
Sabbatical Report

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Hastings Intermediate School
Hastings • Hawkes Bay
July 2014 (Term one sabbatical).

Topic of inquiry:

Strategies for improving Maori and Pacifica student outcomes.

Acknowledgements

I wish to acknowledge first and foremost the Hastings Intermediate School Board of Trustees for supporting my application and sabbatical leave. In particular I wish to acknowledge our Board Chairperson Mrs Jeannette McKenzie.

I also wish to acknowledge my senior staff and other school staff who stepped up to carry out the extra duties in my absence. In particular ,my Deputy Principal Ms Lesley Smith, assistant principals Mr Shane Foster and Mr Stephen Brock.

I believe it is also important to acknowledge the Ministry of Education for making this leave option available for school principals. The opportunity to travel, visit other schools and network with other school leaders from Primary, Intermediate and Secondary levels was something I found valuable and refreshing. This programme offers principals the opportunity to take time out and look in depth at an aspect of our practice and to have a period of refreshment, both of which are invaluable.

My last acknowledgement is to the schools, and to political and educational leaders who hosted me in their schools, educational institutes or offices. During my sabbatical, I visited the following schools: Hastings Boys High School, Hastings Girls High School, Manurewa Intermediate and Bairds Mainfreight Primary. I was hosted at Massey University by Professor Sir Mason Durie, at her offices in Wellington by Minister Tariana Turia co leader of the Maori Party. I also conversed with Hastings District councillors Mr Henare O'Keefe QSM JP and Ms Jacoby Poulain.

To all these people, and of course my wife Kateland and family who patiently supported this research and travel, thank you for your generosity, patience and support.

Purpose

To investigate strategies that can successfully enhance educational outcomes for Māori and Pasifica students.

To reflect on the effectiveness of our own school's strategies and programmes developed over the last four years and consider where further modifications and improvements can be made.

Background and rationale

Hastings Intermediate school includes almost 40% of Maori and Pacific Island students. Although our overall attendance and behaviour statistics fare favourably, the majority of concerns in both these fields are dominated by Maori and Pasifica students. Academically, our students make significant gains in numeracy and literacy over their two years at our school. In almost all curriculum areas however, Maori and Pacific students fall into our underachieving group of students that form our target group. Since 2009, we have made significant inroads in improving Maori student attendance, engagement and behaviour patterns and have introduced or trialled specific initiatives targeting this focus group.

However this issue - although not unique - remains a core focus for our board, management and staff. Key areas relating to maximising student learning which I focused on during my research were:

- *What do students say impacts most on their learning?*
- *What do teachers/schools and the Ministry of Education believe impacts most on student learning?*
- *What strategies are schools trialling or operating that impact on Maori/Pacific student engagement, attendance, behaviour and achievement?*
- *What do we do at Hastings Intermediate that is working and should be maintained? What should/could we consider implementing to further impact on Maori/Pasifica student outcomes?*

Methodology

My learning activities included:

- A reading of relevant literature.
- A questionnaire for students from selected schools.
- Conferences with staff, management and selected students from identified schools
- Discussion questions with political leaders and educationalists.
- Feedback from schools like ours on how they attempt to engage their families and whanau in school and in student learning and achievement.
- A range of schools was visited comprising primary, Intermediate and secondary, all with decile ratings ranging from 1-3.
- Selected personnel were interviewed to provide a wide canvas of opinion. Personnel from local government, central government, tertiary institutes and state schools were included.

Literature

During my search for relevant material, I was impressed by the amount of literature available. However, I have only included relevant information mainly from the Ka Hikitia – Managing for Success, Pasifika Education Plan 2008-2012, The Education Review Offices resources including, “Partners in Learning: Schools’ Engagement with Parents, Whanau and Communities (June 2008), Promoting Success for Maori Students (June 2010) and Improving Education Outcomes for Pacific Learners (May 2012).

“Ka Hikitia - Managing for Success: The Maori Education Strategy 2008 - 2012 is the Ministry of Education's approach to improving the performance of the education system for and with Maori. It is a key aspect of having a quality education system where all students are succeeding and achieving.

The strategy has been refreshed and re-released to emphasise its ongoing importance to our education system. It is based on the evidence of what works. Ka Hikitia asks for a shift in thinking and behaviour. It includes valuable information on what families, whanau, iwi, educators and educational leaders have to say.

From whanau:

"Every parent wants their children to be successful, Maori parents are no exception. You have to have a relationship with the teacher and the school so you can help."

Findings

Summary of findings from canvassing particular groups and individuals re: factors that matter most to impacting positively on Maoru and pacifica student outcomes and achievements:

Ministry of Education:

The quality of leadership in a school.

The quality of teaching in a school.

The quality of programmes and systems within a school.

Evidence of good practice within a school.

The learner's environment.

Teacher voice:

The attitude of the learner.

The capability of the teacher.

The home environment of the student.

The school culture and environment.

The leadership of a school.

Student and staff relationships.

Student voice:

Relationship with the teacher.

Attitude of the teacher to the student.

That the learning environment is safe, happy and engaging.

Having teachers who believe in the student's ability to learn, grow and succeed.

Valid and relevant learning opportunities.

During my research it became clear that there were some strongly held beliefs contributing to Maori and Pacifica student improved achievement. Namely, the valuing of the relationship between teacher and student, and the relationship and or links with whanau and family to support this journey and vision.

Some schools demonstrated success in this area and clearly identified this as a key contributing factor to improving student outcomes. These initiatives may be reflected in school-wide engagement practices or else in the school ethos and teaching practices. Wherever they existed, they had been orchestrated by staff and management, refined over time and although demonstrating evidence of success, were still under constant review and reflection.

Some examples I observed included:

- *Regular time slots in the school curriculum for making connections with home room teachers - discussing school safety, relationship concerns or issues and voicing student opinion in a channelled and safe manner.*
- *Providing a structured Pacifica programme for all Pacifica students in the school that focuses on community, family and church links with school. There is a shared focus on education, values and pathways for students, student led activities, making connections opportunities and celebrating student success.*
- *Programmes focused on at-risk or underachieving Maori students. Staff engaging with these students daily for out of school activities including school breakfast, sports, fitness, tuition and learning support. Providing informal hui with whanau re student opportunities and learning pathways.*
- *Whanau classes with a particular focus on Maori Tikanga, inclusion, relationship with students and whanau. Specific attention is given to Maori cultural identity and also links to local Iwi and local marae.*
- *Valuing and modelling Maori and Pacific language, customs, protocols and local history by staff and school. Evident in school signage. Murals co-constructed with students was also evident around the school environment providing students with a sense of identity and connection.*
- *One school in particular had a 100% Maori and Pacifica roll and yet had no male staff and only one Maori staff member. To the outside observer this may seem possibly ethnically under-resourced for such an environment, but in this school it had led to significant community involvement and mentoring of students and student programmes. Local Kaumatua were working alongside family members to reinforce the school ethos and programmes and thus gave impetus to these learning opportunities with great effect on student attitudes and behaviour.*

As part of my research I held a number of consultations with educationalists and politicians with a focus on Maori student initiatives and underachievement in the current education model. A commonality from these discussions was the view that Maori whanau needed support and guidance in modelling that education and academic success is as valued as sports or cultural success. Many believed that whanau wanted the best outcomes for their children but with many not having gained full secondary qualifications, let alone tertiary qualifications, parental and whanau expectations and real support were not as evident as in other ethnic groups. This contrasted with European and some immigrant families who tended to seek the highest level of educational outcomes.

Whanau involvement was also seen as a significant priority with many schools trialling initiatives but none felt that they had truly succeeded in mastering this issue. Many had reviewed and refined their community hui, communication with whanau and engagement strategies but there were significant variances between schools and learning communities. Hence there was limited commonality apart from the vision and ethos.

Summary

In summary; the main learning point I took away from my discussions and observations was the focus and value of the relationships between the teacher, whanau, school and the community. At Hastings Intermediate this means a review of our community liaison. It also means a review of specific programmes targeted at engaging Maori and Pacifica students in our school, aside from the academies and sports/cultural opportunities currently on offer. It also means a change in approaches to utilising and teaching Te Reo which is currently managed by a specialist teacher.

Upon reflection there are a number of programmes operating at Hastings Intermediate that already offer support and engagement for not only Maori and Pacifica students but all our students:

- Modelling Manaakitanga - management daily rostered to the school gates, naming and welcoming all five hundred and fifty students individually.
- An academy programme that caters for almost 60% of our students and where Maori students are heavily represented. Our school role is 40% Maori and Pacifica but the academies contain over 50% Maori and Pacifica students.
- Valuing of Te Reo school wide with a language specialist and the appointment of Kapahaka tutors from outside the school to add Tikanga Maori cultural education into the programme.

Actions and next steps

As a result of this inquiry, the following will be actioned at Hastings Intermediate:

- Organise a community hui for Maori students and whanau at Hastings Intermediate.
- The hui to involve local Maori leaders and community representatives all supporting the common theme of valuing education and positive links to our school.
- Create a Maori strategic team of staff passionate to promote and celebrate Maori student achievement and focus on creating successful learning outcomes for our students.
- Engage student voice in improving cultural recognition in art and language in our school environment.
- Establish formal links with our local Iwi - Ngati Kahungunu Iwi - with a focus on learning protocols, establishing links with their local marae and providing opportunities for combined events.
- Invite local Iwi - kaumatua in to work with staff and management on school wide protocols and support for whanau engagement.

As at the time of writing (*July 2014*) the following steps to implement the above have already been taken.

- I. A Maori strategic team of six staff has been formed and a Head of department appointed.
- II. The community hui has been booked for 20th August with the C.E.O. of Ngati Kahungunu Iwi agreeing to host the evening and several well known local Maori community leaders agreeing to attend and speak at the evening.
- III. Initial meetings have been held with local schools (*Primary, Intermediate and Secondary*) aimed at finding a common educational focus to improve Maori and Pacifica student outcomes. It is hoped a formal cluster will be established with links to the local Iwi and the local Ministry of Education.

- IV. Based on evidence of improved student outcomes and achievement as a result of digital learning strategies viewed at the Manaiakalani Trust cluster schools in East Tamakai - Auckland, The Manaiakalani Trust represents a cluster of twelve schools in East Tamakai who have joined together with a focus on developing digital engagement strategies for their schools. As a result of my observations and time spent at some of these schools, I reviewed our digital learning programmes and outcomes at H.I.S. This led to a change in our IT provider. TTS (an IT provider with significant ministry of education contracts across New Zealand) has since been appointed to assist us with digital strategic planning, our school wide migration to Google Doc's, school website re construction, email management and iPad professional development within the school.
- V. As part of this review of the high levels of student and community engagement evident in the Manaiakalani Trust schools, I invited a number of local low decile schools in the Hastings District to hear Pat Snedden speak on the East Tamaki model. Pat Snedden is the Chairperson of the Manaiakalani Trust. As a result twenty five schools responded and either attended the presentation or registered their interest in ongoing discussions around this topic. As part of a new initiative I have invited these schools to form a digital learning cluster with Pat Snedden in support as mentor. Prior to inviting local schools to the cluster meeting, I have held several conversations with Ngahiwi Tomoana Chairperson of local Iwi Ngati Kahungunu Iwi and also Lawrence Yule, Mayor of Hastings. Their support is seen as crucial to this cluster developing into a truly community project representing most of the schools and students in our district and funded/supported by our local iwi and local council. The purpose of the cluster will be to focus on improved student outcomes and access to digital devices and learning.