

**Senior Leaders' Sabbatical Report: Linda Dalzell (Southland Boys' High School)**

Sabbatical Period – Term 3 2017

Report Submitted December 2017

**Background summary**

Sustaining culturally responsive and relational pedagogy is pivotal element of my leadership work at Southland Boys' High School. It is also an area of personal interest.

SBHS is a school with a roll of just under 1,000. 36% of the students (and at some year levels up to 50% of the students) identify as Māori.

Many of our Māori students are over-represented negatively in our achievement statistics, particularly in literacy - both functional comprehension and subject specific literacy and in stand down and suspension figures. There are some pockets however, where Māori outperform their NZ European peers but this is not yet consistent.

Although SBHS overall achievement is above the national average for boys and decile 6 schools, our endorsement statistics are poor. Analysis of MidYis data reflects this, showing that we have a culture of "getting over the line" rather than one of performing to potential. This is further evidenced by the quality of the writing some students present - they are not at home with the written word, lacking understanding of writing forms and structures for purpose. As well, Kia Eke Panuku observations identify students "going through the motions" rather than taking the risk to be fully engaged.

Our three years in the Kia Eke Panuku contract (and the previous four years in He Kākano) have led to some transformational changes across all layers of the school. These include a growing awareness:

- of our obligations (and increasingly our desire) - both moral and legal - to engage with the Tiriti O Waitangi
- that every student brings a cultural identity to the classroom that should be acknowledged
- that teaching practice that is culturally relational and responsive is transformational
- that culturally responsive and relational pedagogy principles can and should be active and transparent across all layers and functions of the school

When the Kia Eke Panuku contract finished in 2016, SBHS along with other local schools, James Hargest College, Southland Girls' High School and Aurora College, submitted a

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING DEVELOPMENT Journal application for centrally located funding to continue this work. The schools are now engaged in **Pounamu Poutama** - the next iteration of Kia Eke Panuku through the University of Waikato. This funding is available until mid-2018, with no guarantee that it will go beyond this time.

What are the challenges?

The overall challenge is to shift awareness of the need for culturally responsive and relational pedagogy to deliberate professional acts in the classroom, and across all the layers of the school.

Specifically, this would involve:

1. developing the Poutama Pounamu ethos across the school so that Mauri Ora provides the critical context for change – and that potential of all stakeholders is being realized and activated, maintaining urgency to inform future practice
2. planning and delivering school wide culturally responsive and relational PROFESSIONAL LEARNING DEVELOPMENT (raising both teacher and student expectations to develop greater momentum in school culture / accessing prior knowledge and learning / power sharing sustaining the work of the Poutama Pounamu team of observers and ensuring that the observations are consistent and rigorous)
3. ensuring that the principles of Poutama Pounamu are spread across all layers of the school and that teaching and policy development continue are deliberate professional / strategic evidence based acts to raise student outcomes
4. developing powerful connections with whānau
5. maintaining and developing collaborative partnerships / contact with the University of Waikato research base and with our facilitator - Margaret Egan (University of Waikato) to advance / challenge our thinking and engage with an external view point and PP Cluster and Kāhui Āko

*Ako tahī he pai atu te ako anake.*

*Learning together is better than learning alone.*

1. Developing culturally responsive and relational pedagogy across the school so that Mauri Ora provides the critical context for change and the potential of all stakeholders is being realised and activated, maintaining urgency to inform future practice

**Sustaining the work of the Poutama Pounamu team of observers and ensuring that the observations are consistent and rigorous is fundamental to making sure that teachers see their students as culturally located individuals who have the capability and capacity to succeed.**

With a team of seven struggling to get consistent coverage across a teaching staff of 61, a major challenge is to share the expertise and have more people doing observation and feedback with staff. Completing the observations and using the tool is not difficult - the skill comes in the feedback to shadow coaching. Observers need first and foremost, to have a deep understanding that everyone has a cultural identity that must be acknowledged in the classroom and in the affective domain. Second, they need to be able to identify the elements that create āko within all of their relationships. Third, they need to be skilled in questioning techniques so that feedback sessions have rigour and will drive future change. Finally, the team needs to have a clear understanding of what good observation practice looks like, both in our school and as part of a national framework and imperative, so that observations have the rigour and consistency to be a tool that is trusted and therefore the feedback / feedforward is also trusted and actioned by the teachers in their classrooms.

We are in the process of en-skilling HoFs to work with their Faculties in this role.

Observation of staff in their faculties has always been an expectation of HoFs, but one that has not been given consistent professional learning support or training (sector wide). The increasing administration that NCEA has brought to middle leaders has exacerbated the demands on their time. As a consequence, observations within faculties have been a hit and miss affair – some middle leaders doing excellent work in learning conversations, readings, feedback and feedforward, walk -throughs and observations against the PTCs, but this practice is not consistent. In the worst case scenarios of the past, (sector wide) observations and feedbacks were hasty and judgemental against vague or non-existent criteria, or worse still, "imagined" and then written. Supporting middle leaders to build observations into the fabric of their practice is a "work on". The challenge is to find ways that observation practice is consistently performed and is practised as collaborative work, with the HoF activating and maintaining the communication between the teacher and the mentor. In our current context, HoFs have made a great deal of shift in this area, building professional learning development (PLD) and learning conversation / performance management time into the structure of their meetings, and regularly walking through classes and completing the required observations. The challenge is to provide training for middle leaders in this role, to make the work meaningful and linked to teaching practice so that it is valued by all.

Poutama Pounamu provides this opportunity, by making walkthroughs pedagogically focussed and meaningful for all parties. It has the potential to enable better understanding of students, predicated on the teacher actions that deliberately help students access the

curriculum in ways that are meaningful to them, and through that student engagement, create the conditions that will accelerate achievement. The link to performance management and the Practising Teacher Criteria is clear; there is a reason for teacher inquiries; the teacher learns what will work for each student and builds that into their planning and practice.

Some middle leaders are already part of the Poutama Pounamu team, others have expressed an interest in joining and will work with the Poutama Pounamu team from 2018. The more middle leaders involved in the Poutama Pounamu process, the greater the acceleration and spread of culturally responsive and relational pedagogy across the school resulting in more deliberate acts of teaching, better engagement and improved outcomes.

A further challenge is maintaining the rigour and consistency of the use of the observation tool and ensuing feedback to shadow coaching meetings. To be mindful of this, the Poutama Pounamu team have adopted the practice of building review and refresher sessions into their professional learning meeting schedule. At these meetings, members bring an issue to be discussed and unpacked. Using the tool as a starting point, the team assesses the evidence the observation recordings provide, and review the feedback sessions to satisfy themselves (or not) that the feedback / feedforward conversation has provided the right level of challenge and support leading to goal setting and action. Often, these meetings help the team to develop and improve observation recording and questioning skills. These meetings not only refresh the process, but provide a context for us to explore more deeply the elements that underpin culturally responsive and relational pedagogy. Building these meetings into the regular schedule of meetings is critical for success.

A key ingredient of this is having "outside eyes" in the form of our University of Waikato facilitator, in turn supported by her team, able to make critical comment on progress and the challenges we are facing. By operating as a sounding board and enabling focussed discussion to occur, the facilitator supports us to see what our practice looks when viewed through an objective outside lens. This is an important bridge to building effective, reflective practice.

### **Learning for the future**

- Understand the philosophy - enabling students to achieve success as themselves (with particular, but not exclusive focus on Māori)
- Maintain rigour and consistency by continuing to challenge our own practice (refresh and review meetings)
- Train new staff – especially middle leaders in use of the tool - and apply the same measures to ensure consistency and rigour

- Use "outside eyes" to challenge practice and accelerate progress in observation to shadow coaching

*Mā te huruhuru ka rere te mana*  
*Adorn the bird with feathers and it will fly*

## 2. Planning and delivering school wide PROFESSIONAL LEARNING DEVELOPMENT

At the end of our time in Kia Eke Panuku, PLD in culturally responsive and relational pedagogy was dispersed across a number of different groups who did not always connect. Resisters had a voice that was often at odds with not only our Kia Eke Panuku goals but also the SBHS Charter goals. There was some, but inconsistent, linkage between PLD and Performance Management and significant learned helplessness from staff regarding how they should manage and effectively use their PLD journals, often resulting in minimal attempts to do so simply for compliance.

Concerned at this - given some resistance we were experiencing - and how we might move practice from a transmission to a discursive approach, the Kia Eke Panuku team decided to run a series of workshops demystifying the Poutama Pounamu observation tool and clarifying and unpacking the cultural toolkit. It was a breakthrough moment that captured the growth and development of the teachers in the Poutama Pounamu team; they felt confident to talk about what they do - not from an "expert" perspective, but from a perspective of āko. They articulated this. They further articulated the connections they could see between what they were trying to do in their classrooms and the ensuing benefits they were finding from gathering evidence, using it to inform teaching, working on strategies to build effective teaching and learning relationships and recording all of these as evidence in their performance management journal - linked explicitly to the Practising Teacher Criteria.

The first set of workshops was held on Teacher Only Day in 2017. A very nervous group of teachers set off to lead their 15 minute workshop, with randomly selected groups of teachers (who rotated around each of the workshops). The attendees left the staffroom in a mood of resigned compliance and returned buzzing. Feedback clearly indicated that this was pragmatic and valuable PLD that they could actually use in their classrooms, linked to the underpinning theory. All workshops had positive responses, there were only two negative responses received in the evaluations, and the process itself was welcomed by the staff. Teachers identified other teachers who were doing good work for the next series of workshops!

Since then we have run three more sets of workshops with more planned for 2018. The only criteria we have set is that the workshop topic must demonstrate an aspect of discursive / culturally responsive and relational pedagogy practice. Workshop presenters are from across the school, in all disciplines and at all ages and stages of teaching. Two workshops in particular have drawn requests for more in - depth work: one on *Learning Focussed Relationships* and one on *Evidence - what it is, and how can I use it for my students and for myself?* In each set of workshops, someone from the Poutama Pounamu team runs a workshop on a specific aspect of the Cultural Toolkit.

A further workshop, also highly successful, that deserves specific mention, was led by the Māori Faculty. In this workshop, teachers learnt the school haka! Immediately teachers were in the slightly uncomfortable space of being novice learners, and so remembered what it was like to be a student in a class where you were not confident. Significantly, and evidence of shift in thinking about culturally responsive and relational pedagogy, not one teacher refused to participate. All teachers (including the Rector) had a good time, learnt something new and shared the experience with others!

Staff feedback has also indicated that they appreciate the opportunity to work with teachers from across the school (the workshop groupings are randomly selected and change for every Discursive Practice Workshop cycle). Another incidental positive response has been the deliberate strategy of “housing” the workshops in a different part of the school each cycle – teachers have identified that they appreciate the opportunity to go to different parts of the school and see what the classrooms look like, and also that the everyone, presenter included, is in a neutral space. Further, teachers appreciate the combination of theoretical and practical content. The workshops have also provided a “missing link” between professional learning and appraisal. The staff also now articulate understanding that what we are doing is not an expert model - enabling that spread and sharing of good practice. This practice, in turn is being modelled to and shared with the students.

Our next steps are to listen to the demand, and continue to run workshops – sometimes fewer workshops, for a longer time period and more in-depth intensity, some shorter (10 – 15 minutes) and strategy focussed.

A further example of shift in practice has been the way that engagement with Poutama Pounamu has given staff confidence to show leadership in their practice. The Māori Faculty run fortnightly staff workshops in basic Te Reo which are well attended by both teaching and administration staff. Out of feedback sessions following observations, teachers who are exploring a particular aspect of culturally responsive and relational pedagogy are setting up inquiry groups to share their learning. Whilst these and similar developments have not come directly from Poutama Pounamu PLD, they most likely would not have occurred, or would not have achieved the success they enjoy without the ground work that has occurred during the school's involvement in Kia Eke Panuku / Poutama Pounamu. This is evidence of shift and of learning being used as a springboard to independence and further learning.

### **Learning for the future**

- Share the load - identify good practice and get the teachers to share what they are doing
- Celebrate that Poutama Pounamu is not an "expert model" but is action research, that each step is built on the last

- Keep the workshop structure short and focussed, with opportunities for staff to engage at a more in-depth level from time to time
- House the workshops in a different area of the school each time
- Ensure the focus is discursive, culturally responsive and relational pedagogy
- Celebrate and foster the way learning provides a springboard for more learning

*Me mahitahi tātou mō te oranga o te katoa*

*We should work together for the wellbeing of everyone*



3. The principles of Poutama Pounamu (PP) are spread across all layers of the school and that teaching and policy development continue to be deliberate professional / strategic evidence based acts to raise student outcomes

Given that Southland Boys' High School is in a phase of transition (Rector retiring, Interim Rector, new Rector taking up the position), the importance of support from the Rector cannot be stressed enough. Without the ongoing support of the Rector and the Board of Trustees, progress would have been much slower. While the PP team can work individually or in groups with staff, to achieve a whole school focus requires explicit and well-articulated support from the Rector to provide the context in which collaboration and āko can occur. We are fortunate to have had this, despite the transitions which could have halted our work.

**Learning for the future**

- The explicit and articulated support of the Rector is crucial to ongoing success

*He aha te kai o te rangatira? He kōrero, he kōrero, he kōrero!*

*What is the food of the leader? It is knowledge, it is communication!*

4. Developing Powerful Connections with Whānau

Building powerful connections with whānau has been a focus for all four of the schools in our PP cluster.

Two of the schools have moved to Academic Counselling, in our case, with our Year 7 & 8 students. This has had an immediate impact on increasing the numbers of whānau and parents attending interviews with a 98% attendance rate. Questions which are deliberately positive and goals - for - learning focussed are emailed home prior to the interviews so there are no surprises for whānau at the interview. At the conclusion of each academic counselling session, each person present knows what their next steps are in working towards the goal. Feedback has been positive, and the consistency of the attendance rate evidences whānau support.

In our Y9 – 13 area we are making better use of the Student Management System and its Parent Portal. Student assessment and learning information is there for parents to see, and so, as with Year 7 & 8 interviews, there are no surprises at the interviews. With Year 11 – 13 students we have moved to “Real Time” reporting through the Parent Portal, so that parents have access to their sons’ learning information. These are followed up with two interview cycles per year.

Increasingly, teachers are using email to contact parents, in the first instance with course outlines and assessment dates. Out of some shared good practice in the school, all teachers now email home regularly with reminders of assessment dates, information about the work required from students at home and school in preparation for assessments, with information about resubmissions for NCEA standards and about tutorial programmes. Teachers are now individualising the information more and emailing individual parents about tutorials that might be useful for their son, about good work and about ways the student can develop something they are working on.

With particular reference to Māori whānau, a parent led Whānau Group has been established which acts as a consultation group for the Board of Trustees. This group has enabled the school to interact with the perceptions and aspirations of the local Māori community.

Being in the Poutama Pounamu cluster has enabled a wide range of staff across all four schools to attend wananga at two different marae and to experience and participate in the protocols. In turn, this has led to increased interest and demand for professional learning development in both Te Reo Maori and kawa and tikanga. Because of this, use of Te Reo Māori around the school has increased significantly in breaking down the barriers for whānau coming into the school. The use of Te Reo Māori around the school and in classrooms demonstrates acknowledgement of Māori culture and language being accepted as a valid and valued expression of the uniqueness of Aotearoa, New Zealand. The use of

Te Reo Māori in and around the school, by all of the school community – not just by Māori, further demonstrates commitment to partnership, protection and participation as promised in the Tiriti o Waitangi. These steps, small though they may be, are the beginning of a pathway that will enable Māori (and all) students to achieve success as themselves.

The Kia Eke Panuku and then Poutama Pounamu facilitators have been an integral part of brokering improved relationships between the schools and both Murihiku Marae and Te Rau Aroha Marae, and ongoing wananga at either place is an essential element in keeping the schools connected to local iwi. Through this contact, other relationships have developed where local iwi have contributed to the planning, content and sometimes delivery of locally and iwi contextualised curriculum.

### **Learning for the future**

- Continuing Professional Learning Development in developing and maintaining powerful connections with whānau is an essential factor in enabling students to achieve success as themselves
- Use of Te Reo Māori in and around the school acknowledges the right for Māori students to cultural identity
- Individualised contact with whānau (especially but not only) Māori creates an improved context for learning where all participants are focussed on learning progress
- Sustaining and building on relationships with local iwi is essential to ensuring that students and teachers can access local history, protocols and traditions
- Teachers from across schools meeting at local Marae in a learning context is mutually beneficial. The iwi are informed about what schools are doing and schools are learning about the aspirations and expectations of iwi.

*He aha te mea nui kī tenei ao?  
He tangata, he tangata, he tangata.*

*What is the most important thing in the world?  
It is people, people, people.*

### **5. Maintaining and developing collaborative partnerships**

The "outside eyes" are a crucial element of the work. Right from He Kākano days, the notion that "one size fits one" has been an important precursor to success. The continued support and oversight of Mere Berryman and the team at Waikato University, and the consequent and ongoing work with our facilitator, Margaret Egan have enabled each school to make

progress at their own pace to meet their own goals within their own Charter vision and mission statements.

Their positive, non-judgemental and critical feedback has provided a framework within which we can gradually build a culture that is culturally responsive and relational across all layers of the school. Having someone to listen, articulate and frame the challenges faced, has led to fruitful discussions and decision making that makes the school a more responsive and relational environment.

Further, the “outside eyes” can provide a perspective to challenge internal decision making, which in turn, means the decision making process is more robust. The University of Waikato team have never sought to influence the outcomes of decision making, but have consistently supported us to clarify our thinking about the decisions we do make.

The opportunity to take an annual “snapshot” of practice in the school through Rongohia Te Hau - the winds of change - (including whānau, student and staff surveys) provides critical data from which shifts in practice can be identified, the impact – positive or negative – of changes is gauged and deliberate planning can occur to accelerate progress. That this process is externally moderated provides a rigour that is appreciated by the Poutama Pounamu team and the wider school community. It is not just what **we** say; it is evidence that has been analysed and reviewed externally.

Post Kia Eke Panuku, the four Invercargill schools that make up the Poutama Pounamu cluster work together to plan wananga with agreed foci. These are wide ranging and have included aspects such as school systems, pastoral care, evidence to accelerate and teaching and learning with a culturally responsive and relational pedagogy lens. The range of staff attending supports accelerated spread of ideas. The foci are supported with ongoing readings and scenarios to challenge positions held at an individual level as well as at a school level. Wananga facilitators have developed knowledge and understanding of the schools they work with as well as understanding of the individual attendees which provides a multi - faceted context that benefits both the school and the individual practice. A further positive outcome from wananga is closer connections between and across the schools at both leadership and teacher level. The wānanga, (three or four a year), link teachers with the professional learning and with teachers from their own school as well as with their colleagues from the other schools, breaking down isolation and silos both within and across schools as well as introducing teachers to marae and developing closer and sustainable relationships with iwi.

As well, the facilitator’s regular meetings with the cluster leaders and with individual leaders for each school enables the sharing of ideas and planning with a culturally responsive and relational pedagogy lens and an objectivity that supports greater clarity.

A challenge for the future is to maintain and develop these across school relationships which enable the sharing of good practice.

Only two schools in the Poutama Pounamu cluster joined the Invercargill Kāhui Āko (Community of Learning). The Kāhui Āko has the potential to support and accelerate the work of Poutama Pounamu within each school and across the schools. This is further strengthened by having Mere Berryman as the Kāhui Āko expert advisor / partner and by her (willingly sought) guidance through the establishment phase of the Kāhui Āko. The establishment phase has been underpinned by the three critical contexts for change; cultural relationships for responsive pedagogy, adaptive expertise driving deliberate professional acts (in curriculum, policies and practices i.e. at all layers of the school) and powerful home, school and community collaborations are given a broader platform to engage more teachers, both within our school and across the schools in the Kāhui Āko. This provides a synergy and an opportunity to consolidate and accelerate the work we have been engaged in.

#### **Learning for the future:**

- Maintaining contact with the team and Waikato and their research base and resources is crucial to maintaining progress
- The Poutama Pounamu cluster enables shared leadership across schools and supports improved connections and relationships between teachers in the four schools
- A carefully constructed establishment phase of the Kāhui Āko is founded on the critical contexts for change and has been deliberately developed 'normalise' and accelerate culturally responsive and relational pedagogy in all of the schools involved and the continuation of this is desirable in the accelerated spread of culturally responsive and relational pedagogy.

*Ēhara taku toa i te toa takitahi. Engari, he toa takitini.*

*My strength is not the strength of one. It is the strength of many.*

I would like to take the opportunity to thank Teach NZ for the sabbatical study leave.

I would also like to thank the Southland Boys' High School Board of Trustees for their support in allowing me to take up the opportunity for sabbatical study and my colleagues for taking on the inevitable extra work during my absence.

*Mauruuru te whai wāhi kī te whakaaro me te ako te.*

*Thank you for the opportunity to think and learn.*