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Principal's Sabbatical Report

Learning New Strategies to Raise Maori Achievement - 31/01/19

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Purpose

The purpose of this sabbatical report is to discuss the range of strategies I observed being used to raise Maori Achievement in Manukura, Palmerston North, which is a year 9-13 special character school.

All schools in New Zealand are expected to raise the achievement of their Maori students.

Manukura in particular has a record of high academic, cultural and sporting achievement. Many of their former students have gone onto successful careers in their adult life.

What is more surprising is the fact that a high percentage of the year nine intake each year, sit in the below category for national standards.

By observing Manukura in action, the aim of the sabbatical was to learn any new strategies that could be transferred back into a full primary and to also share across our local Community of Learning.

Each year Manukura utilise Coley Street School, Foxton as a base in the local Horowhenua area, to present a promotional evening to prospective students / whanau. From that association Principal Peter Kemp made a request to Principal of Manukura, Nathan Durie, to visit Manukura each week of his sabbatical.

The purpose of these visits was clearly explained to Nathan who was extremely supportive of the request.

In my first visit I was welcomed onto Manukura with a Mihi Whakatau and the reasons for my visit was clearly conveyed to the students and staff. Throughout my sabbatical I found the staff and students to be very open and honest and especially Nathan who gave me a lot time to question and observe him in action.

Manukura is regarded as a high performance school and each morning school starts at 7.00am with sport specific fitness sessions.

I decided from day 1 that I would engage in these sessions.

This is a big commitment from the students, many of whom travel daily from outside the district including the Horowhenua where I reside.

What this conveyed to me immediately was the level of independence, reliability, commitment and application these students needed.

The sessions were well planned, structured and extremely intensive and the response from the students was mind blowing.

I personally have been involved in high level sport as a participant / coach and Secondary School Physical Education Teacher / University Lecturer.

In my time, I have never observed any sporting students maintain such a high level of intense training for the time and focus these students displayed.

In particular the girls rugby training was equivalent in intensity and technical knowledge to a senior men's club side.

My question is, what makes the difference in the attitude of these students?

I observed this same level of engagement in the classroom.

Rationale and Background

The expectations at Manukura are very high and the school vision is clear. The staff are committed, well trained and qualified and in many cases high performers themselves. They are great role models for the students

There is a history of high achievement in the school from former students that set the benchmark for the current students.

Success is celebrated and acknowledged and this plays a large part in creating confident 'can do' students.

The school has created international links where current students can study or play sport in other countries which many take up the opportunity.

Currently at Manukura there is approximately 18 students that have represented New Zealand in their particular sport and this has a snowball effect on other students at the school.

Students are empowered to drive many of the high standards that are set and there is a real collegial relationship amongst the students who push each other to achieve.

The school works from a strength based approach focusing on 'can do's' and failure is not an option.

Students are expected to stay on at school at the end of the year until they have gained the required credits in NCEA.

Maori culture plays a significant part of the daily programme with full school participation. Most staff show a high level of cultural competence.

Key Strategies Observed

- 1) Small class sizes where more one on one contact can be delivered
- 2) Small group workshops are regularly used to clarify teaching and learning
- 3) Authentic activities are integrated into the teaching programme such as farm visits, marae stays and vocational trips
- 4) There is close relationship between home and school and the teachers clearly acknowledge the whanau links and the learning the the student brings to school. (Taha whanau)
- 5) Some similar concepts to PB4L are used to redirect students who may be off task. This appears to be reteach rather than punitive based so that the students maintain their mana. (Taha hinengaro)
- 6) There is a clear vision and expectations on a strength based concept. Failure is not an option.

- 7) Students are empowered to drive each other and take ownership of their learning
- 8) Whanau are an important part of the students learning.(Taha whanau)
- 9) Every student can engage in their learning at home with take home laptops
- 10)Teaching staff are well qualified and high achievers in their own right.
- 11)There is a history of high achievement from former students and this sets a benchmark.
- 12) Communal eating at breakfast and lunchtime for staff and students play an important role in spirit, relationships and communication. (Taha whanau)
- 13) The food is designed to meet the requirements of a high performance sport person. (Taha tinana)
- 14)Opportunities are provided for success for all across academic, cultural and sporting
- 15)There is an environment of mutual respect amongst the teachers and pupils
- 16)There is an obvious pride in being a part of Manukura (Taha wairua) and (Taha whanau) and the importance of high achievement (Taha Hinengaro)
- 17) Key community links have been forged to get the best possible opportunities for the students learning
- 18)High intensity physical training prepares the students for high performance competition. (Taha tinana)

Implications for Coley Street School and the Kere Kere Community of Learning

- 1) Create high expectations with a clear vision of where we have come from, where we are and where we are heading Taha wairua)
- 2) Importance of creating confident children who have experienced and celebrated success and have high aspirations for the future (Taha Whanau)
- 3) Importance of health and well being of our children and not separating the physical health (Taha tinana) from the spiritual health (Taha wairua)
- 4) Engaging our community into school events, teaching and learning programmes and ensuring that school is physically and emotionally safe.(Taha whanau)
- 5) Taking the school into the community with authentic localised learning activities (Taha hinengaro)
- 6) The classroom teaching and learning environment needs to be a non threatening place where it is conducive to student engagement and teaching and learning
- 7) Staff need to make connections with the students so that they have knowledge of their whanau links and the knowledge that they bring with them (Taha whanau)
- 8) Clear links between health and well being, PB4L and student achievement. (Taha tinana and Taha wairua)

- 9) Acknowledging the place food plays in bringing staff and students together to build relationships (Taha whanau)
- 10) Pride in belonging to Coley Street School and the important life values' that is being a Coley Kid'.(Taha Hinengaro) (Taha whanau)
- 11) An integration of local protocols, tikanga and Reo into the school programme (Taha wairua and Taha hinengaro)

Conclusion

All schools are challenged with raising achievement of Maori students.

In Manukura no one strategy sits above the other but there is a conscious effort to have a clear set of expectations and vision which has been progressively built from the foundations.

High achievement is an expectation and is role modelled by former students, current students and staff.

There are many small strategies that make a difference but developing student confidence and self esteem, through celebrating achievement and also acknowledging what each student brings to their ongoing learning, sits high in the priority from my observations.

References

Nathan Durie - Principal, students and staff of Manukura, Palmerston North
New Zealand Health and Physical Education Curriculum - Ministry of Education,
(1999) - Learning Media
Dr Mason Durie - Concept of Te Whare Tapa Wha

Peter Kemp - Principal Coley Street School

