

Te reo Māori in schools

The Green Party supports teaching te reo Māori to every New Zealand child and is committing to create a comprehensive plan to achieve it.

We have a responsibility to ensure that our indigenous language thrives in Aotearoa. Introducing all children to it at school is the best way to make that happen.

Learning a second language has significant proven benefits for children, as does Māori students being immersed in their own culture. Learning a language is also a fantastic way to respect, value and connect with a culture that isn't your own.

Over the next year, the Green Party's Māori caucus will be engaging with parents, teachers, unions, hapū and iwi to create a plan that will ensure every Kiwi kid will learn te reo from primary school onwards.

Sign on to add your support, and tell us about your experiences/what needs to change to make this happen: http://action.greens.org.nz/te_reo_maori_in_schools

Iti noa ana he pito mata.

What do we want?

The Green Party wants to see every New Zealand child having a good grasp of the taonga that is te reo Māori.

- We strongly support universal teaching of te reo Māori to every public primary and secondary student, up to Year 10.
- Integral to the teaching and learning of te reo Māori is an understanding of tikanga, which we want included in the curriculum to ensure a proper appreciation of Māori language and culture.
- Alongside this, we also want better access to te reo Māori sign language for Māori Deaf, as not having this is one of the major barriers for Māori Deaf to participate in their own culture and communities.

To make these commitments a reality, we know that work needs to be done to better understand the barriers to getting te reo Māori to every child in Aotearoa. While there is broad support for this to happen, we don't yet have the detailed roadmap on how to achieve it. This is why our Māori caucus will be engaging with tangata whenua, schools and the community to create a plan to get there.

Why do we need this?

Despite huge progress over recent decades, the survival of te reo Māori is still not assured. Te Reo needs more help to thrive. According to the latest Census in 2013, only 3.7 percent of New Zealanders speak te reo Māori and the percentage of Māori who can hold a conversation about everyday things in te reo Māori has decreased by 4.8 percent since 2006 (21.3 percent in 2013, down from 26.1 percent in 2006).¹

We know that children learning te reo Māori is one way we can revitalise the language. But there is no downside to our kids learning te reo Māori and it's an important part of normalising the language being spoken. We have a responsibility to ensure that our indigenous language not just survives, but thrives in Aotearoa. The benefits of bilingualism and children learning a second language are well known, as are the

benefits to Māori students of being immersed in their own culture. The Government's Māori Education Strategy – [Ka Hikitia](#) states that Māori students do much better when their education reflects and values their identity, language and cultureⁱ. We believe we need a real commitment from government, and real leadership, to make this happen.

We acknowledge the kōhanga reo, kura kaupapa and wharekura movements and all of the whānau and people who have worked so hard, going right back to the te reo Māori petition in 1972, to bring te reo Māori back from the brink to where we are today. It is a testament to their determination and fortitude, and the constant work of hapū and iwi across the country over decades, that we can even consider setting a target of universal te reo Māori in public schools. We need to also remember that it was in living memory te reo Māori was banned from being spoken in public schools, and when our kuia and kaumatua were beaten for speaking their own first language.

“Ko te reo te mauri o te mana Māori” – Sir James Henare

What's the problem?

A lot of people think that children in Aotearoa New Zealand are already getting the basics of te reo Māori at school. But that's sadly just not the case; most children are not.

In 2016, 77.2 percentⁱⁱⁱ of children were not enrolled in any Māori language in education^{iv}. Around half of the schools in Aotearoa New Zealand (1302 out of 2529) had no students learning te reo Māori, or any other curriculum subjects in te reo Māori. When almost half of our schools aren't teaching te reo Māori, it's clear that we need to take action to protect and revitalise our indigenous language.

The Ministry of Education does have some strategies in place around te reo Māori. The Te Reo Māori in English-medium schools [strategy](#) and [Tau Mai Te Reo: The Māori Language in Education Strategy 2013-2017](#) have given us a starting point.

Tau Mai Te Reo's target of 22 percent of learners participating in Māori language in education (primary and secondary education) was met in 2015.

It's time to aim much higher.

We believe that every child in Aotearoa should learn te reo Māori. It is the first language spoken in Aotearoa, one of the things that makes us unique, and one of our three national languages. It's a fundamental part of our identity as New Zealanders and gives us pride on the world stage. We know this means we need more teachers, more incentives to get people into training, and, most importantly a stronger commitment from government to make this happen.

Despite many people working to revitalise te reo Māori over the last few decades, we don't yet know enough about what we need to make sure every New Zealand child learns te reo Māori. We do know that one of the biggest challenges is the shortage of qualified teachers^v, particularly for English-medium schools. The Government is taking some action to address this, with a range of scholarships and incentives to attract Māori speakers to the profession and support them while they're teaching.

In 2015, the Green Party and New Zealand First sought a select committee inquiry to establish the capacity to deliver te reo Māori to students and to make recommendations on how this can be strengthened. We hoped that the committee would look in to the curriculum, issues of professional development for the delivery of te reo Māori, and seek views from schools and communities about the challenges, barriers and opportunities in the implementation of te reo Māori teaching and learning in their schools. Unfortunately, our call for an inquiry was opposed, and many of these questions remain unanswered.

How have other countries revitalised their indigenous languages?

Wales is often cited as a good example of a country where language revitalisation is working. The Welsh language was made a compulsory part of the curriculum through the 1988 Education Review Act^{vi}, and now almost a quarter of primary schoolchildren are taught mostly in Welsh^{vii}.

In Catalonia, an autonomous province in Spain, the Catalan language was made compulsory in all public administrations, including schools and universities, in 1983. Now almost half of the region's population speak Catalan^{viii}.



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ⁱ <http://www.stats.govt.nz/Census/2013-census/profile-and-summary-reports/quickstats-about-maori-english/maori-language.aspx>

ⁱⁱ <http://www.education.govt.nz/assets/Documents/Ministry/Strategies-and-policies/Ka-Hikitia/KaHikitiaAcceleratingSuccessEnglish.pdf>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/statistics/maori-education/maori-in-schooling/6040>

^{iv} Māori language in education includes Māori-medium education (students are taught all or some curriculum subjects in the Māori language for at least 51 percent of the time), and Māori language in English-medium (students are learning te reo Māori as a language subject, or taught curriculum subjects in the Māori language for up to 50 percent of the time). No Māori language in education means students may be taught simple words, greetings or songs in Māori, or are not recorded as receiving Māori language at any level.

^v <http://www.education.govt.nz/ministry-of-education/overall-strategies-and-policies/the-maori-education-strategy-ka-hikitia-accelerating-success-20132017/history/ka-hikitia-managing-for-success-2008-2012/ka-hikitia-managing-for-success-2008-2012-focus-areas/maori-language-in-education-goals-and-actions/>

^{vi} http://www.mercator-research.eu/fileadmin/mercator/dossiers/pdf/Welsh_in_the_UK_2nd.pdf, p. 3

^{vii} <http://www.economist.com/news/britain/21611099-government-meddling-has-created-new-welsh-dialect-dragonian-measures>

^{viii} <http://www.maoritelevision.com/news/latest-news/native-affairs-summer-series-catalan-experts-make-te-reo-maori-compulsory>