

Sabbatical Report

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School: Cambridge Primary School (1702)

Duration: Term 1 2016

Rationale and Background Information:

Over the past 7 years our Maori student population has risen from 9% to 11%, which is not significant in itself, however if you also add the population growth within the school then we see the school's Maori population has increased from 20 children to 41 children. This is made up of 18 students enrolled as Maori, ethnicity 1 and 23 ethnicity 2.

It has become increasingly obvious to our staff and community the need to do more for our Maori students, by looking at doing things differently to improve their overall performance and sense of belonging and identity. Maori whanau engagement is something we have not differentiated to any real degree from other forms of engagement practices.

The sabbatical was the vehicle to make a positive and sustainable difference in our school.

Professional learning activity

The professional learning activities I wished to undertake were based around enhancing whanau and parental engagement to support children's learning. This was done through researching, critically analysing and relating this to our CPS setting by implementing strategies, initiatives and programmes that our school has the opportunity to adopt.

Purpose of the sabbatical

The purpose of the sabbatical is to develop a "kite" that will provide me with improved knowledge, skills, understanding and effective practices to successfully engage Maori parents and wider whanau/families. This will assist in leading to lifting the achievements of these priority learners in our school. After sharing this and consultation, we will develop a Maori school Vision and incorporate the relevant findings into a strategic plan, action plan and other existing school documentation.

My investigation covered the following:

1. What current research espouses about parent/whanau school engagement and the impact this has on student learning outcomes.
2. How other town, rural and city school's engage parents and whanau to enhance student learning outcomes, school involvement and attendance?
3. Best practices around the most effective ways of engaging parents and whanau initially, and sustaining over the duration of the child's schooling with us.
4. What CPS can do to remove any barriers to sustainable engagement and involvement in the school?
5. Practical outcomes that we can use in our setting.

The across school commonalities that came forward fore mostly was the strong emphasis on the teacher and school knowing their learner, “know me before you teach me”. This included knowing the families of each child. Relationship building is a key element for successful whanau engagement and Maori students to succeed as Maori.

We need to be building a capacity and an understanding around what a culturally safe school and culturally sensitive classroom environment look like. This then needs to be publically understood by all stakeholders so we sing off the same page and are accountable to the same shared understanding.

Our school needs to be aware of the values, behaviours and expectations that exist with the various groups in our community; Glynn refers to these as ‘Communities of Practice’ (Glynn 2013). The common element between school and home is the child and so as a school we are exploring ways the child can be the conduit for building strong partnerships between home and school. The child can be the leader in this process, particularly where the family has not traditionally engaged with school.

This can also be reinforced by linking the culture of home and school (Cathcart 1994) by incorporating specific cultural activities into the classroom within the ethos of the school. We need to continue innovating to build the links so it is more “one” rather than “one and the other”

A further focus on Constructivism- a philosophy that honours what students can do, valuing their work, honouring the whole person, having high expectations, and bringing a lot of heart to the classroom. As the age of the children increases classes can be co –constructed to a degree depending.

One approach is to capture the ‘Funds of Knowledge’ (Glynn 2012) that exist in the community. This requires us to use learning themes that enable other perspectives central to the learning. An example might be rather than doing a study on the Waikato River, ask the question, “Why rivers are important”. This would allow students to consider the culture importance and economic and recreational value. This means a Maori student can learn around cultural significance to Maori and an Indian student could share their perspective based on the Ganges.

As a staff we will look at McFarlane’s, “Education Wheel”, based around five concepts. I would anticipate this will form the basis that underpins the philosophy for whanau engagement and Maori student success at Cambridge Primary School. (CPS)

These five concepts being; Whanaungatanga (relationships), Rangatiratanga (self-determination), Manaakitanga (ethos of care), Kotahitanga (unity and bonding), Pumanawatanga (a beating of heart).

As a staff we will be given reading and discussion time to focus on these five concepts and relate these to our setting. This will be done through our fortnightly Powerful Learning Conversations and whole staff meetings.

Some questions to ask ourselves could be; how do we use our Maori staff? What connections do we currently have in our community? What connections would we like to develop in our community? What training can we offer our staff and parents? What do we believe bilingualism and multiculturalism is? What should this look like at CPS?

The staff will focus on gaining a clearer understanding around the Treaty of Waitangi making links to the significance of Tikanga and Te Reo - (treasures of culture and language)

Implications

The following are realistic ideas that I gained, that can/could or will be implemented into the Cambridge Primary School Charter, Strategic Plan, Annual Plan or designated Maori engagement and achievement planning document.

Proposed new initiatives and direct Whanau Engagement

We had one whanau engagement meeting last year (8 adults, 3 children) however will use that as the catalyst to start a formal Whanau Group that will meet on a regular basis and together develop better opportunities for engagement and Maori student achievement. We will also consider co-opting a representative from this group onto our BoT depending on the outcome of the upcoming BoT elections in June. As a note we had our second whanau engagement meeting in week 5 of term 2 and had 25 adults and 12 tamariki.

We will invite our whanau parents to come in and lead a “reading together programme” specifically targeting individual Maori students who are behind in reading. We will provide the programme and pre training for this to ensure success.

Our school will focus and gain input from our whanau group on Maori Language week and tie this into Kotahitanga.

We will Monkey Survey or equivalent survey our parents for an indication around the desire for a Bilingual Class (there is a total immersion school, Ngati Haua only 10 minutes from town so this will not be presented as an option) to be re- established at CPS. At the same time we will survey the desire for an all-boys class at Years 5/6.

Any new child that enrolls, the children from that iwi will be brought to the office to make a connection with the new child and their whanau; building a connection from the first day, sense of belonging and ownership. A NZ map will have where all our Maori children originate from so children can visually see the Iwi they belong too and who else in the school belongs also; reinforcing that sense of identity.

We will further connect with our local community Marae and annually do a cultural day their each year for the whole school and include Te Reo and Tikanga activities throughout the day on a rotational basis. This can be incorporated into a general Cultural Unity Day involving many nationalities that make up our school.

We will also offer a sleep over experience for children and parents/whanau sleeping in the meeting house. This will include the putting on of a hangi. We will also invite the marae Manuhiri to tour the school and we can explain what we are delivering holistically to all and specifically what we offer that is different for our Maori students. We will also gain feedback and ideas from them.

We have now included the word panui on our newsletter cover.

We have limited signage in the school at present, so over the next two years we will install bilingual signage throughout. We will involve our Maori children and whanau in their design.

Each term teachers will be required to fill in a survey report for Maori students' academic performance. The results will come to the management team for assessment, recommendations, celebrations and any further support required to be delivered to ensure success. This information will be given to the whanau and personal contact will be made with each child's whanau to go over the report.

I meet each family that enrol at CPS and in future any family that identify as Maori I will put their child/rens name on an iwi map that will be established. This will then build to a world map where all children in our school come from. From this we will obtain through donations flags from each country and hang these in our hall.

With parent consent, have children registered with their Iwi which can bring benefits for them throughout life. We will also share our student data (with parent consent) with the various Iwi at the end of each year and share the data at a special whanau meeting which will be held annually at the Cambridge Community Marae. At this same meeting focus on the other positives our Maori students are involved with or have achieved highly at. Focus on the positives.

Proposed new Programmes or Initiatives for staff

We have many rituals at CPS, however building on this will be important including the increased use whakatau (welcome) and koha for significant guests that have added value to our school; examples could be our student teachers, Life Education teacher, Sport Waikato staff, MLA, Asian visitors that come through our school.

We will engage Wānanga o Aotearoa based in Te Awamutu or our local Community Marae to run Te Reo Language classes based out of our school. This will be open to teachers/staff, whanau/ parents/children and our wider community.

We will also incorporate 5 minutes of Maori pronunciation as part of our staff meeting agendas and firstly focussed on the correct pronunciation of every Maori child's name. Staff will be asked to bring a photo of the child so staff builds the connection when out in the playground.

All children and staff will be expected to recite their personal mihi which builds that sense of whanau, self and belonging.

As part of choosing the child's teacher for the following year, teachers and senior management will give feedback in choosing the best teacher for Maori students. Whanau will also be asked to input into the placement of their child.

We will open and close BoT and staff meetings with a Karakia and develop a 'school karakia'. This will be done in consultation with Maori parents and local Iwi.

Staff will be encouraged to use greetings in Maori particularly with our Maori students and whanau. This will include introductions of school occasions; e.g. school assemblies, prize-giving, etc.

Proposed new Programmes or Initiatives for children

We will look at engaging Maori motivation speakers. We currently hold a Boys Breakfast and Girls Supper annually. We will add to this by holding a whanau night with personal invitations through email, letter and a phone call inviting parents, whanau and children to listen to a speaker who can relate their journey through education through to their current success. The brief will include challenging our school to deliver some of the missing gems that would have helped them on their journey and including some of those that helped them on their journey.

We will offer a baby sitting service for this evening targeting ex-students from our school to do this as a pro bono and build on this culture and expectation of staying connected with CPS.

We have a Kapahaka group at present however they only perform twice per year formally-local Kapahaka evening at High School and end of year formal assembly. We will create opportunity for this group to perform to local rest homes and at our motivational speakers evening as well as spontaneous lunchtime performances. They will also be asked to perform at our Family/Whanau Picnic Night. This will boost their mana and motivate others to join this group. This year we will also send our kapahaka group to the anniversary celebrations of the Maori King being held at Turangawaewae Marae in August.

We are currently looking at starting up a radio station at CPS. This has been totally student driven. If this gets off the ground there will be an opportunity to deliver Te Reo through the radio station on set times and days each week. Students, staff, whanau and or community will be able to be involved in delivering these lessons.

We will enter over the next two years the Maori Language Awards which are based around a writing competition. This will give our Maori students something to aspire to and see writing as important and an opportunity to express themselves on a national stage.

Put aside money each year in the budget for 1-3 scholarships that students can apply for post CPS. These could be for cultural, language, academic or sporting endeavours. I also wish to establish a general scholarship for high performing sporting students at senior secondary level who represent NZ. Build that old boy/girl connection.

We will hold an annual Cultural Unity Day for all cultures each year. We will base this around our house system and include music/dance, traditional dress, food, knowledge learning. It will be a giant celebration and awareness of who we are as a school.

We have Senior buddies (Tukana Teina) in the school and will now where possible actively put the children from the same Iwi together or Maori students with Maori students.

Ask the Cambridge High School Kapahaka group to perform for our Kapahaka Group and the whole school. This will reinforce a “next step” for our children and provide potential mentors and role models. We will liaise with the HOF of Maori.

Promoting a key aspect of whanau, based around working together through giving Service will be something explored with parents, children and staff. Giving, expecting nothing back in return, koha or gift just because it helps others and is the right thing to do. This moving forward, if adopted, would form one of the cornerstones of our schools cultural identity.

Conclusion

As espoused in Ka Hikitia under Principal 5-Productive Partnerships the key to our success in building productive partnerships with whanau is based on a mutual respect and a shared understanding of Maori aspirations as Maori for Maori.

The relationship must foster the expectation for Maori parents to be actively involved with their children's education through conversations based on data and evidence, both formative and summative. There is a greater chance of success for Maori if we can link into iwi and hapu connections and bring them on-board to be active participants in Maori education across the board and down to the individual level.

Te Treaty of Waitangi through all 3 Articles talks about partnership. For whanau engagement to positively and productively work will take effort, perseverance and genuineness to listen, act and sustain. Our school is in a good position to succeed.

In terms of the R & R part of my sabbatical I would change nothing. I got to do a road trip up north with my 2 older children before they headed to university. Both were born up there as I was. We fished and dived for seafood and got plenty, dived the HMS Canterbury, parasailed, swam and spent a couple of days out on dad's yacht in the BOI. We also went up 90 mile beach, visited Tane Mahuta and stayed in Omapere. All in all a great 8 days.

I visited Singapore with the Waikato Principal's Association which reinforced my commitment to ensuring our children have a sound understanding of Asia and the opportunities it presents. I also saw some great practice and met some wonderful people.

I did a lot of work around our property and purchased another property adjoining ours and was able to have a play with a spray unit, chainsaw, 14 tonne digger and 10 tonne truck...boy toys heaven!

I was able to see my children at school which was great. I had time to think, think about what else is there to do in life. So when they put me in the box at the end of it all my obituary doesn't read, "he was a teacher his whole life".

Time to think is a wonderful thing. I greatly appreciated the opportunity my Board gave me and to the NZEI and the MOE for giving us the opportunity to learn and refresh through the sabbatical process.

Acknowledgements:

Thank you to all the people in the schools I visited. Your time, experiences, journey and wisdom was greatly appreciated.

Schools Visited/Interactions: Whananaki School-Northland, Russell School-BOI, Puhahui School-Waikato, Maeroa Primary-Hamilton, Te Akau ki Papamoa Primary-BOP, St Peters School-Waikato, Wellington School-Singapore, Surwang- Singapore, Innova Junior High- Singapore, Canadian International School-CIT- Singapore, United World College SEA-Singapore