



**Te Kura Tuarua o Horomaka
Hillmorton High School**

MĀORI STUDENTS ACHIEVING SUCCESS AS MĀORI Institutional racism in our schools

A sabbatical leave report from Ann Brokenshire, Principal, Hillmorton High School, Term 2, 2010

Having ten weeks to relax, travel, read, analyse transcripts of our Māori voice collected in 2008 and 2009, read more and to reflect and plan has been invaluable.

I wish to thank:

- The Board of Trustees for granting leave from my position as Principal;
- The Senior Leadership Team, who continued to lead the school well throughout Term2;
- The Ministry, Principals Council who have included this provision in the collective contract.

The time away from the daily work with so many people has allowed me to reflect on the work we have done over the past five or six years in relation to creating a culture more supportive of Māori student achievement. I have reflected on the change in culture at the school and also I have had time to look forward in considering the institutional systems and policies which have worked to create and perpetuate inequitable educational outcomes for groups of students, not only in our school, but across the country.

The challenge now is to return to the work I love, without letting it once again consume all my energy. I believe that it is difficult for any Principal, given the size of the job, to always walk the talk, but I know that I need to approach this work differently and I am committed to finding an approach which allows me to better support the staff, the students and my family.

The following report outlines my thoughts and plans for the way ahead having had time to take into account more literature, research and our own Māori student voice data collected and transcribed from interviews held in 2008 and 2009.

MĀORI STUDENTS ACHIEVING SUCCESS AS MĀORI

Whānau of our Māori students have made it clear that they want their children to achieve at school – academically, socially and emotionally.

Identity is central to this. On analysing our Māori student voice it is clear that ‘identity’ is an issue for some of our Māori students and particularly for some of those who have lighter skin colour. The term ‘white Māori’ is used by some in our 2008/2009 student voice data. Some of these students want both their Māori heritage and their NZ European heritage acknowledged and celebrated.

Our Māori students acknowledged and appreciated the efforts that many teachers, department and the school are making to ensure that Māori culture is not only visible but also acknowledged as being important and valid. They felt proud that we have a Māori DP who has promoted the use of Te Reo Māori in the school. They like hearing Te Reo spoken even if they don’t yet understand it.

These students admire teachers who not only have high expectations for them, but who care about them and their performance. They want teachers to have (and to show) their sense of humour. Where teachers have built positive relationships with them they accept reprimand for ‘off task’ behaviour.

Māori students were able to identify subjects where the curriculum content acknowledged Tikanga Māori. They felt proud that their Māori culture was important.

Having Māori role models at school (staff) and also as visitors, is important for many of these students.

Some of the students felt that the school did not encourage the more ‘troubled’ Māori students to stay at school but were rather pleased when they left. They felt that these students needed much more encouragement to remain at school.

On the topic of racism students noted that our Asian students were not treated well by many other students in the school. A few also felt that the ‘obvious’ darker skinned Māori students are the ones referred out of class if there is an altercation between two students in a classroom.

The ‘white’ Māori also felt some prejudice from the darker skinned Māori students if they wished to join Te Reo Maori or kapahaka classes. One acknowledged the wish to study Te Reo Māori but asked for separate classes. Another wanted to change her Māori surname so that she could more easily assimilate into Pakeha society.

Some students believe the referral system allows teachers to ‘pass the buck’ rather than dealing with the issue in the classroom.

Future Directions to Explore

Discussion with Staff (with Māori student data) re students’ wishes for teachers to show the following characteristics.

- Respect for students

- Sense of humour
- Passion
- Preparedness
- Consistent, fair classroom management

Student's Advice

- Believe in us
- Sort issues within the classroom whenever possible
- Show us how rather than just telling us
- Explain what we are to learn
- Tell us how we are doing and how to improve
- Ask us what we think – involve us in the decision making whenever possible
- Relate the work to real world examples
- Help us to understand the Māori world and the global world. We will be better citizens if we can see things from a range of perspectives.

Considerations

- i) Many staff still teach 'who they are' not able to teach what they don't know.

Consider running some whole school PD – wānanga which 'disrupt racism' and bring the unknown into consciousness for our staff. "Where there is consciousness there is choice." (bell hooks) These workshops would give staff a better understanding of how their own cultural location can affect how and what they teach. This would better allow us to examine the institutional racism within our school.
- ii) Review the discipline system with a view to giving more support to, and development of restorative practices. Standdown/suspension data also shows that Māori are more likely to be stood down/suspended than students from other ethnic backgrounds. A review of procedures is needed with a view to the possible introduction of a restorative diversion process being put in place.
- iii) Continue to work with departments to ensure that the curriculum and teaching is culturally responsive.
- iv) Consider ways of working with all of our students to enable them to develop 'identity' in a positive way.
- v) On-going professional development to ensure culturally responsive pedagogy is used across the school. The current mid-year review of our professional development is timely.
- vi) 'Cultural' supervision for SMT, including Te Reo Māori development.
- vii) Curriculum issues for consideration – kapahaka as a subject (rather than offered across other subjects), Māori Arts as a subject.
- viii) Māori Newsletter (as with Pasifika)
- ix) Whole school events to be considered and reconstituted as bicultural celebrations.

Conclusion

The moral imperative of 'ensuring all students learn' drives me. In order to create a stronger Professional Learning Community where we do indeed ensure that all students learn, we must continue to work collaboratively, and to focus on results and significant actions, but we must also examine our own cultural location.

I agree with Landsman, although referring to the USA, who wrote 'What I believe our schools can do, however, is simply to right part, the part we have control over, of a complex wrong, the complex wrong of racism that still pervades the policies, the economics, the legal system and the personal interactions in this county (p40).