

Welcome to Waitākiri REAL CHOICES Challenges 2026

February, 2026

Kia ora whānau,

The REAL CHOICES Challenges remain an important and valued part of learning at Waitākiri School. In 2026, the programme has been refreshed to make it more achievable, engaging, and accessible for all students, while keeping the heart of REAL Challenges firmly intact.

What are REAL CHOICES Challenges?

REAL CHOICES Challenges recognise the rich learning children engage in both at school and beyond. These challenges encourage students to become self-directed learners by acknowledging learning through:

- school-based activities and events
- physical activity and sport
- creativity and the arts
- community involvement
- environmental and sustainability actions
- personal interests and inquiry

REAL CHOICES Challenges are an optional part of Home Learning, but we strongly encourage whānau support. Students who experience success as self-directed learners are more likely to thrive in future learning and life challenges.

What stays the same in 2026?

- Rata (Year 4): 8 challenges
- Harakeke (Year 5): 9 challenges
- Pounamu (Year 6): 10 challenges

The minimum expectations to earn each award remain unchanged.

- In Year 5 and Year 6, completing the required Children's University hours will automatically earn a Harakeke or Pounamu award, respectively.
- All original challenges remain largely unchanged, with some minor tweaks to improve accessibility.

What's new for 2026?

- **Refreshed Challenge Booklets!**
All REAL Challenge booklets have been updated and refreshed for 2026.
- **School Activities Now Count!**
Participation in non-compulsory school-based activities and events now counts as REAL Challenges.
 - ★ Examples include sports teams, cultural groups, clubs, and special events.
 - ★ Staff members running activities will initial student booklets once participation expectations are met.
 - ★ A general benchmark for sign-off is at least 80% attendance and consistent contribution.
- **REAL Reading Log!**
A new challenge option has been introduced:
 - ★ Students may complete a REAL Reading Log once per term.
 - ★ Each completed term reading log counts as one REAL Challenge.

- **REAL Reflection & REAL Evidence!**

Each completed challenge must include:

- ★ One **'REAL Reflection'**, including the following information:

- Date of challenge
- Challenge code
- What did you do?
- What was your biggest challenge?
- What was your biggest success?

- ★ One piece of **'REAL Evidence'**

- One piece of evidence such as a photo, photo collage, or drawing/sketch
- Evidence may be used for end-of-year slideshows and celebrations

Rata students will complete reflections and show evidence in their provided booklet. Harakeke and Pounamu students will complete these digitally via Google Classroom.

Planning for Success

At the start of the year, all students will complete a REAL Challenge Planner.

- Students are encouraged to look through their challenge booklet and map out how they will complete challenges across the year.
- This includes selecting a mix of home-based challenges and school activities.

There is a new expectation that students aim to complete a minimum of two challenges per term. This:

- encourages steady progress
- reduces pressure in Term 4

This is an expectation only — students may still achieve even if they do not meet this target every term.

New Tier System (Optional Extension)

Students who complete beyond the minimum will be recognised through a tier system:

- Level 1: Minimum requirement (award earned)
- Level 2: +4 challenges
- Level 3: +8 challenges
- Level 4: +12 challenges

There is no upper limit — students can continue levelling up. Final levels will be shown on graduation certificates.

Where to from here?

Each child will receive a REAL CHOICES Challenges booklet outlining the available challenges for their year level. Please complete and return the permission and support form sent home with your child.

We look forward to partnering with you and your child as they become confident, capable, and motivated REAL Challenge Heroes.

Ngā mihi nui,

Darren Aitchison

REAL CHOICES Challenges Co-ordinator 2026

REAL Heroes making REAL CHOICES

Hanga kōwhiringa tūturu

170 Burwood Rd, Christchurch 8083

P: 03 383 2736 E: office@waitakiri.school.nz

www.waitakiri.school.nz

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Permission and Support Form

Child's Commitment:

I _____ would like to participate in the REAL CHOICES Challenges this year. I understand that the REAL CHOICES Challenges will take effort and commitment from me to achieve. They will increase my learning and challenge me physically, academically, creatively, culturally, and socially and help me become more environmentally sustainable in my life. I will learn to give and support others as part of being a positive member of the community.

I am committed to completing at least the minimum number of the required number of challenges by Monday 16 November.

_____ (Child's signature)

Parent/Caregivers Commitment:

I look forward to supporting _____ from Learning Studio _____ in their REAL CHOICES Challenges this year and will assist them with challenges (but not do the tasks for them).

Questions/comments I/we have are:

_____ (Parent/caregiver's signature)

Please return this to your child's homebase teacher.

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