



Tuhituhi
Writing

Pouārahi

Te tautoko i ngā
ākonga Māori -
Tuhituhi

**Supporting
ākonga Māori
in writing**

| Published September 2025



He tirohanga whakaako | Insights into practice

He Ihirangi

Contents

- 3 He Whakataukī
- 4 He Karakia
- 4 Te Whare Whakairo
- He Whakamārama – Pouārahi
- 5 **Pouārahi Interpretation**
- Kupu whakamihi
- 6 **Acknowledgements**
- Kupu whakataki
- 7 **Introduction**
- Tikanga rangahau
- 8 **Research methodology**
- Ngā kitenga rangahau
- 9 **Research findings**
 - 1. Pou tuakiri:
10 **Anchoring writing in identity, connection and cultural authenticity**
 - 2. Pou whanaungatanga:
12 **Building relationships that foster confidence, belonging, and wellbeing**
 - 3. Pou ako:
14 **Teaching with clarity, structure, and purpose**
 - 4. Pou aromatawai:
16 **Guiding growth through feedback and reflection**
 - 5. Pou reo ā-ākonga:
18 **Empowering expression through student voice and agency**
 - 6. Pou tikanga ako:
20 **Strengthening writing through leadership, purpose and supportive structures**
 - Te whakatinanatanga
- 22 **From pou to practice: What this looks like in the classroom**
- Whakarāpopoto
- 24 **Summary**
- Ngā Tohutoro
- 25 **References**

He Whakataukī

“Waiho mā ngā pouārahi, e tuitui i ngā pūrākau o te whare whakairo”

Let the pouārahi weave together the stories of the carved meeting house.

He Karakia

Rukuhia te ata o te whakairo,
Rukuhia te ata o te wānanga,
Rukuhia te ata o te wharekura.
Whano, whano, hari mai te toki,
Haumi e, hui e, tāiki e!

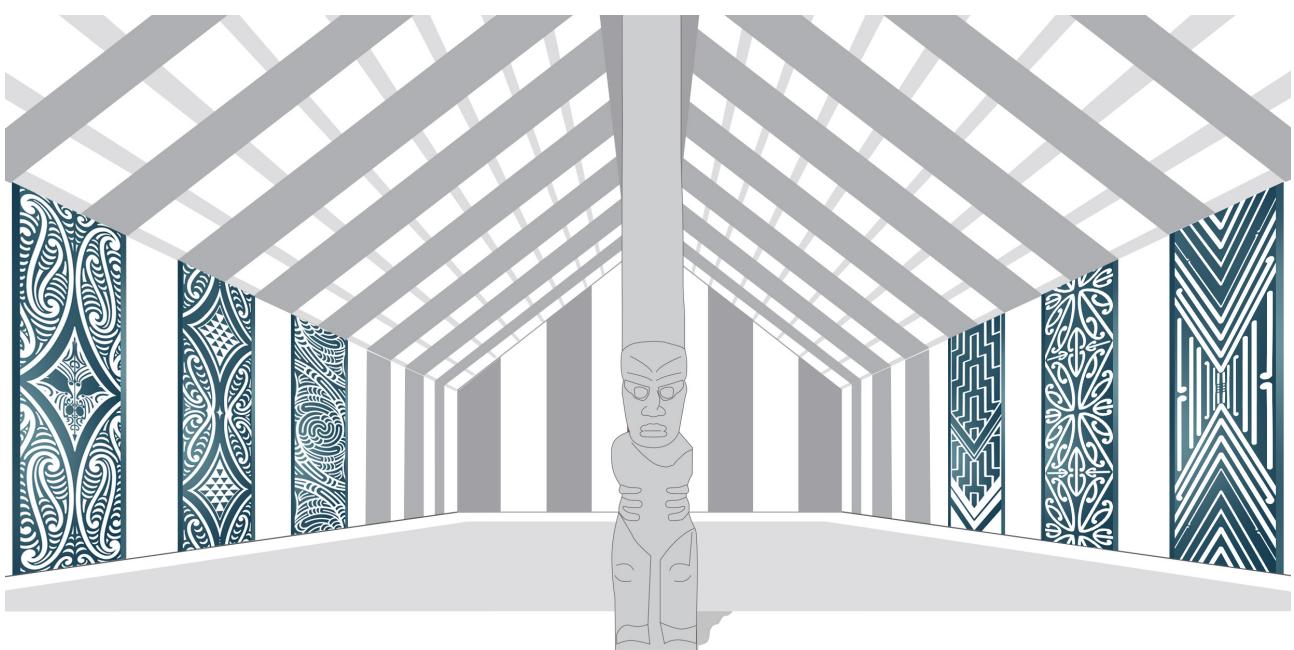
**Delve deep into the image of carving,
Delve deep into the essence of knowledge,
Delve deep into the image of sacred schooling.
Proceed, advance, welcome the adze.
Unite, assemble the vessels, ribs, and hull.**

(Walker, 2008, p. 190).

Te Whare Whakairo

In te ao Māori, whakairo (carving) can be understood as part of the whakapapa (genealogy) of Māori literacies (Rawiri, 2016). Long before written words were shaped on paper, whakapapa, mātauranga (knowledge), and tikanga (values, customs) were preserved and communicated in material form: carved into wood and bone, woven into fibre, painted onto surfaces, and marked into skin (Witehira, 2019; Hetaraka et al., 2023). These practices gave oral language shape and permanence, encoding memory and meaning into the physical world. In this report, we draw specifically on whakairo as a guiding metaphor. Its structural presence within the whare whakairo

(carved house) offers a clear model for how meaning, identity, and intention are held together within a culturally grounded framework, reflecting the kaupapa (purpose) of this work. Central to the integrity of the whare whakairo are its pou or poupou, the carved posts that support and unify the structure, each with its own meaning and role. In traditional form, these pou spoke, sang, and told the stories of the people, their histories, and their whakapapa. In this study, the pou serve as a metaphorical framework through which the findings are presented, each one representing a core element that reflects and supports the nurturing of language, literacy, and identity.



He Whakamārama - Pouārahi Pouārahi Interpretation



1. Pou tuakiri:
Anchor writing in identity, connection and cultural authenticity.

2. Pou whanaungatanga:
Build relationships that foster confidence, belonging, and wellbeing.

3. Pou ako:
Teach with clarity, structure, and purpose.



4. Pou aromatawai:
Guide growth through feedback and reflection.

5. Pou reo ā-ākonga:
Empower expression through student voice and agency.

6. Pou tikanga ako:
Strengthen writing through leadership, purpose and supportive systems.

Kupu whakamihi Acknowledgements

Ka toro te reo o mihi ki ngā kura, ngā kaiako me ngā tumuaki i whai wāhi ki a mātou te āta kohikohi raraunga, kōrero hoki. Nā tō koutou āwhina nui, kua mahea te kite me pēhea tātou e anga whakamua i ngā ākonga Māori i te tuhuhuhi. Ko tō manawa, ko tōku manawa.

The study team would like to thank the schools, teachers and principals who participated in the questionnaires and interviews. Your generous support has made it clearer how we can move forward in supporting students in writing. We are truly grateful for your honest and heartfelt sharing.



Kupu whakataki

Introduction

This report is part of the Curriculum Insights and Progress Study, which supports schools and the wider education system to understand how ākonga are progressing in relation to the refreshed New Zealand Curriculum, and generates insights to support improvement.

The study conducted its first national assessment in writing in 2024. To follow up, we invited a group of schools with strong outcomes for ākonga Māori to share the strategies and practices they use in writing. This report draws on what they told us. Because approaches that are effective in raising the achievement of Māori students are also shown to lift outcomes for all learners (Alton-Lee, 2015; Bishop, Berryman, Cavanagh, & Teddy, 2009), the insights shared here are valuable for the wider education system.

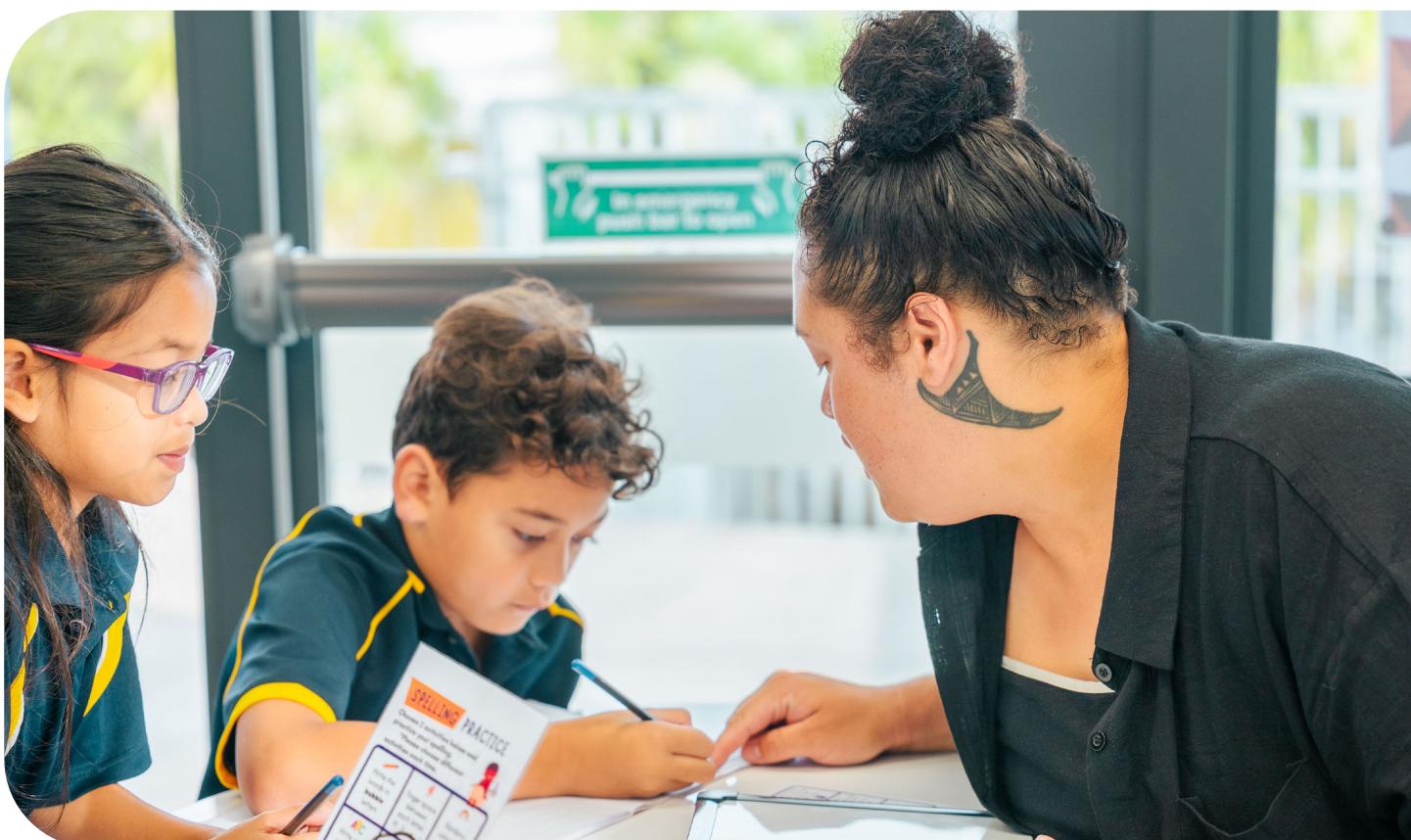
The goal is simple: to highlight approaches that are working, and to encourage others to explore and adapt these in their own contexts.

The report is divided into three sections. It begins with the research methodology, which briefly describes how the research was carried out.

The main section presents the findings, organised around six key pou (posts) that emerged from the analysis:

1. **Pou tuakiri:** Anchoring writing in identity, connection and cultural authenticity
2. **Pou whanaungatanga:** Building relationships that foster confidence, belonging, and wellbeing
3. **Pou ako:** Teaching with clarity, structure and purpose
4. **Pou aromatawai:** Guiding growth through feedback and reflection
5. **Pou reo ā-ākonga:** Empowering expression through student voice and agency
6. **Pou tikanga ako:** Strengthening writing through leadership, purpose and supportive structures

The final section focuses on examples from classroom practice, offering practical insights for schools and kaiako to explore and apply in ways that suit their setting.



Tikanga rangahau

Research methodology

Research question

What practices and strategies contribute to success in writing for ākonga Māori?

Data collection

To identify schools where ākonga Māori were experiencing strong success in writing, we analysed achievement data from the 147 schools that took part in the study's national writing assessment in 2024. We focused on schools where there were at least five ākonga Māori, where Māori students made up at least 20% of the roll, and where Māori students were doing particularly well – both compared to Māori students nationally, and to all students in similar schools. We then ranked schools on this basis and identified the top 20.

These 20 schools were invited to complete short questionnaires, and the top six were also invited to take part in interviews online. We spoke to both

teachers and school leaders, separately, to get a rich picture of what was happening.

Questionnaires and interviews were conducted over a two-and-a-half-week period during Weeks 3 to 5 of Term 2, 2025 (14 – 30 May). During the interviews, researchers took detailed notes and audio-recorded each conversation, which was later transcribed to support the research process.

The questions explored teaching strategies as well as the wider school conditions that teachers and leaders felt were making the biggest difference for their ākonga Māori in writing.

Participants

We heard from teachers and school leaders across a range of school types and settings. The table below summarises participation in the questionnaires and interviews.

The schools involved had a mix of Equity Index (EQI) ratings, which indicate the level of socio-economic

barriers students may face. This included one school with a low EQI rating, where students typically face fewer barriers to achievement; thirteen schools with moderate EQI ratings, where some barriers are present; and six schools with high EQI ratings, where students are likely to experience more significant barriers.

Summary of participation in the questionnaires and interviews

	Questionnaire	Interviews
Number of schools invited	20	6
Number of participating kaiako	75 (from 15 schools)	3 (from 2 schools)
Number of participating school leaders	18 (from 13 schools)	5 (from 5 schools)

Analysis

Questionnaire responses were thematically coded using an inductive approach. A wide range of ideas were shared by teachers and leaders across different settings. These were carefully grouped into consistent patterns of thinking and practice. From this process, six key pou were formed, each representing a pillar that supports success in writing for ākonga Māori.

Interview data was then reviewed to deepen and test these pou. While no new themes emerged, the interviews affirmed the findings from the questionnaires and brought the pou to life through the voices and experiences of participants. Quotes from these kōrero are woven throughout the report to illustrate each pou and honour the insights of those working closely with our tamariki.

Ngā kitenga rangahau

Research findings

This section presents the key findings of the study, drawing on insights from teachers and leaders in schools that demonstrated high levels of Māori success in writing. Their experiences answer the central research question: What practices and strategies contribute to success in writing for ākonga Māori? To frame these findings, we turn to the pūrākau (traditional oral narrative) of Hui-te-ana-nui, the first whare whakairo (carved house), discovered beneath the sea by Ruatepupuke, grandson of Tangaroa (Jackson et al., 2017; Mead, 2017).

In this sacred house, the carvings were said to be alive. They spoke and sang to one another, holding knowledge not just in words but in

presence and form. As Jackson et al. (2017) explain, such whare whakairo are not merely aesthetic structures but repositories of ancestral knowledge, whakapapa, and cultural values, conveyed through image, pattern, and symbolism.

In this report, the six key drivers, drawn from the experiences and insights shared by the participants, are presented as pou (posts) that uphold the whare of Māori writing success. They are not separate strategies but interconnected supports that uphold writing as voice, connection, and expression. Each pou represents an essential element that enables ākonga Māori to write with clarity, confidence, and mana.

Pouārahi



Te Tirohanga a te Kaitoi

The Artist's View of the Pou

Each pou depicts a vital element of the tamaiti and their journey through ako – tuakiritanga, ahureatanga, mana whenuatanga, and rangatiratanga.

At the heart of each pou lies the tamaiti, embraced by the guiding presence of whānau, hāpori, kaiako and kaiārahi, who nurture, support, and uplift them throughout their learning journey.

Te Awatea Pawa

Ko te mātāmua o ngā whakaaro ki a koe e Te Awatea i tēnei taonga nui, ko Pouārahi.

1. Pou tuakiri: Anchoring writing in identity, connection and cultural authenticity

Pou tuakiri holds and expresses the stories of whakapapa, identity, and place. Writing success begins with a strong foundation in cultural belonging, te reo Māori, pūrākau, and the lived realities of ākonga Māori. Pou tuakiri speaks to the power of anchoring writing in the unique identity and cultural world of ākonga Māori. It affirms that writing thrives when it draws from whakapapa, language, lived experience, and the values that shape each learner's sense of self.

Identity in this context is not limited to personal stories, but is deeply connected to place, iwi histories, pūrākau, mātauranga Māori, and whānau knowledge. When writing reflects these connections, it becomes more than a task. It becomes a vessel for voice, belonging, and cultural strength. Research affirms that writing success for ākonga Māori is strengthened when learning is grounded in cultural identity, mātauranga Māori, and local context, rather than generic approaches to literacy instruction (Riwai-Couch, 2021; ERO, 2010). Connection is at the heart of this pou. Writing is most successful when it allows ākonga to connect to their tūrangawaewae, to the people and events that matter to them, and to the wider narratives of their whānau and iwi.



Authenticity is found in contexts that matter; Matariki, marae visits, environmental inquiry, or ancestral stories, and in writing tasks that include te reo Māori, kupu hou (new words), and whakataukī (proverbs) in meaningful ways. Leaders contribute by building strong partnerships with iwi, kaumātua, and whānau, and ensuring kaiako have access to relevant PLD that builds their confidence and capability in cultural narratives. Teachers described how affirming cultural identity can ignite motivation and strengthen writing outcomes:

"There needs to be a sense of identity, a sense of whakapapa, in everything the kids write. If they don't see themselves, they switch off."

"When we write about pūrākau, or when they bring in stories from home, the writing takes off. There's heart in it."

"They need to feel like their language is normal, that it belongs on the page just as much as English."

Leaders reinforced that identity must be present not only in the writing programme, but in the wider culture of the kura:

"It's not just about adding in a pūrākau here and there, it's about who we are as a kura. That's got to be clear in the writing kaupapa too."

"We work closely with whānau to make sure writing connects to real stories, not just abstract tasks. Our local narratives are at the centre of that."

"We can't expect teachers to weave in identity if the school doesn't reflect it. So we look at writing as a chance to live our values, not just teach them."

Pou tuakiri shows that when writing is grounded in identity, connected to culture, and shaped through authentic contexts, it becomes a source of empowerment for ākonga Māori. It invites them to write with depth, and a strong sense of pride and purpose.

"There needs to be a sense of identity, a sense of whakapapa, in everything the kids write. If they don't see themselves, they switch off."

Teacher

Pou whanaungatanga

2. Pou whanaungatanga: Building relationships that foster confidence, belonging, and wellbeing

Pou whanaungatanga places relationships at the centre of writing success for ākonga Māori. Strong relationships connect ākonga to kaiako, whānau, and peers, creating the connections that hold the learning environment together. This pou reflects the power of trust, emotional safety, and collective support in enabling success. It acknowledges that meaningful progress in writing cannot be separated from the quality of the relationships that surround a learner.

When ākonga feel known, valued, and safe, they are more willing to take creative risks, persevere through challenges, and find their own voice in writing. Whanaungatanga within the classroom, among peers, and in partnership with whānau fosters a sense of belonging and creates a culture that uplifts writing confidence and supports growth (Glynn et al., 2000). Strong, respectful relationships between teachers, ākonga, and whānau are central to Māori success in education, creating emotional safety and connection that support learning (Glynn et al., 2000; Riwai-Couch, 2021).



Writing does not occur in isolation from the emotional and relational conditions in which it takes place. Teachers spoke about the deep connection between wellbeing and writing engagement, affirming that emotional safety and wellbeing are essential preconditions for learning:

"We talk about writing as a way to express who you are. But if the child's not feeling good, they won't write. That's just the truth of it."

"Writing shows where the student is at. If they're unsettled, it comes through on the page."

"Sometimes we stop writing completely to do something more relationship-focused."

These insights reflect the importance of teaching practices that uphold ākonga wellbeing through strong, affirming relationships.

Relational pedagogy is about more than classroom management or rapport. It reflects a commitment to mana-enhancing practice, where ākonga are seen and treated with dignity, compassion, and high expectations. Teachers who intentionally build trust, listen deeply, and foster culturally safe learning environments create the conditions for confidence and sustained engagement. This extends beyond the classroom to whānau partnerships. When writing progress is shared openly, aspirations are acknowledged, and learning is shaped together, whānau become active contributors to writing success. Teachers spoke about the role of strong relationships in fostering the emotional safety and motivation that support writing:

"It's the relationship that makes the difference. If they trust you, they'll try, even if writing's hard."

"We check in with whānau regularly, not just at reporting time. They know what their kids are writing about and they offer ideas too."

"We use tuakana-teina pairings. It gives them a sense of responsibility, and they're more motivated when they write together."

Leaders spoke to the importance of setting a cultural tone where relationships are prioritised across the school:

"Our teachers are supported to bring whānau in, not just for events, but as partners. It's a mindset shift."

"Relational pedagogy is the foundation. We focus on it in our PLD and in how we evaluate effective practice."

"We've moved away from tokenistic engagement to genuine, ongoing connection. Writing is one of the most powerful places to do that."

Pou whanaungatanga highlights that success in writing for ākonga Māori is rooted in meaningful relationships. Writing becomes more than a task when it happens within a space of trust, support, and shared purpose. These connections create a sense of belonging where ākonga feel safe to take risks and write with confidence.

3. Pou ako: Teaching with clarity, structure, and purpose

Pou ako ensures identity, relationships, knowledge, and voice are not left to chance but are intentionally supported through clear expectations, scaffolded approaches and consistent guidance over time. High quality teaching practices such as modelling, scaffolding, and clear instruction have been shown to improve outcomes for ākonga Māori when supported by consistent, schoolwide practice (Brooker et al., 2010; Riwai-Couch, 2021).

Like whakairo, writing is a disciplined art that requires guidance, tools, and vision. A carver does not approach a piece of wood with a fixed formula. Although guided by inherited knowledge and clear processes, they must think their way through the work, making decisions in real time as the form emerges (Mead, 2017). What begins as a plan is transformed through attention, adjustment, and insight. By the end, the concept that once existed in the mind becomes a poupon on the wall, shaped and revealed through careful and thoughtful effort (Mead, 2017). In the same way, writing instruction must be purposeful and responsive. It provides ākonga with the tools and structures they need, while also allowing space for thinking, discovery, and voice to develop along the way.



Teachers described how they model writing for their students, use scaffolds such as sentence frames and exemplars, and teach the mechanics of sentence construction and genre structure with clarity and care. This was not about limiting creative freedom, but about equipping ākonga with the strategies and tools needed to write well. These teachers held high expectations of ākonga Māori as capable and skilled writers. They approached instruction with intent, ensuring every learner could see the pathway forward and have the tools to walk it with confidence:

"We teach paragraph structure like a formula, so kids know exactly what to do. It's not guesswork anymore."

"I model writing every day. They need to see my thinking before they do their own."

"We make sure the genre structure is really clear. I use sentence starters and visual templates."

These teacher practices were supported by leadership actions that maintained coherence across the school, built teacher capability, and elevated writing as a schoolwide priority:

"Our teaching team uses shared language and planning formats so writing is consistent across year groups."

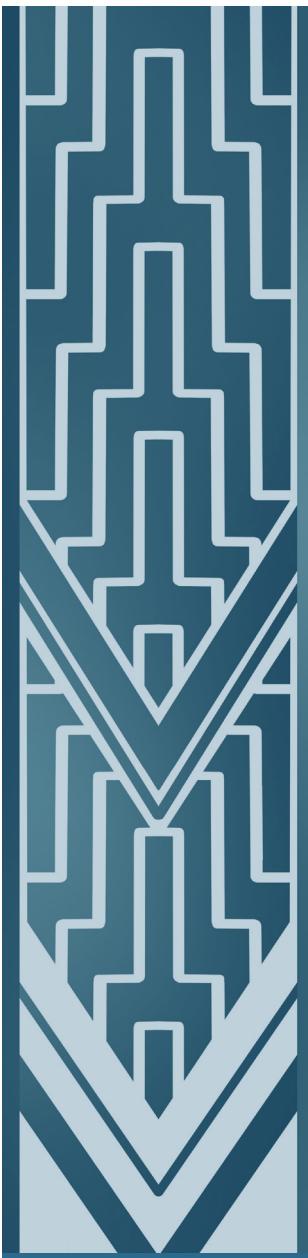
"We've focused a lot of PLD on explicit writing instruction, not just letting them write and hope they improve."

"Our curriculum map includes structured literacy, genre focus, and sentence starters right across the school."

Pou ako illustrates the power of intentional, high-impact teaching to lift writing outcomes. It shows that success for ākonga Māori is enabled when instruction is deliberate, expectations are high, and learners are given clear, consistent pathways to grow their skill and confidence as writers.

"Our curriculum map includes structured literacy, genre focus, and sentence starters right across the school."

School leader



Pou aromatawai

4. Pou aromatawai: **Guiding growth through feedback and reflection**

Pou aromatawai symbolises the role of assessment, feedback, and reflection in guiding and supporting progress, marking a point of entry into deeper understanding and growth. This pou represents effective assessment, feedback, and responsive teaching that tracks progress and uses reliable information to guide next steps. It is not assessment as measurement alone, but as a process of noticing, understanding and responding.

To grow as writers, ākonga need to see how far they've come, know where they are headed, and be guided by meaningful feedback along the way. Pou aromatawai recognises that assessment is not simply a tool for measurement, but a process of reflection, guidance, and growth. Just as a tohunga whakairo (master carver) steps back to examine their work with a discerning eye, kaiako too must look closely at their ākonga, noticing patterns, progress, and potential. Culturally responsive assessment focuses on feedback and reflection that informs teaching and supports ākonga to track their own progress (Averill et al., 2014; ERO, 2010).



In the schools studied, this pou was brought to life through deliberate monitoring systems, robust data use, and responsive, assessment-informed teaching. Teachers made writing goals visible, gave feedback that was specific and actionable, and used real-time checks to intervene early when needed:

"They know their goals, and they check them off with me. It's not me doing the thinking for them."

"I use a tracking sheet so I can see at a glance who's slipping and who's making gains."

"We co-create success criteria every time. They know what 'good' looks like."

"I do conferencing as often as I can and set next steps. I do find that quite useful."

At the leadership level, aromatawai was embedded through coherent use of assessment tools across the school, systematic data reviews, moderation processes, and team-wide analysis of outcomes. These practices ensured that progress for ākonga Māori was not left to chance, but was actively monitored and supported:

"We sit down each term and look at the data for our Māori learners and decide what we need to change or focus on."

"We don't just look at the numbers. We always ask what's behind them, what's working, what's not."

"We sit down and problem-solve together. That professional dialogue helps everyone improve and helps the tamariki get the right support."

"Our Board sees the data each term and expects us to show what's changing."

Through pou aromatawai, we see that success in writing is built not only through teaching, but through responsive cycles of assessment, feedback, reflection, and action. It highlights that Māori student success in writing emerges when progress is made visible, monitored purposefully, and information is used to shape better, more targeted teaching every day.

"We sit down and problem-solve together. That professional dialogue helps everyone improve and helps the tamariki get the right support."

School leader



5. Pou reo ā-ākonga: Empowering expression through student voice and agency

Pou reo ā-ākonga reflects ownership, agency, and the belief that ākonga thrive when they are empowered to shape their writing with purpose, choice, and pride. Giving Māori students agency and opportunities to express their own voice in writing affirms their identity and leads to more meaningful engagement (Glynn et al., 2000; Smallbone, 2019).

In culturally sustaining classrooms, ākonga Māori are not passive recipients of writing instruction but active contributors to its purpose, content, and audience. This agency is aligned with pou ako – intentional teaching – where clear models, expectations, and support enable ākonga to take meaningful ownership of their writing.



Student agency is expressed through choice, relevance, and connection. Teachers reported that when tamariki are given the space to write about who they are, what matters to them, and where they come from, their confidence and engagement lift. This pou also reflects the deeply relational nature of writing, where kōrero, whanaungatanga, and audience all matter. Voice is not just a technical skill, but a reflection of identity and intent:

"I let my students write about what matters to them. Sometimes it's their marae, their cousin, or their dog. When they write from that place, their words are more real, and they care about getting it right."

"Writing becomes meaningful when they know someone will read it. We share it with their parents, the principal, their class. That makes it real."

"I've got one student who hated writing until we did blogs. Now he's posting his writing to his whānau in Australia. That connection has changed everything."

"They're proud when they see their writing on the wall or on Seesaw and their whānau can comment. It builds them up."

Leaders supported this pou by creating systems that support choice, motivation, and purpose. Several schools had implemented real-world writing contexts, publication platforms, or student-led conferences to elevate the role of student voice. Others spoke to the importance of enabling teachers to scaffold oral language and confidence first, then use writing as an expression of that. Leadership that recognises student voice as more than just opinion, but as a core aspect of writing identity, was essential to sustaining motivation for all ākonga:

"We allow student voice to guide what and how they write, but there's still careful scaffolding behind that."

"Our goal is for every child to see themselves as a writer. That means they have to feel like their voice matters and is worth sharing."

"We've built 'writing showcases' into our calendar so it's not just a private thing. Writing is public, it's celebrated. That shifts how students see it."

Pou reo ā-ākonga highlights practices that empower ākonga Māori to find ownership, motivation, and meaning in writing. By embedding choice, oral language, real audiences, and culturally relevant content, schools are fostering not only stronger writing, but stronger writers.

"Our goal is for every child to see themselves as a writer. That means they have to feel like their voice matters and is worth sharing."

School leader



Pou tikanga ako

6. Pou tikanga ako: Strengthening writing through leadership, purpose and supportive structures

Pou tikanga ako reflects the collective strength of leadership, the importance of wellbeing, and the role of system-wide structures in supporting sustainable writing success for ākonga Māori. Māori student success is most sustainable when leadership, wellbeing, and school systems work together to uphold shared values and consistent teaching practice (Downey et al., 2019; Riwai-Couch, 2021).



Leadership was consistently described as a driver of sustained focus. In the schools studied, leaders cultivated a culture where writing was prioritised, Māori success was made visible, and staff were supported to uphold shared values and expectations:

"Leadership drives it. We make sure writing is part of everything, not just something done in the literacy block."

"We've built a culture where writing matters. It's visible in classrooms, it's in our planning, it's part of our conversations."

"Consistency across classrooms hasn't happened by chance. It's the result of intentional leadership and professional learning."

Alongside leadership and wellbeing, teachers highlighted the value of practical structures that supported consistency and clarity. Schoolwide systems such as shared planning, data use, and collaborative review enabled teachers to embed effective writing practice:

"We track writing across the whole school and review progress as a team. Everyone's responsible."

"We have systems that back us up – shared planning, shared expectations. It means we're not guessing, and neither are the kids."

Pou tikanga ako shows that Māori student success in writing is not left to individual teacher effort alone. It is enabled by leadership that sets a clear direction, by environments that prioritise wellbeing, and by structures that create cohesion, clarity, and support across the school.

*"Leadership drives it.
We make sure writing
is part of everything,
not just something done
in the literacy block."*

School leader

Te whakatinanatanga

From pou to practice: What this looks like in the classroom

The six pou, or key drivers of success, identified in this work highlight that success in writing for ākonga Māori is not only about using effective strategies, but also about aligning teaching with identity, whakapapa, language, and place. They call for a shift in thinking, from what works for most to what both affirms and empowers ākonga Māori. The examples below are drawn from the research and linked to each pou, offering grounded, actionable ways to support success in writing for ākonga Māori.



1. Pou tuakiri: **Anchor writing in identity, connection and cultural authenticity.**

- Explore pepeha through writing: Who am I, who stands with me, and where do I belong?
- Invite ākonga to bring in photos or taonga from home as inspiration for biographies, character writing, or personal narratives.
- Include visual, oral, and digital forms of self-expression alongside written text.
- Use local pūrākau, landmarks, histories, and community figures as meaningful writing prompts.
- Work with local knowledge-holders to co-construct writing experiences with ākonga.



2. Pou whanaungatanga: **Build relationships that foster confidence, belonging, and wellbeing.**

- Invite whānau to share stories, aspirations, and knowledge that is used to shape writing tasks.
- Share student writing regularly with home through platforms like Seesaw or writing evenings.
- Learn one new thing each week about your learners and use it to build connection and trust.
- Set up reciprocal writing opportunities, such as letter exchanges with a local kaumātua group or penpal projects.



3. Pou ako: **Teach with clarity, structure, and purpose.**

- Model writing in real time through shared writing and co-construction.
- Explicitly teach sentence structure, paragraphing, genre expectations, and success criteria with clarity.
- Set high expectations by providing clear pathways, strong scaffolds, and consistent support.

5. Pou reo ā-ākonga: **Empower expression through student voice and agency.**

- Support students to select writing topics that reflect their identities, experiences, and interests.
- Use real-world audiences for writing through blogs, whānau sharing, or school showcases.
- Celebrate student writing publicly and authentically to build pride.
- Scaffold oral language to strengthen writing fluency and expression.

4. Pou aromatawai: **Guide growth through feedback and reflection.**

- Co-construct and display writing goals and success criteria with ākonga.
- Use tracking tools and conferencing to plan next steps.
- Support ākonga to monitor their own progress using checklists, writing walls, or portfolios.

6. Pou tikanga ako: **Strengthen writing through leadership, purpose and supportive systems.**

- Use consistent planning formats, expectations, and language across the school.
- Review progress for ākonga Māori regularly and adapt teaching accordingly.
- Prioritise writing in strategic planning and leadership conversations.

Whakarāpopoto Summary

Results suggest that success in writing for ākonga Māori is built on more than instructional strategies alone. It emerges when identity, culture, and belonging are central to learning. Analysis of teacher and leader perspectives from schools where Māori learners are thriving identified six key pou as drivers of success. These include anchoring writing in cultural identity, building relationships that foster

belonging, teaching with clarity and high expectations, using feedback and reflection, promoting student voice, and enabling support through strong leadership and systems. When schools work in these ways with intention and integrity, writing becomes a tool for voice, connection, and transformation—laying the foundation for sustained success for ākonga Māori.



Ngā Tohutoro

References

Alton-Lee, A. (2015). Ka Hikitia demonstration report: Effectiveness of Te Kotahitanga phase 5 (2010–2012). *Iterative Best Evidence Synthesis Programme/Hei Kete Raukura*. Ministry of Education. Wellington, New Zealand.

Averill, R., Hindle, R., Hynds, A., Meyer, L. H., Penetito, W., Taiwhati, M., Hodis, F., & Faircloth, S. C. (2014). "It means everything doesn't it?" Interpretations of Māori students achieving and enjoying educational success "as Māori." *Set: Research Information for Teachers*, (2), 33–40.

Bishop, R., Berryman, M., Cavanagh, T., & Teddy, L. (2009). *Te Kotahitanga: Addressing educational disparities facing Māori students in New Zealand*. Teaching and Teacher Education, 25(5), 734–742.

Brooker, B., Ellis, G., Parkhill, F., & Bates, J. (2010). Māori achievement in literacy and numeracy in a sample of Canterbury schools. *New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies*, 45(1), 49–65.

Downey, R., Grove, H., Alchin, H., & DeBoer, C. (2019). *Enhancing writing outcomes for Māori students through the application of dramatic inquiry approaches within culturally responsive practice* (TLIF Project Report 2-050). Wellington, New Zealand: Ministry of Education.

Education Review Office. (2010). *Promoting success for Māori students: Schools' progress*. Wellington, New Zealand: Education Review Office.

Glynn, T., Berryman, M., & Glynn, V. (2000, July). *Reading and writing gains for Māori students in mainstream schools: Effective partnerships in the Rotorua Home and School Literacy Project* [Paper presentation]. 18th International Reading Association World Congress on Reading, Auckland, New Zealand.

Hetaraka, R., Meiklejohn-Whiu, S., Webber, M., & Jesson, R. (2023). *Tiritiria: Understanding Māori children as inherently and inherited-ly literate – Towards a conceptual position*. New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies, 58(1), 59–72.

Jackson, A.-M., Mita, N., & Hakopa, H. (2017). *Hui-te-ana-nui: Understanding kaitiakitanga in our marine environment*. Sustainable Seas National Science Challenge. <https://www.sustainableseaschallenge.co.nz/hui-te-ana-nui-understanding-kaitiakitanga-in-our-marine-environment>

Mead, H. M. (2017). *Te Toi Whakairo: The Art of Māori Carving*. Auckland, New Zealand: Oratia Books.

Rawiri, A. H. (2016). *E Kore au e ngaro he kākano i ruia mai i Rangiātea: Literacy policy for the survival of Māori as a people*. Waikato Journal of Education, 21(1), 17–27.

Riwi-Couch, M. (2021). *Niho Taniwha: Improving teaching and learning for ākonga Māori*. Wellington, New Zealand: Huia Publishers.

Smallbone, C. (2019). *SpLD – Silent learning difficulties? Factors influencing literacy learning of Māori students, as identified by teachers, SENCo, and parents* (Master's thesis). Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand.

Walker, R. (2008). *Tohunga whakairo: Paki Harrison: The story of a master carver*. Auckland, New Zealand: Penguin Books.

Witehira, J. (2019). *Mana Mātāuhī: A survey of Māori engagement with the written and printed word during the 19th century*. Visible Language, 53(1), 77–109.





1. Pou tuakiri:

Anchor writing in identity, connection and cultural authenticity.

2. Pou whanaungatanga:

Build relationships that foster confidence, belonging, and wellbeing.

3. Pou ako:

Teach with clarity, structure, and purpose.

4. Pou aromatawai:

Guide growth through feedback and reflection.

5. Pou reo ā-ākonga:

Empower expression through student voice and agency.

6. Pou tikanga ako:

Strengthen writing through leadership, purpose and supportive systems.



**Curriculum Insights
and Progress Study**