

Principal's Sabbatical Report

To Investigate How Our Positive Behaviour 4 Learning Programme and The Ka Hikitia Strategy can be Linked to Improve Student-Learning Outcomes



*Kimihia Te Ara Totika
Seek the right Path*

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Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge the Waitara Central School Board of Trustees for supporting my application for Sabbatical leave. A huge vote of thanks goes to our Deputy Principal for releasing me and stepping up in the role of Acting Principal. She ensured that it was 'business as usual'. To the staff thank you for your continued hard work and commitment to our tamariki's education.

I acknowledge the Ministry of Education for making this leave possible and giving me the opportunity to explore both an area of interest and need, and the chance to reflect on my own practice.

To the schools I visited, the Principals, teachers, support staff and other experts thank you for willingly sharing your vision, practices and knowledge with me.

Purpose

To investigate how our Positive Behaviour 4 Learning Programme and The Ka Hikitia Strategy can be linked to improve student-learning outcomes.

Background

My maunga is Taranaki, my awa the Waiongana, my iwi is the Rumball family and my hapu is the Reardon and Read families. I am pakeha in both my heritage and upbringing. During the early 80s my husband and I moved to a predominantly Maori community. This was my first real introduction to Maoritanga. Since then I have been on a journey of learning and understanding.

Waitara Central School situated in North Taranaki is a U3 Decile 2 contributing primary school. Our roll sits between 130-160 children. The roll fluctuates because we have a high ratio of transiency. Over the last five years this has equated to between 32-48% of our roll. We serve a semi-rural, suburban community. At present 65% of our roll identify as Maori. Te Atiawatanga guides the way things are done on a daily basis and during ceremonial occasions.

In 2010 we implemented the Positive Behaviour for Learning programme (PB4L). We have also become increasingly aware, particularly through our involvement in an Accelerated Learning in Literacy Pilot project during 2011/12 that we needed to do some more work around cultural responsiveness – both in terms of understanding our community better and improving student learning outcomes.

As part of our school culture we adopted two Maori values to drive what we do. The first is Manaakitanga. ERO recently identified that a positive and welcoming tone and giving to others is very apparent; and that regular and positive contact with whanau assists us in knowing our children well. Within this value we also promote tuakana/teina relationships, these being particularly evident in the playground. The second value is that of whanaungatanga. We therefore place an emphasis on making connections and building relationships. ERO affirmed that this was reflected in the way the community, teachers and children work together to support learners to achieve their potential. Our motto is ‘Kimihia te Ara Totika’ – seek the right path. Our vision is ‘Working together in harmony to achieve our potential’.

It seemed to me that there were natural links to our behaviour programme PB4L and the Ka Hikitia strategy. As a school we have identified that we would like to implement the latter strategy more robustly than before and where possible connect it to what already exists.

Research

The 2009 Conduct Problems best practice report to the Government states 15-20% of Maori tamariki will display conduct problems of sufficient severity to merit intervention...Maori referrals to the Ministry of Education specialist behavior services increased from 30-40% between 2003/4 and 2007/8 and in 2009 remain at 40%’

Statistics such as these are concerning. What can we do to minimize such results? How can we ensure that our Maori students achieve well and graduate from our school knowing that they are valued as Maori, that they can succeed as Maori and understand and live by culturally supported values?

Positive Behaviour for Learning – PB4L

The premise for PB4L is building supportive and effective learning environments for all students.

- PB4L is a consistent, school-wide system of support that helps define, teach and support appropriate student behaviours, creating a positive school environment
- PB4L is designed to be responsive to the individual schools to reflect on their systems and practices to determine if they are having a positive impact on student learning
- PB4L is designed to create effective teaching/learning environments where students make positive behaviour choices that support academic success
- PB4L focuses on prevention of problem behaviours and instruction in appropriate behaviours.

The key elements are building social competence and academic achievement; supporting decision making, supporting student behaviour and supporting staff behaviour. This is achieved through effective systems, effective use of data and effective practices.

The four schools I visited had embedded this philosophy through having:

- school-wide discipline/behaviour practices, including establishing clear consequences;
- regular and planned instruction in social skills;
- help for students in order to regulate their own behaviour;
- expectations as to how teachers could intervene effectively to manage behaviour in the classroom and other school settings;
- promotion of active supervision in all areas of the school;
- acknowledgement both of student and staff ‘good behaviour’;
- confidence that the PB4L team, Learning Support Team and leadership Team together could plan for and solve problems;
- community understanding of what is in place;
- active participation in external coaching sessions to build capacity; and
- relentless consistency in their practice.

Ka Hikitia Strategy

‘Managing for Success: The Maori Education Strategy 2008-2012’

One of the key messages of this strategy is that “‘Maori students’ educational success is critical to Aotearoa New Zealand’s success”.

Other key points include:

- Maori enjoying educational success as Maori
- A focus on realising potential
- Recognising the multiple concepts of success held by students, whanau, hapu, iwi and educational professional providers
- Ako – culture counts – productive partnerships.

Since the introduction of the strategy in 2008 Waitara Central School has focused on:

- Building an awareness of local history
- Building strong whanau connections and recognising the support whanau give each other
- Recognising that whanau want the best for their tamariki
- Staff supporting whanau and community
- Staff having humility- acknowledging there is a lot we don’t know – but are willing to learn
- All students having the opportunity to acquire knowledge of Te Reo Maori me ona Tikanga
- Providing kai for tamariki and whanau in need
- Ensuring resources and displays have a cultural focus
- Promoting Maoritanga in our weekly panui/newsletter
- Having Maori Leaders in our school – from local High School, role model assemblies and local celebrities
- Strengthening our culture of tuakana – teina
- Implementing ‘A Book in Every Backpack’ programme – a partnership between school and local library
- Implementing ‘Reading Together’ programme to strengthen caregivers skills and confidence
- Accelerating learning in literacy
- Celebrating and acknowledging local culture through learning programmes and kaupapa
- Having an active open door policy
- Working towards whanau attendance at events rather than meetings

- Ensuring there is a balance of CULTURE in our school
- Having an active whanau/school liason officer
- Being visual and available
- Being open-minded
- Being focused; and
- Always making connections to what we know.

Through self review we have identified the following areas of concern:

- Kaumatua – our two kaumatua are elderly and unwell – who will succeed them? What part do we play in this?
- How can we involve our kaumatua without burdening them?
- How do we strengthen ties with our local marae?
- How do we strengthen partnerships with our local iwi and hapu?
- How do we genuinely let our whanau know that we care and value what they are thinking?
- How do we truly know how ‘inclusive’ our caregivers feel?
- Do our students know us as well as we THINK they do?; and
- Not being Maori, as the majority of our staff aren’t, will it ever be enough, are we doing enough?

So what?

In considering the key elements of the PB4L programme and the focus on cultural responsiveness in Ka Hikitia I asked myself “so what?” for our school? I decided there were other factors to take into account before planning a way forward.

PBIS.org (Positive Behaviour in Schools) states ‘When families are meaningfully involved in educational activities their children do better in schools. Families play an important part in their child’s education and social development. The presence of parents in schools not only provides additional academic supports but also creates community and cultural connections.

New Zealand research also tells us that partnerships will be more successful if the purpose of the partnership is clear and goal-orientated and the expected outcomes of the partnership be defined. (Bull, Brooking, Campbell,2008)

The Education Review Office state that effective schools:

- Listen to the aspirations that parents and whanau have for their children
- Consult them on relevant matters and communicate with them in a timely and appropriate manner
- Ensure that all communities have a voice and a sense of identification with the school and its goals
- Willingly share ideas and strategies that parents and whanau can use at home to support children's learning
- Value two-way communication. They provide parents with meaningful information and guidance on ways they can support their children.

According to the PB4L programme successful home partnerships:

- Are collaborative and mutually respectful
- Are goal orientated and focused on learning
- Take time and commitment from both partners
- Are embedded in school development plans, are well resourced and regularly reviewed
- Are built on the circumstances of each individual school and its community
- Are informed by a strengths based rather than a deficit model
- Include timely two-way communication. (Bull et al and MOE)

PB4L also state that for successful engagement with families and community that schools need; creativity – this may be in the form of communication; phone, website, emails, events, newsletters, at the school gate, home visits, school drop in centres and open classroom door; perseverance, keep on trying, don't be put off by an approach that doesn't work, something else will work; and flexibility – be open to new ideas, learn from criticism, reflect and review.

What next?

The schools I visited certainly demonstrated all these elements. By having these attitudes in place a determination to succeed was evident. I also felt affirmed that we were on the right path, both in terms of implementing PB4L and working towards managing Maori student success. I still feel we need to be more robust in self-reviewing both programmes. It is timely for our community to reflect on how to further promote Maori student success, as Maori.

From my sabbatical journey and what I know about our school there are some specific actions I would like our school to consider:

- Unpack Macfarlanes Educultural wheel. This approach uses Maori values to promote whanaungatanga – building relationships, manaakitanga – ethic of caring, rangatiratanga – teacher effectiveness and kotahitanga – ethic of bonding. Macfarlane suggests practical activities to support the implementation of these values.
- Establish a whanau team – a place where whanau voice can be heard, a place where trust can be built.
- Establish a homework club
- Staff to share themselves more – teachers must have a strong connection with children– children need to be able to come and talk to them
- Establish whanau days – these can be linked to our PB4L celebration days, where there is a lot of whanau involvement eg the preparation of food for our whole community at an event
- Informalise our conference/interview expectations. Link meeting parents with a b-b-q so that staff and caregivers can mingle.
- Organise coffee mornings with principal off site – perhaps at a local café. Conversations on ‘whats on top’ at school could be held.
- Teacher Only Days at the beginning of the year to be held on the local marae.
- Develop school-wide continuum based on ‘Taitaiako: Cultural Competencies for Teachers of Maori Learners
- To have a school kaumatua / kuia that work actively in the school to assist with building links to the local community and iwi
- Strengthening relationships with a range of stakeholders such as links to our local marae
- Building a shared understanding of what cultural responsiveness is, what it looks like and how it relates to not only PB4L and Ka Hikitia Strategy but also to our other programmes such as being a Health Promoting School.

My sabbatical has been instrumental in clarifying my thinking. When I initially considered my proposal I thought I would be looking at ways of practically linking PB4L and the Ka Hikitia Strategy. I now know that the strategy is an umbrella for all our programmes; that essentially it is about cultural responsiveness and whanau/caregiver engagement.

We have good ‘bones’ at Waitara Central but need to ‘flesh’ things out. I now have a philosophical base and ideas based on research to consider future strategic planning. I once again thank everyone involved in providing for and participating in my sabbatical.

As a principal it is my job to be the lead learner and to empower staff and community to get the best learning outcomes for all our children. I will continue to nurture and build relationships and to challenge our community and myself to get results.

*Hutiro te rito
Hutia te rito o te harakeke
Kei whea e komako e ko?
Ki mai ki ahau
He aha te mea nui o te ao?
Maku e ki atu
He tangata, he tangata, he tangata*

*If you pluck the centre from the flax, where will the bell bird sing?
Ask me- what is the most important thing in the world?
I will reply
It is people! It is people! It is people!*

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- North Taranaki Cluster of schools implementing PB4L
- Inglewood Primary School
- Waitara East School
- Kaiti School
- Kaitoa Intermediate/Middle School
- PB4L School-Wide Conference 2012
- Ka Hikitia (Ministry of Education 2008)
- Measurable Gains Framework, Ka Hikitia (MOE 2010)
- Tataiako (Ministry of Education 2011)
- The New Zealand Curriculum (2007)
- Raising the Achievement of Maori Students (MOE 2000)
- Promoting Success for Maori Students: school progress (ERO 2010)
- Maori Success: Complementary Evaluation Framework (ERO 2011)
- The Cultural Self-Review (Bevan-Brown, NZCER 2003)
- Education Gazette – various articles on Maori Education and Behaviour
- Various SET- Maori Education/Behaviour focus (NZCER)

