

Research theories to improve leadership capabilities and build on new knowledge to implement focused policies and practices that will improve Māori ākonga success with learning

prepared by

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Ko te pae tahiti whaia kia tata
Ko te pae tata
Whakamaua kia tina
Set high goals and celebrate your successes

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I am indebted to the professionals who assisted with my research as I delved further into this topic providing me with thought provoking questions and ideas that formed the basis of my report. My sincere appreciation for your professional opinions, feedback, information and comments that challenged my thinking to improve leadership practices.

During Term 3 2013, I had the privilege of meeting educationalists from all over New Zealand. I conducted interviews and held discussions with leadership teams in both primary and secondary schools. I am eternally grateful to those individuals for their time sharing their experiences and practices, these opportunities were very helpful in my putting together this report.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A principal for 13 years, seven of those years I have spent at Ashgrove School a decile 9 school with 565 students situated in the heart of Rangiora, a rapidly growing township in North Canterbury. Our Māori population by most standards in the district is also rapidly growing from traditionally 2% of the school to what it is currently 7%. The prospect of more employment opportunities with the rebuild of Christchurch city 26 kilometres away is encouraging for the local schools as rolls have increased including that of Ashgrove.

At Ashgrove the students achieve high success academically as well as in other cultural and sporting activities. Previously for the majority of Māori students' success has also been achieved at or above the National Standard. Those students achieving below the National Standard participated in specific programmes that supported their learning needs, and close monitoring continued with the support of the special needs programme within the school.

Change in the area created by natural environmental causes has also created a natural change in the learning community. The increased school population has added an increase in diversity of cultures and wider parental involvement in the school community.

All this has been welcomed however Ashgrove School management concluded, that to maintain the warm inclusive culture that existed prior to the change, care was needed when employing new staff.

With increased school population obviously we have an increase in identified students performing below expected levels and the data is showing a greater number of those underperforming are Māori.

My topic for this report was to look at theories and good practices where schools had made successful changes to enhance Māori student learning. The opportunity to observe, discuss, share ideas with those in leadership and teachers at the chalk board, so to speak, would provide the context to challenge my thinking as Principal. To come up with initiatives that could be applied in the Ashgrove School setting.

Clearly student voice is equally important to provide the authentic foundation for proof of success of these good practices and these would also have an influence on my considerations for future development at Ashgrove.

PURPOSE

To utilise the time to study and research, find out **“What works best for Māori achievement success”**

The number of our Māori tamariki performing below the expected level of achievement is on the increase.

The view that Māori tamariki will achieve well when they can feel successful as being Māori, is widely agreed.

That forming strong positive relationships with whānau and school is a practice that is seen to be successful.

I want to improve my leadership capability, build on new knowledge to implement focused policies and practices that will improve Māori ākonga success with learning at my school.

My view on what looked like best practice for Māori achievement success for Māori students at Ashgrove School, until this point looked like this;

1. The data told us academically most Māori students were achieving at the expected standard for their age and an increasing number performing just below
2. Teachers felt confident their Māori students' needs were being addressed and help was available to them
3. Parents appeared happy with their child's progress at school but when it came to holding hui very few attended and not all the aspirations of the community were expressed
4. School-wide attempts were being made to encourage the use of Tē Reo Māori in class and success at last with kapahaka happening regularly

I had the opportunity to hear Professor Angus McFarlane author of Kia Hiwa Ra! Listen to Culture – Māori students Plea to Educators. My thinking around success as Māori became challenged.

Further I had glossed over the Ministry document 'Ka Hikitia Managing for Success' but having participated in a workshop in 2012 I realised my understanding of cultural responsiveness needed extensive development.

The sabbatical leave would allow the opportunity to read extensively, talk with leading successful practitioners and management, hear the student voice on what success is for them and take from these ideas and implement where appropriate in our setting.

RATIONALE AND BACKGROUND

Ashgrove School is known in the wider community for its welcoming and inclusive atmosphere. Children are encouraged to do well and for the most part relate well to each other and with adults.

Whenever there is an event involving our children many whanau members and extended families attend. Yet with some reluctance our Māori whānau have found it difficult to engage with the school to discuss kaupapa Māori at Ashgrove School.

While the school is willing to build this partnership it has not always been successful in the past.

As tumuaki of the school I have a desire to extend the relationships that exist within the community and bring closer together ideas and aspirations that the school and whānau want and attempt to make it happen in the school.

Teachers are very positive and open to the idea to participate in Māori professional development with building confidence in the use of Te Reo in the class and inclusion of Tikanga Māori in the classroom programme. However all acknowledge it is not consistent and further commitment is really necessary for us to make a difference for our ākonga.

My brief was to research and visit schools with good practice in these areas and investigate ways our school community will be able to adopt methods that will engage Māori more with our school, that is, parents, relations, children and local iwi kaumātua, kuia.

Additional to that I looked at the practices in other schools that may provide opportunities for our school to enhance Māori student learning success.

To begin with during July 2013 I attended a week long seminar in Wellington called "Picking up the Pace" accelerating success for Māori Students provided by T.R.C.C (Teachers' Refresher Course Committee).

I met with several teachers and Principals with a similar kaupapa (theme, strategy) and participated in conversations and interviews arranged during the week with visits to individual schools following the seminar. Information was gathered from six schools by means of interviews and attending workshops.

Student's voice is also important in this process and I had the privilege to hear 5 Māori students aged from 12 to 16 from different school types in Wellington explain their learning success and aspirations for the future as a result of the good teaching and learning practices they had experienced.

This report presents the findings of those opportunities and the conclusions that will help the practices at Ashgrove School moving forward from this experience.

ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN

- Attend – “Picking up the Pace” Accelerating success for Māori Students seminar 22nd July - 25th July 2013
- Read extensively material from
 1. Ministry of Education – Te Mana Korero – Teaching and Learning relationships that support Realising Māori Potential
Teachers as Learners; improving outcomes for Māori and Pasifika Students through Inquiry
Ka Hikitia – Managing for Success Māori Education Strategy
 2. Articles in such magazines as STA news – What can I do about Māori Underachievement by Dawn Lawrence
 3. ERO reports 2008 Partners in learning: Schools’ Engagement with Parents, Whānau and Communities, 2010 Promoting Success for Māori Students, Schools Progress, 2013 Accelerating the Progress of Priority Learners in Primary Schools
 4. Kia Hiwa Ra! Listen to Culture – Māori Students’ Plea to Educators by Angus Macfarlane
 5. Article - Creating Culturally Safe Schools for Māori Students – Angus Macfarlane, Ted Glynn, Tom Cavanagh and Sonja Bateman
- Carried out interviews, held discussions with educators from six different schools during August of 2013 as part of the sabbatical leave. The evaluative question posed for these schools was:

“What successful practices has your school used that promote learning, engagement, progress and achievement for Māori students” and
“In what ways have you successfully engaged with your Māori families to promote an inclusive partnership.”

In order to answer these questions I sought to speak to Leaders responsible for Learning and Achievement of the schools and have conversations with classroom teachers and students.

Where possible:

- From key staff find out the initiatives implemented to support Māori student success
- View data, collated to indicate the success of certain initiatives implemented
- Look at school charters, school targets, progress and achievement
- Ask about the professional development the school undertook for improving Māori student learning success
- Observe teachers – strategies and responsiveness
- Talk with students how much do they know about their success
- Talk with leaders about the involvement with whānau building positive relationships
- Ask parents what has worked well for them and their child
- Where to next, has the school got an ongoing strategy to maintain the good practice implemented

From the findings of this approach I hoped to identify successful practices and use that information to support my leadership in developing a positive cultural response at Ashgrove School. One of my aims is that teachers will build confidence in their cultural responsiveness to Māori students and whānau.

Specifically for myself personally I want to use the findings of this research to refine my practice as a leader to enable my management team and teaching staff to reflect on their practices, have professional conversations, to bring about improvements for successful learning for Māori students at Ashgrove School.

My ideal is to have a full commitment to the learner and their achievements from a cultural perspective which recognises and builds on the learners' cultural identity and cultural experiences that make them unique.

FINDINGS

Picking Up the Pace – Accelerating success for Māori Students

Five days of presentations and developing learning clusters visiting Takapuwahia Marae Porirua was a fantastic opening to my research.

High quality speakers with engaging topics set the scene.

1. Lisa Coleman an RTLB from Hawkes Bay challenged my thinking around the deficit thinking of Māori underachievement. The title of her presentation “Getting everyone on the waka, rowing the waka in unison.”
Second presentation – “Teaching as Inquiry” again, Lisa posed questions that challenged my thinking around changing teaching practices to raise Māori student achievement.
2. Tom Hullena – Principal, Makoura College, added a new take on leadership and turning a school from a failing school to a school that is highly effective in promoting educational success. Makoura College has been part of the He Kākano project. From this presentation it was clear that a shift in thinking was necessary by the staff and management. Relationships were very important, staff had to move out of their comfort zone, Māori culture is now recognised, validated and incorporated into the learning.
3. Panel of successful educators – talked about their school settings and the changes that made a difference for Māori students to be successful learners in those environments. The panel consisted of a Primary Principal from Johnsonville, Deputy Principal from a Hawkes Bay Primary School, a Drama Teacher from Wellington, a 2nd Year teacher from Wellington, a Secondary School Principal from Wellington.

Day 1 FINDINGS

- All the presenters were passionate about making a difference for Māori success, deficit theory sees diversity in life style, language and different learning styles as problematic.
- The idea that the lower the achievement in school is due to a problem with the student rather than considering the role of the school itself, their instructional practices, organisational structures, cultural understanding.
- Leaders and teachers have the ability to change this thinking – it is about a change, a transformation of learning as described in the Ministry of Education document Ka Hikitia. “How things will change (key levers) p27
- What does a successful Māori child look like; being proud of who they are, engaged, confident, good stable family support to achieve success.
- As Māori having access to resources to support educational outcomes

The success of New Zealand depends on Māori success and the success of Māori depends on their success as Māori. This will happen when Māori Culture is recognised and validated incorporated into the learning process. This will happen by personalised learning opportunities in place and a school curriculum relevant to Māori identity. The school must have an assessment process that helps foster success – so that success breeds success and mana builds mana.

- We all must step up to realise the potential of our children to achieve success
- It is a challenge to move away from deficit theory but the potential to make a significant difference is possible
- It feels good to be a Māori student when; your teacher can say your name correctly, your teacher spends just that little extra time to explain something, your teacher recognises something done well not always focus on the negative things, the teacher knows me and I know them, the teacher respects me and I respect them. They care about me
- An exercise to try with your staff about how well do you build strong relationships with your Māori students and their family? Do we contact whānau when their child gets a successful result or achieves understanding?
- Good relationships are paramount to building motivation and respect then success is achievable
- Be genuine as with most children Māori students can see through the fake – it's about being real

“When you change the way you look at things – the things you look at change”
by Max Planck

Day 2 FINDINGS

The workshops attended I aimed at providing some ideas for practical application for Māori Student Success at Ashgrove School.

1. Teaching as Inquiry – Changing practices to Raise Māori Student Achievement

- All about looking at current practices in the school / classroom
- Teachers need to look closely at how they are teaching to ensure 100% engagement from their students
- Focussed teaching is about using data gathered to target the right teaching required for Māori students to succeed
- The mind shift will happen if the teacher values progress, values success for all, values improved student outcomes
- I read an article by Helen Timperley “Weaving Evidence Inquiry Standards to build better Schools” (NZCER Press). In summary using the range of assessment methods, consider the evidence very carefully, personalised analysis will provide deeper discussions and inform decisions to make a difference for children who really need it
- Helen Timperley – recommends teachers make inquiry more meaningful when they work collaboratively in the context of a professional learning community

- But she also says “Professional learning communities will only lead to improved student outcomes when they are focussed on becoming increasingly responsive to their students”
- Important to use teaching as an inquiry to strategize, come up with a plan most likely to help our Māori students to learn what they need to learn

2. Developing Real Partnerships with your Māori Community

- Lakeview School Masterton – newly merged school in the Wairarapa and their success story of how the Māori community got involved with the school
- Building partnerships takes courage and it helps if you can make a connection with one or two parents willing to commit time to the school
- Leaders need to go out into your community and be brave to talk about the school and children
- Start simple, with an invitation to be part of a group to develop an initiative, e.g. kapahaka group. Or we need an advisory committee to give the school ideas what we can do for you, our community
- Leader be prepared to attend each meeting include one or two other staff make sure the meetings are regular and with records of business
- Have a clear purpose for the meeting, e.g. creating an environment conducive to positive learning for Māori students to progress
- Student voice – make opportunity for the children to have a say about what they want from their primary school, how to be treated by teachers and others. What do your parents expect of you and how will you achieve this?
- Be aware of pitfalls – lack of understanding of the purpose for the gatherings, knowledge of what goals to be achieved. Use local resource people to gain the knowledge needed
- Full commitment from the senior management and that staff are all on board, a reminder that we all want the same thing improved achievement and learning success
- Be careful to not have competing agendas or little to no direction

Ko te manu e kai āna I te miro nona te ngahere.
 Ko te manu e kai āna I te mātauranga, nona te ao
 The bird that consumes the berry his is the forest.
 The bird that consumes knowledge his is the world.

3. Te Kauhua Phase 4 Central Hawkes Bay Cluster – A report after the first year

- Tamatea Rohe consisted of 3 Primary Schools and a High School.
- I had the privilege of visiting 2 of the three primary schools and met with a parent and the High School Principal and teacher of Māori after the seminar as part of my research

- An initiative developed to extend engagement with whānau and Māori success. Te Kauhua initiative was supported and run by Ngāti Kahungunu Incorporated
- Whanaungatanga – family relationships are very important, it is critical to develop strong partnerships and educators have a responsibility to do so
- The cluster developed a protocol of working together to achieve the same end. Improved partnerships with the local Māori community
- All attended a weekend hui at the local Marae. Teaching staff and administration staff
- Parents, kaumātua, kuia also attended. Leadership lead by example. Staff found out so much more about the local area, the families that live there and why. Information gathering was tremendous
- Authentic learning of local area, the people and getting to know the students real world (at home, on Marae) was an outcome of the hui
- The educators used charts to record the desires of the community for their children to be successful learners
- Students were surveyed – questions designed by community
- Building trust and confidence is important, the cluster found that with the Principals and teachers attending the hui Māori community acknowledged the partnership wanted. Now the meetings are not always organised or run by the school leadership
- Whānau are involved more with the schools, Principals now invited to attend Tai whenua meetings, space on the school sites are available for the meetings to be held, e.g. kapahaka students and senior adults
- Meetings are meaningful – consultation including the data for all to discuss analyse and reflect on school practice
- As a result less truancy, increased engagement with whānau, connections with family makes it a joint effort for the learner to succeed
- The cluster managed to get computers in homes for one of the smaller primary schools further in land from the larger township. Computer classes for the parents held at night to train parents to help their children at home
- Books in the home programme set up the effects of this was parents needing to strengthen their reading skills attended reading classes to help their children
- Teachers gained more confidence with parents to have the difficult conversations and parents' confidence grew such that if necessary a teacher could visit the home the visit was welcomed

Day 3 FINDINGS

1. Raising the Bar on Māori Achievement from an iwi perspective

- Ko te kai a te rangitira he kōrero
- The food of chiefs is discussion

- Best practice is where culturally responsive practices happen
- Success for all learners lies in the heart of the teachers
- Common sense would prevail, there will be courtesy and empathy towards others of a different culture
- Teachers would be conscious always of the Māori child and their world view
- Teachers have a huge influence and impact on a Māori child in their class
- Building strong relationships is important – making connections with children, whānau
- Positive and Trusting relationships are essential for student achievement
- Teachers need to know that whānau is very important to a child – a child is very important to the whānau
- Aspirations for a Māori child are the aspirations expressed by all the whānau
- Partnerships with whānau, hāpu and iwi are vitally important to stay connected
- Schools need to proactively seek the support of their Māori Community to help children understand local stories, providing context for learning
- Engage with local iwi for local schools

2. Māori Student Panel reflect on good teaching and their experience in education

- Panel consisted of 5 people, two students aged 11 and 13. The 11 year old at a Bilingual School, the 13 year old at a mainstream Intermediate. Two students aged 16 and 18. The 16 year old won a scholarship to attend a Baccalaureate Private School and the 18 year old at University. The 5th person was a 1st year teacher who had been taught in Te Reo from Kōhanga Reo through to Kura Kaupapa
- All stated how they learn best, when
 - the child knows their culture is respected
 - the child felt valued and worthwhile
 - the child knew the teacher would listen
 - the child understood their learning and set goals to succeed
 - the teacher praises them when they made a big effort or achieved a good result
 - the teacher showed care and empathy
 - the teacher understood the challenges they experienced
 - the teacher explains again without making them feel bad

- The panel of students spoke confidently about their aspirations for the future
- Because they were valued the students knew that they could achieve their goals
- The students recognised that the teacher who showed greater interest in them as a person and a learner gave them confidence in their achievements
- The panel expressed that if a teacher gave more of their time to the student it made all the difference to their understanding of the topic

What does success look like for the whānau?

“My son got a good half year report. He’s writing sentences on his own. His math is good. He knows 1 - 20 on his own and doesn’t need any help. His reading has improved and I know where he’s at and where he’s heading. Success as she put it was the feeling of being proud. It made me want to cry. Just knowing he’s achieving, he must be happy.” (Mum of a 5 year old)

VISITS TO SCHOOLS / CONVERSATIONS

A series of questions was asked of three schools’ leaders. These questions were developed from the ERO Māori Success – Complementary Evaluation Framework.

Questions

- What did Senior Leaders understand about the diversity of their Māori learners and how did they respond to their diverse needs and aspirations?
- How did Senior Leaders work with whanau and iwi to realise their educational success and aspirations for Māori children?
- How does the school environment design and practices reflect Māori Tikanga
- What practical steps did the school develop to strengthen relationships with whānau and iwi
- What have been the challenges to maintain the practices and partnerships gained working with whānau and iwi

Findings

- Leaders explained a lot of the practices implemented were common sense ideas that could apply to all students in their schools
- Two of the three schools had low numbers of Māori students and most were performing really well. However relationships with the community was almost non-existent except when the children were involved with a school performance or at a sports meet they would turn up
- One school approached the local kaumātua and invited him to bring along other elders to the school to meet the principal and teacher responsible for Māori. From this meeting the school formed a whānau committee
- Two of the primary schools were part of a cluster that included the high school and as part of a MOE / iwi funded initiative brought together the local iwi authorities and School leaders to look at the growing deficit data of Māori achievement and Truancy

- In all three cases the schools with the help of local iwi, kaumātua / kuia, developed a plan to initiate engagement with and build relationships with whānau
- The schools developed a strategic plan using ideas from several hui held, ideas included, transition visits to their high school, involving whānau with Truancy and Restorative Justice practices, kapahaka groups formed, regular parent gatherings – school leaders attended
- At the schools visited the displays in the foyers, corridors and classrooms Te Reo Māori was evident – these were mainstream schools. One High School had their own Wharenuī with carvings by local past students trained by a local expert
- Teachers that were observed used Te Reo commands and instructions confidently in the class. When complimented how impressed I was one teacher explained earlier in her career she had pronounced a Māori child's name incorrectly, and the parent explained what significance the child's name meant to her family. This encouraged that teacher to improve her own knowledge and skill
- In all the schools there was a significant Māori person or whānau that was the key to opening the communications with the community. One school it was a grandmother who did voluntary work helping with the breakfast at school every day. Another school – it was the teacher who convinced a parent who dropped her children off every day to come into the classroom and help out
- Leaders worked closely with these people to bring other families into the school to discuss the issues of learning and parents were encouraged to look at the data and help with a plan to improve the statistics
- For one school increasing the reading levels for a particular group of students was a major concern – Books in Schools was introduced and the parents volunteered their time on a roster to come in and read to the children
- Once improved whānau involvement and partnerships were established one school found that the behaviour of children improved, less and less time was spent with off task behaviour, and discipline
- The schools all felt it was their responsibility to ensure the community was clear on the learning difficulties of some of the Māori students
- Within the school environment two schools ensured the families had a space that was user-friendly for parents to drop in and make a coffee. One of these schools principals explained that in his school, the parents had access to a space on school site with coffee conveniences, the conversations and ideas shared led to new initiatives in the school like the vegetable gardens, fundraising ideas for school equipment
- The Principal often appeared and discussed the developments for the school. Later down the track the gatherings were getting larger and there was a need to streamline the meeting with other senior leaders from the school
- So arrangements for guest speakers to participate in workshops, computer skills or sharing ideas of what works for improved learning results with overwhelming successful. One phrase that stands out was “What can this committee do for you”
- Formal gatherings are regularly held once a fortnight. Predominantly Māori attend this meeting. The principal always attended with maybe 1 - 2 educators attending on a regular basis
- The meetings are streamlined with a purpose, initially the committee looked at sharing ideas for kapahaka, environment signage, welcoming people to the school community, parents contributed ideas to help children focus on learning

IMPLICATIONS and BENEFITS

To make a real difference that is sustainable over time there is a need by management to ensure there is continual review of the current practices based on what evidence is available. To tell the school what is working best for Māori students who are successful learners. Concurrently also review why the evidence is also telling us some Māori Students are not succeeding.

Creating an environment of inquiry into practices is a positive move in the direction of self-determination to improve our ability to make a difference for our Māori students. Teachers need to come to the realisation that they are the ones that make a difference to increased success. When the teacher continues to review their practice and make changes necessary. When the principal and the leadership team are continually looking at ways to improve the provision of education in their setting so will learning success be evident.

Principal and leaders particularly at our school are committed to improving educational outcomes for Māori. The evidence of learning success for Māori achievement indicates we could be doing better. Providing ongoing professional development for educators to build confidence in Te Reo Māori and Tikanga will be a step in the right direction.

The availability of support is possible through the Māori families of the school. All the schools investigated for the research report, had strong community relationships with whanau. Those relationships have continued to grow as the leadership and teachers have provided a welcoming learning environment.

There is evidence of Māori displayed, parents helping in the school, Māori ākonga showing leadership.

In cases where the schools created opportunity for parent voice and student voice the communication levels strengthened. This minimised conflict and provided a level playing field for constructive discussion that often led to a collaborative approach to improve the educational outcomes for the Māori student.

Beyond whānau working with local Iwi is also a challenge but can also have benefits. It is important to work together to ensure success for Māori students including everyone's views in the big picture of the schools strategic plan. This worked well for the Central Hawkes Bay Schools where all the school staff spent time with Iwi on the Marae to discuss improvements for local Māori students.

CONCLUSION

It is important to note that many well respected educators have delved into this topic before. I acknowledge from my readings of material and viewing some amazing practitioners the ingredient that motivates them all to help Māori ākonga to achieve success is interwoven with four main aspects;

1. When the educator has an understanding of the Māori student and their culture so the Māori student can advance their learning potential
2. A willingness and commitment to provide quality teaching to make a difference for Māori to be successful
3. An awareness of and a commitment to building and sustaining positive strong whānau relationships
4. Continual growth and support of colleagues provided by the leadership through professional development so that appropriate learning opportunities will be implemented

The next steps for Ashgrove School I believe is, to look at what we are doing and use the review cycle as provided from the ERO Māori Success – Evaluation Framework to look at building on the positive aspects that work well. Then plan for future innovations to further improve educational success for Māori students. This planning or strategy for future innovations needs to involve a range of people, from the school, the Māori community and students. Building strong partnerships with all that have an invested interest to ensure educational success for Māori students at Ashgrove requires careful consideration.

The Findings shared from the sabbatical experience will contribute to possible practices to implement. However the contributions made by the collective group needs to be discussed as part of the planning. To help it would be worthwhile to engage a facilitator to support the process.

The important consideration throughout must be about building relationships that can be sustainable over a longer period of time.

Māori learning success can only but improve when a clear plan is in place that has opportunities to work in a partnership, that is, the school and the local Māori community. Once educators have reviewed their practices, focussed professional development will strengthen their capabilities to improve achievement for Māori students.

The Principal's role is pivotal to ensuring these relationships are valued that the challenge to sustain this partnership is about good communication and listening skills. To be responsive positively in a way that the partnership remains connected. In other words keep local whānau informed, promote the success of Māori students, providing opportunities for leadership, ensuring Māori learners develop confidence in themselves as successful.

Ehara taku toa i te toa takitini, Engari he toa takitini.

Success is not the work of one, but the work of many.

Report completed by
Christine Chadwick

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