

Student Voice: Understanding the Implications

Experiencing the power of whanaungatanga

Māori students explained that strong relationships were an important reason for their success as Māori. They described these relationships in terms of the Māori cultural value of whanaungatanga, ie family-like connections or relationships through shared experiences and working together in ways that provide a sense of belonging. These types of relationships extended to both whānau and others.

- By achieving, succeeding and enjoying, we're a lot better than people think. We might even be better than everyone else because we can actually relate to each other. We have this whānau culture that supports us. It's not about the individual - it's katoa, everyone's there.
- To me, my biggest success in school is finding a family. Having a family within the school and finding my place within that.
- When you're doing kapa haka you have a lot of connections and relationships. It means I have friends and family around me, helping me along the way to university, helping with curriculum stuff.
- If you've got great support around you, it's all going to happen.

For some, their most important support came from their parents and other immediate family members.

- My dad, he's probably my biggest critic, but he's like my biggest fan at the same time. He's always there for me, always telling me what I can do, and he's just always supporting me. Same as my mum. When it's coming to school, she's the one that's making sure I do my homework and have everything done on time.
- My parents, they always push me and my brother and my sister to do what we can do, and our best that we can do.

Often this support came from parents and siblings who had not been able to achieve academically.

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- My parents, they didn't get the chance to go to university and all that stuff so they want me to succeed as much as I can and they support me every step of the way.
- Being the only one of my family to actually make it to high school, using my siblings' failures to drive my success - that's really helped me through high school.
- My older brother, he sort of slacked off with school and he knows it. He talks to me and he always says, "Don't be like me". He always pushes me to make sure I know where I am going. And like, I'm not trying to sound sad, but I don't want to do what he did.

Activating our own agency by engaging others

Ehara taku toa i te toa takitahi, engari he toa takitini.

My strength is not mine alone, but comes from the many.

My successes are not due to my own efforts but are the result of input from many others

What do we understand by the following terms and their possible inter-relationships:

- *au*, including its relationship to the following terms:
 - whānau, as metaphoric whānau e.g. the school as a whānau and whānau as family
 - whanaungatanga
 - whakawhanaungatanga?
- How do/could we explicitly understand and utilise these concepts in our school and community?

Whanaungatanga can help us to develop stronger relationships with staff, with students and with our community. What are the implications for our own understandings when:

- Māori students and their whānau are not present?
- when they can contribute as equal partners?

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If we are to become more strategic in our use and understanding of Māori metaphors, how might we do this?

- Who might we need to help us?

Work with a group to present your developing understandings in the following chart format. Respond to the existing examples, fill in the gaps, and add your own examples.

Implementation alerts	
Not recommended as part of whanaungatanga	More effective implementation of whanaungatanga includes ...
Beginning from a point of view that relationships and connections hold little relevance to the work.	Seeking to build on previous relationships and actively making connections with others as the essential work before the work.
Beginning from a point of professional standing and identifying what we expect from the relationship.	Focuses on who we are, rather than what we are, and how we can work together to advance a shared agenda.
Thinking that individual agenda items and timeframes have priority over those constructed amongst the group.	Understanding that once relationships have been developed through whanaungatanga, responsibilities to the kaupapa may well be ongoing.

Watch the videos in the Educationally Powerful Connections video kete and consider how these schools have understood whanaungatanga to strengthen educationally powerful connections.

In general terms, what do we know about:

- the support that each of our students needs and receives?
- how we could more effectively connect and strengthen that support?

view: [the Educationally Powerful Connections video kete](#)

see: [all student comments on this theme](#)

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