



Principal's Sabbatical Report 2018 - 2019:

“The Culturally responsive nature of modern learning environments (Innovative learning environments), with specific focus on the effects on Māori achievement and acceleration of learning.”

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Introduction

During my 2018 and 2019 split sabbatical, I set out to inquire into the Culturally Responsive nature of Modern Learning Environments (Innovative Learning Environments) with a specific focus on the effects this has on Relational Pedagogies, Māori achievement and the acceleration of student learning.

My journey as a teacher and Principal to date has included involvement in a number of learning environments, in a range of primary schools, with various roll sizes and demographics. I have taught in open plan, variable space environments as well as individual, 'single-cell' classrooms. My teaching career has been in schools where the Māori roll has ranged from 10 percent of all students to other student populations of around 60 percent Māori. My personal journey has generally been a very positive experience in both open plan, variable space teaching and learning spaces as well as single classroom situations. In this paper, I discuss the impact of Modern Learning Environments (MLE) on Culturally Responsive Pedagogies and Māori Achievement.

The various local schools I observed were a mix of Modern Learning Environments, also referred to as Innovative Learning Environments (ILE), or Collaborative Learning Environments (CLE) along with some traditional single-cell classrooms. It is important to note that a number of these schools have embraced the opportunity to capture property funding and maximised this by pursuing MLE developments. This is a feature of current Ministry of Education property policy. Such developments featured the inclusion of modern furnishings, lighting, large spaces with withdrawal areas, flexible partitioning with high sound proof ratings, full ICT servicing with industrial Wifi and power and data cabling as part of their new spaces.

Relational Pedagogy

As Modern Learning Environments have been developed, a shift in teaching pedagogy has been promoted. In a number of schools, staff have been taken through a steep learning curve of new and refreshed collaborative pedagogies to try to ensure successful outcomes for the pupils who are placed in these new MLE spaces. Teachers are expected to assimilate into these new surroundings and become even more effective, while working collaboratively with others. Sadly, this is not always with support, particularly at inception. While the MLE spaces are outwardly beautiful and new, staff struggle to work effectively together without deliberate Professional Learning and Development (PLD) around relational and collaborative pedagogy. Staff are not always asked who they wish to work alongside in MLE spaces and are placed with other teachers that they may or may not have a positive relationship with or who they do not have a similar teaching style to. Working to develop effective teams is not always a priority and teachers are left to muddle through, exploring and experimenting as never before to find solutions to working in a shared, more collaborative teaching environment. While the establishment of new MLE certainly builds potential and capacity for greater collaboration for teachers and learners, unless a deliberate focus is given to developing relational pedagogy and a culture of collaboration, innovative and creative collaborative learning may not exist to the intended extent.

Mark Osborne (2016) suggests that 'buildings alone are not enough; it is about relationships and changing cultures and practices' when discussing the merits of Modern Learning Environments. While a new, more flexible learning environment can be beneficial, the environment will only go so far. The need to have a group of collaboratively-minded, reflective practitioners in these spaces is paramount. The way in which teachers are inducted into Modern Learning Environments, whether in new school builds or in refurbished older schools, is pivotal to the success of these environments and the levels

of collaboration that exist within them. Charles and Shona Oliver, in their recent Principal's Sabbatical Report titled 'Māori Learners in Innovative Learning Environments' found the following: 'Through our conversations with Principals and teachers a common theme was the changed teaching structure rather than the physical environment'. They suggest in their report that the greatest impact on student achievement in the schools they visited, was greater teacher collaboration brought about by the new modern teaching environments. Teachers in the schools the Olivers visited also suggested that the transition to a more collaborative teaching culture and practice was not always easy for teachers. I also found this to be true in the schools I visited.

The effectiveness of Modern Learning Environments really depends on the teachers who work in and around these spaces and their mindset. How well prepared were the teachers in the first place to work inside these new walls? What experiences do they bring with them? Were they involved in the design of their teaching spaces? What became obvious to me during my sabbatical, particularly in established schools with new MLE classes, is that some teachers thrived in this new environment, some avoided it and some 'survived' it: particularly if the staff were not given a choice about working in an MLE classroom environment.

In some instances, my Principal colleagues have commented that staffing in the current climate of teacher shortage, has become an increasing nightmare and recruitment has become more difficult in schools that are designed around Modern Learning Environments. Some experienced teachers choose not to apply for MLE teaching positions and schools can find themselves staffed with a higher than usual number of beginning teachers. This creates a challenge to provide adequate induction and PLD for new teacher recruits who are relatively young and inexperienced.

Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

While a new MLE building or a refurbished MLE building can be viewed as a wonderful teaching environment, this doesn't necessarily change the culturally located teachers who work in them. It is not just the pupils who arrive as culturally located individuals. The 2014 Ministry of Education report Modern Learning Environments to Support Priority Learners states that 'The physical environment can only support cultural inclusivity to the extent to which this is also reflected in effective teacher-student relationships and culturally responsive pedagogies'. Adequate PLD that allows teachers to maximise the cultural responsiveness of the physical classroom environment is necessary to promote identity, language and culture as promulgated in the guiding principles of Ka Hikitia.

For our Māori learners, this means an environment where identity, language and culture are promoted and Te Reo and Tikanga are evident. One of the challenges for school leaders such as myself is that school buildings can be dressed as culturally responsive, however, it is the teachers within these walls who also need to ensure they are culturally located. Teachers need to have the right mindset so they can develop their own cultural understandings and competencies in order to be responsive to their Māori communities and to grow their relationship base. The different schools I visited have a diverse mix of staff. Many of our local schools have fluent Te Reo speakers as staff members and our Community of Learning has facilitated far greater engagement with the local Hapū, Iwi and Kaumatua in our region. In our work together, the schools in our Kāhui Ako are enjoying a journey of improvement and greater awareness of our responsibility to improve our culturally responsive practices. Teachers are affirming and deepening their competencies in relational and cultural pedagogies.

Most Modern Learning environments have the flexibility of varying their spaces. In the Ministry of Education 2014 report Modern Learning Environments to Support Priority Learners, the idea of

flexible spaces used in a culturally responsive way was discussed. Larger learning spaces were used for karakia, waiata and for hui so that large groups of students could be together. Students could also opt to work individually or in groups. Where there were students of differing ages working in a shared space, tuakana-teina was used to promote positive relationships between members of the same whanau and/or their friends. Being together in a shared space can help to build a nurturing learning environment for tamariki Māori.

As with the MLE observed in our Community of Learning, Paengaroa School has made strides to ensure we are developing our culturally responsive pedagogy. Our signage is now bilingual and our school newsletter has weekly Māori language learning/Te Reo phrases and vocabulary to share with our community. Our teachers, pupils and parents are enjoying learning about Te Reo and Tikanga Māori. Our vision is to 'normalise Māori as a living language at Paengaroa School'. To this end our teachers and other staff members have committed to this vision over the next two to three years. As a professional learning community we are seriously committed, however, we are also aware of our limitations and our own predominantly middle class female staff of European descent. Our one Māori female who speaks fluent Māori has embraced our journey and is confident in her ability to lead this work, though it falls heavily on her shoulders.

Our scaffolding for the success of this journey has been made easier by the fact that our teachers all have a growth mindset and are open minded with a view towards being the best teacher they can be. Deliberate acts of teaching are essential and can be even more powerful for the learners if couched in culturally appropriate contexts. When our teachers at Paengaroa School embrace the 'place based' approach to their pupil's learning context, they utilise our local curriculum by inquiring into and exploring the local geography, the rich Māori and European histories around Te Arawa canoe and Maketu, Paengaroa, Pukehina, Otamarakau, Pongakawa, Rangiuru, Te Matai and Te Puke. By utilising our local Kaumatua, local marae, local landscapes and historic sites, that are entwined into and across our curriculum, we have found that not only are our pupils highly engaged but whānau are also becoming more engaged as they are encouraged and willing to get more involved.

Our school success and sustainability has been enhanced by the guidance documents and projects provided by the Ministry of Education, Waikato University and EDUCANZ. Documents such as Ka Hikitia, Tātaiako, Te Kotahitanga, Poutama Pounamu, the Hautū Tool for Boards of Trustees, Whakawhanaungatanga (the building of relationships) and The Standards for the Teaching Profession (Effective January 2018) have all informed our teaching practice. All are founded in the Treaty of Waitangi and are therefore the responsibility of all New Zealanders, in particular teachers, to honour our treaty obligations. We are committed to fulfilling the intent of the Treaty of Waitangi by valuing and reflecting New Zealand's dual cultural heritage and acknowledging the principles of Partnership, Protection and Participation.

Maori Student Achievement

The Te Puke Community of Learning is developing greater knowledge of our ākonga (both teachers and pupils) in the five key areas that contribute to a Māori world view and contribute to a better understanding of Tikanga Maori and the Treaty of Waitangi. This body of work is being heavily scrutinised by the Te Puke Community of Learning. It is reinforcing and sometimes re-shaping our teachers' perceptions, philosophies and decision making in order to raise student achievement, in particular the achievement of Māori. We are gaining in our knowledge, experience and understanding of many Māori concepts and constructs. We are legally and morally guided to learn about and implement the five key areas associated with cultural competencies and relational pedagogies. The five areas that all our teachers, including those in MLEs, are inquiring about include:

Ako - Reciprocal practice in the classroom and beyond that promotes effective teaching and builds positive relationships

Whanaungatanga - Relationships (students, school-wide, community) with high expectations;

Wānanga - Communication, problem solving, innovation; effective teaching relationships.

Manaakitanga - Values of integrity, trust, sincerity, equity along with teachers caring for their students as culturally located human beings;

Tangata Whenuatanga - Place-based, socio-cultural awareness and knowledge.

We have also added in some other focus areas deemed to be valuable from the Te Kotahitanga and Eke Panuku Projects run in Secondary Schools which are intended to raise achievement through culturally responsive and relational work. These are:

Mana motuhake - the way in which teachers care how well their students perform;

Nga whakapiringatanga - a secure, safe environment is created;

Kotahitanga - where teachers reflect on the outcomes that in turn lead to improvements.

The eight key areas above relate more directly to the teacher and their engagement with Māori students and their whānau. However, research through the Poutama Pounamu project run through Waikato University has shown that all children benefit from these considerations and they can and should be applied to both Māori and non-Māori tamariki.

Paengaroa School is not an ultra-new Modern Learning Environment but it certainly is an innovative, creative and collaborative learning environment in terms of ensuring our pupils are learning and growing through successful learning steps that are delivered within a culturally responsive mindset. Teachers and pupils, with whānau help, are continuing to add layer upon layer of understanding, knowledge and application around Tikanga Māori, Te Reo Māori and local Kawa. Our school values have been further enhanced with the understandings our teachers are growing around Tangata Whenuatanga and Whanaungatanga. The eight key areas listed above are being woven into our school's values, procedures and actions. It has not happened overnight but it is happening. This work has led to an improvement in Māori student achievement across all areas of the curriculum.

Conclusion

My investigation into the culturally responsive nature of Modern Learning Environments with a focus on relational and culturally inclusive pedagogy has increased my understanding of the complexities of this type of teaching and learning environment. Teachers who are well supported in their move towards greater collaboration in MLEs tend to thrive in this type of learning environment. Others, who do not have specific PLD and support can feel overwhelmed and stretched as they try to adjust to working closely alongside others and change in their teaching environment.

Teachers who are willing to change their practice and who display a readiness to adapt to a more culturally responsive pedagogy can be effective no matter what their physical classroom environment looks like. While a new Modern Learning Environment may be conducive to a greater variation of spaces and student use in these spaces, the individual and collective work of classroom teacher/s has the greatest impact on raising student achievement and ultimately success at school.

Mā te whakaaro nui e hanga te whare; mā te mātauranga e whakaū.

Big ideas create the house, knowledge maintains it.

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Supporting Documents – Appendix A

Current practices at Paengaroa School that enhance the school culture and have a positive impact on raising student achievement for Māori are:

- Our continued pursuit of cultural practices - tikanga - this is encouraged school-wide (karakia, pōwhiri, basic te reo instructions for all, waiata, school signage)
- Promoting of tikanga in school-wide programmes (understanding and knowing what is culturally acceptable – no sitting on tables, don't touch a child's head)
- Leadership team is sharing the big picture view of student achievement throughout the whole school and continuing to build expertise in culturally appropriate assessment.
- Our Motto that contributes to our vision. 'He Akoranga Mutunga Kori', 'Where learning has no boundaries', this embraces all members of the community in a 'Potential to learn' model.
- A real desire to keep all our pupils in the same waka and not be separated into two schools. i.e a bilingual unit. We are becoming a multicultural school.
- Staff modelling

Further practises that could be introduced to Paengaroa School that enhance the school culture and raise Māori student achievement are:

- Continue to develop school wide practises based on 'Tātaiako: Cultural Competencies for Teachers'. Revisit this document and develop next steps for our school and Community of learners. To continue our journey together, supporting all staff to build their capability in using Te Reo correctly, particularly pronunciation. Using our fluent Te Reo speaker(s) to support others become more competent. Ako (Teachers, pupils and whānau) in everyday use of Te Reo.
- To raise the level of Te Reo being used in authentic contexts in general classrooms.
- Encouraging student voice, choice and self-determination as strong engagers for learning. (Ensuring strong learner agency and ownership)

Authentic ways to engage the local community and Iwi to enhance the student curriculum are:

- To have a school Kaumatua/Kuia that works actively in the school and assists to build links to the local community and Iwi.
- To establish relationships with a range of stakeholders such as links to our local marae. Noho Marae held at least every two years.
- Through relationships, understand our local heritage and determine how we can lay the foundation for our school curriculum. 'Place based' education - continue to seek out local projects that contribute to the well-being and understanding of our local environment such as MEWS and the regional councils, Dune planting expeditions along Pukehina Beach and Maketu. Allports Road Reserve at the end of Ridge Road also promises opportunities for local curriculum and environmental and organic education.

Where to for our School?

This report outlines what I have been thinking about during my sabbatical and how it has shaped my journey and the journey of my staff to support ways in which we can raise Māori achievement. Much of my own personal development has been couched in my own cultural values and beliefs /perceptions, which are open to change and have changed a lot. My understandings and experiences will continue to mutate as further research into raising Māori student achievement is completed. The increased number of MLE in our Community of Learning along with the Ministry of Education property policies which promote the establishment of MLE gave rise to my inquiry.

My next steps to action will be:

- Continue to connect with local Māori elders to establish significant history relating to the Paengaroa School Area. To share this information with staff and incorporate it into our localised school curriculum. Place based, not play based for the students at Paengaroa. The work done with our Te Puke COL is also of value in this regard.

- To revisit the document Tātaiako with staff to build teacher capability and effectiveness when teaching Māori students.
- Revisit the Hautū Board of Trustees Tool to review our schools cultural and relational well-being.
- To complete the contract Cultural Responsiveness/Cultural competency, an inquiry based contract based on the principle of nurturing the language and making it sustainable for all. To continue to have an identified Kaumatua or Kuia for our school.
- Revisit the extremely important work we were doing before and during the days of National Standards around growing our pupils as connected, life-long learners who not only participate and contribute but who are critical thinkers and amazing problem solvers as we head into the 21st century armed with too much information and too little time. Our learners (pupils, teachers and parents –a three-way partnership) need to be able to be agile critical thinkers, be able to connect and collaborate with people across various cultures and need to solve real world problems.

My sabbatical has allowed me the opportunity to take stock of our journey and to consider where to next. Our involvement in the Te Puke Kāhui Ako has enabled us to engage a lot more fully with the local Hapū and Te Arawa Iwi. The main local sub tribes include: Te Arawa, Ngāti Tuwharetoa, Ngāti Rangiteaorere, Ngāti Rangitihī, Ngāti Rangiwewehi, Ngāti Whakaue, Tapuika, Tuhourangi, Waitaha, Ngāti Pīkiao.

Te Puke Kāhui Ako has whakatauki that we have all embraced:

He waka eke noa, he waka taua - 'Empowering our learners. We are on the same waka, with purpose, intention and determination'.

Nā tō rourou, nā taku rourou ka ora ai te iwi - 'With your food basket and my food basket the people will thrive'

Engage the child, engage the whānau, engage the community.

Appendix B: Culturally Responsive pedagogy (What we know at Paengaroa School)

The Māori Potential Approach means:	
Less focus on:	More focus on:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Remedying deficit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Realising potential
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Problems of dysfunction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Identifying Opportunity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Government Intervention 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Investing in people and local solutions, communities, or networks of provision
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Targeting deficit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Tailoring education to the student
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Māori as minority 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Indigeneity and distinctiveness
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Collaborating and co-constructing
From Ka Hikitia –Accelerating Success for Māori – 2013-2017 Page 15	

"The curriculum supports and empowers all students to learn and achieve personal excellence, regardless of their individual differences." *The New Zealand Curriculum*, p.9

Guiding questions - Ngā pātai ārahi

Considering achievement

- What evidence of Māori student achievement do we gather at our school?
- How is this analysed and shared to inform our planning and classroom practice?

Considering expectations

- What are our expectations for Māori achievement?
- Are our expectations built on a Māori potential approach?
- Can we expect more?

Considering productive partnerships

- How do we include Māori students and their parents, whānau, hapū, iwi, and Māori communities in decision making around Māori achievement and expectations?

Considering next steps

- What are our school's short-term, mid-term, and long-term plans to strengthen Māori student achievement?

ETP – Effective teacher profile - R. Bishop, M. Berryman, T. Cavanagh & L. Teddy- Te Kotahitanga culturally responsive and relational teachers.

Pursuing Agentic strategies (Tuakana-teina) used to foster positive relationships amongst learners.

In Kia Eke Panuku: - culturally responsive and relational school leaders and teachers are involved in a dynamic and spiralling critical cycle of self-reflection and learning. Learners are able to connect their new learning to their prior experiences and culture.

Teaching and learning roles are interdependent, fluid and dynamic; students and teachers are able to learn with and from other learners (**Ako**). Feedback and feed forward provides learners with specific information about what has been done well and what needs to be done to improve.

Culturally responsive and relational leaders and teachers are potential focused. They understand they have the **agency** to create contexts for learning within which Māori learners can enjoy and achieve education success as Māori, and they use evidence of this to understand their own effectiveness.