

Ngā whai painga o Te Ao Haka

The positive impacts of Te Ao Haka for ākonga, whānau, and kaiako

Whakarāpopototanga Summary

Ngā whai painga o Te Ao Haka: The positive impacts of Te Ao Haka for ākonga, whānau, and kaiako is a kaupapa Māori research study that set out to understand what benefits and changes can occur for ākonga Māori, whānau, and kaiako when a subject such as Te Ao Haka—that is grounded in te Ao Māori and centres Māori culture, language and identity, knowledge systems, and iwi traditions—has mana ōrite or equal status within NCEA and *The New Zealand Curriculum*. The full report from the study is available at <https://www.nzcer.org.nz/research/publications/nga-whai-painga-o-te-ao-haka>

We found that participation in Te Ao Haka has benefits for ākonga, whānau, and kaiako that centre around Māori culture and identity, the revitalisation of te reo Māori, hauora and wellbeing, and educational achievement.



For ākonga, participation in Te Ao Haka

- enhances identity, culture, and language
- facilitates strong connections with peers
- grows skills, dispositions, and qualities that support wellbeing, success, and achievement in school and in life
- provides learning and skills that are transferable to other subjects
- creates a culture of excellence and high expectations
- develops a deeper understanding of Te Ao Haka.

Te Ao Haka supports ākonga wellbeing by creating a safe space where ākonga are proud to be Māori, they are comfortable speaking Māori, and they are connected to te ao Māori and to their tīpuna. Involvement in Te Ao Haka also helps ākonga develop strong relationships with their peers and form their own kaihaka networks for the future. The benefits of Te Ao Haka span the spiritual, social, physical, and mental aspects of hauora and wellbeing.

Te Ao Haka nurtures skills, dispositions, and qualities in ākonga to support them to be successful in their learning in other subjects, and in life. Ākonga, whānau, and kaiako can envisage multiple future pathways for ākonga as a result of their involvement in Te Ao Haka. When considering how Te Ao Haka might help them in the future, a strong theme identified by ākonga centred around being able to contribute to their whānau and hapū—through transmitting knowledge about Te Ao Haka to future generations, strengthening te reo Māori, and being able to uphold the tikanga of their own marae.

A culture of excellence and high expectations is being developed around the subject of Te Ao Haka. Kaiako hold high expectations of themselves as well as for ākonga, and ākonga also have high expectations for themselves. Te Ao Haka is being promoted and taught in ways to help set ākonga up for success in many aspects of their lives as well as in academic achievement.

For kaiako, good practice in teaching Te Ao Haka means:

- having thorough content and pedagogical knowledge
- having personal experience as kaihaka
- having connections with kaihaka in the community
- encouraging reciprocal learning between ākonga, whānau, and kaiako
- having high expectations for achievement in Te Ao Haka
- utilising ongoing PLD support.

For kaiako, good practice in Te Ao Haka means having extensive and deep content and pedagogical knowledge combined with the knowledge and experience that comes from being kaihaka themselves. Access to networks of kaihaka to support their own learning and that of ākonga is seen to be very important, and kaiako encourage reciprocal learning between ākonga, whānau, and kaiako.

For the most part, kaiako have found the new assessments easy to use. They had only a few suggestions for how the assessments could be improved. Kaiako have found the professional learning and development (PLD), resources, and opportunities to share knowledge through networks extremely useful in coming to grips with Te Ao Haka as a new subject. A strong message from kaiako is that similar support needs to continue to be available to support kaiako—particularly for the new group of kaiako who will take on Te Ao Haka for the first time in 2023—to prepare them to teach Te Ao Haka to the high standard that kaiako expect from themselves.



The establishment of Te Ao Haka as a subject assessed by achievement standards:

- gives Māori performing arts mana ōrite within the curriculum and NCEA
- creates a new pathway to tertiary education
- gives Māori performing arts higher status amongst some ākonga and whānau
- increases the status of Māori performing arts in some schools
- provides opportunities to educate Aotearoa whānui.

We found that the establishment of Te Ao Haka, as a subject assessed by achievement standards, has affected the status of Māori performing arts amongst ākonga, whānau, and kaiako in very positive ways. The kaiako and whānau we spoke with celebrated the establishment of Te Ao Haka, seeing it as a form of validation of the value of Māori performing arts within NCEA and the curriculum. Te Ao Haka also provides tangible evidence (through credentials) that Māori performing arts and mātauranga Māori have mana ōrite within the curriculum and NCEA.

Ākonga and whānau viewed the ability to gain credits towards NCEA and University Entrance through Te Ao Haka as an important benefit, though it was only one of many benefits they associated with Te Ao Haka. They were enthusiastic about participating in Te Ao Haka because they saw the value in the depth of knowledge being taught. For some whānau, Te Ao Haka is creating new opportunities to engage with te ao Māori.

Te Ao Haka improves access to tertiary education by creating a new pathway for ākonga to attain credits that count towards University Entrance. The high status of Te Ao Haka removes barriers related to perceptions that Māori Performing Arts is not an “academic” subject. Te Ao Haka gives ākonga and whānau more reason to value Māori performing arts in school contexts, particularly for those who see University Entrance as an important goal.

The status of Māori performing arts was more varied in the English-medium schools in this study than in the Māori-medium kura where Māori performing arts had always had high status. Much positive change was occurring in the schools. However, even in these pilot schools—which can be considered early engagers with Te Ao Haka—support for Māori performing arts was not universal.



This says that the status of mātauranga Māori in schools is an area that needs attention. Schools that are integrating Te Reo Māori and Aotearoa New Zealand's Histories into their curriculum may face similar challenges in gaining schoolwide buy-in and addressing institutionalised racism. As illustrated in one of the schools visited, senior leaders in schools have a pivotal role in determining what schools will value and prioritise.

In English-medium schools in particular, the establishment of Te Ao Haka is seen as an important step forward in changing the education system to better serve Māori. Looking further afield, participants see the potential for Te Ao Haka to help create better understanding of Māori, te reo Māori, and tikanga Māori in Aotearoa whānui.

E rere ana te mihi ki ngā rangatira o Te Ao Haka, nā koutou rā Te Ao Haka, i whai mana ki roto i te NCEA me te marautanga o Aotearoa kura auraki. Ka nui te mihi ki a koutou. Me whakamihi ka tika ngā ākonga, ngā whānau, me ngā kaiako. Kua kitea e mātou te kaha o ō koutou aroha ki te ao haka. Nei rā te mihi nui ki a koutou.

We would like to express our gratitude to the ākonga, whānau, and kaiako who took part in this study and generously shared their kōrero about their experiences of Te Ao Haka. Nei rā te mihi nui ki a koutou katoa.

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