

**Exploring Kura Engagement Strategies with Whānau, Iwi and
Kura in regards to Marautanga-ā-kura:
A research project for
The Ministry of Education**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of the project is to deepen the Ministry of Education's understanding of the characteristics of successful whānau and iwi engagement in the development of marautanga-ā-kura. This is done by identifying key characteristics that schools employ when working with whānau and iwi groups in their area, and collating this information in the form of a series of case studies.

The review of evidence draws on international, local and Māori focused literature about parent, whānau, iwi and community involvement in schooling, student achievement and curriculum development. The empirical research component consists of five New Zealand case studies including one iwi rūnanga and four schools. The case studies cover three different geographical areas, predominantly low decile primary schools, urban and rural, and Māori language total immersion and bilingual classrooms and units in predominantly mainstream schools. Focus group discussions were conducted with teachers, senior management staff, principals, parents, local elders, wider community members and *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa* (MoA) regional co-ordinators. MoA is the national curriculum developed for Māori immersion settings, level 1 and 2, in New Zealand. Contextual data such as education plans, minutes of meetings and anecdotal notes were also gathered from MoA regional co-ordinators taken from their own regions.

The research literature suggests a wide range of reasons that impact on the low participation of parents in their children's schooling. Cultural differences can create misconceptions that impact negatively upon the effective engagement of parents in their children's educational experiences when their aim, along with that of schools, is to enable students to gain the best education possible. Curriculum and teaching methods are often drawn from the dominant culture and, as is often the case, cannot offer equality, access or opportunity. The literature suggests that there is a need for the recognition of not only cultural differences but also of the ethnic diversity that exists between indigenous peoples. Recognition is needed in order to engage and develop effective parent-community relationships.

The literature also identifies a gap in research that explores the extent to which power is used to influence others to achieve the goals of the organisation, for example, the limited involvement of parents and communities in the building of knowledge of culture alongside schools trying to scaffold student learning, rather than being just a parent 'helper'. Literature tends to place the blame on parents' lack of involvement in schooling and vindicates the school.

Research suggests that there is a responsibility for schools to increase the confidence of parents to engage with teachers about their practices at home. Teachers' thinking needs to change in regards to being open to learning from parents about their child's experiences as well as increasing their ability to include children's out-of-school experiences in the classroom environment.

Other challenges for parents included not having time to be fully involved in their child's school, financial constraints such as getting time off work to attend events, the cost of commuting, having commitments to other family members, school events that clash with other commitments, and frequent relocation. Some segments of the Māori population are highly mobile. Evidence suggests that parents are willing to help if access to resources permit.

Common themes that support successful school and parent engagement identified in both international and local literature included the importance of good leadership where there is a clear vision and strong commitment from school leaders. Good relationships, both formal and informal, are also important. Where these relationships are based on mutual trust and respect and a shared responsibility for the students' learning and well-being, good rapport will follow. The school culture needs to reflect a commitment to involve parents in decision making, and listening and responding to the parents' suggestions. Where parents are valued and provided with opportunities to learn about their child's education and their understanding of that process, relations with the school will be enhanced. Parent and community input into schools is valued because it helps to create a shared understanding about achievements. Communication, both informal and formal, with parents should be clear and timely. Both the parent and school opinions on home-school relationships are considered.

There are examples throughout the case studies stating that parents/whānau and the community want to be involved in the education of their children. The importance of the relationship between the school and its community is also reported. For schools, the challenge is to vary the way they engage with parents, whānau and community. For parents, they must be encouraged to ask questions about the teaching and learning taking place in schools, and to be confident that the response from the schools will be easily understood. It will be through applying various communication strategies that parents, whānau and community will be encouraged to participate, and to trust that their participation is being valued. Evidence shows that when this type of engagement occurs, parents, whānau and community take a more proactive part in the teaching and learning that takes place within the school. The outcome of a positive engagement is the evidence of a curriculum that reflects community aspirations, needs and expectations demonstrated in the teaching and learning programmes of the school.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the project is to deepen the Ministry of Education's understanding of the characteristics of successful whānau and iwi engagement in the development of marautanga-ā-kura by identifying key characteristics that schools employ when working with whānau and iwi groups in their area.

This report is organised by reviewing international, local and Māori focused literature about parent, whānau, iwi and community involvement in schooling, student achievement and curriculum development. Key barriers and successful strategies to engage parents, whānau and the community are also summarised in the literature review.

A summary of the main findings is provided which describes common examples of parent, whānau, iwi and community involvement in schooling, student achievement and curriculum development. Key barriers and successful strategies to engage parents, whānau and the community from the case studies are also summarised in this section, before the case studies are outlined.

The empirical research component consists of five New Zealand case studies including one iwi rūnanga and four schools. The case studies cover three different geographical areas, predominantly low decile primary schools, urban and rural, and Māori language total immersion and bilingual classrooms and units in predominantly mainstream schools. A description of our data collection and analysis processes is provided before each case study is outlined. Each case study is organised by first providing a description of the context, other applicable initiatives, the data collection process, and the nature of partnerships in regards to student achievement, school curriculum development, and MoA. A summary is also included in each case study.

The report concludes with a discussion section summarising the literature and case studies and a set of recommendations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature reviewed for this section includes international, local and Māori specific evidence and has been organised into the following themes: leadership, collaborative and mutually respectful relationships, family environment and involvement, community involvement and being culturally responsive.

Leadership

Strong leadership is a key principle of success when engaging with parents and communities as agreed by international (Epstein, Sanders & Sheldon, 2007) and local (Education Review Office, 2008; Ministry of Education, 2000) literature.

Epstein et al. (2007) explored the effects of family and community involvement on student achievement in reading, mathematics and science. They conducted two special focus studies: one an intervention model to test whether district leadership for home-school partnership programmes affects the quality of relations, student achievement and other indicators of success in school; the second an experimental study of the effects of Teachers Involve Parents in Schoolwork (TIPS) interactive homework on student achievement in mathematics, which examined the effects of the intervention on the levels of emotion and cognitive outcomes in students' as well as family attitudes towards mathematics and the involvement of parents in homework.

Results from the district leadership study showed that specific district leadership actions for family and community involvement independently affected the quality of schools' partnership programmes. It was identified that district leadership could do more to help, specifically in setting up basic programmes and outreach approaches to involve all families and, in particular, those that are hard to reach.

The study also identified the importance of sustained work on partnerships at the district level for increasing the quality of schools' programmes. The importance of reciprocity was also identified, where it was found that district leaders could do more if they had the necessary support from schools and invested time in evaluating the schools' programmes.

The Ministry of Education (2000) report, *Better Relationships for Better Learning* also advocates strong leadership as a key principle of success when engaging parents and communities. Other principles identified in the report include having a powerful school vision, managing relationships proactively, being prepared to change and having long-term strategies to change.

The Education Review Office (2008) has developed a self-assessment evaluation framework for schools to compare their own strategies against. They recommend schools review their current policies and the attitudes and values of staff members using the framework. Finally, they recommend that schools identify groups of parents that are well engaged and the reasons why, so this could provide information to develop strategies to engage parents who are not actively involved.

Collaborative and mutually respectful relationships

One key element to successful home-school partnerships is building collaborative and mutually respectful relationships where parents feel valued and the principal and teachers have positive attitudes (Bull, Brooking & Campbell, 2008). There are also a number of other strategies that have been identified in the local (Alton-Lee, 2003; Brooking & Roberts, 2007; Education Review Office, 2008; Gorinski & Fraser, 2006; Timperley & Robinson, 2002) and international (Redding, Langdon, Meyer & Sheley, 2004; Westmoreland, Rosenberg, Lopez & Weiss, 2009) literature as well as gaps that require further research.

The initial stages of the parent-teacher relationship are crucial and can often determine whether it will be successful or not as stated by the Education Review Office (2008). Redding et al. (2004) conducted a comprehensive literature review with the main finding defining family involvement as a shared responsibility with meaningful and effective involvement of parents and teachers. Timperley and Robinson (2002) also propose a sharing approach where both parties are learning from each other as a 'joint endeavour'.

The Education Review Office report stated that parents wanted the school to be inclusive, honest, to listen to their input, and acknowledge the child's background and their potential to learn. Parents also had high expectations of both the school and their child's achievements, and were willing to attend and support school activities. Teachers were viewed as an important mentor by parents for their children, and parents wanted teachers to be approachable, non-judgmental and to listen to their points of view. Parents also responded well if the teacher made efforts to create opportunities for them to get involved and made it easy for them to come into the school environment.

Family involvement must be integrated within a learning system, connecting systems of learning – for example from early childhood through to tertiary education – in order to create more entry points and opportunities for family involvement (Redding et al., 2004). Westmoreland et al. (2009) examined how school districts built systematic family engagement as a core education reform strategy to ensure shared responsibility between

parents, schools and administrators that resulted in student success. Their research outlines three core elements necessary for systematic family engagement. The first core element included establishing a framework that communicates the importance of family involvement and systems to evaluate progress and success. Continuous professional development for educators that enables schools to carry out family engagement strategies that align with agreed goals is the second element. The third core element includes developing workshops or training for parents, focused on student learning to encourage families to build their own engagement strategies to support student academic success.

The need for effective home-school relationships focused on student learning is also supported by Alton-Lee's (2003) report which aimed to identify key characteristics of quality teaching practices to optimise learning outcomes for students by aiding the development of policies. Policies and initiatives should be designed to build family involvement as a continuous process that grows and develops as children mature (Redding et al., 2004). Three factors were identified to be critical in sustaining home-school partnerships including the modification of resources for different contexts, time and funding of resources, and linking to all other professional development initiatives (Timperley & Robinson, 2002).

There are, however, a number of gaps within the research and literature that have been identified by various researchers. Gorinski and Fraser (2006) identified the absence of a micro political perspective that explores the extent to which power is used to influence others to achieve the goals of the organisation, for example, in a school setting, the limited involvement of parents and communities in the building of knowledge of culture and students alongside schools to scaffold learning, rather than being just a parent 'helper'. They comment that literature tends to place the blame on parents' lack of involvement in schooling, vindicating the school, and there is a need for literature that explores reciprocal relationships between schools and parents (Education Review Office, 2008).

Brooking and Roberts (2007) identified challenges including the need to increase the confidence of parents to get them to engage with teachers about their practices at home. They also found that teachers' thinking needs to change in regards to being open to learning from parents about their child's experiences and increasing the teacher's ability to include children's out-of-school experiences in the classroom environment. A review is also needed about the nature and quality of engagement with parents of Māori, Pacific Island and other ethnic groups as stated by the Education Review Office (2008).

Family environment and involvement

Parenting style, the family environment, parents' expectations and parents' involvement in their child's education are a few of the various aspects that can influence a child's academic achievement outlined in the literature and research.

Desforges and Abouchaar (2003) evaluated existing research on the effects of parental involvement, family learning and education on a child's academic achievement. A key finding was that good parenting in the home extends to providing a safe, nurturing environment (Bowman, 1997).

DeGarmo, Forgatch and Martinez (1999) developed a model of parental influence on educational achievement for young children. It was found that higher quality parenting was strongly related to maternal level of education, not income, and the use of the mother's education was influential in the way they provided intellectual opportunities in the home. Providing intellectual stimulation in the home is also echoed by Desforges and Abouchaar (2003) as a key aspect to good parenting. Good models of social and educational values, having quality relationships and communication with schools, and having high expectations are also other key aspects of good parenting (Bowman, 1997; Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003).

Biddulph, Biddulph and Biddulph (2003) conducted a critical analysis of evidence concerning the influence of family and community in educational outcomes with emphasis on Māori and Pasifika children. The research synthesised the data into four groups including family attributes, processes, community factors, and combined partnerships. Biddulph et al. state that the quality of family is a significant factor in achievement. The quality of family ties and interaction and the quality of resources available are more important than family structure. Families with high access to resources, parental knowledge and the ability to provide appropriate study facilities and opportunities for further educational experiences show their children having higher achievement rates. Wylie (1999) noted that school related activities come easily to children who are from well-resourced homes as they are able to use the knowledge within the family. Families that provide safe and rich learning environments that include interaction with extended family, different languages, and meaningful mathematics and literacy exercises and resources in the home, stimulate high achievement.

Parental involvement also depends on the opportunities or barriers put forward by the school and teachers. Teacher-parent communication is necessary to provide the parents with relevant information and to establish mutual support and shared values. Teacher-

parent relationships are, in turn, influenced by the children, who can sometimes provide an active mediating role.

Bull et al.'s (2008) research focused on improving the understanding of the key elements of successful home-school relationships and how they operate in different school settings. Their research showed that parental involvement significantly impacts on the academic achievement of their children. There is a high level of interest in developing interventions involving parents more in their children's education as a means of raising the academic standards of those who are underachieving. There is little evidence, however, as to what kind of involvement is needed. Their research suggests several key elements in successful home-school partnerships including having well-planned parental involvement immersed in the whole school development plans, having timely two-way communication between school and parent, to acknowledge that successful home-school partnerships take time and commitment, and finally, having strategies in place for parents to support learning at home.

A support programme for parents is also a suggestion echoed by Desforges and Abouchar (2003). The programmes need to be systematically applied and multi-dimensional, and there needs to be commitment and creativity from support providers. Biddulph et al. (2003) found that integrated programmes, focused on the needs of parents and children, can improve student achievement. Providing parents with the necessary knowledge and information about using educational resources can therefore make school practices part of the family environment. They also state that home-school partnerships that are mutually respected, integrate specific, structured programmes and provide opportunities for support and feedback enhance student achievement.

Brooking and Roberts' (2007) data showed that 80% of schools reported parental involvement having a positive effect on children's learning and approximately 75% of schools surveyed reported these partnerships having a small positive effect on attitude, engagement, confidence, and literacy achievement.

Evidence suggests that parents are willing to help if access to resources permits (Biddulph et al., 2003). However, dysfunctional parenting and family processes are detrimental to the child's achievement and can contribute to the child developing learning disorders, mental health problems, hyperactivity, truancy, and low levels of literacy and self-esteem. Such practices include conflict, abuse, and deprivation of stimulation and affection.

The Education Review Office (2008) reported that challenges for parents included not having time to be fully involved in their child's school, financial constraints such as getting

time off work to attend events and the cost of commuting, having commitments to other family members, school events that clash with other commitments, and parents having negative experiences with the school previously.

Biddulph et al. (2003) add other factors that can have a detrimental effect on achievement are frequent relocation – some segments of the Māori population are highly mobile – and the home language spoken. Native English speakers have higher achievement rates than English as second language speakers. The researchers state that the implications include the need to build on current initiatives specifically establishing further inclusive and integrated support programmes for families in need. Extensive implementation of low-cost group programmes with aims to enhance parents' skills and abilities to help their children in education are needed. They also suggest school facilities to be used as community centres for family support programmes. Finding ways of increasing availability of resources to children from low socio-economic families also needs to be explored. For teachers they suggest that initial and in-service teacher training needs to be examined, specifically the steps teachers can take to initiate effective home-school partnerships. The researchers do not provide a clear explanation about who could fund, co-ordinate, and implement these suggestions.

Westmoreland et al. (2009) and Redding et al. (2004) advocate family engagement strategies that have a shared vision of family engagement, involve purposeful connections to learning, invest in high quality programming and staff, have robust communication systems, and allow evaluation for accountability and continuous learning.

The Ministry of Education (2000) provided a framework for schools to audit parental and community involvement in the “Better Relationships for Better Learning Report”. The framework is organised by first identifying an area of possible concern within the school, possible objectives for the school, and questions for schools, parents and the wider whānau community to consider. Areas of concern include school governance, planning and policy, curriculum and programme development and delivery, te reo Māori and tikanga Māori, and linking home, school and community.

Community involvement

In order to create a positive difference for successful home-school partnerships, community involvement needs to be included.

Raffaele and Knoff (1999) and Epstein (2001) advocate that a whole community strategic approach for positive differences between parents and schools be established. Building a

multi-dimensional partnership that is responsive to a community's needs, where a school listens to parents' feedback and promotes parental input in the kinds of activities in which the parents wish to be included is another key element in building successful home-school partnerships (Bull et al., 2008). Strategic planning that integrates parental involvement programmes in school policy, community involvement from the beginning through to evaluation and review, and having networks of support that promote shared experiences are also key elements to maintaining a whole community strategic approach (Epstein, 2001; Raffaele & Knoff, 1999).

Biddulph et al. (2003) noted that the community effect on children's achievements has not been a focus in New Zealand research. Roxx (1997) identified that formal parent support programmes for Māori were successful when they are organised for and by Māori. Programmes should be structured around Māori needs and responsiveness to whānau and whakapapa ties, and demonstrate communication that works for Māori, enabling informed choices for Māori parents. Social networks provide opportunities for further learning and solidify cultural identity and a sense of belonging. The presence of a network also supports parents and can teach them the necessary pedagogies for high achievement.

A related theme in community involvement is setting. Bull et al. (2008) found that home-school partnerships were perceived to be easier to establish in small schools and close-knit communities. The relationships developed between home and kura kaupapa and special schools were thought to be qualitatively different from mainstream schools. The boundaries between home and school were 'blurred', where parents reported that the responsibility for the overall well-being of their children was shared between whānau and kura.

McKinley's (2000) research into Māori medium education suggests that the choice of school does not affect children's achievement, with the exception of Māori attending Māori medium schools where the focus is Māori language and cultural restoration.

One main area requiring further research identified by Biddulph et al. (2003) includes incorporating community factors such as social networks, peer culture, and the influence of media and information technology.

Being culturally responsive

There are a number of factors to consider when consulting with Māori parents and whānau as well as culturally appropriate ways of initiating home-school partnerships outlined in the literature.

Māori parents, trustees, and teachers involved in a Ministry of Education report (2000) identified important considerations when consulting with Māori parents and whānau including having face-to-face meetings, giving whānau the opportunity to identify the issues and direction, and the involvement of whānau and kaumātua. The use of marae as a venue for hui where appropriate as well as having respect for Māori tikanga and maintaining an ongoing relationship with iwi, hapū, and marae when there are no specific issues to discuss were also important considerations (Ministry of Education, 2000). Finally, the report provides a set of guidelines in order to respond to the educational needs of Māori communities and how best to consult with Māori.

Brooking and Roberts (2007) evaluated the Home-school Partnerships: Literacy programme designed to be a framework for schools to initiate culturally appropriate ways of working in partnership around literacy development. They found that successful schools had strongly committed lead teams that considered and provided for the community needs. Time was found to be the most important factor where parents' and teachers' time needed to be well aligned. Having parents involved was most successful if students were involved using creative strategies. The understanding of the successful partnerships revolved around four phrases: 'common goals', 'working together', 'sharing responsibility', and 'equal standing'.

Berryman and Bateman (2008) examined how a mainstream school principal, supported by a Māori elder, undertook a Māori protocol approach with teachers and family instead of suspending a group of boys who were found to have been experimenting with marijuana during school hours and on school grounds. This is an example of a partnership that shows how Māori knowledge and values of the Treaty of Waitangi were used to claim equity for Māori. Bishop and Glynn (1999) state that the reassertion of Māori cultural aspirations, preferences and practices, supported and legitimised by cultural leaders, can lead to more effective participation and learning for all Māori students.

Durie (cited in Berryman & Bateman, 2008) has contemplated understanding others in relation to the relevance of applying Māori knowledge systems. Durie relates the three

components of understanding – space, boundaries and time – with the process of a pōwhiri on the marae ātea, using the pōwhiri as a metaphor for engagement.

Howard Fancy, Secretary of Education, endorsed a set of guidelines developed to help schools set up and maintain good relationships with Māori parents and communities (Ministry of Education, 2000). He stated that schools that are more inclusive of the concerns and interests of Māori parents are able to translate these into more effective programmes of learning and teaching for Māori children. Parents have an important role as well in supporting this, particularly in the home, but ultimately the professional initiative and responsibility must come from the school. He added that success in education is much more likely when schools, parents, and the wider community work well together and enhance the learning of children.

Literature suggests that cultural differences can create misconceptions that impact negatively upon the effective engagement of parents in their children's educational experiences (Hughes, Schumm & Vaughan, 1999; Moles, 1993), when the common aim of parents and schools is to provide students with the best education possible.

Gorinski and Fraser (2006) reviewed literature to assess the effective engagement of Pasifika parents and communities in education, and identified the monoculture paradigm of the New Zealand education system with its colonial past, dominated by the Anglo European education system despite it being a multicultural nation. Curriculum and teaching methods are not drawn from the 'general culture' but from the dominant culture, and cannot offer equality, access or opportunity. The researchers suggest that minority students remain potentially disadvantaged in academic achievement. Bishop (2003) suggests the solution to non-participation by minority students lies in the wider principles of indigenous self-determination and local control.

Gorinski and Fraser (2006) identified another suggestion advocated by researchers of a multicultural pedagogy concerned with equity, bicultural/multicultural perspectives; Bishop 2003; Bishop & Glynn, 2000), spirituality, and a holistic approach. They also suggest that there is a need for the recognition of not only the cultural difference but also the ethnic diversity between indigenous peoples in order to engage and develop effective parent community relationships.

The Education Review Office (2008) found that schools with diverse communities had successful engagement strategies in place, developing ways to bridge the culture, language and socio-economic gap. Cultural identity and values were respected and

included in the schools' practices. The staff at these schools pro-actively sought solutions such as having parent focus groups, running family literacy programmes, establishing homework and study support centres, and having communities lead cultural celebrations.

To conclude this literature review the Education Review Office (2008) have summarised successful strategies in their review of home-school relationships, and the challenges regarding the relationship and recommendations to strengthen them. Their summary reflects the common themes in both international and local literature. These themes include the importance of good leadership where there is a clear vision, and strong commitment from school leaders. Good relationships, both formal and informal, are also important, based on mutual trust and respect and a shared responsibility of the students' learning and well-being. The school culture reflects a commitment to involve parents in decision making, and listening and responding to parents' suggestions. Parents are valued and provided with opportunities to learn about their child's education, thus strengthening parents' understanding. Parent and community input towards activities and vice versa are valued which creates a shared understanding about achievements. Communication, both informal and formal, with parents should be timely and clear.

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this qualitative study is to deepen the Ministry of Education's understanding of the characteristics of successful whānau and iwi engagement in the development of marautanga-ā-kura, by identifying key characteristics that schools employ when working with whānau and iwi groups in their area, and collating in the form of a series of case studies. This is a narrative inquiry-based study with methodology based on kaupapa Māori frameworks.

Kaupapa Māori frameworks

Since the late 1990s there has been an emerging phenomenon of indigenous theoretical research frameworks in the Aotearoa New Zealand context labelled by some as kaupapa Māori research (Bishop & Glynn, 1999; G. H. Smith, 1997; L. T. Smith, 1999). In an education setting, Graham Smith (1997) describes it as an educational strategy and a transformative practice that Māori communities have used as a deliberate means to comprehend, resist, and transform crises related to dual concerns of schooling underachievement of Māori students and the ongoing erosion of Māori language, knowledge, and culture. Strong links to kaupapa Māori research frameworks are evident in this study as we predominantly worked with Māori participants and in Māori medium school settings.

Our research team advocated kaupapa Māori practices including: aroha ki te tangata (a respect for people); kanoahi kitea (the seen face, as in presenting yourself to people face-to-face); titiro, whakarongo ... korero (Look, listen ... speak); manaaki i te tangata (share and host people, be generous); kia tūpato (be cautious); kua e takahia te mana o te tangata (do not trample over the mana of people); kua e mahaki (don't flaunt your knowledge) (L. T. Smith, 1999). As researchers, we are also mindful of kaupapa Māori research theory that is useful and relevant in creating change for indigenous people: seen as a tool to be used appropriately and with a variety of strategies; accountable to the community; able to challenge status quo; able to sustain criticism of its validity and legitimacy from internal and external communities; and able to be continually reviewed and reviewable (L. T. Smith, 1999).

Place-based education

This research project also has links to Place Based Education (PBE), which is an education philosophy that stems from links between the ecological landscape, the community and its various cultures, and the people who claim allegiance to the place (G. A. Smith, 2002). Another key aspect of PBE is that education philosophy emerges

out of the attributes of a place including landscapes (geography); environments (ecology); important events over time (history); struggles for control (politics); relationships among resident groups (sociology) and any other dynamics that attach to a place (Smith, 2002).

Data collection

The Ministry of Education requested one iwi-based case study and four school-based case studies. To develop the case studies the VUW research team decided to gather contextual data from the *Marautanga o Aotearoa* (MoA) regional co-ordinators (RC) in regards to their curriculum development work with the iwi rūnanga or school. Individual interviews with school principals and MoA RC as well as focus group interviews with teachers, whānau members and iwi participants, were undertaken.

The contextual information was intended to help the VUW team gain an understanding of the school, whānau and iwi setting with which they were working. Information from the MoA RC included the iwi rūnanga education strategic plan and timeline as well as whānau hui and anecdotal notes.

The individual interviews with school principals and MoA RC were intended to explore how a particular kura and community were developing marautanga-ā-kura. Only one individual interview was conducted with one of the school principals due to time constraints. This principal would have preferred to be interviewed with his teaching staff which was the choice of the remainder of the school principals. Only one MoA RC was interviewed individually while two were interviewed together and one as part of the focus group discussion.

It was intended that teachers, whānau and iwi participants would share their stories about working together to develop marautanga-ā-kura in the form of focus group discussions. These stories would be gathered with teachers, whānau and iwi groups being interviewed separately.

The four MoA RC were involved in the research project to act as 'brokers' and organise the location and participants for each case study. One MoA RC organised the iwi case study, two other MoA RC organised one school-based case study each, and the remaining MoA RC organised the remaining two case studies. The VUW team decided the data would be collected through focus group discussions. The MoA RC and the VUW project director provided the participants with research project information sheets, consent forms and the focus group discussion questions prior to the face-to-face

discussions. The location of the discussions was chosen by participants and took place at the iwi rūnanga office and school grounds.

Participants in the research project included iwi rūnanga representatives and applicable MoA RC for the iwi-based case study and teachers, parents, senior management, principals and applicable MoA RC for the school-based case studies. Each group had the option to organise who would be a part of the focus group discussion. The iwi-based case study data collection was conducted with separate discussions with iwi rūnanga representatives and two MoA RC. Two of the school-based case studies were conducted with a separate discussion with senior management and teachers, and a separate one with parents. One school-based study had discussions for the principal by themselves, and teachers and parents separately. The final case study had the principal, one MoA RC, teachers, parents, elders and wider whānau in attendance for their focus group discussion. One of the MoA RC held interviews individually. Members of the VUW research team and various MoA RC were in attendance at each focus group discussion.

Through advice from a research mentor and previous experience with evaluation research projects, the VUW research team agreed with the process to collate the information from the interviews and focus group discussions outlined as follows. One of the VUW research team would be the main interviewer with other VUW team members and the MoA RC able to ask other probing questions. One member of the team would collate responses on a laptop computer that would be displayed by data projector. After each main question, the participants were asked to validate that what was recorded was a true reflection of their responses and to give their consent for the information to be part of the research project data. The purpose of this process was to maintain the anonymity of participants and reduce the data validation process for the researchers (Creswell, 1994). The data would be immediately agreed to at the conclusion of the interviews and focus group discussions. Participants in all case studies agreed to this process.

A further validation process was decided by the VUW research team and offered to schools as an act of consideration. This process involved sending an electronic copy of the interview and focus group discussion transcripts to school principals, an iwi rūnanga representative, and the MoA RC. This was the participants' final opportunity to make any adjustments to the data, which needed to have the consent from participants if changes were made.

Only one school principal returned their transcript with changes. These changes were to the discussion transcript of the whānau focus group, which the school principal had not attended. The principal also emailed comments, questioning the validity of the VUW research process and questioning the validity and content of the whānau responses. The VUW project director replied by email to the school principal endorsing the research process conducted at their school and agreeing to make the changes to the data transcripts if the changes were endorsed by whānau representatives as agreed to in the consent process. To date, the VUW research team has not received these endorsed changes, and the original data have been used. In future similar research projects the VUW research team has decided not to undertake the consideration of forwarding transcripts for further checking, and complete the validation of data collected at the immediate conclusion of the interview or focus group discussion.

Ethics processes

The research project involved ethical considerations at individual, school, institutional, national and international levels and our application to the VUW Human Ethics Committee addressed each of these levels. This formal ethical review process establishes confidence that all ethical issues are considered and addressed in a satisfactory manner that protects those involved and minimises the potential for harm that is always present in any research with human participants.

Research questions

The main research question was:

“How are whānau and iwi involved in marautanga-ā-kura (school-based curriculum development), and what are the things that work and not work to support whānau and iwi involvement?”

This question was developed into a series of sub questions for the focus group discussions including:

1. What has the kura done to involve parents/whānau/iwi in supporting academic decisions for tamariki?
 - What has worked?
 - What have been some challenges?
 - What can you suggest for the future?

2. How has the kura involved parents/whānau/iwi in school curriculum development?
 - What has worked?
 - What have been some challenges?
 - What can you suggest for the future?

3. Has having the 'Marautanga o Aotearoa' document supported you in the development of school curriculum?
- If yes, how?
 - If no, why not?
 - What has worked?
 - What have been some challenges?
 - What can you suggest for the future?

Data analysis

The VUW research team allocated each member a case study to analyse the applicable contextual information, interview and focus group transcripts. Each member was required to summarise the data into a set of themes. The team then compared the themes from each case study and summarised them as an overall set of themes. The research team considered that the possible themes could include setting and context, perspectives held by participants, participants' ways of thinking about people, processes, activities, strategies, relationships, structures, and pre-assigned coding schemes (Creswell, 1994).

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS

The literature review identified good leadership, collaborative and mutually respectful relationships, family environment and involvement, community involvement, and being culturally responsive as supporting effective school, home and community engagement to ensure positive student achievement and parental engagement with school curriculum development. The case studies identified similar themes including senior management being committed to collaborative, clear and open relationships with parents and the community, and schools being committed to parental and community involvement at all levels in school policy and curriculum development and the community, and schools being responsive to the nature and culture of their community. Clear and varied communication strategies by school with parents and sufficient resourcing to support communication and relationships were also seen as priorities for both schools and parents.

How did schools engage whānau with student achievement?

Schools reported that they valued parent input and supporting their needs, and were committed to trying alternative strategies to involve whānau in their children's learning. It was common for schools to seek support from outside agencies such as school advisors, the wider community such as kōhanga, and early childhood centres.

Schools communicated with parents using a range of formal communication strategies including newsletters, parent interviews and discussions, student profiles and whānau hui. These were endorsed by the parents, whānau, and community, when they were asked to think about different strategies. Common informal strategies included teachers conversing with parents before and after school, teachers having an open-door policy, and exchanges during school extracurricular activities or community events.

Engaging with whānau using links to Te Ao Māori was also common, with the marae being used as a meeting place for schools and parents, and relationships being established and maintained through whakapapa links.

How did schools engage whānau with school curriculum development?

As with involving parents in student achievement, schools reported that they valued parent input and were committed to trying alternative strategies, such as involving students as part of whānau hui as an incentive for parents to attend. Schools were also working on involving local iwi in school curriculum development by involving local elders and basing hui at local marae.

Strong input from parents was in the creation, development, and maintenance of the Māori medium classrooms. In all schools the establishment of the classrooms was from the request of parents, and parents were the instigators when a change such as shifting from bilingual to immersion classrooms was requested.

Whānau hui located at the school was the common strategy to inform parents of school curriculum foci and development. Parent contribution to content was in the form of volunteering their skills and knowledge for some school teaching topics. There was minimal input from parents in curriculum content and delivery except for one school, which had high engagement from parents and the wider community because of its rural location and strong iwi links.

How did schools engage whānau with *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa*?

For most schools and the iwi rūnanga the emergence of MoA was good timing as the curriculum document aligned with their existing curriculum development and philosophy plans. All schools and the rūnanga reported that they were committed to collaborating with whānau and iwi, especially in the development of the graduate profile component of the curriculum. Some schools allowed parents to attend professional development sessions alongside teachers and the Board of Trustees.

Most schools and the iwi rūnanga were highly appreciative of the support provided by the MoA RC in the professional development they received in regards to MoA, in the form of school-based sessions. All schools and the iwi rūnanga were at the beginning stages of their understanding of the document.

What were the key barriers that hinder successful engagement with whānau?

One of the key barriers for schools to engage with whānau was the limited attendance by parents at school-based whānau hui. Teachers said that their high workload meant they had limited time to explore strategies to address lack of parent attendance and induct new whānau and teaching staff. For parents, one of the key barriers to engaging was the use of 'teachers speak' during hui, which was difficult for some parents to understand. Varied ability of parents to speak te reo Māori was seen as a communication barrier for some teachers. Teachers and parents both commented that having various initiatives happening in the school concurrently made it difficult to engage with parents authentically.

In regards to school curriculum development, one of the main barriers for teachers and parents was the agreement of the structure of the Māori medium classrooms, for example

the level of te reo Māori being taught and to what year level. Other examples of parent/teacher disagreement were strained relationships with school senior management, inconsistent communication methods, and limited access to resources ranging from people to monetary.

Engaging whānau with MoA was hindered also by alignment with other school initiatives, policies, and systems, and for some schools with the New Zealand Curriculum document. Strained relationships with school management, limited resources, and differing values and beliefs were also common barriers. For parents, a key barrier was the information overload and lack of information in 'whānau speak' and some limited their engagement because of their past negative experiences at school. The MoA RC commented that barriers for them included limited time and peer support.

What suggestions did participants have for kura to engage with whānau and marautanga-ā-kura?

All participants reported that alternative engagement strategies needed to be explored. Strategies needed to be led by school management and be a whole school focus supported by a clear action plan. They all agreed that resources were needed in the form of people, professional development, wider community links and the use of information communication technology (ICT). Parents requested more consistent communication from schools and the use of ICT tools as well as increased involvement in school policy development and implementation.

CASE STUDIES

Iwi Case Study

Context

This iwi rūnanga is a charitable trust offering services in the areas of a General Practitioner's clinic, Health Promotion and Education, Mental Health, Social Services and Training and Education programmes. These areas are four key priorities in the rūnanga strategic plan. The Training and Education strategy aims to provide support for the early childhood, primary, secondary and tertiary sectors. In the past the rūnanga has had a strong focus on the tertiary sector only.

The Training and Education strategy is in the developmental stage and includes the following broad aims: ensuring links between all levels of education, from the home through to tertiary; combining skills, expertise and experiences to enrich teaching and learning across all sectors; and being proactive in improving educational outcomes for the iwi.

Key stakeholders for the Training and Education strategy include the iwi rūnanga, industry organisations, tertiary education providers, alternative education providers, one high school, one intermediate school, three English medium schools, two Māori medium schools, and three kōhanga reo. The rūnanga employs full and part-time staff to work alongside a Ministry of Education funded project facilitator to develop the iwi's education strategy.

The Ministry of Education project facilitator is also one of the region's MoA RC whose role is to provide professional development for MoA. The rūnanga education representatives have received professional development about this document. The rūnanga has an education strategy working party consisting of a whānau member, a rūnanga education representative, and the Ministry of Education funded project facilitator.

This rūnanga was chosen to be a part of the study mainly because the iwi education strategy is in the development stage, and how the rūnanga is reviewing, establishing and maintaining partnerships with schools could contribute to the examination of successful engagement strategies.

Initiatives

The iwi education strategy makes reference to the Ministry of Education's (2009) Māori education strategy *Ka Hikitia – Managing for Success* and the curriculum documents *The New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 2007) and *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa* (Ministry of Education, 2008) to emphasise the need for early childhood centres and schools to work with iwi to incorporate iwi needs and aspirations in curriculum development.

Data collection

The interview with iwi rūnanga representatives was organised by one of the MoA RC based in the area and was attended by two education focused rūnanga representatives, two VUW researchers, one VUW administrator, and two MoA RC. The first interview was conducted mainly with one of the rūnanga representatives and joined briefly by the other. The second interview was with two MoA RC on their own, who are based in the region. One of the VUW researchers already had an established relationship with all of the interviewees. Another VUW researcher had previously met the two MoA RC. Both interviews took place at the iwi rūnanga offices.

Partnership strategies to improve student achievement

Before working with the current MoA RC the rūnanga was working with another Ministry of Education funded education facilitator. This person had tribal links to the rūnanga's iwi. The current MoA RC has no iwi links to the rūnanga. The rūnanga representatives shared that these iwi links were important in building partnerships. In establishing initial working relationships, and having whakapapa links between both parties provided a level of trust as it was assumed that there was shared vested interest by both parties. The achievement of iwi-affiliated and iwi-based students was assumed to be a common shared interest.

Rūnanga representative:

Whakapapa works – this is how we first establish our engagement and trust to open the doors of communication...the [MoA regional co-ordinator] was from the iwi and introduced the new regional co-ordinator using these established relationships.

When the iwi affiliated Ministry of Education funded education facilitator left, it was their role to introduce their replacement to the iwi rūnanga. The rūnanga representatives reported that it was easy for them to develop a trustful relationship with the in-coming facilitator because they trusted the outgoing facilitator so highly to provide a suitable new person who would have just as much vested interest in making a difference for the iwi.

The education strategy working party was also made up of iwi members including whānau members from school Boards of Trustees. The rūnanga representatives reported that having a small core group of four in the working party meant they were able to progress with key tasks faster as there were fewer members to have to consult and reach agreement with.

The rūnanga representatives plan to engage with iwi kaumātua to seek their advice and support for the education strategy and to also see what role kaumātua might have already or wish to have in schools in the iwi region.

The rūnanga saw partnerships with local kaumātua as a valuable human resource. The partnership established with the Ministry of Education by the Ministry of Education facilitator provided funding resources for the iwi working party members who in the past had been unpaid volunteers. The rūnanga saw this relationship as critical to supporting them in understanding the availability and accessing of resources from the Ministry of Education and to continue a positive relationship with them.

The rūnanga representatives also reported that part of their education strategy was to develop iwi-focused resources for schools such as text, multimedia resources and a register of local experts. They saw professional development alongside the distribution of these resources as being very important.

Rūnanga representative:

[We intend to] organise resources, [a] strategy to get resources into kura [and] the importance of professional development along side the dissemination of the resources. [We are also interested in] promoting the use of iwi physical resources, i.e. wāhi tapu, marae, historical sites, taonga. Professional development would also include induction into iwitanga.

The rūnanga education strategy working party presented their education strategy at whānau hui in schools in their iwi region. The rūnanga representatives reported that all schools responded positively to the proposed education strategy. One particular school had no previous relationship with the iwi before the presentation, even though they were situated geographically in the centre of the iwi boundaries. This school saw their newly established relationship with the iwi through the education strategy development as being positive.

Rūnanga representative:

Engagement with schools was positive and the promotion of the education plan had a good uptake with schools. One school had no past relationship up until last year with the rūnanga, so [they were] happy to begin [a]relationship.

The two MoA RC agreed that it was important to deal directly with kura with face-to-face meetings, and that having established relationships contributed to gaining initial engagement with school management, teachers and the wider community.

MoA RC:

Face-to-face works with whānau and kura – adds to the integrity. Initial contact could be with principals, managers or [already] established relationships.

In regards to working specifically with whānau, the MoA RC shared that it was important to focus on catering to the whānau needs, for example, conducting hui at a time suitable to whānau members, allowing informal conversations in regards to student achievement to happen in different contexts like at home or a sporting event, acknowledging all contributions, and conducting hui in 'whānau speak' without any jargon.

The MoA RC saw their role as being an important one to support outside agencies such as the iwi rūnanga to engage with whānau and schools as they have specialised facilitation skills to ensure rigorous discussion and that all contributions are acknowledged and valued. Also, in their experience, richer responses come from whānau when discussions take place separately from the school teachers and staff.

The MoA RC had observed that whānau engagement was high during extracurricular school activities; however, strategies need to be explored about how to engage whānau more in student academic achievement decisions. In their experience it was not that whānau did not want to engage but for some whānau they did not know how.

The rūnanga and MoA RC had contrasting views about the challenges of whānau involvement.

Rūnanga representative:

[We've perceive there will be] no challenges as the achievement of iwi tamariki is a common interest.

MoA RC:

[It's a] challenge to empower whānau to have a voice; for kura to get whānau to come along; [to] encourage kura to carry on with whānau participation.

Partnership strategies involving school curriculum development

A key focus for the rūnanga is to develop an iwi curriculum promoting local iwi knowledge and the development of resources with iwi members, whānau and schools. They anticipate there would be a positive response from schools as the curriculum will be iwi driven, would advocate a holistic approach to teaching and learning, and is physically based in the iwi, and immersed in local language and protocol. Challenges for the rūnanga included identifying local kaumātua with iwi knowledge prepared to impart that knowledge in a school setting.

Rūnanga representative:

We anticipate that it would work because it is iwi driven, involves wairuatanga, is a holistic approach, is physically based in the iwi/rohe in all its entirety [including] tikanga, reo.

The MoA RC saw the inclusion of local history and whakapapa in the school curriculum as a key strategy to engage whānau in school curriculum development. Both the rūnanga representatives and the MoA RC asserted that whānau and the community should lead school curriculum development as whānau was constant and the schools and curriculum were ever changing.

Rūnanga representative:

Iwi mātauranga is constant, curriculum is ever changing. Iwi, whānau and kura would develop curriculum links and pedagogy to promote iwi marautanga.

MoA RC:

Curriculum outcome is based on needs and aspirations of the whānau. Discussions are based on what you want, not what you don't have.

The rūnanga saw professional development facilitated by iwi members as being critical in the promotion of the iwi curriculum and resources. They also saw this iwi-based approach aligning with the current Māori education strategy *Ka Hikitia – Managing for Success* (Ministry of Education, 2007).

Partnership strategies involving Te Marautanga o Aotearoa

The rūnanga representatives saw the release of the curriculum document MoA as timely as the rūnanga had just begun their review of their education strategic plan.

Rūnanga representatives:

Timing – at the time the rūnanga was already drafting an education strategy plan so [the] cultural and political environment was right when approached by the MoA regional co-ordinator who introduced *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa*.

The rūnanga also supported the localised focus of the curriculum and saw that this would support their want to engage more closely with schools in their iwi region. They also

shared that this close level of communication and shared view of the curriculum would minimise any misunderstandings of the rūnanga's intentions of aligning MoA with their education strategy and implementation in local kura.

Rūnanga representatives:

It has strengthened relationships with kura. It will support kura with networks from local community. It will minimise risks for all involved in the kura.

The MoA RC saw one of their key roles as being to support both the schools in the region and the iwi rūnanga to transition into taking ownership of the new national curriculum documents. They saw the 'Graduate Profile' section of the marautanga as a helpful starting point for schools and the iwi rūnanga to do this by including their local expectations, knowledge and values.

MoA RC:

[Kura are] using the development of the graduate profile as a starting point. [There are] ideas of using metaphors associated with local history, whakapapa. The graduate profile is a good way to give whānau a voice; to participate and take ownership.

Nature of partnerships

The iwi rūnanga and the two MoA RC have positive relationships with each other, the region's schools and the wider iwi community shown by the ease with which the two groups have organised engagements with each other, schools and the wider iwi community. All of the interviews were conducted in a very welcoming and transparent manner, where the research group felt all responses were open and honest. There was no conflicting information given in the two separate interviews. Documentation in regards to the development of the education strategy was also freely given.

Summary

Having established relationships and having whakapapa links has been a key strategy for the iwi rūnanga and the MoA RC to engage with schools, whānau and the wider community. This has ensured an initial positive response, firstly from schools in regards to the iwi education strategy, and secondly with the introduction of MoA to the iwi rūnanga and schools. All parties are excited and motivated about the development of an iwi-based curriculum which would include their knowledge and local resources. There is a recognised need to engage more whānau in school curriculum development; however, there is a proactive attitude in this region to exploring further ways of engaging whānau. The prospect of an iwi-based and led school curriculum is seen as a vehicle to increasing whānau engagement.

School One Case Study

Context

School One is a decile 1 full primary school located in a low socio-economic urban setting with a roll of 100% Māori students. The school has a choice of bilingual or immersion (rūmaki) classroom settings. A major strength of the school is the capacity to staff rūmaki programmes with qualified teachers, fluent in te reo. The school has a Wharenui (meeting house) that was observed by the VUW research team as a valued hub of the school. The interviews were conducted here and the team was welcomed with a pōwhiri. The Board of Trustees is reported as being student-centred in its decision making ensuring that maximising learning opportunities for each student is central to school governance. The trustees also acknowledge the key role the principal and teachers hold in the education of the students. (Accessed from www.ero.govt.nz 28 June, 2010.)

Initiatives

'Strengthening Education' school cluster initiative

School One has been part of a Ministry of Education funded cluster initiative with four other schools in their district. The funding was initiated by the five school principals who sought financial support to develop programmes to improve educational outcomes for schools within this area. Each school was given the autonomy to choose their own focus within the context of reading. All schools were accountable to the Ministry through generic outputs.

School One focused on how strong relationships could support effective teaching practice. Gathering student and parent 'voice' was a key focus of informing teaching practice. Information was gathered in the form of classroom anecdotal notes, a survey home to parents, and hui at a local marae.

Senior management:

We sought the latest research in reading and up to date professional development looking at enhancing teaching practice; data gathering; interpreting data; teacher pupil relationships; pupil to pupil relationships. The main focus during this project and its point of difference from other schools is relationships.

Teacher:

We are on a 'journey of relationships'...most of the work in our classrooms is informed by 'student voice'.

Data collection

The focus group discussions were organised by the MoA RC based in the school's region and were attended by teaching staff, the school principal, school management, members of the whānau, two VUW researchers, and two MoA RC. The interviews were preceded with a pōwhiri hosted by the principal, teachers and whānau members. After the pōwhiri the VUW researchers provided an information presentation about the research project to school staff and whānau members.

The first focus group discussion was conducted with the staff of the Māori medium classrooms, senior management staff, two MoA RC and two VUW researchers. The second interview was with the two VUW researchers, one MoA RC and two whānau members. The MoA RC already had an established relationship with all of the staff and the majority of the whānau members. Both of the other VUW researchers had also previously met the MoA RC. All interviews were conducted in the school grounds.

Partnership strategies to improve student achievement

Parent interviews was the main formal strategy to share student academic progress; however, informal interaction between teachers and parents before and after school was also a common practice. Formal processes are directed by senior management and informal processes are supported by staff. An open-door policy was also advocated by all staff.

Parent:

Open door policy [is] known by parents... teachers will regularly have a chat informally with parents when [they are] at school.

Surveys were also used to collate parent and student feedback on school initiatives.

Senior Management:

Surveys were sent out to parents seeking responses re perceptions of school and what the school has been doing to support and enhance learning within the school. When we matched the 'student voice with the parent voice' it is clear to see that both want similar things.

Parents spoke about 'whānau hui' that were organised by teaching staff. The agenda usually included up and coming events, assessment, and how students are progressing, including learning and behaviour. Parents were able to bring their own concerns to the hui also. The parents described the whānau hui structure as beginning with karakia and following a set agenda: open discussion; question time; concerns tabled; possible suggestions and ideas shared; and next steps discussed. Parents agreed it was

important to get more whānau to attend these hui, but often other whānau commitments were a priority.

Other teacher-to-parent communication included regular notices sent home with similar content discussed in whānau hui, assemblies, visits with local kohanga to support activities such as sports day, and parent/teacher interviews which were attended by students and wider whānau members. Teachers have a profile book for each student that is shared during the parent/teacher interview and sent home at the end of the year.

Parent:

[We] see benefits of the profile books to see progressions of our child.

When parents were asked about why some parents engaged more with their child's school, they commented:

Parent:

Some parents are confident to bring their concerns because of the nature of their mahi, for example, teacher aiding in the school.

Parent:

For some parents it's observing differences/changes in their children's behaviour can motivate parents to take concerns to staff.

Parent:

Some parents have trust in staff to inform them of their children's academic and behavioural concerns.

Parent:

Possibly for some parents it's the length of time that they have been in the school community that supports their confidence to engage with staff.

The MoA RC commented on their observation of the whānau in this area, and saw a diverse community with transient families looking for seasonal work, or those who had had past negative experiences at school, or as the parents commented, they had other commitments.

The school was experimenting with different strategies including incentives such as prizes for students if surveys and notices were returned by parents. Staff saw that students had a large part to play in encouraging their parents to fill in surveys. Acknowledging and promoting contributions with events such as a student graduation ceremony and the presentation of leaving gifts to students was seen as an important strategy to encourage and continue a successful reciprocal relationship.

An example of a developing reciprocal relationship in this school is the connection with local iwi. Elders from the local marae encouraged the school to hold whānau hui at the marae. These whānau hui have been held to give parents feedback from surveys, inform about behaviour management programmes, and share whole school learning foci. Whānau feedback showed they preferred to attend hui at marae if their children were involved.

Teachers also had relationships with the staff at local kohanga and early childhood centres. There were reciprocal regular visits between these centres and the school. Teachers had knowledge of the early childhood curriculum 'Te Whāriki' which they saw as important to support students to transition and continue curriculum needs from early childhood to school. Staff also kept in contact with past students who attend local high schools which was also helpful to support transition between schools.

The MoA RC shared some of their positive experiences in engaging whānau including going to visit whānau at home and hosting whānau hui at community locations such as the marae or a local kohanga; and using the support of key proactive whānau members or outside of school personnel to engage parents. Having trusting relationships and involving students, parents, teachers and senior management in organising whānau communication and processes was of vital importance to this MoA RC.

Challenges for this school were mainly about inducting new staff and whānau and aligning shared values and beliefs. Staff also saw their daily work demands challenged their ability to engage regularly with whānau. When teachers were asked about what they could suggest for the future in regards to engaging parents with student achievement, their comments focused on improving their teaching programmes.

Teacher:

[We need to] continue improvement of literacy and numeracy programmes. [We're] still getting it right in the classroom in terms of relationships and behaviour.

The main challenge for parents was teachers using 'teacher speak' which could sometimes be difficult for parents to understand. The key request from parents in regards to communication was receiving notices from the school in plenty of time before an event or meeting. Parents suggested other forms of communication such as email, texts, blogs, Facebook, or a school website. In comparison, the parent suggestions are pragmatic and easily implemented, whereas the teacher suggestion is an on-going challenge and not directly addressing the issue of teacher/parent engagement.

MoA RC:

Schools are not thinking outside of the square to actively involve parents; limited in thinking about how to access other people to support them.

Like parents, the MoA RC agreed that schools could use ICT tools to communicate with parents. They also advocated the importance of getting out into the community and identifying whānau skills and how these could be shared reciprocally with schools during whānau hui. In return, schools could share activities with parents that support what their children are learning in the classroom.

Partnership strategies involving school curriculum development

Whānau initiated the establishment of the bilingual and immersion classrooms in the school. Teachers commented that this was mainly due to many parents being involved in the kōhanga reo movement. Whānau also pushed for English transition and the recapitulation of Year 7 and 8 students for these classrooms. Teachers and whānau developed immersion exemplars and benchmarks together.

Teachers reported that a number of whānau members are enrolled in tertiary education and provide regular support, skills and knowledge for students and teachers. There is also support from local elders and the marae who support with Māori language programmes, but this is sometimes limited. Teachers reported that they wanted to strengthen links with local elders and access local iwi knowledge to include in their school curriculum.

Teacher:

He whakaohoho i te āhua o te tautoko, te haere hoki ki ngā marae ake o te wāhi nei. [There is a need to access further support...to revisit the marae and others in this area]

Parents reported that they have some understanding of current whole school curriculum development which was presented during noho marae; however, they wanted more opportunities to contribute and participate in curriculum development. Parents also wanted frequent and consistent feedback about school curriculum development. They said that the information gathered at the noho marae had not yet been revisited with parents. Parents also commented that they have seen results from what they said they wanted for their children during the noho. The development of the reo Māori programme was an example of this, where parents saw results in their observations of their child's classroom and their child's language development at home.

Partnership strategies involving “ Te Marautanga o Aotearoa”

The emergence of MoA was timely for School One as they were already focusing on building better relationships with parents and whānau as part of the ‘Strengthening Education’ initiative. The MoA validated an existing school curriculum and future focus developments.

Teacher:

We had already started searching for our own pathway – before the MoA was launched.

Time was a different issue for the MoA RC who felt the work involved in implementing the MoA was sometimes time consuming, which is not acknowledged; working with individual kura can consume time with travel.

The graduate profile component of the MoA also aligned with where this school was heading in acknowledging student achievement. The school identified possible challenges such as ensuring the teachers have the same interpretation and understanding of the MoA, and that they are knowledgeable in the protocol and Māori language of the local community. The school is focused on ensuring one school curriculum is developed that includes both the bilingual and immersion approaches to teaching and learning. The school believes the developments should be led by school management working alongside staff and whānau.

A whānau working group has been established to focus on the development and implementation of the MoA. Members include school staff, whānau members with children in the bilingual and immersion classrooms, local elders, early childhood providers, and representatives from local high schools. Some parents were asked to be a part of the group because of the contributions they had made in surveys, and whānau hui, and their strong involvement with the school. At the time of the data collection stage of this project, the group had only recently been formed and had met twice over the year. School staff facilitated these initial hui, where they shared information and activities they had gathered from MoA consultation hui facilitated by the Ministry of Education. The aim of the group is to provide the school with whānau ‘voice’ in regards to school curriculum development, specifically MoA. Parents appreciated being given this responsibility to participate.

Parent comment:

[We] Felt ‘smart’. Felt valued. [We] are happy to continue in this supportive role, for our tamariki.

Parents shared that they still had very limited understanding of the MoA which they felt was due to limited and continued feedback from the school. Parents were also not sure

how much the Board of Trustees were involved or were meant to be involved and would like to know and be kept informed. They felt this could be because the school is still sorting out their own understanding of the document for themselves. Parents also commented that there was a lot of information contained in the MoA packs they were given for them to digest in their busy lives.

The staff and whānau members highly appreciated the support from the MoA RC. One key example of support included having regular contact and monitoring. The staff commented that this kept them focused, motivated and on track, constantly reminding them of the overall purpose. They saw the importance of having an action plan and measurable milestones specific to them as a school. The MoA RC also challenged their thinking, supporting them to think 'deeper and wider'.

Teacher:

[The MoA RC] keeps us informed and up to date with what's happening regionally. Keeps us up to date with national kaupapa, for example "Ngā whanaketanga".

The staff felt there was limited professional development available in comparison to support that was available with the implementation of the previous Māori medium curriculum. The message provided was at a surface level and there was limited opportunity to delve deeper. They suggested there needed to be 'excellent' classroom practitioners available who were able to support teachers with their understanding of each of the learning areas. They felt there was limited availability and inconsistent distribution of support materials for the learning areas. They also suggested that the focus of support should be localised, contextual and relevant, which they understood aligned with the philosophy of the MoA, rather than one package for all schools.

The MoA RC had coaxed this particular school and others to seek more support from other in-school teacher educators (ISTEs) but they commented that this school and others did not have faith in ISTEs because of past experience in not seeing strong results from their support, and some ISTEs giving the impression they are too busy to support kura.

The MoA RC saw having established relationships and knowledge of the area as being fundamental in promoting and implementing the MoA in schools in this area. Having a different outside perspective was also seen as valuable as well as having knowledge of local history and genealogy. Being Māori and having knowledge of the Māori language and protocols was also an important part of engaging with local schools and whānau.

MoA RC:

Knowing the people we work with, previously established relationships through work, whānau, teaching, education. [Having] strong past personal whānau links/history with the rohe schools.

Having a team to work with and regular communication and support were also important, as this particular MoA RC was working remotely and sometimes felt isolated and that their efforts were not always acknowledged. They felt they sometimes had limited opportunities to have professional conversations working by themselves. They did, however, keep in regular contact with a local Resource Teacher of Māori (RTM) which was a positive and supportive relationship. They would have liked to have more support from the other in-school teacher educators in the area such as Resource Teachers of Learning and Behaviour (RTL) and Māori school support advisors.

MoA RC:

Being part of the MoA team offers a sounding board, [to] share ideas, concerns, and a reminder that we all have similar issues in our rohe.

When working with schools the MoA RC preferred to work with schools individually as there were different relationship dynamics observed in the school and they wanted to be able to have time to identify individual school needs.

MoA RC:

Having the time to sit and reflect on my own, and sometimes putting myself in the role of principal, to address the needs of each school.

A key concern for the MoA RC was the limited engagement of schools in this area as less than half had requested or allowed them to implement the MoA. They suggested that possible reasons for limited engagement from their experience was limited support from senior management and some schools having poor results working with ISTE in the past.

Nature of partnerships

The principal, teachers and whānau members have positive relationships with each other though with room for improvement which they are working on. The whānau has already directed major decisions such as the establishment of the bilingual and immersion classrooms in the school. The school is in the process of building stronger relationships with the local marae and elders. It has begun to use the marae as a location to meet with parents and the wider local community to discuss student achievement. The school is committed to consulting with parents and the wider community about school foci, initiatives and curriculum development and is trying out different strategies such as a

survey and noho marae. The school also recognises the importance of having strong relationships with local early childhood providers and high schools.

Parents are appreciative of the current engagement strategies such as parent interviews, student profiles and whānau hui; however, they have requested more regular and consistent feedback about school curriculum decision-making. Parents and the MoA RC provided a pragmatic range of strategies to involve the wider whānau in the school, such as the use of technology tools for communication, sharing information in 'whānau speak', which needed to be preceded with getting out and getting to know their whānau community. The priority for parents was to be regularly informed about their child's progress and to involve their children in reporting processes.

The emergence of MoA is a positive for this school as it was already focusing on building better relationships with parents and whānau as part of the 'Strengthening Education' initiative. The support from the MoA RC, the graduate profile component and the establishment of a whānau working group are positive examples of whānau engagement. Parents saw it as a priority for the school to fully understand this document first before they shared it with the whānau and community.

Summary

It is clear that School One sees the involvement of whānau at all levels within the school as very important. Aside from formal reporting methods and informal before and after school catch-ups with parents, the school is also experimenting with other strategies such as hui at local marae, and shared curriculum development focused groups with whānau and staff membership. They were very appreciative of the support provided by the MoA RC, especially keeping them focused and on track. They advocate that successful school curriculum development needs to be led by the school management, supported by staff, whānau and the wider community. Curriculum development also needs to be localised, contextual and relevant to the school's local community.

School Two Case Study

Context

School Two is an urban decile 1 full primary school with an ethnic composition that is essentially Māori with a small number of Pākehā and Pacific Island children. It offers three types of education including English medium, Level 1 Māori immersion and bilingual classrooms.

Initiatives

Ngā Horomata (Guiding Virtues)

The school has a whole school philosophy based on a set of guiding virtues including caring, cleanliness, commitment, consideration, co-operation, courtesy, helpfulness, honesty, forgiveness, excellence, friendliness, kindness, patience, perseverance, reliability, respect, responsibility, confidence, trust, and truthfulness. It is expected that these virtues of the school are demonstrated through the day-to-day behaviours and are the foundation on which school performance is built.

Data collection

The interviews were organised by the MoA RC based in the school's region and were attended by teaching staff, the school principal, school management, members of the whānau, two VUW researchers, and the MoA RC. The interviews were preceded with a pōwhiri hosted by the principal, teachers and whānau members. After the pōwhiri, the VUW researchers presented information about the research project to school staff and whānau members. The first interview was conducted with the staff of the Māori medium classrooms, senior management staff, the MoA RC and one of the region's RTM who is working alongside both the school and the MoA RC. The second interview was with the two VUW researchers, and the MoA RC, and the RTM attended briefly. The final interview was with two VUW researchers, the MoA RC, staff from the Māori medium classrooms, and whānau members. The MoA RC had an established relationship with all of the staff and the majority of the whānau members. The VUW researchers had also previously met the MoA RC. All interviews were conducted in the school grounds.

Partnership strategies to improve student achievement

The school uses student profiles which monitor students' progress over a designated period of time and which students take home for parents to make comment and return. The school and teaching staff feel that this strategy gives the students and parents a real sense of ownership of their learning.

Whānau member comment:

This enables me to be involved with what my tamariki are doing at school.

A weekly notice goes home to parents and all staff also advocated an open-door policy where parents and teachers discuss student academic progress informally. Teachers and parents of the Māori medium classrooms organise an annual noho marae for parents and students at the start of the year to focus on tikanga, kawa, planning, evaluation and assessment. Regular whānau hui are also held; however, it is a challenge to get some whānau there and the school is looking at other ways to meet with whānau and involve parents. To engage more with parents, the school is exploring the use of ICT tools such as 'Facebook', email and Wiki pages.

There are whānau members on the Board of Trustees who are also parents of students in both English and Māori medium classrooms. These parents observed differences in each of these settings including resourcing and management. They commented that they sometimes felt they were not fully informed about school structures or involved in decision-making processes. Currently the immersion classes cater for students up to Year 6. From Years 7 to 8 the students then move to a bilingual class. At present the whānau are in the process of reviewing the structure of the bilingual and immersion classes. Whānau members have mixed opinions on this structure, including those who prefer to have immersion at all levels and those who prefer the bilingual approach. There are also mixed opinions on the inclusion of English transition and mixed support from senior management staff about the future direction of the Māori medium classes. Staff and whānau support each other with any decision about the structures, as long as they have autonomy. It was evident that there were whānau members and staff willing to work with senior management to ensure authentic parent and staff input into the structure of the Māori medium classrooms.

Whānau comment:

I have sent my child to kōhanga and now immersion and is doing really well. But then when he gets to Year 6-8 he has to transition back to Pākehā. I would prefer that he carries right through to Year 8.

Partnership strategies involving school curriculum development

The school is experimenting with sending surveys to parents for them to share their curriculum aspirations and goals for their children. There has been limited uptake from parents and the parents have commented that this could be due to the jargon used in the survey which could be better worded in 'whānau speak'.

Whānau comment:

I find some of the terms hard to understand.

The school plans to develop the surveys in collaboration with the parents and include these in their regular whānau hui and wānanga.

The annual noho marae for parents and students held at the start of the year, mainly to focus on local Māori protocol, practices, planning, evaluation and assessment, is also seen by parents and teachers as an opportunity to learn aspects of Māori culture and develop stronger links to their local marae and iwi.

Partnership strategies involving Te Marautanga o Aotearoa

The emergence of MoA aligns with whānau aspirations for Māori and is seen as a more holistic approach to teaching. Whānau understand and appreciate that it is a document that was written by Māori for Māori, in te reo Māori. The whānau found understanding the language of the document a challenge and they needed more opportunity to unpack it.

One whānau member, who is also a member of the Board of Trustees, attended a professional development workshop. The whānau would like the opportunity for more parents to attend professional development courses that align with school curriculum development. They believed this would enable them to have a more informed opinion when making decisions implementing MoA and other school initiatives.

The staff of the Māori medium classes and whānau members see the MoA RC role as being key in developing their understanding of the document. Having already established and trusting relationships with the MoA RC was an integral part of parents and teachers wanting to engage with the document.

All staff including both English medium and Māori medium teachers also used a teacher only day to start unpacking the new document. Māori medium staff and whānau recognise that the inclusion of MoA has different foci from the whole school curriculum requirements. Teachers and whānau feel that this should be taken into consideration in order for the Māori medium teachers to have time to adjust to different curriculum requirements.

This school likes the graduate profile component of the document and would like to develop their own graduate profile for both English and Māori medium classrooms. A key issue for the school is aligning themselves as a whole school with both the New Zealand curriculum document and MoA.

Nature of partnerships

The principal, teachers and whānau members generally have positive relationships with each other. The whānau feel they could be more informed about some school structures and decision-making processes. The school has begun to use the local marae as a location to meet with parents to discuss student achievement. The school is committed to consulting with parents and the wider community about school foci, initiatives and curriculum development, and they are experimenting with new strategies such as surveys, ICT tools, and wānanga at local marae.

Summary

The school uses a range of strategies to inform and engage with parents in regards to school curriculum development. There is currently strong input from whānau about the future structure of the Māori medium classrooms, which is under review because of a change of parent wants and needs for their children. Parents want to ensure they have input into the direction and decision-making of the Māori medium classrooms. The whānau and school is positive that these types of issues can be resolved through the open communication lines already established in their school.

School Three Case Study

Context

School Three is a rural, decile 2, full primary school. According to the 2009 Education Review Office report, the kura has a roll of 18 students. All 18 students are registered as being of Māori descent, and at the time of the Education Review Office report there were 10 boys and 8 girls. The kura gained Kura Kaupapa Māori status in 1996 and presently has a teaching principal (who is the original principal of the kura) and one kaiāwhina (support teacher). Both the tumuaki and kaiāwhina have links through Whakapapa (geneology) to the local hapū/iwi (sub-tribes/tribes) and reside in the immediate vicinity of the kura. The kura is isolated geographically from other immersion Māori schools and is a two-hour drive to a major urban centre where a Teacher Professional Development (School Support Service) regional centre is located.

The kura operates under guidance from Te Rūnanga-nui o ngā Kura Kaupapa Māori and is an immersion Māori setting with Te Aho Matua acknowledged as the philosophical underpinning document for teaching and learning at the kura. The kura has a strong link to the local hapū and iwi and the marautanga-ā-kura has a heavy hapū and iwi influence.

The MoA RC has whakapapa links to the hapū and iwi associated to the kura and has identified this kura as being one of the key target kura for professional development with MoA.

Data collection

The interviews with the whānau and community were organised by one of the MoA RC based in the rohe. The interview was attended by kura staff, whānau from the community, two VUW researchers, and two MoA RC. Neither of the VUW researchers were known to the kura or the community. The hui was facilitated by the two researchers from VUW and the interview notes were taken by one of the MoA RC. The notes taken were displayed by data projector for all attending the meeting to see, comment on, add to, or amend throughout the hui. The hui was held in the dining room of the local *marae* adjacent to the kura.

Partnership strategies to improve student achievement

The partnership strategies identified in this school cover a diverse range of themes and reinforce the challenges by whānau, community and kura to maintain a positive, sustainable relationship. An influencing factor in the apparent success in improved student achievement may be linked to the strong tribal influences on both process and learning contexts within the kura.

The school has a strong iwi assertion and the location reinforces its ties to the whānau and community. A high proportion of the students, staff, and community have links through whakapapa. Whakapapa, alongside historical and continued occupation of the whenua, was identified as the principal motivational context for teaching and learning at the kura.

Tumuaki comment:

Excursions fit in with the taiao, te kaupapa o te wā... there are many opportunities within this area to haere ki te ngahere, hī ika, me ēnei momo (mahi), pōwhiri, tiaki manuhiri...

Excursions fit in with the environment, the themes of study at the time...there are many opportunities within this area to go to the forest, fish, these types of things, formal welcome events, looking after visitors...

The *whānau* and community insist on the use of *pakeke* in kura excursions and with kaupapa to do with whakapapa and tikanga of the area. The whānau and community have been pleased with the way that the kura has managed this insistence in a positive manner.

Tumuaki comment:

Pakeke (elders) input is valued by the kura. Whānau insist that pakeke are an integral part of these haerenga.

Whānau comment:

All of the news coming out of the school is good. It's a small community and this is a BIG positive.

As a *Kura Kaupapa Māori* the school has a link to other Kura Kaupapa Māori through their philosophical approach to teaching and learning. The kura follows the *Te Aho Matua o ngā Kura Kaupapa Māori* principles, which are underpinned by Māori values, beliefs and customs such as *Te Ira Tangata*, *Te Reo*, *Ngā Iwi*, *Te Ao*, *Āhukatanga Ako*, and *Ngā Tino Uaratanga*.

Te Rūnanga Nui o ngā Kura Kaupapa Māori Incorporated (Te Rūnanga Nui) is the national collective body of Kura Kaupapa Māori Te Aho Matua communities. Te Rūnanga Nui was called upon to facilitate initial discussions and gathering of ideas from the whānau in the development of the marautanga-ā-kura. It is the tumuaki's intention to engage the services of Te Rūnanga Nui again in the near future to facilitate a follow-up hui looking at what progress has been made with the teaching and learning at the kura.

The kura is funded through the Ministry of Education and relies on this funding to operate. The kura also accesses resources through Ministry of Education funded initiatives such as the ICT initiative and teacher professional development through

School Support Services. The whānau and community stated that in their view there was a need for further and more regular teacher professional development support. There was no comment about professional development support directly for the whānau and community. The whānau and community also spoke about a change in practical knowledge they wish to see for their students.

Whānau comment:

...bringing in more people resources e.g., Mahi toi, whakairo, cooking/sewing. Bring back the basic technology skills – cooking, sewing, and woodwork!

...bringing in more people resources e.g., Art, carving, sewing/cooking. Bring back the basic technology skills - cooking, sewing, and woodwork!

The kura has an open-door policy of which whānau and the community are aware and take advantage of. Whānau and the community attend events and hui arranged by the school and were happy with the contact that they had with the kura and with the tumuaki.

Whānau engagement was also high for extracurricular school activities. This was reinforced through oral feedback on a recent overnight excursion that the kura, whānau and the community had taken part in which was planned by the school with input from key people in the community. Student data about the event were gathered through written activities as well as through Ngā Toi responses when students returned to kura.

Whānau comment:

...he wāhanga anō mō te taha whakaako – experts are always accessed/invited – in order to make the trip worthwhile for the tamariki, to get as much learning and knowledge out of the trip.

...and then there is another aspect to teaching – experts are always accessed/invited – in order to make the trip worthwhile for the tamariki, to get as much learning and knowledge out of the trip.

Tumuaki comment:

Ka haere tahi te whānau/ngā pakeke me ngā tamariki katoa ki tētahi haerenga. Tokomaha ake pea te hunga pakeke i te hunga tamariki.

The families/ elders and children go as one on the excursion. At times there are more adults than there are children.

The kura uses two main avenues to engage and inform whānau and the community of student achievement. These are through formal reporting (both written and face to face) of student achievement and through whānau hui called monthly where the kura provides feedback to whānau and the community through a tumuaki report on what is being taught and what is to be taught.

Tumuaki comment:

Ko te hunga pakeke te mea nui, kei a rātou katoa te reo, ngā tikanga o tēnei takiwā. He mea nui te taiao o te takiwā nei, ka mutu, ka whakaakongia ngā mōhiotanga, ngā māramatanga me ngā tikanga hoki e pā ana ki tēnei taiao. Ka whakaakongia hoki ngā kōrero, ngā purākau anō hoki mō Hxxxxxxx me ōna kāwai rangatira.

The elders are most important; they all have the language and history of this area. The environment plays a big part in this district, therefore we teach about the area, the knowledge of this area. We also teach the language from this area, as well as the stories about Hxxxxxxx and her descendants.

The majority of times the kura sets the hui dates; however, the whānau were quick to inform the researchers that they can call, and have called hui in the past when the need to discuss specific issues arose.

Whānau comment:

I ētahi wā, nā te whānau te hui i karanga. (ka) haere ētahi mā runga hoiho, mā runga waka, mā runga motopaika...he pai te noho-ā-whānau, he rongō i ngā kare-ā-roto a tēnā, a tēnā, a tēnā. Voicing opinions...kaupapa are dealt with there and then, ka wānanga, ā, tutuki ai te kaupapa.

Sometimes it is the community that call for the hui, some come by horse, by car, and motorbike... it's good to sit as a community, to hear how each one is feeling. Voicing opinions...issues are dealt with there and then, we discuss the issues, and come to a resolution.

It was stated clearly for the VUW researchers by both the kura and the whānau and community that the kura was an important part of the community, and the whānau and community was an integral part of the kura.

Whānau said:

I takahitahi te hunga pakeke me ngā tamariki i ngā takatakahanga a te hunga tīpuna.

The adults and the children are walking in the footsteps of their ancestors.

Partnership strategies involving school curriculum development

The kura has taken a proactive approach to including whānau and community in the development of the school curriculum (marautanga-ā-kura). The rich discussion and engagement by the whānau and community about the marautanga-ā-kura development was a positive indicator noted by the research team. The kura arranged a hui, facilitated by a member of Te Rūnanga Nui, to develop their marautanga-ā-kura. This hui was held over a day and whānau and the community were invited to share their views and record ideas about the contextual teaching and learning at the kura. These ideas were recorded through brainstorming and focus group activities.

Whānau comment:

The school listens to us and takes the history from our area and puts it into what they teach in the classroom.

The inclusion of local history and whakapapa in the school curriculum was a key to the development of the marautanga-ā-kura, and underpins the positive engagement the whānau and community has with the kura. Both the MoA RC and VUW researchers observed positive whānau and community engagement with the school curriculum development. The work that the whānau and community completed on their planning day is kept for record in the tumuaki's office. This was then gathered by the tumuaki and has been developed into long-term teaching programmes. The tumuaki shares the curriculum using 'whānau speak' and in turn, the whānau use their own words to interpret and understand and relay their needs, thoughts, and aspirations for their *tamariki* and *mokopuna*. There is a clear challenge in understanding curriculum language for whānau and the community. Also there appears to be little whānau and community knowledge of Ministry requirements from the kura in terms of presenting a formal curriculum or annual plan.

Partnership strategies involving Te Marautanga o Aotearoa

The whānau and community of the kura expressed the wish for professional development around MoA as this document had not been facilitated with them. The MoA RC associated with the kura saw one of their key roles as being to support both the kura in unpacking MoA. The MoA RC saw the graduate profile as an important feature of MoA and that the kura were already addressing key features of the curriculum with the inclusion of their local expectations, knowledge and values. The aspirations of the whānau and community were clear, that was for their tamariki to 'always know that these tamariki are learning about who they are (tō rātau xxxxxxxxtanga¹)'

Summary

The whānau and community comments in general are positive about their engagement and the development of the marautanga-ā-kura. There appears to be a genuine reciprocal sense of importance and value between the kura and the whānau within the community, which was evident in their comments. From the data gathered, it is evident the kura acknowledge and value the language and traditional knowledge held by *pakeke*, *kaumātua* and *kuia* along with the historical information about the region that has influenced the development of the marautanga-ā-kura. Through the data the community rely on the tumuaki to report on issues to do with student achievement as well as the implementation of a quality programme that links to the '*manako*' or desires that the

¹ Their identity

community had affirmed in the marautanga-ā-kura. The whānau and community also depend on the educational knowledge of the tumuaki to translate the aspirations of the whānau and community into a document that leads teaching and learning in the kura; with this there is a high level of trust in the tumuaki which translates into whānau and community satisfaction. The sharing of the curriculum using 'whānau speak' is a key way in which the kura and whānau interact. The kura and the community are in need of professional support to improve student outcomes as well as resources to enhance teaching and learning programmes. The affirmation recorded 'always know that these tamariki are learning about who they are, tō rātau xxxxxxxxtanga (their tribal identity),' underpins the data gathered from this kura.

Glossary

| | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Āhuatanga Ako | Taken altogether, the perception of children being central in an ever expanding world of experience which is accessed through the people with whom they associate and language, the implications for curriculum become evident |
| Hapū | Sub-tribe |
| Hui | Meeting |
| Iwi | Tribe |
| Kaiāwhina | In-class support person, teacher aide |
| Kura Kaupapa Māori | A Māori immersion school. |
| Kaumātua | Elder males from the community |
| Kuia | Elder female from the community |
| Manako | Desire/aspirations |
| Marae | Formal meeting place |
| Marautanga-ā-kura | School-based curriculum |
| Ngā Iwi | This part of the document focuses on the social agencies, which influence the development of children, in short, all those people with whom they interact as they make sense of their world and find their rightful place within it |
| Ngā Tino Uāratanga | What the outcome/ value might be for children who graduate from Kura Kaupapa Māori |
| Ngā Toi | Art, as is Mahi toi |
| Pakeke | Adults/elders from the community |
| Tamariki | Children |
| Te Aho Matua | Teaching philosophy of Kura Kaupapa Māori |
| Te Ao | This part of the document focuses on the world that surrounds children and about which there are fundamental truths that affect their lives |
| Te Ira Tangata | This area of the document focuses on the nature of humankind, and more particularly on the nature of the child |
| Te Marautanga o Aotearoa | The curriculum of New Zealand for the Māori immersion sector |
| Te Reo | Having established the nature of the child this part of the document focuses on language policy and how Kura Kaupapa Māori can best advance the language learning of their children |
| Tikanga | Ritual practices and/or protocols |
| Tumuaki | Principal/ Leader of School |
| Whakapapa | Genealogy |
| Whenua | Land |

School Four Case Study

Context

School Four is an urban, decile 3, contributing primary school. According to the TKI website (www.tki.org.nz), the school has a roll of 342 students, 68% of whom are Māori, 22% Pākehā/NZ European, 7% Pacific Nations, and 3% Asian or other ethnicity.

This school has a bilingual unit comprising a Māori immersion class for years 1 - 2 and a bilingual class for years 4 - 6. Other special features of the school include two RTLB, two Montessori classes and one Social Worker in Schools (information accessed from www.ero.govt.nz).

Initiatives

Kia Māia

This initiative was designed to build the self-esteem and confidence of students. A Māori framework and Māori ideologies are used to support and instill mana within the students. The students are predominantly male.

Cornerstone values

This programme identifies and promotes eight key values that reflect the community's aspirations for building students' citizenship skills as they move into the 21st century. These values are highly visible around the school, are integrated into school programmes, and support a restorative approach to behaviour management. Staff and students actively practise these values. As a result, students are developing high levels of confidence and motivation, and feel secure to share their ideas and understandings and take risks in attempting new learning. Through a concerted effort by staff, students, and community, the school has received national accreditation for its cornerstone values programme (information accessed from www.ero.govt.nz).

Data collection

The interview with this school was organised by one of the MoA RC based in the area and was attended by two whānau members, four teaching staff from the two Māori medium classrooms, the principal, two VUW researchers, one MoA RC, and the Ministry of Education contract manager. The first interview was conducted with the teacher and kaiawhina in the junior immersion classroom. The second interview was with the principal on their own, followed by the third interview with the two teaching staff from the senior bilingual unit. The final interview was with two whānau members.

Partnership strategies to improve student achievement

There are a number of partnership strategies that the interviewees agree help to improve student achievement. These include building strong relationships between the home and school, and whānau involvement in all areas of the school environment such as the curriculum, and whānau hui, and at governance levels.

The whānau members interviewed at this school agreed that a strong relationship between the home and school is an important factor in creating effective partnerships that might assist in improving student achievement.

Whānau member's comment:

It's quite a whānau environment, I see the teachers as part of my whānau.

Whānau members commented on the friendly and approachable nature of the principal and staff, enabling them to feel comfortable discussing matters pertaining to their children and the school. A variety of opportunities for dialogue between staff and whānau members are provided by the school including an open-door policy in classrooms, parent interviews, and regular class and school newsletters. These opportunities enable staff to find out what whānau think, and work through decision-making procedures with them. An example of the open-door policy was shared by one whānau member who regularly took part in the classroom morning routine when taking her child to school.

Whānau member's comment:

There's an open door policy. I am able to come in, catch up with the teacher. I am able to drop my child off at 9am and stay for half an hour and be with my child in the classroom.

Whānau members are encouraged to participate in the school programme including school assemblies, Education Outside of the Classroom (for example trips and camps), and give in-class support in areas where they have strengths. Empowering staff and whānau to participate and have a voice in areas of governance such as whānau hui, the Board of Trustees and the Whānau Support Group is also another major strategy that is being implemented by the school to improve student achievement. The challenges for the school are thinking of creative ways to encourage the parents and caregivers who do not attend the whānau hui or who are reluctant to engage in dialogue with the staff or principal.

Principal's comment:

Parents you want to see don't come, so we go to them.

One example of being creative has been when a whānau hui was organised after a school garage sale in order to increase the participation of whānau attendance. The principal commented on an increase in participation, but there had not been as much as anticipated as some whānau took their merchandise home and did not return to the school for the hui.

The Whānau Support Group has recently been revitalised and is proving to be a strong support network for the teachers in the immersion and bilingual classes and the school as a whole. The school currently has one Māori immersion class for years 1 - 3 and one bilingual class for years 4 - 6. The principal is very supportive of the needs and aspirations of these two classes and the MoA RC has been invited to participate in a whānau support hui to share her ideas of ways that the teachers in the bilingual unit can cater for their students. A challenge for the school is to cater for the needs of the students transitioning from an immersion class in years 1 - 3, level 1 into a bilingual class in years 4 - 6, level 2. A future option that is being discussed at the moment is changing the bilingual class to an immersion class; however, the school needs to ensure they have staff capability and capacity to teach in an immersion environment for years 4 - 6, level 2.

In order to meet this need, te reo Māori classes were established by staff members in the bilingual unit for parents, caregivers and staff members to upskill in their te reo Māori proficiency. The classes started in Term 1 2010 and have been continuing successfully since their inception. Staff involved in the facilitation of the classes included one teacher who facilitates the class, one teacher who looks after the children, and a teacher aide who sources resources to support the classes. The staff has recognised the need to provide opportunities for whānau to participate by having a teacher look after children who do not have other carers to look after them. The staff involved in the facilitation of the te reo Māori classes also created games and resources to support the learning taking place in the classes for parents/caregivers to take home to continue the learning in the home alongside their children. The efforts by the staff have been felt and recognised by the whānau members and are encapsulated in the following comments.

Whānau member's comment:

Despite being mainstream, the school feels Māori.

Whānau member's comment:

Non-Māori staff are supportive of kaupapa Māori.

Partnership strategies involving school curriculum development

Partnership strategies involving school curriculum development include informing whānau via newsletters and meetings, at-home support with learning taking place in the classroom, and professional development for whānau.

Classroom newsletters, school-wide newsletters and whānau hui are used by the school as a means of informing and articulating their strategic plans and goals to whānau members. Overviews of the topics being taught as well as upcoming events in both the immersion and bilingual classes are presented at whānau hui and sent home in newsletters in order to keep whānau informed of the school curriculum and events.

Teacher's comment:

Newsletters get sent home providing information about the term, kaupapa being taught, what's coming up and what's going on in the classroom.

Whānau member's comment:

Sitting in the classroom in the mornings, the teacher explains to me what the curriculum will be that day, that week. I see the curriculum in what she [the child] says, and what she brings home.

The school is involved in the Home-School Partnerships programme, which is a concept based on the principles of cultural inclusion and partnership between schools and their communities. It covers both literacy and numeracy and aims to support, develop, and use the rich resources of diverse people in the school community. According to the Home-School Partnerships website (<http://home-schoolpartnerships.tki.org.nz>), *Reading Together* is a research-based workshop programme for parents, children and teachers. It is designed to help parents support their children's reading at home more effectively. *Reading Together* builds partnerships between parent and teacher, parent and parent, parent and child, and parent and librarian (and similarly builds multi-partnerships for teachers, librarians, and children). This approach can bridge cultures and reduce negative effects for children whose culture differs from that of the school. *Home-School Partnership: Numeracy* is a programme to help schools and communities work together to support children's achievement in numeracy. A handbook has been developed with suggestions as a guide for principals, teachers, and parents when planning *Home-School Partnership: Numeracy* sessions. The handbook is a collection of ideas to select from, and add to, the good ideas already used in home and school communities. (Accessed 14 August 2010 from <http://www.nzmaths.co.nz/node/1376>)

Whānau members are also encouraged to play a part in the curriculum by facilitating lessons with the students in their areas of strength or to give in-class support in other areas negotiated with the teacher. A suggestion by whānau members was to have a

whānau hui at the end of the year to allow whānau input into the year's overview for the following year. This would enable whānau members to make suggestions for their participation at the initial stage of planning rather than at the end, as well as having input into the topics that will be covered throughout the year. An initiative where whānau have input at the initial planning stage is student profiles. This is a relatively new initiative and whānau have been asked for their input into what they would like to know and see in the profiles.

The school also invites parents to attend the Ministry of Education. One whānau member attended a professional development session about the National Standards and thought it was a good opportunity to gain an insight into this initiative. There have been occasions when staff and whānau members have been given short notice about these opportunities which has resulted in some whānau not being able to attend who would otherwise like to.

Partnership strategies involving Te Marautanga o Aotearoa

Partnership strategies involving MoA include informing staff and whānau of the document and the strategic plans of the school by way of professional learning groups and whānau hui.

The school has professional learning groups for different curriculum areas with Te Reo Māori being one of the groups. The Te Reo Māori Professional Learning Group is a way for Māori and non-Māori staff to discuss and share information about MoA. According to the MoA RC, the principal has encouraged staff members in the bilingual unit to attend and participate in professional development about MoA over the past two years in order to gain an in-depth understanding of the document. One of the challenges of understanding MoA is that only one staff member was elected to attend the professional development sessions for the document. The elected staff member found it difficult to share and disseminate the information to her colleagues. Reasons for this included the lack of time to reflect on the learning that had taken place during the professional development sessions, understanding the implications for her and her students, understanding the implications for colleagues and their students, and the lack of time to plan and implement the next steps.

Teacher's comment:

Time to take it all in! See where we can strategically implement what we can do.

One of the teachers involved in the Te Reo Māori Professional Learning Group provided an overview of MoA document to whānau members during a whānau hui. The purpose of

this was to allow whānau members to gain an understanding of the document and what it means for their children's learning. A challenge for the school was to provide an overview of the information that was easy to read in a language understood by all whānau members (English) and explains what it means for whānau and their children.

Whānau members' comments:

Parents don't know what it [*Te Marautanga o Aotearoa*] is.

There needs to be a written overview of *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa* in English for parents to explain what it is, why we have it and what it is for.

The MoA document was also used as a guide to develop a graduate profile during whānau hui alongside whānau members. Development of the graduate profile is a work in progress and the MoA RC has been invited to work with the school and the whānau to continue this development.

Nature of partnerships

A strong relationship between the home and school is an important factor agreed by the staff, whānau members and principal involved in the interviews. Whānau members commented on the school being a 'whānau environment' and seeing the teachers as part of their whānau environment. They also felt that the principal and staff were friendly and they felt comfortable approaching and talking with them. Despite being a mainstream school, the whānau members also thought the school felt 'Māori', and that kaupapa Māori was supported well by both Māori and non-Māori staff. There are a number of whānau members who participate in the various school events and information evenings; however, the school is also trying different strategies to engage whānau who do not participate.

All of the interviews were conducted in a very welcoming and transparent manner, where the research group felt all responses were open and honest. There was no conflicting information given in the separate interviews.

Summary

There is a wide range of strategies in place in this school that together are intended to strengthen the links between whānau and the school. The staff at this school is committed to working closely with whānau and involving them in all aspects of the school environment. This case study provides examples of how the school is trying to increase whānau participation at whānau hui by being creative, how whānau are actively participating in the curriculum, and how the school is involving whānau in professional development sessions relating to the curriculum.

DISCUSSION

There are examples throughout the case studies stating that parents, whānau and the community want to be involved in the education of their children.

Iwi case study – MoA RC comment:

It wasn't that whānau didn't want to engage but for some whānau they didn't know how.

The importance of the relationship between the school and its community was also reported.

School Case Study Three – Tumuaki comment:

The kura was an important part of the community and the whānau and community was an integral part to the kura.

On the school front this research raises a challenge to prepare for varied parent, whānau and community involvement and to be able to positively manage the level of involvement without making it a sterile and tokenistic relationship. On the parent, whānau and community front, this research raises challenges.

Parents, whānau and community must be encouraged to ask questions about the teaching and learning taking place in our schools, and be confident that the response from the schools will be easily understood. A comment from a whānau member interviewed suggests continued work is needed in this area.

School Case Study Two – Whānau comment:

I find some of the terms hard to understand

Through experimenting with, and applying, various communication strategies with parents, whānau and community, hopefully they will be encouraged to participate, and will trust that their participation will be valued.

Another important strategy for schools is to involve parents, whānau and community in planning the vision of education in the school. The School Three Case Study outlines the positive outcomes of involving parents and whānau in this process. The evidence from this case study reported that if this type of engagement occurs, parents, whānau and the community will take a more proactive part in the teaching and learning that happens within the school. This, however, needs to be balanced with the evidence in the School Two Case Study and the School Four Case Study where there are other factors that need to be taken into account depending on contexts which include location, urban/rural setting, student population size, and the Māori medium setting.

One outcome of positive engagement is a curriculum that reflects community aspirations, needs and expectations, and is demonstrated in the teaching and learning programmes of the school. This inclusive approach places the child at the centre of learning and uses the school and teachers as the facilitators of learning experiences, and the whānau as the drivers of learning contexts.

The literature and evidence gathered suggests parent and whānau involvement in governance, policy development, school curriculum development, and student achievement reporting are fundamental to supporting student achievement. Parent and whānau contributions are valued and will hopefully sustain their involvement in their children's schooling.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are organised by first identifying an area of possible concern within the school, possible objectives for the school, and questions for schools, parents and the wider whānau community to consider. The areas of concern are as follows:

1. School governance
2. Planning and policy
3. Curriculum and programme development and delivery
4. Being culturally responsive
5. Linking home, community, and school.

The areas of concern align with the common themes identified in the literature review and the case studies and include: school governance or leadership; parental involvement in planning and policy as well as curriculum and programme development and delivery; being culturally responsive for example quality te reo Māori and tikanga Māori programmes; and strong home, school and community links.

The objectives reflect the five common themes identified in this research project as being important for effective home, school and community relationships including: parents and whānau are fully represented and involved in school governance; the school's direction for education and involvement with parents and the community is clear; curricula and programmes incorporate parent and community input; quality te reo and tikanga Māori is an integral part of the school and aligns with the culture of the community; and schools work closely with parents and the community to achieve a high level of complementary educational expectations between home, school and the wider whānau community.

Finally, a set of questions is included for parents, schools and community to consider asking of each other in the key areas of concern to ensure the objectives are to be met.

Area of Concern: School Governance

Objectives: Parents and whānau are fully represented and involved in school governance

Key Questions:

School

Does your school encourage parents with appropriate skills and experience to:

- participate in school governance?
- monitor and report on school performance with respect to its effectiveness for Māori?

Does your school:

- ask parents how they wish to be involved in governance?
- provide support for parents to participate authentically in the governance of the school?
- provide for Māori to appoint one or more members to the Board of Trustees where appropriate?
- consult with local elders, marae and iwi in regards to school governance?

Parents

Do you have an understanding of what appropriate skills and experience are needed to participate in school governance?

Do you know or have you asked about how parents can be involved in governance?

Do you know if there is any support provided for parents to participate authentically in the governance of the school?

Is there sufficient parent representation on the Board of Trustees?

Community

Do you have an understanding of what appropriate skills and experience are needed to:

- participate in school governance?
- monitor and report on school performance with respect to its effectiveness for Māori?

Do you know or have you asked about how community can be involved in governance?

Do you know if there is any support provided for community to participate authentically in the governance of the school?

Is there sufficient community representation on the Board of Trustees?

Is there provision for Māori to appoint one or more members to the Board of Trustees where appropriate?

Area of Concern: Planning and Policy

Objective: The school's direction for education and involvement with parents and the community is clear.

Key Questions:

School

Does your school's planning process:

- take account of the Treaty of Waitangi?
- include objectives that have parent input?
- assess progress in ways supported by parents?
- review and improve outcomes in consultation with parents?

Parents

Do you know if your school takes account of the Treaty of Waitangi?

Do you have an understanding of the relevance of the Treaty of Waitangi and schooling?

Do you know if parents have open access to school planning and policies?

Do you know what your school's current objectives for students are?

Do you know how your school consults with parents in relation to identifying, assessing, reviewing and improving school objectives?

Community

Do you know if your school takes account of the Treaty of Waitangi?

Do you know if the community has open access to school planning and policies?

Do you know what your school's current objectives for students are?

Do you know how your school consults with the local community in relation to identifying, assessing, reviewing and improving school objectives?

Area of Concern: Curriculum and programme development and delivery

Objective: Curricula and programmes incorporate parent and community input

Key Questions:

School

Does your school:

- recognise the validity and integrity of parents' knowledge and skills?
- recognise cultural differences as positive attributes for developing appropriate educational experiences?
- provide for parent input into curriculum and programme planning and design?
- use a broad range of culturally appropriate performance standards to assess students' learning?

Parents

Does your school:

- ask for parents to share their knowledge and skills as part of the school curriculum?
- recognise your cultural differences as positive attributes for developing appropriate educational experiences?
- ask for parent input into curriculum and programme planning and design?
- ask for your input about how to assess students' learning?

Community

Does your school:

- use kaumātua expertise in curriculum development?
- provide for Māori input into curriculum and programme planning and design?
- provide opportunities for learning about local history and cultural traditions?

Area of Concern: Being culturally responsive

Objective: Quality te reo and tikanga Māori is an integral part of the school and aligns with the culture of the community

Key Questions:

School

Does your school:

- have guidelines for the use of tikanga Māori?
- have guidelines for the use of te reo Māori?
- provide opportunities for teachers and parents to improve their te reo Māori and tikanga Māori?
- promote knowledge of local Māori history and traditions?
- Consult with parents, elders and local marae about te reo Māori and tikanga Māori?

Parents

Does your school:

- provide quality opportunities for students who wish to learn in Māori?
- have guidelines for the use of tikanga Māori and te reo Māori?
- ask for your input into the development and implementation of guidelines?
- provide opportunities for teachers and parents to improve their knowledge of te reo and tikanga Māori?
- ask for your support with te reo Māori programmes?

Community

Does your school:

- consult with you about guidelines for the use of tikanga Māori and te reo Māori?
- ask for your support with teacher and parent professional development?
- promote knowledge of local Māori history and traditions?

Area of Concern: Linking home, community, and school

Objective: Schools work closely with parents and the community to achieve a high level of complementary educational expectations between home, school and the wider whānau community.

Key Questions:

School

Does your school:

- hold regular events to bring together students, parents, teachers, and community members to consider student educational needs?
- sponsor activities and events that provide opportunities for students to display their knowledge to the community?
- encourage teacher involvement in activities with the local community?
- make appropriate use of the cultural and professional expertise of local people?
- promote parental and whānau involvement in all aspects of their children's education?

Parents

Does your school provide regular hui with parents in regards to student achievement?

Do you attend any of these regular hui?

What would support you to attend hui more regularly?

Do you engage with teachers in local community activities and events?

Do you help organise any school or community hui?

Community

Does your school promote community attendance at hui about student achievement?

Do you attend school hui?

Do you provide input to school hui?

Do you offer your support or expertise to schools in your community?

KEY MESSAGES

The following key messages are made from the range of data gathered as part of this research project. The key messages are purposely made in such a way as to promote wider consideration and discussion between the Ministry and the sector. Following the key messages is a further set of questions that arose out of the project.

1. Evidence gathered from the case studies indicate that whānau, parents, community, and iwi are very interested in the educational achievement of their children. Schools take various approaches to inform whānau, parents, and community of their children's achievements but the data are inconclusive as to the success of these approaches as well as to the quality of the information being fed into the community.
2. The Ministry has initiated working arrangements with iwi and rūnanga groups. Much of the information about these initiatives does not reach the whānau and educational communities who make up the schools. This information needs to be made available to whānau and community if the expectation is for them to be informed education consumers.
3. Level 1, Māori Immersion Schools/Kura Kaupapa Māori/ Kura-a-iwi have different philosophical beginnings, different ethos and underpinning principles, and different needs compared to bi-lingual and rumaki classes located within English medium schools. The Ministry is encouraged to re-think the make-up of levels 1, 2, 3, and 4 Māori medium settings and the manner in which each is resourced and supported.

Researcher Questions

Do schools make the 'planned teaching' that happens in the classroom accessible to whānau (parent speak)?

Do teachers/schools know what their whānau want to know about? or do most schools just send a grid with what is going to be 'covered' during the term as a way of informing/engaging with parents?

Is there a known strategy linking schools, iwi/ rūnanga, and whānau?

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