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# Sabbatical Report

Term 3, 2015

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Te Kura Ō Mōrere  
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### Topic of Inquiry:

To investigate strategies and pathways that identify and successfully promote the engagement of gifted and talented students with a particular emphasis on Maori students as priority learners.

## Acknowledgements

Firstly and foremost I would like to acknowledge the West End School Board of Trustees for supporting my application and sabbatical leave.

In addition my thanks to my Associate Principal, Pete Horne for his willingness to 'step up' and ably lead the learning and provide effective stewardship in my absence with supporting roles played by Sandy Weir and Warren Smart.

I consider it important to acknowledge the Ministry of Education and NZEI for providing this professional leave opportunity for me and other recipients to take time out and look in depth at an aspect of our practice. Equally the chance to experience a period of personal reflection and refreshment – both being immensely invaluable.

## Purpose

To identify and investigate strategies and pathways that successfully promote the engagement and educational outcomes for Gifted and Talented Maori students.

Specifically to:

- Access and update my current pedagogical knowledge through relevant research literature.
- To reflect on the effectiveness of our own school's strategies and programmes and consider where further modifications and enhancements can be made.

## Background and rationale

As part of a 2014 ERO Review as a leadership team we self-identified the need to review our curriculum delivery for West End gifted and talented students.

This action features in our 2015 Annual Plan with selected, key staff members with accompanying interest and expertise driving the formation of a shared cross school

gifted and talented definition, selecting appropriate identification tools and descriptors and related proven programmes and initiatives to meet the needs of our targeted gifted and talented learners.

My chosen sabbatical inquiry is seen as an important addition to the above focus and process.

To provide some context West End School is a decile 6 contributing kura located on the central western rim of New Plymouth with a present roll of 373 students.

A snapshot of our school profile for April 2008, 2011 and 2014 shows some revealing and comparative trends and patterns:

2008 Roll of 288		2011 Roll of 302		2014 Roll of 323	
<b>Female</b>	45%	<b>Female</b>	46%	<b>Female</b>	43%
<b>Male</b>	55%	<b>Male</b>	54%	<b>Male</b>	57%
<b>NZE</b>	69%	<b>NZE</b>	62%	<b>NZE</b>	62%
<b>Maori</b>	22%	<b>Maori</b>	27%	<b>Maori</b>	27%
<b>Pasifika</b>	4%	<b>Pasifika</b>	4%	<b>Pasifika</b>	3%

In recent years as a staff we have worked particularly hard to embrace the ideals and aspirations of the Ministry of Education *Ka Hikitia* document and to unpack and personalise as to *what Maori students enjoying and achieving educational success as Maori* means for all members of our West End School learning community.

Every effort is made to affirm the identity, language and culture of our akonga while a journey has begun to develop meaningful and sustainable partnerships with key stakeholders.

This year we have been most fortunate to enlist 'first-hand' the professional wisdom, expertise and practical knowledge of Associate Professor Mere Berryman (University of Waikato) specifically in relation to her enlightening research and literature around relational and culturally responsive pedagogy.

For 2014 and 2015 I have been privileged to be a part of Te Arahou (The New Pathway) our local New Plymouth/North Taranaki Maori Achievement Collaborative (MAC) with its aim '*A change in the hearts and minds of principals*' guided by the overriding principles of whanau and whanaungatanga (relationships, connections, commitments and responsibilities).

It is perceived that changing hearts and minds (an attitudinal shift) in the first instance will have an impact on practice and ultimately on Maori student outcomes and achievement. It will also impact on strengthening relationships and engagement in schools and the relationship between Maori and non-Maori principals.

This valuable forum has provided me with the experience of culturally and enriching hui and wananga with the opportunity to share in the narratives and research of a wide range of fellow Principals, academics and other para-professionals.

One such prominent presenter being Dr Melinda Webber (University of Auckland) with areas of expertise in Racial ethnic identity development, Maori conceptions of giftedness and Maori student success. Dr Webber shared her co-authored Ka Awatea research (An iwi case study of Maori student success) which features Ngā pumanewa e waru: the eight key qualities of gifted Maori icons and/or ancestors.

In addition during the last 18 months as a BOT and staff we have looked to forge closer and more meaningful relationships with our Ngati Te Whiti Hapu personnel with the July 2015 initial blessing ceremony for our dual name West End - 'Te Kura O Morere' being a watershed moment for us as a school learning community.

## Methodology

My learning activities included:

- Reading and reviewing relevant resources and literature:
  - Te Kete Ipurangi Gifted and Talented online
  - 'Maori Gifted and Talented a review of literature' Rangimarie Mahuika 2007
  - 'Identifying and Providing for Gifted and Talented Maori students' Jill Bevan-Brown - 2009
- Visiting selected schools and speaking with key staff members regarding their current identification, engagement and programming for gifted and talented Maori students

## Literature Review

Te Kete Ipurangi (TKI's) section on cultural considerations for Maori students states that :

the identification process is intended to reflect the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi to demonstrate the unique status of the tangata whenua. Approaches to conceptualising identifying and providing for Maori students are dual faceted they may emanate from Te Ao Maori; a Maori worldview on the one hand, and have significant connotation to Te Ao Hurihuri (the global world) on the other.

The key constructs that are located within Te Ao Maori include:

- Whanaungatanga (building relationships)
- Manaakitanga (caring)
- Kotahitanga (unity, bonding); and
- Rangatiratanga (leadership).

The key constructs that are located within Te Ao Hurihuri include:

- Ako (reciprocity)

- Tuakana-teina (senior-to-junior tutelage)
- Mana tangata (modelling)
- Tātaritanga (thinking and making meaning); and
- Whaiwahitanga (participating and contributing).

These approaches envisage that increasing the visibility of Maori giftedness within mainstream environments is not about adding a Maori dimension to existing constructs and practices, but requires that the very essence of the system itself is reflective of the principles of partnership, determination and power-sharing.

(Ministry of Education , 2015)

It is a common contention in the literature that the needs of New Zealand's gifted and talented students for the most part have been neglected by our education system (Moltzen, 2004). Mahuika (2007) adds "if the New Zealand 'education system's failure to provide adequately for gifted and talented students, in general inhibits these students from reaching their full potential, how much greater are the barriers that Maori gifted and talented students face in their progress in this area? (p1)"

Mahuika continues "the research indicates that in gifted and talented education, much like in other areas of education, Maori students are significantly underrepresented in comparison with their non-Maori peers" (Mahuika, 2007, p. 1)

Much of Mahuika's review centres on " an examination of several long standing issues and themes...these include: more appropriate definitions of what educators view as 'giftedness' and in particular the inclusion of Maori concepts of giftedness; how best to identify Maori students who are gifted and talented; how gifted and talented education programmes can be developed and implemented in many ways that are culturally sensitive for these students; and the further development of theoretical frameworks and pedagogies in this area" (Mahuika, 2007, p. 1).

Mahuika's investigation shows that the earliest articles specifically relating to Maori gifted and talented education were published in the late 1980s and early 1990s (Bevan-Brown J. , 1994) with the first formal research completed in this field by Jill Bevan-Brown in 1993 "Special Abilities: a Maori perspective".

Mahuika (2007) believes that the subsequent research from Max Galu (1998), Jill Bevan-Brown (1993, 1994, 1999, 2000a, 2000b, 2004) and Heather Jenkins (2002) reflected aspects of Greer Doidge's findings in 'Maori children, Maori students a special giftedness' (Doidge, 1990). Greer's article reinforced the significance of a culturally supportive environment and the further development of the student's self-esteem for encouraging high achievement in Maori children.

Doidge stated that one of the article's intention was to address concepts of cultural and spiritual giftedness as opposed to academic giftedness, raising an important distinction between the limited conventional use of the term and conceptions of giftedness from a Maori worldview, a central issue to the area of Maori gifted and talented education (Doidge, 1990).

Bevan-Brown's study found that Maori concepts of giftedness from the past and present were clearly aligned and that similarities could inform current approaches, i.e. the Maori conception of giftedness "is not bound by social class, economic status, lineages or gender" (Bevan-Brown J. , 2004, p. 174).

Her extensive research and analysis revealed a wide range of people who were considered to have special abilities. Even though whakapapa may influence the development of specific gifts or talents through exposure or opportunity, the ultimate determinant of the individual's success should be focussed on ability.

Other academics have highlighted that socio-economic status is a largely contributing factor to the under representation of some students in gifted and talented education programmes. Rata (2004) endorsed this line of thinking, and claimed that poverty was, and still is primarily responsible for the educational and social disparity that exists in New Zealand, not ethnicity as is often claimed.

Bevan-Brown (2002) signalled that not only is it impossible to distinguish between the latent effects of ethnicity and social class, but it is a redundant exercise as both factors need to be considered to effectively meet the needs of poor Maori students who are gifted.

Mahuika noted that in her thesis, Bevan-Brown (1993) "asserted that gifts or abilities are exhibited in both individual and groups contexts, and that such gifts were, and are today, expected to be used to benefit others" (as cited in Mahuika, 2007, p4).

Inherent in this is the concept of *uta* or reciprocity. With special abilities also came responsibility, for both the proper maintenance of the gift and the equitable sharing of its benefits.

A decade on from this study Bevan-Brown further notes that in this way a Maori conception “of special abilities is holistic in nature and inextricably intertwined with other Maori concepts (Bevan-Brown, 2004 p178) while Sapon-Shevin (1996) noting in the mid-1990s that giftedness can be viewed as a social construct, and that in order to be able to accurately and effectively provide for Maori gifted and talented children, their teachers will need to understand and value Maori culture.

Macfarlane & Moltzen (2005) argued that a culturally safe and supportive environment provides a context in which these students are “more likely to feel confident about expressing their special abilities” (p7) and that Maori students should both see and feel their culture reflected and valued throughout their school programme.

Mahuika (2007) makes reference to commentators throughout the literature advocating the need for more specific pre service training, and continued in service professional development, to provide teachers with both a better understanding of the cultural background of their gifted Maori students, and a better ability to identify and provide for them to meet this end (see Bevan-Brown 1995, 1994, 1996, 2002; Cathcart, 1994; Galu, 1998; McKenzie, 2002; Milne, 1993; Niwa, 1998/9; Reid, 1990; Rymarczyk Hyde, 2001). Such study and training, Reid (1992) emphasised would enable better recognition of the broad range of talents and abilities that are encompassed in a Maori conception of giftedness.

Bevan-Brown’s list below of various abilities, talents, qualities and areas of expertise worked to show clearly the depth and breadth of qualities and abilities that could be termed as gifts or talents in a Maori conception of giftedness. The list illustrates the heterogeneous ways in which ‘special abilities’ can be interpreted from a Te Ao Maori world view:

- Service to Maoridom ( at national tribal and whanau levels)
- Maori knowledge; for example, whakapapa, whaikorero, waiata, healing, tikanga, tribal history, carving, weaving and other traditional arts and crafts
- Spirituality

- Language ability, communication and negotiation skills
- Musical, literary and artistic ability, and aesthetic appreciation
- Leadership and visionary ability, initiator/pioneering spirit, missionary zeal, 'people skills', teaching ability
- Mana
- Sporting prowess, and military/fighting ability (in past)
- Intelligence, 'thinkers and doers', 'good all rounders with holistic understanding', good memory, academic ability, scientific analysis, love of learning, and Pakeha knowledge
- Pride in Maori/ tribal identity, and whanau(ness)
- Outstanding knowledge and appreciation of nature
- Cooking ability
- 'Outstanding personal qualities and high moral values' which included a raft of specially mentioned qualities such as patience; aroha; honesty; integrity; open-mindedness; manaakitanga; humility; bravery; serenity; reliability; selflessness; and sensitivity to, and respect for, others. Particular gifted individuals were described as having moral courage, strength of character and a good sense of humour, being energetic, well organised, determined, motivated, responsible and hardworking.

(Bevan-Brown, 2004, p.174)

Interestingly Mahuika identified that the definition used by the Ministry of Education (2002) took a broad inclusive approach to identifying gifted and talented students as those that "have certain learning characteristics that give them the potential to achieve outstanding performance" (p2). According to the Ministry, these characteristics can manifest themselves in a "wide range of special abilities, including strengths, interests and qualities in their general intellect, academics, culture, creativity, leadership, physical abilities, and visual and performing arts (Ministry of Education, 2004a, p9)

Mahuika (2012) points out that the Ministry's definition still fails to address two subtle yet important differences between multi-categorised approaches and a Maori conception of giftedness highlighted in Bevan-Brown's (1993) earlier work. While it is acknowledged that multi-categorised approaches mention cultural talents and

abilities in general they remain vague in comparison to the more specific list focused primarily on Maori gifted and talented students. Secondly Bevan-Brown contests that while many of the same abilities and qualities are listed under the various definitions the ways in which those qualities and abilities are interpreted can vary considerably from culture to culture.

Of most significance Bevan-Brown asserts that it is insufficient for educators to adopt a multi-categorised approach without adequate consideration for cultural perspectives, she argues, this construction of giftedness continues to reflect the dominant mainstream culture.

McFarlane & Moltzen (2005) reinforced this thinking “where perception of, and approaches to, giftedness are essentially Eurocentric, aspects of ability valued by Maori may be unrecognised and nurturance of the gifts of many Maori students will be overlooked and undervalued.”

Heather Jenkins (2002) in her findings highlights “the broader issues of power and control within mainstream education and their relationship to Maori achievement and actualisation” (Jenkins, 2004, p56) further commenting that simply adding on a ‘Maori dimension’ is insufficient to create a culturally relevant education experience for gifted Maori students, and is unlikely to increase the visibility of Maori giftedness in mainstream schools.

Jenkin’s body of work being somewhat different from others as it draws upon a Kaupapa Maori research framework. “...From a Kaupapa Maori perspective then, the facilitation of self-determination for Maori students is likely to occur in sociocultural contexts where culture counts, where what Maori students know, who they are, and how they know what they know, underpins and characterises the very dynamics of the classroom (Jenkins, Macfarlane, & Moltzen, 2004, p61).

Mahuika (2012) gives prominence for Jenkin’s focus on comfort, safety and self-confidence, where cultural self-esteem was examined as a significant and influential approach adopted at Clover Park Middle School. This emphasis, Jenkins noted, was reflected in high teacher expectations of the students.

Bevan-Brown (2004) discussed the insidious effect of low teacher expectations on Maori gifted learners, noting that:

It was believed that many teachers did not expect Maori children to have special abilities and this created a double disadvantage. Not only were potentially gifted Maori children not being recognised and extended by their teachers but also the “Pygmalion effect” meant that these children were not extending themselves. They performed down to expectation (p186).

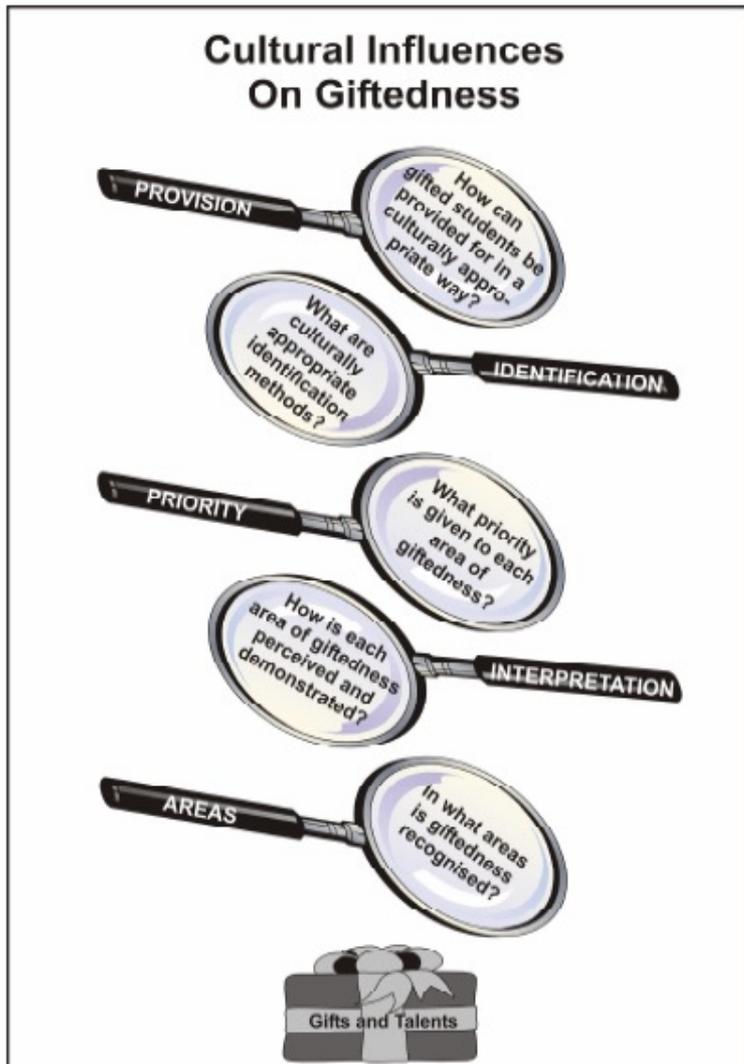
Mahuika (2012) adding that unfortunately, negative teacher expectations and attitudes towards gifted Maori learners continue to reflect the outdated and inaccurate mode of ‘deficit thinking’ in Aotearoa, and much to the disadvantage of Maori students.

In Mahuika’s summary there is an acknowledgement that Bevan-Brown’s research has been most useful in providing a foundation for understanding giftedness from a Maori perspective, she emphasises that Maori are a diverse people, and to impose an oversimplified conceptualisation of Maoriness as the predominant paradigm would be inappropriate and unrealistic.

Noting that:

The suggestions made for identifying and providing for gifted and talented Maori students will not apply to all Maori learners with special abilities. However they are considered appropriate for many gifted Maori learners who identify themselves as Maori and adhere to their Maoritanga (2004, p172).

Jill Bevan-Brown’s later 2009 article “*Identifying and Providing for Gifted and Talented Maori Students*” provides information to assist teachers identify and provide for gifted Maori students in a culturally appropriate and effective way with their gifted education viewed through five cultural lenses.



By way of an introduction Bevan-Brown highlights that one of the government's core principles of gifted education in Aotearoa/New Zealand is that "Maori perspectives and values must be embodied in all aspects of definition, identification and provision for gifted and talented learners" (Ministry of Education, 2002, p3). She contends that research (Riley, Bevan-Brown, Bicknell, Carol-Lind and Kearney, 2004) indicates that this principle is not being put into practice in many schools. Her belief being that teachers are not opposed to embodying Maori values and perspectives in gifted education rather they are unsure of how this can be done. Her article provides information and strategies to help overcome this problem.

Bevan-Brown (2009) warns against cultural stereotyping

“ people with the same cultural background differ from one another across the entire spectrum of human traits and characteristics including the degree to which

they identify with and adhere to cultural beliefs, values and practices. Maori are no exception. While schools should provide a culturally responsive environment for students from all cultures, the nature and extent of cultural input into provisions for gifted Maori students is something that must be decided upon in consultation with parents, whanau and the students themselves (p6).

Bevan-Brown (2009) further points out that while a “multicategorised concept of giftedness is espoused in Aotearoa/New Zealand schools, some areas are provided for better than others. It can be argued for instance that majority cultural values result in intellectual and physical categories being given the highest priority whereas affective qualities were most frequently mentioned by Maori participants in her (1993) research. These include personal qualities and high moral values such as:

- Awhinatanga (helping and serving others)
- Maia (courage and bravery)
- Manaakitanga (hospitality)
- Wairuatanga (spirituality)
- Aroha (love for, caring and sensitivity to others)
- Pukumahi (industriousness and determination)

This has been misinterpreted as meaning other categories of giftedness are less important. This is not so. All areas are of importance however, effective qualities were emphasised” (p8).

With regards to identification the Ministry of Education (2000) describes two broad approaches. The first is the responsive environment approach where giftedness is encouraged to ‘surface’ in a stimulating challenging classroom. Inclusion of a cultural dimension is a vital aspect of this approach. For gifted Maori students a culturally responsive environment is one where their culture is valued, affirmed and developed. The ingredients of a culturally responsive environment include:

- Teachers who value and support cultural diversity in general and Maori culture in particular;
- Programmes that incorporate cultural knowledge, skills, practices, experiences, customs, traditions, values, beliefs, attitudes, behaviours and dispositions; and

- Teaching and assessment that utilised culturally preferred ways of learning.

(as cited in Bevan-Brown, 2009, p8)

Secondly the data-gathering approach which utilises a wide range of identification instruments/ and strategies such as observations, checklists, rating scales, standardized tests, portfolio assessment, parent nomination, peer nomination and so forth.

Participation in Bevan-Brown's research (1993) identified observation as the principal method of identifying gifted Maori children. This was further qualified that it needed to be carried out within a culturally responsive environment by teachers who have a sound knowledge of Maori culture and Maori perspectives of giftedness. In addition it was recommended that teachers need to take rate of progress into account, look beyond the classroom and school and beyond any misbehaviour (Bevan-Brown, 2009)

Recognising potential giftedness is much more difficult! Children will vary in the extent to which they have had opportunities and encouragement to develop and display their gifts or talents.

In the area of provision of culturally appropriate programming content needs to be considered at two different levels. Firstly the curriculum wide inclusion of Maori content which contributes to creating the all-important culturally responsive environment where gifted Maori students feel comfortable enough to reveal and develop their particular strengths whatever they may be.

At a second level teachers need to consider how students who are gifted in cultural abilities and qualities can be extended in these areas and how Maori content can be included in provisions to develop Maori students who have gifts and talents in other areas.

The following were given as examples of "specific strategies and activities that provide for effective gifts to emerge and be developed: peer tutoring, tuakana-teina grouping, co-operative learning, peer mediation, hosting visitors to school and organising powhiri (welcome) and poroporoaki (farewells). In addition extra

opportunities need to be given to clarify and develop personal values, to investigate issues of social justice and extend their spiritual and altruistic abilities” (Bevan-Brown, 2009, p16).

Bevan-Brown (2009) outlined an array of publications, resources and strategies that can provide a wealth of ideas about what Maori relevant content can be included also in the curriculum and in programmes specifically designed to extend Maori children who are gifted in cultural and other areas. Bevan-Brown (2009) states that “...providing for the former group of students involves a great deal more than having a kapa haka group or including a smattering of Te Reo Maori in various activities...” (p15).

Bevan-Brown (2009) concludes that “ideally programmes for gifted Maori students should be holistic in nature. A child’s gifts and talents, whatever they may be should not be developed in isolation i.e. a child who is intellectually gifted must also be nurtured in the affective domain, the fact traditionally Maori do not separate these two spheres of development: a person’s ‘hinengaro’ is the source of both their thoughts and their emotions.

A further important component of holistic programming is the active and ongoing involvement of parents, whanau and members of the Maori community.

## Conclusion – Next Steps

Ministry of Education (2015) states

*increasing the visibility of Maori giftedness within mainstream environments is not about adding a Maori dimension to existing constructs and practices, but requires that the very essence of the system itself is reflective of the principles of partnership, determination and power-sharing.*

In reference to the above, from my observations and in discussion with fellow Principals and Senior Leadership personnel despite them having aspiration to have an holistic Te Ao Maori world view of Maori giftedness and its related identification, engagement and programming, most are in its infancy with many still largely multi-

categorical with an 'add on' Maori dimension viewed by the dominant culture with a predominant intellectual, sporting or creative bias.

Common challenges to kura include having meaningful, sustainable consultation and engagement with all stakeholders, lifting the culturally responsive pedagogical knowledge and practise of classroom practitioners and accessing up to date GATE professional learning and development. It would appear that in many instances policy and documentation 'outstrips' actual practice.

For West End School – Te Kura O Morere our focus and priority for 2016 and beyond will be to address the identification of Maori cultural and spiritual gifts and talents through a culturally responsive lense and context. Added to this continuing to develop an environment where Maori identity, language and culture are affirmed, where akonga feel valued, safe and empowered in their learning.

We will aim to do this through a multi-pronged approach with our Board of Trustees:

- Prioritizing the 'unpacking' of Hautu (Maori Cultural Self Review Tool) enabling a meaningful implementation of Ka Hikitia's aims and principles.
- Pledging a commitment to suitably resource and fund initiatives to support and enhance West End School – Te Kura O Morere GATE programmes and related opportunities for students and staff.

Actions will include:

- Our active involvement in Te Toi Tupu Gifted and Talented Education PLD Project beginning Term One 2016 under facilitator Ingrid Frengley-Vaipuna. NB: The GATE PLD programme is research based taking evidence from noted academic sources including New Zealand studies (Riley, Bevan-Brown, Bicknell, Carrol-Lind and Kearney, 2004).
- Looking to build on our newly developed relationship with local Ngati Te Whiti Hapu, tapping into their wisdom and expertise and having access to their Ngamotu Marae (to be constructed).
- Principal's continued participation in Te Arahou o Taranaki MAC (Maori Achievement Collaborative). Collegial networking and professional sharing at

Hui including Term 3, 2016 MAC National Conference, Rotorua ( 8<sup>th</sup> -11<sup>th</sup> August).

- Establishment of a Te Kura O Morere Whanau Hui - presently the missing link.
- Formal employment of a Maori part time teacher with recognised expertise in Te Reo and Tikanga Maori. To provide school wide in-class tuition and teacher modelling and mentoring of our Kapa Haka roopu. Part of his role would be to provide guidance on identifying students with a Te Ao Maori giftedness /talent and to act as a conduit for Kura and whanau consultation and dialogue.

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