



# Working in special education

Kaitakawaenga





## Meet Karepa Wall, a kaitakawaenga in Wellington

Karepa Wall, who is fluent in te reo Māori, has worked as a kaitakawaenga for the Ministry of Education since 2009.

### Karepa's story

Karepa is a trained primary teacher, who worked in various schools, before becoming tumuaki at a Māori immersion early learning centre. Karepa was also a national representative for the New Zealand Educational Institute Te Riu Roa representing Māori early childhood education centres for a number of years.

### Karepa's day-to-day

A typical day for Karepa includes meeting with parents and whānau to talk about the special education needs of their tamariki, working with classroom teachers, and networking with Māori medium teachers and other specialist staff.

Karepa also provides advice to Ministry staff about how they can work effectively with Māori and be more culturally responsive in their work.



## Reflecting cultural values in his work

For Karepa, working with Māori comes naturally and needs to be on open terms. “I can have as many as three meetings to get to know a parent before I start talking about strategies and interventions. I make sure they know me and that we find common ground, which leads to common values and goals.”

## Rewards and challenges of the role

The reward of Karepa’s job is in “hearing a parent’s sigh of relief when they realise we’re here to help, or when a child smiles and is enjoying learning because of the barriers that we’ve helped to lift. Me auaha ai te ara mātauranga e te tamaiti.”

The main challenge of the role is keeping people informed. “The Ministry has many projects and initiatives going on all at once and it can seem overwhelming. The key when talking with Māori whānau, teachers or leaders is to canvas all the options and present the most suitable.”

## Future aspirations

In the future, Karepa hopes to “use my skills, learnt over previous years, to help future kaitakawaenga succeed in their roles. A good kaitakawaenga means a good service for our tamariki, our kura, our whānau, our Tāhuhu.”

## Nature of the work

### Kaitakawaenga:

- › support Māori tamariki and their whānau in meetings with educators, Ministry specialist staff and other agencies with special education needs
- › develop and maintain effective working relationships with Māori tamariki and their whānau, educators, local iwi, Ministry specialist staff and other agencies
- › provide advice and guidance to Ministry staff, educators, local iwi and community groups on programme development and system changes.



## Qualifications and experience

To become a kaitakawaenga you need:

- › a relevant diploma qualification (minimum 2 years' study) or higher
- › to be proficient in te reo Māori
- › at least 3 years' teaching te reo Māori or 3 years' working in the community in Māori development

Previous experience in the education sector, a special education service or health agency will be an advantage.

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## Skills and knowledge

In addition to the qualifications a kaitakawaenga must have knowledge of or skills in:

- › working effectively in Māori education settings
- › translating specialist knowledge into practical information
- › working effectively with children, young people and their whānau
- › coaching and upskilling others
- › community and family support services
- › effective communication, research and planning skills.

## Career development

Becoming a kaitakawaenga with the Ministry of Education will give you the rewards and challenges of the job itself, as well as opportunities to develop your career.

### You will:

- › be supported and supervised by experienced professional colleagues
- › be kept up to date with the latest evidence.
- › take part in ongoing training
- › have opportunities to share and extend your knowledge and skills.

There might also be opportunities to take part in projects or working groups and in time, you might be considered for leadership roles.









## Further information about kaitakawaenga

### Special education careers and professional development

For more information about the role of a kaitakawaenga and working in special education, visit our special education careers webpage

**[www.education.govt.nz/careers-in-special-education](http://www.education.govt.nz/careers-in-special-education)**

### Special education scholarships and study awards

If you're interested in a career in special education you may be eligible for a scholarship or study award. Find out more at

**[www.education.govt.nz/r/sestudyawards](http://www.education.govt.nz/r/sestudyawards)**

### Career information

For profiles of different careers visit the Careers New Zealand website **[www.careers.govt.nz](http://www.careers.govt.nz)**

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## Contact us

Want to speak to someone about a career as a kaitakawaenga? Give us a call or drop us an email.

### Ministry of Education – Special Education

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