

Sabbatical Report
2017

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What are some of the most effective culturally responsive leadership and teaching practices?

Nāu te rourou, nākū te rourou, ka ora ai tātou.

With the gifts you bring combined with mine, we will all benefit.



Acknowledgements

Many thanks to the Ministry of Education for providing the opportunity for a principal sabbatical which enabled me to regroup, refresh and remember why I do what I do. To my Board of Trustees, who very willingly encouraged me to apply for this time. Whakawhetai koutou to my whānau ropu who through their aroha, korero and willingness to share what it means to have a world view that is not held by the majority culture, inspired me to investigate the practical leadership and teaching actions that impact on Māori achieving success as Māori. I will forever be grateful to them for the way they awahi me in my growth and are there as a sounding board for me. They underestimate the impact they have had on my formation and thinking. Thank you also to my amazing staff who are committed to our Shared Vision Statement:

Everyone has a place here. In our safe and inclusive environment we embrace and value diversity. We recognise and respect the uniqueness of every individual within the school community as made in the image and likeness of God. We acknowledge and accept that there is more than one way to achieve the same goal. We value and encourage the development and sharing of everyone's unique ideas, talents, skills, passions and culture. We understand the importance of supporting everyone to be the best they can be in their daily lives.

They enthusiastically and capably led and kept our school moving forward during my time away. Thanks to my Catholic Community of Learning colleagues who shared so willingly their understanding and current practices of a culturally responsive pedagogy of relationships in their kura. To members of Rangitane Iwi Whaea Debbie Marshall Lobb and Matua Roly Fitzgerald who have both supported me to put my sabbatical application together.

I would also like to acknowledge Russell Bishop and his team for the way they have deepened my understanding in this area and to Te Whiri Koko for bringing Laurayne Tafa from Cognition to share an inspirational presentation in partnership with the Palmerston North Papaoeia Pasifika Trust, about Culturally Responsive Pedagogies - Creating inclusive relationship based learning environments. This korero provided a practical model of how educationally powerful relationships can be formed with family/whānau. Finally, I would like to thank our learners, their family/whānau and our Parish community for their acceptance and support of my absence during Term 2, 2017.

Executive Summary

This report outlines how myself and my teachers, (who have a different world view to the Māori/Indigenous world view), can practically and strategically engage in practices that are based on a culturally responsive pedagogy of relationships i.e. when educators create learning contexts within their classroom; where power is shared between self-determining individuals within non-dominating relations of interdependence; where culture counts; where learning is interactive, dialogic and spirals; and where participants are connected to one another through the establishment of a common vision for what constitutes excellence in educational outcomes. (Education Counts, 2007).

I outline:

- The systems and structures that leaders must have in place, at an organisational level for real change to happen and for educationally powerful relationships to be forged
- The significance of the relationship Māori learners and their families have with their teacher/principal/school and its effect on their achievement
- The mental models of an agentic teacher. An agentic teacher is one who shows “professional commitment and responsibility for the learning of their students” (Bishop, 2010, p. 61).
- The actions of an agentic teacher

Background and Rationale

I am in my 10th year of principalship at St James' Catholic School in Palmerston North, where we have 197 diverse learners. Our current Māori roll is 27 learners, 14 % of our roll and growing. Our Pasifika roll is 6 learners 3% of our roll and growing. We are a decile 8 Catholic school in the suburb of Hokowhitu.

We are members of the *Schools that Deliver Network* and have created significant organisational and pedagogical change by using the following principles with our people:

- Life has taught us all different things.
- Those experiences have influenced our beliefs, values and assumptions which impact on the way we behave.
- We never ignore the unique lives led of the people in our organisation.
- We ensure that every voice is heard and we use protocols that ensure this happens.
- We have created a Shared Vision and Shared Gospel Values and use these as the lens through which we look when considering any organisational and pedagogical change asking, “ how will this (innovation, initiative, change) lead us closer to fulfilling our Shared Vision?”

So how does the topic of my sabbatical “investigating culturally responsive pedagogy” align with our Shared Vision? It aligns with the following statement:

“We value and encourage the development and sharing of everyone’s unique ideas, talents, skills, passions and culture. We understand the importance of supporting everyone to be the best they can be in their daily lives. “ We are a family/whānau school. Best learning happens when strong, respectful partnerships are formed and nurtured within our community. Open communication and ongoing conversations allow family/whānau to contribute to and share in their children's learning in a way that is positive and supportive.

Other background factors that have led to me investigating what culturally responsive pedagogy is include:

- Seconding two Māori parent representatives to our Board of Trustees to ensure our Board has a Māori voice.
- Joining with 8 schools in partnership with our local iwi Rangitane, and securing funding from the Teacher Led Innovation Fund to write an iwi based curriculum.
- Teaching staff identifying they would like some professional learning around Tataiako Cultural Competencies for Teachers of Māori Learners.
- Partnering a small and active whānau ropu (we have Tongan whānau in the whānau as well) who meet every month to korero and organise powhiri, kapa haka (Years 1-3 ropu and Years 4-6 ropu), hangi, contribute to the reo and tikanga learning and who contribute their world view to initiatives that have an impact across our school, e.g. the PB4L school wide matrix, report format, Māori/Pasifika visual art around the school, choosing waiata they want our learners to know etc.

- Starting a Catholic Kapa Haka Festival 7 years ago which all the Catholic schools in our area participate in and take turns at hosting during Matariki each year.
- Collaborating with Rangitane Iwi to create Māori art works that tell the story of the history of our kura
- Joining a Catholic, faith based KāhuiAko
- Enrolling in Te Wananga o Aotearoa's He Papa Tikanga Course

All of these background factors have motivated me as a leader to grow in my knowledge and gain some deeper learning about what a culturally responsive relationship is between a teacher, a Māori/Indigenous learner and their family/whānau. I have been able to use the terminology in the right context but if anyone had asked me what I really meant by being culturally responsive, my explanation would have been inadequate.

Purpose

Therefore, the purpose of my sabbatical has been to:

- Challenge the way I think and understand about what being "culturally responsive" means - so not just changing my pedagogies but deepening my knowledge and understanding about what it really takes to affect change in teachers and leaders.
- Investigate the specific, culturally responsive pedagogies required of teachers and leaders that make a difference to the success of Māori/Indigenous learners
- Grow my capacity to lead and challenge my team to understand what being culturally responsive means. With this knowledge I will engage my teachers in reflecting on what they currently do and how successful it is, including reflecting on the school wide events we engage in . Together we will make decisions about what events and actions we engage in that have a limited impact on Māori/Indigenous student achievement and we will STOP doing these. We will then collaborate around doing things DIFFERENTLY. Collaboratively we will have the time to investigate and START using strategies and plan events that have significant impact on the success of Māori/Indigenous learners.

Methodology - What I did. Activities undertaken.

- The methodology I used included exploring literature, collecting data, conversations and personal reflection.
- I began by reading a range of research including texts from the Ministry of Education and ERO
- I viewed YouTube clips of Russell Bishop delivering to the Stronger Faster Conference in 2012 in Australia
- I attended a 2 hour workshop facilitated by Laurayne Tafa from Cognition Education about Culturally Responsive Pedagogies.
- I designated time to visit colleagues in our Catholic Kāhui Ako to gather baseline data around the current practices in their schools so that we could consider this evidence when developing actions for raising the achievement of our Māori/Indigenous learners across our schools..
- I have also taken considerable time to reflect on the research and conversations and organise my thinking to share with my community so that we can plan forward together, based on the implications of my findings.

Findings

The findings based on readings, interviews, conversations and reflection are presented next. They highlight four culturally responsive pedagogical practices:

1. Systems and organisational structures
2. Significance of relationships between school and whānau
3. Importance of agentic mindsets
4. Actions of agentic teachers and leaders

Implications for our school are included after the section **Organisational Factors** and then follow after the three **Relational/Educator Factors (2, 3 & 4)**.

Culturally Responsive Pedagogy 1: The systems and structures that leaders must have in place, at an organisational level for real change to happen and for educationally powerful relationships to be forged.

Russell Bishop makes it clear in his keynote address to the Stronger Faster Summit in 2012, “The Impact of staff and community connections on student learning,” that at the basis of any organisational change or reform there must be a guiding theoretical model that he calls “SCALING UP”. Bishop refers to seven aspects:

1. A school should have a clear, shared vision about improving the achievement of indigenous learners.
2. Strategic goals around these learners achievement and goals around parental involvement are set and all teachers are involved in setting them and committed to achieving these goals (OWNERSHIP).
3. Change in teacher pedagogy in the school (the teaching and learning) is carefully co-constructed and facilitated.
4. Evidence is gathered to assess the impact of the change in teacher pedagogy and used formatively to inform teaching and learning. (Teaching as Inquiry)
5. The school’s organisational systems and structures, including policies and processes, must be aligned to enable the pedagogy to be implemented, supported, monitored and reported.
6. Leadership must be about enabling and supporting these changes. Leadership must be distributed throughout the school in order for change to be sustained.
7. Families and communities must be included in the reform.

The implications for our school and opportunities for us to strengthen aspects of our practice regarding

“The systems and structures that leaders must have in place, at an organisational level for real change to happen.”

What we will do:

- We will ask: Do we have a shared vision for improving the achievement of Māori/Indigenous learners?
- Have we engaged these learners’ parents as active partners in the process of improving their children’s achievement?
- Do we have strategic goals? Is Māori/Indigenous student achievement inherent in our Teaching as Inquiry Process?
- In our Charter, as we set targets, we will make the achievement targets around Māori/Indigenous learners more explicit.
- As part of the planned actions for raising the achievement of Māori/Indigenous learners we will set goals around how we will engage parents/whānau in the process of partnering us in lifting their children’s achievement.
- As part of each team of teachers Teaching as Inquiry around raising the achievement of Māori/indigenous priority learners, there will be agreed planned actions for engaging parents as partners in this work and close monitoring as to the impact of these actions on raising achievement.

Culturally Responsive Pedagogy 2: The significance of the relationship Māori/Indigenous learners and their families have with their teacher/principal/school and its effect on achievement.

When children, their families and Principals are asked, what is the most important influence on achievement? The research is clear. It is the **RELATIONSHIP** that is especially important for Māori/Indigenous peoples.

So what are the critical factors in building these relationships? What are some practical, strategic actions schools can take?

The following extensive but not exhaustive list, is a summary of the actions taken by whānau and schools, when surveyed about what helped them make effective relationships with each other (Office of Auditor General, 2015). Please note that where it is recorded Māori these actions are just as significant for other indigenous groups. They include:

- school leaders valuing Māori. e.g. strong, valued kapa haka ropu working in the school. (timetabled in curriculum time)
- boards of trustees members actively involved in the life of the school and Māori/whānau representation on the Board
- a proactive principal who actively promotes Te Reo Māori and Tikanga Māori being learned by him/herself, staff/students/whānau, who models positive behaviours such as talking to whānau outside the classroom, and who shares responsibility for building relationships with whānau with his/her teachers:
- whānau members helping in learning spaces and in school activities such as teaching kapa haka
- iwi welcomed and proactively building relationships with the school, whānau and the wider community
- a kaumātua, iwi, or a cultural advisor providing cultural leadership
- an active and valued whānau group who the principal and teachers consult to get a Māori perspective on school initiatives and to connect with iwi, provide advice on how to deal with behavioural problems with Māori learners and provide leadership and guidance to help organise and run events, such as Matariki celebrations
- the creation of meaningful school events that invite parent involvement and promote the school to whānau
- access to people with knowledge of, and expertise in, Māori culture to help provide a culture in the school that supports Māori, help prepare policies and procedures, and put them into practice, help staff build relationships with whānau
- regular, honest and open communication starting with an open door policy so whānau feel welcome and enabled to be involved, regular communication with whānau where teachers/principals LISTEN to what whānau have to contribute about their child/ren, teachers regularly communicating information to whānau about their child's progress
- being flexible by greeting and smiling at parents making them feel comfortable, emailing and texting whānau who don't come into the school often, being aware of whānau circumstances and providing child care and kai during whānau hui, using sports, cultural and school wide events to build relationships with whānau.

- school policy/ies: that outline the school’s commitment to building relationships with whānau. These must be available to whānau without them having to ask.

In summary the report suggests a variety of ways for schools and Māori communities to build relationships, however let’s be clear. **The onus is on each school to take action towards communicating and building relationships with whānau.** It is also necessary for the school to regularly seek feedback from whānau about how well they are engaging with them and how well the relationship is developing.

Having read about the significance of building relationships I still wondered whether this foundational building of relationships was enough to improve Māori/Indigenous learner achievement on its own? My reading would lead me to gain clarity around this. It is not enough! It is the start!

To further confirm this thinking I read ERO’s *Educationally Powerful Connections with Parents and whānau*, (November 2015) which says that, “schools committed to the work of improving achievement of Māori learners first of all were prepared to recognise that what they had previously done was not enough” (p. 17).

This perspective was also reflected in feedback from our Kāhui Ako leaders who were already working on strengthening relationships with their whānau/parents.

So if you’ve engaged in some or all of the relationship building activities what else can you do? The next part of this report outlines a possible way forward.

In August 2017, I attended a workshop facilitated by Laurayne Tafa from Cognition Education who presented us with the following graph from The Best Evidence Synthesis Chapter 7:

What makes a difference?

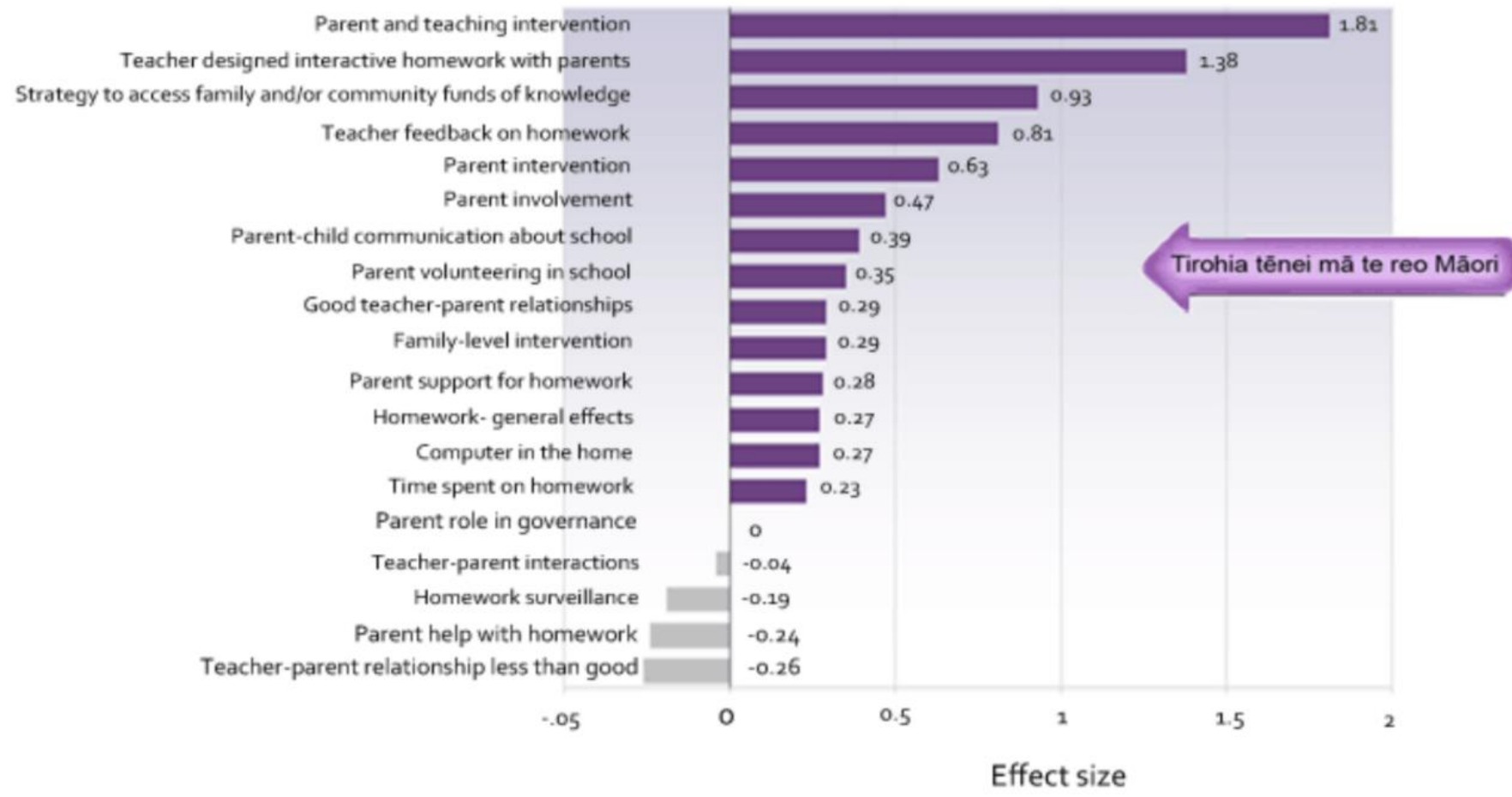


Figure 24: Findings of a meta-analysis of research on the educational impact of making connections between schools, families/whānau, and communities

The graph shows that any intervention that has an effect size of 0.4 or above, makes a significant difference to learners' achievement. The graph is telling us clearly that specific interventions where PARENTS are involved in the LEARNING PARTNERSHIP have a significant impact on learner achievement. For details about each of the interventions and their impact on achievement read the 2009 School Leadership and Student Outcomes: Identifying What Works and Why Best Evidence Synthesis Iteration [BES] by Viviane Robinson, Margie Hohepa, and Claire Lloyd.

Lauryane went on to explain that EVENTS that MADE CONNECTIONS with whānau such as the many outlined above, were important but what was even more powerful in making a difference to Māori learner's achievement was WHEN TEACHERS ENGAGED whānau IN LEARNING TALK. Teachers who shared assessments with parents, explained what they meant, explained expected progress and how resources worked, described what they would be doing to address the child's learning needs and demonstrated to the parent with pre-prepared resources, how the parent could support the learner at home, developed EDUCATIONALLY POWERFUL RELATIONSHIPS. whānau and teachers met at an agreed time 5 or 6 weeks later to look at how the child was progressing and made decisions about next steps. The cycle began again.

She then spoke to us about The Mutukaroa Project - a home-school learning partnership that seeks to accelerate learning progress and achievement for students in years 1, 2, and 3 by seeking to foster the active engagement of whānau in learning partnerships. whānau work with a coordinator to develop the knowledge necessary for them to support the development of core skills in their children. They are provided with tools to support learning with their children. This project is underpinned by the findings of the Best Evidence Synthesis [*The Complexity of Community and Family Influences in Children's Achievement in New Zealand*](#). Originally developed at Sylvia Park School, the Mutukaroa approach is designed to foster the development of fully engaged whānau who understand assessment.

Next to strengthen this pedagogy further:

ERO (November 2015) outlines four key processes that schools engaged parents and whānau of children in who were underachieving:

- They found out who the learner was in the wider context of their school and home. This enabled them to identify learners strengths, needs, culture, identity, interests and aspirations and create authentic learning opportunities for them
- They deliberately involved whānau in actions and innovations to assist in improving learner outcomes
- They then evaluated the impact of these actions and innovations
- They sustained the relationships with the family, changed and improved what didn't work and transferred what did work to other learners and their families

These principles and processes align to that of the Mutukaroa Project. I wanted to visit a local school in Palmerston North which was also engaging parents using these ideas and went and spent some time with Tracey Thorn at Milson school. Tracey had visited Sylvia Park school

where the Mutukaroa Project was created and outlined to me what she had implemented in her learning space (a site of safe practice used when trialling any new pedagogy) and then after trialling the innovation, rolled it out for all children across Years 1-3 and in 2017, 3 learners in each class in years 4-6. I was inspired by what I heard and have invited Tracey to our place to share this pedagogy with our leaders so we can make decisions about how we will move forward in 2018.

Culturally Responsive Pedagogy 3: The Mental Models of an AGENTIC educators- teachers and leaders.

“Mental Models are our beliefs , values and assumptions. Together they form what is often termed our worldview” (Edwards and Martin, 2017, p. 14).

Agentic teachers are those who are prepared to sustain the work described above. Agency is about showing “professional commitment and responsibility for the learning of their students” (Bishop, 2010, p. 61). Bishop in his YouTube clip from the Stronger Faster conference (2012) highlights two different ways that teachers may act - the AGENCY game and the BLAME game.

Table: Key differences between acting with agency or blame

<p>The AGENCY Game</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The problem is identified but no one is blamed. It is what it is ● Responsibility is taken for solving the problem ● The problem is rectified without any reference to how the power to do so may have been circumscribed by policies, systems or anything. ● The work is done within the individual’s domain of power 	<p>The BLAME Game</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Identify the problem. Blame the child. Blame the system ● Take no responsibility to solve the problem - leave it to someone else ● A tense relationship develops ● The tension is deflected by blaming someone else in the system ● The claim of powerlessness in the face of overwhelming incompetency by others in the system
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In his earlier CORE Ed Talk “A culturally responsive pedagogy of relations,” Russell Bishop (2009) describes an AGENTIC teacher as someone who:

- Does not resort to deficit explanations of indigenous children and their families
- Is focused on improving educational outcomes showing these children and their families that they believe they can learn and they are fully capable of high expectations
- Is committed to improving the quality of the CARING and LEARNING relationship by treating indigenous children AS IF THEY WERE THEIR OWN. They treat the children in their care as they would want others to treat their own children

- Knows they can challenge deficit explanations and knows what and how to do it. They engage and are committed to the process of changing their pedagogy through Teaching as Inquiry and when they find strategies that work well they implement them across everything they do
- Is supported to do this by others. They work collaboratively and cooperatively with others to make the difference.
- Understands and believes that they are able to make a difference
- Establishes relationships with family/whānau based on values that are aligned with those of indigenous peoples.
- Creates opportunities to seek solutions beyond the school

In essence an agentic teacher is someone who is clear that **THEY ARE THE DIFFERENCE** and if they don't have the skills and knowledge to be the difference **YET**, they develop them. They are relentless in finding ways to assist learners to achieve their full potential. They have a **GROWTH MINDSET!**

Culturally Responsive Pedagogy 4: The actions AGENTIC educators (teachers and leaders) use on a daily basis:

Using my recent reading of both Bishop and Hattie and aligning their work with the formative pedagogy work of Absolum (2006) and Clark (2005), I have formed a list of actions for agentic educators to use on a daily basis. Please note that where it is recorded Māori these actions are just as significant for other indigenous groups. These actions include:

- They care for Māori learners as Māori
- They care for the performance of Māori learners. They have high expectations and they communicate this to them.
- They are prepared for Māori to be Māori, where Māori can draw upon their own prior knowledge and interests and bring them to the classroom
- They manage their classrooms using formative pedagogy. This means that in their interactions with Māori learners they share their learning goals with them and together they design a plan to achieve them. Their formative practices include:
 - Co constructing learning intentions and success criteria aligned to these goals.
 - Modelling learning.
 - Questioning.
 - Providing Māori learners with feedback and feedforward aligned to their learning goals.
 - Teaching Māori learners how to self assess their progress towards their learning goals
 - Teaching Māori how to give their peers feedback and feedforward.
 - Using the evidence of learners performance to guide where they will take their teaching next.
- They create an atmosphere in their learning spaces of learners among learners where inquiry is the norm as opposed to transmission modes of teaching, where the teacher is the dispenser of all knowledge.
- They use a range of strategies such as cooperative strategies, understanding that these strategies are a structured way of engaging learners in the work of co-constructing knowledge, unpacking challenging content and reflecting on learning

The implications for our school: Opportunities for us to strengthen aspects of our practice related to three Relational/ Educator Factors (2, 3 & 4):

2. The significance of the relationship Māori/Indigenous learners and their families have with their teacher/school/principal and its effect on achievement.

3. The Mental Models of an AGENTIC teacher

4. The actions of an AGENTIC teacher on a daily basis:

- We will ask Māori whānau, how is it here for Māori families?
- We will ask Māori learners about how is it here for them? How do they experience relationships and learning at St James? What do they like/not like and what suggestions do they have?
- We will ask teachers about how they contribute to building relationships with Māori learners and their whānau
- We will ask teachers how confident they feel in raising the achievement of Māori learners
- We will co-construct with teachers and whānau a way of engaging parents in the Learning Talk Partnership to raise the achievement of their children. These practices will be supported by school wide systems and structures and the cycle of Teaching as Inquiry
- As the leader I will continue my participation in Te Wananga o Aotearoa's He Papa Tikanga Course as an example for my staff to take up in 2018/19
- As part of our observation and monitoring of good practice cycle, we will continue to develop and embed teachers formative assessment practices.
- I will take the Tataiako Cultural Competencies and their implications for practising teachers and integrate them into the elaborations of the Standards for the Teaching Profession.
- Teachers will then work together to gather evidence of culturally competent practice in our school using the Standards. Gaps will be used as opportunities for development.
- Teachers will then reflect on their cultural competence, providing evidence using the standards. Gaps will be used as opportunities for development.
- I will access PLD for all staff around Te Tiriti o Waitangi and Māori Spirituality

CONCLUSIONS

I believe change starts with me. During my sabbatical I have had the time to scratch the surface of what there is to know and learn about culturally responsive leadership and teaching practices and I now feel that I am in a much better position to share and articulate what those practices are, to know what to notice as we review what we are currently doing and to take strategic action as outlined in the implications.

It is clear that school leaders must have in place systems and structures at an organizational level for real change to happen and for educationally powerful relationships to be forged. Leaders and teachers must be knowledgeable about and actively engaged in building relationships with Māori/Indigenous learners and their families, as this has been shown to have the greatest effect on achievement and is strengthened by engaging parents in “Learning Talk.” School leaders must explore their own mental models and explore and challenge the mental models of their teachers and have in place school wide, agreed teaching and learning practices that build a culturally responsive pedagogy of relationships and a culturally responsive learning culture.

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