

# Sabbatical Report 2016

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The professional learning and purpose of this sabbatical is to investigate the effect that variables ( Teacher relationships / Attendance / Whanau support and MLE ) have on students well below and below achievement expectations with emphasis on Maori non achievers.

I intend to undertake professional conversations with a variety of schools, Whanau and student across a variety of age groups. This will involve interviews, surveys, questionnaires and meetings. All forms of data gathering will remain private and confidential and no personal or school names will be used in this report. Once the report is complete all material will be destroyed – for confidentiality purposes.

My key questions / investigations will focus on what and how internal and external influences or variables impact on student achievement targeting student recognised and assessed as being well below and below expected achievement levels, again with emphasis on Maori non achievers.

There is research and reference out there that is directed at the investigation that I am basing my application on. I want to take it to a more rural / small school aspect with relevant data from local sources that can be used in rural situations around New Zealand.

## Action

Teachers have an obligation to investigate children who appear to be failing in their learning. It is important that influences on students learning are identified each year and measures put into place to enable children's learning to progress. To identify community, school and child related influences to learning, in order for these to be addressed and allow for the school to effectively educate its students.

## Findings :

My research investigated three influences:

1. Students
2. School / Teachers
3. Whanau / Home / Community

My report will identify 3 aspects of each influence

1. The Concern
2. The Indicators
3. Proposed Solutions

# Student Influences:

Concern	Indicators	Proposed Solutions
Health and Well Being	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of food – specifically breakfast</li> <li>• Diet - specifically morning tea and packed lunches</li> <li>• Lack of routines – regarding bed time / TV time / Computer time</li> <li>• On-going health issues – head lice / colds / school sores / ear infections</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consultation with parents / caregivers</li> <li>• Involve the Health nurse</li> <li>• Curriculum integration around well-being and health</li> <li>• Encourage healthy choices – food and exercise.</li> <li>• Develop and practice routines around bed / TV / computer time.</li> </ul>
Bullying	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unable to stand up for themselves and a lack of coping strategies</li> <li>• Little or no self-esteem as a result of constant bullying</li> <li>• Being a bully towards others – how to break the cycle.</li> <li>• Low achievement levels</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Classroom / schoolwide programmes to help students understand what bullying and introduce a variety of coping and dealing with initiatives.</li> <li>• Promote good choices</li> <li>• Discuss and reason through poor choices</li> <li>• Restorative conversations</li> <li>• Engage outside agencies when necessary.</li> </ul>
Schoolwide behaviour management plans ( BMP ) Students perspective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poor choices in the classroom / playground</li> <li>• Lack of empathy and concern towards others</li> <li>• Ignoring / not understanding the schools rules / values and vision</li> <li>• Not listen and following instructions</li> <li>• Medical influences.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consistent BMP across the school</li> <li>• Clear expectations are set that students understand</li> <li>• Develop classroom programmes to help guide and help students deal with situations.</li> <li>• Understand the background and</li> </ul>

		foreground concerning medical conditions and the effects that they have on students in relation to their behaviour.
Managing Self	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Always looking for self-assurance</li> <li>• Not coping with change or something new</li> <li>• Relying on others and having to confirm all the time through others.</li> <li>• Unable to commit and follow through on tasks.</li> <li>• Lack of initiative and devotion, commitment and perseverance.</li> <li>• Unable to manage tasks in set times</li> <li>• Struggles to complete work independently.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trust in the teacher</li> <li>• Develop self esteem</li> <li>• Communication with parents.</li> <li>• Set goals / timelines / help lines</li> <li>• Monitoring programmes</li> <li>• Intervention through outside agencies.</li> </ul>
Absenteeism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Absent from class</li> <li>• Late for school</li> <li>• Extended breaks</li> <li>• Choosing to attend or not</li> <li>• Health problems</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parent / caregiver / whanau consultation</li> <li>• Help parent / caregivers / whanau develop routines</li> <li>• Follow up phone calls</li> <li>• Support from outside agencies</li> <li>• Health support and recommendations ( Health Nurse )</li> </ul>

# School / Teachers Influences:

Concern	Indicators	Proposed Solutions
Class Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wide range of abilities in one class</li> <li>• Class sizes and Tchr/ student ratios</li> <li>• Multi year levels in one class</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parent / caregiver / whanau consultation</li> <li>• Parent / caregivers / whanau help in the class</li> <li>• Tchr Aide programmes supporting individuals and groups.</li> <li>• Support from outside agencies – funding and programmes.</li> <li>• B.O.T funded tchrs to reduce multi levels and class sizes</li> </ul>
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Funding short fall in the annual budget</li> <li>• Stress on staff</li> <li>• Limited resources</li> <li>• Lack of space / rooms</li> <li>• Large classes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Base the budget on high needs students</li> <li>• Increase fundraising opportunities</li> <li>• encourage parents to pay school donation</li> <li>• Forecast budget</li> <li>• Keep applying to outside agencies for funding.</li> <li>• Staff plan for next year and predict shortfalls in resources and contact time.</li> </ul>
Staff Professional Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff not attending PD directly linked to children’s learning</li> <li>• Tchrs not delivering Best Practice or lasted pedagogy.</li> <li>• Appraisal system identifying “ Gaps “ in PD</li> <li>• Student achievement below expected levels and not showing improvement.</li> <li>• Low staff morale</li> <li>• School working in isolation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Link student learning to charter / appraisal system</li> <li>• Closely monitor short and long term plans</li> <li>• Share ideas and planning – in school and in a cluster situation.</li> <li>• Link staff PD to achievement levels.</li> <li>• Use MOE / University etc. for PD opportunities from</li> <li>• Budget for PD accordingly and with relevance to student</li> </ul>

		<p>achievement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide leadership opportunities</li> <li>• Join cluster / moderation / learning groups</li> <li>• Encourage and focus on positive staff achievements</li> </ul>
<p>Schoolwide behaviour management plans ( BMP ) Staff / Schools perspective</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of respect from staff towards students</li> <li>• Non-communication with parents and Whanau.</li> <li>• Inconsistent BMP being applied by staff</li> <li>• Lack of PD around new approaches</li> <li>• Absence of student education and programmes around BM</li> <li>•</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote the values, vision and mission statement of the school</li> <li>• Regular updates with parents and whanau on student behaviour.</li> <li>• Email / phone contact immediately on an issue to keep parents / whanau informed – no surprises</li> <li>• Clear BMP implemented in the school with all parties being a part of the BMP development.</li> <li>• Engage in the latest PD that links to schools BMP</li> <li>• Promote the BMP to students through education programmes and curriculum strands</li> </ul>
<p>Communication</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When parents state “ we didn’t know “</li> <li>• Notices are not getting home</li> <li>• Short notice to parents</li> <li>• Lack of parent support</li> <li>• Families that struggle financially</li> <li>•</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Broaden the forms of communication – newsletter / email / notes / phone calls / website.</li> <li>• Follow up the notes home received – parents return a slip</li> <li>• Teachers need to be better planned and allow parents time to organise their lives</li> <li>• Parent rep to communicate with class parents and point out the educational benefits of events etc.</li> <li>• Formulate a payment plan that suits families the struggle financially.</li> </ul>

Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Broken equipment</li> <li>• Missing equipment</li> <li>• Lack of class sets</li> <li>• Request being denied due to financial pressures</li> <li>• Importance of resources not being allocated a ranking</li> <li>• No accountability on returning resources – lack of a booking system.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Replacement list</li> <li>• Plan for purchasing enough that if a class set is required this can be accounted for in a budget.</li> <li>• Get future purchases in early and explain how this will add value to student achievement.</li> <li>• Determine immediate needs vs we can live without it but it would be nice to have.</li> <li>• Create a resource asset register and develop a booking system for issuing and returning.</li> </ul>
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# Whanau / Home / Community Influences:

Concern	Indicators	Proposed Solutions
Parental Pressures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stressed students</li> <li>• Students looking for attention</li> <li>• Inappropriate student behaviour</li> <li>• Lack of self esteem</li> <li>• Lack of cultural identity and how different cultures are represented</li> <li>• Absence of enthusiasm and adventure</li> <li>• Parents not attending school events / parent interviews</li> <li>• Students missing out on school activities and events</li> <li>• Parents questioning and or undermining school and classroom programmes.</li> <li>• High absenteeism</li> <li>• High attendance at before and after school</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a safe and welcoming environment</li> <li>• Acknowledge student success both in and outside the classroom</li> <li>• Identify and work through the behaviours and what leads up to them</li> <li>• Acknowledge the identity of New Zealand cultures e.g Maori</li> <li>• Help parents include and involve the aspects of culture in the school.</li> <li>• Provide support for cultural initiatives.</li> <li>• Provide challenges / opportunities to students</li> <li>• Communicate directly with parents / whanau and encourage them to attend events etc.</li> <li>• Offer support to get family / whanau to events e.g travel / finance</li> <li>• Keep parents informed so as not to create confusion.</li> <li>• Approach parents/ whanau / community if the “ car park Gossip “ raises its head</li> <li>• Follow up on absentees</li> </ul>
Reward and Punishment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A different set of rules at home vs school</li> <li>• Expectations vary between parent to parent and parents to school</li> <li>• Using reward / punishment as a tool against another party.</li> <li>• Over use of rewards</li> <li>• Over use of punishment</li> <li>• Undermining of a party as a way to keep the peace.</li> <li>• Variation of the full story between parties.</li> <li>• Use of expensive rewards often detract from why students do a task</li> <li>• Time spent with children vs tactile</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication strong between home and school.</li> <li>• Clear understanding of expectations around behaviour.</li> <li>• Avoid conflict between parties when children are present.</li> <li>• Make rewards “ special “ not an every act reward.</li> <li>• Limit punishment to the “ serious “ behaviours not minor infringements.</li> <li>• All parties follow through and be on the same page –</li> </ul>



	rewards	<p>reward or punishment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review before you react.</li> <li>• Get all side of a story / situation as variations can impact on a decision.</li> <li>• Encourage children to “ be Good because they are “ intrinsic good.</li> <li>• Use time doing “ stuff “ as a reward this can be the most cost effective and rewarding time for a child.</li> </ul>
Parent School Conflict	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parents running down the school.</li> <li>• The School running down parents.</li> <li>• Students not wanting to go to school.</li> <li>• Students regularly being in trouble.</li> <li>• Misunderstanding of the complaints procedure.</li> <li>• Not having all sides of the situation</li> <li>• Misunderstanding of the sequence of events or how a situation played out.</li> <li>• Students lying to avoid punishment</li> <li>• Parents shifting the blame</li> <li>• The school appointing blame to the wrong party.</li> <li>• Unwillingness to accept responsibility for behaviour</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avoid “ Car park “ gossip circles</li> <li>• Avoid “ staff meeting “ gossip sessions.</li> <li>• Resolve conflict / issues so children are comfortable at school.</li> <li>• Regular misbehaviour needs addressing as to why the continual occurrence is happening.</li> <li>• Have clear easy to follow guidelines that all parties understand.</li> <li>• Keep it a step by step procedure for complaints.</li> <li>• Be sure to involve all parties in the investigation process when dealing with a situation.</li> <li>• Insure all parties have all the necessary information to help in the decision making process.</li> <li>• Encourage students to be totally honest.</li> <li>• Encourage / praise students for honesty. It is better to tell the truth</li> <li>• Through clear communication and total understanding issues can be resolved.</li> <li>• Insure that all the facts are clear before a decision on reward or punishment is decided on.</li> <li>• Teach students about accepting responsibility for their actions.</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explain the values and outcomes associated with consequences.</li> </ul>
<p>Parents Supporting their students</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Non-attendance at school functions</li> <li>• Parents unable to support students learning – lack of knowledge.</li> <li>• Parents struggle to financially support their children’s learning</li> <li>•</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Timetable functions to best work with parents – e.g. evenings</li> <li>• Give plenty of notice about upcoming events.</li> <li>• Open door policy – communication and consultation to keep parents better informed.</li> <li>• Make resources available</li> <li>• Keep costs to school events at a minimum</li> <li>• Fund or free where possible</li> </ul>

### **Summary:**

I would like to thank all the schools, teachers, teacher aids, parents, students and community members who contributed and added value to my research. Your honest and frank responses are appreciated and majorly added to my findings and given all those involved, in educating children an insight as to where future direction is needed.

It is clear from my findings that no one aspect has a major influence in the engagement, learning and achievement of today's students but it's culmination of a number of influences.

### **The Students:**

My findings clearly link the strong bond between our students, our schools our parents and whanau. We (that is all parties) believe that our students are the centre and the purpose of what drives us in the education profession. We set high expectations for our students at home and at school. We need to be aware of our student's limitations and acknowledge that all students have varying degrees of structure in their lives that give them the coping mechanism to deal with our expectations.

We have to guide and teach our students how to accept, challenge and cope with our expectations. We have to provide our student with the tools and understanding of when and how to deal with what we expect.

We have to respect and nurture our students to get them to become good people that will pass on our values and expectations to the next generation.

When our student hit the wall is when the trouble starts. We need to recognise the early sign of this trouble and put in place support that will see our students not only sail through the storm but come out with a better understanding of what to expect next time and how to deal with it.

## **The Schools / Teachers**

The path of education is changing and as added pressure is applied to the family structure, the workplace and society expectations in general, schools are now seeing the results of this pressure. Schools are expected to be social workers, caregivers, providers and educators. While schools are taking on this added responsibility it is important to acknowledge the amazing work that teachers are also achieving in the classrooms, under this added pressure.

Teachers now find themselves in situations that five years ago would not have presented themselves. They are dealing with parents whose expectations are to provide the whole package not just the 3 r's. Issues often arise from unrealistic expectations that teachers find are "not in our job description" but they are faced with.

Clear, open and honest communication is the key to keeping teachers "safe" in the workplace. It is vital that we clearly understand the parent's point of view, that we clearly understand the parents' expectations and that we clearly understand what is deemed as acceptable expectations and what are unrealistic demands.

Once clear boundaries and lines of communications are set, relationships are able to be formed and fostered. This can only lead to a better understanding of how the whole child and their situation works.

## **Whanau / Home / Community:**

The majority of schools surveyed in this research project all indicated that the school is more than often the central focal point of a community. A lot of events are driven by or are supported by small rural schools. They are often the backbone of a community and are often the meeting place for family and friends to get together.

As mentioned in the teacher / school aspect of this summary, society is placing more and more demands on our parents and whanau. Employment pressure is adding to an increasing workload our parents are taking on. This is impacting on all parties and not so much in a positive way.

"I just don't have time" was a familiar response from frustrated family members. "I am expected to work 7 days or lose my job". How is this adding value to the family unit and what impact is this having on children. The answer is simple – a very damaging and harmful environment.

Parents complained of time – we never have enough time. The follow on effect is that our parents are trying to provide the best possible home environment – PlayStation, Xboxes, computers etc. all keep our kids busy and quiet. They also cost money, which our parents need to work the 7 days to earn a wage that keep up with the modern household's demands. This vicious circle has a detrimental effect as time is forfeited with and on Family time for work.

Without this precious time parents and whanau are having to rely on extended whanau to support their children and they also place a great deal of expectations on schools to provide their children with a "whole education" – "it's the schools job and That's what they get paid for" were comments that parents made when asked "Who's' job is it to teach your kids?"

Parents are missing the point when it comes to a partnership. A coalition formed between school and home to give our children the best possible start is the backbone to all New Zealand schools. We are seeing more responsibility for once considered the 'Parents Job' being handed on to schools.

Schools are feeding children, they are mediating between parents when relationships go sour. They are counselling children, they are providing, on some cases the only stable platform in children's lives. The day of give an inch take a mile have gone – schools still give an inch but parents are taking 100miles and when things are not going their way they are quick, ruthless and often heartless to lay blame on schools.

We need change we need the relationships between parents, whanau, communities and schools to become a culture of trust and respect. We need our children to see us working together in a way to do the best we can possibility do to give them the best possible chance in life.

We need our Ministry of Education to support and back schools. We need our Ministry of Education to stop painting a bleak picture of schools and our teachers to our parents. We need our Ministry of Education to acknowledge the amazing work and the diverse work our teachers are doing.

When parents, whanau and communities read in the local papers and hear over the 6 O'clock news that we have a brilliant education system and we have highly skilled and devoted teachers, then and only then will we the minds of our parents, whanau and communities see and acknowledge the good that is happening and become part of it.

"I have a dream ....." "