

Primary Principal's Sabbatical Report

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Title and Focus of the Sabbatical

Engaging with Maori and Pasifika whanau

Find successful ways to engage with Māori and Pasifika communities, in the belief that successful engagement and consultation with families will lead to better outcomes, and hopefully attendance, for Māori and Pasifika students. Visit similar schools. Explore the impact of attendance on learning and behaviour and study successful initiatives that have been trialed in NZ schools, such as RAAYS programme (Raising Achievement Across the Youth Sector).

Acknowledgements

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- Randwick School Board of Trustees for supporting my sabbatical application and allowing me to take time to reflect, refresh and research.
- Jo Sawyer who was Acting Principal during my leave and did a great job of leading the school in my absence.
- The greater leadership team and staff at Randwick School. Everyone took on extra responsibilities and worked collaboratively to ensure that the school continued to thrive and ensure that the focus was on student learning and welfare. I'd also like to thank Wendy Schollum (our Office Manager) who took on extra responsibilities in my absence.
- The Principals who completed my survey and provided me with further information about how their schools build on engagement with Maori and Pasifika whanau and how they address attendance issues.
- The Principals that I met with to discuss how they engage with Maori and Pasifika whanau and the strategies and programmes that they utilize to combat poor attendance. I would particularly like to acknowledge the principals and staff of Corinna School, Windley School, Avalon Intermediate and Naenae College who provided me with a great deal of information about the work undertaken at their schools.
- Special thanks to Michele Whiting from Corinna School who took the time to explain the programme and its impact with me and shared documentation relevant to the RAAYS programme.
- Principals who have submitted previous sabbatical reports. I would particularly like to thank Neil Worboys whose sabbatical report was particularly useful in helping to identify ways that cultural responsiveness enhances Maori student achievement.
- Kim Barndon from Attendance Services.
- The parents / caregivers and students who completed surveys providing me with very useful information about why attendance is an issue for their whanau.

About the Author and School

I am the Principal of Randwick School and have held this position since January 2013. I have also held Deputy Principal positions in three New Zealand schools and one school in London. Randwick School is a decile 3 multicultural school in Lower Hutt. It is a school with high transience and numerous social factors that impact on student's learning and well-being.

Purpose

Find successful ways to engage with Māori and Pasifika communities, in the belief that successful engagement and consultation with families will lead to better outcomes, and hopefully attendance, for Māori and Pasifika students. Visit similar schools. Explore the impact of attendance on learning and behaviour and study successful initiatives that have been trialed in NZ schools, such as RAAYS programme (Raising Achievement Across the Youth Sector).

Background and Rationale

Randwick School is a small school with a very transient roll. Our 2017 attendance rate was 91% and we have a number of families with ongoing low attendance patterns. Over 50% of our students are Maori and 18% are Pasifika. A number of our families face social challenges such as poverty, unemployment, housing shortages, incarceration and displacement. Our data showed us that on average students whose attendance was less than 90% achieved 20% below students with good attendance. As a school we wanted to explore how we can improve attendance and work positively with whanau to develop positive partnerships that foster engagement and connectivity with the school.

Activities Undertaken / Methodology

An online survey was sent out to Principals and the following questions were asked:

1. % of Maori students in your school?
2. % of Pasifika students in your school?
3. What was the overall attendance rate for your school in 2017?
4. Is poor attendance an issue at your school?
5. If you analyse poor attendance what does your data show you?
6. What initiatives have you put in place that have made a positive impact on attendance?
7. What initiatives have you put in place that have had a positive impact on Maori engagement and achievement?
8. What initiatives have you put in place that have had a positive impact on Pasifika engagement and achievement?

I visited and contacted a number of schools with high Maori and Pasifika populations and talked to Principals and staff about the issues they faced in raising Maori and Pasifika achievement, how they engage successfully with whanau and what initiatives and or programmes they have put in place to improve attendance. We also discussed in great detail the impact of social factors affecting many of these families and how many of these factors are out of our control.

I surveyed parents and caregivers of students whose attendance was of concern about the reasons for their poor attendance and spoke with selected students to find their perspective on why they do not attend school regularly.

I carried out research of a range of publications including Attendance Matters, Education Counts reports and Ka Hikitia.

I also met with Kim Barndon from Attendance Services to discuss their processes and discussed ideas and initiatives that she believed made a positive impact on improving attendance.

Findings

Case Study 1 – Corinna School RAAYS programme – (Raising Achievement Across the Youth Sector) is an initiative to work together with schools in the Porirua East community as well as a number of agencies including the police, Social Workers in Schools and Public Health Nurses. The aim is for all agencies to work with at risk families to raise achievement with an emphasis on improving attendance. SWiS and the health nurse are requested by the school to work with children and families who have health issues preventing them from attending school regularly. Schools work closely together and transfer data and information between schools, including when students transfer from one school to another in the cluster.

- At Corinna School every 5 weeks the teacher prints out the attendance by week and then teachers discuss as a whanau and track on a google doc and then follow up at leadership meeting before referring.
- Teachers phone parents first as they have the best relationship.
- Students are marked T for truant if the school can't get hold of parents as it's their responsibility to let the school know if the child will be absent from school.
- The school does their best to work with the family before following the RAAYS process.
- Data has shown an improvement in attendance for many families but there are still a core group of families that do not engage. Michele feels that there are a lot of positives to the programme but it requires constant monitoring and implementation and takes a lot of hard work.

RAAYS Guidelines for all schools in the cluster.:

The aim of these guidelines is to establish consistency across the Porirua East Schools for the implementation of the RAAYS process.

The following systems and procedures need to be put in place in each school.

1. Information on attendance expectations and the RAAYS process are provided to families on enrolment.
2. Information on attendance procedures and expectations need to be communicated to the school community regularly (eg. Newsletters)
3. Early identification of all absent pupils on a daily basis
4. All unexplained absences will be followed up with a phone call or txt.
5. Absences that remain unexplained are marked as Truant (see Appendix I for absence rates and what is a justified absence)
6. Students at risk are monitored daily and appropriate follow up actions taken.
7. The RAAYS process will start when the absence rate reaches 15%. Some individual cases may be monitored depending on the circumstances, e.g. a student who has had a long stay in hospital. Refer to support given such as the PHN or SWIS.
8. Parents will be contacted by class teachers or the SENCO (as appropriate) when concerning patterns emerge at or before RAAYS 1, to raise awareness of the impact on achievement and social relationships.
9. Meeting with the Principal or Deputy Principal follows at RAAYS 1 or RAAYS 2 after the class teachers' initial contact, to explore possible supports within the school, SWIS and/or Health Nurse. The names and addresses of students who receive a RAAYS Letter 2 must be sent to all the agencies, particularly the Police (Andy,). A referral to the AA will be made at the same time as the RAAYS 2 letter. This is to ensure the family do make contact with the school.
10. At any stage, the school may instigate its own contacts between RAAYS 1, RAAYS 2 and the AA referral. The school will ask for a medical certificate if a child is away for 3 days or more once they are at RAAYS 2.

11. If the early process is unsuccessful, RAAYS 3 is delivered by the Police. The Police will stress the importance of another meeting with the school. This meeting should be attended by the AA and others where appropriate e.g. SWIS. This meeting should still be focussed on finding positive solutions but it should also explain the serious consequences of RAAYS 4 and 5 that will follow if the issue is not resolved. Principals need to monitor the attendance carefully and have the AA do an interim visit if necessary to remind them of RAAYS 4 consequences.
12. If there is no improvement within 5 weeks of issuing RAAYS 3 and the interim AA visit activate RAAYS 4. Include the grounds for referral (see Appendix ii) for the FGC and ensure all agencies (or appropriate representatives, whanau members or other support people) have been listed with their street addresses and contacts.
13. RAAYS 5 follows if the conditions set by the FGC are not met.
14. The number of RAAYS letters need to be reported to the B.O.T. each term.

Case Study 2 – Naenae College- Te Whanau Tahī

Te Whanau Tahī is the name of the College Marae and the Kapa Haka group and the name of the programme aimed to raise the achievement levels of Maori and Pasifika students. It draws on the work of the Te Kotahitanga project as well as the school's involvement in the He Kakano and Ako Panuku contracts. It also builds on aspects of the PB4L programme and the school's restorative practice approach.

Te Whanau Tahī means The United Family and is the ethos of the school and how it operates. Naenae College is made up of 42 ethnic groups and Te Whanau Tahī firstly acknowledges the Tangata Whenua of Aotearoa and the bicultural heritage and then acknowledges the multi-ethnic nature of the Tauīwi – all the rest of those who have arrived on these shores over generations. Mutual respect is the cornerstone value and everyone is important and valued.

There is a strong focus on realizing the potential of all students and recognizing each person's cultural capital. Teachers and students learn from each other in a spirit of partnership and the concept of Ako is embraced. There is an emphasis on relationships and there is no place for deficit thinking.

The school looks to students becoming people who:

- Can cope with change and the demands of living in a complex society
- Are questioning in their approach to issues, flexible in outlook and with a concern and respect for truth
- Have strong feelings of self-esteem and integrity
- Can set realistic goals, meet challenges head on and aspire to high standards of performance and behaviour
- Are prepared to work together and support one another.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs underpins the ethos and the school works very hard to meet the varying needs of its students. There is a very strong emphasis on relationships to meet the relational needs of the students and an emphasis on consistency, responsiveness, flexibility, co-operation, negotiation, accountability and responsibility. The message is 'Get to know me and then I am ready to learn from you.' 'I need to know you care about me.'

Te Whanau Tahī incorporates 5 core values – Kotahitanga – working together, Manaakitanga – caring, Pumanawatanga – atmosphere, Rangatiratanga – leadership and Whanaungatanga – relationships.

Students know and understand the values and are given multiple opportunities to learn and practise these. All Year 9 students have an induction programme that introduces them to Te Whanau Tahī and incorporates the values and restorative practices. Time is spent in home room classes learning and practising the values and using circle time to work on restorative practices. Year 12 students mentor the Year 9 students and there is a Year 13 prefect group that also works with the whanau groups and whanau heads.

The school is organized into 4 whanau groupings that are vertical groupings and there are opportunities for whanau groups to spend time together. Each term there are whanau assemblies organized by student leaders and there are also regular competitions and events between whanau groups.

Students work towards half yearly academic awards as well as Te Whanau Tahī awards. To receive a Te Whanau Tahī award students need to demonstrate the values and key competencies, commit to learning and participate in a range of areas and have an attendance rate of at least 85%. These awards are included in the student's half yearly and end of year awards.

Well-being surveys of students are strong. Students feel they connect with their culture and teachers. Students have a strong sense of belonging and diversity is celebrated.

The school marae is owned by the Board of Trustees and there is a strong marae committee made up of key stakeholders who manage the marae, Kapa Haka, Nga Mana Korero and performance groups. The marae belongs to everyone and is a central point of the school culture and community. The college hold whanau hui and have an annual multicultural day festival and work hard to engage with whanau. The principal acknowledged that while the school works very hard to provide opportunities to engage with whanau, uptake is often low and they have had to look at more authentic opportunities. One successful initiative has been a Celebrating Maori Success event where guest speakers and Maori students from the school share their successes and discuss what it is like to walk in both worlds. The Kapa Haka group also perform and it has been a very successful event with a high turnout of whanau.

It is thought that one reason for a lack of whanau engagement is that many whanau did not have positive experiences in the education system so are therefore reluctant to value the school system or want to engage in it further.

Transience in the school is a challenge and data shows that transient students generally have lower attendance rates and do not immerse themselves in the Te Whanau Tahī ethos as they have often missed the induction and, or miss out on learning programmes linked to Te Whanau Tahī due to absenteeism / truancy.

The school has an expectation of an 85% minimum attendance rate and meets weekly to discuss at risk students and the best way to assist these students and their whanau. Only about 2% of students are referred to Attendance Services as many of the families may require more relevant pastoral care and assistance. Data clearly shows that Maori students have lower attendance and students with less than 85% attendance have lower achievement. The school works with students over the age of 16 who have low attendance and tries to support them to transition into the work

force or training. The school also offers an Alternative Education programme called Lyriks for those students who may be at risk in the mainstream environment.

The principal sees the need for the education system to move to a more holistic model that values more than academic achievement and puts more emphasis on values, cultural competency and the key competencies.

Survey results and findings from meetings with schools:

The Education Counts survey states that a student is considered to be **attending regularly** if they are present at school for more than 90% of all half-days.

Data collected from the schools that responded to my survey showed that all but one of the responding schools had attendance of 90% or higher. 18 schools completed the survey with a variety of schools from a range of deciles and a variety of ethnic compositions. It was clear that higher decile schools had lower Maori and Pasifika populations and higher attendance rates. The average attendance rate for 2017 was 92.15%, higher than the Education Counts survey results of 90.1% although this was only for term two.

Survey Responses:

If you analyse poor attendance what does your data show you?

- At our school students with 90%+ attendance do on average 20% better than those with less than 90% attendance.
- No formal analysis but gut response formed from observation is those students with poor attendance are usually underachievers.
- No significant difference in attendance rates by ethnicity, gender or year level. All within 89-94% attendance rates.

Most students with <90% attendance are explained absences.

Individual students with <90% attendance with lower achievement rates have additional learning barriers as well as low attendance rates

- There is no question that the students who are at school more do better, however I've never done an analysis like this. I think it's more obvious to say that the students who aren't at school definitely do worse. And that's not just academically, socially, their behaviour etc..
- We have more problems with lateness than attendance
- That's a really hard one to answer. But what we do know is that the children who don't attend, tend to do worse.
- Poor attendance for us is children going overseas for extended holidays with their families, or children with ongoing health issues who may require more time off school than their peers
- There is no consistent link for us as most of our children with higher absence rate are absent for reasons of privilege (ie overseas holidays). There are some however, for whom there is a link.
- Particularly noticeable with younger child where reading is not getting underway as we would like and progress is minimal, slowing. Noticed in running record data and 5, 5 1/2 and 6 year data.
- I don't think 90% is good, our poor attendance issue is with a group of students who bring our attendance down to the 90% mark - term 1 2017 was 93%, Term 4 87%, so maybe an issue with term 4 for us? Data clearly shows students with very good attendance add value to their learning.

- That often the students with high rates of lateness or absenteeism are the ones who are also target students or are part of specific programmes.
- All students who attend school less than 80% of the time have become our priority students i.e. those students who are below or well below in their academic achievement, and who are falling further and further behind.

After further analysis, we have also discovered that it's not just truancy and poor academic results are the problem - that's just the tip of the mountain. Underneath there are issues of poverty, hunger, lack of adequate clothing, domestic violence, neglect, drugs and alcohol abuse etc.

What initiatives have you put in place that have made a positive impact on attendance?

- Incentives based programme including an attendance trophy that is given out at each assembly for the class with the best attendance for the previous week. This is also given out termly and the winning class get a free sausage sizzle. Implementation of an updated attendance policy and procedure with clear guidelines on how attendance issues will be addressed. This involves phone calls, meetings to discuss ways that we can work together to improve attendance, formal letters for ongoing poor attendance followed by referrals to Attendance Services for students with 85% or less attendance and no engagement with the school to address the issues. Reporting on attendance results in the weekly newsletter and in all BOT reports. Specific data analysis of data with an attendance focus and then follow up with these families linking attendance to achievement. We have also surveyed all families with poor attendance to find the reasons for poor attendance and questioned students for their input into why their attendance is poor. One of my appraisal goals is to investigate attendance patterns, implement appropriate initiatives and evaluate their effectiveness.
- Breakfast club and a van service for students who require it.
- Immediate follow up with home.
- Individual contact with families/whanau
- We meet once a term to analyse which students are at risk of poor attendance because of factors outside genuine health reasons. Those that are identified receive a letter home asking for a greater effort to be made on the part of the parents to ensure the children come to school. Any particularly bad offenders are contacted personally and/or asked for an interview/meeting. If they are first timers the letters are always quite gentle. Those that are regular offenders get a more direct approach.

I report to the board twice a year on attendance rate numbers. In this report we review how we going compared to other years. We also look at how each ethnic group is doing. We aim to get between 93 and 95% attendance rates.

I also report attendance rates to the community through the school newsletter. The point of doing this is to celebrate rather than point the finger.

- Providing daily breakfast club, conversations with family one on one
- Termly letters to parents where attendance is an issue.
Part of a 'Rock On' programme with local Police looking at truancy and key students
- We promote attendance in newsletters etc - We are also proactive with local truancy and have a staff member dedicated to attendance every morning
- Write letters every term to parents who we consider are not doing their best to get their children to school.

Ask parents to a meeting if the truancy continues.

Send truancy officer around.

I print attendance rates in the school newsletter making sure there is a statement linking attendance and academic progress.

- We note in our school newsletter that holidays are preferred not during school terms, we advertise the school terms well in advance, letters are sent to parents who have higher than usual absences
- Developing relationships with student and whanau and working closely with them around issues where these have been identified
- Follow up every day with a phone call if no explanation. Contact with home first by the teacher is a concern about attendance. Contact from AP/DP or Principal to follow if needed. Letters written with details of attendance/lateness rates. Analysing data regularly. Using Every Day Matters. Students of concern identified and at Learning Conversation teacher discusses and show attendance record. Information in the newsletter about how school can support and about how to help children if they don't want to come to school - looking for signs.
- We contact parents every day, we meet with identified students, we have written to families, truancy follow up, ongoing building of relationships with students and families.
- Phone calls to parents, letters to parents, meetings with parents.
- The major initiatives have been: principal driving to houses and knocking at the door to pick up students who are regular non-attenders, feeding students at lunch time and having our breakfast club daily, giving students warm clothing that has been donated, phoning parents instead of texting them as they often don't have any credit, meeting with parents to find out what student needs are, but the ones that have been most successful but last resorts are: Truancy Services and Oranga Tamariki. They have completely turned around the attendance of 3 of our families. There is no one answer unfortunately, and all of them require an incredible amount of hard work and time.
- Parent meetings on an individual basis

What initiatives have you put in place that have had a positive impact on Maori engagement and achievement?

- Establishment of a Maori Curriculum leader and an annual Maori Achievement Action Plan with clear goals and actions to meet targets. Termly events to encourage whanau into the school e.g. picnics, fish and chips evening, Matariki hangi, touch rugby competitions – we keep these social and focused on socializing in the hope that as we develop stronger partnerships we will get greater turnout at more learning based events. Introduction of a Tane Toa group to bring dads and male caregivers together in the hope of involving our male community more in the school community. Introduction of Matauranga Maori domains into our school curriculum, implementation of a waharoa, tomokanga and murals that reflect the cultural diversity in our school.
- Whanau hui, active kapa haka programmes, aiming to attend Poly Fest, Teachers feel supported by the help of students and the tuakana-teina approach, “kupu o te wiki” , staff and Board engage with karakia and waiata at meetings, powhiri to start each term
- We have a very strong Whanau Support Group who are not only Maori parents but includes Staff and non - Maori parents. They have been instrumental in helping us establish a Te Ao Maori Curriculum with the emphasis on the normalisation of Tikanga and te reo Maori. We have held community Matariki celebrations for the past 2 years which have been very well attended. Our Maori students are definitely not over represented in our target student groups.
- Establishment of a Maori Advisory Group
Closed Facebook site for our Immersion unit whanau
Community activities - shared BBQ, open evenings
Celebration of events/occasions e.g. Matariki, Parihaka Day

- The parents of Maori students who are not attending regularly are treated in the same way as everyone else, however I will say that we do our best to take into account personal circumstances for students. For example if there is a good reason why a student has had a lot of days off, they don't receive a letter. My administration officer is Maori and heavily involved in the community. She supplies me with lots of information about whether there are genuine reasons for students not having good attendance rates. She is invaluable.
- Whanau group meets termly
- Whanau hui
 - Te Reo Maori Curriculum
 - Initiatives with local Maori agencies
 - Cultural leaders
 - Karakia, waiata, powhiri, kapa haka, waitangi & Matariki celebrations
- Forming strong relationships with family and creating good ways to engage with them - text, Facebook, etc - trying to give them good news first
- Kapa Haka programme, Nga Tama Toa programme, Whanau engagement evening. In the process of establishing a Whanau group of parents
- Whanau Group - students input into strategic plan - collaborative learning environment - students having a say in what happens at school - establishing a school whakatauki, waiata and karakia, led by Whanau Group - celebrating kapa haka and involving whanau - having a whanau night at school and providing kai - students sharing the language - Maori leadership opportunities
- Te Reo Māori and Tikanga Māori are highly regarded at our school, and we place value on things Māori giving our students an opportunity to shine and take on leadership in these situations
- Valuing and using Te Reo me Taranga Maori, including a Maori world view within our teaching / learning programmes. Where there are issues we try to take a whanau approach (ie the teachers of all children in the family meet with the family and talk through issues, what we're doing at school and how we can support the home)
- Approach by teacher (or person with positive relationship with family) first. A conversation first wherever possible. Showing the graph to highlight the data. Talking about 'missing one day a week means 10 a term and 40 a year, so that is equal to 9 weeks missed in a year - a quarter' etc. Always checking to see if there are reasons for non-attendance and not making assumptions eg. dad works at night and comes home to pick up kids for school but might be late dependent on traffic. Meanwhile mum has already had to leave for her work. Checking what more support can be provided for home.
- Phone calls and meetings with parents.
- We have been working on how to engage our Maori whanau better, and again, it's not a one size fits all. Many of our whanau are happy for us to educate their tamariki and others want to be more involved. We have an open door policy where whanau members are welcome to stay in the classroom and help out, we have matariki events, kapa haka events, Reading Together evenings, and our reports and goal setting are now more tailored for whanau in that we look at a child's whole wellbeing/hauora rather than just their academic achievement. We look at this through Te Whare Tapa Wha. Whanau Education Action Plans (WEAPS), goal setting time, IEP's etc. It's difficult to really gauge how well these activities have had an impact on engagement other than to say we have had an increase in participation in goal setting interviews. It's early days as to whether this has translated into better achievement results.
- Whanau meetings every month. We employ a local Te Reo teacher and have a culturally responsive curriculum.

What initiatives have you put in place that have had a positive impact on Pasifika engagement and achievement?

- Establishment of a Maori / Pasifika Curriculum leader and an annual Pasifika Achievement Action Plan with clear goals and actions to meet targets. Pasifika fono to involve parents / caregivers in increasing Pasifika content / contexts in our school curriculum, celebration of Samoan Independence Day and all Pasifika language weeks.
- First Pasifika meeting next week, wall displays, celebrating different groups, starting to look at lifting our engagement with the Pasifika community.
- Pasifika Parents Group who support the school in all things Pasifika including support with Language Weeks. We sing and pray in our main Pasifika languages and include their cultures in our Masses and Liturgies. We also have a Pasifika Homework Study Centre which is funded by the Ministry. Strong identification of Target students and a strong ESOL and Learning Support programme has supported our Pasifika students
- Establishment of a Pasifika community group
Community activities - shared BBQ, open evenings
Celebrating of language weeks
- There have been times when we have used Pacific Island staff to talk to families who are struggling to get their students to school. This seems to have worked well.
- same as above
- Face-to-face seems to work well with the Pasifika. The gentle approach.
- Part of Whanau Group - including sasa as part of Kapa Haka - different Pasifika groups preparing videos for language weeks to share with the classes
- We need to do more for our Pasifika community, our fono group find it increasingly difficult to get together. We do celebrate Samoan Language Week and try to incorporate some Pasifika contexts into our work
- Our numbers are so small we use one-to-one contact.
- Phone calls and meetings with parents.
- Sadly, very little. We take our small group of Samoan students to the Pasifika Festival each year, and we call upon students and aiga when we need support for language or cultural activities.
- Apart from our curriculum not specific.

Key points from discussions / surveys with students and their parents and whanau

- Reasons for absence ranged from medical reasons, caring for younger siblings or older family members, lack of transport, tangi and family events, shift work, lack of warm clothing and food, cost of medical bills and extended taking extended school holidays.
- All families consulted said that they did value education but that often other factors came first. Families described some of the circumstances that they found challenging and many talked about housing overcrowding, lack of heating and poverty as all being factors that caused illness and therefore poor attendance.

Challenges for schools

As part of the discussions I had with principals we also talked about the challenges schools face in trying to engage with whanau.

It is thought that one reason for a lack of whanau engagement is that many whanau did not have positive experiences in the education system so are therefore reluctant to value the school system or want to engage in it further. It may take a generational shift whereby students that are achieving success in the current education system will be more engaged with their own children in the future as they are more likely to have enjoyed school and experienced success.

We discussed some of the barriers that schools in general face in raising attendance and achievement and noted the impact that socio economic factors have on education. A number of families live in poverty and in social housing where houses are cold and not well insulated. Houses can be overcrowded and sickness becomes a significant factor which is compounded when families can't afford medical care. Mental health, unemployment, drugs and alcohol are all significant factors that impact many families. Many of these issues are outside of the school's control but have an increasingly significant impact on the education system.

Transience in schools is also a challenge and data shows that transient students generally have lower attendance rates and do not immerse themselves in the ethos of the school as they have often missed induction and values based learning programmes from earlier in the year.

Research:

Attendance Matters - Guidelines for Implementing an Effective Attendance Management Plan

- Attendance, achievement and engagement are critical. Student attendance along with effective teaching has the greatest influence on student achievement and engagement.
- Attendance is one of our three strategic goals alongside attitude and achievement.
- Maori and Pasifika attendance rates are lower than NZ European and Asian students.
- Students with high levels of absence were the lowest achievers. If a student misses 5 days each term, or one day a fortnight, they will miss the equivalent of one year of school over 10 years of schooling. As the level of absenteeism grows, the difficulty of re-engaging in learning can grow exponentially.
- Schools need to explore how they can ensure parents, whanau, iwi and the community understand the links between achievement, engagement and attendance.
- The report recommends that schools select strategies that they believe are workable for your school and community for 'at risk' groups and / or the whole school. Low cost or no cost options can be some of the most effective solutions.

The guidelines included a range of effective attendance management case studies:

“Holistic approach to engagement and learning – Otahuhu College, Auckland –

Use culturally appropriate strategies to manage its unjustified absence problem. The school aims to respond to students' diverse needs and motivate them to raise achievement and improve attendance.

Meeting the needs of diverse learners – Melville High School, Hamilton –

Working to improve students' engagement with learning and relationships with teachers.

Aiming high – Papatoetoe Intermediate, Auckland -

Sets high attendance targets and has established strong systems to provide the evidence to back up its attendance strategies. The school encourages good behaviour through rewards and recognition, and intervenes early if issues appear.

Community hub – Victory Primary School, Nelson -

Has a whanau centric approach and believes that staff and parents are mutually accountable for students' educational and behavioural outcomes. By creating a positive and fun learning environment, the school has become a place where students want to be.

Positive change through positive action – Corinna School, Porirua -

Attacked the issues from multiple angles. The result was improved attendance rates, better communication and relationships with parents, stronger networks with nearby schools and a raised awareness of the importance of attendance among the wider community.

Community and whanau engagement key to success – Hendersen Intermediate, Auckland

The Waitakere City Improving School Attendance Programme has helped. Also zero tolerance approach to truancy, an effective attendance management procedure and a strong emphasis on community and whanau based initiatives.

Collaborative approach reaps rewards – Taupo / Turangi cluster –

A cross cluster attendance support team share procedures, ideas and resources. Pastoral care has an important role to play, as do the relationship building skills of the local Truancy Officer and a range of wider community truancy initiatives.

Three-pronged approach works well – Turaki School, Taumarunui

High priority on monitoring attendance and following up unexplained absences. Having a rigorous attendance and monitoring system, dedicating necessary time to personally assess data and act accordingly; and being part of a cluster wide, interagency attendance management initiative called CKCBase.”

Reference - *Attendance Matters - Guidelines for Implementing an Effective Attendance Management Plan*

Education Counts 2017 Report

This report provides a picture of attendance in New Zealand schools to help schools, Communities of Learning | Kāhui Ako and other sector representatives understand patterns of attendance and how these can affect achievement

This report uses two different key measures of attendance:

- The percentage of half-days attended by a student. A half-day is two hours of class time within a calendar day. A student is considered to be **attending regularly** if they were present at school for more than 90% of all half-days in Term 2.¹
- The percentage of class time missed by a group of students. This is further broken down into justified and unjustified absence, and individual reasons for absence within these categories. This measure better accounts for specific types of absences that may not make up a half-day but still amount to a significant amount of missed class time over the course of the term.

All state, state-integrated and partnership schools were invited to submit Term 2 attendance data. Of 2,413 schools, 1,920 (80%) provided this data. This accounts for about 640,000 students, or 84% of the student population. This report covers attendance in Term 2 only.

Summary of 2017 Findings

- Term 2 attendance in Year 11 is strongly linked with attainment of NCEA Level 1.
- In Term 2 of 2017, 63% of students were attending regularly (more than 90% of all half-days). This was lower than in 2016 (67%), mainly due to an increase in absence due to medical reasons.
- The decrease in attendance was evident among schools common to both the 2016 and 2017 surveys, which suggests that this decrease was real and not due to a change in the composition of schools responding to the survey.
- Students who identified as Māori and Pasifika had lower rates of regular attendance than other ethnicities (50% and 52%, respectively).

- Students in high-decile schools attended more than those in lower-decile schools, with 72% attending regularly in decile 10 schools compared to 47% in decile 1 schools.
- Attendance declines in the senior secondary years, with female students attending less than male students in Years 11 to 13.
- Both justified and unjustified absences were higher in Term 2 of 2017 than in the same term in 2016. Over a longer time span, unjustified absences have increased steadily, while justified absences have been more variable.

| National Data | | | |
|---------------|-----------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Year | Present Half-Days (%) | Justified Absence Half-Days (%) | Unjustified Absence Half-Days (%) |
| 2017 | 90.1 | 5.9 | 4.0 |
| 2016 | 91.0 | 5.3 | 3.7 |
| 2015 | 91.2 | 5.4 | 3.4 |
| 2014 | 91.1 | 5.6 | 3.4 |
| 2013 | 90.8 | 5.9 | 3.3 |
| 2012 | 91.3 | 5.6 | 3.1 |
| 2011 | 91.1 | 5.7 | 3.2 |

| Ethnicity 2017 | | | |
|-----------------|-----------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Ethnicity | Present Half-Days (%) | Justified Absence Half-Days (%) | Unjustified Absence Half-Days (%) |
| Māori | 86.7 | 6.9 | 6.4 |
| Pasifika | 87.3 | 6.3 | 6.4 |
| Asian | 92.6 | 4.5 | 2.9 |
| European/Pākehā | 91.1 | 6.0 | 3.0 |

| Decile | Present Half-Days (%) | Justified Absence Half-Days (%) | Unjustified Absence Half-Days (%) |
|--------|-----------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1 | 85.5 | 5.6 | 9.0 |
| 2 | 87.3 | 6.5 | 6.2 |
| 3 | 88.0 | 6.5 | 5.5 |
| 4 | 89.0 | 6.3 | 4.6 |
| 5 | 90.2 | 6.2 | 3.7 |
| 6 | 89.7 | 6.4 | 3.9 |
| 7 | 91.1 | 6.0 | 2.8 |
| 8 | 91.7 | 5.6 | 2.7 |

| | | | |
|----|------|-----|-----|
| 9 | 92.0 | 5.5 | 2.5 |
| 10 | 92.4 | 5.1 | 2.5 |

| Year Level | Present Half-Days (%) | Justified Absence Half-Days (%) | Unjustified Absence Half-Days (%) |
|------------|-----------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1 | 90.1 | 6.4 | 3.5 |
| 2 | 90.7 | 5.9 | 3.4 |
| 3 | 91.4 | 5.4 | 3.2 |
| 4 | 91.7 | 5.1 | 3.2 |
| 5 | 91.9 | 5.1 | 3.1 |
| 6 | 92.0 | 5.1 | 3.0 |
| 7 | 91.5 | 5.4 | 3.1 |
| 8 | 90.8 | 5.8 | 3.4 |
| 9 | 89.8 | 6.3 | 3.9 |
| 10 | 88.5 | 6.7 | 4.8 |
| 11 | 88.5 | 6.4 | 5.1 |
| 12 | 87.3 | 6.7 | 6.0 |
| 13 | 84.3 | 7.5 | 8.1 |

Female attendance was 90% compared to male attendance at 90.2%

Reference - *Education Counts 2017 Report*

Ka Hikitia Accelerating Success 2013-2017

Accelerating Success builds on the previous Ka Hikitia Managing for Success / Maori Education Strategy 2008-2012. Accelerating Success continues work towards realizing the vision – Maori students enjoying and achieving education success as Maori.

Key Messages from both reports:

Presence – being in school in order to be able to learn.

Engagement – being motivated to learn and actively participating.

Achievement – Maori students achieving at the same rate as other students.

The Guiding Principles:

1. *“Treaty of Waitangi* – focus on collaboration. Ensuring Maori students enjoy and achieve education success as Maori is a joint responsibility of the Crown and iwi, hapu and whanau.
2. *Maori Potential Approach* - Every Maori student has the potential to make a valuable social, cultural and economic contribution to the well-being of their whanau, their community and New Zealand as a whole. A focus on shared high expectations for Maori students to achieve.
3. *Ako* – a Two Way Teaching and Learning Approach. Educators and students learning from each other.
4. *Identity, Language and Culture Count* - Maori students are more likely to achieve when they see themselves, and their experiences and knowledge reflected in teaching and learning.

5. *Productive Partnerships* key stakeholders must form productive partnerships where there is an ongoing exchange of knowledge and information, and where everybody contributes to achieving the goals.” (Ka Hikitia *Accelerating Success 2013-2017*)

Broad Student Outcomes

- “Maori learners working with others to determine successful learning and education pathways.
 - Maori learners excel and successfully realise their cultural distinctiveness and potential.
 - Maori learners successfully participating in and contributing to te Ao Maori.
 - Maori learners gaining the universal skills and knowledge needed to successfully participate in and contribute to Aotearoa New Zealand and the world.
-
- **Key Levers to activate Maori potential:**
 - Increasing professional learning and capability of teachers.
 - Focusing on responsive and accountable professional leadership.
 - Setting and resourcing priorities in Maori language education.
 - Increasing whanau and iwi authority and involvement in education.
 - Strengthening inter-agency collaboration.” (Ka Hikitia *Managing for Success / Maori Education Strategy 2008-2012*)

2012 Sabbatical Report – Neil Worboys - the role cultural responsiveness plays in enhanced Māori student achievement in primary schools.

Neil concluded that the cultural responses and specific practices and processes successful in enhancing Māori student achievement are:

1. “Effective partnerships: In schools where Māori students are achieving successfully there is a strong focus on partnerships; with Iwi and Hapu, with the wider community, and especially with parents and whanau.
2. Positive relationships: Quality relationships are central to all the schools. There is a diverse range of relationships within the school community; teacher-student, student-student, teacher- teacher, leaders-staff, whanau-school, parent-teacher-student, board-leadership-staff- community, and the quality of these relationships is pivotal to successful learning.
3. An authentic curriculum: The school curriculum must respond to the culture of the students. Authentic contexts for learning within a community centered curriculum are pivotal in ensuring that Māori students reach their potential.
4. Student engagement – Māori achieving as Māori. Student engagement is closely linked to the key areas of partnerships, relationships and curriculum. It is the sum of these three critical areas of school life that allow Māori students to engage successfully in their learning. For Māori students to achieve as Māori the school needs to be a vital part of the student’s life with strong links to home and whanau.” (Neil Worboys – 2012 Sabbatical Report)

Implications

As a school we are going to endeavour to introduce some of the initiatives that I have learnt about through my research to build on how we effectively engage with our Maori and Pasifika communities to improve engagement, achievement and attendance. We will focus on:

- Enabling teachers and leaders to better evaluate our data and the factors that hinder engagement, achievement and attendance. Work with staff to develop the skills they need to carry out their roles effectively and ensure that they are provided with ongoing professional development which allows them to carry out their roles effectively.
- Introduce an induction programme for transient families that helps them to connect to the school's values and Randwick Way programme. Explore ways of assisting students and their families to make positive connections and feel a sense of belonging within the school community.
- To ensure that we develop effective partnerships with our local community, iwi and hapu and the wider community to form stronger Maori Whanau and Tagata Pasifika groups that meet regularly and are engaged and involved in their child's school community. We will further build on informal and formal opportunities to socialize and meet with our whanau to develop stronger partnerships where whanau feel valued, supported and open to sharing their expertise and interests. Explore initiatives such as Celebrating Maori Success events.
- Explore further how we can implement aspects of the RAAYS project and work with multiple agencies and personnel such as the police (particularly the Community Constable), Public Health Nurse, SWiS, Oranga Tamariki and Attendance Services staff to form individual plans that meet the needs of the students and their whanau who have poor attendance.
- Explore creating a Cultural Space that Maori students can connect with and that whanau can use as a meeting point.

Conclusions

Attendance goes hand in hand with engagement and achievement and we need to look at the three areas collectively.

The information I gathered through my school visits, readings, surveys and discussions with school leaders, parents and students has given me a greater insight into how challenging it is to make significant progress to improving student engagement, achievement and attendance without a multi-agency approach to meeting the needs of students and their whanau. It may take a generational shift to change whanau perceptions of school as for many, school was not an enjoyable or successful environment.

Attendance is lower for Maori and Pasifika students and for students who attend lower decile schools. Transient students are more likely to have lower attendance and are less likely to have a sense of belonging at the school. Many factors hindering attendance, and therefore engagement and achievement are linked to social factors such as housing shortages and overcrowding, poverty, unemployment, incarceration and poor health.

Schools are working very hard to engage positively with Maori and Pasifika whanau and a wide range of programmes and initiatives are in place in schools. As educators, we need to continue to find ways to build positive relationships in less formal ways that lead to families becoming more confident to become more engaged in more formal settings linked to learning and achievement.

The principals I visited and spoke with all played a crucial role in building capability to ensure that all staff had the tools and skills required to meet the needs of all learners and build positive relationships with learners and their whanau.

Finally, I have become more aware of the challenges that students and their whanau face to attend school regularly, engage and achieve. I am also more aware of the challenges that schools face in trying to meet the needs of their students, particularly the social factors that have such an impact on our children and their whanau.

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