

# RANGIĀTEA WESTERN SPRINGS COLLEGE

## CASE STUDY

**The Rangiātea project consists of case studies and exemplars from five secondary schools, each of them on a journey towards realising Māori student potential. The case studies look at the strategies used by the school leadership team and report on the key factors that contributed to lifting Māori student achievement. The exemplars step through how a particular programme has been used successfully in each school.**

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

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Introduction	1
Research context	2
Research method	2
<b>Case study findings</b>	3
Setting high standards and expectations for Māori student achievement	3
Strategic resourcing to enhance Māori student achievement	6
Ensuring quality of teaching and the curriculum to enhance Māori student achievement	8
Teacher learning and development to enhance Māori student achievement	11
Ensuring an orderly and supportive environment for Māori students	13
Making powerful connections with Māori whānau and community supports for Māori student achievement	16
Engaging in constructive problem talk enhances Māori student achievement	18
Further readings	21
Acknowledgements	21
<b>Tables</b>	
Table 1 Example of the goals set in Western Springs College's 2010 Annual Plan	3
Table 2 2009 pass rates for NCEA Levels 1–3 (national decile 8 pass rates in brackets)	3
Table 3 Māori school leavers with less than a Year 12 qualification	4
<b>Figures</b>	
Figure 1 School leavers with Year 12 qualification or higher	4
Figure 2 Absence rates compared to other schools of similar school type for 2009	14
Figure 3 Stand-downs at Western Springs College 2005–2009	14

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# Western Springs College

## CASE STUDY

### INTRODUCTION

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Western Springs College has been one of the top-performing state secondary schools for Māori student achievement since 2005. A co-educational decile 8 college, it has a particular focus on building and sustaining high levels of achievement for Māori students.

The 2009 results are typical: Māori students achieved an 81 percent pass rate at Level 2 and an 80 percent University Entrance (UE) pass rate at Level 3.

After visiting Western Springs College in 2010, the Education Review Office (ERO) showed confidence by placing it on a delayed cycle of four to five years. It is one of the 10 percent of schools in the country in this position.

The distinctive features of the school ERO identified were:

- students who are highly engaged in learning and proud of their school
- positive relationships between students and teachers
- teachers' high expectations for individual students' learning and success
- department heads focused on working with teachers to develop effective teaching practice
- a school which values individuality, creativity and inclusiveness
- a board and staff who actively seek parents' participation in the life of the school
- high levels of student success in NCEA and Scholarship
- high rates of retention and achievement for Māori and Pacific students
- effective pastoral care and support for student well-being
- recognition and celebration of student achievement in a wide range of academic, creative, cultural, sporting and leadership areas.

Source: Principal's Address at the senior student prizegiving, from the Western Springs College website

This case study explores some of the strategies and approaches the school leadership team uses to enhance Māori student achievement. Some approaches are specific to Māori, such as the strong presence and influence of the Rumaki (Māori immersion) unit. At the same time, the school uses a wide range of tools and strategies to set goals, track Māori student achievement and help all Māori students stay on course.

The tumuaki (Rumaki principal) acknowledges that working towards high levels of Māori student achievement requires a cohesive and concerted approach from the leadership of the school, ongoing commitment, high expectations and it takes time:

*This has been a long historical process over more than 20 to 21 years of the marae and whānau establishment. This level of achievement did not happen overnight. It has also had ongoing support of the board of trustees, principal and senior management team—both past and present—over an extended period. [Tumuaki]*

## **RESEARCH CONTEXT**

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Western Springs College is a decile 8 co-educational college in Western Auckland. The school has 1,110 students from Years 9–13. Māori have a strong presence in the school and make up 17 percent of the school population. The school offers Māori students the option of attending the Rumaki or mainstream Māori classes. It aims to meet Māori whānau requirements for an excellent education for their young people. The school understands whānau needs are on a continuum from a near-total immersion kaupapa Māori approach through to a mainstream approach. While the school is in a decile 8 area, a number of Māori students come to the school from outside the zone—often from lower decile areas. This means the school needs to provide additional pastoral care for students whose families may have fewer resources.

The Nga Puna O Waioreoa unit, or Rumaki, has been running for 21 years and is staffed by a dedicated team. The Rumaki is almost a separate unit within the school, particularly at Years 9 and 10, and runs along similar philosophies to kura kaupapa schools. Whānau who opt to send their young people to the Rumaki commit to providing high levels of whānau support for students. The unit places considerable emphasis on achieving “as Māori”, and there is a real pride in the unit amongst students as well as a strong cohort moving through the school. This supports Māori student success. The Rumaki has representation on the senior management team and on the board of trustees (BOT).

The mainstream Māori whānau also have representation on the BOT and hold whānau hui once a term to ensure whānau are aware of and can provide feedback on developments in the school. For this project, we focus more on mainstream Māori initiatives, however the contributions by key people who have been involved with the Rumaki over the years is acknowledged by both the Rumaki and the principal as having been a significant factor in Māori student achievement school-wide.

The school has a strong leadership team that has worked together for many years under strong pedagogical leadership of the principal and senior management team.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

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Western Springs College was one of five mainstream schools selected for this research. It was included in the project because it had higher-than-average Māori student retention and achievement for National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) Level 2. It also provided a different research context from other schools in the study, as a decile 8 co-educational college in a metropolitan community, with a high proportion of Māori students on the roll and a strong Rumaki as well as Māori mainstream presence.

Researcher engagement with the school occurred between 3 May and 1 November 2010 and involved two data collection phases as well as additional feedback from the school up to 5 May 2011. Information collected was based on the aspects the school identified as important to support Māori student achievement. An information sheet was provided to all interviewees and informed consent obtained from all research participants.

After the first phase of data collection, the researchers developed a summary of the key themes emerging from the interviews for the Ministry of Education, which commissioned the study. This summary helped identify priority areas of interest for the second round of data collection. Phase two of the data collection focused on identifying (a) how school leaders enable Māori student achievement and (b) a specific initiative or approach developed in the school to drive Māori achievement.

Researchers used a range of interview approaches to collect data, including individual, focus groups and pairs. Individual interviews generally ranged from 30–60 minutes, while focus groups took between one to two hours. In total, 25 people were interviewed, including the senior management team, deans, teachers, students, whānau, pastoral staff and BOT members. A further 39 self-completion student surveys were filled in. In addition, the school made available a wide range of monitoring and student achievement data, including variance reporting, curriculum planners and NCEA data and Ministry of Education School SMART data.

## Setting high standards and expectations for Māori student achievement

The principal, senior management team (including the tumuaki) and BOT have developed strategic goals that promote high standards and expectations for all Māori students. The Annual Plan states the school's intended outcome is that: there are clearly defined targets for all students, and Māori students' NCEA results match those for all students. The school also aims to ensure Māori student leavers make the transition to tertiary education or job training. Attached to these outcomes are some specific "smart" annual targets for student achievement. These are derived from a deep understanding of past student achievement for that year's cohort. Targets are specific, measurable, realistic, achievable and time-bound. Clear targets, roles and responsibilities are assigned among the principal, senior management team, heads of departments, learning support and subject teachers for achieving these objectives.

**TABLE 1** Example of the goals set in Western Springs College's 2010 Annual Plan

Objectives	Outcomes	Annual targets	Responsibility
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve academic results at all levels.</li> <li>• Improve results at all levels for Māori students.</li> <li>• Improve leavers' qualifications for Pacific students.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students achieve best-ever NCEA and Scholarship results.</li> <li>• Gender achievement gap closed further.</li> <li>• Māori and Pasifika students' NCEA results match those for all students.</li> <li>• Pasifika students leave with a Level 2 or Level 3 NCEA Certificate.</li> <li>• Student leavers make the transition to tertiary education or job training.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Level 1 pass rate of 85%.</li> <li>• Level 2 pass rate of 85%.</li> <li>• Level 3 pass rate of 75%.</li> <li>• UE pass rate of 75%.</li> <li>• Level 1 M/E<sup>1</sup> certification rate: 40%.</li> <li>• Level 2 M/E certification rate: 33%.</li> <li>• Level 3 M/E certification rate: 30%.</li> <li>• 25 Scholarship passes.</li> <li>• All gender differentials under 5%.</li> </ul>	All subject teachers, form teachers, deans, directors, learning support staff, guidance staff and senior managers.

Source: Western Springs College Annual Plan 2010

In 2009, achievement rates at all levels were well ahead of the national pass rates for same decile schools. It is clear that the approach used by the school benefits all students, including Māori students.

**TABLE 2** 2009 pass rates for NCEA Levels 1–3  
(national decile 8 pass rates in brackets)

Ethnic group	% Level 1 pass	% Level 2 pass	% Level 3 pass	% UE pass
All	81.7 (75.8)	93.2 (80.2)	84.2 (71.4)	87.6 (67.6)
Māori	72.7 (60.2)	81.1 (69.0)	65.0 (53.8)	80.0 (51.2)

Source: Principal's Annual Report 2009 (1 January to 31 December 2009)

**Clearly defined targets with clearly articulated responsibilities**

**Achievement rates well ahead of national pass rates**

Figure 1 shows that over the last five years there has been a steady increase in those leaving school with a Year 12 qualification or higher.

**FIGURE 1** School leavers with Year 12 qualification or higher

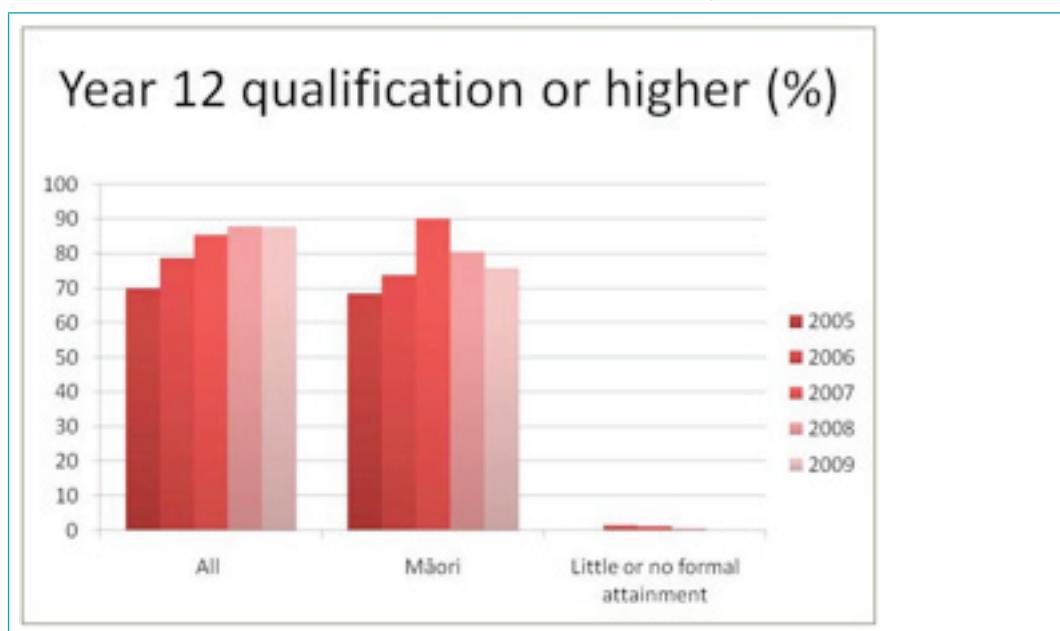


Table 3 shows that Māori students are increasingly equipped to transition to tertiary training or job training, and few Māori school leavers have less than a Year 12 qualification. Again, this is well ahead of the national decile 8 rates.

**TABLE 3** Māori school leavers with less than a Year 12 qualification

Year	School decile	% for your school	% for your decile	% difference
2004	7	31.6	50.0	-18.4
2005	7	21.1	55.1	-34.0
2006	7	26.1	48.2	-22.1
2007	7	10.0	39.8	-29.8
2008	8	11.1	26.8	-15.7
2009	8	18.2	28.6	-10.4

Source: Ministry of Education School SMART website data

The school has ongoing processes for engaging with whānau to ensure that strategic and long-term goals are in line with whānau aspirations. The Rumaki has led the way in providing continuous examples of whānau engagement through hui and this model has been utilised within mainstream settings to enable whānau of mainstream students to discuss new initiatives as they are developed. There is Rumaki and mainstream Māori whānau representation on the BOT. According to whānau, the school's strategic goals are in line with their aspirations for Māori students.

Western Springs College's principal, senior management team, heads of department and teaching staff know student capabilities well. They track and closely monitor all students, with a particular focus on Māori students, and report progress to the BOT. Staff are aware of Māori students' interests and capabilities, and school targets are based on information about what Māori students know, aspire to and are able to do.

There is an ongoing focus on improving all student achievement, and school targets promote Māori student achievement on a par or better than the rest of the student population. Western Springs College consistently manages to have high levels of achievement for all Māori students:

## School strategic goals aligned to whānau aspirations

## School goals clearly communicated to all staff

## An ongoing cycle of assessing student achievement against targets

## Rumaki achievements exemplary

*The principal and trustees have continued to raise expectations for the retention and achievement of Māori and Pacific students so that rates for these students match those of other students at all levels of the school. [ERO report 2010]*

All staff are fully aware of the targets in the school's Annual Plan that are relevant to their areas of responsibility for enabling Māori learner achievement. Targets are set at both school-wide and department-wide levels, for individual students and kaiako/teachers, with clear targets for the academic achievement of Māori students. Students are monitored closely right through their time at Western Springs College. All teachers are expected and supported to teach in ways that ensure that Māori students have success. A student achievement goal in the Annual Plan is to raise the achievement levels of students, particularly by identifying barriers to learning and developing strategies to overcome these learning barriers. The school challenges teachers to ensure all students achieve at the level of their ability, including Māori students, for each year level and for each stream of their courses.

The school embraces ongoing assessment and analysis of student data, and there is an honest, nonblaming evaluation of progress towards school targets for Māori student learning. The principal and senior management team lead conversations that consider how to improve on the previous year's results. For example, in the area of mathematics, data show an increase in the uptake and retention of Māori students in maths classes in their senior years. The mantra for maths is "everyone can do maths":

*[Maths] teachers push you to be the best but they are really nice with it and really passionate about it. [Student]*

There is a strong history of focusing on aspirations for Māori student achievement within the Rumaki that the school has continued to build on within mainstream. Everyone has expectations that Māori students can and do achieve at a high level, both academically and culturally, at Western Springs College. There is a strong history of promoting cultural pride in students and the school community. There is a strong Māori cultural presence in the school, starting with a highly visible, established marae at the school's front entrance. By offering both the Rumaki and mainstream Māori options, Māori students have the opportunity to succeed "as Māori<sup>2</sup>" in ways that are meaningful for them, and both options provide successful pathways for students. For example, successes in the Rumaki included:

- the 2009 Rumaki Level 1 pass rate (86 percent) exceeded that for all students at the college by 4 percent
- the 2009 Rumaki Level 2 pass rate (89 percent) is less than 5 percent below the overall college Level 2 pass rate (93 percent)
- the 2009 Rumaki pass rate for UE (87 percent) matched that for all students
- in 2010, the kapa haka group gained first placing at Auckland's Polyfest, fifth placing at the national competition in Rotorua and second placing at the Te Ahurea festival
- in 2010, one student was placed second in the senior Māori section and another represented the college and Auckland at a national level in Dunedin in the Nga Manu Korero speech competition
- in 2010, Nga Puna won the Mahepohepo sports competition in rugby league and netball, and the league team won the Western Springs College sports team of the year.

The tumuaki maintains that one of the keys to success amongst the Rumaki students is that the staff know their students well, and work with each student's interests and passions:

*We've made sure that our students ... have subjects they will need when they hit tertiary level. They may not be that successful at that subject back here at secondary [school] but if that [career] is actually their passion, and the dream they want to pursue, then we need to make sure they are well equipped to be able to follow that through into tertiary [study] ... and not having to do the bridging courses and spend another year at tertiary [study] when they really should not have to.*  
[Tumuaki]

# Strategic resourcing to enhance Māori student achievement

Māori student needs prioritised when resources are allocated

Māori participate in leadership and management

School takes a holistic approach to student wellbeing and success

The principal, senior management team and BOT of Western Springs College are committed to strategic resourcing for Māori students. There is an ongoing challenge to ensure the particular needs of the Rumaki and mainstream Māori students are prioritised in school-wide initiatives. Representation of both the Rumaki and mainstream Māori on the BOT and in the senior management team helps achieve this.

The heads of department ensure effective teaching resources are readily available and aligned to school goals for enhancing Māori learner achievement. The principal and BOT have allocated high levels of staff time to developing departmental assessment and teaching resources to ensure the curriculum is relevant to all students:

*A professional culture has been established throughout the school, and senior managers invest resources in order to further develop staff leadership skills. Trustees continue to support the professional leadership of the school and plan targets to further raise student achievement. Trustees regularly review the school charter and maintain cohesive strategies for ongoing school improvement. The development goals identified in the strategic plan provide an effective framework for school self-review. [ERO report 2010]*

Several school senior and middle management roles are held by Māori, and several Māori teachers work hard to help Māori students stay on track. However, this is not just the preserve of the Māori staff—other members of the senior management team are also passionate about ensuring high levels of Māori student achievement. Researchers found the principal and senior management team openly discuss the need to continue to find ways to improve Māori achievement:

*I don't think it's any one thing in particular; I think there is a whole range of policy, procedures and initiatives ... A considerable number of Māori teachers have been appointed to the staff... [and this has] been a key factor. [Principal]*

The principal and BOT have resourced a number of initiatives, both of an academic and of a pastoral care nature, to engage all students at risk of falling behind, and especially Māori students. The school has a long tradition of taking a holistic approach to student wellbeing and has recently resourced a health centre where nurses and counsellors are available for students. Another key resource is the learning centre for homework support:

*The learning centre continues to play a pivotal role in helping to meet students' wide range of learning needs. Targeted interventions for individuals and groups of students support students' ability to learn independently. A large number of students self-refer, seeking a boost in particular aspects of their learning.*

*Senior students willingly volunteer to tutor and mentor younger students. [ERO report 2010]*

The Rumaki enables Māori students to work as a cohort and provides considerable encouragement, nurturing and support as well as providing for peer support:

*In Term 2 we have three boards where students write up every time they get a unit or achievement standard ... what it's done for students who aren't necessarily passing is our senior [students] say 'come on, you can do it' [and the students encourage each other]. [Tumuaki]*

Initiatives such as the homework centre and holiday workshops support mainstream Māori students. Homework Centre and Study Wananga were initiated by Rumaki following on from the Pasifika Homework Centre. Departments also have initiatives and strategies that focus on all students, and particularly Māori students, to support their achievement. These include approaches in the maths department (which are covered in detail in the accompanying exemplar):

**Timetable  
reflects school  
priorities**

*Senior leaders and heads of departments are focused on improving practices for teaching and learning. They are working with teachers to develop models of effective teaching that are based on research and best practice. These models include strategies that enable differentiated teaching. [ERO report 2010]*

The principal and senior management team work hard to set a timetable that reflects the school's priorities for teaching and learning, in order to enhance Māori learner achievement. The Rumaki has a series of routines, including the Rumaki calendar, hui, pōwhiri and daily karakia, which give Māori students a sense of cultural pride and wrap a constant support around them as Māori. In addition, school routines also extend to whānau, with a high percentage of parents participating in school events, often on a roster basis in the Rumaki. These routines are resourced to maximise learning opportunities for Māori students.

**Close  
monitoring  
of Years 9–10  
builds base  
for academic  
success**

In mainstream classes, there is also resourcing for ongoing review of systems and routines to support Māori student achievement, such as close monitoring and assessment of students. The school recognises that success achieved in Years 11–13 is built on solid foundations developed in Years 9 and 10. For instance, the maths department uses data from two testing systems, PAT and asTTle, to band classes and to help set goals for Year 9 classes:

*The asTTle results showed us that at the start of year 9 about 29% (30% PAT) of the mainstream cohort were above the national expected level (4B) and 55% were working below the national average, 14% significantly below the national average. One of the major areas of interest to us was the fact that asTTle could clearly show the progression of the students in year 9, and demonstrate value-added learning.*

*At the end of the year, 51% of students were working below the expected level (curriculum level 4P or below), 28% of students had results above the average expected curriculum level for the start of year 10 (5B), just under 18% were significantly below the average (below level 4), however 90% of all students had improved, and 44% of the year 9 students improved by one whole curriculum level or better.*

[Mathematics Annual Departmental Report, 1 February 2009–31 January 2010]

**School is  
responsive to  
students at  
risk of falling  
behind and  
provides  
support in a  
range of ways**

Māori students at risk of falling behind academically in the Rumaki receive additional support, encouragement and coaching, and learn in a culturally relevant way. For example, Māori students have the opportunity to operate as a cohort and receive peer support as well as support from whānau. The school-based marae provides a venue for this. The night caretaker and the administrator from the Rumaki live on site, so students can and often are on the marae at school for extended lengths of time, well past school hours. Māori students at risk of falling behind in mainstream classes obtain additional support from teachers, the homework centre and holiday classes.

The school focuses on ensuring teachers teach in a way that works for Māori students. Teachers have ready access to teaching and learning resources as well as support from senior management to improve the way they engage with Māori students. The expertise of Māori whānau and the Māori community is used in ways that serve the school's priority learning goals—especially in the Rumaki, where whānau are a regular and ongoing resource for the school. Further, resources are allocated to support the development of partnerships between school and home that serve Māori students' learning in both the Rumaki and mainstream environments.

# Ensuring quality of teaching and the curriculum to enhance Māori student achievement

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## PART A: ENSURING CURRICULUM QUALITY

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**Constant use of diagnostic tracking to inform teaching and learning**

The focus of the principal, senior managers and heads of department is to ensure Māori potential is maximised. Systematic monitoring of all Māori students' progress occurs on a regular basis and is reported and monitored by the senior management team, regardless of each Māori student's level of achievement, ability and potential. The school monitors and uses diagnostic tracking of cohorts to understand what they should set as goals, and this informs teaching and learning. This monitoring process has several strands: heads of department and their departments consider student achievement data, discuss and evaluate courses against the student data and then discuss the curriculum-based goals:

*All maths department staff are involved. The head of department may have given them some questions for staff to ask themselves. It was a variance—a small analysis of variance. They did the analysis and said which students were below what the expectations were and what factors might have influenced that for the child; what needed to be in place to support that child; which ones were doing extremely well and what adjustments needed to be made to the programme to make sure that they could continue to develop at the rate that they were capable of.* [Deputy principal]

The school places considerable emphasis on building relationships so that teachers are able to engage students. The curriculum offered is relevant and interesting to Māori students, and there is evidence teachers try to make their subject areas interesting for Māori students:

*The school is attracting teachers who are committed to Māori student achievement. A senior manager is assigned to work with the managers of mainstream Māori student achievement, meeting once a term. These days Māori parents are demanding the best for their children.* [Principal]

There is a clearly documented departmental assessment plan to collect the information needed to monitor progress on priority learning goals and enhance Māori learner achievement. Senior managers, heads of department and teachers track and analyse students' results each term. Heads of department hold regular meetings to discuss achievement, and action is taken to keep students on track if necessary—by academic directors and the head of department at the senior level, and by deans and heads of department at the junior level. Heads of department try to ensure every Māori student experiences a programme that is challenging and appropriate.

Māori students maintain that Western Springs College is an awesome school where they are encouraged to succeed. Students report there are opportunities for extra tuition. Students also noted the school provides opportunities to broaden their horizons regarding career options, and they are made to feel they have potential:

*This is an awesome school, and you'll do really well academically. If you come here, you won't want to leave.* [Māori student]

*[The school offers] the chance to learn cool things like physics and calculus, challenging teachers that always push me, a relaxed environment.* [Māori student]

**Students in need of additional support identified early**

Deans and teachers identify Māori students needing additional support early, and put in place plans to accelerate their progress. There is a lot of support wrapped around Māori students. The deans have a strong focus on the pastoral care elements of their role. Further, the school is uncompromising in ensuring students have basic skills. For instance, the school has a 100

percent achievement rate for Level 1 numeracy. Students say teachers sacrifice a lot of personal time to help them succeed, and they genuinely believe teachers have high levels of commitment to them.

There is a high level of data collection for all students including Māori that is analysed, reported, discussed and acted upon. For example, the school analyses levels of achieved, merit and excellence gained for internally assessed achievement standards by ethnicity and gender. In addition, senior managers get feedback from students on teachers.

Curriculum in all areas includes content relevant to the identity of Māori students—especially in the Rumaki, where content is Māori-focused and taught in te reo Māori. In mainstream classes the focus is more on developing strong relationships with students, but these teachers are also expected to present content relevant to the identity of Māori students.

Teachers receive feedback on individualised approaches used with students and are closely monitored within each department. Strategies that are used to maximise the engagement of Māori students include:

- making the work interesting and fun by breaking tasks down
- working with Māori students as a group, and allowing students to build on one another's understanding
- teachers having an open-door policy for students.

There is regular discussion in teaching teams of student achievement and the results of common tests or tasks. Staff use these discussions to inform their curriculum planning.

## PART B: ENSURING QUALITY OF TEACHING

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There is a school-wide approach and a shared responsibility for Māori students' academic and social learning.

Some key Māori staff and community members make an important contribution to a whole-of-school approach. Those with particular expertise in te reo Māori and tikanga Māori help other teachers in the school strengthen and develop their knowledge and skills. The school has a focus on ensuring teachers have competency in te reo Māori me ona tikanga (Māori language and customs), and on understanding their obligations in upholding Te Tiriti o Waitangi (the Treaty of Waitangi). These requirements are outlined in the school's staff appraisal document:

*Pronounce and use Māori names and words correctly, where appropriate, develop Māori language appropriate to own learning area, incorporate elements of te reo and tikanga Māori into classroom programmes with some guidance, participate in Māori cultural events and develop understanding of local kawa and tikanga where relevant.*

There is a challenge to improve teaching where Māori students remain disengaged, and support for this. Teachers regularly account for the progress of all their students including Māori students, and those students who are struggling are closely monitored. Because of this reflective process, teachers are constantly challenged to find new approaches:

*It can be a powerful thing to say out loud that this student is not having the results because my teaching could be improved ... In a nonblaming way, it is focused on the students and about getting the very best from them. [Academic director]*

There are high levels of expertise and collegial support amongst staff to help them work effectively with Māori students. The collegial atmosphere between teaching staff encourages teachers to seek support from others. Teachers identify their own professional development needs, and support is available from the senior management team, heads of department and specialist classroom teachers who make provision for mentoring or undertaking classroom observations and providing feedback. Appraisals are clearly linked to teaching practice and improving student outcomes generally, as well as Māori student outcomes specifically.

**School-wide approach and shared responsibility for Māori students**

**Collegial atmosphere supports teaching staff to work effectively with Māori**

## **Assessment data and student feedback inform improved teaching**

The principal leads an experienced senior management team that is well established with longstanding relationships. The senior management team knows each other's strengths and weaknesses and is comfortable having robust discussions, disagreeing and debating issues behind closed doors. The senior management team aims to harness its collective experience as well as that of its staff, and all are open to new learning. The principal provides for highly distributed leadership that utilises the strengths of his senior management team as well as the wider teaching staff:

*Any staff; all the teachers are potential leaders ... The thing I liked about my past principals was the quality of letting you run with an idea—something you were passionate about. I try to bring that into my role as school leader.* [Principal]

Assessment data, such as that produced by the PAT and asTTle testing systems, are used in conjunction with a deep knowledge of each student to improve teaching to enhance Māori learner achievement.

Teachers receive ongoing feedback from Māori students on the effectiveness of their teaching, both in day-to-day exchanges and when exploring student results. There are plenty of opportunities for students and teachers to discuss coursework. Students can also go to heads of department or to the homework centres if they do not understand something and want further support.

Staff appraisals are an important time for reflection and identification of requirements for further professional development. However, as the school is engaged in a learning organisation approach, there are many opportunities during the year for the entire staff to reflect on their practice and to look for ways to improve or find innovative solutions to issues that arise.

# Teacher learning and development to enhance Māori student achievement

**Open discussion of Māori students' results used to develop more effective teaching strategies**

The principal and senior management team strongly promote collaborative teacher learning and development:

*The principal is a capable and productive school leader. Together with the collaborative leadership team, the principal has developed reflective models for planning and reporting that align with the board's strategic direction. A professional culture has been established throughout the school and senior managers invest resources in order to further develop staff leadership skills. [ERO report 2010]*

Māori student achievement patterns are analysed and incorporated in the school's Annual Plan as goals, which are then translated into targets for professional learning:

*I went to each department and asked them what they were doing. I showed them how to set up a spreadsheet so heads of department had a spreadsheet for their junior students, mainly in the core subjects, so that they could record all their department's data and look at how it was coming in and start reflecting upon it. [Deputy principal]*

There is open discussion of Māori students' results, and teachers help each other develop more effective teaching strategies. There are both formal and informal sessions that utilise systematic data collection analysis to inform professional learning and learning opportunities. Senior management has a significant role in this:

*Departments looking at student achievement patterns break data down into the achievement standards, both internal and external. There are formal assessments once a term. [In implementing a reporting system] there was a lot of talking and [teachers] were a little bit nervous, but after the first couple of terms of taking their results in to the head of department and showing the reflections they'd had on it and having [the head of department's] input on it, they think it's really useful now. [Deputy principal]*

**Meetings to examine student performance are timely**

There are three to four analysis meetings every year between the head of department and the teacher to discuss progress and ways of enhancing Māori student achievement and meeting staff support needs. Staff meetings include serious discussions about how to improve teaching and learning for Māori learners:

*So if you were to come in as a teacher I would say to you, 'Ok who are your Māori kids in your class? ... Where do you think they should be?' And then we make some decisions about what the next steps are going to be for those particular students. And every time you have a meeting, you use the evidence that's been added on and you make some calls in terms of what has that particular student's path been and, 'Why has that happened and what did we do to influence it and what can we do differently?' Then you also start looking at, 'Well this Māori student is doing really, really well and this one isn't, they're in the same classroom, why do you think that is?' 'Well this one attends and this one doesn't.' 'Ok, well what can we do about this?' And it's constantly guiding that process of thinking about each student's learning individually. 'Cause I think as teachers, it's our job to look at the class and you manage the class and it's a learning community, but at those meetings there's a huge sense of accountability in terms of us thinking about individual students and that's the expectation across all ... teachers for all courses. [Head of department]*

**Collaborative teacher groups enable teachers to draw support from peers**

Collaborative teacher groups provide a setting for teachers to improve their teaching of Māori learners by observing effective colleagues, and there are a number of initiatives to support teacher development such as peer teaching:

*Collaborative teacher groups are formed within subject areas—they meet on a regular basis, monitoring and tracking, designing interventions on an as-needs basis. [Principal]*

**Teachers document progress and constantly review ways to teach more effectively**

*[With] regards teacher learning and development, we had a school-wide project that was the 'Able project—assessment for better learning' where we looked at lots of different things including how Māori students learn ... And we had someone from the Ministry of Education come in and talk to us about what was happening in other schools—where teachers were going into others' classrooms and feeding back. We had critical friends set up here, where it happened on a smaller scale. So there's been a strong professional development focus. The collaborative learning and reflective process became embedded. And as a school we've gradually, over the last 10 years, used some of the property money to have nice department areas, with large tables and places for [staff] to be able to sit together and work collegially.* [Deputy principal]

**Regular feedback from students, whānau and staff feeds into school planning**

The school documents its own progress for each subject area and learns from that progress. Decisions to maintain or change particular teaching approaches are based on evidence about their impact on Māori students. In addition, there is a constant focus on professional development offering teachers opportunities to develop the knowledge and skills necessary to provide quality teaching for Māori learners. The school has a rich internal resource, and there is a team effort within each department:

*The approach to be taken is a team effort, so the head of department might suggest something and the department might say, 'Not sure but we'll try it.' And then it will be reviewed, and it can be adjusted or it could be abandoned, or it can be re-thought [through]. As a school as a whole we don't really operate on the basis of, 'You will do this.' It's professional development and what ideas have come out of it: What can we try and implement? Let's have a look. Did that work? No—let's go back to the drawing board. Or let's cement that in concrete or let's refine it. We are open to change. I wouldn't still have an interest if things didn't change. It's important that we try things with other people's ideas and sometimes they're great!* [Deputy principal]

There is a robust process for collecting feedback on all staff including the senior management team. Quality-of-service questionnaires are given to students, whānau and staff. Student feedback can be analysed by Māori and non-Māori. The results assist the senior management team to plan and take into account the wishes of whānau:

*Similarly, staff will be asked to provide performance feedback about heads of departments, and the staff will be asked to fill in things about senior managers—often ones we work closely with. Every two years we do a quality of service [assessment] where all students, parents and staff are surveyed, and they rate various things within the school. And then we have a group of staff, the senior managers and some nominated ones who will come and look at those results. And that helps us make the plan for the next year or two about what we need to do in school. For example, we put extra time for careers because it was coming through from parents that they didn't think we did enough career advice, and so we've just appointed another half-time [position] into careers.* [Deputy principal]

# Ensuring an orderly and supportive environment for Māori students

**Clear expectations of both students and staff**

Western Springs College provides an orderly environment for both students and staff. For students, there is a clear expectation they will attend school, apply themselves, take responsibility for their learning and ask for help when needed. For staff, there is ongoing support to help teachers be effective in the classroom, foster a love of learning in students and help students achieve their potential.

When asked for the top three reasons they come to school, mainstream Māori students' responses referred to the school's positive climate:

*The teachers are very supportive, there is a good feel from the student body, it's a peaceful school. [Student]*

*[The school is] not too big therefore teachers have [fewer] people to teach which means they can spend more time on us. [It is a] family school, [we have the] freedom to express ourselves. [Student]*

*Friends—friendly atmosphere, to do well in class, enjoyment of extracurricular activities. [Student]*

Whānau are also aware of the warm environment of the school:

*I think it has got a really caring environment, even though it is a really big school ... it's a real community, and I think the kids can feel that. [BOT member]*

As these comments illustrate, whānau and students believe the school genuinely wants them to achieve and that both teachers and students have a role to play in that process. Students are expected to take responsibility for their learning. Support is often given in the form of one-on-one time with students, although sometimes teachers work with groups. Heads of department are specific in their encouragement of students:

*[I say] 'I would like you to aim for merit there and I would like us to aim for achieved here, and here I'd like an excellence.' And when you list it for them and you outline it and then when you teach the topic, you're quite particular in terms of, 'Ok this is your topic, where I think you're really capable of excellence. Now to get excellence these are the things I need you to do.' And they like that structure, and they like it to be clear-cut, black and white. And I find that the boys ... when I set those goals—and it's shorter goals—and they can see how they can achieve them, they respond hugely better to it being [presented as] an open-ended course and they need to achieve certain skills. [Deputy principal]*

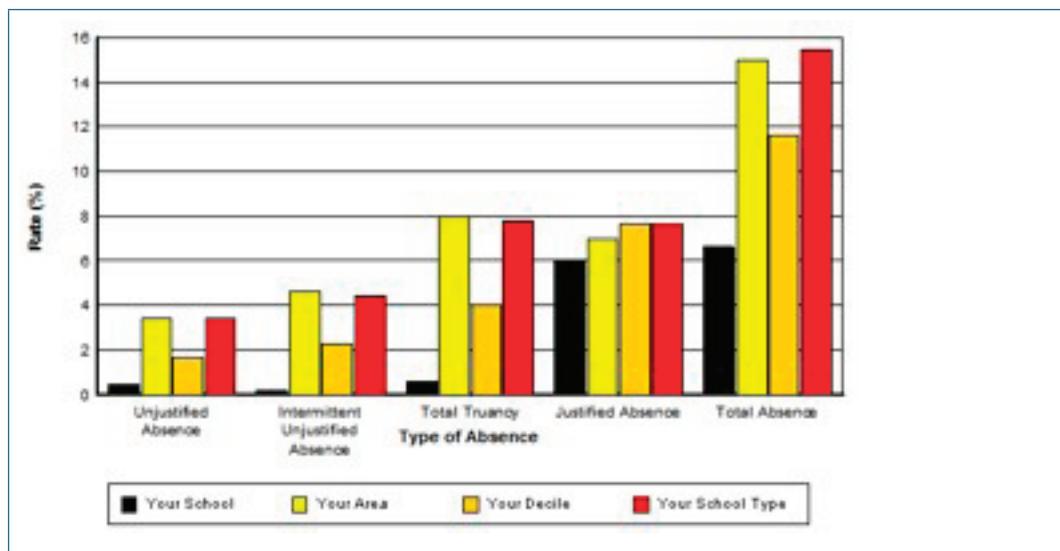
The school focuses on learning rather than behaviour. Students told us they feel safe at school, and one head of department maintained that the majority of behaviour management problems at Western Springs College are not with the Māori students.

Compared with similar school types and deciles, absentee rates at Western Springs College are low (around 6.6 percent) for all students with high attendance for all groups. In 2009, the attendance rates were: European—93.4 percent; Māori—92.6 percent; Pasifika—94.7 percent; Asian—87.6 percent; and other—91.8 percent. Truancy rates across the ethnic groups are generally less than 2 percent (with the exception of the Asian students at 2.8 percent).

**Māori students and their whānau genuinely believe the school wants them to succeed**

**Focus on learning rather than behaviour**

**FIGURE 2** Absence rates compared to other schools of similar school type for 2009



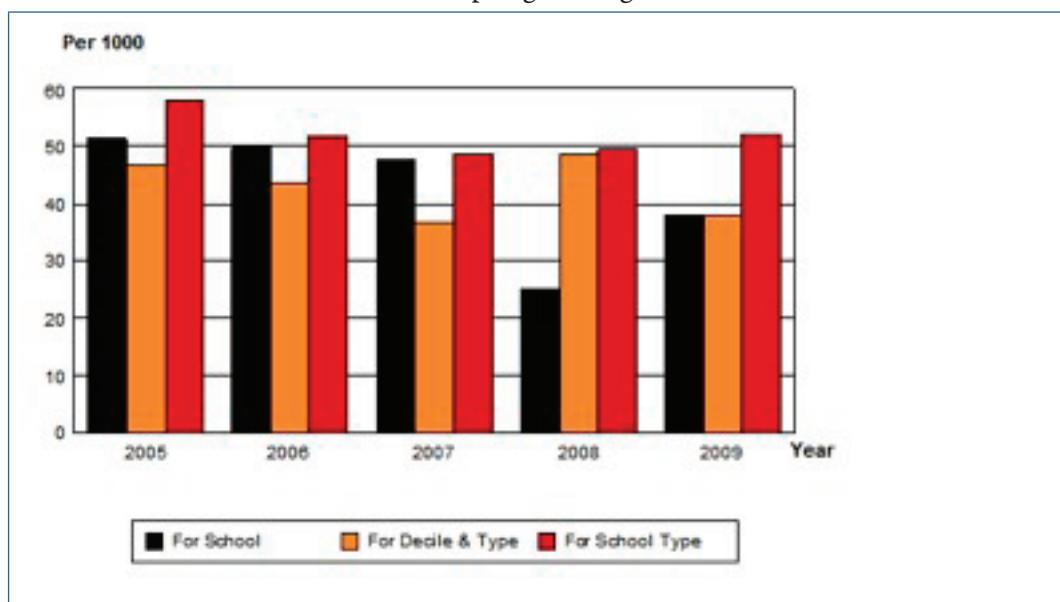
Absentee and truancy rates are low

Behaviour management is consistent school-wide

Source: Ministry of Education School SMART website data

There is a consistent school-wide approach to student behaviour management at Western Springs College, which enhances Māori learner achievement. A departmental strategy outlines expectations of staff, and a preventative management approach helps manage behaviour and deal with different levels of misconduct. The school uses stand-downs and suspensions where necessary. In 2008 and 2009 there were fewer stand-downs and suspensions than prior to 2007.

**FIGURE 3** Stand-downs at Western Springs College 2005–2009



Source: Ministry of Education School SMART website data

In the past, Western Springs College staff have undergone a professional development course presented by Russell Bishop, and the school supports his approach to focus on the learning rather than the behaviour:

*Classroom management is all about getting students engaged. And if the students feel they can learn, then generally they're engaged and generally you don't have too many behaviour issues. There will always be somebody who has too many external influences, but it's not focusing on behaviour—it's focused on learning. I never actually tell a group off for talking in the classroom; I would immediately say, 'I don't think that's enough work. We're getting behind. Come on we need to get through this. You're not going to have this ready in time.' I find that the behaviour doesn't need to be mentioned—you just always shift the focus back to the learning. [Deputy principal]*

There is a school culture that Māori students can and will be successful, and the school is interested in Māori students' views. Due to the focus of the senior management team, along with systems and processes in the school, the school is a positive environment in which Māori student learning is a central focus and staff work hard to build relationships with students:

*The collaborative teaching approach where teachers buddy up with others when working on some areas of the curriculum is great. The thing that is most needed for our Māori kids to succeed is a good relationship with the teacher. A challenge is, though, that sometimes our kids put up barriers. [Teacher]*

*The head of department would informally visit classrooms quite regularly; pop in and out of the classrooms all the time. I do, too, as I only teach one class, but if I can see someone's struggling I can get in alongside—referred to as peer teaching. I can get in there and sit with a group of students. Teachers are open to that approach. I'll say, 'Is there a group of students that are struggling?' and if they are they'll say so. It's not threatening. [Deputy principal]*

## SUPPORT FOR STAFF

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A culture of success has grown over the past 10 years. Western Springs College's departmental systems and processes provide a formal structure for both teaching staff and students. Staff take part in ongoing discussions about student achievement and are encouraged to take a continuous improvement approach.

The school team places huge emphasis on the need for teachers to get to know their students. Teachers are able to, expect to and are supported to work effectively with Māori students. Students say teachers are committed to them and they believe the school really wants them to do well:

*Most of the teachers relate well to students; you are encouraged to be an individual; there are many resources available to help better your learning. [Student]*

*A quality relationship between teacher and student is essential. The culture is [the student] can go to anyone for support but also it is that you might not like the teacher you have this year—tough—it's still your job to learn. You can come and ask any of us, but don't tell me it's because of the teacher that you're not achieving. [Deputy principal]*

# Making powerful connections with Māori whānau and community supports for Māori student achievement

Rumaki encourages strong whānau commitment—which helps whānau to be aware of student learning

Mainstream Māori parent support group

Ongoing commitment from school to communicate with mainstream whānau

Western Springs College has a number of strategies in place to ensure there are strong connections between the school, Māori whānau and the Māori community. Māori whānau can choose to enrol their students in the Rumaki or in mainstream classes. Some 21 years in operation, the Rumaki operates along the lines of kura, and there are two preconditions to entry: the whānau has to be committed to tikanga and te reo, and the whānau has to commit to support the Rumaki. This is not just about attending hui, but requires a serious ongoing commitment to support their students by coming to homework centres, supporting weekend wananga, kapa haka rehearsals and attending sporting events:

*Whānau are rostered to help and are expected to turn up, roll up their sleeves and get stuck in ... I think those students ... are so lucky. I often exaggerate to make a point by saying they are getting a 24/7 education. And it's a holistic approach ... [with] big emphasis on academic achievement but also on cultural and sporting achievement—the whole deal. And increasingly a focus on transition beyond school into tertiary education. And families really warm to this. They can see that there is this total care for their kids, and there are not too many places you can get this wrap-around service. [Principal]*

A mainstream Māori parent group offers support to Māori students and whānau, and provides feedback to the school. A senior manager is assigned to work with this group, which meets once a term. Two teachers share a management position to monitor and manage Māori student achievement in mainstream classes, over and above the work of the academic directors who focus on all Māori students. These teachers provide additional links to whānau. There is a diversity among whānau of the mainstream students in their experience of what it means to be Māori, with some whānau being strongly aligned to cultural values and practices while others are not. One of the challenges for the school is to meet the needs of this diverse group:

*Some parents don't even want to acknowledge that they are kind of Māori or that their kids are Māori ... so it's quite tricky sometimes. [BOT member]*

*They go, 'Why do you need to do a separate Māori thing?... That's the attitude of some of them. So you are on a whole different playing field there; a whole way of thinking [that] is totally different ... [compared with] the Rumaki whānau. [BOT member]*

Key members of the senior leadership team are well known in the community, with some now teaching a second generation of students. The senior leadership team welcomes whānau engagement and reflects that whānau are often well informed, articulate and prepared to challenge the school to ensure their children get the best opportunities possible:

*They regularly come in and ask questions, or find out or want to know something or want something put in place—they are very discerning. [Deputy principal]*

*You've got Māori parents demanding the best for their kids. I think that's a healthy situation. [Principal]*

Due to their high level of involvement in their students' education, Rumaki whānau are well aware of the course of study their children undertake. All whānau interviewed reported feeling well informed, with many opportunities during the year to discuss class programmes and their children's progress.

The mainstream Māori parent group is used as a point of contact for the school to engage with mainstream Māori whānau. Events to engage whānau and students outside of the class and in a culturally safe way are initiated and advocated by this group. These may include a welcome BBQ, information nights, an end-of-year celebration and Matariki events.

**School ensures  
Māori BOT  
representation  
from both  
Rumaki  
and Māori  
mainstream  
whānau**

A designated senior manager makes a concerted effort to communicate with mainstream whānau and to provide an accurate picture of the school and what is happening for Māori. Indeed, the development of the mainstream Māori parent group was initiated by the school after whānau reported concerns with retention of Māori boys and expressed a desire to have a specific forum to address issues for Māori students in mainstream classes. In addition, a range of communication opportunities, both formal and informal, are available to whānau. These include hui, written reports, email, phone calls and notices.

Western Springs College co-opts BOT members to represent Māori and frequently reports on Māori academic and cultural success at BOT meetings:

*The school makes the students feel confident as Māori students, not as someone else. [BOT member]*

Whānau know the school has excellent knowledge of their students' current achievement levels and that all possible support will be given to help them reach their goals:

*It's a balance between home and school, but they really do have such a good sense of who he is and where he is in his learning. [Whānau]*

*The school offers a range of opportunities—a wide curriculum in sports, music, te reo, academic—which is good, because it means that your kids can have success in many areas and get to experience many things. [Whānau]*

*The school has a culture of success for all and high expectations ... They are highly organised and they set up homework centres and, you know, the learning centre, all the support systems for the kids, if they want extra support in maths. Then [there are] the different subjects that hold workshops in the holidays ... The Rumaki gets massive support for the kids actually ... after hours. [BOT member]*

Teachers report consistently on student progress, taking sufficient time to explain the student's current level and what needs to be done for them to progress. These conversations involve whānau and students.

# Engaging in constructive problem talk enhances Māori student achievement

## Senior leadership team operates a distributed leadership model

The principal of Western Springs College clearly has the respect of the staff as someone who is knowledgeable about pedagogy, recognises the strengths of others and is able to build strong teams of highly experienced professionals. One of the notable features of the school is the long tenure of some of the staff. The principal has held his position since 1998, having joined the school as deputy principal in 1990. A current deputy principal has been at the school 27 years and holds much of the institutional knowledge. Others on the senior management team have been at the school for more than five years.

The principal is highly regarded by the senior management team, BOT and whānau, and leads a distributed leadership team. According to the distributed leadership model, the deputy principal has a focus on pedagogical leadership. She leads reflection on the internal data on student achievement, and in particular, Māori student achievement, which informs important school decisions. Her particular area of strength is in the pedagogical support for the leadership of the maths department. (The initiatives of the maths department are covered in the exemplar that supports this case study.) The principal also coaches and mentors potential leaders.

The principal and deputy principal facilitate discussions to improve teaching and learning, especially to enhance Māori learner achievement. At a school-wide level there is a systematic approach to developing annual plans that draw on input from each department. The principal encourages robust discussion amongst the senior management team and at BOT level, and supports innovation and change where it is needed to enhance student achievement. He favours an open style of decision making:

*People are quite responsible in terms of their demands—when you give them all the information, they don't tend to make unreasonable demands. It's only when they think that you have something under the table that you are holding back on that they get defensive, aggressive and demanding, so I think it's got a lot to do with the style of leadership and management ...*

*And how do you determine a fair allocation of resources? I actually think that the more power you give people the more power you get back, and so that is the reason I am open about this.*  
[Principal]

## School-wide approach to developing annual plans

The principal has a clear understanding of partnership and of ways to honour the Treaty of Waitangi. He also understands the notion of identity and the importance of identity as Māori:

*If the Rumaki is to be a strong entity in itself then it has to have its own integrity and its own life. Sometimes mainstream Māori parents notice the Māori education that Rumaki kids get. It's great to offer two strong options ...*

*To some extent justifiably, we were criticised for a little while for not really focusing enough on mainstream Māori students. I think the school responded to that by establishing a mainstream Māori parent group, which is separate from the Rumaki group. There is a trustee nominated from that group, just as two trustees are co-opted from the Rumaki onto the board.* [Principal]

The principal has an important role in ensuring the needs of both the Rumaki and mainstream Māori students and whānau are met. He considers it important to support Māori student achievement and ensure that Māori student needs are balanced along with the needs of the rest of the school. There are ongoing tensions around ensuring the school offers genuine choice to Māori whānau. The principal sees his role is to ensure that all parties are represented and have decision-making opportunities. Western Springs College has put in place practical steps that reflect an honouring of the intent of the Treaty of Waitangi policy:

*Representation and decision making goes back to the Treaty, and that's the thing that is very strong here: the school commitment to the Treaty and to partnership. It's absolutely fundamental.* [Principal]

**School meeting needs of both the Rumaki and mainstream Māori students and whānau**

*[The principal supports mainstream Māori] by putting the money into the time allocation for those management positions (when I know there's a lot of pressure for those time allocations elsewhere in the school), having the position on the board, coming along to all of the [mainstream] functions, and speaking at them ... talking about how it's important. All the board statistics always report on academic and cultural success, all kind of success of Māori and Pacific Island students in the school. It's just taken for granted that those kind of results are there as well as overall results ... I know a lot of other schools haven't got that together yet. [BOT member]*

The principal trusts the years of experience, knowledge, expertise and passion of the senior management team, which includes Māori representation. Decision making at Western Springs College is done predominantly by consensus, as this way the principal ensures that the Māori voice is represented, even when it is in the minority:

*In a meeting process, we would not choose a majority decision-making [method] to overrule the Māori viewpoint. Consensus making is the way we go, and that tends to operate at a board level as well. [Principal]*

There is lots of evidence of courageous conversations amongst the senior leadership team at the behest of the Rumaki and whānau. The tumuaki considers that contributions of whānau and key resource people to Māori student achievement (in both the Rumaki and in mainstream) have been highly significant:

*The long-term and continuous investment by whānau Māori of the school needs to be recognised and understood. The school has continued to build on and develop since the earliest initiatives. I would say that everything for and from mainstream Māori has been a drop-down approach or adaptation from what has been initiated in the Rumaki, Reo Rua, whānau classes and marae committees over the years. [Tumuaki]*

The principal recognises it is vital to acknowledge Māori student achievement, both academic and nonacademic, and that building relationships with whānau is imperative. The principal is dedicated to Māori student achievement, is responsive to new ideas and encourages and values the expertise of staff:

*The Rumaki prizegiving is a wonderful affirmation of student achievement, in academic, cultural and sporting arenas. The students clearly appreciate the way in which their achievements are honoured as Māori. Students are deeply appreciative of the selfless dedication of the Kaiako. [Principal]*

*We celebrate their successes a lot. We are doing a Year 13 mainstream Māori celebration leavers' kai on Thursday this week, which has been really successful in past years. The kids talk about what they have achieved and what they are going on to do ... And this year has been really good because a lot of the student leaders have been Māori in the mainstream. [BOT member]*

It is evident that the principal cares about all students and understands the dynamics of the community. He values relationships and champions a leadership style that ensures Māori both in the Rumaki and in mainstream classes have a genuine voice. He is very committed to successful outcomes for Māori students:

*They make the students feel confident as Māori students. [BOT member]*

In addition, the principal and deputy principal know the community; the principal is active in it and regularly attends events where whānau are present. The senior management team is open to discussion with Māori whānau and observes positively that whānau have become more discerning over the years. The BOT appreciates the principal's genuine commitment to Māori students:

*[We] have a principal who really supports [mainstream Māori], and knows and just doesn't talk about it but actually thinks actively about ways of supporting it. [BOT member]*

**Achieving Māori student success takes time and a school-wide commitment**

The principal believes that the high levels of Māori student achievement at Western Springs College are the result of a lengthy commitment from the school. The original drive for change came many years ago from concern that students were leaving school after Year 10:

*Initially we didn't focus on achievement; we asked, 'What can we do to keep them in school?' ... We had to have them here before we could concentrate on achievement ... but the things we were doing to keep them in school were improving their achievement. [Deputy principal]*

Over the years, the school has used a range of policies, procedures and initiatives—including employing more Māori staff. The principal and members of the senior management team believe the school now has a reputation as being committed to Māori education and attracts teachers committed to supporting Māori student achievement:

*It's not an overnight development—you've got to acknowledge the legacy of the people who came before you. [Principal]*

## FURTHER READINGS

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- Bishop, R., & Glynn, T. (1999). *Culture counts: Changing power relations in education*. Palmerston North: Dunmore Press.
- Lee, J., & Selwyn, C. (2010). *Oho Ake: Rehu Marae, Nga Puna o Waiorea*. Auckland: Western Springs College.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Nga Puna O Waiorea unit acknowledges it has used models and adopted policies and practices from Whānau kura from throughout the region and that Waiorea has taken the best of these, along with the guidance and support of Whānau kura and has made these its own. Whānau kura include Newton/Te Uru Karaka, Kowhai, Whānau Ata at Freemans Bay, Nga Uri o Nga Iwi at Westmere, Te Kura Māori o Nga Tapuwae, Tupuranga-Kia Arahoa College, Te Kura Kaupapa o Hoani Waititi Marae.

In regard to personal contributions, Nga Puna O Waiorea unit acknowledges the significant contributions from amazing kaiako over the years such as Mahia Nathan, Jim Peters, Lilli Tuioti, Achlee Fong, Mina Pomare, Margie Taurere and Deidre Walker.

This case study has developed from the knowledge and expertise of many people both now and from the past who have been involved in various stages of writing and production, whom the research team would like to acknowledge.

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The research team is grateful to the time and contribution of both students and whānau who spoke with them and trusted that their experiences within the school would be represented accurately. Students engaged in the research process with maturity and expressed their hopes that their own successful experiences would improve education for Māori throughout Aotearoa.

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The research team included Kataraina Pipi, Kellie Spee and Nan Wehipeihana. At their invitation, Judy Oakden led the team and had overall responsibility for the project.

## (FOOTNOTES)

1 M/E certification rate is the proportion of students who achieve NCEA with a merit or excellence endorsement.

2 “As Māori” means Māori enjoy success from the perspective of a Māori world view.

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