



Engaging with purpose

The development of a Graduate Profile that addresses the aspirations of a core group other than teachers, means serious engagement. But engagement with who? How do we define engagement? Is it the same as consultation? Or giving advice? Making recommendations? Talk and chalk? Or is engagement something else, something that is going to require a higher level of action in order to achieve a better outcome?

The Oxford Dictionary describes “engage” as:

- Participate or become involved in
- Cause someone to become involved in a conversation or discussion
- Pledge or enter into a contract to do something
- Establish a meaningful contact or connection with

The common message here is that engagement is more than consultation or advice. It requires 2 or more parties to work together, to achieve a common goal or outcome.

The purpose of *Te Āhua o te Ākonga* is to develop a clear profile of the attributes and skills that each child of a kura should attain before he graduates from the kura to the next stage of education.

Teachers should not presume that they know what students need, or that they have all the answers. These attributes and skills are the aspirations of the students themselves, their whānau, the hapū and/or iwi and the wider community of the kura.

How then should we define ‘whānau?’ Careful thought and consideration needs to be given to the constitution of the whānau of the kura.



Is the whānau made up of just parents? Grandparents? Aunts and uncles? Siblings? What about whāngai parents or other caregivers. Personnel from the rūnanga, Māori trust committee, marae committee, Māori health providers? There is no one answer to this question. The kura does not decide who the whānau is. The whānau themselves do.

What about other adults without children at the kura, like the kapa haka tutor or the kaumātua from the marae?

For most kura kaupapa Māori this is a given. But for some settings that do not have Māori governance and/or management the issue may be clouded.

A teacher's role therefore is to facilitate a process by which the whānau of the kura are able to participate in a meaningful and purposeful way. Having determined who the whānau are, this engagement is extended to hapū, iwi and communities. The members of these groups may already be in the 'whānau'.

Teachers will also need to decide on the best place for this engagement to happen. Perhaps school is not that place. Rather a marae, kōhanga reo, a building in the community, the home of one of the whānau members. There are many options, the easiest option is not always the best.

When is the best time to engage with whānau? To make this decision teachers will need to be aware of the family circumstances of each of the students. Find out if there is anything happening in the Māori community that would be a prohibitor to whānau attendance, i.e. an event at the marae, te matatini, reo classes.

What percentage of the whānau work during the hours suggested as a suitable time for a whānau hui? How can we engage with everyone? Perhaps several options are needed.



What do teachers need to prepare for? Set a tikanga for the hui, including consideration of the different likely participation styles of the group. Maybe both group answers or activities, and independent activities are used. Written and oral may be appropriate too.

Whānau like everyone else need to feel valued, that their contribution is worthwhile, and that they are being listened to. They need the freedom to express their ideas and thoughts in a way that best meets their needs too.

Finally why are we proposing to engage with whānau?

The students who make up the kura, akomanga or immersion/rumaki units are the progeny of the whānau. They come to kura as 5 year olds with a depth of whānau knowledge, practice and expectations, including values. The parents, grandparents and communities from which these children stem have aspirations for their children.

Aspirations for the present and the future, aspirations to see their children do well in their chosen field. Aspirations to see them succeed as people, members of local communities, national and international societies. The influence of the whānau on the children is not to be discounted.

True engagement means those aspirations are shared. The responsibility for learning is shared. The love of learning is shared. Successful engagement will encourage more whānau to become active participants in their children's learning.

That's reason enough!

If teachers can get this process right and working really well, they will go a long way towards lifting achievement and building success for these children. "Māori enjoying success as Māori" (Ka Hikitia – Managing for Success).