

**Investigating curriculum development and the development of a
culturally responsive environment to support Māori student
success in schools.**

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Acknowledgements:

I would like to thank the Ministry of Education for awarding me this sabbatical and the Tawa College Board of Trustees for granting me leave to take up this opportunity. I would like to thank my Principal, Murray Lucas, and the Senior Leadership Team of Richard Gale, Jules Nicholas and Anne West for their support, especially during the term that I was away. I would also like to thank Steve Conroy who acted so competently in my position while I was away.

I would like to thank the schools who allowed me to visit. In every school, very busy senior leaders took the time to talk with me and share their stories. They did this with honesty, integrity and warmth; sharing both successes and challenges. This made my school visits highly valuable and I have brought a lot of new ideas, theory and reflection back to my own school. The schools I visited were:

Hutt Valley High School, Lower Hutt, Wellington

Mt Maunganui College, Mt Maunganui, Bay of Plenty

Otumoetai College, Tauranga, Bay of Plenty

Pakuranga College, Howick, Auckland

Paraparaumu College, Kapiti Coast, Wellington

Te Puke High School, Te Puke, Bay of Plenty

Executive Summary:

This report explains the findings of an investigation into how other large, diverse, co-educational secondary schools are implementing curriculum development and creating a culturally responsive environment to support Māori student success.

The investigation targeted schools who are recognised as having strength in one or both of these areas. Six schools were visited. Responses have been summarised here, looking in particular at similarities and differences.

The investigation found that before major curriculum review and development can take place, it is important to look at what the educational needs of today's students are. Using a future-focused lens, what attributes and experiences do you want your learners to leave with? All schools are working to provide a connected, relevant curriculum. Nearly all are making time for core teachers of the same junior class to meet, share and plan. Several schools are running pilots of integrated programs.

The investigation found that schools using the Kia Eke Panuku strategy, and in particular the observation and shadow coaching tool, were all seeing a significant shift in teacher pedagogy and Māori student learning. Alongside this, the strategy led to school-wide change and stronger learning-centred relationships with whanau and iwi.

Purpose:

My sabbatical was primarily focused on two areas.

Firstly, looking at how other schools were developing a culturally responsive culture and curriculum; what did Māori achieving as Māori look like in their school?

Secondly, how was curriculum being developed to engage students and to build the competencies and attributes they will need in a fast-changing world. This included looking at the structures and supports (including course choice) that were being used with Year 13 students, to help them stay engaged and successful at school.

In addition, this was a great opportunity to look at other schools and see what their successes and challenges are. I have always found this to be a great help when it comes to reflecting on my own context and looking at possible next steps.

This report:

This report is mainly a summary of my findings from my school visits. In addition to these visits I used my sabbatical time to do a considerable amount of related professional 'reading'. Some of the senior leaders I spoke to recommended authors/researchers who had been important in the development of their own thinking and so this gave me a springboard of places to start. I have listed some of these authors at the end of this report. Often I would find a youtube clip of a conference presentation which would cover the key points and then I could decide in which direction to explore further.

Half-way through my term of sabbatical I was appointed to the position of Community of Learning Leader for our Tawa Kāhui Ako. This generated related professional reading that had more of a leadership and fostering collaborative environments focus. I have not included that here.

My school – Tawa College

Tawa College is a large, co-educational secondary school (years 9-13) in Wellington. Our roll is about 1500, with 19% Māori, 13% Pasifika and about 50% New Zealand European students. A feature of our school is its diversity – a close reflection of the diversity in New Zealand society. A strength of our school is the high retention through to year 13. This is supported by a very strong pastoral structure, underpinned by relational pedagogy (and restorative practices). In addition, we have very high participation in a multitude of co-curricular activities, which serves to connect students to the school and create the inclusive community culture which we are deliberately building.

Students achieve at a high level in a wide range of areas and we are well supported by our whānau and wider community. However, we have two ongoing issues that we are trying to address.

Firstly, while our Māori students achieve at a level higher than Māori students nationally, they have the lowest NCEA success rate of our ethnic groups. We have lifted this success rate at Levels 1 and 2, but Level 3 and University Entrance remain a challenge.

Secondly, while the majority of our students achieve well right through to Level 3, there are a significant number who lose interest during Year 13. This is reflected in their attendance statistics and their NCEA success. They are still keen to be at school, and many are heavily involved in co-curricular and even leadership, but they lose their sense of academic purpose. Fewer than 50% of our students go on to university. We do have a range of non-UE subjects available, as well as GATEWAY and Trades Academy options. We have very high retention through to year 13 (over 90%) but need to step back and rethink what we are doing.

Process:

I wanted to visit schools that were unfamiliar to me, but were similar to mine.

The key features I was looking for were: co-educational, diverse socio-economic, diverse in ethnicity (including a significant, but minority, proportion of Māori, and also Pasifika students), large, not 'new builds', preferably urban. I looked at the Education Counts website and at Education Review Office reports to see which schools would be suitable and then contacted each Principal to ask to visit.

All but two agreed for me to visit. I visited six schools across Auckland, Bay of Plenty and Wellington. I have listed the schools visited in the Acknowledgements section at the beginning of this report. My selection turned out to be excellent. Every school had exciting, successful initiatives which they were happy to share and every school provided considerable food for thought for me.

I have decided not to specifically name individual schools during this report. Instead, this will be a summary of key findings and my increased understanding after visiting the schools, doing further reading, talking and reflection.

I did not have a set of specific questions to ask each school, although knew that I wanted the discussion to include curriculum, Year 13, and Māori achieving as Māori. As I also wanted each school to talk about what was going well and what challenges they were working on, I felt it was important for me not to direct all conversation through specific questions.

Findings:

Curriculum development and innovation:

Most schools are creating opportunities for integrating learning at junior level. This mostly happens through core teachers teaching a common junior class. Teachers then meet regularly. This ranged from teachers meeting a couple of times a term to discuss what they are doing and how things are going, to a more deliberate, thematic approach to the teaching and a weekly meeting of the core teachers of a particular class to plan and share. It is early days for some of these initiatives and so it is unclear what difference is being made to student achievement. However, a common aim is to increase the relevance of what is being learned and also to increase student agency in the process. Student voice is being used to inform some programs. Teachers are benefitting from the cross-curricular links with other departments and it has given some teachers the confidence to try a more collaborative, cross-curricular planning process.

In most schools, there has been ongoing discussion about ability grouping. The consensus seems to be that having a smaller group of students with the lowest diagnostic data taught as a 'class' is effective. Schools that are still taking out top-stream classes, based on their incoming Year 9 diagnostic data, feel that the expectation of the parents of these students around the desire for streaming is driving the decision more than whether it has educational benefit. One school has this year stopped streaming at the top end and says for the first time there have been no complaints from parents of the 'top' students about the quality of the teaching. The school feels that the increased need for all teachers to differentiate their teaching, and to provide increased student choice in lessons, has actually contributed to a more enjoyable and effective learning experience for all students.

Several schools are trialling integrated teaching pilots at junior level. One has introduced a full year junior option subject of Inquiry Extension, while another has introduced a rotating 6-week Foci option line where students choose a special interest project, which could be solving a real-life problem or learning a new skill. At senior level, one school has an "Engineering and Maths" course which counts as two subjects and has a Science and Maths teacher allocated for half the time each. Both students and teachers are seeing value in the increased flexibility. Several schools have introduced one or two senior courses which draw standards from several learning areas. For example, 'Pacific Rim Studies' being taught by a fabric technology teacher, 'Te Awa Kairangi' – a mix of English, History and Sustainability. The challenge in Year 13 is to create a course which still gives access to UE.

All schools are committed to strengthening the attributes learners will need in a fast-changing world. There is discussion around New Zealand Curriculum Key Competencies, Michael Fullan's six pedagogies of Deep Learning, Guy Claxton's Learning Habits and more. Deliberate, extended work is being done with staff, students and community exploring the profile of a successful learner. This then provides increased clarity in the drive for curriculum and structural change. One school has used the learning of Professor Yong Zhao as a driver for change. They have a strong focus on students being "producers, not consumers" and have an expectation that learning will involve students creating something new from their

learning. There is a clear vision around supporting teachers to be the best they can be, and students being active and creative in their learning.

Māori achieving as Māori:

Three of the six schools I visited had recently been part of the Ministry of Education Kia Eke Panuku initiative. Two of these had been involved with Te Kotahitanga before that. In all of these schools there was a very clear understanding of what excellent culturally responsive practice looks like and a well-planned path moving towards this. All schools spoke positively about the shift in teacher understanding and pedagogy as a result of the school being part of the program. A fourth school has this year started a whole school change initiative based on the Kia Eke Panuku model and is also seeing positive change. As Kia Eke Panuku is no longer a supported initiative offered by the Ministry of Education, I was interested to know what in particular had made the difference.

All schools pinpointed the teacher observation tool as being critical. This tool has an associated rubric of culturally responsive practice, which the school unpacks and develops to reflect their own context. This gives teachers a shared understanding of excellent teaching practice in a range of areas. To use the tool, a teacher has a 20-minute classroom observation by a trained observer. During this time, information about the lesson snapshot is recorded but no judgements are made. After the observation, the recorded information is laid against the school rubric and a discussion between teacher and trained observer takes place (called shadow coaching). Decisions are made about where the teacher practice fits on the rubric. Two important factors are that it is the teacher who, through self-reflection and clarifying discussion, decides where their practice falls, and because the rubric has stepped descriptors through to excellence, it is then clear what the next step for that teacher is.

The same observation tool (but without follow up discussion) is used to assess where the school as a whole is operating (over 50% of teachers are visited) and to measure shifts in school practice. However, it is the shadow coaching which principals told me was the key step for individual change.

None of the schools had made this a compulsory focus of every teacher's teaching as inquiry cycle, or professional development. However, the hope in all schools was that the increasing numbers of teachers opting-in would lead to whole school change and an expectation that all would shift their practice. Two schools have made culturally responsive practice part of the teacher observation feedback for all teachers.

There were a number of other strategies which schools were using which they felt had a significant effect on Māori student engagement and success. In particular, schools were all working to increase whānau, iwi and community involvement and to provide more opportunities for leadership for Māori students. Strategies I heard about were:

- Having a group of year 13 students designated as Māori Leaders. One of their responsibilities is to organise a celebratory assembly for all Māori students once per term. (two schools). Whānau are invited to attend.

- Having a group of Māori students act as a Kaupapa Māori Council and giving them a formal, active role in developing the strategic plan for ensuring Māori success as Māori.
- Having a Leavers' Dinner (hāngi) and awards night for Māori students and their whānau when they leave school (again senior Māori students help to plan and organise this).
- Providing the opportunity to belong to a form class/tutor group which provides tikanga and a Māori world view. Three schools were doing this. The first had a year 11-13 Māori boys group, to allow targeting but also tuakana teina between students. In the second school, students apply to be in this type of form class (about 20% of the Māori students in the school are in this). This has given the school a way of connecting with Māori students who are not taking Te Reo or part of kapa haka. It was interesting to hear that take-up varies by year group, with some year groups not feeling the need to move out of their original form class. The third school also has an opt-in Māori student vertical form class, but this meets just once a week and students go to their usual form class the rest of the time.
- Having a pōwhiri for new students and staff was part of what all schools are doing. One school which has a marae on site has also developed a marae orientation program, which senior Māori students lead and year 9 classes cycle through early in the year. Next year, they will also get all staff to experience this as feedback has been very positive.
- Several schools have made time in their program for staff to learn waiata, and one even has an active staff kapa haka group. A parent in another school has written a staff karakia and an ex-student is working on a school waiata, having already created a school haka.
- Inviting teachers to have an active part in the strategic planning and implementation. For two schools who did this, about 25 teachers have taken up this offer and meet weekly or fortnightly to plan, look at data, discuss research evidence, brainstorm - and really take some ownership in driving the initiative forward.
- One school has been running successful weekend wananga for a group of targeted senior Māori students, on their school marae. This occurs four times a year and allows students to complete standards relating to tikanga, whakapapa and other Māori related topics. Up to 42 credits across Levels 1-3 have been on offer and initial support from tutors at the local polytechnic helped to get things started. The school now feels they are in a position to run this themselves. It is important that some of the students attending are academically successful so that they can role model as tuakana teina. The purpose of these wananga is not just to give a credit boost, but to help get students back on track in terms of motivation, routines, self-belief and resilience. Whānau are involved also.

All schools have been trying to strengthen iwi and whānau links. It became apparent to me how much easier this is when the school is based near the iwi group that the majority of

Māori students come from. There is a much more natural dialogue that goes on and whānau and iwi involvement is often involving the same people. In a large urban area, such as Auckland and Wellington, where many families have moved well away from their tribal area, the iwi who are the tangata whenua are not necessarily even a major iwi group when it comes to student affiliation. Also, the tangata whenua may be trying to work with multiple schools.

The best example I saw of a close working relationship was in a Bay of Plenty school where the local iwi is very involved in both day-to-day events and also the wider strategic vision and plan. For example, they come into school to teach kapa haka, to mentor students, to help source authentic Māori contexts for learning areas and more. The iwi has an Education Officer who provides an important consistent link, and the iwi itself is providing significant financial support to Māori students, from paying sports and course fees to supporting with trip costs and even tertiary fee support. This support is greatly appreciated by the school, students and their whānau. Three years ago, this same school undertook an extensive investigation into the views of staff, students, whānau and community to find out what they thought the college was currently like for Māori students, and how they would like it to be. This was followed up by reflection, further consultation and finally a strategic vision and plan incorporating many of the suggestions from those who participated. Already the school is seeing significant change in Māori student engagement and success. Another school who also has close iwi links has done a similar consulting, reflection and strategising cycle with their Māori students and community. Again this has been empowering for all, and real progress is being made.

Year 13:

It surprised me how much difference there was in the school structure for Year 13 students. All schools are trying to provide multiple pathways for students to give them plenty of choice as they leave school and in all schools Year 13 leadership is an important part of school culture.

Two of the schools I visited do not have a problem with declining engagement and attendance at Year 13. All of the other schools I spoke to do have some concerns with their year 13 statistics. The main difference that I could see was that the first two schools have no unsupervised study periods in Year 13. In fact, they have 25% more teaching in all subjects than we do, by timetabling 5 1-hour teaching slots per week for each of the 5 subjects taken. They also offer 5 subjects at Year 12 for 5 hours per week, whereas we do 6 subjects for 4 hours. This came as a big surprise to me as I know of no schools in Wellington that offer this much contact time per subject. Three of the other schools I visited run 4 1-hour periods per week and the last school is in between as they have recently changed to longer lesson times, over an 8-day week.

Whichever way schools have chosen to timetable, all discussed the need to get year 13 students to be independent, self-reliant learners so that they could function successfully at tertiary level and in a work environment. Some felt that having study periods was part of this personal growth and the emphasis should be on students making good use of their study time. Others felt that maximising contact time at school was important. For us to

increase to 5 1-hour lessons a week at Year 13 there would obviously be a significant impact on staffing. The schools already doing this both have a significant number of international fee-paying students which allows them some additional flexibility.

This would seem to be a significant factor to me. I am a Mathematics teacher. There is a large amount of pre-requisite content to be covered at years 12 and 13 to allow study at a higher level. To have 25% more teaching time in both Year 12 and Year 13 would greatly enhance the learning of students, with time to slow down, explore, consolidate, and also to extend. At year 12, there is the added complexity that universities are awarding study scholarships based on the number of Excellence credits earned in this academic year. However, the possibility of an optional extra standards would compensate for the drop of a subject. Already, at my school we constrain the number of compulsory credits available in a course because of the workload of 6 subjects.

As far as other patterns go, there were no obvious ones. The majority of schools have uniform for year 13, the majority have horizontal form groupings. Seniors in all schools are heavily involved in supporting the Year 9 transition and in whole school leadership. All schools are retaining Māori students at a lower rate than non-Māori.

Professional development:

Investigating schools' professional development programs was outside of my brief, however, I did see some models which seemed to be working very effectively and as the outcomes were often linked to curriculum development or improving the success of Māori students I have included some comments here.

Most schools were using cross-curricular groups as a vehicle for professional development. This was usually around supporting the Teaching as Inquiry cycle. Three schools were working to strengthen the cycles by encouraging teachers to be more ambitious when setting their focus and by making the process more robust through greater use of evidence and research-based pedagogy. The school furthest down this path has teachers working in threes, within their cross-curricular group, doing peer observations as well as taking a 'critical friend' role. At this school, five teachers have been appointed as Teaching and Learning Coaches, doing similar work to a Specialist Classroom Teacher role, working alongside teachers, both in the classroom and looking at data, helping unpack what is going on and what the next steps should be.

All schools are still doing some school-directed professional learning, alongside the teacher selected Teaching as Inquiry. Schools are using this directed time to do things such as:

- Ongoing e-pedagogy development.
- Discussions around the unpacking and development of the cultural responsiveness rubric discussed above.
- Feeding back TAI findings; several schools run a version of a road show where, over several sessions, a number of volunteer teachers present their Teaching as Inquiry and other teachers opt in to listen to the one(s) that interest them. Interestingly,

schools that are using an opt-in approach to professional learning say they are finding increased engagement by teachers and no negative feedback about it being a waste of time.

- Visioning and reflection by the Principal/SLT.
- Whole school PD supporting a strategic initiative eg implementing Restorative Practice, implementing Learning Habits (Guy Claxton).
- Planning and reflection time for core teachers of a common junior teaching group to share and collaborate on planning and to share knowledge of students. The aim is to provide a more integrated learning experience for students.

Most schools also have a number of strategic initiatives, where groups of staff are developing knowledge and expertise in order to lead school-wide change. This is happening in Restorative Practice, e-pedagogy, Māori achieving as Māori and personalised learning for students (TLIF). Some schools are also using the Heads of Faculty group to drive strategic school-wide change.

Implications and Conclusion:

This investigation was extremely useful to me in terms of providing new ideas to feed into my school's strategic planning.

In particular, in 2018 Tawa College has been awarded a PLD contract looking at culturally responsive practice and Māori achieving as Māori. This contract will focus on three main areas: strengthening the Teaching as Inquiry process, developing and trialling an observation tool similar to that used in the Kia Eke Panuku initiative, and developing a wider strategic implementation group including teachers and middle managers to drive school-wide change. We are already on this journey, but my sabbatical has given me time to research, explore and focus on what might work for us. There are some very good models already working in the schools I visited.

Also in 2018, Tawa College is starting a major curriculum stocktake and overhaul. We have been working on developing relevant and engaging curriculum for some time, but still within our subject silos. We now need to step back to look big-picture at what we are doing. The advice I received about taking time to think and talk with your students, staff and community about your 'graduate profile' will be valuable. Unpacking what our underlying principles and values around learning are will also make decision-making easier. In addition, staff need more exposure to some of the people who are leading the thinking around learning. For example, Prof Yong Zhao, Michael Fullan, John Hattie.

I have not really solved our Year 13 conundrum. Schools are all doing different things. I would like to explore with staff and students some ideas from other schools, including having no study periods. I also think collecting student voice during year 12 and then several times during Year 13 could be useful. At the moment, student voice is regular but more adhoc and not structured with the intention of checking about academic engagement. We do have individual student conversations through regular mentoring, but again we are not collating what patterns or factors teachers and deans are noticing. Mostly we wait until the student has disengaged and then try to unpack what is happening.

The different ways that schools are supporting teachers with professional learning and development helped me to reflect on our own program. All schools find it a challenge to balance teacher self-driven PLD with the need to upskill teachers in areas related to schoolwide initiatives. All have allocated time for teachers who teach the same junior class to work together. I have realised the strength of the Teaching as Inquiry model when it is done well and have seen that when time and staffing resource is put into supporting teachers with this, it is possible to see a significant shift in teacher pedagogy and student learning. All teachers want their students to be successful learners, so motivation is high. However, lack of dedicated time means that it can be easy to not really unpack what the problem is, how this might be addressed, what difference was made or what the next step could be. A superficial inquiry serves neither the teacher nor students. As one of the goals of our community of learning is to strengthen inquiry, I see an opportunity to use the Across and Within school roles to help with this process. I was also interested that two schools have made aspects of professional learning optional, and both have found much increased

teacher engagement. Those who attend are positive and keen to learn, and they spread the word which in turn increases buy-in. As we review our professional learning program, these are things I would like to raise with teachers and middle managers.

This sabbatical has been a great opportunity for me. I have had time to reflect, read and explore. I found the school visits extremely valuable and met passionate, thoughtful and capable educators. They challenged my thinking, sparked my interest and showed me next steps. I have been able to return to my school with a clearer vision and some strategies that I think will work for us.

Related resources:

I found the following very useful.

Kia Eke Panuku website <https://kep.org.nz/>

<https://kep.org.nz/assets/resources/site/Voices7-1.Rongohia-te-Hau.pdf>

<http://www.edtalks.org/#/video/rongohia-te-hau-measuring-culturally-responsive-and-relational-pedagogy>

Dr Adrienne Alton-Lee

Chief Education Adviser, Best Evidence Synthesis (BES) Programme, Ministry of Education, New Zealand

<https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/schooling/walking-the-talk>

Very interesting paper which begins with a focus on the competences students will need for the future and then looks at a range of current and recent initiatives, including teacher professional learning, through this lens.

Dr Linda Bendikson

Director, University of Auckland, Centre for Educational Leadership.

Article: Courageous Leadership Needed?

<http://www.uacel.ac.nz/language/en-us/publications/articletype/articleview/articleid/389/courageous-leadership-needed#.WmVLGqiWblU>

A relevant and challenging article about the importance of ‘opportunities to learn’ for priority learners. Linda challenges the current practice of streaming/banding in many secondary schools.

Dr Jenni Donohoo

Jenni has produced some good material on the use of collaborative inquiry, particularly as a professional learning tool with teachers. She currently works in Ontario, including doing work for the Council of Ontario Directors of Education. In this role she works alongside system and school leaders. Her work is a good mix of theory and hands-on, in school practice. Her most recent book is a great summary of current key educational thinking. She discusses Professor John Hattie’s most recent results on effect sizes, the implications of growth mindset research, the place of collaboration and collective teacher efficacy ... and more. There is also an interesting (albeit dry) one hour webinar covering the main points of this book.

[Webinar on book Collective Teacher Efficacy](#)

Book: Collective Efficacy: How Educators’ Beliefs Impact Student Learning

Michael Fullan – many books and videos of presentations available.

<https://michaelfullan.ca/>

I mainly focused on “Indelible Leadership” and “Coherence”

Michael had presented at ULearn 2016 (run by CORE Education) and there are good videos of this. This is the link to his Keynote.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M_U8s6y2YPI

Professor Christine Rubie-Davies, University of Auckland.

Has undertaken some ongoing, excellent research investigating what it is about some teachers that means they make a significant difference for all of their learners. This has led to the development and testing of a structured intervention for teachers “becoming a high expectation teacher”. Although this has occurred mostly in primary classrooms, there is a lot to interest and challenge with respect to the secondary context.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lb9DUTL34Pc> this is a 4-minute video summarising some of the key findings of Prof Rubie-Davies.

“Becoming a High Expectation Teacher – Raising the Bar” is an accessible, excellent book with a good mix of theory and practical application.

Professor Yong Zhao – many books and videoed conference presentations.

<http://zhaolearning.com/>

I focused on “World Class Learners” and “What Counts in Schooling?”

Excellent video: Counting What Counts: What Makes a World Class Education?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cYudQ8US52w>

In conversation with Daniel Pink:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wrk3vfEE8i4>