

Neil Worboys

## 2012 Sabbatical Report

### Introduction:

My intention is to examine, through research findings and through dialogue with education sector practitioners, the role **cultural responsiveness** plays in enhanced Māori student achievement in primary schools.

One of Ka Hikitia's (The Māori Education Strategy 2008 – 2012) key messages is that "Māori students' educational success is critical to Aotearoa New Zealand's success".

Other key points include:

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

It is clear that the ability of a school to realise the potential of their Māori students relies on the school's ability to be culturally responsive to those students – in the quality of the teaching and learning, in the relationships with students, parents and whanau and in Tikanga and Māori values being embedded in school culture and practices.

What is not so clear is how schools and their communities have gone about developing these important practices and processes. What has been successful? What works?

Through reading some of the research available and talking to a range of people within school communities and the education sector I hope to shed a little more light on what cultural responses and specific practices and processes are successful in enhancing Māori student achievement.

I wish to thank all those I met with during the course of gathering the information that makes up this report. Ngā mihi nunui ki ā koutou mo tā koutou manaaki, mo tā koutou awhina ki ā au. Your warmth and willingness to share with me your valuable time and to share your knowledge and expertise has been a wonderful and enriching experience for me – aroha nui ki ā koutou.

In July and August 2012, I visited nine schools – six in Te Tai Tokerau and three in South Auckland. Whilst all schools visited were quite different - environment, make up of community, systems and structures - all had a number of commonalities:

- A significant Māori roll – from 30 to 100 percent
- A strong commitment to Māori learning as Māori
- A focus on partnerships and relationships within the school and community
- A curriculum that reflected their student and community identities

During my school visits I interviewed the principal, other teachers and a number of students in order to get a picture of the school from several perspectives. The

following report is a gathering together of the notes I took during the interviews. I have grouped the report under the following headings:

#### CULTURAL RESPONSIVENESS:

- Partnerships – community, consultation, communication
- Relationships – inside and outside the school
- Curriculum – content and context
- Student engagement – Māori achieving as Māori

During the course of my sabbatical I gathered a large amount of current research information around cultural responsiveness, Māori education, cultural identity and learning (see resource list). These readings have helped in understanding and confirming the approaches to teaching and learning found in the schools that I visited.

#### PARTNERSHIPS:

“Nāu te rourou, nāku te rourou – Your basket and my basket”

The following approaches to developing and sustaining community partnerships were described by principals and teachers:

- My deputy principal and I have attended meetings with the local Iwi. These were consultation hui called to assist our local Iwi to develop their educational strategic plan. The local Iwi representative has also followed these meetings up twice. I have also attended my own Iwi and Hapu education strategy meetings. This is where I take advice on tikanga and kawa when I need it.
- We have slowly built relationships with the Marae through a local kuia, a former staff member. It took 18 months to get to the stage of visiting the marae – getting to know the community, building relationships with the kuia and Māori parents and whanau.
- Church and Marae committees – the principal was invited by the kuia and has subsequently talked to the Marae committee – building links to the school. The principal is working on building community spirit – connecting with the community. *“If we want a vibrant school, we need a vibrant community!”*
- The local Iwi are involved with the school through a hau ora initiative.
- Parents have expectations that high quality learning is happening and they trust the school to do this. There is no problem getting parent/whanau help when needed. Homework / Inquiry – good support from home. A well respected kuia works with me in the school (teacher aide in the bilingual unit). She is my guide and I tap into her for local knowledge as I am not from here.
- Rituals, symbols, systems and practices need to be real – linked to life and to our community. We have an open door policy – parents can come in at any time and go directly to the classroom (no signing in etc). Staff have spent time on what ‘open door’ really means in terms of a partnership with parents/whanau.
- Each team / whanau meets with parents once a term. We are asking ourselves; is there a genuine two-way partnership? (Often meetings are on school terms only). What are we asking our parents to do? Are we asking our parents what they would like for their children? Parents now have a larger role in these meetings.
- The Board developed some key questions around community engagement for the strategic future of the school. To get community engagement the Board worked together to identify key families in the community. Then each Board member was allocated a group of these key people and met with them at their own house, often involving a meal. The Board members then brought back the findings from their meetings for collation and decision making.

- We define consultation in lots of ways. Consultation is different for each ethnic group, so we don't meet with parents as a whole school.
- One of our teachers, with funding from Te Puni Kokiri, knocked on the doors of parent's houses and asked: "What is good / bad about school?"
- Parents said they didn't want meetings – they will come to school when they need something. Parents can be supportive without being at meetings. Parents asked for the school to continue with Yr 9 and 10 classes; then Yr 11 to 13. This happened over a number of years.
- The home is seen as a source of knowledge. Parents and others in the community have large funds of knowledge. Home-school partnerships are a key point: 'Home learning supports achievement'
- Community Groups - setting up the Whanau committee. We had MOE support for the first meeting. We identified key people – talked to them and they talked to others – maximum of about 30 people. Our Māori teachers attend; Māori first – teachers second – the community listens to them. There are fortnightly hui – run by our Māori community. It's important that the principal 'sits back' and waits – doesn't lead the committee. This is difficult but necessary; it must be community led.
- The Samoan community is well organised – links to church groups etc. The Samoan community will now support the Māori community and vice versa - in 2011 this was not the case.
- ICT: We want to set up a wireless network for all the school community to use. Use smart phones – not computers. Apps for learning are being developed and we are using Facebook for communications – we no longer have a website. We are investigating possible links with Microsoft – become a 'Microsoft school'? The Glen Family Foundation is providing money for Otara schools. The focus is on digital learning and the future.
- Child/community/school – if we want the child to be successful in their learning we (the school) need to be part of the community.
- Treaty of Waitangi: We as teachers need to develop our knowledge and understanding. What does the Treaty mean for us as teachers at our school? The Treaty of Waitangi means a partnership in learning.
- Whanau committee: We (Māori teachers) need to build capability up and then step back. At times I have needed to focus the group on the kaupapa but I am also listening to the group and getting advice from kuia and kaumatua.
- Iwi: In this area Tainui / Ngai Tai are Tangata Whenua. Also a lot of Te Tai Tokerau Iwi. Regardless, we all live here.....The culture is 'Nga hau e wha' – Tainui land (tangata whenua), Nga Puhī kawa (or marry it up).
- We have a lot of 'add ons'. The school is the 'hub' of the community. We have on site full time councillors and social workers, a health nurse two days a week; the school funds this and it is the result of parent requests, from a school survey, for a health practitioner to be on site for parents and students to access during school hours. We have adult classes – they have been in place for nine years and are growing – there are more modules now:
  - Job seeking skills (job applications, interview skills, CV preparation etc).
  - Literacy skills (basic ESOL programmes).
  - ITC / computer skills.
- The school provides budgeting advice for parents – part of our 'wrap around' support. Parents also are encouraged to observe in classes (eg reading lessons) so they can take the knowledge learnt back to the home to support home work / home learning.

- We have as chaplain at school two days a week. He is a bit like a social worker. He moves around classrooms and often notices kids ‘flying under the radar’ and mentions them to teachers who then follow up.
- The school has its own Health Centre for its own pre-school programme. The programme is run by a self funded co-ordinator. The programme is named HIPPY (Home Improvement Programme for Parents and Youngsters) and has been running for 12 years. It is partially funded from community (Pacific Foundation) and MOE, \$20,000 funded by the school (school applies for funding). Currently 72 families are in the programme. Approximately 27% of pre-school children attend some sort of ECC – our programme captures extra families. The tutors are parents – they go into others homes and tutor other parents.
- We run a Summer Programme. We take instructional reading programmes throughout January. Parents stay and we provide a programme for them too. We have tracked kids over time – we know the programme is valuable and effective.
- Duffy Books – fabulous – great role models for kids and lots of books for homes.

#### RELATIONSHIPS:

“He aha te mea nui o te ao - he tāngata, he tāngata, he tāngata - What is the greatest thing on earth – it is people, it is people, it is people”

Quality relationships were central to all the schools I visited. There was 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...

Principals, teachers and students described their school based relationships in the following ways:

- The first thing we needed to do was examine ourselves. We needed to have a critical look at our systems etc. because schools are good at ‘blocking their communities’ without realising they are doing it.
- All parents, prospective employees, and the majority of visitors meet the principal and are shown through the whole school to show how we roll. The principal meets with all prospective enrolments; this is part of the enrolment procedure. He tells parents/whanau that we are a committed staff eager to improve our teaching and learning programme. We are always asking for solutions or assistance from the community on any matter.
- The bilingual / immersion school has strong links to iwi / hapu / whanau / parents. Teachers are passionate and there is a ‘cross-over’ to ‘out of school’ links and relationships. More informal links rather than formal.
- The principal has ‘informal’ meetings with parents once a month in the school library – fifteen parents attended in July. It’s an opportunity for parents to suggest ideas, voice concerns etc. The meetings also let parents know that their thoughts and ideas are listened to and acted on. We have general surveys throughout the year (rather than once every three years). They are analyzed and used to inform planning. There are lots of different processes – constantly happening – always letting parents know. Review is constant for staff and parents.
- We shoulder tap people in the community with influence. A thinking group meets once a term to look at what our main issues / themes are. This helps form our strategic intent.
- Parent-teacher meetings also a focus on building relationships - cultural responsiveness. They are now held throughout the school day. All parents are

phoned/contacted before hand, by teachers, to check parents/caregivers are coming (teachers have a script for this, to ensure a consistent message). We have had an 80% response – this is very high compared to previous years.

- After the marae visit, the school was asked to be tangata whenua when another school visited the marae – this was very successful. The school went to our kuia's tangi in 2012 – parents came too (Māori and Pakeha). It was a new (and positive) experience for the Pakeha parents / families. The principal is being careful to bring along all members of the community in the journey to improve Māori achievement. Building the profile of Māori (the marae, tikanga, Reo, Māori learning as Māori) in the school. All the community need to see the value (for all children) of an increasing Māori presence in the school.
- Working bees (staff, parents and families). Eg The olive harvest – the whole school with parents, pick olives at a nearby olive orchard. The school gets 200 litres of olive oil to develop their own products (olive oil, health remedies etc) to sell through the school shop (this is part of the school curriculum).
- We have two camps a year (different year groups). Lots of fund raising, often involving parents / whanau. We have whanau days – food with every occasion. For example, at prize giving, kids cook and serve a meal including setting out tables, chairs, table cloths etc. Kapa haka, for the whole school, is tutored by parents and sports are good – lots of parent involvement. There are a lot of extra people working in the school - artists, gardeners, councillors and others. Some are paid through banked staffing, others are volunteers. Parent-teacher meetings (3 way conferences) are attended by about 70% of parents. The other 30% are chased up.
- The Board chair has been involved in the school for the last 20 years – he is a kaumatua in the community. BOT meetings are held when it suits everyone - straight after school or 5pm and often accompanied by food and wine.
- We have an open door policy – parents very welcome at all times. Parent-teacher interviews are held twice a year (95% to 100% attendance). We have three written reports a year – full written report in term 4. Teachers meet with parents at the end of Term 1 to share assessment information and set goals and at the end of Term 2 (looking at progress / learning).
- The school community (and whole community) responds well to the school eg kapa haka, productions etc and lots of parents and whanau come to assemblies (especially when Juniors are running the assembly). We expect parents to work with their children at home. Homework is linked to school learning. Most of the staff are from this local region – born and bred.
- Relationships are the most important thing – building trust, getting to know the students, being respectful and gaining respect. It is a privilege to teach these children. I want my kids to remember me and come back and see me (after they have left this school). It's the greatest job!
- The staff know the kids really well and know their whanau – they are 'our' kids. Staff share some of themselves with their students. Children respect their elders. Relationships are vital. The teachers must have strong connections with their kids – children will come and talk to me. They are interested in me as well.
- Relationships with parents - some are always involved ☺ and a high percentage come to parent-teacher interviews. I have lots of incidental conversations and it's generally easy to get in touch with parents - parents expect communication when it's needed.
- Increasing parent involvement: The first thing was; “How do we get parents in the gate?” We decided to commit to doing something in our Whanau Ropu (teams) once a term eg Whanau sports event, talents quest etc (fun things).

- Parent interviews in the past were very poorly attended. We agreed as teachers that every family needed to be represented. There was a demand on teachers to see 100%. There were invites and newsletters asking for all families to attend - and that teachers would be knocking on doors if a family didn't show up. On the night we had a BBQ and food - parents and BOT members mingled together. There was no specific timetable (no individual times for each student's parents) and it was an informal meeting – not just about the student report. Nearly everybody came and attendance has been almost 100% since then – and teachers follow up non-attenders.
- Having local teachers is important. There has been a conscious language change from 'those kids' to 'our kids'. Teachers are called 'Whaea' and 'Matua'. Teachers understand that by using these terms they are teaching and caring for the whole child and that their teaching and caring carries on outside of the school to ensure each child is successful, progresses and learns.
- It's vital that all staff have a positive attitude about our parents and acknowledge that parents are doing the best they can, sometimes in difficult situations. A key belief is that teachers must value parent / whanau contributions – they are the experts and know their children best.
- Café Korero: Once a month the principal meets with families at a local café. It is an opportunity to talk with family members about school-wide issues (not about individual students) in a neutral environment. Up to 20 people come to the Café Korero (mostly women but men are being encouraged to attend also). The principal is able to ask questions like "How do you think the school is going?" This activity is really important in showing parents that school staff will genuinely listen to what they say and take things on board. It also gives parents an opportunity to have a real involvement in the school. Some examples of input from the Café Korero:
  - Decisions about school uniform colour were informed from discussions.
  - National Standards – an opportunity to explain the school's point of view and get parents' thoughts and feedback.
  - Sometimes the discussion is about big things (eg –Yr 11 to 13 enrolments) and sometimes about little things (tuck shop issues).
- Teacher only week – beginning of the year. The focus is on 'big picture' strategic stuff. We stay on the marae for the 1<sup>st</sup> two days – this is good for everyone (staff and community). Although initially it was a big change for staff the culture now is that staff really love the whole week.
- We are building distributed leadership, formerly very hierarchical, and instituting a whanau structure. The principal and DPs are teaching in classrooms - doing CRT release plus target kids. Formally all were fully released. We need to involve senior leadership in classroom teaching – taking the vision to the classroom level. We now have six 'Year Group Leaders' – younger less experienced teachers taking a role in leadership. The principal is offering PLD for 'developing leadership' (not for experienced leaders).
- Relationships with the family are a core part of my job. Relationships are a core part of our parents 'Being'. Trust between school, family and child is paramount as children need to see the link between home and school – then they want to learn. Parents' learning is also important.
- Whanau Committee: Building trust – we see parents on a different level (as a person) and vice versa. Planning together – opening the whare, fundraising. The whare is now a place of learning for children, parents and community. We are all changing our thinking and coming together – all on the same wave length.

- Relationships are pivotal – teacher-student and student-student. I am building relationships with families throughout the year by being respectful – always thanking parents and showing appreciation. This is helped by living in the community. This term we are meeting with our Māori community and our wider community. Communication is very important and my actions need to reflect what is important – we are a team of learners, teachers included.
- Relationships come first! We want students that are happy to come to school, feel safe and are relaxed. We want ‘kids to be kids’ at school – no family or peer pressures. Teachers really need to know their kids. Staff are constantly listening to student voice.
- Relationships with the home / parents: Bi-lingualism is the key so we need to educate our parents about the importance of bi-lingual education and the add-on value of having two languages. The best way to communicate with parents is for all units (each comprising seven classes) to hold regular whanau hui once a term at least. We aim to get across key messages: The value of the first language; the value of bi-lingualism. Hui are designed to be attractive for parents and are developed in consultation with parents. They are held at times that suit parents. It might be 5.30pm or 6.30 pm or might be 3pm to 4pm. We provide crèche, food etc.
- Parent ‘get togethers’ in the staff room. Held fortnightly – cup of coffee and bickies. Not a structured meeting but informal talking. We let the parents know and gather them up at 9am. The principal (and any other available staff) attends and joins in discussions. We run the ‘Reading Together’ programme (Jean Biddulph) with parents twice a year.
- This school responds to our community - sometimes whether we agree fully or not. We don’t say... “that doesn’t suit us”. We have an open door policy – we want parents to be in the school, visiting classrooms, taking courses, meeting with the nurse etc. We don’t book things too far in advance – a few days ahead only (many families plan for the day only and are not able to look along way ahead). Tātaiako gives a real insight –parent, child, teacher.
- We need happy staff / well staff. We expect staff to work hard so we reward them for that. We value our staff and need to cater for their emotional needs eg: stress release – a massage person at school – hair cuts at school. Staff can use the school councillors and we have a school day care facility for teachers to use.
- We have a distributed leadership model – recognising the skills and knowledge in our school. We have excellent teachers and leadership (APs, DPs, lead teachers) and we are able to bounce ideas off these people and to build their expertise.
- The Board of Trustees membership represents the make up of our school. There are five elected representatives as well as co-opted representatives. We have a wonderful Board - very focussed on the school goals. There is BOT training, attendance at conferences, a Board cluster for support and PLD. Board members are honest about their needs eg training, new learning. There is stability in the Board also – some members have been on the Board for a long time. Each member is linked to a team. They are visible in our school and are here for the kids – proud of the school and what it stands for. The Board trusts the school leadership and relies on the knowledge of education professionals.

### **Student comment:**

#### **What do you think makes a good teacher?**

- Someone who understands us – recognises our learning needs – can be fun but also teaches us – keeps their authority.

- A kind, laughing teacher who knows the subjects. Helps you out when you get stuck. Having something in common. Not too much serious stuff – learning with fun - but not too much.
- Needs to motivate you and encourage you and help you with your work.
- Pushes us harder and doesn't give up on you. Our teacher is cool as – she's funny, hard, picks me for stuff, respects me.
- Being comfortable with your teacher. Knowing them well enough to ask them anything.
- Kind, plays with us, helps us do our work.
- Teachers help us to grow up and be good – get a job and money.

#### CURRICULUM:

“Kōrerotia ōku painga, kia ngaro ōku mahi koretake – Highlight my strengths and my weaknesses will disappear”

Although all schools visited had their own unique culture and way of doing things the curriculum, and the philosophy behind the curriculum, was consistent across all schools – authentic leaning based in a community centred curriculum.

- We decided to develop authentic learning within the school grounds – Having an authentic context to learning and involving kids in developing the curriculum.
- Inquiry learning is the preferred mode of learning. There is a focus on ‘self-motivated’ learning. All planning is based on the seasons – topic based planning.
- We are using the inquiry approach to support learning and support the stuff children bring to school – it's what works. Children bring their whole selves – they bring lots of experiences and knowledge. The teacher is a facilitator and the kids drive the learning – it's not hard to keep it on track. The partnership between school and the home is embedded in the curriculum.
- The school uses an inquiry approach to deliver the curriculum. All inquiries are linked to our local Iwi and there is a strong social justice / critical pedagogy focus to all Inquiries. The inquiry must have an impact on our community – so parents and family need to be involved. We ask the question: “How does the inquiry focus affect our community / Iwi?” The initial brainstorm includes families – at the moment our inquiry is focussed on mining / papatuanuku. Our priority relationship for the inquiry was originally parents and it has now spread outwards to community and wider.
- We are a research driven school. All PLD is linked to Inquiry (we have no formal staff meetings). All staff, including T Aides, undertake their own inquiry each year. It needs to be something they are passionate about and needs to be relevant to the school and community / Iwi. The structure is: Term 1 – develop your inquiry; Terms 2 and 3 – milestone reports to staff; Term 4 – TO day (after school has finished and kids have gone) – presentations (it's a long day and we usually go out for a meal at the end of the day). Teacher aides do the same sort of thing, however they present to their own team. The individual inquiry is also part of the staff appraisal process. For intensive PLD (eg Ka Hikitia) we use call backs. We would rather do one whole day instead of 4 or 5 one hour staff meetings.
- Literacy and numeracy: We believe there needs to be a different approach as traditional practice has failed our kids in the past. Our school does not partake in MOE driven numeracy and literacy initiatives. We teach literacy and numeracy in the context of our inquiries. We expect literacy and numeracy progress at national norms. Literacy and numeracy are taught as separate subjects, but linked as much as possible to the inquiry, in the early years and then progressing to integrated learning as the students get older.

- Our curriculum has developed over time and parents have accepted the way the curriculum works, and now advocate for it. Teachers developed the pedagogy and worked to get parent ‘buy in’. It’s not enough to just have an ‘academic’ curriculum. The curriculum has a social justice focus; critical pedagogy, research based, an integrated curriculum that is also integrated into the students’ lives with a big picture context to learning.
- Over arching statements like; “My culture defines me” or “Aroha is my intelligence” give rise to critical questions e.g. “But who is defining my culture?” and “So how intelligent am I?”
- We have a community based curriculum with a bi-lingual approach. It’s relevant to families and is specific to the lives of students and families - critically looking at our environment. The home is seen as a source of knowledge - parents and others in the community have large funds of knowledge.
- There are different levels of fluency across the school – kids come in with different levels of fluency and we cater for this in our curriculum
- Headings are built into our online planning tool to ensure the areas we value (students questions, culturally responsive, critical, social justice elements) are embedded in our curriculum and that all areas of the NZ Curriculum are covered over time. We also have these elements built into teachers’ job descriptions – the Critically Conscious, Culturally Responsive Teacher Profile (CCCRTP) developed by teachers.
- There’s been a literacy / numeracy focus for the last 20 years and it hasn’t worked! The curriculum didn’t reflect the children or the community so the first thing we had to do was re-engage with the school community. Learning happens in a social context – at home too. We need to celebrate this. Now our vision is “Learners transforming community”. A process of reflection, making change, taking action, re-reflecting and so on.
- We are redeveloping the curriculum - ‘Learning to Learn’. Using an integrated learning inquiry approach with an Otago context reflecting the community. Contexts need to be appropriate, understandable and relevant – real life experiences but also myths and legends – at the moment we are using contexts that have been proven to work as a starting point. We need to look at how the topic relates to each ethnic group – a very important component of the inquiries - blending the learning component - Maori, Samoan, Tongan, Pakeha.
- We’ve had lots of work on reading levels and writing progressions – our year group leaders get the PLD and then share with us.
- This year we have a focus on writing and spelling. An outside expert works across the school visiting classrooms as well. We have fortnightly staff and syndicate meetings and PLD linked in at the beginning of meetings.
- The inquiry approach is great for our school as integrated subjects give meaningful context to learning. Methods of teaching differ and the curriculum responds differently in each unit. We still have separate times for literacy and mathematics. We have our own ‘School Curriculum’ document that has been built up from a wide range of resources and people. This curriculum is responsive to us and our community.
- All teachers are required to take an Info-link Inquiry paper (University paper) as part of our professional learning programme.
- We are running our own technology programme this year as the programmes provided by the satellite school were not culturally responsive. We have developed a technology programme with our Yr 7 / 8 teachers and senior leadership staff and we will evaluate the effectiveness of the programme at the end of the year.

- Assessment – knowing where our kids are: We use testing tools (nationally normed and our own) and we moderate progress in languages using STAR etc.
- We evaluate using the Key Competencies – teacher observations, child assessment, group assessment. We closely monitor attendance and we monitor social behaviour including OTJs on interaction. We expect our kids to be academically ‘up there’ by year 6 and in the bi-lingual units our Year 7 and 8 students ‘really move’. We know that many of our children do very well when they leave here – we track achievement beyond our school. *It is very hard to link to National Standards*

## STUDENT ENGAGEMENT - Māori enjoying education success as Māori

“Whāngaia ka tupu, ka puawai – That which is nurtured, blossoms and grows”

In my visits to all nine schools it was clear that student engagement was closely linked to the other three key areas of partnerships, relationships and curriculum. It was the sum of these three things that allowed students to engage successfully in their learning.

- Māori enjoying education success as Māori: “It is preposterous that any Māori should aspire to become a poor Pakeha, when their true destiny, prescribed by the Creator, is to become a great Māori.” – Sir James Henare (displayed in the Kawakawa School office foyer).
- The charter includes a statement of intent for Māori students. This for us reflects Ka Hikitia and I as Principal ensure that it happens. As part of the charter, the curriculum programme is to provide traditional and contemporary Māori contexts on an ongoing basis. One syndicate in particular has taken up the challenge. This syndicate includes the bi-lingual class, however the other two teachers in the syndicate have embraced the changes in our curriculum direction.
- The school’s resources reflect Māori skills, knowledge, experiences, language, tikanga, values and beliefs. The teacher aide in the bi-lingual class also delivers te reo Māori and ‘sign’ for the other two syndicates on a daily basis.
- The whole staff is part of a ‘Te Reo Māori in the Mainstream’ professional learning programme. The principal has employed Maori staff able to assist their colleagues with resources. All staff have high expectations in terms of academic achievement, social interaction and up to date relevant NZ based research.
- “Factors that may have contributed to change include my position, my own whanau, my own vision for this school, PLD from Aka Tokerau, PLD for cultural appreciation and a correcting of long held ignorant views.” - Principal
- Cultural responsiveness: Are we being clear about cultural responsiveness? We are focussed on getting clarity. Are we as leaders clear in our agreed understandings? Are we being specific about what is expected of our teachers? Are leaders being explicit?
- Job descriptions have been reviewed - they are more specific. Senior leaders have sat with HODs and identified what they intend to achieve this year. There has been a lot of professional development around explicit teaching. The principal has had pre and post meetings with all teachers, classroom observations and feedback – time consuming but important.
- The bi-lingual and immersion units make up 25% of the school. Our school processes support Māori – The Charter and strategic goals are now specific in incorporating Māori achievement and a culture of engagement. There is a focus on learning (rather than behaviour) and conversations are about learning – not

behaviour. Restorative justice processes have also impacted on teacher / student relationships – dignity and mana. We work really hard not to stand-down or suspend and I am always questioning the school practices – can we do things in a better way? We have a stronger educational focus to change behaviour (eg marijuana use) and we have more options now – not just a stand-down

- We have changed parent-teacher meetings to a total focus on academic achievement. They are now called ‘Academic Support Interviews’ (3 way interview) and teachers have a script to support this focus and give school-wide consistency. The focus is on academic achievement – not other things. We want these meetings to be seen by all participants as part of learning - not time out of learning.
- Displayed on the staffroom wall from a recent staff meeting: Five areas of cultural responsiveness: \* ako \* whanaungatanga \* tangata whenua \* wananga \* manaakitanga.
- Children from the marae showed leadership, as tangata whenua, at the marae visit. This has carried on at school – asking for leadership roles (these children didn’t do this previously). Because of improving relationships with Māori parents / whanau, parents are now asking about their kids’ progress at school. The principal visits families to talk about their children’s progress at school – this hasn’t happened before
- Our Mission statement is all about authentic learning and the school has a positive persona that has been achieved through the enviro schools’ kaupapa. The school is a ‘magnet’ school with a reputation for good pastoral care. We use restorative justice practices throughout the school.
- Decile 1 school, 100% Maori: 14 years ago 30% of children at or above expectations (from old school records). 2012 data – ‘At’ or ‘Above’ using OTJs and moderation
  - Reading – 66%
  - Maths – 63%
  - Writing – 71% (this has been an ongoing school focus)
- We want to build a meeting house and marae within our school. “If we want Māori learning as Māori we need to have our own marae and meeting house.” The principal expects the MOE to support this development. ....
- How do we know we are successful? Socially, we have happy children, actively involved at school, very little anti-social behaviour (bullying etc), no stand-downs or suspensions. Academically, we know through testing using nationally normed tests, OTJs and moderation with analysis shared with staff and BOT.
- We have ten classrooms – three bi-lingual, seven mainstream - one school working together. We are catering for the learning needs of all our students – cultural, sporting and academic. We have high expectations of success for our children and we expect Māori to achieve as well as anyone else in NZ - *not to have their ‘Māoriness’ compromised in their learning and achievement.*
- Māori learning as Māori: The children know their identity and have pride in being Māori. They are breaking out of the low achievement stereotype. We have a culturally responsive learning environment - sharing the culture at school, speaking te reo, talking about the culture – increasing what they already know and incorporating Māori culture in the classroom programme. Teachers tap into what they are interested in – show an interest in their life beyond school.
- The principal is passionate about Māori achievement and gets us all involved, eg I went to an ‘Engaging Māori Learners’ conference earlier this year. Mainstream teachers receive Māori language lessons from fluent teachers.

- Class structure and organisation is a key factor in engagement. We have multi level classes – year 1-4, year 5-8, year 9-10 arranged in teams / whanau comprising one year 1-4, year 5-8 and year 9-10. Students stay with the same teacher / whanau throughout their time at the school. This mirrors a family structure – comfortable, natural relationships. It strengthens relationships - teachers get to know students and parents really well over time and vice versa.
- There are lots of success indicators. Firstly, we need to develop our students’ identities before we can develop academic success. For example: feeling proud of being Māori, strong relationships (student-student, student- adult), correct pronunciation and happy to be at school. We’ve proved that when we get these things right, academic success follows.
- Assessment: The students are involved in research based learning. It’s then linked back to NCEA / NZ Curriculum for assessment purposes. We use Probe and asTTle etc, alongside school-developed culturally relevant processes, because we need to get a national picture of where our students’ achievement levels are at. We have a school-developed measurement tool for self-knowledge – cultural identity and relationships development.
- Māori achieving as Māori: Teaching and learning encompassing the whole child. We need to develop relationships and identity first, then academic learning– our school achievement data proves this.
- Success in learning – “Whatever it takes!” For example kapa haka provides links to success. Kapa haka is an important part of the school curriculum - not an ‘add-on’. Kapa haka has real links to academic success; learning about learning, learning about the importance and power of whanau, collective achievement. This is hugely valuable
- The principal’s passion is bi-lingual education. “These kids need their language. They need their language to achieve.” The Māori bi-lingual unit needs to be the first to start – honouring the relationships – Treaty partnership.
- Bi-lingualism is the key and is linked to our vision. We are constantly visiting this to bring the vision to life. The big questions for our community are; Māori learning as Maori – how do we capture the whole person? What does success mean and what does it look like?
- Tātaiako: we have taken the dimensions and applied them to all our kids. What’s best for Māori is best for all our children – same processes apply. The dimensions have become our professional standards and we are using ‘Ka Hikitia’ in the same way. As a staff we need to develop our knowledge. Marae based learning – challenging staff to take a risk in their learning (as we ask our students to do). We need to focus on tikanga. Use Te Wananga o Aotearoa.
- ICT is also a key component – very important for our kids’ success now and in the future.
- Māori learning as Māori: I use the Māori values in my teaching. Using a lot of reo in the classroom. Common use in the classroom. The school may go bi-lingual and we will be teaching multi-level in bi-lingual classes.
- I understand where children and parents are coming from. I have an open door policy - the class and teachers are part of the parents’ extended family. Communication is the key and we have a big focus on this. Parents are included in homework – I show parents what they need to do – keep it simple.
- Learning happens in a social context (at home too) – celebrate this. Know the parents and organise learning with the community. New learning is based on prior knowledge – John Hattie – quality, relevance, accessing prior knowledge (kids have rich knowledge).

- Planning, feedback and assessment: Planning reflects what I see as being important. I am constantly giving oral and written feedback, modelling, using hands / movement to accentuate learning. Lessons are always revisited and I try to be a good role model and seek feedback from children – be fair
- Assessment helps me re-direct learning. 1 on 1 – eg running records, NumPA, GloSS. I am also able to get a picture (OTJ) from talking to and listening to the children.
- We want to support the first language. This is a basis of our school; to nurture the first language. Cultural responsiveness is natural for most staff – teachers must respond to the children’s culture, eg group work, talking it through, using waiata / singing / chanting.
- All Pakeha teachers (50% of teachers) have a TESOL background and are very aware of cultural diversity. All teachers, when employed, must make a commitment to tertiary bi-lingual study (university papers). The school pays all study costs.
- We need to respond to our students’ particular needs; we won’t compromise our own standards / kaupapa. Pakeha National Standards are not relevant – *they are not culturally responsive*.
- All class programmes reflect a commitment to Māori language. All teachers have a commitment to Māori language including the Pasifika units and mainstream teachers. Teachers really need to know their kids – relationships
- School structure supports Māori learning as Māori, Samoan learning as Samoan, Tongan learning as Tongan etc. We have the following units - Māori immersion, Māori bi-lingual, Samoan bi-lingual, Tongan bi-lingual, mainstream (mainstream is about 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the school).
- Unit structure: There are around 7 classes in each unit - year 1-2, year 3-4, year 5-6. Children stay in each class for two years. Year 7-8 are also in the immersion and bi-lingual units. There is a ‘boys only’ class (year 5-6) and also a boys education programme run in the morning – led by a man – self management, literacy and other relevant topics.
- Kaupapa of the school: Respect and understanding of others - ‘Kiwi can’ (values education). We have community trained tutors. Every classroom has one session a week every week on a specific value (based on a theme). Values information also goes into the school newsletter with suggestions for the home too. The school sponsors World Vision children (respect for others and nurturing the less fortunate).
- Respect for the environment: Zero rubbish at school (no bins in the playground – recycle and compost bins in classrooms). All children take their own rubbish back home (lunch papers etc). We have a ban on all ‘orange’ food –twistees etc. Each class has a garden box – approx 2 x 1 metres in size. We are a Health Promoting School – next step – water tanks. We have a student health team that meets once a fortnight (12 students). A teacher leads this – receives a Unit – the team prepare newsletters, surveys and info for the school community.
- Life can be pretty tough and parents don’t need to be told their child is being naughty etc - there are better ways to do this. The MOE often asks us to take excluded kids and they usually do pretty well here.
- There are lots of ‘add on’ programmes for our students: Social skills and life skills – learning about responsibilities and values is very important. We have an after school study centre – 3.00pm to 4.45pm – headed by language teachers. Different groups attend on different days eg Samoan-Tuesday, Māori-Wednesday, Tongan-Thursday etc There is an after school sports programme - teachers and support

staff run this and an after school taiaha programme – very popular with our Māori boys. We also have a leadership group (year 7 and 8 students) – adult tutors work with groups of 10 to 12 children once a week.

- Student well being: Fruit in school programme – we share fruit with parents too. We have a breakfast club – 7.30am onwards and free lunches – if in need.
- We have our own social skills and behaviour programme – ‘**Rangi marie**’ – redesigned by the school from the ‘Cool Schools’ programme. We use restorative practices – all staff have had PLD on this. We have peer mediators – they have their own restorative justice cards to use in the playground. The school is calmer since the restorative justice programme was introduced. There is consistency across the school – playground – duty – peer mediators.

### **Student comment:**

#### **What is it like to be a Māori in your school?**

- Awesome – we can pick it up when people are speaking Māori and you can study it.
- It’s great! If there’s something Māori my mates come to me. We are in the bi-lingual class. I’ve learnt a lot – both Māori and Pākehā. We’ve been learning mihi and pepeha.
- OK but hard – learning to speak is hard.
- Awesome, cool!
- Normal....
- Pretty cool. I get to learn both languages
- It’s cool. I’m learning about my culture. We are all Māori here.

#### **What makes it easy for you to learn?**

- The teachers are strict and make us learn heaps. They give us hard work.
- My teacher is my Auntie!! She encourages me to learn more.
- Whanaungatanga – physical spaces that support a whanau based approach to learning.
- Programmes that provide links to other students.
- An expectation that older a younger students link together to support each others learning.
- Our current environment – whanaungatanga – physical spaces – tuakana / teina.
- Relationships – it’s like home, it’s in your face, on your case.
- Teachers and students all get to know your background.
- Helping out – being a role model.
- By listening and working and not talking – listen to the teacher; then you’ll know how to do it.
- Being motivated and encouraged. Being helped with my work.
- I like all my friends and playing with Whaea.
- Being around my friends – they help me out a lot. Other students can help and the teacher can help you.
- All the teachers – they help us out with our work and that – our mihi and that. We have teacher aides to help. Maths; teachers help you if you make mistakes. We learn about who we are and where we came from.
- We get a say in what we learn.
- We talk and ask if we haven’t done this before. “Can we do that?” eg Young Design Award.

- We are always busy – filming, guitar, options eg – learning to sew at the moment (an after school option with a teacher).

### **What makes it hard for you to learn?**

- Sometimes instructions are hard to understand. People can annoy me and disturb others.
- Only ourselves – mind state and focus.
- When things are not there. Too much pressure sometimes. Some individuals in our groups.
- When teachers don't motivate you, you don't learn. They need to help you with your learning.
- When we are learning hard stuff – confusion.
- Talking and shouting in class - bad stuff like fighting.
- When teachers don't motivate you, you don't learn. They need to help you with your learning.
- Distractions – noises, talking etc.
- When you don't understand or can't understand what the teacher says. When it gets confused.
- Too much noise in the classroom.
- When the teacher races ahead and loses you.
- When the teacher tries to be a 'mate'.
- When things are not there (resources, equipment etc).
- When I get confused – too much pressure.

### **How do you know you are learning at school?**

- My teacher has shown me that although I know quite a lot I am going to learn more.
- I know I am learning lots – every day I come to school and new work is set up.
- The teacher tells us - teacher says.
- Because the teacher is helping us – Miss V takes reading and maths groups.
- The teacher says 'kā pai', 'well done', 'ae' and 'kāore'.
- Because everyone has high levels and scores.
- We're learning a lot but some are ahead of us and some are behind.
- Learning different subjects. Learning new stuff. Being challenged.
- Me and one of my friends are the best readers in the class. I'm into writing and spelling. I want to learn and improve.

### **Who do you ask if you need help?**

- Ask three people then the teacher.
- The teacher aide is good for help, especially as I get along with him (he teaches me guitar) and we have something in common.
- Talk to a teacher, ask friends / peers.
- Research – question, use the computer, Google.
- Ask the teacher to repeat. Ask a friend.
- First I ask people in my group – then I ask my Auntie.
- Ask people in my group or the teacher.
- Ask others – students and teachers. We have open spaces and can move around and choose from lots of teachers.
- Ask peer mediators (to solve problems)
- Ask my parents (homework)

- Ask the teacher, my friends, other people in the class, ask myself.

### **What do you think makes a good learning environment?**

- The teachers and the principal. Having good attitudes and working towards your grades.
- A place where kids are positive – good teachers – good resources.
- No talking – makes it easier to work.
- I like buddy reading, I like to play on the field.
- I am proud of our school – having a clean school – peace and quiet.
- Whanaungatanga – tuakana / teina.
- Physical spaces that support a whanau based approach to learning – where we can move around...
- Having a kind teacher who helps you out. Kind friends and mates who help too.
- Having less competition and more being myself.

### **CONCLUSION**

In my introduction I stated that *‘through reading some of the research available and talking to a range of people within school communities and the education sector I hoped to shed a little more light on what cultural responses and specific practices and processes are successful in enhancing Māori student achievement’*.

It is clear that in all the schools I visited there are specific cultural responses, practices and processes in place to enhance Māori student achievement. The key elements 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. Importantly, the Treaty of Waitangi is seen as a means to a partnership in learning.

There is a focus on community engagement, often led by the board of trustees and a sense that schools must respond to the community. These schools work hard to develop and sustain genuine partnerships, linked to student learning and school life. These partnerships recognise the home as a source of knowledge and that parents’ desires for their children’s learning need to be incorporated into the school curriculum. The role of the principal is critical; genuine open door policies, community projects and regular whanau and community meetings, both formal and informal all help to build and sustain effective partnerships.

#### **2. Positive relationships:**

Quality relationships are central to all the schools I visited. 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.

Students need teachers that develop strong connections with them; that understand them, respect and trust them, recognise their learning needs, are fun to be with but also keep their authority. They want teachers they can be comfortable with, teachers that will motivate them and not give up on them – in short, a teacher that cares for the whole student.

Staff are focussed on the ‘big picture’ school vision and value positive and productive relationships with students, parents, family and whanau; getting to know them, building strong connections and trust. Being respectful and gaining respect is seen as a core part of their job as a teacher. Strong and positive relationships are seen as key to increasing parent and whanau involvement in the school and in the learning experiences of their children.

Relationships are built in many ways; making sure school policies and procedures aren’t unintentionally ‘getting in the way’, ensuring the school promotes relationships by holding regular community hui, concerts, fun activities and informal meetings that bring parents and whanau into the school – this includes the principal holding regular informal meetings with parents and community members to ask advice, seek opinions and share new ideas. Parent-teacher meetings are very well attended in schools that have good home – school relationships.

Positive relationships amongst staff are critical to enhanced student achievement, Staff are expected to work hard and that needs to be recognised and rewarded through the actions of the board and school leadership.

The board’s positive relationships with the principal, staff, and school community are also critical. The board needs to be focussed on the school goals and they need to be visible in the school community.

### **3. An authentic curriculum:**

The school curriculum must respond to the culture of the students. Authentic contexts for learning within a community centred curriculum are pivotal in ensuring that Māori students reach their potential.

An inquiry approach to teaching and learning allows teachers to harness the experiences and knowledge that students bring to school. Having the critical questions that drive the learning centred initially in the local community, supports an appropriate, understandable and relevant context to learning that benefits both the learner and family and whanau, who are able to also be engaged in the inquiry as community members with something to contribute. Using a cyclical process of reflection, inquiry, making change, taking action and then further reflection encourages a self motivated approach to learning, which is critical if Māori students are to reach high levels of educational achievement.

A high quality integrated curriculum must ensure that all curriculum areas are covered and that the critical areas of literacy and numeracy are given precedence, especially in the early years of schooling. There needs to be ongoing high quality professional learning and development for staff, to ensure effective inquiry teaching and learning.

High quality assessment is also important. There needs to be formative assessment to ensure teachers and students know ‘where they are’ in their learning and what their next learning steps might be. Teachers must be able to develop valid overall teacher judgements on student progress and achievement, based on a wide range of assessment practices.

#### **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. Māori students must have their 'Māoriness' acknowledged in their learning and achievement – students knowing their identity and having pride in being Māori. Student – teacher relationships must be based on respect, dignity and mana with a focus on achievement. There needs to be a lot of Reo, written and spoken, in the classroom and class structures mirroring family structures – i.e. multi class levels that encourage rich relationships developed over time so that teachers become part of the parent's extended family – are effective. The school needs to promote Māori student leadership and provide multiple pathways to develop leaders. Effective schools acknowledge kapa haka as part of the curriculum – not as an add on. Success in learning – what ever it takes!

To support Māori student engagement school policy and processes (e.g. the school charter and strategic plan) need to be aligned to reflect a culturally relevant environment. The curriculum must provide traditional and contemporary Māori contexts and teachers must have the knowledge and skills to develop and sustain a culturally relevant environment for learning using all of the resources available to them, including ICT to enhance learning and achievement. The principal must be passionate and seen to be passionate, about Māori achievement and there needs to be strong leadership across the school that is specific about what is expected in the classroom and in the curriculum. Social skills and behaviour programmes must be culturally relevant too.

Teachers must be able to assess the rich knowledge that students have, to involve students and parents in assessment practices, give lots of oral and written feedback and use assessment to redirect learning.

In conclusion, the schools and communities I visited have developed effective practices and processes that allow Māori to enjoy educational success as Māori. There is no one way to achieve this but there are key elements that all schools can follow to build cultural responsiveness that will in turn, enhance Māori student achievement in primary schools and in further education.

#### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Thank you to the following people and organizations, who through their actions have supported my sabbatical research project.

The Ministry of Education, Bill Sutton, Mike McGimpsey, Wainuiomata Primary School BOT, Allison Burdon and the staff at Wainuiomata Primary School, Wainuiomata Principals' PLC, Pam O'Connell, Neil Withington, Darren Gammie (Learning Media) Barbara Hollard, Sonia Glogowski (MOE), Keri Milne-Ihimaera and the staff of Moerewa School, Peter Witana, Noeline Lemon, Verbina Kopa, Dana Cowles, Dylan and Jess (Kawakawa School), Robert Clark, Carlos and Ngakau (Whau Valley School), Jason Tane and the staff and students at Peria School, Patariki

Toi, Mike Ryken, Nyree King, John Lee (Taipa Area School), Fraser Smith, Teamohaere and Akesa (Otoru School), Ann Milne, Kaia, Koha and staff at Kia Aroha College, Wayne MacGillivray, Whaea Maraea, Whaea Rona, Zion, Ihapera, Riley, Beau and Georgia (Mayfield School), Shirley Maihi, Nardi Leonard, Sumithra Naido, Sandra Carley, and the staff and students of Finlayson Park School, Jan Baynes, Clare Harper-Lee, Sue and Mike Dunleavy and Olivia Worboys.

He mihi nui, he mihi aroha ki ā koutou.

Neil Worboys  
March 2013

## RESOURCE LIST

- Tātaiako (Ministry of Education 2011)
- Ka Hikitia (Ministry of Education 2008)
- Kiwi Leadership for Principals: Principals as educational leaders (MOE 2008)
- Teachers as learners: improving outcomes for Māori and Pasifika students through inquiry (MOE 2007)
- Te Aho Arataki Marau mō te Ako i Te Reo Māori - Kura Auraki (2009)
- The New Zealand Curriculum (2007)
- BES – School leadership and student outcomes: Identifying what works and why (Robinson, Hohepa, Lloyd 2009)
- BES – Effective pedagogy in Social Sciences / Tikanga ā Iwi (Aitken, Sinnema 2008)
- BES – Teacher professional learning and development (Timperley, Wilson, Barrar, Fung 2007)
- Raising the achievement of Māori students (MOE 2000)
- Promoting success for Māori students: schools' progress (ERO 2010)
- Maori success – Complementary Evaluation Framework (ERO 2011)
- What they did last summer (Rapson, Nicholson, Massey University 2012)
- Culturally responsive differentiated instruction (Santamaria 2009)
- Culturally responsive teaching (The Education Alliance)
- Diversity within unity: essential principles for teaching and learning in a multicultural society (Banks, Cookson et al, University of Washington)
- Te Kōtahitanga: The experiences of Year 9 and 10 Māori students in mainstream classes (Bishop, Berryman, Tiakiwai, Richardson)
- Culturally responsive contexts for learning (Ngaamo)
- The Cultural Self Review (Bevan-Brown, NZCER 2003)
- The “Culture Audit”: A leadership tool for assessment and strategic planning in diverse schools and colleges (Dept of Education, Michigan)
- Creating culturally safe schools: culturally responsive approaches to supporting Māori students (Macfarlane, Glynn, Cavanagh 2005)
- SET – Māori Education (Various, NZCER 2010)
- Te Wheke (Pere 1985)
- Te Pumaomao – nationhood building strategies and solutions (Murphy 2008)
- Paths to Victory: Victory village (Victory Primary school and Victory Community Centre) – A case study (Stuart, Families Commission 2010)
- Te Piko o te Māhuri: The key attributes of successful Kura Kaupapa Māori , (Tākao, Grennell, McKegg, Wehipeihana, Education Counts, 2010)

- Reading related language abilities: Māori children “at promise” (Harris, SET 2009)
- Creating strong achievement gains for Māori students in English-medium mathematics classrooms (Te Maro, Higgins, Averill, Numeracy development project findings 2007)
- Synergies and strategies: supporting schools to make links between effective practices for diverse student groups: Māori, Pasifika and ESOL students (Renwick, MOE 2007)
- Raising black students’ achievement through culturally responsive teaching (McKinley)
- Kumara, taro and spuds: Three reflections on equity and ethnicity (Rutherford, Sila’ila’i, Webber (NZ Journal of adult learning)
- Cultural responsiveness: A discussion paper (Stewart 2009)
- Colouring in the White Spaces: Cultural identity and learning in schools (Milne 2009)
- How policy travels: making sense of Ka Hikitia (Goren 2009)
- An introduction to the Measurable Gains Framework, Ka Hikitia (MOE 2010)
- How is cultural competence integrated in education? (King, Sims, Osher, US Dept Education)
- Being Māori (John Rangihau, Te Ao Marama)
- What can I do about Māori underachievement? Critical reflections from a non-Māori participant in Te Kotahitanga (Lawrence, SET 2011)
- Iwi versus Kiwi: Racism, race relationships and the experience of controversial political debates within the context of culturally responsive school reform (Hynds, Sheehan, NZ Annual Review of Education 2010)
- Whose culture counts? (Glogowski, MOE)
- Education Gazette (Various articles on Māori education 2011, 2012)
- Educational leaders website: Ruia (MOE)