Community of Learning – Kahui Ako
One year in……

Sabbatical Report

Term 2 2017

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Acknowledgements

The time I have spent reading research, visiting schools and taking the time to reflect and refresh has been of huge value and I know our school will benefit from the learning I have taken away from this experience, not only of the term off for this piece of work but for the role of Lead Principal.

I would like to acknowledge and thank the St Dominic's Catholic Primary School Board of Trustees for fully supporting my application for a sabbatical but also for being so supportive of my role of Lead principal of our Kahui Ako
I would also like to acknowledge and thank the Ministry of Education for giving me the chance to undertake my sabbatical.
Thank you to Vicky Coakley who took on the role as Acting Principal confidently and capably and also the staff for supporting Vicky in my absence.

Executive Summary
- IES is a total shift in thinking across our Educational landscape.
- True collaboration can only happen in high trust environments.
- Communication is very important if schools are all going to feel part of a community.
- Great Leadership is vital if a schools is going to thrive and ignite great learners.
- You don't always get given a template in life.
- It takes time to make great whisky!

Purpose

The purpose of my sabbatical was to have time to visit schools in the Far North to look at true 'Culturally Responsive' practices that support Maori leaners.

I specifically wanted to see how different schools had developed teaching practices that supported their children's learning and how knowing their children's family/whanau influenced the children's relationships with their teachers and ultimately their student achievement.

However, in term 4 of 2016, I had taken on the role of Lead principal of our Auckland Central Catholic Community of Schools. Taking time in Term 2 2017 from this role would have affected the natural momentum I was seeing in bringing our schools together. I decided to change my sabbatical focus and work through it with my focus being on 'building a plane in midair' after we had just taken off!

Background and Rationale

Research shows that quality teaching has the biggest influence on whether learners succeed. IES has been designed with this in mind and is intended to help raise achievement by:

- improving teaching practice across New Zealand
- enabling kaiako and teachers to work together and benefit from each other's knowledge and experience
- helping all learners benefit from the skills and knowledge of great kaiako and teachers from across a group of education providers (early childhood education services me ngā kōhanga reo, school, kura and post-secondary)
- helping educators and training providers work together so it's easier for learners to move through the education system.

IES Working group report
Communities of Schools would form to encourage collaboration between school governance, leadership and teachers to improve their practice and deliver shared achievement objectives, which they would collectively set.

Communities of Schools would self-identify and would largely be geographically defined, including a variety of school types (primary through to secondary). They would be expected, where possible, to reflect the student education journey through schooling.

Participation in a Community of Schools is voluntary. The Ministry would support schools to form Communities of Schools and help them in their operations.

Communities of Schools would be expected to respond to the needs of all students, and especially Māori students, Pasifika students, students with special education needs and those from low socio-economic families in their communities. The Government has identified these groups as a priority as it believes they are over represented in New Zealand's national achievement challenge.

Findings and reflections

When *Investigating in Education Success* was first discussed and proposed, it caused many people who worked within the sector to begin to feel really uncomfortable.

By some it was seen as another quick 'fix-it' roll out, that after a period of time would slowly become a distant memory. Many fantastic programmes have been launched before through the ministry, but because of the pressures and workloads demanded on schools, these often fell over and died out.

In January 2014, the Prime Minister announced that the Government was investing an extra $359m in funding over the next 4 years, and $155 million a year after that, to help raise student achievement.

As with many Ministry of Education initiatives, I did not take too much notice at first, but when the funding amount was discussed, I soon realised that they were really serious in making this work. What this looked like and what it meant for my own school had yet to be realised. Many new ideas and strategies roll over my desk throughout any year, and it all depends on what is going on that day, as to whether or not you pick up the glossy document and read the first page.

As IES kept being talked about through the media and online, discussions were held with colleagues about what it would actually mean to us at ground level. What were the implications and where were the children in all of this 'investing'?

The key to me becoming interested in the concept was the word 'collaboration'. In my 13 years as a principal, I have jumped at every opportunity where I could meet and share ideas with other principals, teachers and Boards of Trustees.

I believe that within a high trust collaborative environment, some of the best work in education takes place, and teachers by their very nature are reflective and love to share. Relational trust is foundational to this process, and Robinson, Hohepa, and Lloyd (2009) make this point as well. One person's success is dependent on the contributions of others.

In the past however, MOE opportunities came with fish hooks. They were MOE run and led. They required milestones and 'checking in'. They were not high trust settings, and because of this many were not taken up by schools. For me personally, they were with schools that I did not necessarily want to collaborate with, and often were very short lived due to funding issues.

At times, schools took up these MOE initiatives to tick a box and 'play the game'. They never became embedded in actual school practice, and took up time that could have been well spent on thinking about teaching and learning.

The educational thinking and research behind new MOE initiatives were there, but often required the school to sustain the 'change', and this required substantial funding and personal capability, that at times was not in the schools.

The ideas for 'de-privatising' your school was new for many, and the MOE initiatives often led to direct competition with the school down the road. Schools needed to keep their rolls high and teachers were being trained up and then leaving for 'better' positions. This is especially the case in rural communities.

After sitting down and unpacking the theory and thinking behind IES, I quickly found myself asking "what if this could possibly work?" Imagine a group of schools working together like they are suggesting, and how research says it could be like.

Research suggests that community schools that establish and maintain collaborative systems in which community stakeholders share governance and build comprehensive, multifaceted, cohesive systems of interventions can improve conditions and address issues for students, families, schools, and communities (Center for Mental Health in Schools at UCLA, 2011).

At the time of the roll out, the NZEI was also doing some intensive reading and unpacking. Their concerns were real, and within my school, caused many of the staff to question what was behind this massive spend within education. Trust was at an all-time low between primary teachers and the MOE.

NZEI's stand was as follows:-
While research shows that sharing effective practice is important to boosting quality teaching, most communities facing challenges with under-achievement have to focus on the conditions for learning as well as teaching practice. Socio-economic factors have the most significant impact on children achieving success, even according to John Hattie, who is an advocate for improving teaching quality.

As negotiations continued, it became obvious that there was going to be a massive shift in education. Some call it the biggest thing since 'Tomorrow's Schools'.

Work streams within the MOE were set up, and the actual 'how' this IES was going to work started to be developed.

The overarching goals were very clear from the start.
- give children and young people throughout New Zealand a better education by lifting student achievement.
- create new career opportunities for teachers and principals.
- help ensure quality teaching and leadership can be shared across all schools.
- encourage collaborative practice across schools.

With so much money being spent, many questioned the 'where' it was being spent. With classrooms needing specialised teachers, teacher aides to support teachers as they deal with the ever growing learning and behavioural concerns, and RTLB services needing a boost, many questions were being asked about appropriate use of funds. What about down here in the classroom? What about at the coal face? How is IES going to help the actual teaching and learning for our children?

In the middle of 2016, the formation of our Catholic Community transpired – Auckland Central Catholic Kahui Ako.

It made sense to call a gathering of those schools that were thinking about joining a community of schools to see what the collective understanding was, and what each school possibly wanted out of this new initiative.

Forming a Catholic Community made sense, as the schools invited to attend the meetings already had natural streams of enrolments, and had previously worked

together over a range of activities like professional learning, sports activities and Whanau engagement. The Catholic Community is not a large one, and most of the principals invited to join had already known each other and engaged in some way in previous years.

The Achievement Challenge document we submitted states:
"The pathway between our schools is very clear, and being Faith based allows us to collectively develop the whole child. When a child enters our Year 1 classroom, each year their faith is added to, and this continues until they leave in Year 13. This development of the whole child is crucial. Our faith is a major factor between our schools, and having a common set of values and beliefs, that includes equity and personal respect makes sense, that we would naturally create a functional and transparent process between schools."

In the first stages of the principals' meetings, it became very obvious that we had a range of ideas of what we thought the IES and Community of Schools was, and that we had a lot to learn about what it could look like.

Around this time, the MOE were sharing several good news stories of other schools that had formed Communities of Learning. Many publications were coming out and it really felt like the country was on a wave that you had to be on, in order to be seen as "innovative and progressive". Talk around the blocks was that all funding would now only be accessed through a community. IES days were being advertised, and principals encouraged to come along and hear what other schools were doing, and the advantages they were having since joining a Community.

At the end of 2016 it was decided to formally submit an expression of interest for our ACC Kahui Ako. Staff and Boards of Trustees had been consulted, and even though there were many still nervous about what it would mean, it was decided we would rather be at the front of the pack leading the change, rather than at the back, having it forced upon us.

Once the expression of interest was in, we started to work on our Achievement Challenges. We soon realised that working with 11 schools and finding common understandings on a range of topics was going to be no easy task. This workstream was completed by a small number of principals from the group, to save time and 'get it over the line' so to speak.

While this was all going on, so was the IES marketing train, with many workshops being run, meetings being held, and information being sent out. The amount of MOE documentation was endless and information coming through your emails was tremendous. Often it seemed that not even members of the Ministry knew what the next change and direction this IES was taking.

In thinking of becoming a Lead Principal, I had to make sure I was ready for the change in my leadership role. I was principal of a 280-student school that had a stable staff, wonderful community, and supportive Board of Trustees. We were heading into an ERO year, and as a school community, we were looking forward to celebrating the wonderful learning that to take place. I did, however, like the idea of a challenge, something completely different from anything that I had come across before, in my role as principal. For these very reasons I applied, and was successful.

Once I was appointed, I soon realised the massive shift I had to make. My role as first Lead Principal, was to bring together 10 successful Catholic schools in their own right, and start them talking and thinking as one, all very clear and purposeful, working towards two achievement challenges. Simple!

Within my own school, my internal structures had to change, and even the relationships I had with the school community. Time and focus became hard to find when thinking about my own school, and this has taken a toll, not only to the teaching staff, but to the parent community.

Parents love seeing you present within school - taking duties and being there for main school events. This became a juggling act with my ever-increasing list of appointments and meetings, and the time it took to reflect and think of the next steps for the collective community.

I remember one of the first meetings I went to, someone likened the IES initiative and the forming of a Community of School to building a plane while it was flying, and I have to say that is exactly what it was like.

With no rules or templates, you really are entering into the unknown and you rely on the people around you like MOE advisors, colleagues and research, to drive the process.

We appointed the Across School Teachers very early on, and saw this as a crucial stage in order to get things up and running. I was very conscious of making things happen really quickly, so that our school communities could see the advantages and positives to being part of our Catholic Community.
A lot of the trust work that other Communities were doing was not needed within our group of schools. As a Catholic Community, we already had a common set of values and principles on which each of our schools stood by. Initial decisions and directions were fairly easy to decide, and people's personalities and egos were not causing the issues that I had been hearing about in other Communities.

From the start, it was very important for me to keep the principals and Boards of Trustees as much in the know as possible, so I set up a termly information sheet of directions, information and the steps we were taking as a community. Boards and school communities have a limited understanding of the Community as it stands now. The information sheet is an important document, which allows each school to understand the movement and change that is occurring across the schools.

The setting up of a Community website has also been another way we school communities can see the developments of the community, and allows school Boards of Trustees, teachers and parents, to see what this IES and Community of Learning is all about.

After the Across School Teachers were appointed, we very quickly went out and appointed the Within School Teachers across our schools. This, in some cases, has caused disruption and questions on where these roles fit into the normal school structures around leadership.

One of the core goals of initialising the IES was to foster and create new career opportunities for teachers and principals. Often inside school structures, having openings within school leadership is hard to find, so the 'new' roles *do* provide additional

opportunities for teachers and middle leaders to develop and grow as leaders. Within each school, each new position appointment required negotiation and planning, to allow the new roles to 'fit in' the normal school structure. Job descriptions become ever more important as to what each person in required to do, as crossovers occur and taking on new tasks becomes an issue. In some cases, this caused issues and continues to do so.

Middle leadership buy in is crucial if communities are to effectively run and make traction. We know the school's middle leaders are the' work horses' - they are the ones with direct influence in school timetables, structures and activities, and they need to be involved from the start, if changes which need to be made are going to happen.

Boards of Trustees need to be part of the process from the very start. They need to fully understand the process and what it actually means for them, whether they are a Board of Trustees of a leadership role school or not. When IES first rolled out and Community of Schools' started to be formed, there was the idea that actual money was going to drop from the sky, and this just was not the case. Staffing amounts changed and release time became available. This, however, brought numerous issues around finding relievers and timetabling across schools' departments and teams.

Boards of Trustees need to sign off all official documentation with the Ministry, which includes Expression of Interest, Achievement Challenges and Community Strategic Plans. It is then up to the Board of Trustees to make sure that they are staying informed as possible with the flow of the Community. It is up to the Lead Principal and the collective group of principals to make sure this happens. Communication issues across the schools become a real barrier in ensuring everybody knows what they need to know, at all the different levels of a Community.

The collection of data and documents is also something that our community has had to grapple with. We are using Google Drive and this has worked extremely well as a place to gather and share information, however as the Community has taken off, so has the number of documents and evidence of workstreams, so the organisation and the 'filing' of this has become an area that needs attention. Information flow from top to bottom and back up again has to be seamless, if everyone is to understand, read, and be able to use it when they require it.

So, what has been the impact, one year in, for our schools and their communities? The Ministry have published a personalised pathway document that allows you to track where your Kahui Ako sits, and then track the inroads you are making at the different areas they have identified.

Below I have evaluated where our ACC Kahui Ako sits one year in, and the Community will use this to move forward in 2018.

Teaching collaboratively for the best learning outcome for every child.

SHARING AND IMPROVING TEACHING PRACTICE
We are currently developing in this area. In order to start to 'share' and exchange practice, the trust and relationships need be strong, and this takes time. Even though the ACC Kahui Ako are all Catholic schools and there were relationships already in place prior to the formation of our community, sharing practices and information takes a 'leap of faith', and protocols and understandings need to be entered into openly and freely.

This takes time to develop and build. Our Across School Teachers have observed practice and have developed work plans and goals to improve practice and share learning between our schools. This was done with Within School Teachers setting up Theories of improvements within the individual schools, and then relating these back to six overarching work streams across all schools.

OUR CURRICULUM
Each school is using the New Zealand Curriculum to drive the learning within their schools, and Writing and Mathematics have been identified through our Achievement Challenges as the areas of focus for the first 2 years of forming the community. Within each school, they already have ways of tracking and identifying those children that were working 'below' where they need to be, and they collect and monitor these children in order to show progress and achievement throughout the year and over time. You could say we are 'developing' in this area. For this to progress, we are to gather 'valid' and 'reliable' data based on the real time, collectively, and use this to set realistic goals across the Community. These would then drive the individual school's annual targets. This process has already been tried twice, and is still a work in progress. When the achievement challenges were written, the data that we used was out of date and meant nothing for future collective Kahui Ako goals. The data has to drive the direction and focuses for a Kahui Ako, and for this to happen, it needs to be up to date and reliable.

IMPROVING CAPABILITY
Again we find ourselves in the 'developing' band. We have written and are using our Kahui Ako Strategic Plan. This document is the corner stone of what we want to achieve. We have written it with a 2-year time frame, as we are aware that the community's focuses may change at the end of this time period. The focus of this document is to lift teacher capability and to drive collaborative practices across our schools. We have engaged an expert partner whose job it is to ask challenging questions of the Community and Lead Principal, and to bring the flow of the community back to real evidence and collective understandings. Six workstreams have been lifted through the Theories of Improvements, and these have all had their first round of collective PLD.

From the onset, I was very conscious to make sure each and every teacher across the community had some engagement with the Kahui Ako in some form, whether it be PLD, meeting time, release or surveying. This has not happened as quickly as I had planned, however I have also found that moving too fast leaves people behind and feeling detached from the very essence of what a Community of Schools is trying to achieve - collective improvement of teaching and learning.

Leading for progress and achievement for every child and every teacher.

COLLECTIVE PURPOSE, FOCUS AND RESPONSIBILITY
This is an area that we are 'Establishing'. As a Community of Schools we have achieved a huge amount over the year, however we are still at the initial stages of collective purpose and understandings. We have written a very clear and purposeful Strategic Plan, and now need to make sure all school communities have brought into the collective vision. This will happen over time, and we are making inroads to this collective vision every time we meet and discuss the goals of the ACC Kahui Ako. Future visioning exercises are planned for this year.

LEADING A CULTURE OF TRUST

We again find ourselves at an 'establishing' stage. As a collective group of leaders we are committed to working together and are finding out now just what this means. We have had to compromise, share staffing resources and negotiate targets and goals. This all builds understanding around collective partnership.

At the very heart of our community and at the heart of each Catholic school are the Gospel values. They might look a little different through the different schools charism and traditions, however we are all Catholic, and with this comes a common understanding on what trust and partnership needs to look like, if we are going to create a true culture of trust.

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

We are currently 'embedding' leadership development across the community. We have appointed all Across School Teachers on 2-year contracts, and each school has appointed the correct number of Within School Teachers. The principals appointed the Within School Teacher to carry out the Theory of Improvement that they felt was going to drive student achievement within their own school context. We purposefully left this open for each school to drive, so the principals had the ability to pinpoint leadership, and activate the skills within these people. The Across School Teachers were appointed based on their leadership capabilities, and have worked extremely well together within this first year. Not having a template or clear pathway to go by, at times has caused confusion and anxiety, however their personal drive and leadership capabilities have seen them action many positives for the community at different levels.

Building up middle leadership and what this looks like within our community is our next step, and also bringing on future leadership as the 2-year contracts run out. Transition plans will need to start to happen within the community shortly.

LEADING EVIDENCE BASED PRACTICE

We are 'developing' in this area. We have identified very quickly that moderation and setting collective targets based on data, was an aspect that needed a huge amount of work. Having a shared understanding about curriculum levels, learning progressions and assessment tools, is something that we did not quite realise was going to be so different across our schools. Secondary and primary schools work and learn in different worlds, and the bringing together of these institutes was no easy task. How one school reaches an OTJ is completely different to how another school does, and changing practices and pedagogies takes time. Having experts lead the change and ensuring their understanding and knowledge is researched based is vital if we are going to come close to reaching the Achievement Challenges set a year ago. Building shared capabilities with all these things in mind is certain, the goal, however, we now know is a journey through time, rather than a quick destination.

Evidence guiding our practice and actions.

STUDENT PROGRESS AND ACHIEVEMENT
We are 'developing' in this area. When we first wrote the Achievement Challenges we had to use previous years' data, and we soon realised that this was going to be of no use at all. We needed up to date real time data if we were going to be able to track and share the shifts we hoped to make across our schools.
Schools used National Standards data initially, however this soon showed the massive disparities in teacher judgement across our schools. Moderation and curriculum understanding was going to

have to be a key area of development for the ACC Kahui Ako. We created a role for a Across School Teachers based on assessment data, as we needed someone to solely be in charge of this area. Schools needed to be able to manipulate and filter data quickly in order to highlight target children, which they would then work to shift and would ultimately progress the Achievement Challenges.

Tracking systems, developing shift information and reporting on this data, are all areas that we will continue to develop moving forward. Highlighting good practice in these areas has started to take place, and learning from each other's 'ako' is starting to happen between schools.

SHARED AND CONSISTENT APPROACH TO COLLECTING AND USING EVIDENCE

We are 'developing' a shared approach to aggregating data across the community, as I have mentioned.

We have had two initial meetings across the gap of Year 6 and 7, and bringing together primary and secondary certainly showed the massive range of understanding and awareness of what each instution does, in order to assess a child's progression and attainment. We are employing methods of moderation across our Kāhui Ako to build trust in the evidence and data we collect, to make robust decisions about next steps for students. We are currently using data from Years 4-10 in order to help 'clean' up the data process and target setting.

DATA MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

We are 'developing' this area and are currently working with an outside provider that can work between our range of SMS systems and provide 'real time' data as it is inserted into the schools' individual systems. We need to be able to set meaningful targets across the community in order to be able to make the gains within our schools.

Our first approach to bring data together failed, due to a difference in understanding of what we needed to gather, so we have tried to clean this data up by using excel. This is still being populated, but when completed, will give us more valid data in order to monitor and show progression.

Pathways developing and connecting along the whole educational journey for every child.

INTEGRATING THE LEARNING PATHWAY

We are very much at the 'establishing' stage here. As we are getting used to each other at Principal level and working across the different levels of management structures and systems, our understanding around each school is developing. We have all helped in the writing of the Strategic Plan, and have had this document signed off by our Boards of Trustees, however making this document come to life is the next step. Only by doing this will we see the true advantages of our ACC Kahui Ako.

SUPPORTING TRANSITIONS

Again we are very much at the 'establishing' stage. We understand and have pinpointed transition stages in our strategic document, however have only had two sessions around this. What we are finding is that every door you open, you realise that you needed to have opened ten before that, to make sense and gain clarity to what you are seeing.

We have highlighted Year 6 and 7 as a key transition point, and understand that by looking at transition data, protocols around student information, and collecting whanau stories, we will be able to build up these areas of information to hand over. The goal is, of course, to make this seamless so that the child and teacher feels supported and informed, time is not wasted, and the child feels welcome and valued in their new environment. At primary school we realise we need to get them ready for Year 7, so aspects like teaching styles, testing protocols and self-management, are all areas that we need to collectively get right to grow this area. I have not yet entertained pre-school or tertiary transition points, however these are in our Strategic Plan.

CAREER PATHWAYS

'Establishing' at present. Our secondary schools gather information on leavers and in the future will be where we start, so that we can gather a picture of school leavers in our community.

Partnering with families, employers, Iwi and community.

STRONG COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND LOCAL RELATIONSHIPS

At present this is 'developing' across the ACC Kahui Ako. Each school carries out community and whanau engagement, and the goal now is to collect up our good practice and learn from each other. We know that what works in one school community might not work in another, however we can now start to inform and share what the collective group of schools is doing, in order to lift student achievement.

The first place to start is to continue to build up each community's understanding on what Kahui Ako is, the theory behind them, and what they hope to achieve. From here we can then collectively and strategically share with them the steps and milestones we are making. Parents and communities will then the see how their school fits into this bigger picture.

WORKING WITH EMPLOYERS Nil action

IWI PARTNERSHIPS Nil action

Building a thriving Community of Learning | Kāhui Ako.

SHARING RESOURCES

At this stage we are 'developing', but only in the last few months. Resources were shared between two schools in order to develop a leadership role, however other resources are now being shared, like moderation documents, templates and teacher expertise.

Tracking systems are being shared within primary schools and secondary schools, as is teaching practice in writing and mathematics.

JOINT PLANNING AND IMPROVEMENT

We are 'establishing' this, as in order to become fully functioning, we need to be able to rely on the data we are using.

All schools clearly understand the need for their annual targets to be dropped out of Kahui Ako data. We understand that by a real focus on our own targeted children, this will collectively lift ACC Kahui AKo targets.

DELIVERING TOGETHER

We have a very good system of meeting times, however we now need to bring on the next group of leaders - our APs/DPs and department heads etc. Because of this I see the community as 'developing' in this area. Meeting times are planned well in advance and all parties understand what is expected of them at these meetings. Often it is about information sharing, however at times decisions need to be made, and having face time allows this to happen. Online works as well, and all schools engage when they need to.

I am currently working with a change manager who will support me role in developing this area of the ACC kahui Ako. We need to have a clear idea of who and what needs to be known and when we make information sharing more efficient and easy for principals, to decipher what they actually need to read and action.

CAPABILITY TO DELIVER CHANGE

I would currently see us as 'developing' in this area. We all understand the need to change, however at times I find it hard to make the shift from what is best for my school to what is best for the Acc Kahui Ako. We all knew this was going to be the biggest barrier to cross and all understand that this takes time. For some the shift is easier than others, as we all run reasonably effective schools, so the need to change is not as easy to see as in schools that might not be as effective. Change for improvement is more important rather than just change. There is no point changing something that works well and has proven to deliver the required outputs, so this is an aspect that each school needs to unpack and then bring to the table to have the discussion. Each school sets clear 'next steps' at the end of each year, as required by their school's Annual Plan. The goal is to bring these together and make the next steps for each school to be based on ACC Kahui Ako's next steps. In doing this we will start to see systemic change. Change for improvement.

Below is a review session that we had at the end of 2017 as a collective group of leaders in the ACC Kahui Ako.

An expert partner synthesised the feedback into the following.

Synthesis from the review meeting held at the end of 2017 one year in.

Meeting of the Central Catholic Community of Learning (Kāhui Ako) Principals and Across School Teachers on 08 November 2017

Synthesis of Discussion themes

Number present: 22 participants, including representatives from 11 Kāhui Ako schools.

1. What are the advantages of the Community of Learning so far?

There were 46 individual comments collated in response to this question. There were six main themes (outlined in order of frequency):

· There has been increased interaction between schools, early stages of collaboration, opening the door for conversations across the sectors, relationship building between schools, breaking down of silos (9 responses)

· Opportunity to share practice and ideas, data, be innovative, be at the forefront of educational reform (8 responses)

· Change in teaching practices including, moderation, reflection, tailored learning focus, Kāhui Ako staff meetings, common PLD opportunities (7 responses).

· Opportunity to grow leadership, WST and AST professional development, collegiality at a leadership level (5 responses)

· Opportunity to work on student transitions (4 responses)

· Opportunity to increase resourcing for schools (3)

Summary - A significant number of advantages were outlined, many of which spoke of the early opportunities the Kāhui Ako has offered to this collective of schools.

2. What are the challenges to date?

There were 52 individual comments collated in response to this question. There were six main themes (outlined in order of frequency):

· PLD - setting up of, timetabling of, obtaining staff buy in, role of PLD providers (8 responses)

· Role of AST and WST teachers, remuneration of, clarity of roles (as well as relationship with the role of DPs) (6 responses)

· Establishing the Kāhui Ako - time it has taken to develop collective change, attempt to set collective goals (6 responses)

· Inflexible school systems - timetabling, release, etc. (5 responses)

· Divide between primary and secondary (4 responses)

· Communication - developing a shared understanding (4 responses)

Summary - Many of the challenges described could be expected as the Kāhui Ako enters the end of its first full year of operation. They outline a number of improvements that could be adopted, especially around the provision of PLD

3. What is the feeling of staff around the ACC Kāhui Ako?

There were 43 individual comments collated in response to this question. There were three main themes (outlined in order of frequency):

· Positive, optimistic, this Kāhui Ako has potential (13 responses)

· Need for increased clarity, improved communication, only know a little (8 responses), including responses, mixed, uncertain, too soon to say, just the same as in the past (further 4 responses).

· Allocation of funding, PLD resources, release time, questions about the funding (5 responses) as well as a further 3 responses suggesting the development of some jealousies.

Summary - while the greatest number of responses were positive, there is also significant need for development as the Kāhui Ako moves into its second year.

4. How much engagement are we having with other schools?

There were 22 individual comments collated in response to this question. There were three main themes (outlined in order of frequency):

· Highly varied, from none for some staff, to significant for other staff (9 responses)

· Leadership level has had extensive engagement (5 responses)

· WSTs and ASTs working together (5 responses)

Summary - there appears to have been significant opportunities for school leaders, ASTs and WSTs to engage across schools, but yet to occur for many teaching staff

5. Is this (the Kāhui Ako) meeting your expectations– each leader or as a whole school?

There were 42 individual comments collated in response to this question. This question had the greatest diversity of responses. However, there were four themes (outlined in order of frequency):

· A greater need for clarity of roles, particularly ASTs and WSTs, though sometimes including the principal's role (7 responses)

· Need for increased principal (and Board of Trustees) leadership (5 responses)

· Improved communication (3 responses), linked to the need to develop a shared belief system (2 responses)

· School systems need to change, including mention of moderation processes and collaboration (3 responses), as well as increased integration between the Kāhui Ako and schools (2 responses)

Summary - from these responses it appears that the Kāhui Ako is in the early stages of meeting the respondents' expectations.

So, the next steps for our Community will be around the following: -

- Continue to build awareness of the Kāhui Ako across all teachers and Board of Trustee members, particularly through improved communication processes, and widening the work of the Across School Teachers and Within School Teachers to include all teachers.
- Review the Across School Teacher and Within School Teacher roles and job descriptions, providing them with greater clarity.
- Involve the principals in the work of the Kāhui Ako, so as to build a collective responsibility and understanding of the work of the Kāhui Ako.
- Continue to break down the silos that exist between schools by continuing the effective projects such as the transitions work, and the various PLD opportunities.

Conclusions

We have some fantastic teachers and leaders in New Zealand and giving them an opportunity to shine and teach others, is I believe, the answer to lifting student achievement for those children that need acceleration or for those teachers that need support in areas of the practice.

The issue behind a Kahui Ako is the silos in which we have always worked. It takes time and patience to break down our walls and a huge amount of understanding to allow great things to happen across all our schools and communities. As leaders of schools, we need to learn that others do things differently and often better. Rather than each of us doing the same thing, year after year, here is another opportunity where we can work more efficiently and effectively for a better outcome.

I think we have a huge gap between primary and secondary and this will take time and hard work to understand each other's ways.

One year and I still believe in theory that a Kahui Ako is the future for teaching and learning. Bringing schools together to share and learn from each other has to be the way if we are going to keep up with our learners we see each day at whatever the age.

References

- IES Cabinet paper 21st January
- New Zealand School Trustees Association
- New research on Communities of Learning NZCER
- Community of Learning PPTA
- Communities of Learners: What are the Implications for Leadership Development? University of Auckland
- Education Review Office