

Title

## Te Ao Māori Thriving in a State School in Aotearoa

Full abstract

Tomo mai te aroha	Enter love
Tomo mai te marino	Enter calm and peace
Tomo mai te mataara	Enter understanding and awareness
Tomo mai te reka	Enter gratefulness
Tomo mai ki tua o te Pae Kārearea	Enter through the entryway
Ki te ngākau kura	To the heart of the school
Ki te ngākau tāngata	To the hearts of the people
Kia kaha, kia māia, kia manawaroa	Be strong, be brave, be steadfast
Tihei mauri ora!	Behold there is Life!

Many schools in Aotearoa New Zealand struggle to authentically embed Te Ao Māori, often remaining as a list of token gestures. Globally, many schools are wanting to authentically integrate indigenous cultures and languages, often encountering challenges in moving beyond symbolic gestures to genuine, embedded practice. This presentation shares Silverdale School's decade-long journey from tokenism to transformation, a state school in a predominantly Pākehā (European), middle-class community, committed to biculturalism.

Our real success lies in having our staff and community on board the waka, participating and paddling as one. The guiding belief is simple: **Te Ao Māori is what WE do**. This is symbolised in Te Pae Kārearea, our striking new waha ātea (entranceway), which tells our story and is a symbol of our commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

The strategic implementation of daily hui, whole-school kapa haka, and cumulative schoolwide lessons has been central to the success of normalising Te Ao Māori. Our staff and tamariki (children) have developed pride in kapa haka, tikanga and language proficiency. 2025 saw a significant milestone with the opening of a bilingual class, made possible through strong whānau partnerships.

This presentation outlines a practical model for leading revitalisation in a school, demonstrating how persistence, effective leadership, and authentic partnerships with Māori strengthens the school culture and enhances outcomes for tamariki, whānau and community.