

# Sabbatical Report 2018

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How can we lift the  
achievement of Maori boys  
in writing using technology?

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## Acknowledgements

I would firstly like to thank my BOT for encouraging me to take this time. My Board of Trustees have trusted the judgements that my teachers and I have made in the way we want our students to learn. They have given my teachers the opportunity to take risks and have openly encouraged them to change their practises in a bid to lift achievement.

I would like to thank my staff for allowing me to take this time away from school. You know when you have a great staff when things just carry on seamlessly when you are not there. They are committed to raising the achievement of all students and have been so open to new ideas.

I would also like to thank my students and their families who have been so supportive of me having some time out. I have spoken to a number of parents in my walks around the Beach and it is satisfying to hear how views are changing of the profession. They understand the challenges Principals and teachers face.

# Rationale and Purpose

At Foxton Beach School there has been a culture of change during the last 4 to 5 years. All the changes that my staff and I have made, have been in an effort to continue to raise achievement within our school.

In that time we have made some very key changes to the way our students learn and the way the teachers teach. One of the most influential has been around the use of devices to assist with learning.

I made the decision to lease 60 devices which my two senior classes used. This meant that each student had a device which meant that there was equity for all. During that time all teachers were undertaking their own PLD and we also undertook school wide PLD around e-learning.

Foxton Beach School has also been on the steering committee for the Te Hinaki Trust which has been set up to provide families with devices. To date my families have purchased nearly 120 devices through the Trust.

This has allowed us to roll devices out to 6 out of my 7 classes. The families have been fully supportive of this change to learning and teaching and have come in to see programs in action during open days.

The teachers have also embraced the concept of ILE's and we currently have 4 out of 7 classrooms reconfigured this way. All the teachers are working collaboratively to ensure their strengths are being utilised and we are meeting the needs of our learners.

So what has been the outcome of all these changes. By the end of 2017 we had reached 80% At or Above the National Standards for reading, writing and maths. However, the data for our Maori students and especially our Maori boys was not at this level of achievement. There had definitely been gains over the last 4 years but they had not kept up with the rest of the school.

The focus of my sabbatical was to get into schools that are having success with their Maori learners. I wanted to know what steps had been put in place to achieve accelerated learning and what I could do differently at Foxton Beach School.

# Executive Summary

As I visited schools and talked to teachers and Principals it became very clear that there are some very similar dimensions being put in place to achieve the success that they are having with Maori students.

It also became clear that I couldn't just focus on achieving higher levels of achievement in writing because if these dimensions are not in place in a school then achievement across all areas of learning is going to be slower for Maori learners.

If you look at it as a jigsaw, the puzzle will never be solved when a piece is missing.

I have come to the realisation that there are six key dimensions that need to be in place in all schools to ensure better outcomes for Maori learners.

They are:

- 1) Appropriate culturally responsive practices across the school.
- 2) An effective school curriculum.
- 3) Effective teacher/students relationships.
- 4) Effective whanau engagement.
- 5) An effective relationship with iwi/hapu.
- 6) Effective use of technology.

In my findings I will go into more detail about each dimension.

Carrying out this sabbatical has highlighted for me the areas that I need to work on more within my own school. This is a lot of work but from what I have seen the rewards are great.

# Findings

As I have stated, there are 6 key dimensions that once implemented and continually reviewed to ensure all staff are applying them, you will start to see a shift in achievement of Maori learners.

To be able to do this effectively a plan must be developed where all key stakeholders are involved in the development of and the implementation of the plan. It should also be a key document that forms part of all staff performance management.

Culturally responsive practices:

When reviewing the practices that you have within your school one of the main questions to ask yourself and your staff is, “how would you know that you are in a school in Aotearoa/ New Zealand compared to any other school around the World?”

This is quite an interesting question because if you take some time to walk around your school and look for things that show the unique culture that we have in New Zealand, what can you see, hear and feel within your school?

One way to make some changes within your school is to discuss the signage within your school. Do you have bilingual signage around the school to ensure that Maori families feel that the language is valued within your school. This should be done in consultation with staff members as to the signage that is a priority within the school as some of the signage could be budgeted over the course of 2 to 3 years.

When Principals are undertaking their usual walk through of classrooms, what do they hear within the classrooms. What Te Reo are they hearing the teachers using within their day to day teaching and what Te Reo are the children using?. This may be a case of putting in extra resources for the staff around upskilling them in Te Reo or ensuring that teachers are using resources such as the RTM ( Resource Teacher of Maori).

Whanau is key for Maori and it would be a good place to start to review how much of the Tuakana/ Teina concept is in place within your school.

There are always ample opportunities for senior students to take on the mentoring role with the younger students. This is a very good way to develop leadership potential of some of the older students. It is also a good opportunity for these students to be seen as role models within the school as this also becomes second nature out in the playground and even in the community.

Effective relationships with iwi/hapu:

An effective relationship with iwi/hapu is such an important factor in raising the achievement of Maori students. For this relationship to be effective it must be a true partnership between both parties.

While I was undertaking my sabbatical I visited some schools in Rotorua and In Taupo and I was very impressed to hear how local iwi have worked very closely with schools.

In Rotorua I was told how iwi representatives pass on the knowledge to the teachers of the names of local landmarks and how those names came about. They have worked closely with teachers to unpack some of the local history and have shown how these stories directly relate to some of the students that are currently within their classrooms.

It is helping those teachers make better connections to the children and their whanau.

The teachers have undertaken walks around Rotorua with iwi representatives to identify street names and landmarks and the oral history of those places has been passed on to teachers.

The teachers have been on bus trips around Lake Rotorua and have visited local Marae. This has enabled the teachers to be able to make better connections with students and whanau.

I feel that if a strong relationship is developed with iwi/hapu then together we can work on ways to ensure our Maori students are better supported within our classrooms.

I feel that this dimension is hugely critical as it directly impacts on a couple of other key dimensions which I will unpack as well. They are the effective

student teacher relationship and the effective whanau engagement within schools.

Effective student/ teacher relationships:

This dimension can sometimes be underestimated I feel. Yes, teachers know their students but in the majority of examples this knowledge of their students is very much on the surface.

I believe that the New Zealand education system can be held accountable for this due to the environment teachers have been working under for so long. If you asked a teacher what Numeracy stage a child is at or what level a child is writing at, all teachers would be able to give this information, as they should.

However, if you asked the same teacher which cousins Henare has in their class, which iwi he belonged to and which waka their whanau whakapapa to, I could almost guarantee they would be unable to tell you.

For so long we have been locked in a system which seemed as though the only thing people really cared about was the % of students At or Above by the end of the year. While we will be continuing to ensure all students in Aotearoa are achieving success relative to their age, we now have the opportunity to take the time and really get to know our tamariki.

Obviously the start of a new school year is such an important time for all. Schools need to take this time to really look at ways they can celebrate the start of the new school year and look at ways they can really get to know their students and give the reciprocal opportunity for the students to know the staff.

If this is done effectively and the children feel as though they have a connection with their teacher then the rates of truancy will be much lower and the rates of behaviour that stops children from learning and teachers from teaching will diminish as well.

We must also remember that this is not just a task that is undertaken at the start of the year and then left, just like any relationship this is something that must be continually developed during the course of the year.

Being able to make those connections with students while out on duty for instance, just simply asking a student how their koro is as you heard he had been unwell lately or discussing what sport they are going to be signing up for over the winter etc. Sometimes it can be those small connections we make with our students that have the lasting effect. While this is not rocket science it is troubling how often this does not happen within our schools.

Effective whanau engagement:

This is an extremely difficult dimension in our current times. Due to the technology that is now being used in our schools we have to make sure that we are not removing the opportunity for whanau to come into schools. By this I mean that if our tamariki are sharing work electronically via Google Apps or work is going on Apps such as Seesaw with feedback from teachers etc, then why do they need to come into school and meet with teachers? This is the direct feedback that I have had from some parents. They can see their children's work as it goes live and they comment on their children's success.

Schools need to make sure that they are warm and inviting places for whanau to come into, this links straight back to our culturally responsive practices. This comes back to the way parents are greeted as they come into the school by teachers, office staff and even the tamariki.

Schools need to look at what they are inviting parents in for. Will this be another occasion where parents feel they are coming into schools for a lecture? If so I am sure you will count them out.

I would suggest talking with whanau and finding out what they would be most comfortable coming into school to see. For these evenings I would highly recommend putting on kai and perhaps employing support staff to undertake some child care while parents are at school.

If you are starting off with kai first, this gives not only the Principal and teachers but potentially BOT members to make connections with whanau that may not have been in at school for a while.



This is an ideal opportunity to make a real connection with the parents and to share some positives regarding their tamariki. If it turns into an opportunity to discuss behaviour, you will never see them again.

As I have mentioned previously, our teachers time has been so heavily stretched due to compliance issues we have dropped the ball in other areas. It cannot be stressed enough to teachers about how important that first term is in regards to establishing relationships.

They need to find a time to ring parents and share some praise regarding how the term has started for the tamariki. If this is done a few times it really starts to break down the barriers with the home and the school.

School Curriculum:

One area that is sometimes overlooked is the school curriculum. Schools need to go back to each area and review what aspects of te ao Maori are being covered in each curriculum area.

While undertaking my sabbatical visits I was at Titahi Bay North School and I was discussing school curriculum with the teachers in the immersion classes. As part of their planning process, they inform all parents of what will be taught during the term and ask what other aspects parents would like to see included.

The teachers said that because they are asking for parents ideas and parents can see that their ideas are valued and implemented they are really keen to be involved. This has lead to parents offering specific skills that they have which can contribute to the children's learning.

Now that the focus has moved away from National Standards within our schools we now have an ideal opportunity to use this as a chance to kick start discussions around school curriculums and ensure that they are community focused making explicit links to the local environment and the people within the local environment.

It must also be stressed that teachers do not know everything. If effective consultation with iwi, whanau, students and all other stakeholders is occurring then the outcome will be a school curriculum that will be engaging for all.

Effective use of technology:

Since we brought in e-learning for our students there has been quite a dramatic change to the way our students are learning. We have found that the level of engagement has taken off in all the classrooms. This has led to a reduction in severe behaviour within the classes and there has been a reduction in the amount of truancy in these classes as well.

Now that the students have a wealth of apps that they have been introduced they are able to take responsibility for more aspects of their learning. They can plan their work, complete it and present it in many different ways. It comes down to the way that they want to do it, instead of being told this is how you are going to present it.

With the use of technology it has led to higher levels of student agency as the students take responsibility for aspects of their own learning. They all have their work shared on their workspace and they can choose their must do's and can do activities.

This continues to be an area that we are developing and it will tie in very nicely with the digital technology curriculum due to come in.

While a lot of this information may be stating the obvious it is only when you put all of these areas together that you are going to get the very best outcomes for Maori students. I see this now as a challenge to go back to my school and make a plan and implement changes to address any shortfall in these areas. This is a challenge my BOT, staff and entire school community need to work towards.

# References:

[Ka Hikitia - Accelerating Success 2013 - 2017](#)

[Hautu - Maori cultural responsiveness self review tool for BOT's](#)

Titahi Bay North School : Principal Colin Tarr (has since moved on) and staff.

Taupo Intermediate: Principal Bill Clarke and staff.

Wairakei Primary School: Paula Farquhar and staff

Glenholme School: Nancy MacFarlane (has since moved on) and staff.