralist education. For a century, deaf students were taught to communicate only through oral language by using lip reading, speech and mimicking the mouth shapes and breathing patterns of speech.

Students of the first School for the Deaf, which eventually became van Asch Deaf Education, were not allowed to sign and had to do it in secret until 1979.

In that year, the school introduced a “use all communication modes” philosophy known as Total Communication, but the signing adopted was an artificial system, using mostly Auslan signs, with some local deaf signs and others that were created to represent the words and grammar of English. NZSL wasn’t adopted for teaching until 1994.

In 1992, Dr Rachel McKee (who is hearing) and Dr David McKee (who is Deaf) established and taught New Zealand’s first full-time interpreter training programme, at what is now the Auckland University of Technology.

Both are now based at Victoria University of Wellington’s School of Linguistics and Applied Language Studies, and David McKee has a particular interest in comparative studies of sign languages.

He explains that two Deaf people from countries with different signed languages would be able to communicate more effectively than two people using different spoken languages. “Because there are more visual elements in sign language, there’s more use of body language and also more common experience in mutual understanding between Deaf people,” he says. “Say you have a Deaf German person who went to China – they would be able to communicate at a basic level more effectively than two hearing people. They could kind of cobble together an international sign. It’s not a ‘sign language’ as such, not a formal language, but a way of communicating across languages.”

David McKee says that spoken language is based on sound and a sequence of words, with the grammar influenced by that modality. “Sign language works in a visual modality; it’s three-dimensional and doesn’t really conform to the structure of the use of sounds. It uses elements like space and movement and facial expressions,” he says.

Rachel McKee is qualified as an interpreter of New Zealand and American Sign Languages, and played a key role in establishing the interpreter profession in New Zealand.

While she says no culture can really be summarised, Deaf culture is mainly about having a visual orientation in the world. “Deaf communication behaviour is obviously quite different, in that it’s quite physical and has emphasis on face-to-face communication and use of the body. Waving to get attention, using visual signals. It’s mannerisms, it’s just a Deaf presence, it’s very different,” she says.

She says Deaf people consider sign language as an important cultural resource because it’s how they learn, get information and express themselves. “I think it’s a sense of common identity. People really value the collective, being connected with other Deaf people.” ●

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A note about the capitalisation of the word Deaf: Generally, “deaf” is used when referring to a hearing-loss condition and “Deaf” refers to the Deaf community and its members.

The New Zealand Sign Language Bill (2004) states: “The capitalised ‘D’ in ‘Deaf’ is used internationally to denote a distinct linguistic and cultural group of people who are deaf and who use sign language as their first or preferred language, and includes those deaf people who identify with that group and with Deaf culture.”



A taniwha in the pipes: encouraging creative writing

Strong written language skills not only help students to cement and present their learning – some teachers are using creative writing to strengthen children’s sense of identity and build resilience.

“One year, Mr Puru found mushrooms growing in his classroom carpet,” says Trish Hereaka, a Year 2 and 3 teacher at Rātā Street School in Lower Hutt. “When they dug up the floor, they found a pipe had burst.”

Hereaka is always keeping an eye out for ways to tie together learning, exploration and writing. “I asked my class: what had made the pipe burst? Had a taniwha got into the pipes? We made up our own legend and created a book, which I share with my current class.”

The idea of creating legends came partly out of a class visit by local writer Moira Wairama. Hereaka was also inspired by her recent trip to Alaska, where she heard a local legend about a raven stealing the sun. These stories, combined with the fact the school had New Zealand birds as their current inquiry focus, meant looking at bird-related myths and legends seemed logical. And writing their own came next.

“The students and I created a template of the common features of a legend,” says Hereaka. “Next, we retold and rewrote some known legends using our own words and explored using a ‘hook’ to engage our audience.”

After this solid introduction, Hereaka took her class for a wander around the school to find some local inspiration. “We settled on a fantail, a white heron and the Waiwhetu stream. We also learnt that Naenae used to be a swamp, so our school land was previously a swamp. From this, we created ‘How the fantail got a fan tail’.”

Each student wrote their own legend using these elements, with plenty of feedback from classmates and Hereaka along the way, while she kept a close eye on the Level 1 and 2 curriculum objectives and strategies. The students had the freedom to create parts of their story using pictures, acting or music to help them explore the process of creating.

Hereaka sees lots of benefits of having a strong creative writing presence in her classroom. “Students see themselves as writers and authors because they are conveying their own personal voice to their readers. They may entertain or inform, or convey feelings, using their own words, ideas and experiences,” she says.

Visits from published writers through ReadNZ’s (formerly NZ Book Council) Writers in Schools programme can be both inspiring and reassuring. “When the writer shares their own life experiences or the process that they go through to create a book, the students begin to make links between their writing journey and the [visiting writer’s] journey,” explains Hereaka. “Often the writer talks about making mistakes, changing parts, proofreading, editing – all the steps we use in the classroom.”

In 2012, the National Monitoring Study of Student Achievement New Zealand (NMSSA) found there was a marked decline in children’s attitudes and performance in writing as they moved into upper primary. While two-thirds of



“I like to look at what I can do for, say, that quiet student who’s got a creative element but no outlet.”

– RAYMOND CHAVE



Year 2 and 3 students around the country were doing well, by Year 8, two-thirds of students were achieving below expectations, boys especially. This was despite strong participation in professional learning and development by teachers. What could be done?

A follow-up report by the Education Review Office in May 2019¹ examined schools that were doing particularly well in writing in Year 7 and 8 to see if any common conclusions could be drawn. It found that the best results came when writing was incorporated into all parts of classroom learning – enacting things learned in a wide range of topics – as well as giving students the opportunity to practise various writing techniques. It was also important that teachers understood the purpose of writing, relating to both the curriculum and the future lives of their students. Very strongly, it found that success came when teachers placed an emphasis on craft to help children organise their ideas.

Evans Bay Intermediate is addressing these points in a unique way. In 2018, the Wellington school decided to give students more agency in the subjects they could learn, so now the whole school takes two electives every Friday morning, for 45 minutes each. There are over 20 options – including chess, French, science and

the William Pike Challenge² – and students sign up term by term. This way, they can either try out lots of different activities or focus on mastering a couple. One of these electives is the *Toitoti* Journal Club, run by teacher Raymond Chave.

“I work with students on their writing – it’s not so much a lesson, more one-on-one support,” says Chave. “I’ll help [them] scaffold their ideas, plan their ideas, with the aim to publish in *Toitoti*.” *Toitoti* is a New Zealand journal of original writing and artwork by children aged five to 13, published once a term.

The elective grew somewhat organically out of a lunchtime club a couple of years ago, which in turn was borne of Chave’s observation that the same group of students were signing up for every reading and writing activity run by the school. “I got given a library leader group [to organise], and it just so happened that the same students were trying out for the Kids’ Lit Quiz, and also wanted to do the HELL Pizza reading promotion.” Chave noticed these same students were interested in entering writing competitions.

Chave was keen to support the students he saw throughout the school who weren’t extroverted or sporty. “I just like to see success in students, and I like to look at what I can do for, say, that quiet student who’s got a creative element but no outlet.”

From these origins, the club has seen some unexpected outcomes. “I walk around at lunchtimes and they’re all hanging out together in the library, sharing their writing,” says Chave. “It’s made their own wee community, their own friendship group.”

It’s also meant he’s getting to know more students from across the school. “Only about four or five of them are from my homeroom class, and 25 are from other classes.”

Chave says the original lunchtime club was a group of about 15 girls, but when the club became a school-wide elective, another unexpected outcome occurred. “All of a sudden, I got quite a different learner. Now it’s about two-thirds girls, one-third boys,” Chave observes. “To get boys writing has been a bit tricky in the last few years, and it’s been quite noticeable that boys are signing up for this group now.”

Chave says he’s noticed most boys at his school want to spend their lunchtimes running around outside. “Now that [the writing group] is in class learning time, it’s more attractive. The boys come into the lesson on a Friday morning, and they’re a little bit muddy,” he says. “A lot of them say they enjoy writing with no parameters.”

It’s not all fun and games, though. Chave emphasises to the students in his group that writing deserves to be taken seriously, and it’s hard work – especially because the goal of the group is to be published in *Toitoti*. “It’s a privilege to be published in such a beautiful journal,” he says. “It’s like a real job – [Toitoti supplies] a contract, it’s a professional published book.”

He works with the students on things like target audience (“the readers are five to 13, so don’t make it too gruesome”), word count and being mindful of the time of the year the next issue will be published – “a Halloween-themed story or poem won’t work in Term 1”.

Students use technology to share their work with each other. They post their work on Seesaw and are required to make a comment on someone else’s work each week before starting on their own writing. “It has to be a ‘compliment sandwich’,” Chave says. “They also share their Google doc with me, and I [comment with] ideas, or highlight some parts they could expand with more precise language or other language features.”

Chave has started using published writing from the *Toitoti* group in his classroom. “It’s good to look at poems from the *School Journal* or New Zealand authors sometimes – but it’s

“To get boys writing has been a bit tricky in the last few years, and it’s been quite noticeable that boys are signing up for this group now.”

– RAYMOND CHAVE

also nice to look at an [Evans Bay] student poem that was published in *Toitoti*. I put it up on the screen, and we pull it apart for its precise language and everything,” he says. “It gives my students an exemplar – especially when they recognise the name.”

Luca, one of the students in the *Toitoti* Journal Club, has got a lot from taking the elective. “I enjoy it because it’s got a great atmosphere, where we all bounce ideas and constructive criticism off each other,” says Luca. “I’ve learned a lot about writing, deadlines and time management.”

The writing club also gives its members lessons in resilience and success. Students who have work accepted for publication are celebrated in a school assembly, where they receive a *Toitoti* merit patch to sew onto their uniforms, “like if they were in the basketball or debate teams,” says Chave.

Chave acknowledges it is “quite tricky” to manage the students’ disappointment when their work isn’t accepted – but he uses it to impart a life lesson: “Perseverance and resilience are key if you want to be successful with whatever you do in life.”

He shares the story of one of his past students who submitted to *Toitoti* unsuccessfully seven times, before being accepted on her eighth try.

“If they do get that rejection, we make sure we’ve got plan B, C, D, E. We’re going to go again!” ►

¹ ero.govt.nz/publications/keeping-children-engaged-and-achieving-in-writing
² williampikechallenge.co.nz

Exploring cultures through creativity

Toitoe is a journal that publishes the creative writing and artwork of New Zealanders aged five to 13. It has received awards for its excellent design and won Best Primary Resource in 2016. And it has just published two very special editions celebrating New Zealand’s connections to the cultures and languages of Latin America and Southeast Asia.

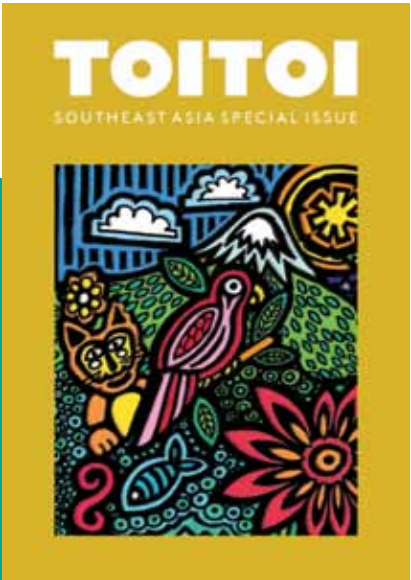
In Term 1, 2020, every primary and intermediate school in New Zealand will receive free copies of these special journals thanks to a collaboration with the Latin America Centre for Asia-Pacific Excellence (LATAMCAPE) and the Southeast Asia Centre for Asia-Pacific Excellence (SEACAPE). Each poem or story in the journals is published in two languages – English and a language of the Asia-Pacific – due to the involvement of expert translators from the School of Languages and Cultures at Victoria University of Wellington.

Founding editor of *Toitoe*, Charlotte Gibbs, says the idea originated during a conversation with Associate Professor Sally Hill, Head of the School of Languages and Cultures.

“Our young people are bursting with curiosity about the world and their place in it,” says Gibbs. “It is so important that they see the arts as a way to explore their imaginations, examine their experience and express who they are.”

Gibbs says *Toitoe* has always wanted to encourage curiosity and creativity, so young creators’ connections to these cultures could be “real or imagined, big or small, past, present or future.” To help inspire these connections, *Toitoe* made sure to offer practical support to teachers.

In April 2019, *Toitoe* and the National Library’s Services to Schools hosted workshops throughout the country to help educators find ways to engage their students in learning and creativity¹. The National Library curated resources about the two regions on their online Topic Explorer², and teacher support materials³ provided ideas for the classroom – all with the aim of learning about other cultures (or sharing students’ own cultures with their peers) via creating stories, poems and artwork for potential publication in *Toitoe*.



“It is so important that they see the arts as a way to explore their imaginations, examine their experience and express who they are.”

— CHARLOTTE GIBBS

1 teachapac.nz/teacher-stories/student-stories-grow-southeast-asia-and-latin-america-related-learning-at
2 natlib.govt.nz/schools/topics
3 toitoe.nz/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Toitoe-Connect_Teacher-Support-Materials_Digital.pdf

Toitoe received 407 submissions from 52 schools throughout the country, and 114 young writers and artists will have their creative work published in the journals.

Gibbs hopes to publish further special language editions in future, alongside the four regular issues each year. Visit toitoe.nz for information about how your students can submit writing and art, or to purchase a subscription, including teacher support materials, for your school library. ●



OPINION | THE LANGUAGE ISSUE

Leonie Agnew

Love reading aloud? Love writing!

Every year I read my class the same book – *Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing* by Judy Blume. Why? One of my favourite memories from primary school was hearing it read by my Year 3 teacher.

Mrs Vanderworth did voices. Now, I normally struggle with creating voices when reading aloud, and I can never remember exactly how they sounded from one day to the next. However, I *nail* my performance with that book, because Mrs Vanderworth’s voice stretches across decades like a time-travelling ventriloquist act. It’s a voice I can’t get out of my head. Thanks to her, I get begged all year to “do the *Fudge* voice”, but I suspect it’s really my enthusiasm for the story that starts off a series of chain reactions.

See, Judy Blume wrote a series. The *Fudge* books fly off my school library shelves because everyone wants to know what happened next. I also remember how my teacher would explain words and mime out the actions, and the way meaning slipped off the page and into my growing

vocabulary. The world grew wider with every page. I try the same with fact walls, group discussions on character and vocabulary jars, so we can see how many words we’ve learnt.

It’s a short leap from oral language to writing. We do character descriptions of *Fudge*, rewrite chapter endings, create maps and tinker with creative recounts from the point of view of different characters. When I’m teaching paragraphs or speech marks in a small group, I’ll reach for the class novel and say, “See, this is how you do it. Look here.” Obviously, I also model, but I often see the light go on when I pass them the book.

I realise my enthusiasm fuels theirs and it makes me wonder if other teachers, those who say they don’t have time for reading aloud to their class, know what they’re missing. It creates such enthusiasm for reading and writing. (I also own the rest of the series and I end up dishing them out in a bidding war during SSR. Reading engagement: tick!)

I’m also a children’s author, so I’m fussy about what I read aloud. My last

few books have been for intermediate-aged kids, too old for my students, and it’s easy to tell. They’re bored by page two, almost rolling on the ground and staring at the ceiling. My first book, *Super Finn*, remains my best read-aloud novel. I realise now that’s because of the humour, fast-paced chapters and the strong reliance on dialogue. Those kinds of books work best.

Other books I’ve linked into writing are *The Legend of Worst Boy in The World* by Eoin Colfer, *Fuzzy Doodle* by Melinda Szymanik and illustrated by Donovan Bixley – this is a brilliant sophisticated picture book with a tie to writing – and any “Horrid Henry” books. They’ve never failed me.

So, pick up a children’s book and get stuck in. Better still, try a book from the Storylines NZ Notable Book list. (Google it – you won’t regret it.) If it’s a little tricky at first, well, your enthusiasm will be infectious. Include voices and mime, then sit back and watch the writing and oral language improve. However, you’ve been warned: if they start flicking Blu Tack across the classroom, try another book!

Leonie Agnew is a primary school teacher and the award-winning author of four children’s books, including *Super Finn* and *The Impossible Boy*. She lives in Auckland.



“A space where children can be Samoan”

A leai se gagana, ua leai se aganuu ... A leai se aganuu ua po le nu’u.
When you lose your language you lose your culture, and when there is no longer a living culture, darkness descends on the village.
– Samoan proverb

In August 2019, the Education Review Office reported to government on the state of Pacific bilingual education. It warned that a burgeoning population of Pacific children, without exposure to their language, might soon occupy a similar situation to Māori in the 1970s, “fighting to bridge an inter-generational language gap in the community.” At the same time, the paper described existing immersion and bilingual programmes in schools as under-resourced, uncoordinated and under-supported.

In response to this grim bird’s-eye assessment, *Ako* visited two very different school communities in Auckland that are focussed on growing Pacific New Zealanders who are safe and secure in their culture.

Nerra Lealiifano-Tamarua considers herself blessed.

“I am one of the lucky generation of Pasifika New Zealanders who learned to walk in two worlds. I’m confident and successful as a Samoan and as a Kiwi – and that’s what I want for the students I teach.”

Lealiifano-Tamarua talks as she surveys her classroom, which sits in May Road School’s Samoan bilingual unit. She is Senior Leader here, and around 25 children are quietly working away at a writing task, some assisted by a teacher aide.

“My generation had parents who spoke our first language exclusively and that was reinforced by the church, which was the mainstay of our community,” she says. “When I started school, I was strong in my language and culture. These kids come here from a different space.”

Some parents of these city-fringe Auckland students have limited or no functional Samoan

language, and have lost much of their connection with their culture.

“They’ve experienced a lot of racism and negativity growing up, so now they are seeking out something better for their kids by re-engaging with their language and culture.”

Parental demand saw the establishment of a single bilingual classroom, which has now grown to three classes. Together they make up around a third of the school roll. For the children entering at Year 1, English is usually the strongest language.

“It’s the default language because that’s the language their parents speak,” says Lealiifano-Tamarua. “If the family is active in the church, they will have stronger language and some comfort in the Samoan way. Some will have come through a Samoan [early childhood centre], but we are building from a fairly low language base.”

That’s why the focus at May Road School is not exclusively on language.



01

“People assume that it’s language, language, language. Sure, it’s an important component, but not the overriding one. Here we have a whole-child approach. We are creating a space where children can be Samoan.”

Lealiifano-Tamarua turns to the class and begins to chant a Samoan proverb, which the children complete in unison.

“E iloa ie teine ma le tama Samoa I lana tu, I lana nofo, I lana savali, I lana tautala ma lana amio,” they call enthusiastically before returning to their work. She translates for us: “You will know a Samoan girl or boy by the way they stand, sit, walk, talk – and by their behaviour.”

Within the classroom, most instructions are delivered in Samoan, as are any corrections. Even when children do not understand the words, they pick up the nonverbal clues.

During class discussion, Lealiifano-Tamarua offers ongoing translation so that all children can

participate, no matter their language proficiency. When a new topic of study is introduced, she will often frontload in English before building a vocabulary of Samoan words that routinely populate the whiteboard and are used in handwriting and reading. The class uses dual-language readers, which are sent home for parents to share with their children. Some of these books are about everyday events in Samoa.

“Parents are learning Samoan language through their children,” says Lealiifano-Tamarua. “When they come into the classroom to drop off their kids, we chat, and I can hear the development of their language and offer them support to develop further.”

Api Cowley-Lupo is one of those parents. She’s fluent in Tongan, with a Samoan husband who doesn’t speak the language. She wants her children to be connected to the language and values of both heritages.



“Here we have a whole-child approach. We are creating a space where children can be Samoan.”

— NERRA LEALIIFANO-TAMARUA

02

“That’s why I brought them here,” she says. “I want my kids to be able to communicate with grandparents from both sides. Since coming here, they’ve developed a new confidence. They’re not shy to speak Samoan at family gatherings. They’ll step up and say grace. People are learning from them, including their dad.”

Kirita Auva’a-Key tells a similar story. She enrolled her daughter in the bilingual unit, hoping to give the child a different experience from her own.

“I was part of a generation that felt there was something missing. For me, there was always a disconnect. You know you’re Samoan, but without the language you feel you’re not a real Samoan – and I used to hear things like, ‘Plastic, you’re a plastic Samoan’. I really want it to be different for my daughter.”

Auva’a-Key hasn’t been disappointed. Her daughter is developing confidence – and not only in the Samoan language.

“The school is reinforcing the values and morals we teach at home as well,” she says. “I went through a mainstream education, and school was very different from home in terms of expectations and behaviour. That was hard for me – but for my daughter, I can see she’s comfortable with who she is. Being Samoan is so much more than being able to speak the language.”

Auva’a-Key can also view bilingual education up close. For the past couple of years, she has worked as a teacher aide at May Road, sitting alongside the children while they all learn the language.

“Like the kids, I have no choice but to engage with the language because it is everywhere.”

She speaks, too, of the way Samoan cultural norms permeate the classroom. There is a real feeling of family or aiga, where children with stronger understandings support and guide others. Such an environment can have a profound effect on a child coming from mainstream. Even if they had been getting in constant trouble before, they soon calm down.

“It’s not because he or she is intimidated,” says Auva’a-Key. “It’s that they’re not having to have two selves.”

Lealiifano-Tamarua agrees. “You can see kids coming from mainstream [who are] beginning to unpack who they are as a Pasifika child; discovering who they might be.”

By the time they reach the senior school, students in the bilingual unit are performing at levels comparable to their mainstream



03

“I was part of a generation that felt there was something missing.”
– Kirita Auva’a-Key

counterparts. They are able to carry their Samoan language into the digital classrooms that operate in the upper school.

However, Lealiifano-Tamarua does worry that when they leave primary school there are limited options for students where their language and culture will be supported.

“It is this aiga culture, the feeling of family, that our parents say the children miss most as they go on to intermediate and secondary school,” she says.

Twenty kilometres south of May Road, Sonia Johnston is principal of Roscommon School. Like May Road School, Roscommon has a significant Samoan population, but one that is different from the Mt Roskill school.

“Eight years ago, when we first began our unit, our Samoan parents were largely first-language speakers,” says Johnston. “Over time there has been a slight shift, but most of our Samoan children still come from homes where Samoan is the main language spoken.”

Like May Road, the impetus for the establishment of a bilingual programme at Roscommon came from the parent community, growing out of regular meetings with the school’s ethnic groupings.

“Those meetings had a real, empowering effect on our parents and, following a Samoan Language Week, a group of them came and asked if we could set up a unit.”

It was a request that Johnston wasn’t fully prepared for. Though she was about to start studying bilingual papers at university, she was unsure about such a proposal.

“Some of my reservations were based upon the variation in the quality of provision I had seen in my own experience, and some was my own lack of understanding of bilingualism,” she says. “However, I said to the parents that we

would unpack the evidence together as to what a successful bilingual education would look like. So that’s what we did.”

The journey Johnston and her community went on overturned the myth that mastery of English was paramount. Rather, the research showed that for Samoan children, bilingualism and biliteracy were keys to success. What finally settled things, however, was when the community convinced Johnston that the right leadership was there to lead such innovation.

At an emotional meeting, Johnston told the parents that she didn’t feel Samoan enough to drive the process. “There came a point where I realised that my reservation was partly because of my personal feelings about being a Samoan who could not speak the language,” says Johnston. “I felt that I wasn’t the person who could lead the process.”

She was immediately embraced by the community. They told her that she was one of them and that they trusted her to show the way. From that point, Roscommon School’s bilingual Samoan unit was born, starting with four classes and quickly growing to seven.

The unit was founded upon two principles: the maintenance of the Samoan language, culture and identity, and the empowerment of children.

“Our parents were saying they wanted our children to be strong in their [Samoan] identity, but also wanted them to succeed in New Zealand society – not just as individuals, but as members of a family and aiga. Part of that is about empowering parents and communities by engaging them in their children’s education.”

Teacher Pisa Fua admits that the first year was a lot of hard work for staff in the unit.

“We had spent years in our classrooms using English as the first language, so it was a big change. Suddenly, we had to plan in two languages, and even though I’m a native speaker it wasn’t easy. I realised that I had been losing my language, replacing Samoan words with English.”

Fua and her colleague Simoe Toleafoa agree that support from management and community has made the experience a success for teachers, students and community alike. Teachers plan as a group and share the load of creating resources. They have also experienced a resurgence of their own fluency in the Samoan language.

“When we started, teachers suddenly had permission to use their first language,” says Johnston. “I hadn’t anticipated how important that would be for them. We’d always used Samoan in the mainstream to support Samoan children, but



04

“Our parents were saying they wanted our children to be strong in their [Samoan] identity, but also wanted them to succeed in New Zealand society.”
– Sonia Johnston

this was quite different. There was a freeing up.”

There has been a similar liberating effect for parents, especially those with English as their second language. “Anxiety has been reduced,” says Johnston. “Parents don’t have the worry of coming to school, where often it can be an environment foreign to their own experience. Here, they can freely use their own language to access information about their child’s learning and our education system in general.”

“We have a good turnout at parent interviews,” says Pisa Fua. “Parents are able to discuss their children’s learning in their first language. They now know so much more about their children’s learning and how they are doing.”

Johnston says that the connection of teachers to the parent community has continued to be strengthened over the years.

“Teachers feel that they carry the weight of the culture on their shoulders. They are part of the dream of the Pacific people, trying to reverse trends and mindsets and racism. We are saying to our kids, ‘You are okay. You can do this. Don’t let anyone tell you that you can’t learn in a way that affirms who you are.’”

At Roscommon, the first language – Samoan – is consolidated and built upon in the early years, making up around 80 percent of language used. Over time, the amount of English usage increases, so that in the senior school Samoan makes up around 20 percent. Part of the success of the bilingual project has been due to its extension to include Years 7 and 8.

“That was a long fight,” says Johnston. “We had to persuade the ministry that the eight-year pathway was critical to the success of our students. We produced the evidence and had strong backing from the parents. In the end,

I think it was the level and quality of parent support that got us over the line.”

The principal and teachers agree that running a successful bilingual unit can be challenging. Finding teaching resources is an ongoing battle that has in part been addressed by schools sharing through the Pasifika Early Literacy Project (PELP).

Funding is also an issue. While Roscommon School’s Māori bilingual unit attracts additional government funding, including the Māori Immersion Teaching Allowance (MITA) for kaiako, its Pacific bilingual unit get no such funding. The school sees this as an “anomaly” and has made representations to ministers about it, but does not see it as a divisive issue.

“There’s no rivalry,” says Johnston. “Our language units have the same kaupapa. They do the same work, share the same story in trying to revitalise and sustain the language, and are working to turn that story around. They are very supportive of each other.”

While the school is lucky in maintaining quality bilingual teachers, Johnston knows of other

“We have a good turnout at parent interviews. Parents are able to discuss their children’s learning in their first language.”
– Pisa Fua

schools that struggle, particularly when it comes to accessing qualified relievers. It was this limited availability of quality, qualified language teachers that impacted on Roscommon being unable to sustain its Tongan bilingual unit.

Eight years on from the initial discussions about pursuing Pacific bilingual education, Sonia Johnston and her staff are satisfied. They acknowledge the work of other schools, like Finlayson Park School up the road, which provided leadership for the bilingual education movement. And every year, Roscommon School proudly farewells the graduates of their own unit.

When they leave at the end of Year 8, Roscommon’s Samoan students are bilingual and biliterate. Just as importantly, they are ambassadors for the language.

Sonia Johnston sums it up this way: “We say to the kids, ‘Yes, you are coming here to learn, but you are also coming here to lead. It is your job to keep the Samoan language, culture and values alive for the next generation.’ When you come here every day, you know the work is worthy work.” ●

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OPINION | THE LANGUAGE ISSUE

Pisa Fua

O Taumafa Manogi ma Aogā mo le Fanau

O le Gagana, o le Fatu po’o le Maui lea o le Aganu’u a Samoa a’o le Aganu’u, o le Fa’asinomaga lea o le Samoa. – Tuiatua Tupua Tamasese Efi, 2018

O a ia Taumafa? O Taumafa Manogi, ua fa’atusaina lea i le fa’aaogaina o le Gagana e fafaga ai tama a Samoa e Faatonu, Fa’asino, Faapoto ma Fesoota’i ai. E leitioa fo’i le Fa’autaga ma le ‘au fai Tofā a fa’apea mai: “O fānau a tagata e fafaga i ‘upu ma tala ‘ae ‘o tama a manu o fuga o lā’au.”

O la’u gagana, o le taula lea o lo’u olaga aoaoina, o le faavae malosi ma le mafuaaga o le manuia o lo’u taumafai i totonu o Niusila. O se pine faamau foi o suesuega o loo faapea mai, a malamalama le tagata i lana gagana muamua, e faigofie ona fa’aofi se isi gagana i lona olaga¹. Na ou galue o se faiaoga i Samoa ma sa fa’aaogaina le Gagana Samoa o le Gagana fa’atonu i aoga. I le galue ai i Niusila nei, na faigofie ona feso’ota’i, tusitusi ma talanoa i le Gagana Peretania ona o le lelei o la’u fa’asamoa. E faapea foi le maitau i fanau o loo autova’a mai i Samoa, e faigofie ona au ai i mataupu e faatalanoaina i le gagana Peretania ona o lo’o mausali ma lelei le tautala fa’asamoa.

O le fesili: “Ae o le a se matauga i fanau e le lelei le tautala fa’asamoa?” I le mafutaga ma la’u vasega (bilingual class) e vave tele le pu’eina o le gagana Samoa e tamaiti na ola i Niusila ona o a latou paaga mai Samoa. E fa’apena foi

le vaega mai Samoa i le pu’eina o le gagana fa’aperetania mai a latou paaga o lo’o avea le gagana peretania ma gagana muamua. O lo’u taofi, a fafia le loto o le tamaititi, o le auga lea o le naunau e saili ma tu’ufesili mo le fafagaina o le ola a’oa’oina. O le Matafaioi ma le tofi lea e fai fa’atasi e faiaoga, matua ma aiga fa’atasi ai ma fanau.

O le faaaogaina o le gagana Samoa, o se vailaau ua lototele ai le tamaititi e fa’asoa. Ua tautala ma manino ona manatu pe a tulai i faatasiga o tu ma aganuu a aoga. Ua faamautuina ai lana tu faaaloalo ma ‘ausia nisi o moemitiga, ina ia mafai ona tautala, faitau ma tusitusi i gagana e lua. O se tasi vaega taua, o le gagana Samoa lava, sa foia ai faafitauli na tulai mai i fanau sa i vasega ē na o le gagana Peretania e faaaogaina. Ina ua fesiligia le mafuaaga o le lē faalogo ma ulavavale, ae sa faailoa e le tamititi, o le lē malamalama i le gagana Peretania ma e leai foi se isi sa faaliliuina i lana gagana.

O loo faatupulaia le toatele o tamaiti i le Iunite Samoa ma o loo maitauina le alualu i luma o lo latou taumafai. O se fiafiaga sili foi i matua, ona ua faaoga la latou lava gagana e faasoa ai ma faiaoga i auala eseese e mafai ona latou fesoasaoani ai i fanau i le fale, aua o Taumafa ia e manogi ma aoga mo fanau. Saunoa le tamaitai fomai o Fanaafi Aiono-Le Tagaloa: “A leai se Gagana, ua leai se Aganuu. A leai se Aganuu, ua po le Nuū”.

¹ Cummins J. (2000). Language, power and pedagogy: Bilingual children in the crossfire. Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters.

Nourishment for the next generation

Language is the heart (fatu) or centre (mauli) of the Samoan culture, and culture signifies one’s sense of belonging. – Tuiatua Tupua Tamasese Efi, 2018

Language can be considered nourishment – the best ingredient for feeding and enriching knowledge for the purposes of learning, directing, relating and connecting. There is a Samoan proverb that states, “O le tama a le Tagata e Fafaga i Upu ma Tala ae o Manu o Fuga o Laau” – “The son of man is nourished with words, while birds are nourished with nectar.”

My Samoan language is the anchor and strong foundation of my journey academically. It helped me understand and communicate more clearly in English, both oral and written. I see it as one of the main reasons I am good at my job as a teacher, living a fulfilled life in this country. I was fortunate to have experienced life in Samoa not only as a student, but also as a teacher. Samoan language was the language of instruction in the school system and no doubt kept my fa’asamoa current and sharp.

This is also observed in our bilingual

unit with Samoan children who have not been in New Zealand that long. While their first language is Samoan, they adjust reasonably well to picking up the meaning of conversations in English. With guidance and support from teachers and their peers, their participation and contributions to class activities and discussions are impressive. It legitimises the maintenance of children’s first languages in order to find their own uniqueness.

And what about Samoan children who have English as their first language? In my experience, as one of the teachers for the bilingual class, it is interesting to note that both Samoan first language speakers and English first language speakers have a very high degree of similarity. I have observed with great admiration the support that both groups of children give to one another. They look happy while learning and exploring.

While the emphasis in the unit is on language, the environment and the people in it must create conducive settings for children to enjoy learning. This is the reason children enjoy coming to school and are free to explore, question and learn more words. It is a

source of improving the articulation of language and enriching knowledge. It is our collective responsibilities as teachers, parents and aiga to nurture our children towards contentment.

Language embodies values and meanings to living life. It archives beliefs, history and genealogy (gafa and fai’a) that define us as a people. Cummins suggests that when someone understands their first language, they are more likely to learn and understand other languages easier and steadier¹. This could lead to forging better relationships and a unified community.

In summary, the use of children’s first language helps them understand other languages quicker. It provides them with confidence to participate and be expressive. It increases their sense of pride in who they are and their ability to communicate and connect with others. Samoan speakers learn English quicker with the help of their peers, and likewise. They are able to resolve their differences with the help of the teacher using their first language. Roscommon School’s bilingual unit is growing all the time and, I must say, it looks very healthy.

Ia manuia.

Pisa Fua works at Roscommon School in Manurewa as a classroom teacher and team leader of the Samoan Bilingual Unit.

KAIĀWHINA TAUTOKO WHAKAMAHIA HE REREKĒTANGA



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campaigns.nzei.org.nz/support-staff



To literacy and beyond

School libraries can boost literacy results for students, and they can also contribute to students' sense of belonging. School librarians talk about how they serve the varied needs of their communities.

01



Around 92 percent of New Zealand schools have a physical library space – although what that means in practice varies. They could be multi-media learning hubs with a team of library staff, or a cupboard of books managed by a teacher and volunteers – or anything in between¹.

Given school funding pressures, it can be hard to prioritise the library. Yet schools with librarians have better student reading levels, according to international research².

A comprehensive survey undertaken by the National Library, the Library and Information Association of New Zealand Aotearoa (LIANZA) and the School Library Association of New Zealand Aotearoa (SLANZA) identified “a widely held view that the school library has an important part to play in supporting literacy development for students, learning across the curriculum, and student wellbeing.”³ At Tamahere Model Country School, south of Hamilton, the library is literally at its centre. Books have been moved from a dark, ministry prefab into the renovated, historically listed, original classroom “to make more space for our 7,500 precious books.”

“Our librarian is energetic and passionate and helps to ignite and build on the love of reading and learning,” says principal Waveney Parker. “Our reading results reflect this and the Education Review Office (ERO) used our school as a case study in 2017, acknowledging our library and librarian as significant influences.”

Parker says all the teachers and students love their very special library and librarian and would



“I tell children if they don’t like a book we’ll find another option – there is a book out there for everyone, we just haven’t found yours yet!”
– Theresa Kewish

1 Page 16, natlib.govt.nz/files/schools/school-libraries-and-school-library-services-in-nz-aotearoa.pdf
2 greatschoolibraries.org.uk/news
3 natlib.govt.nz/files/schools/school-libraries-and-school-library-services-in-nz-aotearoa.pdf
4 learningstaircase.co.nz
5 scholastic.co.nz/ideas

not want to be without them. “We value them and prioritise [them] in our tight budget.” The librarian herself, Theresa Kewish, credits excellent two-way communication between the teachers and herself when it comes to the library supporting literacy development. “I have no problem communicating the library’s needs or advocating the library’s services to students, staff, parents and school management.”

She uses the school’s annual “booklet” to identify topics that are coming up, in order to get resources in ahead of time. She likes to “move along with the curriculum” by, for example, adding material on resilience and coding. Each class visits the library to be read to every week, and Kewish is aware of the struggling and reluctant readers, as well as the bookworms.

She believes there is a book or series for every child. “I tell them if they don’t like a book, to put it aside and we’ll find another option – there is a book out there for everyone, we just haven’t found yours yet! We provide books and topics that reluctant readers want to read. It’s ‘promote, promote, promote’ – making reading and the library fun, investing in graphic novels, discussing books as much as you can.”

It’s not always entirely about the books themselves, though. Kewish says it’s also “caring about children, being genuine and making the library an interesting place to be – making displays and changing them regularly, doing reading advisories, making bright posters promoting books and genres.”

There are year-level sets of read-aloud books, complete with teacher notes, and visits from children’s authors – most recently, Des Hunt and Kat Merewether. Recent hit books include New Zealander James Russell’s “Dragon Brothers” series and Australian Jessica Townsend’s “Nevermoor” series.

Kewish also runs various programmes and activities during her 22-hour week, including Steps to Literacy⁴ and the Scholastic Book Fair⁵. The annual Book Week features various promotions and competitions, including Dress Up as a Book Character Day.

She acknowledges the importance of the community in promoting reading and literacy. Every week, local early childhood services (ECEs) visit the school library. A community volunteer repairs books, and Kewish organises student librarians and teacher volunteers to keep the library open and running when she’s not there.



02





03

“An inclusive collection [also] means that children are exposed to, and get insight into, other cultures and ways of life.”

– MICHELLE SIMMS

North of Hamilton city, at Te Totara Primary School, librarian Michelle Simms has also set up a system that sees a team of student librarians and shelf monitors, about 80 children in any one year, working with books.

“From the student librarians, we choose five head student librarians, who are responsible for training and monitoring the shelf monitors. There’s a lot of demand to be a student librarian, often from bookish types, but also those who want to use the scanner and be in charge.”

Simms works closely with teaching staff. “The principal provides me with the curriculum coverage and contexts for the year. As the school loan coordinator for the National Library’s lending service, I also touch base with team leaders about their needs for each term,” she says. “Staff recommend books to me to buy that they’ve seen promoted, or that are their

favourites, and I make displays in the staffroom of relevant books from our library.”

The school has a Patron of Reading, the author Dawn McMillan, and Simms runs Teachers’ Reading Groups. Both these initiatives stem from an NZEI Scholarship that she used to travel to the United Kingdom to learn about reading initiatives there.

Simms is a big fan of graphic novels, particularly for children who have difficulty reading. “Everybody is reading graphic novels, so struggling readers don’t have to worry about reading something that is different from everyone else – though it’s useful to have an article up your sleeve about how worthy graphic novels are, for teachers and students who don’t see them as ‘real’ reading!”

Audiobooks and e-books also help struggling readers, particularly ones that allow

students to make the font bigger and change the colour of the background.

“These kinds of books give anonymity to students so they can read ‘younger’ books without being embarrassed,” says Simms. This kind of thinking helps create a diverse and inclusive collection in the library.

“There are also highly illustrated series, like ‘Tom Gates’ [a series by Liz Pichon] or ‘Big Nate’ [a comic strip series by Lincoln Peirce], or books specifically created for dyslexic children, like those published by Barrington Stoke.” Simms puts these in their own section, under the title “Easy on the Eye”.

Simms says one of the barriers to building an inclusive collection is being able to easily locate the books on site. “The Dewey system leads to books on Māori language and culture being shelved in separate places.” So she is creating a section that brings these books together.

“The benefit of an inclusive collection is that children see themselves. An Indian student this week held up *The Night Diary* by Veera Hiranandani, a historical fiction book about the partition of India, and said, ‘This is the best book I have ever read.’”

An inclusive collection is also helpful for parents. “I had a mother come in and ask for books with children with autism in them, for her son,” says Simms. “I printed a list from our catalogue, and she was really happy.”

Simms adds: “An inclusive collection [also] means that children are exposed to, and get insight into, other cultures and ways of life.”

Student librarian Ruby agrees that this is one of the reasons the library is special. “It teaches us about different histories and entertaining people,” she says. “I volunteered to be a school librarian because I wanted to try something new this year. I love helping out around the library, issuing books for other people and showing them around the library.”

School libraries can be vital to families who are at a distance from the nearest public library. At Massey Primary School, in Auckland’s northwest, a survey found that less than a third of families had a public library card. The school responded by setting up a library bus programme. It also invited a local playgroup to meet at the school’s library, and as a result, several parents have become regular borrowers. “It has taught [young children] to value and enjoy books, and research shows that [reading] creates better bonding between parent and



child,” says librarian Nova Gibson.

Gibson has offered 11 local ECEs a box of books each as “pop-up libraries”, using books she has personally sourced – and checked for quality – from local op-shops and donations. Parents are invited to borrow books to read to their children and then swap them for another one. “I don’t expect staff to police the books coming back – but encourage them to let me know if they run low and I top up the box.”

There are another 15 centres with a fridge full of books at their front gate, thanks to Gibson. These are used for wider community book swaps. There’s also a book swap fridge in her own school library, from which she gives books to children who are chronic losers of books.

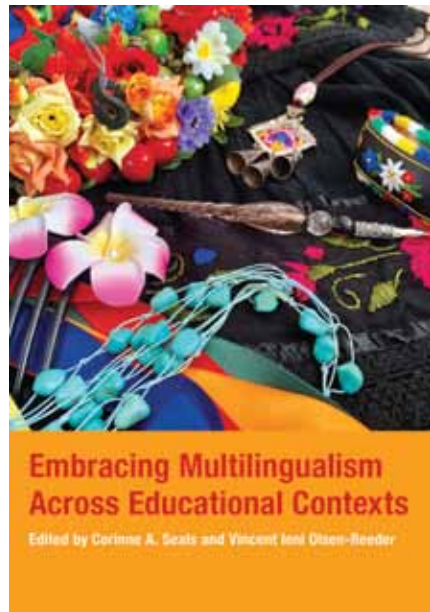
There’s a summer reading programme planned, too, in conjunction with public libraries and school libraries from throughout Massey Primary’s Community of Learning.

Gibson is passionate about books being accessible to busy families, and about books reflecting children’s experiences. “One young boy was so excited about Tongan books when I displayed them for Tongan Language Week. Two sisters, recently arrived from South Africa, follow me into the library at about 7.30am and I’ve been able to talk with them and show them books about their country,” she says.

“If children find a book they identify with, it’s a starting point for a conversation. They feel safe, included and valued until they’ve made friends and feel more secure in the playground.” ●



REVIEWS

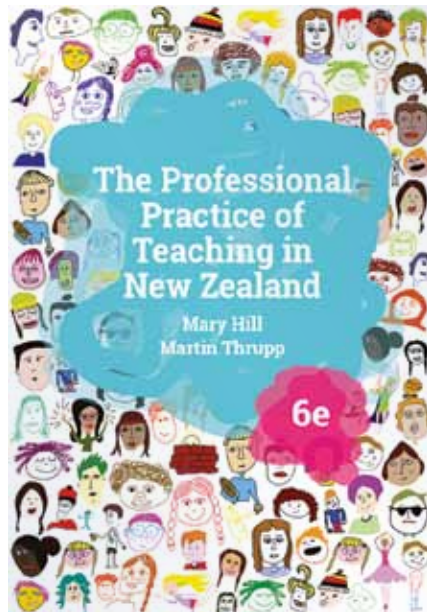


Embracing Multilingualism Across Educational Contexts

Corinne A. Seals & Vincent Ieni Olsen-Reeder (Victoria University Press)

Embracing Multilingualism Across Educational Contexts is a comprehensive exploration of international case studies of multilingualism in education, and it investigates the effects of different types of supportive languages education. There is a focus on researcher-led and practitioner-led studies of translanguaging in teaching.

The book is one to refer back to over time, to dip and delve into, as each of the chapters brings a different context and suggestions of possible further research or practical implications to support multilingual learning environments. Regardless of the specific context, though, there is a shared agreement that embracing



The Professional Practice of Teaching in New Zealand (6th edition)

Mary F. Hill & Martin Thrupp (Cengage)

This comprehensive textbook covers everything a training teacher might want to know about classroom practice and the New Zealand education system. I'd posit that even experienced teachers would find food for thought or ways to refresh their work. Every chapter has been revised and updated, and thoughtful new content includes "Creating cultures of belonging: engaging diversity to enhance learning", "Becoming a teacher" and "Revealing the privatisation of education". Each chapter includes rich case studies, views from students and teachers, and insightful questions and activities to help the reader engage with the content. – *Jane Arthur*

Educational Psychology for Learning and Teaching (6th edition)

Sue Duchesne & Anne McMaugh (Cengage)

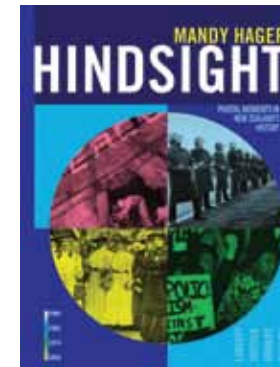
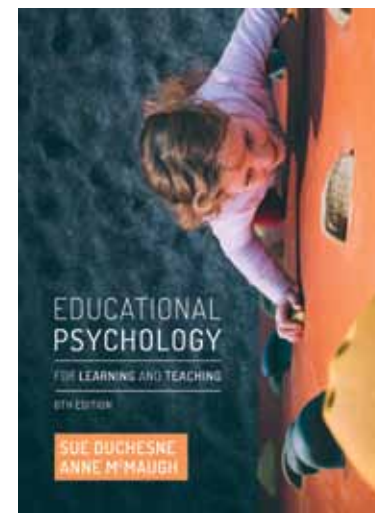
As a practicing psychologist working in the education sector, I am constantly grappling with how to effectively and efficiently support teachers to apply the principles of psychology in a way that can best assist all of the students in their classrooms, especially those with the highest level of need. No simple task, I can assure you.

Educational Psychology for Learning and Teaching provides a holistic view of learning, behaviour and development as it relates to educational psychology in the school context and delivers it in a practical and user-friendly way.

While there's no hiding that this is in fact a textbook intended predominantly for university students (there's a study guide at the end of each chapter), there is extensive value in a book like this being in every school in the country. This book provides the key foundations for educators to understand the diverse learners in their classrooms and how best to hone their teaching practice for maximum effect.

Although predominantly an Australian text, there are some strong links to the New Zealand context. As such, it's impressive to have te ao Māori and indigenous perspectives and theories woven throughout, ensuring culturally responsive supports for tamariki Māori.

This book is full and comprehensive, and so it should be with 700 pages. It may be unlikely to make it onto a summer reading list for any of you. However, I certainly recommend it as a one-stop-shop for educators seeking ideas of how to support diverse learnings in their classrooms. – *Byron Sanders*



Hindsight: Pivotal Moments in New Zealand's History

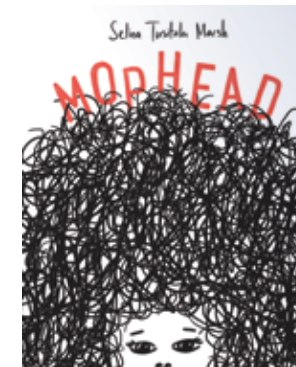
Mandy Hager (OneTree House)

Hindsight draws lines from four moments in history – women's suffrage; the Springbok tour; the Dawn Raids; and the sinking of the *Rainbow Warrior* – to other parts of our social, political and cultural history. Throughout, acclaimed author Mandy Hager (best known for her award-winning novels for teens) asks the reader to consider social and moral contexts with questions like "Why Should We Care?" and "How Would You Feel?" This is an ethically responsible approach that helps teach critical thinking alongside the facts and complexities of our history. Suitable for intermediate schools and above. – *Jane Arthur*

Mophead

Selina Tusitala Marsh (Auckland University Press)

Selina Tusitala Marsh – English professor, former NZ Poet Laureate and Officer of the NZ Order of Merit – tells her life story in this "graphic memoir", which reads like a long picture book.

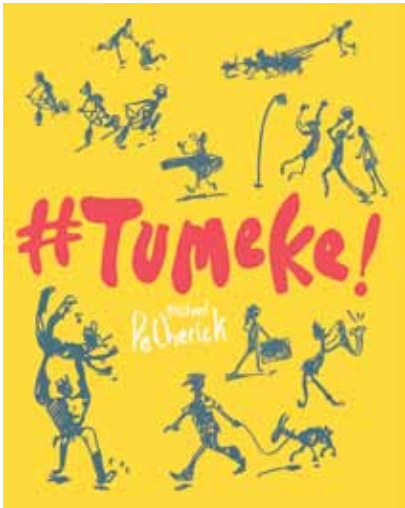


Starting with being teased for her wild, frizzy hair at age 10, Marsh discusses having mixed heritage (Samoan, Tuvaluan, English, Scottish and French), being switched onto poetry when Sam Hunt visits her school, becoming head girl, getting a PhD and performing for royalty. A fabulous celebration of "wildness" and boundary-defying achievement for a wide range of ages. – *Jane Arthur*

Awatea and the Kawa Gang

Fraser Smith (HUIA)

This novel for upper-primary children is the sequel to *Awatea's Treasure*, which was shortlisted for the NZ Book Awards for Children and Young Adults. Author Fraser Smith is the principal of Oturu School in Kaitiāia, and he has a real knack for the type of yarns that will engage reluctant readers. Set firmly in the New Zealand outdoors, this story takes place during the school holidays. Awatea is staying at the beach with his grandparents, catching fish, sleeping outdoors, swimming in the sea and hanging out with a talking parrot. A tried and tested classroom read-aloud. – *Jane Arthur*

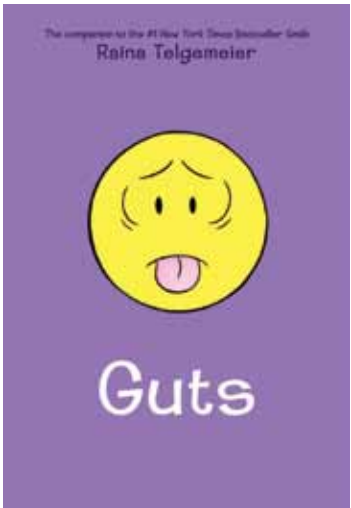


#TUMEKE
Michael Petherick (Annual Ink/
Massey University Press)

This is a unique novel for upper primary and intermediate children, told in full colour via a collage of text messages, emails, drawings, letters and the quirky notes pinned to a community noticeboard at the library of a diverse urban New Zealand suburb. There is a lot of potential for using this in the classroom, and it’s also a good reading option for children who enjoy graphic novels. – Jane Arthur

Guts
Raina Telgemeier (Scholastic)

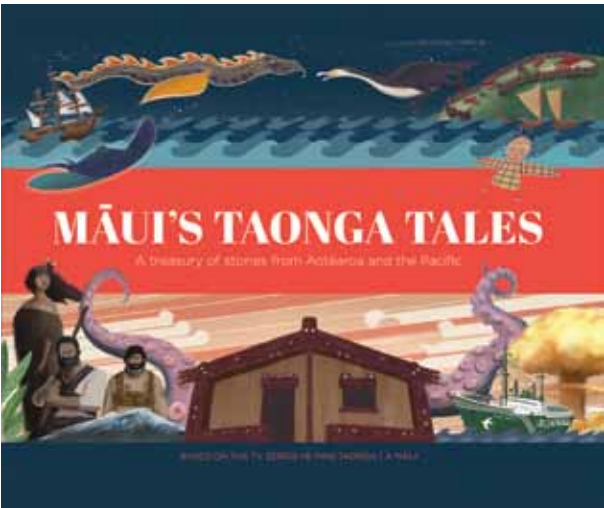
A fabulous graphic novel from America telling the story of the author’s development of anxiety and phobias when she was 10. It’s filled with relatable and humorous details about family, friendships and school life, as well as vividly describing what panic attacks feel like and how they might be tamed. Highly recommended for children who experience anxiety, as well as for others to help understand what it’s like. The



gorgeous full-colour illustrations and clever storytelling techniques (using both written and visual language) could also kickstart a class project on comic strips and graphic novels. – Jane Arthur

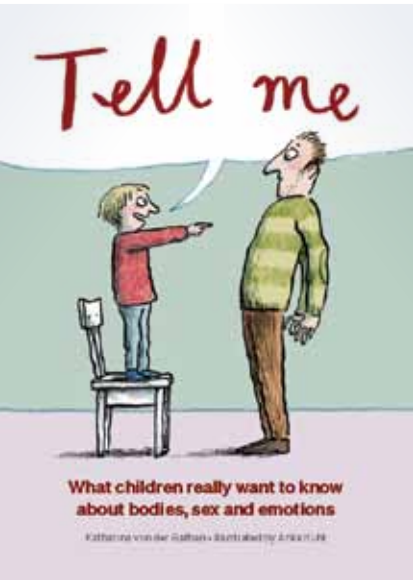
He Paki Taonga i a Māui / Māui’s Taonga Tales
David Brechin-Smith & Ranea Aperahama (Te Papa Press)

There are two separate editions of this gorgeous hardcover book for upper primary and intermediate children – one in te reo Māori and one in English. It is based on a Māori TV series, which in turn is based on the stories of selected taonga found in the collection of Te Papa. Each story has been created in consultation with Te Papa’s mātauranga Māori curators and the relevant iwi, and they include “Tāne and the Kete of Knowledge” and “Willie Apiata and the Tough Decision” – myth and history, old and new, all “narrated” by Māui. The colour illustrations are created by a range of Māori illustrators. This book is a fabulous way into parts of our history. – Jane Arthur



Tell Me: What Children Really Want to Know About Bodies, Sex and Emotions
Katharina von der Gathen & Anke Kuhl, translated by Shelley Tanaka (Gecko Press)

The author of this fabulous resource is a sex educator in Germany. She asked children to anonymously submit questions with the promise she’d answer them all – and answer them honestly. This book, a hit around the world and now available in English, is a collection of 99 of these questions, and von der Gathen’s answers are commendably frank and simple. She strikes a perfect balance – never condescending, with just the right amount of scientific detail for primary school children. Because these questions came from children, there’s no skirting around issues, resulting in queries like: “what is a prostitute?”, “how long is a penis?” and “what happens if you don’t feel like having sex?”. *Tell Me* provides a wonderful way for children to address their curiosity safely on their own, or begin a more in-depth conversation with a parent or teacher. There is lots of



Gathen’s answers are commendably frank and simple. She strikes a perfect balance – never condescending, with just the right amount of scientific detail for primary school children.

nonjudgmental information about consent, identity, puberty and more, and sweetly humorous cartoon illustrations accompany each question (including naked genitals, so be prepared for some giggles as children learn). – Jane Arthur

Whakarongo ki ō Tūpuna/ Listen to Your Ancestors
Darryn Joseph & Munro Te Whata (Oratia)

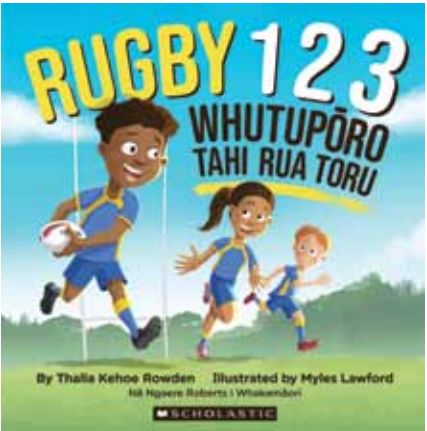
This special picture book is set in and around a classroom, and depicts a wonderful teacher sharing lessons from te ao Māori, in both te reo and English, including: “*Tukuna ngā raru, e*



hine, e tama, kaua e puritia. Whiua atu kia riro i tō kōrua tupuna, i a Tāwhiri-mātea. / Let your troubles go, girl, boy – don’t bear grudges. Go outside and throw them to your ancestor, The Mighty Blustering Wind.” This book’s author is a senior lecturer in te reo Māori at Massey University, and he has written many books for Māori immersion education. – Jane Arthur

Rugby 1 2 3 / Whutupōro Tahi Rua Toru
Thalia Kehoe Rowden, Myles Lawford & Ngaere Roberts (Scholastic NZ)

A rhyming counting book about rugby, covering lots of details about the game in an admirably simple way: “*Five mighty forwards, joining in a maul. / Six backs, stretched out wide, running with the ball. // E rima ngā kaitākaro mārohirohi, kei mua, kei rō kākaritanga / E ono ngā kaitākaro kei muri, kei te hōrapa, e oma ana, me te pōro.*” The text is in both English and te reo Māori, with both languages printed in equal size. The illustrations convey a wonderfully diverse cast of characters,

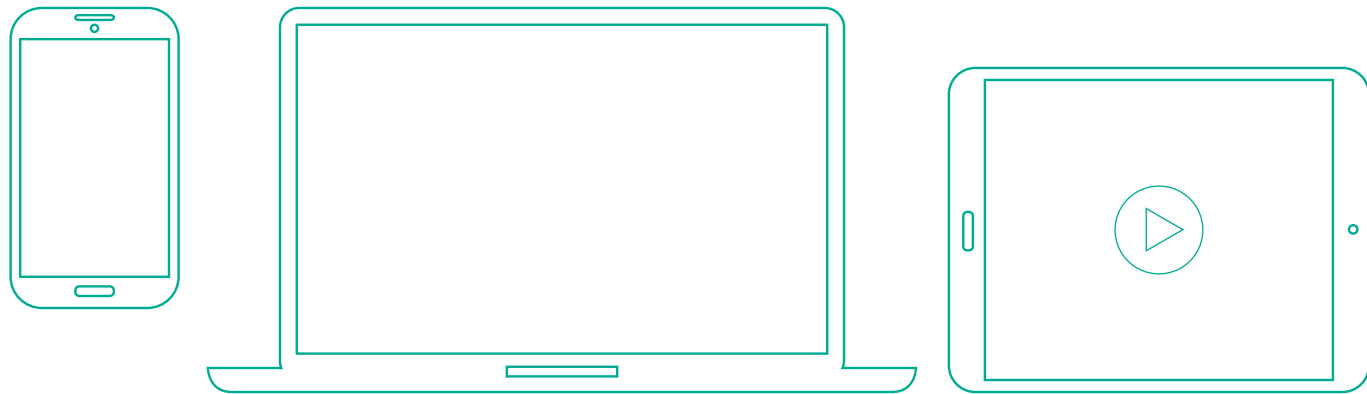


representing lots of genders, body types, hair and skin colours. An authentically New Zealand picture book for ECEs and lower primary. – Jane Arthur

Hoihoi Turituri
Soledad Bravi, translated by Ruia Aperahama (Gecko Press)

A bestseller in many languages around the world, and known as *The Noisy Book* in English, this chunky little book for toddlers is now available in te reo Māori. The translation is loads of fun – “*Ka muuuuu te kau*”, “*Ka kihikihi a Māmā*”, “*Ka pātōtō pātōtō te tatau*” – making it irresistible to read aloud. There are over 100 pages, and the pictures are bold and full of personality. – Jane Arthur

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New Educators Network Te Kupenga Rangatahi is a space within NZEI Te Riu Roa where new educators work together to address issues that impact students and beginning teachers.

Together, we're the clear and coherent voice of educators entering the profession.

Find our Facebook page by searching "NZEI New Educators Network" to learn more, get involved and see professional development and social activities in your area.

NZEI TE RIUROA
NEW ZEALAND EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTE



Angie
Assistant Principal

NZEI TE RIU ROA IT'S OUR UNION

Joining NZEI Te Riu Roa means linking up with 50,000 other people working in education. Together we can achieve positive change for education, for our profession and for kids and their learning.

IT'S OUR UNION

WHY JOIN US?

Work together for positive change in education and in our workplaces.

Use our **collective strength** to successfully negotiate improved pay and conditions.

Access dedicated **support** from NZEI staff and the **expertise** of your colleagues.

Build your knowledge and your networks through training and **professional development**.

Unlock member-only **discounts** on travel, healthcare, computers and holidays.



Liz
Special Education Advisor



Isla
ECE Teacher

HOW DO I JOIN?

Join online at nzei.org.nz/join

Talk to your **NZEI worksite representative** at your school or centre.

Call us free **0800 NZEI HELP** (0800 693 443) week days 8.30am-5pm.

Email nzei@nzei.org.nz

NZEI
TE RIU ROA