

# Mātaiao Evaluation 2025

## What is Mātaiao?

A kaupapa Māori approach supporting kura and kaiako to enhance ākonga wellbeing through mātauranga Māori (Māori knowledge). Funded by Sport NZ, it strengthens tamariki and rangatahi connection to te taiao (the natural world) and culture through physical activity and learning. Other pathways into Mātaiao are through kapa and wharekura:

### Kapa in Mātaiao

Kapa is one of the practical entry point into Mātaiao (especially for kura auraki), through locally led, group-based activities. Kapa build broad participation; ongoing wānanga and kura-led components support deeper embedding over time.

### Wharekura in Mātaiao

Wharekura support senior Māori-medium kura to embed Mātaiao across curriculum, kaiako practice and leadership systems. Learning is grounded in local environments, whakapapa and kaupapa ako, with kura-specific support that strengthens sustained, kura-wide embedding (including NCEA-aligned learning where relevant).

## Evaluation approach

Te Paetawhiti Ltd and Associates led a kaupapa Māori evaluation of Mātaiao, focused on what supports effective implementation and the difference it makes for taura, kaiako and kura.

## 2025 nationwide reach at a glance

**50** kura receiving targeted regional support in 2025

**31** new kura to Mātaiao in 2025

Depth, continuity and leadership engagement drive the strongest outcomes.




Mātaiao delivers the greatest impact when kura are supported to move from entry-level participation into sustained, embedded practice.

## Embedding Mātaiao into kura practice takes time

It typically takes 3-5 years for kura to embed lasting change.

Most kura are currently at Kākano (Emergent) after ~1 year, with embedding still developing.

Sustained multi-year engagement supports deeper integration, progressing to Pihinga (Developing) and Puāwai (Embedded).

	<b>Kākano</b> Emergent 	<b>Pihinga</b> Developing 	<b>Puāwai</b> Embedded 
<b>Number of Kura</b>	Kura are more likely to engage in training intermittently and require support to grow.	Kura are committed to Mātaiao and require in-depth support to embed the kaupapa.	Kura have a sophisticated understanding of Mātaiao relevant to their context.
<b>2024</b>	48	4	5
<b>2025</b>	37	9	4
<b>Time</b>	→		

The evaluative rubric reflects the relationship between time kura have spent engaged in Mātaiao and the level to which the kaupapa is embedded in their practice.

## What difference Mātaiao makes

Where Mātaiao is embedded, the following impact is evident in:

### Taura

- More physical activity.
- Stronger taiao literacy and cultural connection.
- Improved engagement and enjoyment of learning.

### Kaiako

- More confidence using mātauranga Māori and physical activity as learning contexts.
- More experiential, project-based teaching practice.

**62%**

of tamariki say they are always active at kura

### Kura

- More regular place-based learning and physical activity in te taiao.
- Stronger leadership support and capability.
- Deeper whānau/community connection and localised curriculum focused on te taiao and iwi mātauranga.

## Taura knowledge gained

Key gains were in atua narratives, whakapapa connections and practical environmental skills reflecting the kaupapa and local contexts of kura. Learning in te taiao increased engagement and helped knowledge stick.

Atua Whenua	<b>88%</b>
Karakia	<b>85%</b>
Atua Wai	<b>73%</b>
Atua Rangi	<b>62%</b>
Waiata	<b>62%</b>
Pūrākau	<b>50%</b>

## What matters most for implementation

### Key barriers

- Competing priorities within kura.
- Lack of follow up support for kaiako.
- Varied kura leadership engagement.

### Key enablers

- Sustained kura engagement over time.
- Active leadership support for kaiako involvement.
- High quality wānanga delivery.
- Ongoing regional provider support.

# Impact story

## Te Pā o Rakaihautu

Whole school commitment to taiao-based learning strengthens engagement.

Since engaging with Mātaiao 5 years ago, taura at Te Pā o Rakaihautu in Ōtautahi now spend up to 70 percent of their school day outside the traditional walls of the classroom. The pā wānanga (learning village) in Te Waipounamu also now has a practitioner experienced in Mātaiao on staff. They are helping to lead development both within the kura and across others in Te Waipounamu.

The changes reflect the commitment of senior leadership at the kura-a-iwi, who have seen first-hand the value of outdoor education to reconnect whānau with place, people, and Papatūānuku (mother earth).

Evaluation has shown that pononga are now spending more time learning outside the classroom and being more physically active, enjoying learning mātauranga taiao in the taiao, and positively engaging in school – with positive changes in behaviour, especially among those who may have been considered difficult to engage in learning.

Within the junior school, the kura is well advanced in integrating kaupapa ako, tikanga (karakia), pūtaiao, taiao-based activities and reo matatini into their planning.

Through Active As funding, the kura is also progressing in applying Mātaiao to the delivery of their senior curriculum. This includes contextually relevant learning in taiao, and the use of kaupapa to integrate subject-specific achievement standards and learning outcomes.

One kaiako says, with the support of the Mātaiao practitioner, he has shifted his practice. “I’ve definitely changed my approach to planning my units by making my outcomes almost like project or experience based,” he said.

“Last year I did the adrenaline forest and we did the high ropes,” he said. “This year we devised strategies to walk the Rāpaki track which is uphill and it’s in our real taiao. We whakapapa back to that taiao, so I think choosing the right context for us to do our NCEA assessment is key.”

Offering further opportunities to embed their approach to taiao-based learning, Te Pā has also recently been approved to relocate to Diamond Harbour at the foothills of Te Ahupātiki. This is the same location where Ngāi Tahu ancestor Rākaihautū buried his famous kō (digging tool).

“ I’ve definitely changed my approach to planning my units by making my outcomes almost like project or experience based. ”

Kaiako

Up to 70% of learning time in te taiao.

Kura-wide curriculum integration.

Improved engagement, behaviour and physical activity.

