

## ***Investigate tuakana teina concepts and their correlation to reciprocal and peer learning strategies to lift the achievement of our Māori students.***

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### **Acknowledgements**

It is 6.30am, only part way through my sabbatical break, and I am sitting at a desk in my lounge enjoying a strong coffee and looking out at a stand of giant kahikatea at the back of my property. I am certainly grateful for this moment. A time of reflection. It certainly hasn't been without hard work. Over the last 8 years of principalship, there have been plenty of moments of turmoil, moments that 'rattle your core' an apt phrase used by esteemed former principal Mike Lander. But somehow they are quickly forgotten as they are just absorbed- sucked up- as you carry on with your duties as a school leader. We are certainly in the midst of a real shake up in NZ education. The principals union are currently battling with the government over collective agreements. I feel a little removed at the moment. But it is time for a shake-up. Principals need a better deal, especially when I cast an eye towards new principals and emerging school leaders. I know of a few who have the potential to make an impact on the education landscape as principals, but get the feeling that they will become quickly disillusioned with the role as it stands now. Personally the money is secondary, and it always has been, but the opportunity to paint on a larger canvas as opposed to being somewhat pegged by your classroom was the lure for me. This hasn't changed. The pay certainly enables us to get by, but to my mind, no matter how much we try to squeeze out of the government, I will never own a yacht in the Wynyard Quarter, so I am realistic. So as we battle away with the government over this and that I simply want the unnecessary rubbish and overly complex nonsense to be removed, so that principals can have some creative license, some freedom and have some fun. All that aside this has been a wonderful time for reflection. Getting my head above the clouds, helping a friend build his house, reconnecting with my wife and family and I am ever so grateful to the people who have made this possible.

Firstly, thank you TeachNZ for providing these wonderful milestone incentives. To my BOT and Chairperson Joseph Hunter, thank you for supporting me back in 2018 when I considered applying. To Maree Phillips and Louise Tupai, thank you. You two are amazing. You have breathed new life into me professionally. I couldn't have wished for two better leaders beside me, and I have them. Friends have asked me *"How does the school run without you Jade?"* my usual reply is *"Better"*. I wouldn't be on this sabbatical if it weren't for you two.

To my teachers, thank you for continuing to push the bar. You are inspiring. Even when your backs have been against the wall and they have been over the last couple of years, you have kept coming back to the kids and each other.

To the administration team and support staff thanks for keeping the ship steady as always.

## Emerging thoughts

Just to add a bit of context to the following discussions. I am Maori. Born in South Westland, I spent my early years in a very small and remote West Coast town, then relocated North to my father's whenua in the Bay of Plenty. Matakana Island is turangawaewae and we spent the rest of our early years in and around the Waihi Beach, Katikati, and Tauranga area. But herein lies the twist. Although I am Maori, my family grew up very much disconnected from Maori culture. This is probably a scenario which is very common across NZ. Have a read of Liana Macdonald's 2017 article on *e-tangata* entitled "Why I didn't sit with the other Māori girls at school". A brief but to the point reflection of cultural disconnection. My father was raised in a time when being Maori was not a good thing. He like so many held a lot of pain from that time. Pain that has never been addressed and like a boil has festered over time. I will touch more on our upbringing throughout this report as my experience is my reference point.

Maori achievement or more to the point Maori under-achievement is an issue. Maori continually holding down the bottom of the bell curve in academic achievement shouldn't be news to you if you work in education.

Addressing this is a national educational priority and schools have been entrusted with the task of sorting it. Long story short I was initially thinking of delving into whanau engagement and how this in some settings correlates with improved Maori learner outcomes. Then I had a rethink.

Is whanau engagement an actual issue? *Probably.*

Is there a misunderstanding about Maori whanau being disconnected in general terms? *Probably.* Just because you don't see Maori whanau in the school grounds as regularly as our NZ European families does that mean they are disengaged or disconnected? Something to ponder perhaps.

I could count how many times my mother came into school when I was young on one hand, my father- never. But I can assure you that they placed unequivocal importance on 'us boys' getting a good education. I still vividly remember a little red notebook going home each night with a note from the deputy principal detailing my behaviour when I was starting to deviate a bit. Scares the heck out of me now. Mum and dad always backed the school and came down really hard on me if I slipped up. So although they never really turned up to school, were they disengaged with the school? I don't think so.

I am not saying that whanau engagement is not an issue. What I am saying though is that there is a bit more to it than schools can tackle alone and also in any prompt manner. There are some serious social development implications that need addressing before any meaningful progress can be made in my view. As a matter of fact my leadership team and I recently spent time at a low decile South Auckland school which has a predominantly Maori and Pasifika roll base. They are right in the battle zone when it comes to all the issues that are prevalent with Maori underachievement. The highly respected and experienced principal when asked about the whanau issues she faced said it was 'Spiritual poverty'. Alluding to whanau not only experiencing financial poverty but also no sense of belonging, a lack of moral compass or true way of being. It was a very sad and very confronting conversation. Those important people in those important government departments needed to be in the room. I wish that conversation could have been captured in a bottle.

Before I close off my whakaaro on whanau engagement I will add that although it is a really big mountain to climb, I think I have seen one school that "cracked the code" so to speak. The school

situated in the lower Coromandel had what I would say was truly engaged and connected Maori whanau. It was very seamless in the school and the school itself was owned as much by the whanau as anybody else. I have not been back to the school for a few years now, this may have changed. But after spending time with the school's principal in the early years of my principalship it quickly became apparent that it was a genuine investment in both time and energy to build up to that level. Over 20 years in fact. So there you go.

So I changed tack and wanted to look at another approach that may make the difference for Maori. Something that I want to explore at my own kura. It goes without saying that this sabbatical and the research involved will have certain practical applications.

Tuakana Teina, reciprocal learning partnerships. What does the research say about its use and effect? Are there any schools using this approach solely with our Maori students with the intention of lifting their achievement? And if there are schools doing it, then how?

## **Introduction / Abstract**

### **What is Tuakana teina?**

According to *Te Aho Arataki Marau mō te Ako i Te Reo Māori - Kura Auraki Curriculum Guidelines for Teaching and Learning Te Reo Māori in English-medium* (tki.org.nz) Tuakana/teina refers to the relationship between an older (tuakana) person and a younger (teina) person and is specific to teaching and learning in the Māori context.

It goes into further detail by stating that “The tuakana–teina relationship, an integral part of traditional Māori society, provides a model for buddy systems. An older or more expert tuakana (brother, sister or cousin) helps and guides a younger or less expert teina (originally a younger sibling or cousin of the same gender). In a learning environment that recognises the value of ako, the tuakana–teina roles may be reversed at any time. For example, the student who yesterday was the expert on te wā and explained the lunar calendar may need to learn from her classmate today about how manaakitanga (hospitality) is practised by the local hapū”.<sup>1</sup>

The idea of the roles being reversed in the aforementioned definition is of interest and will certainly have an appeal to the majority of educators. As the reciprocal nature of the transaction means that in a paired scenario both the tuakana and the teina have the opportunity to take the lead and share their learning. In other words there will be dual benefits.

It is also worthwhile noting that current educational pedagogy leans more towards the term *Ako* instead of tuakana-teina. *Ako*- a very broad term in Te Ao Maori- means to both learn and teach. The concept is reciprocal in nature and is connected with the principle of whanaungatanga. But for the purposes of this report I want to focus solely on tuakana-teina as it is the student to student interaction and its impacts which is of most interest as opposed to teacher and pupil that is more closely aligned with the concept of ako.

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<sup>1</sup> *Te Aho Arataki Marau mō te Ako i Te Reo Māori - Kura Auraki Curriculum Guidelines for Teaching and Learning Te Reo Māori in English-medium* <https://tereomaori.tki.org.nz/Curriculum-guidelines/Teaching-and-learning-te-reo-Maori/Aspects-of-planning/The-concept-of-a-tuakana-teina-relationship>

The concept certainly holds a lot of power and leverage within Maori culture. Whanau is integral to the Maori way, so it makes sense that the influence of ones elder siblings takes on an elevated status. In addition to this though there is plenty of research and action around positive role models being vital for the development of our Maori youth. So it goes without saying that if done right, a positive and consistent tuakana-teina programme could make the difference in the education outcomes for a Maori learner.

For further clarification purposes. We are talking Maori- Maori peer relationships -not your typical Friday afternoon buddy reading session- and building the scaffold for the relationship to be focussed on learning.

## **What are we currently doing?**

### **Tuakana Teina at Patumahoe School**

Like most schools. Tuakana Teina is ever present. Be it organic in nature or as deliberate strategies to support student behaviour. We have a number of mechanisms which are deliberate in nature, socially geared, and equally as effective.

**Pink brigade** a peer support programme developed by our senior team leader Todd Williams. A playground based programme where senior students volunteer to be Pink Brigaders who act as support and companions for students who may be socially isolated during play time or in some situations be identified by staff as in need of positive redirection. This support may come in the form of a korero with the student, invitation to play a game, or simply joining in with whatever the student is doing. The phrase '*Others First*' underpins the pink brigade kaupapa. Pink brigaders are identified through their highly visible pink bucket hats in Term 1 and 4, or alternatively pink beanies in the winter terms. The pink brigade is a special and highly valued part of our senior school service programme.

### **Whanaungatanga at Patumahoe School**

The model or platform we work off at Patumahoe School is Whanaugatanga which was established in 2017. The group we call **Whanaungatanga** being named after the concept itself consists of the vast majority of our Maori and Pasifika students. The Whanaungatanga concept came to life through our teacher and kaiako Joanne Syme. A passionate educator and believer in the importance of our Maori learners, Syme started the group with the kaupapa -"to develop a sense of belonging and appreciate tikanga through waiata and sharing of experiences."

The formation and development of the group inadvertently addresses the key statement in the *Ka Hikitia – Accelerating Success 2013–2017 strategy* which says that "all Māori students will have their identity, language and culture valued and included in teaching and learning in ways that support them to engage and achieve success"

So once a week our whanaungatanga group meet with our kaiako Mrs Syme, and they learn various elements of te ao maori to nurture a sense of identity and belonging as Maori. Joanne Syme stressed that one of the most critical actions with the group is the ongoing regular contact with the group be it in the playground or in the classroom, so although the group meet officially once a week, the korero and practice of awhi of each member is maintained

## **Findings**

*He aha te mea nui o te ao. He tāngata, he tāngata, he tāngata*

*What is the most important thing in the world? It is people, it is people, it is people.*

I fondly recall attending a noho and hui at Kia Aroha College about 7 years ago. I was there as part of the inauguration of the Maori Achievement Collaboratives. A number of notable speakers along with former Kia Aroha tumuaki Anne Milne were also in attendance with the intention of directing some strong messages to the attendee principals around ‘pulling finger’ for our Maori rangitahi. Of all the speakers, the one who had the most resounding impact was a year 13 girl who spoke from her experience as Maori and pupil of Kia Aroha College. She spoke of the time she had to leave Kia Aroha due to family circumstance eventually enrolling at another school. She soon became lost. Going “off the rails” so to speak. She longed to return to the kura that embraced her as Maori and to the place where she felt connected. Upon returning to Kia Aroha in her final year she found her direction and purpose and as she spoke, was in her final stages before heading off to tertiary study. Once again reaffirming that need for connection and the importance of relationships.

Tuakana teina and whakawhanaungatanga concepts are certainly not new concepts. They are organic in nature. One only needs to cast their eye around the school at lunchtime and you will see big sis looking out for little bro as he cautiously shuffles around the playground on his first day. But they can also be nurtured. They are readily embraced and developed through kapa haka groups, house sports, and buddy learning. What was of interest to me was the way schools were utilising these relationships as a way to strategically target learning with our Maori learners.

### **What are other schools doing?**

From the schools I spoke to the overriding theme was that Tuakana Teina was evident through social based interactions across the school. Onewhero Area School principal Simon Craggs explained *“Yeah, we have a few things some formal and some informal. Use senior leaders for going out into junior playground to play with juniors. Have used senior students to mentor and work with juniors who have behavioural issues. We also have cool schools peer mentors in Year 6 – moving into Year 7-8 next year. We also have junior house leaders who work with the senior house leaders”*.

An area school certainly lends itself to an enhanced level of tuakana teina interaction with the spread of year levels and also the visible junctions or transition points throughout the school.

Although Craggs did not identify any deliberate focus on classroom learning he shared an insight into the power of tuakana teina through a recent school situation. *“We had several Year 9 boys who were playing up and getting off track. So one lunchtime we enlisted the help of some Year 13 boys to sit the year 9s down and have a talk with them. The talk was positively geared and the senior boys talked about their journey and some of the challenges they have had at school, just trying to make a connection with the younger ones. It has proved to be an effective way to redirect some of these kids, certainly more effective than the continual drilling they get from teachers which is more punitive than anything”*

A teacher I spoke to from a small rural school said that tuakana-teina was captured in whanau grouping for house sports where the elder siblings lead by example, they also did buddy reading and buddy spelling.

A new principal from another small rural school is developing tuakana teina through his school values namely the concept or act of whakawhanaungatanga. He could not specifically identify any learning focused elements yet, but is planning on developing this throughout his tenure as principal.

I purposefully did not venture into any kura kaupapa settings or even rumaki classrooms, as I wanted to see how it is or if it is implemented in an English medium setting. That alone would be a wonderful and extensive research topic.

### **What does the research say?**

Professor John Hattie's research into effect size is well known. I looked into it through his *Visible Learning* study and related publications to see if I could glean anything that could suggest I might be on the right track. Hattie states that the influence of peers on learning has a 0.53 effect size which falls into the medium effect range. However his research identifies reciprocal teaching as having an effect size of 0.73 which is significant.<sup>2</sup>

To provide further clarity on these effect sizes. A 0.4 effect size over a year is the typical impact or influence a teacher would have on a student. So the research is telling us the combination of peer teaching and a targeted reciprocal teaching approach is potentially significant. It may even fall into the category of *accelerated progress*. A term that the Education Review Office like at the moment. According to ERO<sup>3</sup> in order for schools to ensure that Maori learners enjoy success as Maori they must have "integrated elements of students' identity language and culture into teaching and learning". So this is further reinforcement that deliberately using tuakana-teina as a mechanism for raising Maori student achievement is at the very least a culturally responsive practice.

### **What is reciprocal teaching?**

The word reciprocal in this case, is an adjective, stemming from the Latin word *reciprocus*, meaning *returning the same way*. When a student listens to the teacher explain a concept or idea in a lesson, such as the parts of a plant, the student pays special attention to the various names, learns how each part is related to the whole and studies the purpose or function of each part. The teacher then puts the students into pairs and asks one student to "teach" the other student what they just learned. The first student repeats what the teacher taught in the lesson, naming each part, explains the part's relationship to the whole, and so forth.

After a few minutes, the other child has a chance to reciprocate the action by putting into their own words what they have just learned. Just this simple act of teaching one another helps students retain more making it easier to remember and recall the information when test time comes around.

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<sup>2</sup> John Hattie: Visible learning: A synthesis of over 800 meta-analyses relating to achievement  
Routledge, Abingdon, 2008.

<sup>3</sup> ERO. Accelerating student achievement: A resource for schools. 2015.

<https://www.ero.govt.nz/assets/Uploads/Accelerating-student-achievement-synthesis.pdf>

*Te Kotahitanga* and in particular *The Effective Teacher Profile: Te Kotahitanga* developed by Dr Russel Bishop maintains that discursive practices such as reciprocal learning and reciprocally developed knowledge are far more effective than traditional practice of knowledge being 'taught, passed down or transmitted' to Maori learners.<sup>4</sup> I think in this age of trying to be more discursive or exploratory in our practice, this strategy might have some merit.

In the ERO publication ***Success for maori children in early childhood services good practice*** they suggested that centres "embrace the concepts of tuakana/teina where it is common for siblings to attend this centre. The younger children learn from the older ones and the older children learn perseverance."<sup>5</sup> (ERO)

In the 2018 ERO publication *Leading Innovative Learning in School* outlines the following benefits with a peer to peer reciprocal learning approach.

#### **Benefits for tutees**

- more individual teaching
- gains in learning
- gains in social/relationship skills, for example, communicating, accepting help
- improvement in attitude towards learning
- improvement in self-esteem

#### **Benefits for tutors**

- practice/reinforcement of skills at earlier levels
- gains in learning
- insight into the learning process
- development of social/relationship skills, for example, listening, encouraging
- development of responsibility
- development of self-esteem

#### **Benefits for teachers**

- increased opportunity to interact effectively with a range of individual students
- more effective use of time
- greater coverage of individual needs
- opportunities to observe students at work, and to assess skills

#### **Implications**

How do you find the balance? If Anne Mile suggests that we should be measuring 'aroha' if we are looking to ensure Maori have success as Maori. Then how do we inject some strategic mahi around

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<sup>4</sup> Te Kotahitanga (2009) The effective teacher profile. Dr Russell Bishop, University of Waikato.  
<https://tekotahitanga.tki.org.nz/>

<sup>5</sup> ERO. Success for Maori children in early childhood services good practice.  
<https://www.ero.govt.nz/publications/success-for-maori-children-in-early-childhood-services-good-practice/examples-of-good-practice/>

literacy and numeracy more 'white spaces' without seeming like we are 'slipping pills into the pudding'.

This sort of questions makes me think that National Standards and the preoccupation with literacy and numeracy still lingers.

Will there be resistance if we continually push the classroom through systematically formed or even organically formed relationships? Is it more important for kids to simply connect and korero through their relationship and just learn how to be?

## **Conclusion**

Tuakana teina is inherent in most school settings. With school values often reflecting things such as responsibility, and respect there is an onus on teachers developing these through the use of senior students as role models. In a number of settings you will find deliberate strategies, programmes, and initiatives that develop these peer support strategies. *Peer mediators* and the *Pink Brigade* are two such examples at my school, as well as our *Whanaungatanga* group which is especially significant for our Maori students. For the most part, schools are doing this well. Do schools have a defined tuakana teina based learning support programme for Maori learner? I have not seen one yet, however, I still have my eyes and ears open for any schools that do.

How simple and effective would it be if at a secondary school for example. An esteemed Year 13 student who held down a peer support role walked up to a Year 8 and asked them how they are finding mathematics or PE and if they needed any help? So often in this type of situation it is socially geared. "*Are you keeping out of trouble?*", "*Have you found someone to have lunch with?*" The change of conversation to be learning focussed would be interesting. I think back to my younger years when I was trying to study for my school certificate exams, and seeking advice from my older brother who was well into the swing of bursary examinations. He was a diligent and conscientious student, often getting me to take his draft assignments or essays to his teachers so they could peruse his work and offer him feedback before exams. One afternoon he came into my room and explained in very direct terms, "*Jade, you must get your school certificate, it's the stepping stone to everything*" he then went onto show me how he prepared for exams just to cast aside any flippancy I may have had. It was a flurry of post it notes on his wall and scrawls of refill paper littered with fluorescent highlights, but it was very focussed and effective. I think the power in this exchange was that I looked up to my brother and superficial things like being great at rugby and having a flash car all took a back seat for a moment because he actually valued his education and worked hard to get results. That afternoon was a turning point for me.

I have wandered several times through the grounds of Pukekohe High School and wondered how much impact the senior boys and girls could have on the rest of the school. I am not sure they even know.

Te wero mo tatou inainei. The challenge for me now is to try and use our Whanaungatanga group and the already well established connections to have a further impact through the learning of our Maori and Pasifika. Not totally overhaul the kaupapa of the group but to try and shift the axis slightly so that our Tuakana can see the importance of deliberately helping the younger members of the roopu with their learning. I want to spearhead this as the principal, but I will also take guidance and direction from my leadership team and our teachers. We are currently considering a new approach which involves the management team supporting these students through a multi-faceted approach.



With *pastoral* and *manaakitanga* being supported by our DP, *performance* and *kapa haka* taught and led by our assistant principal, and finally *tikanga, leadership and learning* being led by myself. We feel that with this wrap around approach we can carry on the key principles of the *Whanaungatanga* group but also build more layers particularly with learning and leadership. The approach has lent on some of the theory apparent in Mason Durie's *Whare Tapa Wha* holistic model.

The most wonderful online resource that I have come across during my sabbatical was the *Inclusive Education Section* on [tki.org.nz](http://tki.org.nz) and in particular their '*Guide to Maori Students*'. It outlines the basic foundations for Maori learner success starting from 'Knowing the child', then 'Establishing reciprocal relationships' and onto 'Building community networks' and so on. Very sensible stuff and although most of these concepts are fairly common knowledge they break down each of these above mentioned sections with examples, practical ideas, and evidence based readings. It truly is excellent material and for someone like myself who has limited online navigational abilities, I found it rather easy to follow.

I think the long and short of it is that the research clearly points in one direction for making shifts with people and in the case of this report Maori kids, is relationships. The educators who have the ability to get the most out of the relationship they have with their students, the educators who nurture and develop relationships between themselves and students and also between students are the ones that make the difference in my eyes. I have seen it time and time again. The teachers who fail to see the relationship and human connection as important are the ones who hit hurdles more often than those who do.

At the beginning of this report I acknowledged and thanked TeachNZ for providing these wonderful milestone incentives. I wish to add to this sentiment. Something that TEACHNZ or the government should consider especially when they have been espousing a promise to support principal wellbeing. Make sabbaticals a mandatory part of a principals career journey, still make it a 5 year milestone, but take away the application process and the need to have to do a research component. If we are truly interested in what we do, then time away in itself is a powerful tool for reflection, principals and teachers are always thinking about what they do. I have found the last few months invaluable as I have thought about so much professionally. It has been great. I can't wait to get back to my school, our kids, our families, and my team.

Kia ora