



MANAAKITIA A TĀTOU TAMARIKI

**Children's  
Commissioner**

**"I hope, one day, I'm going to say  
I stayed in school for 13 years,  
through all the blood, sweat and  
tears." (Student in kura kaupapa, Māori)**

# **He manu kai mātauranga:**

## He tirohanga Māori

### **Education matters to me:**

Experiences of tamariki and rangatahi Māori

**Detailed report 1 of 6**

**'Education matters to me' series**

A starting point for the Statement of National Education and Learning Priorities

March 2018

Please respect the voices of the children and young people that have contributed to this report. To reference this report, please include the full title: **He manu kai matauranga: He tirohanga Māori**, and a link to the online version at [www.occ.org.nz](http://www.occ.org.nz) or [www.nzsta.org.nz](http://www.nzsta.org.nz)

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# He manu kai matauranga:

## He tirohanga Māori

*Experiences of tamariki and rangatahi Māori*

### ***Detailed Report 1 of 6 At A Glance***

*This detailed report belongs to a series that supports **Education matters to me: Key Insights. A starting point for the Statement of National Education and Learning Priorities**<sup>1</sup>, released January 2018. A pictorial summary of the Key Insights report is included as an appendix.*

The Children's Commissioner and the School Trustees Association have a shared interest in ensuring the National Education and Learning Priorities are grounded in the needs and lived experiences of all tamariki and rangatahi in Aotearoa. We engaged with children and young people face to face and through online surveys to hear their views on education. This engagement was initiated to help ensure that voices of rangatahi and tamariki contribute to the development of National Education and Learning Priorities that are to be introduced for the first time in 2018.

We wanted to hear from children and young people about their experiences; especially what was working well and how things could be better for them. We started from a position informed by the views of tamariki and rangatahi from previous engagements and some of the well-documented challenges in the education system. With this foundation we were able to focus our engagements with children and young people on six key areas of enquiry, which correlate directly to the six detailed reports:

- 1. Experiences of tamariki and rangatahi Māori***
- 2. Emotional wellbeing**
- 3. Engagement**
- 4. 'If I were the boss' - improving our education**
- 5. Progress and achievement**
- 6. Transitions**

This is one of six supporting reports that give more detail on each of these main areas of enquiry. As real life does not fit into neat compartments, the feedback we received from children and young people quite often overlaps areas of enquiry. This means some reports share common themes, and some statements we heard have

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<sup>1</sup> Hereafter referred to as the Key Insights report. Available at <http://www.occ.org.nz/publications/reports/education-matters-to-me-key-insights/> or <http://www.nzsta.org.nz/news-and-publications/education-matters-to-me>

been used in more than one report to help tell the story. The reports can stand alone, or be read alongside the others.

The six key insights from the whole engagement are explored further in the *Key Insights* report. You can access the insights report and all the other supporting reports on the NZSTA and Office of the Children's Commissioner websites.<sup>2</sup>

Children and young people across a diverse range of engagement groups spoke about three key factors, which they require to have a successful experience in education. These were: a great teacher; a supportive and involved family, and friends.

*Experiences of tamariki and rangatahi Māori* is the area of enquiry explored in this report.

**"Achievement should be more than grades. Be able to support whānau and doing jobs well in life."**

*(Student in kura kaupapa, Māori)*

**"To feel good about going back to school, the school and teachers would need to be warm, friendly, caring, helpful and believe in me...But they need to be consistent."** *(Student in alternative education, Māori)*

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.nzsta.org.nz/news-and-publications/education-matters-to-me>  
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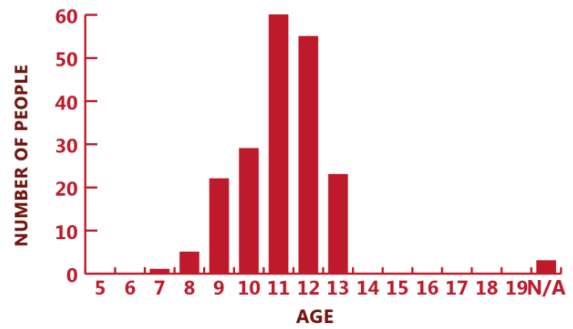
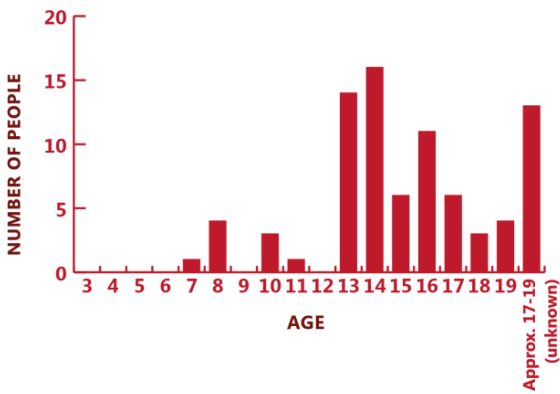
## Who did we talk with?

During October and November 2017, we engaged with 1,678 children and young people face to face and through online surveys to hear their views on education. We heard from 362 rangatahi and tamariki Māori in primary, intermediate and secondary schools, alternative education centres, kōhanga reo, kura kaupapa Māori, learning support units and teen parent units, as well as home schooled students.

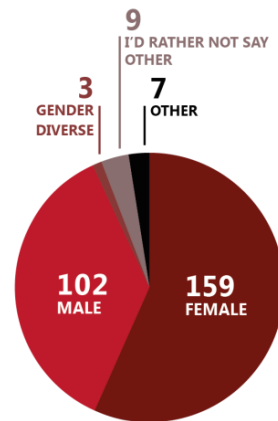
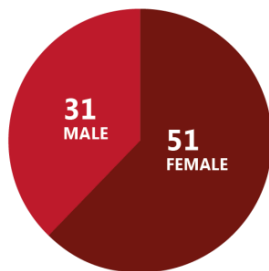
**82** Face to face engagements  
*Kanohi ki te kanohi*

**280** Online responses  
*Urupare ā-ipurangi*

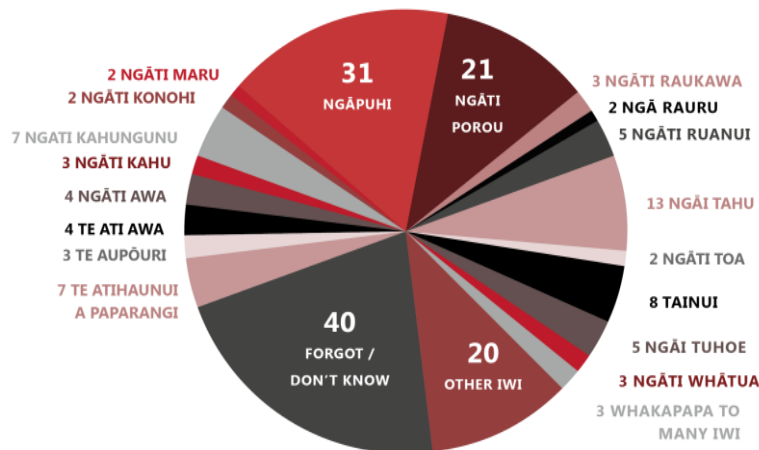
### AGE



### GENDER



“If you are Māori, which iwi do you whakapapa to?”



We used a range of engagement methods to collect the views and voices of tamariki and rangatahi Māori. This included one on one and paired interviews, focus groups, postcard responses and on-line surveys for primary and secondary students. The many views and voices shared from all sources were combined first by area of enquiry and then grouped by themes. Looking across all the themes, key insights were identified.

### What we heard from tamariki and rangatahi Māori about their experiences in education

This report shares the voices and experiences of the tamariki and rangatahi Māori we had the privilege to engage with.

We acknowledge there is no one Māori, tamariki Māori or rangatahi Māori voice, perspective or experience.<sup>3</sup> The experiences of people who whakapapa Māori are informed by their own lives, their connections to culture and their whānau, hapū, iwi, rohe and community they have grown up in. While many of the concerns voiced in this report are shared by all children and young people, we also heard about issues that tamariki and rangatahi Māori experience differently from those who are not Māori.

<sup>3</sup> All voices in this report are from rangatahi and tamariki Māori. Any reference to rangatahi and tamariki for the purposes of this report refers to Māori children and young people.

We wanted to hear from tamariki and rangatahi about their experiences of their education. To do this, we asked questions along the themes of:

**What does achievement mean to you?**

**What helps you do well at school?**

**What could be better?**

## The responses we gathered from tamariki and rangatahi Māori have been grouped into five findings:

### **Finding 1 Tōku reo, toku ohooho**

*To understand me, understand my world and te reo Māori*

### **Finding 2 Tūhuratia te ao i te rangimārie**

*I want to feel comfortable and safe to explore my culture*

### **Finding 3 He kaikiri Māori, he whakaparahako ētahi o te kura**

*People at school are racist towards me and judge me because I'm Māori*

### **Finding 4 Whakatūngia te tangata, ka tū hoki te whānau**

*Supporting my whānau is important for my achievement*

### **Finding 5 He oranga ngākau te hākari kai**

*Kai helps me feel comfortable and connected*

In the following sections we will provide more detail on these.

Throughout this report we share many quotes from children and young people. When we do, we will indicate the type of learning centre that the child or young person is attending, and their ethnicity.

For many reasons, categorising ethnicity can be subjective. In this report, some children and young people chose not to share their ethnicity. Ethnicities cited from face to face engagement are self-identified and based on the terminology used by the children and young people. Online survey response use categories used by StatsNZ Tatauranga Aotearoa.

Throughout this report we have used the terms 'tamariki / children' and 'rangatahi / young people' interchangeably to refer to Māori children and young people that we spoke with.

## ***Tōku reo, toku ohooho***<sup>4</sup>

*To understand me, understand my world and te reo Māori*<sup>5</sup>

The importance of being understood in the context of culture is key for all children and young people. Many tamariki and rangatahi told us they feel their school does not understand them or their culture.

**“Mainstream is a zoo where I’m surrounded by snakes.”** *(Student in secondary school, Māori)*

### **Understand te ao Māori**

Tamariki and rangatahi who have grown up with a Māori world view want their teachers to have a better understanding of their world

**“When you leave a full unit in Māori you lose stuff. Doing hāngī and performances for tourists is stuff we already know. Our kaiako are white. So [they] don’t know tikanga and reo.”** *(Student in teen parent unit, Māori).*

For tamariki and rangatahi, not being understood in the context of their own culture can present significant barriers to their sense of belonging, engagement and achievement. Tamariki and rangatahi told us that, except in kura kaupapa settings, they do not see themselves or their culture reflected back to them in their school. This theme was apparent in a number of stories and comments we heard from Māori young people in mainstream schools. When asked what they would like to change, they told us:

**“I will make them stop shutting Māori schools down and let Māori culture out.”** *(Student in secondary school, Māori)*

**“The way Māori and Pasifika students are treated and viewed. I would employ a more ethnically diverse teaching staff and ensure that there is a wider understanding of Māori and Pasifika culture among them.”** *(Student in secondary school, Māori)*

**“I would want the teachers to wear Māori patterns on their clothes.”** *(Student in primary school, Māori)*

<sup>4</sup> To capture the essence of this finding we have used this quote from Katerina Mataera, from Te Aho matua

<sup>5</sup> This finding is discussed further in the following reports: *Education matters to me: Progress and achievement*, *Education matters to me: Engagement* and *Education matters to me: ‘If I were the boss’ - improving our education*



Some tamariki and rangatahi are deeply connected to their tikanga; one young person said they feel mauiui (sick) when there is no provision to hongiri in the morning before going into class, because he feels a strong need to share the breath of life.

When young people feel that their teacher fails to understand their cultural identity they don't see them as someone who has the potential to help. One rangatahi explained that if the teacher was Pākehā, he expected they would be unable to support him because there was no way they could understand him as Māori. This rangatahi did not speak te reo Māori - the barriers he referred to were around cultural understanding.

**"If they can't understand me how can I understand them?"** (Student in alternative education, Māori)

In contrast, another rangatahi spoke of how moving from a mainstream secondary school to kura kaupapa helped her to do better because she felt the school and teachers understood her.

**"My other schools not understanding my background n coming to a school where everyone knows what it's like to be in my shoes."** (Student in secondary school, Māori)

## **I wish everyone could speak te reo Māori**

Rangatahi who are fluent, or near fluent, in speaking te reo Māori and who feel strongly connected to their cultural identity expressed a desire for all people able to understand and talk te reo Māori.

**"Make Te Reo Māori compulsory."** (Student in secondary school, Māori)

**"At our school it was compulsory to learn Mandarin but it was an option to learn Te Reo Māori."** (Primary school student, Māori)

[What would make school better?] **"More te reo Māori in Kura. Need a te reo Māori Teacher! ASAP."** (Student in teen parent unit, Māori)

**"Every year group learn Māori."** (Student in secondary school, Māori)

Some tamariki and rangatahi in kura kaupapa Māori feel they are treated as outsiders for speaking te reo Māori in public as well as at school, as most students do not speak or know te reo Māori. We heard about how they feel judged and misunderstood by young people from other schools. For example, at interschool competitions, they feel that they are treated as outsiders by other students for speaking te reo Māori. Tamariki and rangatahi from kura kaupapa Māori talked about wanting to be understood and supported.

Tamariki and rangatahi also felt that shifting from a schooling environment of speaking predominantly te reo Māori to speaking predominantly English can create a sense of isolation.

## My culture is more than performance

We heard from many tamariki and rangatahi about the struggle to see themselves reflected in their educational environment. However, some Māori young people told us that the use of karakia or waiata in their classroom is tokenistic, and that their culture only features when there are visitors. They said it was important that tikanga was embedded in their everyday schooling experience.

**“I was asked to do a haka for some visitors to school because the principal wanted to give a cultural experience. But it was annoying because that’s like the only time he cares about Māori culture.”** *(Student in secondary school, Māori)*

## Whanaungatanga and tikanga

Rangatahi and tamariki value being welcomed and having time for whakawhanaungatanga when they are new to an environment. Rangatahi told us that feeling welcome, on a daily basis, is important to them.

**“At my very first primary my teacher helped me get through things and then I never changed teachers until I moved class... then I moved schools and I hated it.”** *(Primary school student, Māori)*

**“When I’m comfortable, I’m surrounded by people I know and can connect with the type of people/teacher.”** *(Student in secondary school, Māori)*

[When you started school, is there something that would have helped you feel happy at school?] **“The teacher let your class all get to know each other.”** *(Primary school student, Māori)*

[What helps you achieve at school?] **“Being comfortable around everyone n teachers n mates are treated like family.”** *(Student in secondary school, Māori)*

We heard the importance of being made to feel comfortable and welcome by teachers.

**“My mum and teacher help me make friends when I first started school because mum asked the teacher if there was someone scared like me and**

**that's when she said there was a kid called A\*\* and we are still friends up till today."** *(Primary school student, Māori/Japanese)*

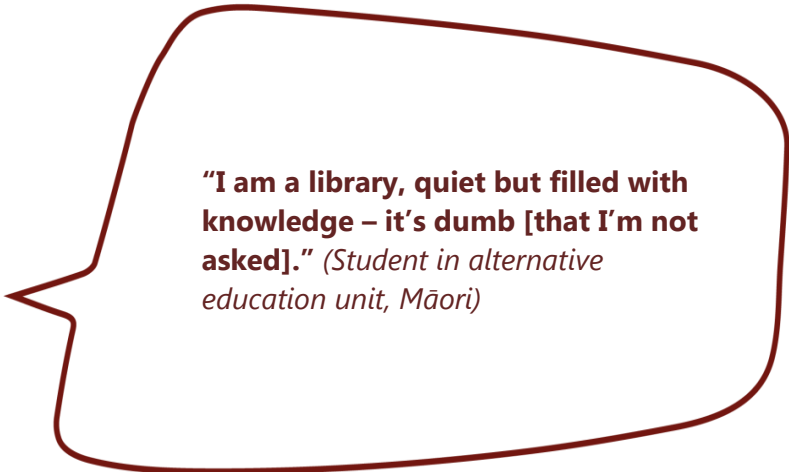
**"Success in school would look like teachers and students building a relationship together so students can feel comfortable."** *(Student in teen parent unit, Māori)*

**"My friends and teachers made me feel welcome and at home during school."** *(Primary school student, Māori/Pacific People/Middle Eastern)*

Rangatahi shared how it feels good when their teacher makes an effort to welcome them in the mornings and when they pronounce their names correctly. When teachers pronounce names correctly gives tamariki and rangatahi the sense that their teachers care. Some rangatahi said that they know when their teacher does not want them at school or in their class and as a result they do not feel welcome.

**"Everyone should have to learn both Māori and English. It would be better and everyone would be able to say my name right and I wouldn't have to be embarrassed or angry."** *(Student in kura kaupapa, Māori)*

**"I'm smart, but I don't want to go to classes .... And sometimes when I do go to class they kick me out. It's really annoying, teachers say if you're not gonna come to school then don't come and if I don't come they phone home saying I didn't come!"** *(Student in alternative education, Māori)*



**"I am a library, quiet but filled with knowledge – it's dumb [that I'm not asked]."** *(Student in alternative education unit, Māori)*

## *Tūhuratia te ao i te rangimārie*

*I want to feel comfortable and safe to explore my culture*

Children and young people have shared with us before how disempowering it can be for young Māori to be expected to speak on behalf of their culture when they do not feel comfortably connected to their cultural identity.<sup>6</sup> Young people have told us that this can make them feel they are not 'Māori enough' and leave them with a sense of whakamā and embarrassment.

Developing and having a sense of belonging is important for all children and young people. Some tamariki and rangatahi who cannot speak te reo Māori, shared how they feel embarrassed and uncomfortable when people speak to them in te reo Māori when they cannot understand. Several said they felt disengaged from their school because their teachers do not know their language and culture. Some rangatahi suggested that both English and Māori should be taught and spoken in all schools.

**"If everyone could speak Māori things would be easier and we'd have less problems. Pākehā and Māori should be taught."** *(Student in kura kaupapa, Māori)*

Tamariki and rangatahi Māori can sometimes feel pressured by teachers if they are expected to know tikanga and other aspects of their culture or te reo Māori because their teacher sees them as Māori and therefore as experts on all things 'Māori'.

**"We are expected to know our language, to know songs and the haka but we aren't given the opportunity to actually learn it. It just makes me feel bad."**  
*(Student in alternative education, Māori)*

<sup>6</sup> See also the OCC's previous report on young people's experiences of their culture: <http://www.occ.org.nz/assets/Uploads/20-09-2017-Mai-World-Culture-Report.pdf>

## *He kaikiri Māori, he whakaparahako ētahi o te kura<sup>7</sup>*

*People at school are racist to me and expect me to fail because I am Māori*

Many tamariki and rangatahi Māori shared their experiences of racism in school. When tamariki and rangatahi feel undervalued or underrated because of their culture, this has a negative impact on their experiences in education and their identity. We heard from many rangatahi who felt that because they were Māori, they had not been treated equally.

**“Because we’re Māoris and the teacher might think we’re dumb, don’t wanna pay as much attention to you and focus more on the white people.”**  
(Secondary school student, Māori)

**“At other schools we’re judged like ‘typical Māori girl’. We were labelled at other schools. [They] already decided who we were. Like ‘oh there’s a brown girl, she is going to beat us up. Stay away from them [Māori]’. Makes us mad and feel down.”** (Student from teen parent unit, Māori)

**“Was in ‘naughty class’ – no teacher’s wanted to teach us, that was what we were told.”** (Student in teen parent unit, Māori)

This finding of tamariki and rangatahi experiencing racism at school came predominantly from our face to face engagements with young people who are not well served by the mainstream system. Tamariki and rangatahi Māori made up most of this group. In contrast, the majority of students who completed the online survey identified themselves as New Zealand European. Very few of these students identified racism as an issue, and those who did were more likely to identify with a minority ethnic group. As we did not ask about racism in any of our engagements, all comments made by tamariki and rangatahi about racism were unprompted.

A number of tamariki and rangatahi Māori also identify with other ethnicities. Where those other ethnicities are also minority groups, tamariki and rangatahi experienced problems with racism in relation to both identities.

[What would make school better?] **“The attitudes of the teachers and staff towards minority students”** (Secondary school student, Māori / NZ European / Pacific People)

<sup>7</sup>This finding is also discussed further in the following reports: *Education matters to me: Progress and achievement*, *Education matters to me: Emotional wellbeing* and *Education matters to me: If I were the boss- improving our education*

## Don't judge me - treat me fairly

Tamariki and rangatahi want teachers to get to know them and to give them a chance to perform well. They told us they feel burdened with negative stereotypes, and they believe these stereotypes impact upon the way teachers treat them. They talked about teachers' negative assumptions about them affecting their relationship from the outset.

Many rangatahi shared experiences of racial stereotyping<sup>8</sup> in their relationships with their teachers. Rangatahi said they feel judged and that they are expected to fail or even set up to fail by their teachers. These feelings significantly impacted on their access to meaningful educational experiences:

**"The negative statistics are always reminders of how we fail... why do we constantly get reminded of how we fail?"** *(Student in alternative education, Māori)*

**"Just cause we are Māori doesn't mean we are stupid."** *(Secondary school student, Māori/Pacific/European)*

Some young people told us how negative stereotyping contributed to a cycle of escalating behavioural issues. Rangatahi in alternative education commented on this as a significant contributing factor to their eventual exclusion from school:

**"Since I am Māori, and have an anger problem, I would get into fights easy because people would say racist things to me."** *(Student in alternative education unit, Māori)*

One rangatahi talked about how, because he was Māori, the only way he believed he could get into university was if he got a special scholarship:

**"We get scholarships for being Māori so we can go to uni."** *(Student in alternative education, Māori)*

**"Bad teachers' are strict, not supportive and don't encourage you."** *(Student in alternative education, Māori)*

Fair treatment, being included and being respected, came through as clear themes when tamariki and rangatahi were asked what they would change about their school.

**"Treat everyone as equals and don't jump to conclusions because of race."** *(Secondary school student, Māori/Pacific/European)*

**"The racist bastards that call us brown kids pieces of poo and baa baa blacksheeps - schools need to get this stuff improved."** *(Primary school student, Māori / New Zealand European / Pacific People)*

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<sup>8</sup> See also our report Education Matters to Me: Key Insights

## Believe in me to achieve

Tamariki and rangatahi learn best when they feel their teachers believe in their potential to achieve. They notice when teachers do have faith in them, and persist in helping them through difficult times. We heard that these teachers can have a transformative effect on the lives of tamariki and rangatahi.

**“When people recognise me and my skills I feel I can do better and achieve more.”** *(Student in secondary school, Māori)*

**“My teachers and my deans ... have always believed in me even when I never listened to them and always disobeyed the school rules. I’m grateful for their help as they’ve pushed me to keep going.”** *(Student in secondary school, Māori)*

**“Good teachers, teachers who are helpful, they make the difference between me achieving and failing.”** *(Student in alternative education, Māori)*

Where rangatahi Māori feel the teacher does not believe in them and expects them not to achieve, they are more likely to feel unmotivated to try. This can then become a self-fulfilling prophecy. If their teacher already knows they are going to fail and doesn’t care, what’s the point in trying?

[What helps you achieve at school?] **“Being around good people like good friends and teachers who are cool instead of being dicks all the time and making me feel like I shouldn’t be in class. There are some classes I enjoy so I try hard to attend and to achieve in them, but other classes I don’t care.”** *(Student in secondary school, Māori)*

[What helps you achieve in school?] **“When the teachers are cool and are good, when I can connect to them and I don’t feel like they are just there to hassle me.”** *(Student in alternative education, Māori)*

We heard from some rangatahi about how they want to succeed in school; however, they felt they aren’t given the opportunities or the encouragement to do so. Tamariki and rangatahi told us of times they ask for help from their teachers and are not given the help they need or are made to feel embarrassed, which results in them no longer asking for help.

**“I felt I was ignored at other schools. I struggled a lot, if I asked for help I was told just to move on to the next one when I wanted to understand it so I wouldn’t ask for help me next time.”** *(Student in teen parent unit, Māori)*

## Whakatūngia te tangata, ka tū hoki te whānau<sup>9</sup>

*Supporting my whānau is important for my achievement*

Tamariki and rangatahi told us that being able to support their whānau is an important part of their motivation that impacts on their ability to achieve in school.

[What helps you achieve at school?] **“Succeeding in life jobs while supporting whānau.”** (Student in kura kaupapa, Māori)

**“Achievement should be more than grades. Being able to support whānau and doing jobs well in life.”** (Student in kura kaupapa, Māori)

**“I want to achieve for myself but also for my family.”** (Student in secondary school, Māori)

[What helps you achieve at school?] **“Supporting my whānau, iwi and hapū any way I can and have a successful career.”** (Student in kura kaupapa, Māori)

**“Reconnecting with all the whānau makes me feel refreshed with ngākau.”** (Student in kura kaupapa, Māori)

We heard from rangatahi who want to be the first in their whānau to pass and finish school. Although this aspiration is a huge motivator, young people told us it can also be a constant struggle.

**What keeps me going to school is just the fact that none of my family have fully finished school, and I don’t want to be one of them so I’m making that my goal, to finish school with all my levels next year for my last year.** (Student in secondary school, Māori)

**“My family didn’t finish school, so I wanted to finish but it got really hard to stay in school.”** (Student in alternative education, Māori)

**“I hope, one day, I’m going to say ‘I stayed in school for 13 years, through all the blood, sweat and tears.’”** (Student in kura kaupapa, Māori)

A number of mothers in teen parent units told us their children are their biggest motivation for achieving. They said that where their school environment supports

<sup>9</sup> This finding is also discussed further in the following reports: *Education matters to me: Transitions*, *Education matters to me: Progress and achievement* and *Education matters to me – Emotional wellbeing*



them to support their children, then it also supports their own ability to achieve in education.

**“I feel loved here, comfortable, supported, my surroundings, my child at creche right next door, love love love my kura.”** *(Student in teen parent unit, Māori)*

**“It is comfortable with our babies here.”** *(Student in teen parent unit, Māori)*

**“I want my boy growing up happy, a roof over his head, food on the table and clothes on his back. Setting goals and achieving them.”** *(Student in teen parent unit, Māori)*

**“Striving through school to be the best you can be for yourself, your children and your family.”** *(Student in teen parent unit, Māori)*

## **I want to learn but it is hard if my whānau can't afford uniforms**

We heard from many tamariki and rangatahi how it can be hard to learn at school when they are constantly in trouble for not having the right uniform. They spoke about how their teachers would only focus on what they were or were not wearing. Rangatahi wanted their teachers to concentrate on teaching them, not on what their uniforms looked like.

**“For the teachers and deans and everything to stop hassling students about their uniforms and shoes because at least the kids still turn up to school still ready to learn despite what things they are wearing.”** *(Student in teen parent unit, Māori)*

**“I did want to go to school but I kept getting in trouble for my uniform being wrong when the right jersey for winter cost 2 much. So it was easier to give up and pretend I didn't care.”** *(Student in alternative education, Māori)*

**“Many people I have lived with [in state care] aren't able to go [to school/courses] because they can't pay the fees... I live with mum but the uniform is too expensive and we got no money from CYFs. We had to borrow off WINZ and have to pay it back. Some children and young people don't have enough money to buy uniforms or just won't go to school because of this. Education should be free so everyone has the equal opportunity to go to school. Money shouldn't be a barrier.”** *(Secondary school student, Māori)*

## He oranga ngākau te hākari kai<sup>10</sup>

*Kai helps me feel comfortable and connected*

We heard from tamariki and rangatahi Māori of the importance of having kai to be able to participate well at school. We also heard how the process of sharing kai together is important in relationship building.

**“Food in my palette, is music to my ears, we should be allowed to eat in class me and my peers.”** *(Student in kura kaupapa, Māori)*

### I need kai but having to ask for it makes me feel whakamā

Some tamariki and rangatahi told us they feel hungry but would choose not to collect a free lunch from their school because of the shame connected to that. They said the process of giving out free lunches creates embarrassment for students who need and want the food and that because of the whakamā associated with the process, some rangatahi prefer to go without than admit they need the kai in front of their peers.

**“I’m always hungry. It’s shame as to say you don’t have kai so I just act full. The kidscan [free lunch] would be g but you have to sign up and everybody knows. So nah.”** *(Student in alternative education, Māori)*

One rangatahi told us how the teacher asks the class at the start of every day who needs lunch and if they do they have to put their hand up in front of their peers. Many rangatahi we spoke to suggested it would be easier if everyone received free food to remove the shame of being one of the ‘pōhara’ (poor) students.

**“Meke kai. Free lunch – cause once we have kai we can do better.”** *(Student in teen parent unit, Māori)*

**“Schools should make uniforms simpler, cheaper and comfortable and help families who can’t afford them.”** *(Secondary school student, Māori)*

**“I will let students do homework every 5 days and make sure there’s a big play ground and a place were u can get food.”** *(Primary school student, Māori/Pacific People/Greek )*

**“Better kidscan food. We struggling out here man.”** *(Student in alternative education, Māori)*

<sup>10</sup> This finding is also discussed further in the *Education matters to me: Emotional wellbeing* report

[Improving achievement] **“Having food and being able to eat.”** *(Student in teen parent unit, Māori)*

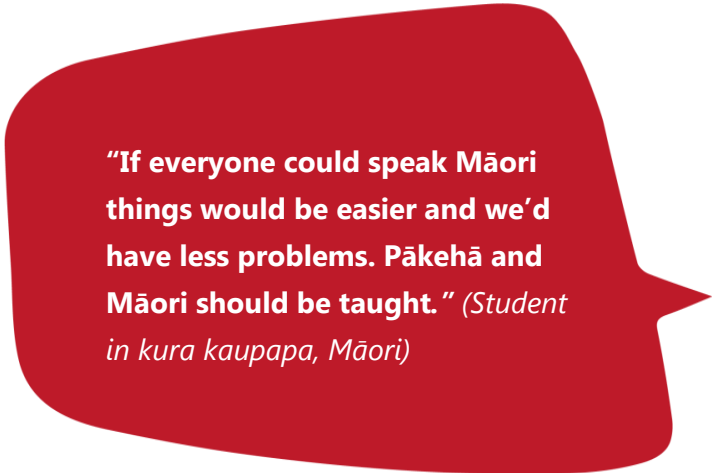
## Preparing and sharing kai builds community and belonging

We also heard how sharing and preparing kai collectively creates a sense of pride and belonging.

[What helps you achieve?] **“Making food at school and eating it after. I love the cooking class and sports. Sports help me lose weight after eating all the food haha.”** *(Student in Kura Kaupapa, Māori)*

We heard from rangatahi about the value they place on preparing food together with their classmates. They told us that this activity helps them feel comfortable, cared for, supported, and nurtured. Where rangatahi take turns preparing the kai they enjoy the responsibility, and the opportunity to show they care for their peers. For some tamariki and rangatahi, being able to prepare and serve kai makes them feel better about themselves, especially if they experience difficulties contributing in other areas of their learning.

**“We can eat lunch together at PTU. We talk to each other and we get jobs to help – have a feed, clean your mess and eat and talk together.”** *(Student in teen parent unit, Māori)*



**“If everyone could speak Māori things would be easier and we’d have less problems. Pākehā and Māori should be taught.”** *(Student in kura kaupapa, Māori)*



## Conclusion

While many of the concerns voiced in this report are shared by all children and young people, we also heard about particular issues that tamariki and rangatahi Māori experience differently.

Rangatahi and tamariki find it easier to feel connected and ready to learn when they have daily opportunities for re-connecting and whakawhanaungatanga. We heard that tamariki and rangatahi in mainstream schools often cannot see themselves or their culture reflected back to them. They also said that they find the use of karakia or waiata in their classroom or kapahaka displays for visitors tokenistic, especially when kawa and tikanga are not understood or embedded at a deeper level.

The lack of appropriate and meaningful ways to connect in mainstream English-medium schools, compounded by implicitly or explicitly negative expectations of teachers and peers, came through strongly as contributing factors in the experience of many rangatahi in alternative education.

Our schools need to provide a good education for all of the children and young people of Aotearoa New Zealand. We heard from children and young people that the system is currently falling short. The question is how we can make it better.

If we really want to improve education outcomes, we need to get input from the people it affects most directly – children and young people. Where children are currently not served well by our education system, their voices and experiences are critical to any solutions proposed. We heard from rangatahi and tamariki Māori across the education system that the current system is not serving them well.

Children and young people are experts on their own experiences in education. Only they can talk about whether the kind of experience we are trying to give our children and young people is what they are actually getting. They have the right to have a say, and have their views heard in decisions that affect them. It is time for everyone, especially in education, to be more deliberate and purposeful in how we incorporate children's views and opinions when making decisions that affect them.

We have gathered a diverse range of perspectives from children and young people throughout New Zealand, but we recognise the limitations of our reach. In particular voices from those children and young people living rurally are not captured in this report. The children and young people's voices that have shaped this report, and all of the *Education matters to me* reports, are honest and genuine. It is our job now to listen to them and act on what we hear.

## Education matters to me: Key insights.

A starting point for the Statement of National Education Learning Priorities.

*Six key insights drawn from our engagement with children and young people on education, and supported by the findings in this report. These key insights can be found in our report Education matters to me: Key insights*



### Understand me in my whole world

*He kākano ahau i te wao nui tāngata*

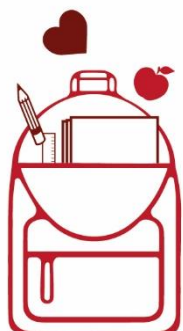
Children and young people talked about how they want to be seen for who they are, and to be understood within the context of their home life, and experiences.



### Relationships mean everything to me

*He āhuru mowai, he ingo matauranga*

Children and young people talked about the range of significant relationships that either enable them to achieve or prevent them from achieving. Many told us that they can't begin learning unless they have a trusted relationship with their teacher.



### I need to be comfortable before I can learn

*Whangaia tēnei manu kai matauranga*

Children and young people from all different learning environments stressed the importance of feeling happy and comfortable before they can learn and the impact that their learning environment has on their wellbeing.



### **People at school are racist towards me**

*He mea nui te hononga tangata*

Many children and young people told us they experience racism at school and are treated unequally because of their culture.



### **Teach me the way I learn best**

*Whangaia tēnei manu kai matauranga*

Children and young people want their teacher to teach them according to their strengths, and unique abilities. Learning content was also important, some want to be learning things that they see as relevant to their lives, and their futures.



### **It's my life - let me have a say**

*Whakatua toku rangatiratanga*

Children and young people experience a lack of choice or participation in decision making about their own lives and schooling. They really want to have a say in their education. They want teachers to involve them in their learning.

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## Glossary

|                            |   |  |
|----------------------------|---|--|
| <b>āhuru mōwai</b>         | - | safe space                                   |
| <b>hangi</b>               | - | food cooked in an earth oven                 |
| <b>hongī</b>               | - | to press noses in greeting                   |
| <b>ingo</b>                | - | desire                                       |
| <b>kai</b>                 | - | food   |
| <b>kaiako</b>              | - | teacher                                      |
| <b>kaikiri</b>             | - | racist                                       |
| <b>kapa haka</b>           | - | Māori cultural/performing group              |
| <b>kawa</b>                | - | karakia and customs to open a new place      |
| <b>māuiui</b>              | - | sick   |
| <b>meke</b>                | - | used as slang/'tumeke' which means too much. |
| <b>ngākau</b>              | - | heart  |
| <b>orotau</b>              | - | understand                                   |
| <b>rangatahi</b>           | - | youth  |
| <b>tamariki</b>            | - | children                                     |
| <b>tikanga</b>             | - | the correct and right way to do things       |
| <b>whakamā</b>             | - | embarrassed                                  |
| <b>whakapapa</b>           | - | genealogy                                    |
| <b>whakawhanaungatanga</b> | - | building relationships                       |



**“Include Māori performing arts more and include [carving] classes and been looked at in a good way.”**  
*(Secondary school student, Māori)*

**“I would make ethnicity equal, no one should be higher or lower than any other. I come from a very diverse school, so I would make everyone feel recognised and that their identity matters. No group is greater but understanding each other’s qualities by celebrating their culture. Help those who are failing, praise the high achievers and support the ones that are really struggling. Invest in my teachers so that they teach with passion, that it’s not just about teaching but more than that, you change lives.”** *(Secondary school student, Māori)*

**“I did want to go to school but I kept getting in trouble for my uniform being wrong when the right jersey for winter cost 2 much. So it was easier to give up and pretend I didn’t care.”**  
*(Student in alternative education, Māori)*

**"If everyone could speak Māori things would be easier and we'd have less problems. Pākehā and Māori should be taught."** (Student in kura kaupapa, Māori)

**"Treat everyone as equals and don't jump to conclusions because of race."** (Secondary school student, Māori / Pacific / European)

**"We feel like we are failing when we are constantly reminded that we are not doing well – Principal use to bring out all these graphs to show us how we are failing, and it would just piss us off."** (Student in alternative education unit, Māori)

**"I'm always hungry. It's shame as to say you don't have kai so I just act full. The kids can [free lunch] would be g but you have to sign up and everybody knows. So nah."** (Student in alternative education, Māori)

**"Racism exists – we feel little and bad."** (Student in alternative education unit, Māori)

[What helps you achieve at school?]

**“Supporting my whānau, iwi and hapū any way I can and have a successful career.”**

*(Student in kura kaupapa, Māori)*



MANAAKITIA A TĀTOU TAMARIKI  
**Children's  
Commissioner**

