

**Structures that support Synergies in Kahui Ako Community of Learning**

Term 2, 2017

**Acknowledgements**

The opportunity to take time to reflect, refresh and recharge through a Sabbatical is a privilege and one I am incredibly grateful for. It is only when you step back from the role, that you truly realise how consuming, draining and relentless it is. I'd like to thank the following for this moment in time:

- MOE/ Teach NZ for valuing the importance of a Sabbatical,
- Frimley Board of Trustees for supporting this application,
- Paul Jamieson (Acting Principal) for leading the school in my absence,
- Our Learning community leaders for stepping up to support Paul and finally
- Kahui Ako leaders across NZ who were gracious with their time, truly Kahui Collaborative in how they readily shared their journey (warts and all) and the other members of our Sector who offered advice or leads

**Sabbatical Proposal**

To undertake professional reading and review of a range of existing Kahui Ako to identify:

- Innovative approaches taken by Kahui Ako to address achievement challenges for priority learners (in particular, those that would be difficult to implement in as a single school), and
- Foundational structures or organisational scaffolds that have helped the developing Kahui Ako to work constructively together.

**Sabbatical project overview- the what and why**

Frimley School is part of a developing Kahui Ako. We started talking in late 2015 and finally had our expression of interest endorsed in the last tranche of 2016 (December).

Our Kahui Ako comprises of 7 Primary schools, 1 Intermediate and 1 Secondary School. We are all located on the West Side of Hastings and are geographically close. Our schools range in size but are all lower decile. The 'pipeline' is satisfactory between primary and intermediate but weak from there to secondary, with only our neighbourhood Girls College in our Kahui Ako.

Becoming part of Kahui Ako seems to have been inevitable and the schools that comprise our Kahui Ako<sup>1</sup> are geographically sensible, representing 'West Hastings'. Some of the schools have worked together in prior clustering projects, notably EHSAS<sup>2</sup> and ICT-PLD<sup>3</sup>, alongside a less formal and more recent literacy moderation cluster. All schools are part of the same RTL<sup>4</sup> cluster (Cluster 23). These prior relationships along with the fact that some of the school leaders have worked or

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<sup>1</sup> Community of Learning and Kahui Ako are used interchangeably.

<sup>2</sup> Extending High Standards Across Schools- Cluster project

<sup>3</sup> Information Communication Technology Professional learning and Development- Cluster project

<sup>4</sup> Resource Teacher of Learning and behaviour Cluster.

taught in member schools, should give us a great advantage in the continued development of our Kahui Ako.

Up till now (May 2017) I have informally facilitated our Kahui Ako and this is probably a contributing factor as to our slow and deliberate gestation. Throughout our journey I've wanted to be clear about the benefits or synergies we should aim to achieve and also to know what structures or scaffolds we should be building to give ourselves a better chance of success. I've wanted to be certain that the time and effort we put in as leaders will really make a difference and in turn allow or make possible something that we couldn't achieve from working as we have in the past.

Many of my informal interactions with Kahui Ako Lead Principals and much of the 'talk in the traps' is about building a plane as it flies. This is, in my view, an incredibly inadequate way to roll out such a well resourced policy. We should be able to do better than this and there should be systems and learnings Kahui Akolected to save another few hundred Kahui Ako redeveloping the wheel!

The IES<sup>5</sup> flagship policy was released nearly three years ago and we seem to be only now getting any sort of reasonable uptake. Most Kahui Ako's are fledglings and have still to access the core resourcing associated with this policy. Almost all Kahui Ako leaders felt that the Kahui Ako they led was only in its infancy.

While away on Sabbatical (May/ June 2017), the suspicion and confusion continued to surface around the purpose and function of Kahui Ako and where it sits with many of the more revolutionary changes associated with the latest Education Amendment Act and the changes to Learning Support. The surveys of Principals, by NZEI, show that Kahui Ako's are not yet part of the accepted landscape and the clarifications received by NZPF (of the function of Kahui Akos) from the Secretary of Education are still inadequate.

### **An overview of Kahui Ako- policy and practice**

A Community of Learning | Kāhui Ako is a group of education and training providers working together to help learners achieve their full potential. These include early childhood education services, schools, kura and post-secondary.

Each Community of Learning | Kāhui Ako sets shared goals, or achievement challenges based on the particular needs of its learners (MOE website 28th April 2017)

The Ministry of Education reiterates how research shows that quality teaching has the biggest influence on whether learners succeed and that 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)

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<sup>5</sup> Investing in Educational Success

- helping educators and training providers work together so it's easier for learners to move through the education system.

The significant investment through IES (\$359 Million over 4 years from 2014) had the aim of strengthening teaching practice and educational leadership to raise achievement of those already doing well and young people for whom the system consistently struggles to support (14 Aide-memo: The achievement challenge).

The official statement from the Secretary of Education released in June 2017 and summarised in the NZPF Flyer (15) had the purpose of Kahui Ako's as:

1. Kahui Ako create a system based on Kahui Collaboration across the education pathway to connect students with learning, language, culture and identity
2. Kahui Ako relentlessly focus on progress and providing quality teaching and leadership
3. The Kahui Ako vision is to create a network of professionals deeply invested in the needs of students and equipped with information and support to meet those needs.

NZPF continues to ask for clarification as many aspects of the Education (update) Amendment Act (2017) and statements from the Minister appear to indicate a range of further functions which could be devolved to Kahui Ako. Until there is clarity and transparency, there will continue to be distrust, unnecessary speculation and confusion.

### The Research

I began by reviewing the many papers and background readings related to IES/ Kahui Ako/ COL available on the Education Ministry website. As many critics have noted it is extremely difficult to find any research from within NZ or indeed overseas that has informed how we are developing Kahui Ako in NZ.

The Kahui Ako website is now populated with a wide range of material and suggested scaffolds. The introduction of the 'HoneyComb' document or rubric of Kahui Ako development at the 2017 National Forum (Auckland) has finally given some structure to the development process.

Of particular interest to me were the Education Council leadership 'Think Pieces' which highlighted not only the leadership dilemmas involved with Kahui Ako policy but the challenge of moving beyond just another tweak of the system to something that will address the achievement concerns.

Since the release and introduction of this Policy (IES), useful related research is slowly coming on stream. Cathy Wylie (NZCER), ERO and John Hattie (Visible Learning) have all released material that is likely to help inform the work of Kahui Ako.

NZEI and NZPF continue to survey their membership about Kahui Ako's and the perceptions, experiences and impact this is having on schools, students and more importantly learning.

### **Gathering the data**

Initially I took time to read the 'approved' Achievement Challenges of all Kahui Ako. This gave me a great overview of where things were at nationally and made it easy to see how expectations and understandings had developed as the policy was rolled out.

I then made email contact with all Kahui Ako leaders from Kahui Ako's who had their Achievement Challenges approved between 28th July 2015- 26th October 2016 (26 Kahui Ako's in total). Finally, I made contact with almost all Kahui Ako leaders within our immediate area.

A large number of Kahui Ako Leaders emailed me feedback to my two key questions and many made themselves available for follow up phone/ skype/ facetime contact. I'd like to thank these leaders (20 in total) for their additional time and the 'colour' these conversations added to my understanding of their Kahui Ako. Many leaders shared Kahui Ako websites or specific documents, developing wisdom and mistakes they had made thus far.

I made contact with our Regional Director (MOE) and our Lead Adviser Community of Learning to discuss regional developments. I'd like to acknowledge the continued support from Roy Sye (Regional Director) and Barbara Bristow (Lead Advisor Communities of Learning) both for our own Kahui Ako and for their interest in this work.

### **The Findings**

*My first question asked Leaders to describe Innovative approaches taken by their Kahui Ako to address achievement challenges for priority learners (in particular, those that would be difficult to implement in as a single school).*

It would be fair to say that most Leaders found this difficult to answer. Many felt that it was still early days and almost all said they were unable to yet show impact on priority learners. This is what I had suspected, so in subsequent discussions I looked for variations, innovations and practices that I felt might help inform discussions our Kahui Ako might have as we develop our theory for improvement.

### **Strategies or activities identified**

- Strengthening of the transition to school and between schools within the Kahui Ako through deliberate discussion around improved and consistent practices, sharing of assessment information and general seamlessness. A number of Kahui Ako had worked to increased understandings about what teaching looked like across the educational pathway. One Kahui Ako had developed a school start profile with ECE which would be used by all primary schools
- There was variability in the engagement with ECE<sup>6</sup>, but in most instances it had started with the local Kindergarten Association. A few Associations have decided to fund their own 'cross-centre' teacher who works alongside the Kahui Ako and other 'cross- school leaders' on their Achievement Challenges. This is seen very positively and has resulted in some PLD opportunities for Year 1 and 2 Teachers facilitated by ECE Teachers.

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<sup>6</sup> ECE- Early Childhood Education. Unless specified further refers to all centres offering ECE.

- Some Kahui Ako have rationalised their SMS<sup>7</sup> systems so they that can more easily ‘talk to each other’ and transfer consistent data to intermediate/secondary school. These Kahui Ako had also reached agreement on what data they would Kahui Akolect ( NS<sup>8</sup> or PaCT<sup>9</sup> for instance) and had cut back on or eliminated the transition testing at year 7 and 9.
- One Kahui Ako had their teachers recording their ‘Teaching Inquiries’ using their Kahui Akolective modified SMS so that member teachers could search others inquiries to inform their own
- A significant number of Kahui Ako had developed and were able to articulate a clear theory for improvement (bridging in some cases ECE- High School). These Kahui Ako talked positively of the benefits of a student’s whole pathway of professionals working together
- Most Kahui Ako talked about the benefits of utilising staff expertise across schools (via across school leaders) and the sharing of teacher practice in formal (‘Jumbo Days’) and more informal (workshop) formats.
- Despite concerns from NZPF and NZEI, a number of Kahui Ako were beginning to use the PaCT tool- to develop a shared language of assessment and to work on increased consistency of OTJ<sup>10</sup>s. Some other Kahui Ako leaders reported that this might be a next step but that they were now working on developing agreement on how OTJ’s would be made (using one matrix or the learning progressions)
- One Kahui Ako had a project working in conjunction with MOE Speech-Language therapists around oral language developments/ interventions. They were using SLT expertise to drive systematic change of practice by working with teachers and parents together.
- A Kahui Ako had appointed an additional cross school leader to look at the needs of learners who are ORS/ HLN and what programmes might support their progress
- The formation of Cross School SENCO<sup>11</sup> networks, to share expertise and effective systems
- Cross school Whanau and Pasifika Hui- utilising strengths and maximising participation particularly for whanau with learners in more than one setting
- One Kahui Ako with Science as an Achievement Challenge received funding for eight Teachers through the Royal Society scholarship scheme. Each of these teachers had two terms release to work in a science industry plus follow up facilitation and support in developing in-school science plans.
- One Kahui Ako talked about the perceived benefits from developing local Kahui Ako<sup>12</sup> curriculum (particularly in their Achievement Challenge foci-science)

## **Structures**

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<sup>7</sup> SMS- School Management System

<sup>8</sup> NS- National Standards.

<sup>9</sup> PaCT- Progress and Consistency Tool

<sup>10</sup> OTJ- Overall Teacher Judgment.

<sup>11</sup> SENCO- Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator.

<sup>12</sup>

*My second question looked at foundational structures or organisational scaffolds that have helped the developing Kahui Ako to work constructively together.*

There is such variation between Kahui Ako (size, geographic spread, internal capability and of course length of time operating) that the range of ideas was immense. I have tried to capture both the most common strategies and also those that challenged my thinking for the stage our Kahui Ako was at.

Structures and strategies include:

- One Kahui Ako had developed a decision making matrix, which clarified the delegations to the Lead Principal, Principals management group, Stewardship group etc. This allowed the Kahui Ako Lead to make decisions without over burdening Principals with meetings
- Almost all Kahui Ako leaders emphasised the benefits of the support/ advice provided by their Expert partner. A number described the benefits from having an Expert Partner who works with a number of Kahui Ako or as part of a consortium who did. Kahui Ako leaders value the cross pollination of ideas and opportunities this creates for sector learning.
- The development of a shared Kahui Ako calendar of events and website/ google site which curates Kahui Ako knowledge, systems and available resources/readings.
- MOA<sup>13</sup>/ Privacy protocol. While MOE documentation provides a model for this, a number of Leads talked about the importance of referring to this regularly in the early stages as part of the relational trust building process
- The Development of a shared Theory of Improvement, leading to a Kahui Ako action plan. Many have found the 'honeycomb' (2017) useful in seeing where they are heading
- Clear definition of accountabilities and roles for in-school and cross school teachers. Some early Kahui Ako have reviewed the initial job descriptions to better reflect the work they were actually doing. Some Kahui Ako aligned Teacher leaders to Achievement challenges (eg Literacy) while others were thinking of them being strategy experts (eg Cultural competence, Modern learning Pedagogy). In most cases, across school teachers were accountable to the Lead Principal and In-school teachers accountable to the across school teachers.
- Forming a small Stewardship group which met termly and fulfilled the 'Governance function', thus freeing principals to work at a management level and removing the 'ownership' from just the Lead school Principals Board of Trustees. In one case, the group comprised of a Primary, Intermediate (or contributing and Full Primary) and Secondary school trustee Rep and the Lead Principal. The identification of these people followed standard BOT election processes except:
  - BOT's had to nominate and second,
  - Only BOT members from Kahui Ako schools could vote.
- I thought the production of a monthly newsletter by the Kahui Ako, which principals included in BOT reports was a good way to keep BOT informed of developments without endless meetings. In one case the Lead Principal wrote

the introduction but each across school leader then provided an update on their work stream and activities.

- Kahui Ako agreement to keep one day a week after school free for Kahui Ako PLD/ meetings etc.
- Once the Achievement Challenge was approved and the resourcing appointments made, reduce the meeting schedule for Principals. In one case a half day towards the beginning of each term (planning and set up) and a full day towards the end (evaluation and review) was found to be enough.
- At least one Kahui Ako had included the RTLB Manager in the management meetings and they in turn had identified a RTLB who would function as a cross school teacher and attend their meetings.

### **Other advice/ interesting ideas**

- A number of Kahui Ako leaders talked of the importance of the cross school leaders and the value in Principals and the Lead stepping back and letting these Teacher leaders develop and exercise their leadership skills further.
- There was a range of ways in which the release time for within school leaders was allocated. Some allocated it regularly, others as tasks demanded and a few with a combination of the two.
- A number of Kahui Ako had pooled the Establishment/ Maintenance grants, Travel allowances and even Inquiry time handled by a Kahui Ako account. Any underspend was then utilised to further other aims or in a few cases subsidise travel for distant schools
- One Kahui Ako had developed a Memorandum of Understanding with their Iwi, which outlined what each of them would contribute to the desired outcomes
- Some Kahui Ako had already begun discussion about Cohort entry and what that might look like/ what it's impact might be.
- One Kahui Ako had looked at and made changes to individual schools enrolment zones to enable all schools to have sufficient students to generate an in-school leader.
- A number of Kahui Ako had considered the total in-school leader allocation as a Cluster pool and used a 'blind' analysis of achievement data to determine the actual allocation based on need rather than size. Some had distributed positions so that all schools had at least one in-school leader and others had an in-school teacher supporting a neighbouring school that didn't have an allocated position based on roll.
- Moving from Cross school leaders focussed on Achievement Challenge (eg NS areas) to focussed on the strategies for change (in this Kahui Ako it was future focussed pedagogy). Individual schools then used the Achievement Challenges as the contexts.
- A number of Kahui Ako focussed their efforts on only one of their Achievement Challenges, at least initially as they developed their ways of working.
- One Kahui Ako had limited their Achievement Challenges and work-streams to years 0-10 so that the learning progressions would support their aims and

that the same measures could be used to evaluate progress and achievement.

## **Conclusion**

The opportunity to have a sabbatical and explore what is happening in other Kahui Ako has been well timed. I have identified a number of ideas which I hope to share with our Kahui Ako to stimulate thinking as we continue on our development journey.

While I acknowledge the uncertainty at the moment about where Kahui Ako might head, I am personally positive that we might see:

1. A much needed shift in the system from the Tomorrow Schools “choice or competitive model’ to one that is more Kahui Collaborative
2. While retaining the school based governance model, a system that will ensure more synergy, greater regional decision making and an overall strengthening of the schooling network.
3. Continued improvement and enhancement the leadership and career structure of teachers and leaders
4. Greater systematic inquiry and the sharing of effective practice (through Kahui Ako Spirals of Inquiry, increased ‘Inquiry Time’ and the Teacher Innovation Fund.

## **Readings that have contributed to my Sabbatical (that are not found on the MOE website)**

### Education Gazette

**Growing momentum around Communities of learning-** Education Gazette 10 April 2017

**A great Learning Curve** Education Gazette 27th March 2017

**A common purpose: Piritahi Kahui Ako.** Education Gazette 30 Jun 2017

### Other

**Communities of learning: The Emergent Stage.** Cathy Wylie, NZCER 2016

**To research the effectiveness of the College’s current PLD and how it has aligned with programmes that operate in the Mid-Bays Community of Learning.** Principal Sabbatical report Gary Hunt. Education Leaders.

**Leveraging Collaboration within your Community of Learning for best results** Carolyn English. CORE education.

**What is the addition Value of working as a Kahui Ako?** Carolyn English, School News term 1, 2017

**The Kindergarten Offer-** NZ Kindergarten Inc, 2016

**Hattie and Bishop-** Kahui Collaborative Impact: Research and Practice event, April 2017.

### Education Review Office

**Collaboration to improve learner outcomes.** ERO 2016

**Communities of Learning in Action** ERO 2016



**Communities of Learning, working towards Kahui Collaborative practice, ERO  
2016.**

Education Council: NZ

**Leadership for Communities of Learning- 5 Think pieces.**