

ENGAGING WITH MĀORI: WHĀNAU, HAPŪ, IWI and MĀORI ORGANISATIONS

Māori achieving success as Māori

85% NCEA Level 2

A focus on Māori students

One of the first things that people often think about is why do we have this focus on Māori students? Somewhere along the line we've moved to recognise that actually there is an issue there, what we are doing hasn't worked and we need to do something about it.

I guess the next question people have is 'well how can I do anything about that? I'm a classroom teacher. What difference can I make? My job is to get these kids through NCEA level two or whatever'. So it's shifting that thinking from 'I'm a teacher, I've got a job, here's my job description' to 'I'm a person, I have a moral obligation to support this group of learners who are currently being under-served and marginalised by our current ways of working.'

Relationships with mana whenua and iwi

We encourage schools to establish who the mana whenua are, and that in itself is sometimes a big discussion. We open it up and it's something for the school to pursue. If needed, we broker those relationships but it's for the school to develop it. We do make a point of monitoring how things are going and keep it on the agenda. 'How's your engagement with iwi, hapū going? What's happening? What's been happening since we last met?'

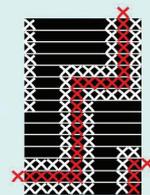
The iwi might say 'we would like to have a relationship with you, but it has to be two-way. It's not one-way traffic.' Kia Eke Panuku is an opportunity for iwi to share their education plans and aspirations for their tamariki and mokopuna. It's not just what do schools want from iwi, it's how can we work together to meet those aspirations?

Challenging assumptions

Historically people have been a little bit frightened, or just assumed that people outside the school may not have the knowledge or the desire to have input into that level of discussion, or the desire to co-construct. Thinking that they may not have something to bring to the table.

Iwi can participate and help us understand the significant histories that actually reside in the area in which the school is delivering its educational programme. They can also broker significant relationships with marae, with cultural nuances that are tribally specific and regionalised, so they can greatly enhance the opportunity for all students to understand that their opportunity to learn is located and locatable.

When a Principal leads 'a new way of being,' they accept the risk of putting themselves outside their comfort zone, and acknowledge that 'maybe I don't know all there is to know about this complex thing called realising student potential'. Giving life to Ka Hikitia is something we do together... and it's better because of that.



Kia Eke Panuku
building on success

The Treaty of Waitangi

As they're creating strategic change leadership teams, some schools have thought that the first port of call should be Māori staff who come to the table to help solve the 'Māori problem'. But actually we didn't get to where we are by ourselves and therefore the pathway forward is not a single pathway either. You're having people who are being very courageous and they're saying 'If we've got a real partnership it's ultimately about power sharing.' And when they centre on the Treaty itself, they understand that it's not just a brown issue, it's an issue for all of us.

The professional me, the personal me at home, it's bringing those two together. I think one of the most powerful things I've seen is where people have used the question, 'would you want your child to be taught in that way?' to bring the conversation right back to the centre of who people are. It starts to, metaphorically, break down the walls of the school fence. If I'm connecting to my students on a personal level I see them as individuals who are going to grow and shape the society that I'm going to grow old in, and my kids are going to grow up in, then I'm going to have a slightly different response, I suspect, than simply thinking I've just got to get these kids through this exam, through this assessment.

Opportunities for working relationships

We're coming back to the need for that fundamental relationship. It is about bringing people together at the table so that then they can talk about the significant knowledge they have of their own children.

You've got that whole notion of hapū and iwi commitment – and sometimes hapū and iwi may not actually have rangatahi or students at the school – but the fact is they are the mana whenua or the hau kainga of the land upon which the building is sitting. And so these need to be long-term, enduring, strategic relationships with others who are also located in this same space.

If we're talking about sustainability, we have to take an holistic approach. It has to be embedded within the systems and the whole cultural context of the school. A new way of valuing what it is we do and what whānau, hapū and iwi actually bring with them to this context. It's having a rich knowledge of the context, the actual place in which school is located, so when we start to think about the fabric of society the school doesn't sit in isolation. It doesn't sit in a bubble within the communities.

Positioning for partnership

We need to think about how we partner with groups so that they can authentically participate. Partnership and participation isn't just simply sitting at the table, so that it's a tick-box exercise. It's understanding that while we have a language that we use within education itself, how do we demystify that and support other people's ability to engage in the conversations?

How do we create the context where we can all make sense of the evidence that's before us? We need to be able to plan a way forward, together, in a way that is helping realise the one ultimate goal that we are all responsible for.

This is one of a series of documents "Voices from Kia Eke Panuku" developed to support schools on their Kia Eke Panuku journey