

Secondary Principals' Sabbatical Report

Focus Area

Te Reo Māori

Engagement through language acquisition

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Te Kura Kōhine o Te Rāwhiti o Te Upoko o Te Ika
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- Te Wānanga O Aotearoa for language learning experiences
- Te Te Whānau Tūtahi for supporting my faltering steps in Te Reo language learning

Purpose

The purpose of the professional learning was to enter into and make a commitment to Te Ao Māori through the understanding of language and cultural concepts.

I studied Te Reo Māori with a view to developing my capacity to be involved in the bilingual contexts of the college, to participate in whānau events in a more active way, and to model engagement with cultural competencies for staff and students. We are working across the school community to develop a school based tikanga, with support from mana whenua. I am seeking to develop a more authentic base for my leadership.

Background and rationale

The school is committed to ensuring that all Māori students at Wellington East Girls' College engage, participate and achieve success as Māori across all curriculum areas. We do this in partnership with individual students, their whānau and staff, to ensure that the curriculum is delivered within the principles and goals expressed in Ka Hikitea.

The school is establishing a whare (Whare Maanaki) as part of the school rebuild. The whare will provide a cultural and learning space and place to stand (turangawaewae) for Māori students and represents an opportunity for significant cultural learning across the school community. We are building relationships with whānau and mana whenua to support this work.

This cultural learning provides a focus for greater engagement with Tātaiako and the school has linking PCTS to the cultural competencies for appraisal work and professional learning including inquiry focus.

In 2014 the school undertook a review of Te Kura Māori led by Moana Jackson to identify strategies to support Māori student achievement. The mana and status of Te Reo was identified as a significant element in the development of a foundational platform for the College.

The Strategic Plan identifies engagement with learning as the key focus - Ruku honu i te akoranga. Goals and strategies highlight the significance of engagement, curriculum, relationships and environment to student success outcomes and are developed annually in the annual plan. A school wide consultation was undertaken in term 3, 2017 which sought input from whānau and students. The consultation formed part of the process used to set the new strategic direction for the school. The primary goal identifies the engagement of tauira, whānau and kiako and sets out plans to enhance the learning of these three groups. The strategies in the annual plan set out a range of actions to support student success and engagement, including Māori student action plans, strengthening community relationships, identifying inclusive pedagogical practices as one of the 4 platforms of learning at East alongside blended, coherent and learning to learn.

Methodology

I enrolled with Te Wānanga Aotearoa for the year in 2017. I supplemented the material provided through the Wānanga (the three work books *Wāhanga 1: Te kore*; *Wāhanga 2: Te pō*; and *Wāhanga 3: Te whei ao* and *Te Ara Reo Maori: Puna Kupu: A dictionary and resource for maori language beginners*) with a range of learning sources such as Scotty Morrison's (2015) *Māori Made Easy*; Ian Cormack's (2010) *Te Hikuwai: Launch yourself into te reo Māori*; and Nadine McKinnon's (2016) *Māori to Go: write on workbook // Book 1*. The term 3 focus provided an opportunity to consolidate and develop the prior learning and allowed for the discipline of daily language engagement. I also read, and developed ideas from a range of professional reading including Bishop & Glynn (1999); MacFarlane (2004); Metge (2015); and Whitinui (2011) as well as two core government publications: Ministry of Education (2013) *Tau Mai Te Reo*, and the Education Review Office (2010) *Promoting Success for Māori Students*.

Benefits

This opportunity to commit to Te Reo language acquisition has supported my role as a school leader, as a learner and has allowed me to model authentic practice in the cultural competency dimension.

1. Use of Te Reo Māori in formal contexts
2. Model use of Te Reo Māori in everyday contexts
3. Use mihi in formal powhiri, at Whānau Tutahi, Kahui Ako, before presentations to education sector groups
4. Use of the school pepeha in a range of contexts
5. Greater confidence in leading the tikanga based design aspects of the whare maanaki
6. Greater confidence in working with mana whenua to develop school wide tikanga
7. Focus develop new school development group Te Ika Mairanga
8. Support students as learners of Te Reo

Conclusions

This sabbatical provided a unique opportunity for me to reflect on the importance of te reo in a school leadership context: why it is critical for that commitment to the language and to the learning of the language to be part of my everyday consciousness. It also made me aware of the challenge that learning te reo embodies in a more practical sense. Not only is it time consuming, and difficult to learn a new language, it is also conceptually and politically challenging to understand the role and value of te reo for all staff and students in a schooling context. The sabbatical provided necessary time not only for some initial language acquisition but also time for associated professional reading and reflection alongside the language work.

References

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