

# Manaakitia ngā tamariki kia ora ai Supporting children's wellbeing

Learning from the experiences of six good-practice schools

Sally Boyd and Nicola Bright, with  
Maraea Hunia and Elliot Lawes

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## WHAKATAUKĪ

*E kore au e ngaro, he kākano i ruia mai i Rangiaātea*

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# 1. Key messages

Caring for the whole child is first here. You can't learn if those things are not in place.  
(WHĀNAU)

This publication shares themes and narratives from six primary and intermediate schools on a journey to enhance the wellbeing of students. These schools are part of the study, *Manaakitia ngā tamariki kia ora ai | Supporting children's wellbeing*. These schools were invited to take part because they all had high levels of student wellbeing as shown by Wellbeing@School student survey data.

The study has two main focuses. We wanted to deepen our understandings about the different ways schools promote the wellbeing of tamariki, and, in particular, Māori students. Wellbeing is a multidimensional concept which can mean different things to different people. We mainly focused on how school actions foster students' sense of belonging and identity. We also wanted to find out how schools deal with things that impact on wellbeing, such as racism and bullying behaviour.

This publication is likely to be relevant to primary schools thinking about ways of fostering student wellbeing, developing a reo Māori curriculum, or incorporating more Aotearoa New Zealand content and history into the curriculum. We hope that the findings help to deepen readers' commitment to change, by showing the equity and wellbeing benefits of honouring Te Tiriti o Waitangi/The Treaty of Waitangi (Te Tiriti), and mātauranga Māori<sup>1</sup> in a central place in school life.

## Core values and a holistic view of wellbeing drive school approaches

These good-practice schools developed many interrelated wellbeing-focused approaches that targeted different layers of school life and practice. These approaches reinforced each other to support students' wellbeing.

Strong values drove these approaches and are also interwoven throughout them. Both learning and a holistic view of wellbeing were at the forefront of school approaches. Staff were clear that students would not be able to learn if their wellbeing or the wellbeing needs of their whānau were not addressed, if their cultural and other identities were not recognised at school, or if they did not have a sense of belonging to school. School staff committed resources and time to put in place a wellbeing foundation across different layers of school life. For students who needed more support, they aimed to remove barriers. Schools went the extra mile to also support whānau.

## A commitment to whanaungatanga, relationships, and belonging is key

Both adults and tamariki had a multilayered view of the things that supported tamariki wellbeing at school. Based on their kōrero, we developed two diagrams that show dimensions of wellbeing. One diagram is based on tamariki views, and the other on adults' views. There was considerable overlap between tamariki and adult views.

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<sup>1</sup> The approach taken to describing mātauranga Māori is discussed in section 1.

There were two key focuses that stood out as supporting the wellbeing of Māori students as well as other students. The first focus was a valuing and prioritising of whanaungatanga, and the belief that everyone in the school community was whānau. This belief was the foundation for school actions. Schools worked to decrease the separation between home and school. The valuing of whanaungatanga and upholding relationships started at the door of the school and reached out into the community, giving all a sense of belonging to the school community. A commitment to relationships and partnerships came in many forms—with learners, with whānau and whānau Māori, with community, and with external providers. Staff and whānau had a commitment to the school and holistically supporting tamariki.

## Placing mātauranga Māori at the centre of learning fosters wellbeing

The second focus, which was key for Māori students as well as others, was about making culture visible and important. Schools were on a journey to make mātauranga Māori<sup>2</sup> more central to how they worked and within the curriculum. Common actions included developing a reo Māori curriculum for the school, and tikanga for times such as the start of the day, at school events, or when the school was welcoming people. Many schools had a focus on students knowing who they are through the development of pepeha. Some positioned kapa haka as a key aspect of learning for all students and staff. At these schools, kapa haka was a vehicle for many things—learning te reo Māori, growing understandings about mātauranga, strengthening cultural identity and pride, and fostering learning, wellbeing, and a sense of belonging to a collective.

School staff, students, and whānau acknowledged the many learning and wellbeing benefits that stemmed from uplifting the status and use of te reo Māori, tikanga Māori, and mātauranga Māori within their schools. This included the sense of pride and belonging students gained from having their cultural identity celebrated and fostered at school.

## Knowing all your learners fosters wellbeing

This prioritising of whanaungatanga and mātauranga Māori sat alongside a deep commitment to inclusion and diversity. The priority schools placed on valuing the identity of Māori students did not in any way diminish their valuing of diversity in other forms. They were able to uphold their commitment to do better for Māori students, as well as for all students. They engaged in many actions which fostered a sense of community to ensure that all students felt like they belonged. Students were able to see themselves and their cultures and interests valued and reflected in the learning programme, resources, and school life.

## Change requires commitment, takes time, and is aided by whole-school PLD

The journey to place whanaungatanga and mātauranga Māori in a more central place took time. Key drivers were a desire to do better for Māori students and an acknowledgement of the institutional and structural racism and white privilege that exists in Aotearoa New Zealand. Change required passion, commitment, and buy-in, and processes that assisted in getting everyone on board with the kaupapa.

Many school leaders had a deep commitment to change and were taking action. For nearly all schools, whole-school professional learning and development (PLD) was an ongoing key part of the journey. There were two main types of PLD that assisted school journeys. One was forms of PLD that could be broadly described as focused on behaviour, such as Positive Behaviour for Learning School-Wide (PB4L School-Wide), Incredible Years Teacher (IYT), and restorative practices. This PLD helped schools to shift to a more strengths-based, relational, and values-driven way of working.

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2 Discussion about, knowledge of, and insight into particular or collected kaupapa.

This PLD worked in tandem with the second group of PLD. This PLD supported schools to find ways to address their obligations to Te Tiriti, through te reo Māori, Te Tiriti, or Poutama Pounamu PLD. This PLD was assisting in raising staff's critical consciousness about the systemic nature of racism and how to address it in a school context.

### **School actions cannot be achieved without partnerships**

Schools also needed and partnered with Māori who assisted and guided them on the journey. These champions could be Māori within the school community (school leaders, teachers, and kapa haka and reo Māori tutors), or from the community (school whānau, board of trustees members, kaumātua, and kuia), or PLD providers.

#### **Partnerships with whānau are key**

Schools listened to whānau and included their aspirations as they shaped the direction of the school. Over time, schools built trusting and reciprocal relationships and developed frequent and effective ways of communicating about students' learning successes. For some whānau, this open and positive communication style helped to break down barriers built from their own negative experiences of schooling. These relationships provided a foundation for working through any issues that could arise in ways that kept everyone's mana intact.

### **School approaches to fostering wellbeing are multilayered**

Alongside their prioritising of whanaungatanga and mātauranga, schools engaged in many other actions that aimed to foster students' wellbeing, belonging, and identity. These actions reinforced each other.

#### **Knowing local history, spaces, and places assists in knowing your learners**

It was important for both students and schools to know where students came from. Schools worked on building a localised curriculum and pepeha which helped foster students' pride in who they are and their connections to community and place.

#### **The extent to which schools are developing a critically conscious curriculum varies**

Many of the study themes were common across most schools, although what this theme looked like in each school related to their unique context. One theme that varied was the extent to which schools planned for and created opportunities for students to engage in critically conscious learning. At some schools, learning about local history was framed as a neutral exercise during which students learnt about stories about the past from different perspectives. Other schools approached history with a critical lens which enabled students to consider the acts and legacy of colonisation. This is an area of development for schools as they consider how to represent Aotearoa New Zealand histories in schools.

#### **Schools have high expectations and want the best for students**

Schools had high expectations for all students and for staff. Schools made a lot of effort to get to know individual students, as finding each child's passions could provide a foundation for further learning and create a sense of belonging. Schools were innovative in sourcing and using funding and other forms of support. They provided lots of opportunities for students to have different learning and extra-curricular experiences that also forged stronger connections with the wider community.

## **A “feelings curriculum” helps foster self-understanding and empathy**

Supporting students to understand and express their feelings was prioritised. Schools actively taught a feelings vocabulary, behaviours relating to their values, and strategies students could use to express themselves and manage situations. A feelings- and values-based curriculum helped to foster self-understanding, empathy, inclusion, and wellbeing, and was setting students up with the skills they need for life and to manage racism, bullying behaviour, and conflict.

## **Ako and student leadership helps build confidence and identity**

A culture of ako was evident in these good-practice schools. The ability of everyone to both learn and teach was recognised, and included students, teachers, whānau, and those in leadership positions. Students were recognised as agentic leaders who contributed to the school culture. Schools had many ways of building or acknowledging students' leadership capabilities. Students had cultural leadership opportunities such as leading whakatau. Tuakana-teina approaches were important at all schools. Leadership opportunities had many wellbeing benefits. They helped to build students' identity as learners, as well as their cultural identities, fostered a sense of pride and belonging at school, and built students' self-confidence.

## **A commitment to upholding relationships helps schools deal with racism and conflict**

Although these good-practice schools had a strong wellbeing foundation, they still had to deal with racist or bullying behaviour. Common features of schools' approaches included listening to and addressing concerns quickly, and a commitment to restorative approaches and never giving up on relationships. School leaders were skilled in having challenging conversations in ways that upheld mana. Schools brought in whānau if needed to help decide on ways forward. Staff communicated clearly throughout the process and sought extra help if needed.

## **Schools face common tensions and challenges on their journey**

Working through their obligations to Te Tiriti required schools to take all staff and the community on a journey with them. As part of this journey, schools have to address structural racism (such as a Eurocentric curriculum), and practices that prioritise learning over wellbeing. They experienced challenges from within the school community (such as staff or whānau challenging the school's focus on te reo or tikanga Māori), and from external organisations and directives. Schools' approaches to dealing with racism and conflict supported them to work through the challenges that came from within the school community.

School leaders were innovative in sourcing support and funding for these mostly low-decile schools, which could take considerable time and energy. The commitment of staff to fostering wellbeing could entail a high workload, particularly for school leaders and Māori staff who were committed to supporting tamariki. Māori champions who were not in formal school leadership roles—such as teachers, reo Māori or kapa haka tutors, or community members—tended to have a wide range of roles that were not necessarily reflected in job titles or remuneration. These roles include cultural leadership, strategic leadership, care and support, mentoring, or whānau and community liaison.

Many Māori staff who lead aspects of their school approaches were not from the local iwi. They were very conscious of this and it was a tension they were careful to navigate.

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## 2. What's this study about?

They are creating kind children. This is going to be a really cool generation. (WHĀNAU)

### What's the main purpose of this publication?

Education settings in Aotearoa New Zealand are on a journey to build understandings of the many ways we can foster the wellbeing of tamariki. This wellbeing journey is intertwined with a focus on deepening our understanding of what it means to value diversity and to be bicultural. This publication shares themes and narratives from six good-practice primary schools that are designing and using approaches to enhance the wellbeing of tamariki. We hope that school leaders and staff will find the experiences of their peers useful to inform their beliefs, planning, and actions relating to wellbeing.

### What's the main purpose of this study?

The study builds on a prior analysis of Wellbeing@School<sup>3</sup> student and teacher survey data (Lawes & Boyd, 2017, 2018) which found that, after controlling for factors such as school decile, Māori students report lower levels of wellbeing than other students. This finding raised questions about why this is the case, and what key factors are influencing Māori students' wellbeing. The study also found that data from similar types of schools varied widely, suggesting there are school sites in which good practice is occurring which we could build knowledge about.

Our main focus was to deepen our understandings about the different ways schools successfully promote the wellbeing of tamariki, and in particular, tamariki Māori. Secondly, we wanted to find out how schools deal with things that get in the way of wellbeing. We focused on racism, unconscious bias, and bullying behaviour.

The term "wellbeing" has different meanings in disciplines such as economics, positive psychology, health, or education. These disciplines use various concepts and terminology to describe wellbeing. Wellbeing is also conceptualised in different ways within te ao Māori and Western worldviews. While acknowledging the differences, there are common threads. Most models of wellbeing are multidimensional, and many have some similar dimensions.

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<sup>3</sup> Wellbeing@School is an online self-review toolkit developed by NZCER for the Ministry of Education. The toolkit includes survey tools for students and teachers, a self-review process, and support resources that together aim to help schools explore how different aspects of school life contribute to creating a safe and caring climate that deters bullying. The main focus of the toolkit is on relationships and social wellbeing. See <https://www.wellbeingatschool.org.nz/>

For this study, as a starting point, we asked about two aspects of wellbeing that are known protective factors in school settings. One aspect is a key concept in te ao Māori, and is about the importance of a positive sense of cultural identity (Durie, 2003; Rata, 2012). The second is a key concept in Western literature that concerns students' sense of connectedness and belonging at school (Allen et al., 2018; Goodenow & Grady, 1993; Jose & Pryor, 2010).

To develop the focus and processes of this study we undertook three rapid reviews of literature on te ao Māori models of wellbeing, racism and unconscious bias (with a focus on Aotearoa New Zealand settings), and researching sensitive topics with children.

## Why focus on wellbeing at school?

Wellbeing is important to learners, and for learning. We know that tamariki are best able to learn at school if they are feeling safe and secure and their basic needs such as food, warmth, and nurturing relationships are met. We focused on belonging which is a key aspect of wellbeing and core to psychological functioning (Allen et al., 2018). Therefore, belonging is important for tamariki at school and throughout their life. In general, meta-analyses show a positive association between achievement and constructs such as school belonging (Allen et al., 2018) and wellbeing (Bücker et al., 2018; Kaya & Erdem, 2021).

Many models of wellbeing have been developed from an adult perspective. We wanted to explore the meaning of wellbeing in a school setting from the point of view of tamariki Māori (see Section 3). So first we listened to the things that were important influencers of their feelings of belonging at school and their identity at school.

To assist us to conceptualise the ideas mentioned by tamariki Māori, we looked at the dimensions of Māori models of health and wellbeing, all of which are holistic and multidimensional. We explored: Te Whare Tapa Whā (Durie, 1994) which is included in *The New Zealand Curriculum* as a core concept in the Health and PE learning area; Te Wheke (Pere, 1997); Te Pae Mahutonga (Durie, 2003); Whakaoranga Whānau, a Whānau Resilience Framework (Waiti, 2014); the Whānau Rangatiratanga Frameworks (Baker, 2016); and the Mana Model (Webber & Macfarlane, 2020).

## Why focus on racism, bullying behaviour, and conflict?

To better promote wellbeing in educational contexts, we all need to find more ways of addressing key challenges such as racism and bullying behaviour. Currently, there is a groundswell of concern around the world about the impact of continued structural and individual racism.

**We define racism as ...** a network of disadvantage and differential treatment embedded in power structures and systems, and perpetrated by individuals with power upon marginalised groups and individuals from within those groups. (Alansari et al., 2020, p. 2)

As this definition suggests, one of the defining features of racism is that it reflects an overall system or power structure that promotes disadvantage on many levels. Although derogatory statements about Pākehā in Aotearoa New Zealand can be called race-based discrimination, these statements do not fit this definition of racism as they are not underpinned by a system of disadvantage.

Racism is multilayered with impacts felt at all levels of school and educational contexts, such as individual, classroom, school, or policy (Alansari et al., 2020). Racism can be in the form of micro- or macro-aggressions. Micro-aggressions are “subtle, ambiguous ... acts of casual racism” (Blank et al., 2016, p. 14). Their effect can be cumulative and dehumanising.

Examples of **micro-aggressions** include:

- verbal (e.g., patronising or stereotypical comments about culture, dismissive statements about the Treaty of Waitangi, expressions of surprise when minority students succeed, or refusal to learn to pronounce Māori names and other Māori words correctly)
- nonverbal (e.g., closed body language or dismissive looks).

Macro-level racism can occur within schools (institutional) or can be transmitted through policy (structural).

**Structural racism** can be described as the normalization and legitimization of an array of dynamics—historical, cultural, institutional and interpersonal—that routinely advantage whites while producing cumulative and chronic adverse outcomes for people of color. (Lawrence & Keleher, 2004, p. 1)

The connection between racist power structures and skin colour is called a variety of names including “whiteness” (Picower, 2009) or “white privilege” (Milne, 2013). One example of racism that occurs at both a school (institutional) and national policy (structural) level is policies or practices that reflect lower expectations of minority students. The prioritisation of Western values and views of learning and a Eurocentric curriculum are other examples of institutional and structural racism that are a reflection of white privilege.

Racism and unconscious bias are longstanding issues in Aotearoa New Zealand. As one recent example, a consultation process that aimed to gather young people’s views about educational directions uncovered many concerns from tamariki and rangatahi Māori about the impact of the racism they experienced from other students and teachers (Office of the Children’s Commissioner & NZ School Trustees Association, 2018).

Like racism, bullying behaviour involves an imbalance of power. In addition, it is defined as repeated aggressive behaviour that is intentional and experienced as harmful. We know that bullying behaviour is a longstanding concern in Aotearoa New Zealand schools. International studies consistently report that we have high rates of this behaviour compared with other countries (Martin et al., 2008; Ministry of Education, 2017; Mullis et al., 2008, 2016). Bullying behaviour has many negative health and education impacts on young people. Data from the Youth 2000 series of surveys show that students who had been frequently bullied are also more likely to avoid going to school, have significant depressive symptoms, or attempt suicide (Clark et al., 2009; Fleming et al., 2007; Fortune et al., 2010). As another example, involvement in bullying (as either a perpetrator or a target) is associated with early school leaving (Wylie et al., 2008).

Looked at together, Aotearoa New Zealand data suggest we need to do more to build school environments that promote safety and wellbeing. We particularly need to do more to support Māori youth, as suggested by recent mental health statistics (Fleming et al., 2020; Gluckman, 2017).



School PLD initiatives such as Te Kotahitanga show us it is possible to strengthen teacher–student relationships (an aspect of social wellbeing/taha whānau) and teacher pedagogy in ways that better support the learning of Māori students (Bishop et al., 2010). We also know there is a relationship between school actions and Māori students' wellbeing. For example, a study about secondary school contexts showed that Māori students at schools with higher levels of Māori cultural promotion had higher levels of ethnic identity, which in turn was associated with increased psychological wellbeing (Rata, 2012).

For a number of years, Aotearoa New Zealand schools and researchers have been focusing on culturally responsive pedagogies. These pedagogies are about schools and teachers drawing on students' cultural knowledge, home languages, experiences and interests, and ways of learning to make the school experience more relevant and successful for learners.

Internationally, some writers are moving past the idea of culturally responsive pedagogies (Paris & Alim, 2017), as they perceive these practices to be about assimilating students into a white space (e.g., English-medium schools), rather than fostering their capabilities and wellbeing in ways that are based on the values and practices of students' cultures. These writers are moving towards the use of the term “culturally sustaining pedagogies”. These pedagogies are about de-centring whiteness and, instead, fostering and sustaining “linguistic, literate and cultural pluralism” (Paris & Alim, 2017, p. 1), in ways that support positive social transformation. In an Aotearoa New Zealand context, culturally sustaining pedagogies are about valuing mātauranga Māori and supporting te reo Māori revitalisation as well as the cultural practices and languages of many other cultures.

When mātauranga Māori is referred to in this publication, our comments are based on the descriptions provided by the people in this study within each of their particular contexts. They talked about mātauranga in many ways, including in relation to te reo Māori, tikanga, whenua, whakapapa, pepeha, kōrero pūrākau, waiata, haka, whakataukī, and understanding the values and practices encompassed in concepts such as whanaungatanga, manaakitanga, and rangatiratanga. We understand that mātauranga Māori encompasses far more than what is discussed here.

## What approach did the study use?

We visited the six good-practice schools as part of a study called *Manaakitia ngā tamariki kia ora ai | Supporting children's wellbeing*. This study explores how these six schools promote all students and Māori students' wellbeing, and address actions that are detrimental to wellbeing, such as racism, unconscious bias, and bullying behaviour. We used an exploratory Māori-centred approach guided by kaupapa Māori principles and a social justice lens to develop the study approaches and to analyse the data. We placed the experiences and views of Māori at the centre.

## How were the schools selected?

We used Wellbeing@School student survey data to select six case study schools in which we would be likely to hear about their change journey and good practice in fostering students' wellbeing. We used three indicators (clusters of Wellbeing@School questions) to select schools:

- **Wellbeing:** This cluster of questions explores social and emotional wellbeing; for example, the extent to which students agree with statements such as “I feel I belong at school”.
- **Aggressive behaviours:** This cluster of questions explores students' experiences of different forms of aggressive and bullying behaviours at school; for example, how often “do other students put you down, call you names, or tease you in a mean way?”.



- **Equitable relationships:** This cluster of questions explores facets of equitable and culturally responsive relationships; for example, the extent to which students agree with statements such as “Teachers treat students fairly”. One aim of this scale is to provide an indicator of the extent that biases in behaviour, which are likely to be underpinned by institutional or structural racism, vary by student demographics. For example, if Māori students have lower scores than other students on this indicator, this is one indication that they are experiencing school as a less fair and equitable place.

Each school was given an overall score on each indicator. This overall score was determined by student responses to the questions associated with each indicator. We looked for schools that had high scores on the wellbeing and equitable relationships indicators, and low scores on the aggressive behaviours indicator. We developed a list of schools that were in the top 25% for all three indicators and showed no or minimal difference between the scores of Māori and non-Māori students.

The six good-practice schools we selected were operating within a Eurocentric education system but were finding ways to challenge the system from within. We wanted to know what they were doing differently to support tamariki, and if there were commonalities and differences in their beliefs and actions.

We aimed to visit different types of schools to see if and how their context impacted on their actions and the experiences of tamariki. For example, small and larger schools are likely to have different strategies for creating a sense of belonging. We also wondered if tamariki Māori would have different experiences depending on whether they were a minority or majority group at school. To help with the selection process, we also looked at each school's website and most recent Education Review Office (ERO) report to give us more information about each school's priorities, actions, and good practices.

These six schools included five that had positive trends over time in the indicators which suggested they were engaged in an active change journey. The sixth school had used Wellbeing@School once and had high positive values on all three indicators. The schools we visited:

- included contributing, full primary, and intermediate schools
- included schools in the South and North Islands
- included those in rural areas, as well as small and large urban areas
- had roll sizes ranging from small (around 70 tamariki) to large (around 500 tamariki)
- had a percentage of Māori enrolment that ranged from around 20% to 70%
- had decile rankings from 1 to 4
- included one that offered Māori-medium education and one that offered bilingual education
- included four that had been part of PB4L School-Wide for a number of years, and one that joined more recently.

### **Who did we talk to, and what did we ask?**

We visited each school for 2 days to talk to a mix of people who could tell us about the school's approaches and wellbeing journey. The people we talked to included principals and other members of the senior leadership team (SLT); classroom teachers and those who were leading school approaches to te reo Māori or building connections with whānau and families; kapa haka and te reo tutors; Special Education Needs Co-ordinators (SENCO); visiting support workers (such as Resource Teacher: Learning and Behaviour (RTLB) or social workers in schools (SWiS)); a group of senior Māori students at each school; and a few whānau, board of trustees (BoT) members, or community members such as kaumātua or kuia who were supporting the school.

We focused on two main areas:

1. How each school promoted the wellbeing of all students and tamariki Māori, and the journey they had undertaken to develop their approaches. As a starting point, we asked adults about how each school fostered students' wellbeing, belonging, and identity. When we talked to students, we asked about the things that helped them feel they belonged and what made them feel happy at school, what made them feel proud to be Māori at school, and where they saw or heard their culture or language at school.
2. How the school dealt with "the hard stuff" or challenges to wellbeing. We asked adults about how the school addressed two main areas: racism and unconscious bias; and bullying behaviour. Many staff also talked about how they addressed unwanted student behaviours or difficult situations with whānau. We used the term "the hard stuff" as a conversation starter to create a space where people could talk about things they might find uncomfortable. Many Māori, and particularly Māori school staff, appeared to be comfortable naming and talking about racism. Some Pākehā staff appeared less comfortable doing the same, but did so as conversations progressed. We asked students about things that did not seem tika at school or that could make them feel bad about being Māori.

We kept the names of schools confidential. One reason was to create a safe space for adults and students to tell us about difficult and challenging experiences. To ensure we represent the views and experiences of the people who took part in this study, we make use of quotes in stories and throughout the publication to illustrate themes or show different views. The stories and listed examples of practice were reviewed by schools.

Our interviews in the schools confirmed the selection process, as we found many examples of proactive and good practice in each school. We have therefore used the term "good-practice schools" to talk about the schools.

### Accessing the ideas in this publication

This resource has nine sections that explore the following questions:

- What does wellbeing at school look like from the perspectives of tamariki?
- What does wellbeing at school look like from adult perspectives?
- Why and how have the schools engaged in a change journey?
- What is the range of actions at a schoolwide level that support wellbeing?
- How does partnering with whānau and communities support wellbeing?
- How do schools provide extra wellbeing support for students and whānau?
- How is wellbeing fostered through curriculum learning?
- How do schools address racism, bullying behaviour, and conflict?
- What are the key findings and implications of this study?

Depending on your school's situation, different sections may be more relevant as a starting point. For example, if you are thinking about planning PLD to assist staff to better support the wellbeing of students, a useful starting point could be Section 5: A strengths-based journey takes time.

Most sections include a reflective space with questions for readers to consider or discuss with their colleagues. We have written short stories that highlight aspects of good practice at each school, to give practical examples of school actions. In some sections, we have also provided a range of examples that show the different approaches schools have developed.

### Reading the text

In the text we used the terms tamariki, children, and students interchangeably to talk about all young people. We use the term ākonga to refer specifically to students in Māori-medium classes. Kaiako refers to teachers in Māori-medium. Whānau refers to all parents, caregivers, and extended family members. Whānau Māori refers to particular experiences or views relating to Māori family members. Quotes use the terms used by each speaker.

We use Te Tiriti to refer to the Treaty of Waitangi (English version) or Te Tiriti o Waitangi (te reo Māori version). The people we talked to used both terms, but we did not necessarily know which version they were referring to.

The school staff we talked to often had many roles, so quotes are labelled with the main roles they were representing in the interview. Likewise, some whānau we talked to were also BoT members or learning assistants at the school.

To protect confidentiality, we have removed names or other identifiers from quotes, and altered some of the names of school activities.

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# 3. Tamariki Māori have a holistic view of wellbeing

We are all a big team. Our teachers are kind. We feel safe ... You are never alone.  
There is always someone to play with. (STUDENTS)

In this section, we draw on interviews with 37 tamariki Māori to explore the influences on their wellbeing in a school context. At each good-practice school, we talked to one or two groups of tamariki who came from Māori-medium, bilingual, or English-medium classes. We asked them two questions about their wellbeing. One question was about belonging: “What things help you belong or feel happy at school?” The other was about identity: “What are the things that make you feel proud to be Māori at school?” We thematically analysed students’ responses to these questions.

This section presents a summary of what we heard that focuses on the relationships, actions, and activities tamariki said supported their sense of belonging and identity at school (see Figure 1). Tamariki spoke about their wellbeing in their own words. We interpreted their kōrero as fitting within Māori concepts such as whanaungatanga, tuakiritanga, and Māoritanga. We have described what each concept means within the context of this study, drawing on the words used by tamariki. The summary does not focus on tamariki in terms of their current state of wellbeing (i.e., their feelings about themselves).

## What does wellbeing at school look like from the perspective of tamariki? Key messages:

- Tamariki talked about eight multilayered dimensions that supported their wellbeing at school.
- Whanaungatanga (We have good relationships) was foundational and talked about at all schools. Wairuatanga (We feel happy and safe) was also key.
- Tuakiritanga (My identity is valued) and Māoritanga (My culture is valued) were also main themes mentioned by tamariki, suggesting that actively promoting the language, culture, and identity of tamariki at school was promoting wellbeing and tamariki success “as Māori”.
- Less frequently mentioned, but common dimensions important to tamariki, included Tuākanatanga (We can take a lead role), Taiao (We like the environment), Āheitanga (We have lots of opportunities), and Whakanui (We celebrate and have fun).

## Tamariki think many aspects of school life support wellbeing

Figure 1 represents kākano (seeds) held within a seedpod. The surrounding pod represents the foundational dimension of wellbeing that nurtures and protects the kākano. This dimension—whanaungatanga—was mentioned by all groups of students. The dimensions in the three larger kākano—Tuakiritanga, Māoritanga, and Wairuatanga—were mentioned by nearly all groups. Additional themes mentioned by fewer students are represented as smaller kākano.

In Figure 1 we have used quotes from students to provide examples of each dimension and in the table that follows

(Table 1) we use students' language to describe the main components of each dimension.

### Reflection space

Does your school, kura, or institution have processes in place to help you hear from tamariki about:

- the things that impact on their wellbeing?
- ways wellbeing challenges could be addressed?
- new ways of supporting their wellbeing?

FIGURE 1 Kākano pod: Tamariki Māori views on what supports their wellbeing, belonging, and identity at school

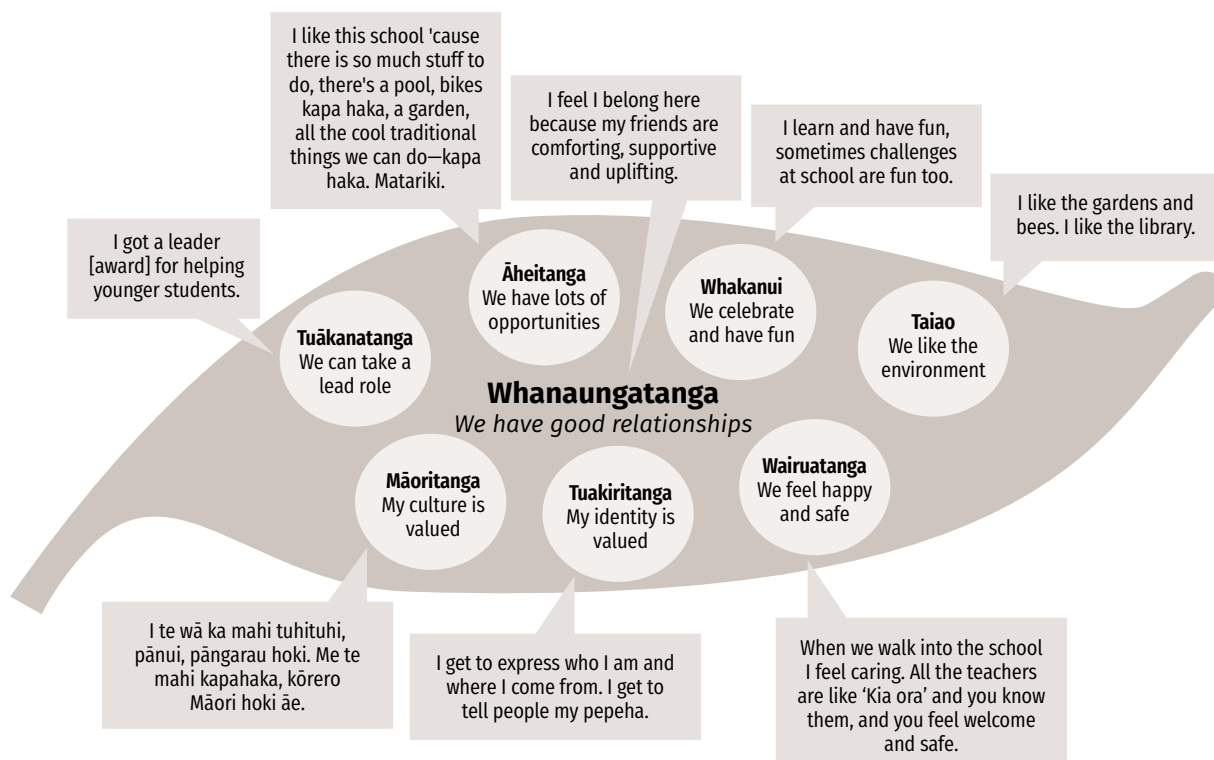


TABLE 1 Tamariki Māori dimensions of wellbeing, belonging, and identity

Kākano pod (foundational dimension)	How this dimension is expressed
<p><b>Whanaungatanga (We have good relationships)</b></p> <p>A feeling of being welcome and supported at school and having strong connections and relationships with peers and teachers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We can be with friends</li> <li>• Teachers are nice and caring</li> <li>• We feel welcome</li> <li>• We feel supported</li> <li>• School feels like whānau or home</li> </ul>
<b>Kākano nui (common dimensions)</b>	
<p><b>Māoritanga (My culture is valued)</b></p> <p>A belief that their culture is valued and present at school</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We hear, see, and use te reo</li> <li>• We live our culture (waiata, kapa haka, karakia)</li> <li>• We see our culture and knowledge in the curriculum</li> <li>• We celebrate our culture</li> <li>• We have Māori role models</li> <li>• We talk about issues that matter to us</li> </ul>
<p><b>Tuakiritanga (My identity is valued)</b></p> <p>A sense that their identity as Māori is valued and that they can be themselves at school</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• My identity as Māori is valued</li> <li>• My whakapapa and pepeha are valued</li> <li>• I feel proud to be Māori</li> <li>• I can be myself</li> </ul>
<p><b>Wairuatanga (We feel happy and safe)</b></p> <p>A feeling that the culture of the school is about being happy, safe, included, and settled</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We feel happy, safe, and included</li> <li>• All cultures are celebrated</li> <li>• We can share our feelings</li> <li>• School feels calm</li> </ul>
<b>Kākano iti (less common dimensions)</b>	
<p><b>Tuākanatanga (We can take a lead role)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We are buddies for others</li> <li>• We are cultural leaders (e.g., kapa haka)</li> <li>• We can choose what or how to learn</li> <li>• We lead or show school values</li> </ul>
<p><b>Taiao (We like the environment)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We have kai</li> <li>• We have good playgrounds and gear</li> <li>• We like being on the whenua (gardens, bush, bees)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Āheitanga (We have lots of opportunities)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We go on trips to learn (e.g., to marae)</li> <li>• We have fun opportunities (sports, arts, technology, music)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Whakanui (We celebrate and have fun)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Our successes are celebrated</li> <li>• Learning is fun</li> </ul>

### 3. Students have a holistic view of wellbeing

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This child-centred summary was developed from discussions with small groups of students at six schools and therefore is not necessarily generalisable to all students. However, the themes mentioned by students clearly connect to many of the dimensions in te ao Māori models that include a focus on wellbeing, health, and resilience for tamariki or whānau. For example, aspects of the eight dimensions in Figure 1 relate to the four dimensions of Te Whare Tapa Whā (Durie, 1994).

Whanaungatanga, Tuakiritanga, Māoritanga, and Wairuatanga are central to this child-centred summary. These dimensions are also reflected in te ao Māori models such as Te Wheke (Pere, 1997), the Mana Model (Webber & Macfarlane, 2020), Whakaoranga Whānau: A Whānau Resilience Framework (Waiti, 2014), the Whānau Rangatiratanga Conceptual Frameworks (Baker, 2016), and Te Pae Mahutonga, a health promotion model first developed by Dr Maui Pomare (Durie, 2003).

For example, the Mana Model (Webber & Macfarlane, 2020) explored the conditions that support the educational success of Māori students. This model (see Figure 2) includes five types of mana that are important for tamariki success.

FIGURE 2 The five optimal conditions for Māori student success

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Source: Webber and Macfarlane, 2020, p. 39.

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Mana Whānau is the most important condition that provides a foundation that flows upwards to support the other forms of mana. Webber and Macfarlane (2020) describe Mana whānau as a child-centric family environment that also includes school and community as “family”.

Tamariki in this current study affirmed the importance of all these forms of mana. In particular, the foundational dimension of Whanaungatanga in the student Kākano pod in Figure 1 intersects with Mana Whānau in the model above. The student kākano dimensions of Tuakiritanga and Māoritanga also intersect with Mana Motuhake and Mana Ūkaipō. Overall, these dimensions show that students’ sense of self and identity as a learner is connected to having a strong sense of cultural identity, whakapapa, and connection to place.

The different dimensions in Figure 1 also align with concepts in Western child-centred models that include categorisations such as relating (relationships), being (identity), and having (assets and opportunities) which all contribute to wellbeing (Powell et al., 2018; Soutter et al., 2014).

The foundational nature of Whanaungatanga, Tuakiritanga, Māoritanga, and Wairuatanga in Figure 1 suggests that schools that are actively promoting the language, culture, identity, and sense of connection and belonging of tamariki Māori are making a positive contribution to the wellbeing of these tamariki. It appears that the schools' focus is helping to create the conditions that enable tamariki Māori to be "enjoying and achieving education success *as Māori*" (Ministry of Education, 2013, p. 5, emphasis added). This is a core aspect of the vision of *Ka Hikitia* (Ministry of Education, 2013) and the refreshed strategy, *Ka Hikitia–Ka Hāpaitia* (Ministry of Education, 2020).



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## 4. Adults have a holistic view of wellbeing

Whanaungatanga, the relationship thing is huge ... we've broken out of the mindset that that child is in your class [so] you worry about them. Now everybody is responsible. We're a whānau. (SCHOOL LEADERS)

In this section, we summarise what adults told us about the things at school that foster students' wellbeing, belonging, and identity. We asked adults some general questions about what each school did to foster wellbeing, and also asked how each school fostered the belonging and identity of tamariki Māori.

We analysed adults' responses thematically to develop a summary of the relationships, actions, and activities at the school that they thought contributed to students' sense of wellbeing (see Figure 3 below).

We interpreted adults' kōrero about wellbeing as fitting within Māori concepts such as whanaungatanga, tuakiritanga, and Māoritanga. We have described what each concept means within the context of this study, drawing on the words used by adults.

### What does wellbeing at school look like from adult perspectives? Key messages:

- Seven wellbeing dimensions were mentioned by adults. Whanaungatanga is viewed as foundational for wellbeing and learning and an enabler for other wellbeing-related actions.
- Adults have a holistic view of wellbeing at school which encompasses all aspects of the child's wellbeing including their whānau (Poipoia tamaiti).
- Kanorau (valuing diverse cultures) is core to supporting wellbeing. This sits alongside Māoritanga (upholding mana Māori) and Tuakiritanga (valuing identity).
- The practice of Mana taurite (We support equity for all tamariki) ensures everyone can access resources, and that barriers to wellbeing are addressed.
- Ako (We create a reciprocal learning culture) ensures all views are valued and people are able to learn from each other.

## Whanaungatanga is a foundation for wellbeing

Like the student summary, Figure 3 represents kākano within a seedpod. The surrounding pod represents the foundational dimension, whanaungatanga. Six kākano are in this pod. Table 2 gives more information about the aspects of school life that relate to each part of the kākano pod.

There was considerable overlap between the student and adult summaries. Whanaungatanga was the foundational dimension for both. One main difference between student and adult views was that Mana taurite (we support equity for all tamariki) was more visible in discussions with adults, although it was also mentioned by some students. The different aspects of the adult and student themes are expanded on in the next sections.

### Reflection space

How does your school or institution hear from whānau, staff, or communities about:

- the things that impact on tamariki, whānau, and staff wellbeing?
- the ways wellbeing challenges could be addressed?
- new ways of supporting wellbeing for different groups?

FIGURE 3 Kākano pod: Adult views on what fosters students' wellbeing, belonging, and identity at school

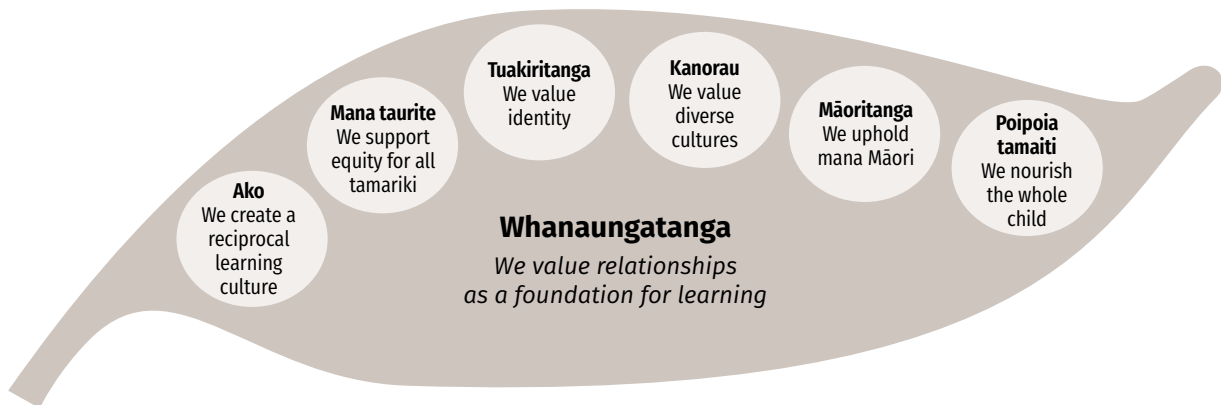


TABLE 2 Adult dimensions of wellbeing, belonging, and identity

<b>Kākano pod</b>	<b>How this dimension is expressed</b>
<p><b>Whanaungatanga</b></p> <p>We value relationships as a foundation for learning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We make sure we know who our learners and their whānau are</li> <li>• We foster a sense of pride and belonging to our school community</li> <li>• We live our shared values</li> <li>• We communicate in ways that build trust and relationships</li> <li>• We seek feedback and partnerships with whānau</li> <li>• We are kanohi kitea in the community</li> </ul>
<b>Kākano</b>	<b>How this dimension is expressed</b>
<p><b>Poipoia tamaiti</b></p> <p>We nourish the whole child and their whānau</p> <p><i>(This dimension is about holistic caring and learning, and how schools work to get tamariki into a space where they can enjoy school and learning)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We create a welcoming, settled, and calm environment</li> <li>• We celebrate all tamariki and all forms of success</li> <li>• We work to meet tamariki and whānau needs (wellbeing, health, learning)</li> <li>• We help tamariki understand their feelings and build relationships</li> <li>• We seek out opportunities for tamariki to grow their interests and passions</li> </ul>
<p><b>Ako</b></p> <p>We create a reciprocal learning culture</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School staff, tamariki, and whānau all learn from each other</li> <li>• We grow student leaders</li> <li>• We build a learning culture amongst staff</li> </ul>
<p><b>Kanorau</b></p> <p>We value diverse cultures</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We make culture visible because it is important</li> <li>• We include everyone</li> <li>• We help tamariki to understand others and value diversity</li> </ul>
<p><b>Māoritanga</b></p> <p>We uphold mana Māori</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We work to honour our obligations to Te Tiriti o Waitangi</li> <li>• We work to incorporate mātauranga Māori into school life</li> <li>• We value the learning and wellbeing benefits that mātauranga Māori brings</li> </ul>
<p><b>Tuakiritanga</b></p> <p>We value identity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We recognise the importance of identity</li> <li>• We celebrate all students' identities (e.g., through pepeha)</li> <li>• We prioritise place-based learning that connects us with our community</li> </ul>
<p><b>Mana taurite</b></p> <p>We support equity for all tamariki</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We make sure everyone can access resources, opportunities, and learning</li> <li>• We have high expectations for everyone</li> <li>• We remove barriers and offer tailored support</li> <li>• We provide extra support in class</li> <li>• We seek extra help for tamariki and whānau if needed</li> </ul>

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## 5. A strengths-based journey takes time

It's a very collaborative process for strategic planning. Everyone has an opportunity to have an input and feel valued. Things are not imposed on them. They're on the journey. (SCHOOL LEADER)

The six good-practice schools in this study were all engaged in long-term change journeys to better foster the wellbeing of Māori students, as well as that of all students. These schools had quite different contexts, but many aspects of their journeys had similarities in terms of the values that underpinned a desire for change, the directions they were heading in, the actions they were taking, and the support that assisted them on their journey. This section discusses the factors that influenced schools' current journeys and the things that helped create change.

### **Why and how have schools engaged in a change journey? Key messages from this section:**

- Change takes time. Schools had been actively building approaches to student wellbeing for a number of years. Central to this was a focus on whanaungatanga and mātauranga Māori.
- Clear values drive change. Most school leaders had a strong commitment to Te Tiriti partnerships and a desire to do better for Māori through addressing structural racism.
- Leadership by whānau Māori champions was key in prompting change.
- Change requires strong leadership and processes that bring everyone on board (such as whole-school PLD).
- Two main forms of whole-school PLD worked together to assist school journeys. One form focused on behaviour and helped schools to shift to a more strengths-based, relational, and values-driven way of working. The second form assisted in raising staff's critical consciousness and helped schools address their obligations to Te Tiriti.
- Schools needed to address barriers that could slow their journey, such as staff or whānau challenging the focus on te reo or tikanga Māori, or directives from external organisations that did not fit with their focus.

## A change journey takes time, persistence, and support

### A holistic view of wellbeing and core values drive school actions

The actions of these good-practice schools were underpinned by core values and beliefs about learning. A holistic view of learner and whānau wellbeing and learning clearly drove all schools. Staff knew that, if the student and their whānau were well, then the student would be able to turn their attention to learning. Staff also knew that if a student's health and wellbeing needs were not being met—for example, if a child came to school having had a hard start to the day—then these needs had to be attended to before they could be expected to engage in classroom learning.

Our whānau is into holistic living. We wanted to make where the kids were have a holistic focus as well. This extends to every aspect of their life, wherever they go. (WHĀNAU)

Wellbeing [is key]. If the child isn't well within themselves the learning doesn't take place. We have a big focus on that. I spent a month with a very anxious boy, encouraging him, to get him ready to learn. (SCHOOL LEADERS/TEACHERS)

Staff also knew that if a child did not feel they belonged at school and their identity was not valued they would be less likely to learn. As a result of these beliefs, schools were on a journey that was leading them to review and improve or develop approaches that aimed to foster students' wellbeing, belonging, and sense of identity. These approaches, and the values that underpinned them, are described in further sections of this publication.

### The change journey is long, and leadership is key

There were different trigger points for school journeys. A turning point for some was the fact that staff were having difficulty managing student behaviour which was impacting on learning. For other schools, it was a realisation that they needed to do better for tamariki Māori or for groups of students whose cultures could have more prominence, because school practices felt monocultural, or whānau were not comfortable at school.

Engagement of whānau Māori wasn't visible; that's what started the journey. How could we, as a school, make an environment that was safe? Engaging with whānau and iwi started knocking down barriers. Kuia coming to school regularly, and us going to them, going to their whare. (SCHOOL LEADERS)

School leaders had a key role in charting school directions. At many schools, people described how the current learning journey began many years ago with prior principals. Past and new principals had clear visions for each school. Many current principals were actively driving change, some of which was built on change processes that had been started before they came to the school. Some school leaders

wanted all staff to raise their critical consciousness about their obligations to Te Tiriti and the impacts of racism. Others were more focused on the value that fostering students' connections to cultures and communities could bring to learning.

Many people contributed to schools' change journeys and leadership came from many people in the school environment or community. Larger schools had distributed leadership approaches with assistant principals (APs), deputy principals (DPs), and other teachers who were change agents. A number of Pākehā school leaders and lead teachers were instrumental in actively fostering relationships with Māori champions who proactively offered guidance and support to the school. These leaders modelled working outside of their comfort zone, being learners, and anti-racist attitudes and practices.

School leaders and SLTs were innovative and strategic about change management. They committed to ongoing whole-school PLD and found other ways to build staff commitment so they could go on a change journey together. This process could take a lengthy amount of time; for example, one school identified that their current journey started about 14 years ago.

### **Māori are partnering with schools to shape and support their journey**

Within each school there were some people who were critically aware of the impacts of structural racism on schools, and the damage that negative stereotyping could cause. They were driven by a desire to do better for Māori students. In general, Māori staff were more critically aware of these issues, but there were Pākehā school leaders and teachers who shared this awareness and were on personal learning journeys to uphold a commitment to Te Tiriti. These staff were also leading school approaches to uplift te reo and tikanga Māori in partnership with others.

Leadership by whānau Māori was key in prompting change. Schools had Māori strategic partners who were guiding and supporting the journey of the school. These partners came from different places. Some were school SLT members or teachers, PLD providers, or Resource Teachers of Māori who worked with the school. Others were kapa haka or te reo tutors the school employed, but who also acted as strategic advisers or tutors for Pākehā school leaders and teachers. Some were whānau on the BoT, or kaumātua or kuia, or people who had a care and support role at the school. Story 1 shows two views on how leadership by Māori champions was supporting learning and change at a school.

#### **Reflection space**

Who are, or could be, the Māori champions for your school?

Is their role in supporting change at your school acknowledged and well supported?

STORY 1

**A partnership to support school change**

There used to be nothing culturally happening for students ... It was a conscious decision to build mana around our Māori students and then they could go out and support others.

We approached a tutor—it was a process ... She brings a gift to the school; she empowers a sense of belonging. She first started working with me and the students. She spent two terms working with Māori students. We sang, did te reo, talked about their iwi ... We visited our three marae—it was a powerful connection for our Māori students.

Now the whole school does kapa haka and students lead. It is important not to assume because you are Māori it means that you want to lead kapa haka. With that understanding it meant teachers were more responsive to our Māori students' needs.

(SCHOOL LEADER)

Before 2017 it was not good for Māori tamariki [at this school] ... These tamariki need to be able to express themselves for who they are, not what they are. This is a key ingredient for success for our mokopuna.

Kapa haka is a whole learning for the kaiako. Not just singing and actions. They are learning. I do the same thing for the children and kaiako. They have learnt appreciation about who we are. It's not a tick-the-boxes thing anymore. Having [more than one Māori staff] here—it gives them that time [to learn].

We normalise the reo around the school. Just incorporating those words. The teachers are getting on board ... It is a good start. We are going from nothing to lots ... We have that whanaungatanga. I can say that here. At other schools, you can't say that.

(KAPA HAKA TUTOR AND TEACHER)

Some Māori champions had supported a school through several changes of principals. These partners were all strongly committed to the education of tamariki Māori. Often their view of the changes they would like to see was long-term and multigenerational and they had worked with the school for a number of years with this aim. For example, over time one school had started providing Māori-medium classes, encouraged by gentle pressure from whānau who had joined the BoT.

**The journey is assisted by PLD that changes beliefs about behaviour**

A combination of long-term PLD contracts was instrumental in assisting the good-practice schools to build approaches over time and take all staff on a learning journey. While these journeys were not solely focused on wellbeing, they had implications for wellbeing. Most schools had two PLD focuses that assisted in shaping their journeys. The first was PLD that assisted staff to reframe their views about behaviour and deepen their understandings about the importance of relationships. Common forms of this PLD included Incredible Years Teacher (IYT), PB4L School-Wide, and restorative practices.

Through this PLD, schools explored new ways of creating a culture of belonging that embraced values such as respect for diversity and celebrated and validated aspects of students' identities including their cultural identities. Moving from a predominant focus on behaviour and learning to also valuing the importance of whanaungatanga and relationships was a core step along the way, as was a shift from a punitive to a strengths-based view of student behaviour, and how solutions might be found.

Many of these PLD initiatives bought with them a focus on: data-driven decision-making from staff or student observations; surveys of staff, students, and whānau; student learning assessments; or behaviour incident records. As to be expected, all schools made decisions based on data, and for some—particularly those that were part of PB4L School-Wide—data was a strong driver. Wellbeing@School data also contributed to determining schools' directions. Some schools used processes and tools that reflected te ao Māori or that enabled schools to collect community feedback, such as Poutama Pounamu data-gathering processes and tools, and the Hautū Māori Cultural Responsiveness self-review tool for school boards.<sup>4</sup>

### Te reo, tikanga, and mātauranga Māori PLD is a core support

A second set of long-term PLD that assisted schools' journeys was about mātauranga Māori. Most school leaders were driven by the view that their school needed to honour their obligations to Te Tiriti. They wanted to do better for Māori students, and move away from deficit thinking towards strengths-based approaches that supported students' development as citizens of Aotearoa New Zealand. Most schools were strongly committed to forms of PLD that could assist staff to reflect on their obligations to Te Tiriti.

At each school, this PLD took different forms. At some schools, all staff studied te reo Māori at a local wānanga for a year. Other schools participated in te reo Māori and Te Tiriti PLD with a facilitator for a number of years, and a few schools had joined Poutama Pounamu PLD as part of a Kāhui Ako / Communities of Learning (CoL) focus. Nearly all schools had made a substantial long-term commitment to this PLD, which was a core aspect of their journey of change as it was aimed at growing all staff's capabilities and critical consciousness.

To cement this commitment, school leaders embedded goals relating to Te Tiriti or te reo Māori within charters, action plans, or teacher appraisal and inquiry processes. They changed curriculum planning processes and content and worked to incorporate te reo, tikanga, and mātauranga Māori within school life in ways that were described as more authentic than past practices.

#### Reflection space

How do PLD processes at your school assist staff to develop:

- critical consciousness about racism?
- culturally sustaining pedagogies?

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.nzsta.org.nz/assets/Uploads/Hautu-2021-FINAL.pdf>



The first thing we worked on was identity ... We committed to 3 years of PLD only on te reo Māori. That was deliberate, that's how I'd do it from now on, just one focus. We actually did more than 3 years, because we got an extension ... For me this was non-negotiable; we're breaking the law if we're not doing it. I bought a Treaty of Waitangi and it's in the foyer to remind everyone we're obliged to do something about it. We had no kickback from the staff ... Pronunciation is a big thing, getting the basics, and not butchering kids' names. We did heaps early on. We had the charter and workplans.

(SCHOOL LEADER)

To keep building on this PLD, most schools had Māori or Pākehā staff who lead the school's focus on te reo and tikanga Māori. Most had voiced a commitment to taking on this role and were passionate about supporting their peers. The SLT encouraged this passion by providing leadership positions. Over time, many schools transitioned from a lead teacher approach—where this teacher provided plans and resources to their peers. Now the reo Māori leads supported their peers with resources and ideas but focused on empowering their peers. They were careful not to take ownership away from teachers to do their own planning.

Story 2 below shows how many forms of PLD had contributed to one school's journey towards a strengths-based kawa that fosters inclusion and respect for diversity. Similar to other schools, the groundwork for this journey was put in place by a prior principal and was continued and built on by current staff.

## STORY 2

### **A long PLD journey from punitive approaches towards a strengths-based kawa**

Over 15 years ago, decile 1 School 5 had a punitive approach to discipline. Staff acted like “a big stick”. If a student misbehaved, their name went up on the board with a cross by it. After three crosses, teachers could send these “problem” students to the SLT. Every day there were classes of students at detention.

We knew there needed to be change—how do you do that? We had to change the culture of the school. But the parents accepted the old culture. Globally this approach was becoming unacceptable. We had big hurdles. (SCHOOL LEADERS)

For around 4 years, school leaders looked for better approaches. The first change came when some staff did IYT PLD. They found this PLD so valuable that the school decided all staff would attend. Some teachers initially resisted new approaches, saying “This is too soft, where are the consequences?” Over time, they started to see benefits for students and got on the waka. IYT prompted other changes as staff recognised processes such as detentions did not fit with their

new approaches so they needed alternatives. To help this change, the next step of the journey was restorative practices training for the SLT. Now the school uses a range of processes, from mini chats to full whānau conferences to work through issues.

**Change takes time to set it up. We had teacher only days and parent days [on things like restorative chats]. We knew we'd cracked it when the parents started to talk about it, saying things like "I had a mini chat last night". (SCHOOL LEADERS)**

Next, the school joined PB4L School-Wide which gave them data to use, rather than basing decisions on opinions: "We did not know it then, but we definitely now know we needed the systems and the data."

Although whole-school PLD is a core part of the school's approach, school leaders are very clear that localisation is also vital, so they do not prescribe to any one programme or system. To provide all the bits of the puzzle they blend the bits that work for them: PB4L provides consistency and data for the school to "heat seek" about issues and when or where they happen; IYT provides ways to build teacher capacity to teach social and emotional skills; and restorative practices offers ways of acting if things go wrong. Celebrating and acknowledging the cultures of students is also a core part of the school's approach.

Together, all these approaches provide a new kawa for the school that is about relationships and strengths-based views of students, high expectations, celebration of cultures and diversity, calmness, and consistency: "[W]e all use the same language—we keep things succinct, and we have clear structures and frameworks." This kawa is not set in concrete; it is also flexible and responsive to needs, so approaches are constantly being improved and revised.

A recent new step on the journey is Poutama Pounamu PLD which is part of a Kāhui Ako / CoL focus on Māori achievement. School leaders can see this PLD is helping them address institutional and structural racism so they can better support the achievement of Māori students. In groups, staff do an audit and observations of how they are building relationships and including mātauranga Māori within their practice. In syndicates, staff analyse this audit and set up goals for their group. A second focus is putting mātauranga Māori at the centre of the curriculum.

As a result of their long commitment to developing their approaches, staff have seen the culture of the school change and the school roll rise. Now, more parents want to enrol their children, and students who are not having successes at other schools often get transferred.

## Schools face tensions and challenges on their journey

Each school was at a different stage of the journey to embed te reo, tikanga, and mātauranga Māori in the way they worked.

People are doing culturally responsive practice, but they may not recognise it as being that ...

We've just surveyed the staff last term and I would say it came up at maybe 85% of the staff next year want development in te reo and tikanga Māori. There's a strong desire and a recognition that there needs to be some more work done in that space for our school. (SCHOOL LEADERS)

Each person, including staff members and whānau, were on their own personal journey. Within each school, staff had different levels of critical consciousness about the impact of colonisation and institutional and structural racism. Those who actively talked about how their critical consciousness was being raised had a strong personal commitment to their own individual PLD and learning as well as whole-school PLD. They were also active in building partnerships with Māori.

Schools were fortunate to have Māori staff who acted as pou and advisers for the school. Where Māori staff were not in full-time paid positions, it brought to light a tension between an expectation that they would support the school, but not be fully compensated financially as other support positions are. Some staff thought the schools did not realise how lucky they were to have Māori staff, or how wide-ranging the roles of Māori staff were. For example, many kapa haka tutors or kaumātua were also strategic advisers to school leaders, mentors for students, or people who supported whānau and built connections between home, school, and marae. This experience highlights a wider tension around the extra layer of work Māori undertake in communities and schools. For school leaders and policy makers, this suggests a need to ensure that adequate acknowledgement of the partnership is provided, both in terms of remuneration and via other means.

At the request of the school, I visit whānau having problems with their tamariki, to see if there is any way the kura could awahi i a rātou. A lot of taumaha over the year. I get food parcels together for struggling whānau, and connect with communities, be proactive with them, and connect with the iwi where possible. To help them. Some of the Māori families are reluctant to come forward, whakamā. I say to the principal, 'Pai kē mēnā ka haere au ki ngā whānau that are having problems'. On behalf of the school I try to find a resolution. I let whānau know that the kura has an open-door policy.

(KAUMĀTUA)

A commitment to change and to do better for Māori students could entail a high workload and challenges for school leaders and other staff, particularly Māori staff who felt a strong sense of commitment to tamariki, whānau Māori, and the school.

All schools had Māori staff who obviously cared about Māori students and helped incorporate their culture into their learning. Many Māori staff who lead aspects of their school approaches were not from the local iwi. They were very conscious of this and it was a tension they were navigating. Recognising the importance of local connections, one school had specifically placed a teacher from the local marae in a leadership role. Other schools talked about the importance of making these connections and were trying to build relationships and find ways forward (see Section 7: Partnering with whānau and community supports wellbeing and learning).

School leaders sometimes had to manage challenges from staff or whānau who were not fully supportive of the school's new directions. Pākehā staff who were leading aspects of their school's journey encountered some personal challenges and feelings of unease that needed to be worked through. These staff were active in overcoming what has been termed "Pākehā paralysis". One definition of this paralysis is:

the inability of Pākehā to be active participants in social and cultural relations with non-Pākehā people or groups. This paralysis can come about due to fear of 'getting it wrong' or negative cross-cultural encounters and experiences. (Barnes, 2013, p. 1)

If staff were challenged by colleagues about the school's direction or about being non-Māori in a Māori space, a commitment to the students helped them move forward and build relationships.

[The Pākehā lead reo teacher] made that effort but she has not got the hononga. She knows all the whānau, and they know her. But that's developed over time—she has kept on going, and now she has that relationship. She has been in some really uncomfortable conversations but she stuck with it as the wellbeing of the children is the most important thing. (BOT/WHĀNAU)

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## 6. Building a wellbeing environment

Ko te mea nui ko te whanaungatanga. Nōku anō te whiwhi ka noho tahi mātau ko aku ākonga mō ngā tau e toru, e whā rānei, ka tino mōhio au ki a rātou, ka tino mōhio rātou ki a au, ka tino mōhio tātou i wā tātou whānau. (KAIAKO)

The morning routine ... it's the same every day. It brings the class together. We take the roll, drink milk, say karakia, sing a song ... we start as a unit together. The culture of inclusiveness is set every day ... it sets the tone. (TEACHERS)

Based on their beliefs and values, the good-practice schools engaged in many interrelated actions that targeted different layers of school life. These actions reinforced each other to create an environment that supported students' wellbeing and strengthened the overall culture of each school.

This section describes the main ways a focus on student wellbeing, belonging, and identity was embedded in the practices and approaches that occur at a schoolwide level.

### What is the range of actions at a schoolwide level that support wellbeing? Key messages:

- Whanaungatanga (good relationships) provides a foundation for many other school actions that foster wellbeing. Students, whānau, and teachers viewed themselves as belonging to a large whānau.
- Shared school values that relate to wellbeing (e.g., caring, inclusion, diversity, identity) show students, whānau, and staff that their wellbeing is important.
- The celebration of diversity and making culture visible and important fosters identity and wellbeing for all students. Māori students' identity is affirmed when schools value te reo Māori and tikanga, and put kapa haka in a central place in the curriculum.
- Manaakitanga within the classroom is supported through employing staff who are skilled at building relationships with students and whānau. A tau or calm environment helps communication.
- Schools take time to know who their students are, find ways to foster their passions and leadership capabilities, and have high expectations for all students and staff.

## Whanaungatanga is prioritised for all

Schools' approaches to wellbeing had many layers, but one that stood out as a clear priority in all schools was whanaungatanga, which provided a foundation for many other school actions. Whanaungatanga involves the fostering of relationships between students, whānau and communities, and staff, which help people get to know each other, communicate well, and work together.

School staff viewed their community of students, whānau, and staff as a large whānau and stressed the importance of building relationships with both students and their whānau. They worked hard on creating a caring and safe school culture based on forming and maintaining complex and trusting relationships through good communication. It was clear to school leaders that relationships were *not* one-way; that is, aiming to assimilate students and whānau within "school" ways of doing things. Instead, school leaders worked to build reciprocal and mutually beneficial relationships.

These relationships were key to supporting wellbeing and learning inside and outside of the school. The wellbeing of the whānau is connected to, and impacts on, the wellbeing of children, so all must be supported, hence the importance of whanaungatanga in getting to know the whole whānau. Having a sense of what events were important in the community and the stressors that impacted on the community was also key.

This culture of caring for the whole whānau is underpinned by holistic beliefs about identity and relationships. When students know who they are and where they are from, and that their identities are valued, this creates a sense of identity and belonging.

Story 3 shows how one school creates a culture of whanaungatanga.

### STORY 3

#### **Whanaungatanga is a foundation for wellbeing and learning**

##### **Everyone is whānau**

A deep commitment to whanaungatanga is a key underpinning of School 2. Staff are clear that it is very important they know who students are. They know that students are unlikely to be in a good space for learning if they do not feel cared about or safe at school. School leaders are also clear that strong relationships and partnerships with whānau are vital for student learning, and for the school.

The school feels like a whānau. A commitment to relationships starts at the front gate, where the principal welcomes whānau and students in the morning. A lot of informal hui occur at this time. Students and teachers greet and hug each other, and people describe the school culture as "huggy". Students talk about how their school feels like a home, they are a big team, and everyone is welcome.

The office lady is warm and calm and the school has an inclusive, open-door policy so whānau can visit classrooms at any time. Kaiako and teachers work on forming strong relationships with students and their whānau.

Kaiako are very good with making whakapapa links or other links, or there is a pūrākau to explain some kind of connection. It's the same for the Pākehā staff—we know your grandfather who works at so and so. Lots of connecting without too much thinking about it. The teachers know the kids. (SCHOOL LEADERS)

### Being part of the wider community

This focus on relationships extends wider than the school. Both Māori and Pākehā staff make a lot of effort to be connected into the community—they go to tangihanga and other important events at the local marae, as well as sports, arts, and cultural events where whānau are likely to be. For some Māori staff this is already part of their life. Other staff have made a conscious decision to be seen and involved.

To make stronger connections with whānau Māori, a new leadership position has been created for a kaiako who is from the local marae. Part of her role is now to be a whānau liaison leader—this role strengthens the connections between the school, whānau Māori, and the local marae.

We are lucky to have that local connection. It makes that hononga stronger. When whānau see their own it makes them feel more comfortable. [My advice for] other schools is keep on going, find that person, get to know your marae, and make those connections. (BOT &

SCHOOL LEADER)

All Māori [at this school] can whakapapa to the three local iwi. We have generational attendance; parents or grandparents came here.

(SCHOOL LEADERS)

### Shared values help create a wellbeing environment

One way of expressing school beliefs is through values. As well as school leaders having strong values that drive their actions, it is common for schools to develop a set of shared values that reflect community aspirations. All the schools in this study were clearly committed to living their shared school values which reflected their priorities. Values could be expressed in te reo Māori or English or a combination of both languages. As discussed earlier, whanaungatanga was a foundational value that underpinned schools' approaches. Whanaungatanga, along with manaakitanga, were highly valued, so schools commonly developed shared values that reflected these concepts. Most also had values about inclusion, diversity, and identity. Values about identity could be about your identity as a learner, your cultural identity, or both. Some of the ways schools expressed these values are interwoven through later sections.

Many schools had built on existing school values or developed new ones through PB4L School-Wide. They developed their values through a process of community consultation. This process aimed to include the aspirations of different groups and build a shared view of the values across all those in

the school community (students, whānau, school staff, and wider community members). These values were explicitly explored in class through weekly focuses, and related behaviours were discussed and taught (see Section 9: Fostering wellbeing through the curriculum). Several schools used external provider programmes to reinforce their values. The values were also integrated into students' wider learning through a focus on learning related to social justice themes, sustainability, or giving back to the community.

Displays of values were acknowledged through classroom interactions, and rewards and celebrations. Student leaders acted as guardians of the values. Branding related to values, and visual reminders of values, were in many places around each school. For the students and whānau at many schools, the focus on values had created clear, positive messages about the culture of the school.

There were some challenges for schools where more than one set of values were present, or the current values were no longer seen as relevant. In two schools, there was a tension between the values derived from te ao Māori and incorporated in either Māori or English medium, and those developed for English medium such as new PB4L School-Wide values. Schools were still working out how to address this tension. In a couple of schools, a principal had inherited a set of values set before their time, and had plans to review the values so they could develop a new set that felt like a better fit for the school and its community.

### **A tau and caring environment supports wellbeing**

A tau or calm environment was a common feature of the schools and was a sign of settled and consistent communication between teachers and students. Each group knew how things worked, and what they needed to do in different situations. A tau environment was not about students being passive or a product of transmission teaching styles. Spirited debates were welcome in this space. A tau environment was about students feeling welcome, knowing the classroom routines, and feeling safe to express and be themselves.

At some schools, hugging between teachers and students, or staff, demonstrated whanaungatanga and caring. For children, it is important that hugging is child-initiated, and based on an authentic relationship. Overall, schools aimed to create an atmosphere that was calm and caring, and in which relationships and wellbeing were in the forefront.

*I feel I belong at school ...*  
I am happy because I have lots of  
friends and I can sit alone and be calm.

(STUDENTS)

Part of your job is to support them into  
a sense of wellbeing at school. We talk  
about providing a predictable and safe  
environment for our children and that  
the adults are the role models of the  
behaviours we seek. (TEACHERS)

Teachers told us they worked to create a whānau-like environment in their class. They had high expectations and use relational practices—such as creating a team and family-like culture in which students had space to be themselves—and share important things about themselves and their family. Teachers also shared information about themselves and their home life and passions. Teachers made connections with students' backgrounds and interests, celebrating many different forms of success,



took time to listen to students' concerns and work with them to find solutions, and gave ownership and leadership and peer support opportunities to students. These are some examples of relational practices that increase equity as described in Russell Bishop's (2019) book, *Teaching to the North-East*.

We have an eye to make sure there is a staff member who has each kid's back ... If they don't have someone who believes in them, we don't just lose them from here, we lose them from society. (SCHOOL LEADERS/TEACHERS)

### Manaakitanga in the classroom supports wellbeing and learning

Manaakitanga in the classroom was a core part of schools' approaches. Schools employed staff who were skilled at building relationships with students and whānau. These staff kept themselves well informed about what was happening at home for students and could quickly sense if something was not right. Some schools used team teaching approaches. One benefit of this was that if a child was upset, one staff member could look after this child and the other could manage the classes. Other schools had teaching assistants in every class who were other adults students could build a relationship with. Many assistants were school whānau, so this strengthened the links between home and school.

Schools were continually developing their approaches to fostering manaakitanga in the classroom; one was planning to give staff a tutor role where they each build relationships and support a smaller group of about 12 students.

I share information about myself. My partner comes in. They feel like they know me, and how my family operates.

It is hard to name [my approach]. I notice if a child is fidgety, might not have eaten, a bit down, or not their normal self, and check it out. I can notice this across the room. I never yell or belittle or push them into a corner—I always try to keep mana intact. If I'm upset with something they've done I get down and talk. I never confront a child in class. With conflict—I know there is something behind it—and I need to deal with it. It's about never embarrassing them, who they are, where they came from, what they bring. (TEACHER)

### Making culture visible and important fosters identity

The second dimension of schools' wellbeing focus, which was key for Māori students as well as others, was about making culture and identity visible and important for all students.

#### Māori students' identity is affirmed through te reo Māori and tikanga

Knowing who you are and where you are from is an aspect of identity that was strongly supported by all schools. Most schools were in the process of acknowledging Māori as tangata whenua and were working to embed te reo, tikanga, and mātauranga Māori in the way they worked.

Several schools had a strategic focus on building mana and pride in being Māori. Māori students were supported to learn and do things that affirmed their identity at both a schoolwide level and in the curriculum.

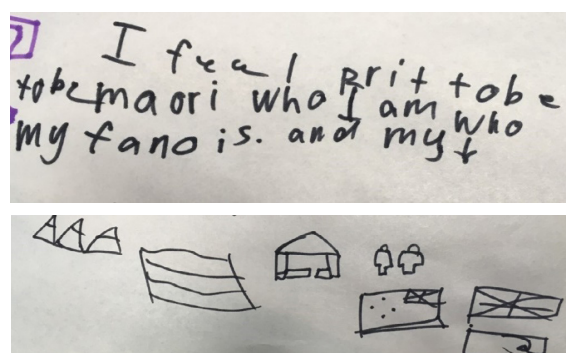
Some schools had embedded tikanga into the way they worked at a schoolwide level; for example, by starting every day with karakia and waiata, as they welcomed new staff, students and their whānau, or visitors with pōwhiri or whakatau, or through holding school hui or PLD at the local marae. Having a school kapa haka group, waiata, or whakataukī was common across many schools. Students took a lead role in many aspects of tikanga.

They are learning tikanga Māori as well as speaking te reo Māori. How to hold themselves on the marae, the belief system, connection to the land. The meaning of things, why we look after our whenua. (WHĀNAU)

Some schools were at an earlier stage in their practice; for example, they were incorporating waiata in assemblies.

Māori students were also able to engage in learning activities in class that affirmed their identity; for example, developing their pepeha, learning about the iwi history of the land they live on, learning through the medium of te reo Māori, or as the school integrating te reo and tikanga into classroom practice (for more detail, see Section 9: Fostering wellbeing through the curriculum).

The image below was drawn in response to a question about when students felt proud to be Māori at school. At this school, students develop a pepeha that they share at the start of the year. They visit local marae, and learn about local landforms, history, and legends. All these things are referenced in the student's drawing. For example, the three flags represent his heritage.



### Kapa haka fosters wellbeing and many types of learning

At some schools, the prioritising of whole-school kapa haka was a core part of their journey to create an inclusive culture that valued te reo and tikanga Māori and the identities of Māori students. At a few schools, kapa haka was central to the curriculum and integral to school approaches to learning about the history of places and spaces, and connections between people. These schools had developed or been gifted a school pepeha, waiata, or whakataukī (which could also be a waiata) which located the

school in their local community and with spaces and places. Students visited local marae and other locations to learn about people, spaces, and places. Literacy learning was also part of the mix as students researched, wrote, and spoke their personal pepeha.

Different levels of learning occurred in kapa haka. For example, one school had built in learning progressions. In Terms 1 and 2, weekly kapa haka was compulsory for all students. In Term 1, students learnt all the things they needed to know and do for pōwhiri. In Term 2 they practised for pōwhiri, and they could perform at festivals and events. In Terms 3 and 4, kapa haka was voluntary and held with each syndicate to ensure students of different ages and stages could assess further learning tailored to their needs.

A number of schools had employed a kapa haka tutor on a part-time basis. The tutors were well regarded in the local community, but not necessarily from the local iwi. To ensure they could support as many tamariki as possible, tutors often worked across more than one school.

Tutors guided a school as they started a kapa haka group or assisted the school to develop more clarity about the purpose or learning and wellbeing benefits of kapa haka. Tutors also supported the school in many other ways. They often mentored individual students, provided strategic support to school leaders, or assisted the school with pathways for community consultation. Thus, tutors performed many roles that were not clearly visible from their job title.

[My job] is not just about kapa haka; I do role modelling, I am a mentor if needed ... I do challenge the principal and tell him it is time for him to start practising what he preaches, time for him to step up and do his pepeha and extend that. He agreed. I told him this is what you need to do. (KAPA HAKA TUTOR)

Having a kapa haka group made it easy for all students to participate in, and experience, te reo and tikanga Māori. Kapa haka and waiata groups were inclusive, and all students were able to join them.

At the schools that located kapa haka in a central place in the curriculum, all the groups we talked to considered kapa haka to be key in fostering wellbeing and many types of learning (see Summary 1 below).

### SUMMARY 1

#### **The many wellbeing and learning benefits of kapa haka**

Kapa haka is valued by all (students, whānau, teachers, school leaders, community members) for the multiple learning and wellbeing benefits it offered students, whānau, and staff.

Kapa haka contributes to students' sense of enjoyment and belonging at school, helps create a sense of unity among students, and supports the identity and pride of tamariki Māori as they participate or take on leadership roles.

Kapa Haka, s - Kapa Haka it Fun. I do Te Reo Maori culture is in portant

I like this school 'cause there is so much stuff to do, there's a pool, bikes, kapa haka, a garden, all the cool traditional things we can do—kapa haka, Matariki.

We get to make poi. For waiata the whole school comes. For kapa haka we have a whole group. We have singing ...

(STUDENTS)

School leaders value kapa haka as a core part of a strategy to promote wellbeing and learning. They see kapa haka as assisting in building mana and pride in being Māori and leadership among students as a core part of their localised curriculum, and one way of fostering te reo Māori and tikanga Māori across the school.

We got new kapa haka uniforms—as we have a unique connect through the board, a kaumātua came in and blessed the kapa haka uniforms. A kuia explained about kapa haka being a pou. (LEAD TE REO MĀORI TEACHER)

Kapa haka also helps schools strengthen connections with whānau, and assists teacher learning. For whānau, a commitment to kapa haka shows that a school understands that valuing te ao Māori supports the learning and wellbeing of their children.

[Kapa haka is really important for my child] ... it is kapa haka on Friday. I drove down to Dunedin for an assessment. I had to drive back on Thursday to make sure he was back for kapa haka on Friday ... These kids are growing up confident and they are feeding on it. They are not afraid to do anything. That's what the school has done. (WHĀNAU)

We're now embracing things Māori ... I'm getting emotional about it ... to see the kids stand in pride, and to understand their belonging. With kapa haka there is always the protocol ... It is beautiful the amount of parents who come in [now]. They feel they have some value. It's cool to see their dads come in, as they are in an area they are comfortable, it's good for the boys. I did not used to see the dads before, now you see them at things a bit more. (WHĀNAU/BOT)

## Knowing who your students are is key

The foundational nature of whanaungatanga was demonstrated in the emphasis schools placed on school leaders and teachers getting to know each of their students, their passions and interests, and their whānau. Schools had developed a range of processes for this purpose; for example, spending time on relationship-building at the start of the year with whānau and students. A focus on celebrating and learning about students' cultural identities was one way teachers got to know students; for example, as they helped students develop their pepeha.

We are a small school [which makes a difference to relationships]. We try to make contact and have a relationship with parents ... so we know what's happening outside of school. We notice a change in a child's demeanour—what's happening in their private life. (1ST TEACHER)

We consciously slow things down at the beginning of the year. We don't allow the teachers to jump into reading ... They take 4–5 weeks getting to know their kids. (SCHOOL LEADERS)

Whānau interviews at start of year were a good first step to get to know families—it opens the door. [We asked] tell me about your family, your children, their strengths, interests? And parents' interests that they could bring in. Parents bring in their younger and older siblings. (2ND TEACHER)

Getting to know students and their whānau was beneficial in many ways—it helped form relationships, and assisted teachers to focus the learning programme around things they knew would engage students. In addition, if any learning or wellbeing concerns came up, teachers and school leaders were better able to understand the wider context.

Schools were proactive in identifying individual students who could benefit from a stronger sense of connection to school. For example, the principals of two schools had noted a pattern for some senior boys to become disengaged with learning and school. These principals played sports with the senior boys before school or at break times which helped them form strong relationships based on shared interests. The principals then had these relationships to draw on if any concerns arose. Both noted this approach was helping them keep students engaged and at school.

This focus on relationships was evident to students. On the whole, students at different schools used the same words to describe the characteristics of their teachers and other staff which contributed to their sense of belonging at school. These words were “nice”, “caring”, “kind”, “fair”, and “supportive”. Teachers formed good relationships with them, supported and encouraged them, and were there for them when times were difficult.

*I feel I belong at school ... because when we walk into the school I feel caring, and all the teachers are like, 'Kia ora', and you know them, and you feel welcome and safe ... Teachers and the principal are really amazing. They have fair punishments if you are naughty. They reason with you ... They always say, 'How was your weekend?', 'How are you today?' They are caring and lovely.* (STUDENTS)

One challenge for school leaders was working with teachers and other staff who were slower to get on board with the direction the school was moving in. Students described these teachers as “grumpy”.

Some staff noted that a few teachers sometimes expressed deficit views of Māori students or whānau. They thought these teachers could benefit from a more holistic or strengths-based view of Māori students and their whānau, and from increasing their understanding about students' background or family situations that might manifest as perceived “bad behaviour”. Researchers such as Macfarlane et al. (2007) and Bishop et al. (2003) note it is important not to locate the student or family as the problem but to consider how student behaviours might result from interactions in the classroom. “Challenging” behaviours might be related to a lack of power sharing, or a classroom ecology based around a dominant culture that does not value what minority cultures bring to the classroom (Macfarlane et al., 2007). In these situations, a student challenging a teacher could be a sign of assertiveness and leadership rather than “bad” behaviour.

*This school could be made better if ... there were no grumpy teachers ... There are not many grumpy teachers ... to be really honest, I like our school.* (STUDENTS)

*They need to know their own learners and tweak their own behaviour with the child, rather than see that as bad behaviour ... Our staff need to see where [students] are going and help them on their journey. They need to know the student. What can they bring? What can they bring to the class?* (KAPA HAKA TUTOR & TEACHER)

## Valuing diversity for all is important to schools

Schools placed a high priority on valuing mātauranga Māori and the identity of Māori students. This did not in any way diminish their valuing of diversity in various forms. They were able to uphold their commitment to doing better for Māori students, as well as for all students.

Most schools had a strong focus on acceptance and respect for diversity, whether that be of culture, learning needs, personality, or gender identity. They aimed to foster an individual and collective sense of pride in students' cultures and other identities.

### Reflection space

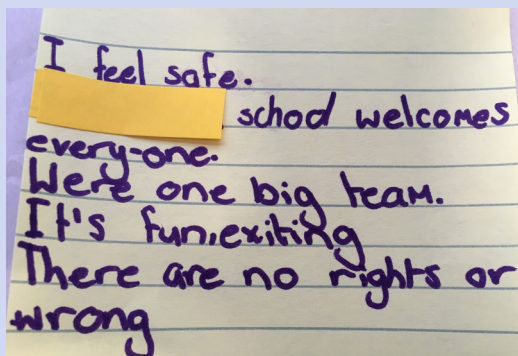
What are the different ways your school gets to know students' identities and interests?

How are students' cultural identities valued and sustained at school?



The biggest thing at this kura—it is not left to one person to carry all of this. The teachers are learning from the kids in the rumaki—their conversation. Our kids also learn sign language, Mandarin—a lot of them are learning a second language. Year 6 do English in preparation for intermediate. They learn a range of languages. So, they know what it is like build that compassion for others [who are also second language learners]. (KAIAKO)

Schools made culture visible by celebrating language weeks and important events for different cultures with activities that included all students and whānau. This is a common starting point for schools. The schools in this study had expanded on these practices and worked with whānau to bring their mātauranga, including language and cultural knowledge, into the school.



I feel safe.  
school welcomes everyone.  
Were one big team.  
It's fun, exciting  
There are no rights or wrong

Every morning they do whakataukī, they do ... karakia ... they do more for Māori, more than a normal school. Also, for Pasifika they do more for their culture. Even Indian. It doesn't matter what culture you are from; it is nurtured. They also teach all the other kids about those cultures as well. It gets blended in. Like Vietnamese, he comes home and says I know how to say this in Vietnamese. They say greetings from their country. It gives them the opportunity to be themselves, it gives them that confidence. (WHĀNAU)

Another way schools supported cultural identity and inclusion was through actively recruiting staff who shared the cultural backgrounds of students. This cultural connection was important to both students and whānau who talked about how these staff members were role models or people they felt they could relate to and connect with.

## Schools have high expectations for all

The high expectations school leaders held for student learning and wellbeing and their commitment to wanting the best for students stood out in all the good-practice schools. Schools also had high expectations for staff. This commitment was visible in schools' valuing of relationships and wellbeing, in the way they committed resources and energy to uplift te reo and tikanga Māori, and through their belief in the value of long-term and whole-school PLD. This commitment was visible to whānau who talked about the many ways teachers and school leaders supported the passions, learning, identity, or wellbeing of their children. High expectations are also about clearly communicating what students and whānau can expect from teachers and the school.

I ask her what has she learnt today? And she always has learnt something. My daughter has 107 chapter books. The school noticed her [interest] and helps her along the way ... They push and strive and just want the best for your children, and for them to keep going [forward]. (WHĀNAU)

We have an ethos of excellence ... We are just not OK with mediocre [for staff, students, or activities] ... (SCHOOL LEADERS)

We have high expectations of the students who come to this school. We don't make excuses because of where they come from, or poverty. We expect them to achieve. We expect them to do well. (TE REO MĀORI TEACHER & KAPA HAKA TUTOR)

### Finding students' passions hooks them into learning

Schools' commitment to wanting the best for students was particularly evident in the many opportunities they offered for learning experiences and trips outside school, extracurricular activities, and sports. There were multiple reasons for prioritising these opportunities. In keeping with their commitment to getting to know students, staff wanted to find different "hooks" that could engage students with learning and strengthened their connection to school. These opportunities were a way of including students who might be feeling disconnected from school, or who might not feel they are succeeding, as they offered different pathways for students to explore their interests or find new passions. Another reason schools prioritised these experiences was that they wanted to connect the school and students to local opportunities, people, and spaces and places.

My girl likes being outdoors, so the school found out about that so they have made her head of the environmental thing. They find what the kids are interested in. Now they have a new garden. It used to be a rubbishy mess ... There is always a new thing going on. (WHĀNAU)

Many schools offered a wide range of experiences in areas that students were interested in and passionate about, such as language learning, music and arts, ICT and digital technologies, visits to local art galleries, and opportunities to take part in sports, kapa haka, cultural performances, or engage in environmental or gardening projects. Each school had a different focus and ways of sourcing experiences for students. Four approaches are described below:

- Forging long-term connections with local marae, hapū, and iwi is important to School 1, but they are conscious that the local iwi have many demands on their time. One way the school is building connections is through joining a local wildlife conservation project that has the local iwi as a partner. The school leaders also stated they wanted to make sure Māori and Pacific students access and maximise the benefits of the "white spaces" in town; that is, institutions such as the art gallery and library that tended to be managed and visited mostly by Pākehā. The school makes frequent use of these resources and has forged a relationship with a local Māori artist



who exhibits in these spaces. He talks to students about his work, and they worked on a joint project with him in the gallery. The leader of School 1 also wanted students to be able to learn in the community with their whānau, so they are entrepreneurial about sourcing extra sponsorship from local businesses to make sure as many whānau as possible can accompany students on learning experiences to local marae, and other important spaces and places. Sponsorship funds are also used to assist students who perform or compete in local events.

- School 3 has a focus on learning that acknowledges students' cultural knowledge, engages students via the use of digital technologies and the arts, and promotes an ethos of service which is an important value for the predominantly Pacific student population. For example, students visited the local museum to explore Māori and Pacific motifs. As part of their technology learning they then designed and made necklaces on a 3D printer using motifs from their cultures. Students ran a pop-up shop to sell their necklaces, and the proceeds went to charity. The school has partnered with local businesses to run a robotic programme that enables students to design solutions for local groups. This school also has a performing arts centre, a wide range of musical instruments for students to use, and specialised tutors. Students enter in local band competitions. The centre is open after hours, and students and community members can attend low-cost classes.
- School 2 has an open-door policy for community members, such as people from local churches, who offered their time or support. These volunteers, who are carefully vetted and trained about how to relate to students, enable the school to offer students a wide range of extracurricular activities and learning opportunities. For example, as well as te reo Māori, students have access to a range of other languages such as Spanish. The school has several music tutors, and volunteers run morning reading and maths clubs for students.
- School 5 finds out what students' strengths and interests are and tries to create opportunities that fit with these. They have started photography, chess, and robotics clubs to match the interests of current students. They also employ kapa haka, taiaha, Pacific performance, and art tutors. Students are also connected with the community through sports, dance, music, and technology challenges. The school wants as many students as possible to access a broad range of experiences and feel proud of who they are as they represent their school, so they find sponsors who fund outfits, uniforms, equipment, and trips.

**Aku mahi i konei hei hoatu ngā taonga o ngā tupuna nā rātou i homai hei tiaki i ngā tamariki o te kura: te reo, me ngā tikanga, ngā ahuatanga o te manu tioriori, mau rākau, taiaha, patu. Erā atu taonga. (KAPA HAKA TUTOR)**

- School 6 is in a rural location and maximises the use of the resources they have on site to give students a range of opportunities. They have large grounds, a bike track, and are an enviroschool. They have a garden, orchard, bees, chickens, and a ngahere (forest) that students take an active role in managing. One of the curriculum focuses is kaitiakitanga, and the school draws on mātauranga Māori to help them with sustainable gardening practices.

School leaders were highly committed to ensuring equity of experiences for students whose families could not afford the extra costs of trips, sports uniforms, or extracurricular activities. Many of these schools were low to mid decile and did not have school donations to fund these opportunities. School leaders were creative about sourcing other funding or tapping into local opportunities in ways that

also connected students with their community. For example, School 3's approach to sourcing business partners meant that students were building relationships with local business people. One tension for schools was that forging these connections took time and energy which added to already busy workloads.

### Schools work to ensure equity of access to high-quality resources

A second way schools expressed a commitment to wanting the best for students was through working hard to ensure that students could access a variety of high-quality equipment, books, and other resources. Some school leaders noted that offering broken or old equipment or computers sent a signal to students that they were not important enough to deserve good-quality gear. Some made sure kapa haka groups were well-resourced and had outfits that made students feel proud. Several schools had well-resourced and used libraries. To make connections with students' cultures, these schools made sure they had books in te reo Māori, and in the heritage languages of other student.

Recently I asked an Indian child, 'What would make you happy at this school?' He said 'Some Punjabi books'. He was so happy, so I put pressure on the library to get them. You start with the ones who always get left out, and move inwards, you start with minority groups. (SCHOOL LEADERS)

Some schools had onsite resources such as a performing arts studio. Others made efforts to provide quality resources and experiences for students by taking them to local community resources such as libraries, arts centres, and museums.

### Ako and student leadership is prioritised

A culture of ako was evident in the schools. The ability of everyone to both learn and teach was recognised, and included students, teachers, whānau, and those in leadership positions. Tuakana-teina approaches were all important at all schools.

Many schools had a strategic focus on fostering Māori student leaders, and Māori students had many opportunities to take on cultural leadership roles. These student leaders could, for example, run whakatau from start to finish, call the roll in te reo, or lead karakia, kapa haka and waiata, or the school whakataukī.

In [Maori-medium classes] in the morning hui, we make a big deal of kids who look after others—tuakana. So, they can see that's the kind of behaviour we're looking for. Manaakitanga is one of our big kaupapa—we want to encourage it. (KAIAKO)

A few leaders noted that cultural leadership roles needed to be set up carefully. They had learnt it was important not to assume students wanted to take a lead role just because they were Māori. Consultation with whānau can help to ensure leadership roles are appropriate to students' cultures.

Most schools had formal ways they supported students to develop as leaders and supporters of their peers. They had roles like house leaders, values leaders, or peer mediators. One had a licence system that students worked through during their time at school (see Story 12). At this school, everyone was called a teacher, and students who had gained their licences had leadership responsibilities.

We don't have 'a' teacher [in class]. Students are all on personalised timetables—we set them every morning. We've got 3 licences. They all point to our values. (TEACHER)

At assembly we start with Māori: Tēnā koutou ... We say good afternoon teachers [to everyone] 'cause we call ourselves teachers as we look after our classes. (STUDENTS)

Another school offered students a range of leadership training programmes. These programmes ran during the day and after school. Some of the student leaders visited local contributing schools to assist younger students with their learning in areas such as robotics and peer reading. Students also mentored their peers. Sports leadership was another focus. Students could attend Tu Kaha which is a sports pathways programme developed by Steven Adams. This programme promotes pride in identity and fosters values that align with the school's values.

[My child] comes home every day buzzing about something ... The [student] leadership programme has a lot to do with it—it's about lending out a hand to pick people up along the way. They have a programme every Friday. (WHĀNAU)

Being part of PB4L School-Wide had prompted many schools to develop new leadership roles for students (see Story 4).

## STORY 4

### Students who are values guardians help build a caring culture

When the principal joined School 1, she thought PB4L School-Wide was run as “an old-school system with punishments, and rewards as presents”. She consulted with the community to find out what sort of learning culture was important to them. Then the school developed new values that reflected these views. High expectations of learners and ideas about growth mindsets were embedded in the values. Each value has a bicultural focus with some aspects in te reo Māori and others in English. Tuakana-teina approaches, and the idea of ako—everyone is a learner and a teacher—are interwoven within the descriptions of values. Knowing the strengths of each learner is also key.

[In class] We started the year with some questions: What are you bringing to our class or school? What can someone help you with? We're all teachers and learners ... Children [spend time doing activities] in whānau groups—the older children with the younger ... When we talk about tuakana-teina they really get it; I've got some skills and I'm happy to share. The children consult—it is not always the older child that has the ideas. The [older students] admire things the younger children can do. (TEACHERS)

As part of the tuakana-teina focus, older students are trained as leaders and guardians of the school values. The guardians are buddies for new students, help their peers in the classroom or playground, and take a lead role in activities like assembly presentations. For example, they presented a session on what bullying looks like, sounds like, and feels like.

Students felt a strong sense of pride in taking on these leadership roles, and staff and whānau all felt the values, and the student guardians are some of the main things that have helped shift the school culture so it is more about inclusion, relationships, caring, and belonging.

All the kids belong in a group. The principal rang me, she asked, 'Could you ask your son to come and see me, as there is a little kid who needs his help?' It make him feel good as this other kid, who had been home schooled, needed friends.

It teaches them leadership skills.

I'm watching him grow as a person. The kids looks after each other. Because of [the values] the older ones really look after the young ones. (WHĀNAU)

[The values] came in—it's about growth, resilience—it's the school motto. Young kids come home saying words like resilience, tenacity! She learnt about never giving up. The values system is, to me, what's helping keep the school together. No bullying happens as, as soon as it happens, it gets shut down. People say 'You're not showing the [values]'...

I bring the [school values] system home, if you can't show this at home, you need to [step up]. (WHĀNAU)

Growing knowledge about how collaborative grouping could harness the skills of peers was a focus at some schools. Leaders at these schools considered collaborative work to be more beneficial than ability grouping, as it fostered a wider range of aspects of learning and wellbeing. As one example, it provided a way for students to learn how to interact with each other, explain their learning, and support their peers. Students at these schools talked about feeling that it's OK to make mistakes, how their peers supported them, and how they learnt from their peers.

### **Schools value students' input and set them up to take a lead role**

Most schools had processes that enabled student consultation and input, such as around school values or clubs, as well as student councils. Many of these processes, such as school councils, are based on Western democratic processes. Some used tikanga that was more aligned with Māori worldviews (such as class wānanga and sharing circles) to listen to students' perspectives or for them to discuss and consider solutions.

At some schools, students were clearly positioned as agentic leaders who contributed to the school culture. These schools consulted students on most major decisions. For example, one school asked students for their views on the characteristics to look for in a new principal.

Overall, schools had many ways of building or acknowledging students' leadership capabilities. Student leadership was prioritised as it supported many goals. It was a way of building students' identity as learners (see Story 5), as well as their cultural identities. Being able to take a lead role helped build students' sense of pride and belonging at school. It also fostered their self-confidence and sense of wellbeing.

## STORY 5

### Student-led conferences celebrate learning with whānau

At School 4, student-led conferences are an important opportunity to celebrate a child alongside their whānau, and for them to take the lead role in the process. The school changed focus to include extended families, so these conferences also help the school build relationships with the wider whānau. Whānau can join remotely if they can't make it in person. The new format is resulting in a higher turnout of whānau (100% in one year).

At the end of the year, we have student-led conferences and we get extended whānau coming into those, mum and dad, aunties, grandparents, and other kids. That's kind of a high point of the year for kids. Often families then take that forward and they go out for tea together, or whatever their particular family likes to do ...

It is a point where we ask the whānau to stop and focus specifically on that child and that child is able to say, 'This is what my writing looked like at the beginning of the year and then I've been working on adding on adjectives and extending' ... and they can talk about their learning, and 'This is where I am now'. And you see the children beaming, and you see the families so full of pride. The way that we report to parents is really important in terms of everybody's wellbeing in terms of being at school. (SCHOOL LEADERS)

Students said the conferences are one of the things that contribute to them feeling proud to be Māori at school. Whānau consider the conferences have multiple benefits.

Student-led conferences are an opportunity to learn what our kids are doing at school, and about the relationship between your child and the teacher. My child puts a lot of work into the conferences, she goes through her work profile to see how far she's come, and we see pieces of her writing that didn't come home.

(1ST WHĀNAU)

Through student-led conferences, I noticed the girls' confidence has grown, they introduce the teacher and take everyone around to shake hands. It sets them up for talking to people and looking them in the eye. Self-managing is big here. Kids have to look after their own stuff even though they don't do it at home.

(2ND WHĀNAU)

## Pride in your school and culture fosters belonging

Having a sense of connection and belonging to school is known to be connected to positive short- and longer-term health and education outcomes for young people (Allen et al., 2018). As well as prioritising relationships, building students' sense of pride in their school was a way school staff aimed to build belonging. There were many ways schools worked to create a unified culture that fostered pride. Many of the priorities discussed earlier in this section, such as fostering students' sense of cultural identity and their leadership capabilities, also contributed to students' sense of pride and belonging at school.

The focus on values and celebrations of values and learning was another way of doing this. To foster pride and belonging, several schools also used rewards to acknowledge displays of the school values as well as branding, uniforms, and house team events and celebrations.

It's been a long process. We got the house flags, the house score board, house school tee-shirts. It became an important thing. Before, house sports were just token. We wanted to develop pride in the school. We brought in the shirts, and children are allowed to wear them as a day uniform. Learners are really engaged with that. We got nice signage. We rebrand the school. It makes the school look good, professional, and welcoming. (SCHOOL LEADERS/TEACHERS)

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# 7. Partnering with whānau and community supports wellbeing and learning

The door is always open for whānau to share. The open-door policy we have is brilliant. (WHĀNAU)

This section describes how the good-practice schools formed partnerships with whānau and their community in ways that fostered wellbeing. Schools' valuing of whanaungatanga was demonstrated through the priority schools placed on fostering informal as well as more formal relationships with whānau and communities, which aimed to support wellbeing and learning. Whanaungatanga took place inside and outside of the school, and helped school staff become part of the community, and the community to become part of the school.

## How does partnering with whānau and communities support wellbeing? Key messages:

- Schools believe all whānau need to feel welcome at school. They have open doors and prioritise whanaungatanga as a foundation to support the wellbeing and learning of students.
- School leaders and staff are visible at school and in the community. They make time to build relationships with whānau at school drop-off and pick-up times and at local community events.
- Reframing common events, such as "Meet the teacher night", so they involve students and are more about relationship building, helps to form stronger connections with whānau.
- Schools listen to whānau suggestions and invite feedback from whānau for important school actions. They act on suggestions. Reciprocal and mutually beneficial relationships are key.
- Active listening and positive, frequent, and clear communication with whānau is a priority, and staff address any issues quickly.



## Kanohi kitea in school: Being seen and connected to whānau

All schools valued whanaungatanga and relationships with whānau. These connections were seen as a key foundation that supported the wellbeing and learning of students. School staff tried hard to make stronger connections with whānau, especially those they might not see often. They believed that all whānau needed to feel welcome at their child's school. The school office staff are the first contact that many parents have with someone in the school, so schools made sure that first experience was welcoming and set the tone for an ongoing relationship.

**The school is quite an inviting environment ... Having [a Pacific person] at the counter is important as families are mostly Pacific Islanders or Māori. That makes it a whole lot easier for parents. It's really important for schools [to be welcoming]. It's not just dealing with the parents and students, it's all the age groups, students, parents, and grandparents. (WHĀNAU/BOT)**

It makes a difference when leaders are visible and accessible outside of school buildings. It creates important opportunities to build informal relationships with whānau. Staff would often have informal conversations with whānau at the school gate or in the school carpark at drop-off and pick-up times. Most principals greeted students and whānau at the school gate in the morning. In one school, the principal started and ended their day at the school gate talking to parents and caregivers—they talked about how they had many important hui at this time.

Informal and formal events were organised to encourage whānau to come to school and feel welcome. Whānau were also made welcome through open-door policies, where they could come into the school and classrooms to be with their tamarki.

**The door is always open, parents just come in every day, all the time. There are no rules to stay outside the classroom ... There are staff who make time to look after people, the admin lady is always calm. (SCHOOL LEADERS)**

Relationships with whānau and the community were long-term and multigenerational in some of the schools. Different generations of the same whānau could attend the school over time, and it was not unusual for grandparents to be the main caregivers for their mokopuna.

Most schools had members of their community, including whānau and volunteers, working in the school. Some were paid teacher aides, others were volunteers who helped students with reading programmes, for example, or coaching sports teams. Many volunteers were retirees and for some schools it was very important to have the different generations present in the school.

Having different generations is very important—we need them or we wouldn't have our reading club. Some grandparents are dropping off their mokos. We have to get to know them. There are long-term relationships in the community. (SCHOOL LEADERS)

Schools also worked to break down the separation between school and home. Staff visited whānau at home, picked up children on rainy days, or transported children or whānau to important appointments if needed.

## School staff communicate frequently with whānau

Whānau valued the ways schools communicated with them. Clear systems of communication with whānau, whether face to face, by phone or text, via Facebook, or apps such as Seesaw, were a priority in schools. Staff focused on building good relationships with whānau through sharing students' learning and successes, and information about school events. Frequent positive communication was the norm.

The Seesaw app—you can see what your kids are doing at school. On Seesaw it's good to see what my four kids are doing. There are photos, stories, learning. You can comment—it enriches your conversation with your kids. Rather than asking, 'What did you do at school?' and them saying 'I ate my lunch'! On Facebook they give constant updates, reminders ...

(WHĀNAU)

There are Facebook pages—they put certificates on there, a newsletter ... It's useful information now, much better than it was. It gives you the big events in the school calendar, and the principal lets you know what to wear etc., also things in the community that the school is involved in.

They ring and tell you if there's good behaviour. There is a syndicate shield, all kids in the class have the opportunity to get that shield. Then they ring you and tell you your child got it, then you can go to assembly and hear great things about your kid. (WHĀNAU)

Schools also made sure they communicated frequently and clearly during times that could be stressful. For example, knowing that some whānau were anxious about their children staying away from home on camp, one school sent whānau many images of their children learning and enjoying themselves which were appreciated by whānau.

Frequent positive communications provided a foundation if any issues arose, as there was already a relationship in place. Schools were careful to contact whānau about positive things as well as challenges, so that whānau would not only associate contact from the school as being negative. Knowing that school was not always considered a safe space by whānau, some schools created comfortable environments for whānau to interact with staff. Staff also went to whānau homes or community spaces to meet with and talk with whānau, and build trusting relationships.

## Forming reciprocal relationships with whānau

Reciprocal and mutually beneficial relationships were key to building partnerships between whānau and school. All schools listened to whānau suggestions and consulted whānau about their aspirations for their children or other aspects of school practice. Some schools also consulted students about many of their important decisions. At some schools, whānau consultations were a core part of their change process. Schools reported back to whānau exactly how they had acted on their suggestions, and then sought feedback about next steps. It was important to whānau that they could see that their aspirations or suggestions were acted on. Acting on whānau suggestions helped strengthen relationships and school practices.

Every term they do a whānau hui and everyone gets a meal. The kids watch a movie. We [whānau] are asked: Do your kids like being here? What do you want? ... The principal, she actually integrates what the parents want. I have never seen a school that does that so well. (WHĀNAU)

## Reframing common practices to build stronger relationships

All schools had realised that some of the traditional ways they attempted to build relationships with whānau were not working as well as they hoped. They had reframed practices like “meet the teacher” evenings, consultation processes, student learning conferences, or whānau support for school trips to better enable them to build relationships and partnerships with whānau. One practice schools had in common was the way they worked to make occasions more fun and informal, which provided more casual opportunities for people to interact and build connections. Another was tailoring events to whānau needs and interests. A third was organising events in ways that made it easier for whānau to attend; for example, inviting the whole family and providing kai meant that whānau did not have to find babysitters.

Some of the approaches schools had reframed, which school staff and whānau told us were helping whānau feel more welcome at school or partners in their child’s learning, are described below:

- School 1 is trying to build a culture in which whānau are comfortable being at school and are partners in their child’s learning. Feedback from whānau Māori suggested they did not think their tamariki were successful at school. So the school organised a pizza evening for whānau where they looked at tamariki success. The school shared Poutama Pounamu data and talked about what they were doing. After this session, school leaders worked with whānau to develop a graduate profile for tamariki Māori. This process helped staff realise that Māori perspectives about what success looked like were different from Pākehā perspectives. The school has also changed their learning programme; students now go to one of their local marae once a year, and visit other local places. The whānau of every child is invited to join in their child’s learning by coming on these visits. The visits are an important time for relationship building with people in the community as well as between students, whānau, and school staff. The school wants as many whānau as possible to attend, so they source sponsorship for buses to ensure that transport costs are not a barrier. The school also holds other whānau hui, lunches, and games evenings.

- School 2 has a whānau hui every month. The school provides kai for everyone and tamariki watch a movie while adults talk. The school also has an annual whānau consultation hui to talk about strategic directions. At these hui, school leaders talk about the progress they have made on the prior suggestions of whānau, and everyone works together to set new directions. As some examples, whānau wanted more focus on student behaviour, sports, and performing arts. Whānau Māori wanted more emphasis on local pūrākau and the Land Wars in the curriculum as well as marae visits that enable tamariki to learn about local tikanga and what happens on a marae. The school took action on all these suggestions. Whānau told us they valued how the school listens and acts. Recognising that many grandparents are looking after their moko, the school also holds regular grandparent events.
- School 3 wanted to make stronger connections with whānau and their community, so they changed their “meet the teacher” night to a community expo. At the expo, whānau get to meet teachers and people who provide learning and health support to students. During the evening the school band plays and students showcase their digital learning. Staff noted this change in focus, which celebrates students’ learning and skills, was resulting in a larger turnout of whānau. The school was continuing to work on fostering stronger connections in the community by planning events in local shopping centres and places where whānau congregate.
- School 4 has developed a whānau-centred approach to student-led conferences (see Story 5) which has been successful in engaging everyone in conversations about learning.
- School 5 recognised that it was not always easy for whānau to come to school, so at the start of the year teachers ring whānau to talk about how their child is settling into class. School staff make extensive use of the Seesaw app and the school website as communication tools. If needed, staff visit whānau at home. At this school “meet the teacher” night used to involve whānau listening to school leaders and teachers talking in the hall. Now it has been turned into “whānau fun night”. Parents, siblings, aunties, uncles, nanas, and koro are invited. After a short introduction in the hall, whānau visit their child’s class and have some kai, there is a bouncy castle for tamariki, and everyone joins together for fun activities like a tug-of-war. The school also draws on whānau knowledge to improve school practices. As one example, a whānau hui was held to help create more useful and readable school reports.

Our school reports were created with the parents. Anyone who wanted to could come [to the hui]. We asked what tables do you want? What comments? What do you want to see? (SCHOOL LEADERS)

- School 6 had struggled to involve whānau in the consultation processes that were held at school, so they decided to do a phone consultation. Whānau were told well in advance that someone would call them to hear their views. The BoT and school leaders reached about 90% of whānau and had some rich conversations.

People get hōhā writing down stuff, and they don't want to sit down and listen. Once we rang them, that's how we did our consultations by phone, they told us things they might not have ... Some things they might be feeling shamed [to say] they could say privately. We asked five questions, simple ones; it was a more personal touch. That's been the secret to the culture of the school. It is an open environment, people can talk to anyone. (BOT/WHĀNAU)

## Kanohi kitea outside school: Being seen and connected to community

Being part of the local community was important to schools. Both Māori and Pākehā staff and BoT members made sure to be seen at school and community events (such as local marae, sports, or arts events) where they could build connections and have informal conversations with whānau. Being seen as part of the community is an important way of building relationships by going to where whānau were, instead of expecting whānau to always come to the school. This was one way of connecting with whānau who may have very little direct (or positive) contact with school.

## Schools are building connections with Māori communities

All schools were working in different ways to form stronger connections with mana whenua. Schools were building connections with Māori communities through involving people from local marae, hapū and iwi, and kaumātua and kuia in their school or through consultation processes. All schools had Māori staff and/or BoT members who had a long-term commitment to supporting Māori learners.

Having good relationships with Māori who are well known in their communities, and who whakapapa into the community, can be an important conduit for supporting schools to make connections with whānau. In one school, a kaumātua/chaplain held this role, while another school employed someone from the local iwi as a whānau, hapū, and iwi liaison to strengthen the school's connection with the community. A few schools also had a local iwi member on the BoT, or had consulted iwi about their aspirations for learners at the school.

Schools were in different places in terms of their relationships with local marae; most were working on forming stronger connections. A focus on connecting with marae and local places was embedded as part of the curriculum in many schools (see Section 9: Fostering wellbeing through the curriculum).

### Reflection space

How is your school planning for long-term relationship building with local Māori communities including marae, hapū, and iwi? Who are the people you could partner with to help you build these relationships?

At the beginning of this year, we went to [the local] marae for a noho. It was amazing, incredible. Parents came out of the woodwork—ones we'd never seen—they knew what to do, this was their norm. It was a beautiful thing because parents were in their comfort zone (TEACHER)

As noted earlier, some schools had people who were closely associated with a local marae on their staff. Several schools had Māori staff or kapa haka tutors who did not whakapapa to the local community. They were very conscious of the need to connect and consult with people from the community. Some schools had consultation processes in place, while others were working on healing past raruraru (from before their time) and reconnecting with local marae. Others were building new connections (see Story 6).

#### STORY 6

#### **Building relationships with the local iwi**

When a new principal came to School 4 a year or so ago, he wanted to connect with the local iwi, whose land the school was located on. He asked to have a pōwhiri into the school that would involve the iwi. That hadn't been traditionally done by the school and it started a useful conversation about the school's ongoing relationship with iwi. For the principal, iwi involvement in previous school contexts was the norm, and he believed it was important to continue those kinds of relationships.

The pōwhiri was a first step that started a relationship between the school and the iwi that staff are working on growing. Their lead team has gone to meet with the iwi at the marae, and are going through a process to organise a pōwhiri for all staff at the marae, and have their end-of-year PLD day there. They are also working on linking iwi histories into the school's story.

We asked them to be involved in our story. We're going to rebrand here as well, so we want their story and our story to be cohesive, so that when you walk into the school there is a visual link and a story to what we do that links us. ... We have wanted a local curriculum, working alongside local hapū and iwi. It's a big shift that's been made. Teachers are wanting to develop their pedagogy and reo. It's really important. There's a high percentage of Māori kids here. (SCHOOL LEADERS)

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## 8. Offering tailored support removes barriers

We must make sure our kids and teachers are supported. This is a team responsibility.  
(SCHOOL LEADERS)

A sense of inclusion and belonging is an important aspect of wellbeing for students. This section describes how schools worked to remove barriers by offering extra support to individuals or groups of students who had additional learning or health and wellbeing needs. Schools also offered support to whānau.

### How do schools provide extra wellbeing support for students and whānau? Key messages:

- Schools have revised many types of transition processes to better support students.
- Schools are proactive about offering extra support and work hard to meet student needs. Many have a teacher aide in each class. Schools offer individualised support or tailored programmes for groups of students. They have well-developed networks of people and organisations to draw on if they cannot provide the support themselves.
- Schools understand that if whānau are not well, then this impacts on their children. They go the extra mile to remove barriers and support whānau wellbeing.

### Smooth transitions support wellbeing and learning

Developing innovative ways to manage times of transition was a part of the wellbeing focus of all schools. School leaders and teachers understood that times of transition could be unsettling for both students and whānau as there is the potential for anxiety and stress at these times. Staff looked carefully at different forms of transition to make sure these times went smoothly and were a positive experience for all. For example, some schools attended to wellbeing first as part of the transition into class. Schools also designed a range of processes that supported students (and sometimes whānau) at the following times:

- **Joining or leaving the school:** Schools had many ways to welcome and support students who were joining the school. Pōwhiri or whakatau for new students was common, as were buddy systems. Transitioning into school from early childhood education can be a big deal for many whānau. Schools developed processes that enabled early childhood centre (ECC) students to be frequent visitors to a primary school before they joined. One school had aligned their values, vision, and some of their PLD focuses with the local ECC so students' learning was a continuation



of their ECC foundation. This school was also in the process of working through a similar alignment with the local secondary school.

Another school gave whānau a New Entrant pack that includes a sheet for whānau to tell staff about their child's likes and dislikes. After 6 weeks, a hui is held with whānau who visit the school and get to see and hear how their child is doing.

Other schools also had extensive transition programmes for students as they moved to secondary school. The intermediate school in this study had a student leadership programme that assisted with transition by building relationships between intermediate students and those at local contributing schools.

Families were key partners in transition processes for younger students and schools had open-door policies for whānau to visit. Schools developed transition plans for students with extra support needs and a few schools had designed special transition processes for whānau who were anxious about leaving their child at school.

[For students with extra support needs] I will go to kindys and centres before they come into school and meet the families then, so that families feel confident. It is so important to meet them early on. Some students are transitioning in soon with some issues. [These visits] help with transition plans. (SENCO)

- **Starting the day:** Several schools had a settling in time in the morning. Some started the day with whakataukī and karakia. For example, the Māori-medium classes at one school started the day with karakia. Another school had a morning check-in time where students discussed how they were feeling and if they were in a learning headspace (see Story 11).
- **Moving between classes and breaktimes:** Some schools had removed bells as they did not create a tau or calm atmosphere, and instead played music, or had other ways of noting it was time to change locations or activities.
- **Transferring from Māori medium:** Transitioning from Māori medium (including from kōhanga reo, puna reo, or kura) is a big decision for whānau. Schools recognised that students needed support at this time of change, particularly when they are moving from a Māori language environment to a predominantly English language environment. One school used understandings from ESOL teaching to assist this transition.
- **Transferring from other schools:** A few schools ran special introduction sessions for students transferring from other schools. One school had a club for new students and a process to help students understand the school values and ways of working.

We have a newcomers' club. When they've been at school for a few weeks—they do workshops on the values. For the little ones it might be a tiki tour around the school ... When you're sick where do you go? Talk to the office lady first. What does the uniform look like? Where do you eat your lunch? ... We make it fun. With the older kids, it's What do you enjoy doing? How are you going making friends? (SCHOOL LEADERS)



- **Transferring between learning support classes and classrooms:** Some schools had onsite learning support units. They had a focus on transitioning students between learning support and other classrooms, or on welcoming students with extra support needs into classes.

The special school is part of the culture. The children are so empathetic towards them. They learnt the signs for the children who don't have spoken language. We're all calm and consistent as teachers. It's a safe feeling for children. It's the culture. Teachers do a lot of preparation before a child arrives, and prepares the other children to welcome them ... they think about how they might feel coming in ... if they have behaviour problems etc. There is lots of talking around things, so children know what to do.

(SCHOOL LEADER/TEACHER)

- **Starting a new year:** An awareness that some students felt very anxious about the class they were going to be in next year had prompted one school to decide on new class compositions before the school closed each year. Students and whānau were told the class each student would be in next year, and students were invited to get together for fun activities with their new classmates so they could start building bonds that could be a foundation for the new year. If students wanted to transfer to another class, they could do so early on. This meant that teachers could start building a strong class culture early in the new year and each class had fewer disruptions at the start of the year.
- **Moving from play to more formal learning approaches:** Play-based approaches were common in junior classes as a way of fostering learning, and as a transition between ECE approaches and primary school. Staff considered play-based approaches had many other benefits for students' wellbeing and for older students. One school had dress-ups and play equipment in each class to help students transition into the school day in the morning or have time out in the classroom if needed.

### Including students with extra support needs is a priority

Feeling included and that you belong is an important aspect of wellbeing for students, and schools had many ways of including students with extra learning support or wellbeing needs. Some of the schools had a high proportion of students with extra learning needs or students in on-site learning support units. Having a learning support unit on site meant students and teachers had access to extra specialist support.

There is a high number of students with [extra support needs] but you wouldn't pick them in the playground or classroom—so they must be feeling safe and secure within their environment, and classroom. (RTLb)

Many of the schools funded extra learning assistants/teacher aides or had volunteers who provided extra support in the classroom. A few schools made sure they had two adults in every classroom. Often, teacher aides were whānau members, which offered schools another way to connect with

whānau and students' cultures and communities. These adults supported students' learning and wellbeing and shared their knowledge and experiences with students. School staff also valued how students benefited from having more than one adult in the classroom with whom they could form relationships.

### Schools tailor support to match students' needs

Schools had a SENCO or SWiS who provided initial assessment services, ran programmes related to current needs, brokered extra support, or provided a quiet space in their room for students who were anxious, upset, or angry. RTLB also provided support. A few schools had access to onsite or visiting counsellors. Access to onsite support varied across schools. Some schools were a host school for RTLB, others had visiting staff. Some schools had a full-time SENCO, while in smaller schools the SENCO had a small amount of release time allocated to the role and many other responsibilities. These staff felt stretched.

Schools contacted whānau early if they perceived students required more support. They worked closely with whānau to identify issues and discuss extra support options. If needed, most schools were active in calling in other people to help individual students. Some schools had moved from a process where different services worked individually with a child and the school was not necessarily informed about what was happening. They now worked as part of local multi-disciplinary teams to decide on support options. These schools found these teams to be effective as they resolved the fragmentation and communication issues that could occur when lots of different services worked with a child and the school was not kept informed.

Many schools and SENCOs had also developed networks of providers and agencies they could call or refer individual students or whānau to. These included: Ministry of Education (MoE) psychologists; Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMS) staff; paediatricians; Oranga Tamariki; local police; health nurses; district health board (DHB); iwi or Whānau Ora health services; and local non-governmental organisations (NGOs) or charities such as Barnardos Child and Family services.

[We ask] When you see a child acting out, what is the background? We dig around, and also support the teacher. We identify [issues and needs], and give hands-on support. We will make referrals out, but we must make sure our kids and teachers are supported. This is a team responsibility. We work really closely with families; we support them and link them up with services. (SCHOOL LEADERS)

Schools' access to culturally relevant support varied. To provide relevant support to students and whānau Māori, some schools sourced programmes developed from a te ao Māori worldview such as those provided by iwi trusts or Whānau Ora health services. Others had a kaumātua who supported the school in their work with whānau.

### Schools connect students with tailored programmes

One feature of the schools was that they sourced or developed a wide range of needs-based programmes and extra support for groups of students. Some developed their own programmes, which were run by SWiS or SENCO. Others sourced funding so that students could attend external

programmes. It was common for schools to run a few programmes each year to fit with the current needs of groups of students. Dealing with grief, illness, or death at home was a common area. Managing emotions and anxiety was another.

Both my daughter and I struggle with anxiety. I suffer from depression and anxiety and the school is really good. This school helps with that and they recognise that ... For my daughter, I would not put her in another school ... They have taught her a lot about herself and she is doing really well. (WHĀNAU)

Other schools developed proactive and strengths-based approaches that aimed to address students' needs before they became bigger lifelong issues. An example that harnessed the skills of peers is described below in Story 7.

### STORY 7

#### **Students learn together to turn rusty bikes into community resources**

School 3 decided to start a lunch-time club that mixes boys who are at risk of disengaging from education with school prefects who are shoulder-tapped to join. The club is run by the caretaker who is a long-serving staff member. The school bought a few rusty bikes online. Students work together to strip the bikes down, fix them, and then sell them. The profits go to charity.

Staff felt this club is highly successful as it offers a range of benefits. It provides a setting for prefects to act as role models. As any student can attend, vulnerable students are not pigeon-holed or labelled. Students can access extra hands-on learning experiences and develop new relationships with their peers and the caretaker. These connections help build students' sense of engagement and belonging at school and foster school values about being connected to the local community.

## **Going the extra mile to support whānau wellbeing**

Knowing that student wellbeing is interconnected with whānau wellbeing, many schools went the extra mile to also remove barriers for whānau. Knowing the cost of transport could be an issue for some whānau, some staff picked up students to bring them to school, or whānau so they could come on school trips. Others sometimes took whānau to health appointments if they did not have their own transport. Many schools also supported whānau wellbeing by assisting whānau to make connections with local resources or support programmes. Some of the ways schools assisted in removing barriers for whānau are described below:

- To reduce the barriers of healthcare access and cost for whānau, a couple of schools used the Imoko™ health services app. As part of the process, a few school staff were trained to conduct health assessments of common childhood health problems. Via the app they then access a digital healthcare assistant who can approve prescriptions that get sent to whānau quickly (Schools 2 and 4).

- To help whānau access support, a school has built connections with a marae health services trust that runs parenting and reading together programmes. The school connects whānau Māori with this trust (School 2).
- One school had changed their meet the teacher night to a community expo. At the expo, whānau get to meet teachers, RTLB, nurses, dentists, and learning support people so that they can find out more about the free health and learning resources they can access. The school also opens to the community in the evenings and runs a community technology centre which assists parents to get connected and helps with financial literacy, such as transferring money safely to family in the Pacific Islands (School 3).
- One school runs a fitness group for students before and after school. It started as a form of support for overweight students, but anyone can join. The programme is funded and run by a local kaupapa Māori health provider that also funds the school health nurses. The person who runs the programme works with students and connects with families to provide services such as meal suggestions and cooking classes (School 3).

The guy running [the fitness programme] shoulder-tapped the kids. It has been really successful. It has changed their belief in themselves as well as their size.

(SCHOOL LEADER/TEACHER)

## There are barriers for schools in providing needed support

Most schools had built a strong network of trained staff and external providers and agencies, and felt well supported. These schools made sure they had the right people working with students and whānau. Research suggests that getting a good fit between a support worker (such as SWiS) and the community is vital to the success of these roles (Bright et al., 2020).

A few SENCO or SWiS felt more assistance was needed such as more: funding for their role (if they were part time); timely or ongoing support for students with diagnoses; support for younger students who came to school with undiagnosed needs; or counselling services for students with anxiety or who were self-harming.

It's frustrating that we get 2 weeks transitioning funding. Children with a diagnosis should have funding support in place right through instead of me having to battle for funding for them.

Autism and other things don't go away when you start school! (SENCO)

We are missing a counsellor. We're getting girls who talk of suicide and are cutting themselves, who fall out with each other ... Where is the person who can just sit down and talk with these kids? (SENCO/TEACHER)

Schools also had to work through differences in understandings with agency partners. A few visiting support workers (such as SWiS) wanted to work on-site at schools as they knew the key importance of being seen in the community, and being able to provide just-in-time support to students or whānau. However, the agency they worked for wanted them located in a central office in town. Some schools also felt pressure to focus on academic progress, even when students' social and emotional state prevented learning (see Story 8 below). This undervaluing of students' wellbeing could be seen as an example of structural racism.

### STORY 8

#### **Supporting students to be in a safe place so they can learn**

At School 5, some of the students who start school or who transfer from other schools have multiple and complex wellbeing and learning issues. For example, one child had been excluded by other schools for assaulting students and teachers. Over several months, the teachers, the leadership team, and support staff worked closely with the student, his whānau, and external support. They focused on developing positive relationships, until the child was secure enough to attend school willingly and happily, and the environment was safe for him and for others.

However, when ERO came to review the school, staff felt their main focus was on the school's failure to ensure more students were judged as being "at" or "above" literacy and numeracy standards (at this school, the starting point for many students was "below" or "well below" the standard). Staff had tried to highlight to ERO their work around fostering students' wellbeing, and how this laid a foundation for learning as evidenced by the progress that some students, like the one mentioned above, had made.

What makes me go super nuts is when ERO goes, 'Where's the reading target?' Actually, I don't care because he's sitting in class and smiling and not hitting the teachers. I couldn't care less if he's hitting your reading target. They [ERO] need to know the reality [of supporting vulnerable children]. (SCHOOL LEADERS)

The school in Story 8 was also part of a prior NZCER case-study project. They were selected because their national standards data showed that, over time, they had added substantial value to students' learning. Clearly, they were punching above their weight in terms of wellbeing and learning.

There are tensions for schools that aim to prioritise both wellbeing and learning. Ann Milne analysed the ERO ratings of 12 mostly decile 1–4 schools in her blog, *White-gaze centred judgements*.<sup>5</sup> She noted only one of these schools was judged as meriting a 4- to 5-year return visit. However, the schools were all actively challenging racism and working hard to ensure Māori children could enjoy education success and achievement as *Māori* (as required by *Ka Hikitia*). Milne concludes that:

... we are operating in a racist system where predominantly White and wealthy schools have far more chance of receiving positive review outcomes because their values mirror the dominant culture.

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5 <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/qpleji9074488ze/AAAwKRs91jDxQ1cosyVLWc0Ra?dl=0>

Overall, school leaders considered the organisations that reviewed or funded school roles (such as ERO, MoE, and the Ministry of Social Development [MSD]) needed more understanding of the complexities for schools of working in ways that: supported the wellbeing of all students; assisted in fostering the cultural identities of Māori and Pacific children; and supported students with complex needs. School leaders noted significant commitment and resources were needed to do this work well.

These schools are operating within a Eurocentric system. It was not easy for school leaders to challenge the structures and processes that appeared to get in the way of them supporting students' wellbeing and learning. School leaders needed to be courageous and sure of their beliefs to do this. They found ways to challenge the system while still sitting within it.

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# 9. Fostering wellbeing through the curriculum

No child is left not being familiar with te reo, pepeha, the Treaty, marae—everything that a child needs. (WHĀNAU)

This section explores how the good-practice schools fostered wellbeing through curriculum learning.

## How is wellbeing fostered through curriculum learning? Key messages:

- Schools have many ways of fostering belonging within the curriculum. Core to this is a place-based and localised learning programme that helps students understand who they are and fosters their sense of belonging and connection to place.
- Schools understand that focusing on language, culture, and identity is good for all students. They are committing resources to raise the status and use of te reo Māori, tikanga Māori, and mātauranga Māori within their schools, which supports the identity and wellbeing of Māori students. Many have a reo Māori curriculum.
- Schools are on a journey to move past tokenistic representations of culture and develop a critical, and conscious-raising curriculum that explores the acts and legacy of colonisation.
- Schools have an active values and “feelings” curriculum that assists students to express themselves, understand others, and develop strategies to support their wellbeing.

## Mātauranga, te reo, and tikanga Māori are central

Schools integrated mātauranga Māori into the curriculum in many ways. Schools took a holistic view of wellbeing, which included a commitment to uplifting te reo Māori and tikanga Māori to support the identity and wellbeing of Māori students. For most schools, this was part of all students' learning. The schools understood that focusing on language, culture, and identity is good for all students.

## Te reo Māori as a core part of the curriculum fosters wellbeing

One way of integrating mātauranga Māori was through actively building teachers' and students' capacity to speak and understand te reo Māori. Nearly all schools were committed to developing a reo Māori curriculum and normalising te reo Māori through everyday use in the classroom. Schools were at different stages in their reo and tikanga Māori journey. One had an immersion unit; another had set goals relating to the level of reo Māori used across the school.

A commitment to contribute to the revitalisation of te reo Māori was evident in the ways schools were working to make te reo and tikanga Māori part of formal learning as well as everyday classroom practice (e.g., through a focus on karakia, kapa haka, and pepeha (see Story 9)).

A lot of te reo is used as a whole, and we are upskilling. Students realise we're learning with them. (TEACHERS)

I swear my kids talk more Māori from being [at school] than their whole time from growing up here. As I don't speak the language, I was really surprised from being here. It's not just Māori, it's other languages also that are really nurtured. That is a thing that I like. (WHĀNAU)

## STORY 9

### Learning te reo and tikanga Māori brings the mana back to the school

School 6's current journey to raising the profile of te reo Māori started when a school leader reflected on the school's commitment to Te Tiriti. The school felt very monocultural; there was minimal reo Māori spoken, but many students and whānau were Māori. The principal applied for PLD funding and started building a plan with a local Te Reo Māori Facilitator/Education Adviser. They developed a goal for the school to get to level 4 of Māori-Medium Immersion teaching, and a PLD plan for all teachers. Two main aims were to have explicit time for learning and speaking te reo Māori as well as having it integrated throughout day. To take everyone on a learning journey, the staff did over 3 years of reo Māori PLD.

A Pākehā lead teacher stepped out of her comfort zone to lead te reo Māori curriculum planning across the school. The BoT resourced her to attend Ka Hikitia PLD which was a turning point for her in terms of critical understanding. The lead teacher also worked in partnership with a part-time teacher who is also the school kapa haka and waiata tutor.

To build everyone's reo Māori capability, the school now has a teaching plan that includes a new focus each term.

A massive [change] is locking in a te reo curriculum. We have a term-by-term focus. Each teacher has a folder in class. We have daily notices put out (via email) that include resources and videos to tie into the focus. We want to see consistency in the school—for the [reo] education of students and teachers. They are getting more confident. (TEACHER)

Integral to everyone's learning is the school waiata and pepeha written by the kapa haka tutor which locates the school in the community.



We implemented schoolwide waiata—this also lifts the level of things Māori being fun and cool. Having the whole school there means you can address things at once. We break up songs, and where they come from and what they mean—so students have a sense of belonging around that [local meaning].

(TEACHER/KAPA HAKA TUTOR)

Staff consider that the pepeha and whole-school kapa haka helps to foster all students' sense of identity and belonging, as well as their learning of te reo and tikanga Māori. Learning waiata also helps staff with pronunciation, and to grow their kete of vocab.

Waiata and pepeha is the vehicle that so much has fallen off from. [A teacher] wrote pepeha and waiata [for the school]. It's that connectedness to all that beauty; the rākau, the hua whenua is all there [local bush and crops]. Bringing it in—we wanted to lift the students' mana about being from here, so we placed huge importance on landmarks. This made them realise we are important. (TEACHER)

The school celebrates important Māori events such as Matariki. Students visit local marae and other spaces and places, and consider whose history is or is not represented in the local area. They explore their whakapapa and develop their pepeha.

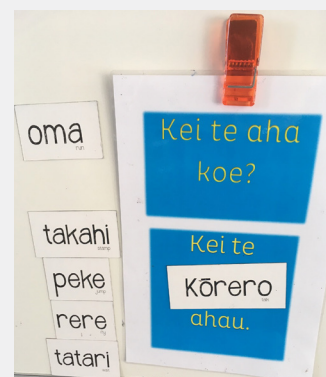
Students could describe many contexts in which they hear, see, or use te reo Māori at school as they share their pepeha, give speeches, in class, in their e-portfolios, and in the playground. They felt confident to lead daily karakia and roll calls, as well as events like whakatau for visitors. They particularly valued kapa haka and the school waiata.

***I see Māori culture and language at school ...***

For kapa haka we go to heaps of festivals ... we get to perform in front of visitors, and we get opportunities like today [a whakatau] ...

Waiata mai. I like this school. The whole school does it, it is really fun. And we do our pepeha song and we do different things, like we do pūkana ...

In the playground we say random stuff like 'Kia ora'. We say 'Kia ora whaea'. We say random things to each other in the playground like 'Ko wai tō pāpā?' ... We hongī each other for some weird reason! (STUDENTS)



Teachers, BoT members who were also school whānau, and students all talked about the multiple benefits stemming from the priority the school places on te reo and tikanga Māori and learning in and about local spaces and places. Students can understand about the expression of manaakitanga and whanaungatanga and learn about their whakapapa. Through their focus, the school is strengthening the connections they have with parents and whānau, and the community.

All the waiata and karakia, they are doing in class every day. It was a force, it's a daily thing now.

(1ST WHĀNAU/BOT)

... [The learning is not] just talking te reo Māori in school, there is also the Māori way. It is about making a kai for the manuhiri, the way you feel when you see other people eating. How do you feel doing a karakia? [The students] doing these things [at pōwhiri], that brings the mana back to the school ... [Manaakitanga] is being the person who cleans up at the end of the day. You see the big ones helping the younger. That whanaungatanga is awesome and we see the kaumātua and kuia crying at all these beautiful things. (2ND WHĀNAU/BOT)

Some schools don't do Māori. We do, it's one of the top learning priorities for us ...

All of our friends have been improved through te reo, and they say it's really cool! Some students who are not Māori will say they like the language. One, she had Māori down—they are 0% Māori and they really get into it! (STUDENTS)

## Knowing who you are, and where you are placed

Staff were committed to getting to know students and their whānau. They believed in building all students' pride in their identity through students understanding who they are and where they come from. One way they did this was through prioritising the development of a place-based and localised curriculum. Penetito (2009) suggests that place-based education can facilitate discussions that enable us all to explore how we fit in, and our relation to place through considering questions such as "Who am I?" (identity) and "Where am I?" (location). Penetito considers place-based education aligns well with indigenous approaches but can also benefit all students both educationally and culturally.

Place-based approaches intersect with the idea of developing a localised curriculum which is a core principle in *The New Zealand Curriculum*. A localised curriculum explores the needs, interests, and circumstances" of students and the local community (Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 37).

The ways schools developed a place-based and localised curriculum, and the extent to which this curriculum disrupted the dominant colonial narrative, varied between schools.

### A place-based curriculum helps students learn about identity and place

For schools, a place-based and localised curriculum fulfilled many aims and fostered wellbeing. School staff saw this approach as one way of building students' sense of local and personal pride and identity, and connections to their community and whenua. Focusing on local narratives, history, or

past and contemporary issues as well as spaces and places, helped students anchor their learning to experiences, values, and places that were important to their family, culture, or community.

All six good-practice schools included a focus on iwi and hapū histories or mātauranga Māori in their curriculum to some extent, to connect students to the people and land and explore whakapapa.

Some had a dedicated focus on learning about Te Tiriti, and events such as the Land Wars and how those events relate to today. Local Pākehā histories were also a part of the core curriculum.

Supporting students to develop their pepeha was a key activity at many schools that assisted in exploring place-based questions such as “Who am I?” (identity) and “Where am I?” (location). Schools set up these experiences to make sure that both Māori and non-Māori students could research and share their backgrounds.

Having a strong sense of self—that is, knowing your culture, place, and history—is important for young people because a positive sense of cultural identity is a protective factor (Rata, 2012; Webber & Macfarlane, 2020). Doing activities such as researching and sharing their pepeha appeared to have a range of benefits for students that included feeling pride in their culture and who they are. Students found these experiences relevant and engaging.

*I feel proud to be Māori ... when I get to express who I am and where I come from. I get to tell people my pepeha and my Samoan side.*

(STUDENT)

*I hear or see my culture, or Māori language or history at school when ... We do pepeha and whakapapa ... On the walls—those [images] are our maunga. Whaea did the mural showing why we do that song [the waiata that locates the school]. It has all our maunga and what happened to them ...*

*In the hall we did, ‘Ko wai tō ingoa?’ [What is your name?] and we learnt our pepeha and it was fun.* (STUDENTS)

Schools aimed to support students’ sense of connection and belonging to the local community, and important sites, spaces, and places. Many schools aimed to foster connections with the local Māori community through visits to marae and important sites or places. In these places and spaces, students heard about and made connections to iwi narratives and history, and learnt about tikanga. For some, this was part of a process to understanding the origins of the school’s pepeha or to develop their own pepeha. These visits were a learning experience that was valued by all. Over time, schools had changed their approaches to ensure the visits were not a one-off and assisted in building longer-term relationships with whānau at the marae. These reframed visits also gave students and staff access to mātauranga Māori in ways that were described as more authentic.

[From community feedback about] the noho [marae]; the whānau felt it was tokenistic. We changed the whole marae visit now to be about showing manaakitanga. Seniors now prepare a meal and invite their whānau, and do kapa haka ... (SCHOOL LEADERS)

The marae visit used to be about making soap and poi. Now it's about learning about what happens at the marae. Hosting, and a Nanny doing a pūrākau, so kids know the history. The kids do hīkoi around the area and kōrero about the area. They learn how to be in the wharekai, cooking, cleaning ... hosting. Learning about what we do on a marae ... You have to give those opportunities to all those kids, not just those marae kids ... It's also a huge learning for the [school] staff, that when you go, you just don't pay a koha ... How to tiaki the marae. It's a learning experience for all of us ... The adults also need to learn it. (WHĀNAU/BOT)

Another form of place-based and localised curriculum was building students' connection to the whenua through kaitiakitanga, environmental, or sustainability education. This was common across schools. Some schools had gardens or a ngahere (forest) that students helped to manage. Other schools engaged in local conservation projects or planned curriculum units on kaitiakitanga and sustainability.

Use of digital technologies could also support schools to access and explore local and cultural knowledge. One school had made connections between mātauranga Māori and digital technology learning. For example, teachers set up students to develop graphic novels of Māori stories and legends. Students also designed jewellery using motifs from their cultures which they explored during visits to local museums or galleries.

### **Moving past tokenism**

A tokenistic approach to te ao Māori was a concern for several staff who were active in reviewing how they could represent mātauranga Māori in more authentic ways in the curriculum. An example of this (described in the quote above) was when a school received feedback from whānau that prompted them to change their approach to visiting their local marae. They moved away from a focus on craft activities to instead focusing on manaakitanga and tikanga. Another example below is a school that had "flipped" their approaches to planning.

At the start of year, we taught a unit on sustainability [but when we put on our] Poutama Pounamu caps [we realised] we were only giving Western knowledge to kids. [We used to do things like] we'd call it maunga instead of mountain and then we've 'done' [mātauranga Māori]. This time we taught about Papatūānuku ... It was a huge learning for staff.

... why are we looking at Pākehā models when we have our own ...? So instead of doing 70% sustainability, plus 30% of what did Tāne do? [This year we said] we'll do all Māori knowledge with a sliver of sustainability. Lots of teachers are looking at me, they knew nothing about Rangī-nui and couldn't say Papatūānuku ... but they said yes ... They dove in and gave it a go. We got great feedback from teachers ...

We watched movies, talked ... the kids absolutely love it. It's the knowledge that's inside their genes and their bones, and their ancient knowledge.

(SCHOOL LEADERS)

Another school had reviewed their approach to incorporating te reo Māori in the curriculum. They developed learning progressions for te reo Māori and had clear goals about what they wanted students to achieve by the time they left the school.

[It was] tokenistic, in regards to what was getting taught. [We moved from] not just Māui stories, it has to be [based on local iwi knowledge], land wars, Treaty of Waitangi. Getting rid of 20-minute reo sessions and one person going in [to teach the whole school]. We are embedding it in classes instead. Getting away from doing the same pepeha every year, but now it is a staircase of skills. (BOT)

For all these schools, feedback and input from whānau and Māori champions was needed to ensure that school actions were authentic representations of mātauranga Māori. Authentic representations could include upholding local knowledge and tikanga, and deepening understandings of concepts such as manaakitanga and whanaungatanga. Working with whānau and Māori champions helps ensure authentic representations of mātauranga Māori and is also a way of supporting Māori teachers who are likely to have this responsibility.

### **Raising critical consciousness through the curriculum is a next step**

Many of the main themes to do with schools' priorities and approaches were common across most of the good-practice schools. One aspect of practice that varied was the extent schools were developing a critical, conscious-raising curriculum. At some schools, students explored the "Who am I?" (identity) and "Where am I?" (location) questions through learning local history. The exploration of local history appeared to be framed as a neutral exercise during which students heard different Māori and Pākehā stories about the past.

This neutral approach appeared to be less likely to raise students' critical consciousness about racism or promote critical thinking about the longer-term and harmful consequences of colonisation. Other schools approached history with a critical lens that enabled students to consider the acts and legacy of colonisation.

Considering how local history, events, and issues are presented is a topical area of development for all schools, especially in the light of the recent requirement to teach Aotearoa New Zealand history in schools, and debates about what could be included.

The schools in this study had found different pathways to build students' critical consciousness. One thing they had in common was a commitment to exploring local content that was relevant to students.

One school had a schoolwide planned approach, and a few schools had individual teachers who placed critical conversations and debates at the heart of the curriculum. Overall, the development of a critical, conscious-raising curriculum appeared to be driven by individual teachers, most of whom were Māori. At one school, in the Māori-medium classes, debates and speech topics were a pathway for raising consciousness about topics that were important to Māori and to assist students to understand and live in multiple worlds. The debates were also a vehicle for developing students' critical thinking and oratory skills.

## Reflection space

How could your curriculum programme assist students to:

- challenge Eurocentric views of history?
- consider the acts and legacy of colonisation in your local region and nationally?

We talked about how someone got slammed for talking in te reo on the netball courts. So, it's one of our speech topics: 'Should people be able to kōrero Māori on the sports courts?' Another one is 'Should all of New Zealand be celebrating Matariki?' I asked: 'Who signed the treaty? It was both partners—we celebrate English New Year, why not Matariki? What about both partners?'

When we grew up it was very segregated. I want them to have acknowledgement for each other. It is not about, this is a Pākehā system, it is more about knowing who you are and being successful in both worlds without depleting your own integrity of who you are.

We embrace it with them: How do we embrace the Treaty in our class? What can we do as Māori with the other partners? We do the Treaty as an overview, who signed it as well. Kids talk about it is about protecting us. [They ask] how did they get all the land then? So, it's about what can we do now? We follow the hīkoi at Parliament. And we talk about how this affects you.

We know these kids are having these discussions at home, and so their kōrero become a norm at school. Why learn about raspberries in France? [So, kids are not asking] what's that got to do with me? We place Māoritanga and [iwi] tanga ... right up front.

(KAIAKO/SCHOOL LEADERS)

At another school, a Pākehā teacher supported students to think critically about colonisation and how local history was presented in their region.

The curriculum has critical conversations ... We talk about the mana whenua—we expressed disappointment that the local museum is all about early settlers, and prompted the children, ‘Do you think there were things going on before the settlers?’ We talk about how kaitiaki were affected, and how marae and women were affected by colonisation. This sits alongside if we are doing a marae study—what would have happened before settlers arrived? That could be something we could do more of. We have nothing on paper about that [in terms of curriculum planning]. (TEACHER)

One school had developed a plan for shared student inquiry themes across all classes. The curriculum leader was influenced by Ann Milne’s (2013)<sup>6</sup> work on critical and culturally sustaining curriculum. As shown in Story 10, these inquiries enable students to explore local and relevant issues and contexts.

#### STORY 10

### We want the kids to be very informed

#### Local issues and interests are at the heart of the curriculum

A curriculum leader at School 3 is passionate about designing students’ learning around local problem-based issues. She planned a whole-school student inquiry about Ihumātao before it hit the media.

One boy said, ‘Why do we have to learn about that? I’ve lived in Māngere and I have never heard about that.’ So, we looked at why it’s an issue. The boy asked me ‘Have you been down there?’ ... He went down there, he got his dad to take him. We had lots of good conversations ... Now we get Jacinda stepping in ... So, we are looking at the political stuff. We don’t want to dumb down anything, we want the kids to be very informed. (TEACHERS)

For 6 weeks, students researched the history of the land at Ihumātao, and followed events as they unfolded. They considered the different perspectives about the land represented by the local iwi, Save Our Unique Landscapes (SOUL), and Fletcher Residential. They interviewed 50 people [each other and their whānau] about their views. The unit integrated many subjects. For the maths component, students designed graphs to present these different perspectives.

Students then had to decide which point of view they agreed with and show the key aspects of this view using a medium of their choice which could be a report, video clip, movie, dance, or courtroom drama.

<sup>6</sup> See <https://www.annmilne.co.nz5>



### Learning makes connections to students' experiences and cultures

For all the learning experiences they design, teachers want to make sure that all students can find connections to their own experiences. So as part of this unit, students had opportunities to think about the places that were important to them or their family and talk about how they would feel if someone built on it. Students also visited Ihumātao.

I took a group down there and walked around on the land just ... to sense that and feel that this land has that mana. You don't have that feeling in a shopping mall! If Māori is not their culture, they can connect to some things—like the taonga that is in the ground that we have not found yet [as we] looked at it from an archaeological perspective. (TEACHERS)

Teachers also connected what was happening at Ihumātao to wider issues relating to land displacement and the impact of colonisation.

I have five out of 27 Māori kids in my class. I was able to say—it's not just a Māori issue, it's about archaeology, history ... The land was confiscated—we found that out. They all know Pania Newtown. We asked, 'Is that why she wanted the land to be left?' When we looked at archaeological clips, the wairua is there ... They placed the rocks there, so it enabled Māori to grow their crops. So [students] know it is a historical and special place.

We also looked at the housing crisis and the cost of new houses in Auckland—the kids said, 'My family, we can't afford that.' The kids looked at all sides—about Māori men in prison ... they made those connections ... that land displacement can have generational issues. The Pacific kids said it's not just a Māori issue, it's a worldwide issue. (TEACHERS)

### Students value the way their school celebrates cultures and local issues

Students thought it was important for them, as well as their non-Māori peers, to learn about Te Tiriti and Ihumātao. These inquiries were contributing to students' pride in their identity as Māori.

*I feel proud to be Māori ... when we do inquiry, and we learn about historic events like Ihumātao and others from the past. [What did you talk about?] Whether it's right or wrong to build on the land ... That it's sacred land ... (STUDENTS)*



## Students feel proud to see their culture reflected in school life

The students we talked to described the many ways they saw their culture reflected in the school. This affirmed their identity and sense of belonging and showed them that the school knew who they were and valued all that they brought with them (See Summary 2).

### SUMMARY 2

#### Feeling proud to be Māori

Across schools, students said they felt proud to be Māori because:

- their identity as Māori is acknowledged
- their culture is reflected in the curriculum
- te reo Māori is prioritised at school, and they feel comfortable using it
- te reo Māori is normalised in the classroom and whole-school gatherings
- the school supports connections to identity and place through pepeha, and the school's pepeha locates it in the local environment.

They felt proud to be Māori when:

- they learn Māori knowledge, skills, and values
- they take the lead in student-led conferences, karakia, whakatau, and kapa haka
- they develop, learn, or share their pepeha
- the school celebrates and participates in Matariki events, Māori language week, and kapa haka festivals
- they do karakia, mōteatea, and whakataukī
- they learn Māori arts or games like mau rākau or kī-o-rahi
- they are in Māori places like marae.

*I feel proud to be Māori ... Kapa haka is fun. We go to festivals and perform.*

*I feel proud to be Māori when ... Speaking Māori in front of the class to lead karakia.*

*I feel proud to be Māori ... Knowing who I am and who my whānau is.*

*I feel proud to be Māori ... Going to marae [on school trips].*

He tino pai te reo Māori mēnā kei waho au, mēnā kei te kāinga ahau rānei (1ST ĀKONGA)  
I te wā ka tū au hei kōrero i waenganui o ngā tamariki. (2ND ĀKONGA)

*I feel proud to be Māori ... when we speak Māori to each other, when people speak Māori and I can understand them. (STUDENT)*

## A “feelings”- and values-based curriculum fosters wellbeing

In keeping with schools’ prioritisation of wellbeing, a “feelings”- and values-based curriculum was a core part of classroom practice in all of the good-practice schools. This learning had a range of benefits for students as it supported them to: recognise and understand their own emotions; build empathy about others’ emotions and situations; and learn strategies and develop the self-confidence needed to self-manage difficult situations.

Across schools, pro-social teaching based around school values was prioritised and common. Many schools had strengthened their focus on actively teaching, acknowledging, and celebrating students’ displays of school values through PB4L School-Wide or IYT PLD. Values about learning, diversity and inclusion, and whanaungatanga or manaakitanga were common. Rewarding students for displays of values sent a message that these values were important. Modelling of the values and support from student leaders was also core to school approaches. Some schools also used external providers to reinforce their pro-social teaching focuses and values.

A second common approach was the whole-school use of tools that provided students with a “feelings vocabulary”; that is, language they could use to understand and express their feelings. Schools also taught students strategies they could use to help understand and manage their emotions and relationships. It was common to see “feelings vocabulary” and statements about social and emotional competencies on posters in classrooms in te reo Māori and English. For example, one classroom had a wall where tamariki could put up notes about their feelings.



Twinkl Flash cards from: <https://www.twinkl.co.nz/resource/nz-mfl-158-emotions-and-expressions-flashcards>

Several schools used approaches developed in other countries such as the Zones of Regulation<sup>7</sup> to assist students to identify their and others’ emotions. Most taught students variations of the WITS strategies (Walk away, Ignore, Talk it out [e.g., using “I” statements], Seek help)<sup>8</sup> to help students deal with bullying or unwanted behaviours. It is important to consider the fit of these approaches with Aotearoa New Zealand contexts.

As well as developing a “feelings vocabulary” in te reo Māori, some schools incorporated mātauranga Māori within their feelings and values curriculum through exploring the different ways the atua (Māori

7 The Zones of Regulation is a social and emotional learning approach developed in the United States that assists students to talk about their feelings and learn to self-regulate using four colour zones. See <https://www.zonesofregulation.com/learn-more-about-the-zones.html>

8 WITS is a school- and community-based approach to support students to stand up to bullying behaviour. Many New Zealand schools teach students variations of the WITS strategies, but may not use the full approach. See <https://witsprogram.ca/school/>

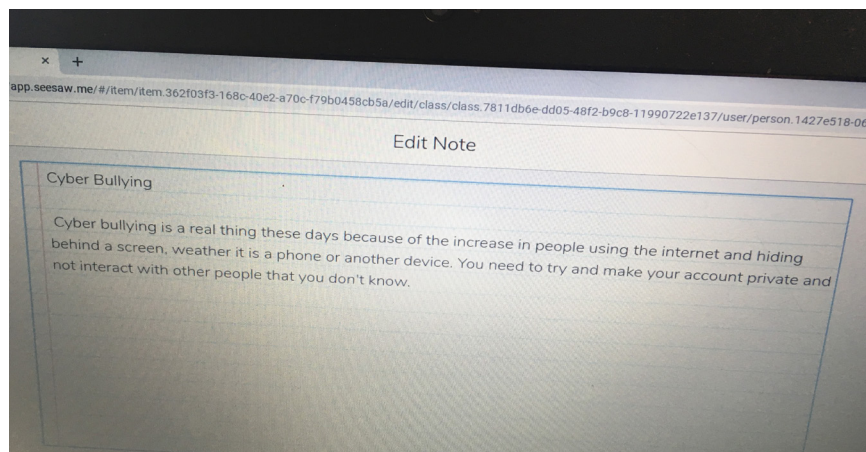
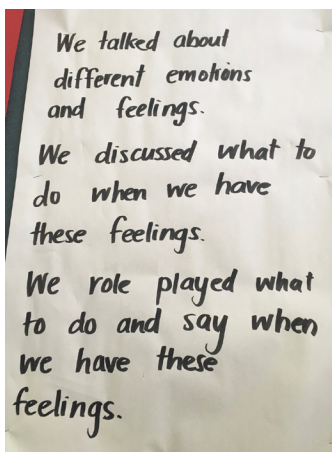
gods) expressed themselves. Other schools drew on Te Whare Tapa Whā model of hauora as a holistic way of viewing wellbeing. Students considered the four walls of taha tinana, taha hinengaro, taha wairua, and taha whānau, and how these were interrelated.

A third common approach related to the way schools located activities like kapa haka, waiata, and mau rākau as a core part of the curriculum. These activities are vehicles for many types of mātauranga, and they offered cultural, identity, and learning benefits. They also foster wellbeing and values; for example, some students had opportunities to practise mau rākau which incorporates many types of mātauranga, including breathing and meditative practices.

We make links to what the boys do in mau rākau and bring it into class. They do a really good job. [It's] a type of mana the boys teach—the tuakana give to the teina. They share. The boys talk like they are at their wānanga. There's a lot of wairua—we use a lot of their kōrero from their kete. They also get the responsibility [put] back on them. How do you show the values? Not just te tohutohu i a rātou. (KAIAKO)

A fourth approach used in some schools was a focus on building students' ability to talk about their feelings and problem solve through using classroom discussion or circle time. During this time, students were encouraged to suggest ways forward or role play how to express themselves and manage situations.

A fifth approach was active teaching around known issues. Across most schools, teachers and school leaders were clear that they wanted students to be able to differentiate bullying from other forms of behaviour, so this was part of classroom discussions and learning. The example to the left shows a format for classroom discussions. On the right is a student's work on researching and describing cyber-bullying.



The following narrative shows one school's approach to helping students to understand and express emotions and build empathy.

## STORY 11

### **“He’s in the red zone—what can we do?”: Learning to express and manage feelings**

As part of a focus on making sure transition times foster wellbeing, School 5 has started a morning check-in time for all classes. This time helps staff understand how students are feeling and what is happening at home, so they can settle students into the day. Check-in time also provides a platform to teach about emotions and how to work through issues.

At check-in time, using the Zones of Regulation, students say how they are feeling (green = ready to learn; yellow = fidgety or silly; blue = sad or tired; red = angry). Then discussions and activities are tailored to student needs, from those expressed each morning, and from school data that helps decide on a weekly focus. As one example, data showed that gossip seemed to be a growing issue, so at check-in time classes discussed how to deal with this. Teachers also cover areas such as strategies for getting into the green zone, making friends, reading faces and emotions, and dealing with difficult interpersonal situations. As part of the school's journey to place mātauranga Māori in a more central position in the curriculum, classes explore how the atua might express themselves and manage different situations and link this to the four Zones of Regulation.

For students, check-in time, and having opportunities to express their feelings, is contributing to their sense of belonging at school and helping them build stronger relationships with peers and teachers. For whānau, check-in time and the Zones are helping their tamariki develop their ability to empathise, and understand, express, and manage emotions at school and at home.

I like [check-in time], and the Zones of Regulation. You express yourself before school starts, you get everything out. If you do the zones, Miss knows how you feel. When I'm sad, people who are not even close to me help me feel better.

(STUDENTS)

They've got better strategies to be with each other ... We get those strategies, and our children are teaching us ... [For my older child] at home my kids say, 'He's in the red zone ... what can we do to help him be less angry?' (WHĀNAU)

For the teacher of this class, the overall aim is to create a culture of belonging and acceptance, and provide students with social and emotional skills to use throughout their life.

It's about us being able to function as a class—here as a whānau. We are together and we support and accept each other—if they see someone who is a bit of a geek, if someone is different, they must be accepting ... Accepting of difference is massive for me. If someone teases in ways that mana is hurt, I'm on it. We talk it through. They are building lifelong skills in acceptance of people with differences.

(TEACHER)

The approaches used by schools are well aligned with what is known about effective Social and Emotional Learning (SEL). Effective SEL includes multiple planned opportunities for students to engage in sequenced and interactive learning experiences and structured around particular skills (Payton et al., 2008).

Some of the pedagogies schools prioritised could also be seen as examples of Cultural, Social, and Emotional Learning (CSEL). CSEL is suggested by Goodman (2021) as an approach that is attuned to the multicultural and multilingual nature of Aotearoa New Zealand. CSEL is more holistic and collective and draws on Indigenous worldviews, ways of knowing, and practices. Schools' prioritisation of CSEL appeared to offer students multiple opportunities to understand concepts such as whanaungatanga, taha whānau (social wellbeing), and taha hinengaro (mental and emotional wellbeing). Overall, the SEL experiences at school helped to create an inclusive and caring culture, and provided a secure foundation that helped prepare students to be able to address racism, bullying behaviour, and conflict as discussed in the next section.

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# 10. Dealing with racism, bullying, and conflict

We work on our wellbeing. We teach what it feels like when you're well, what it feels like when your wairua is not well. How do you deal with grief? How does it feel when you are angry? (SCHOOL LEADERS)

We wanted to find out how these good-practice schools dealt with some of the challenges that get in the way of wellbeing. We asked staff and whānau about racism and unconscious bias, and bullying behaviour. Staff also talked about unwanted student behaviours or difficult situations with whānau. We asked students about any experiences they had at school that made them feel bad about being Māori or that they thought were not tika or fair. We asked staff, whānau, and students to tell us about these experiences and, if and how, the situation was “put right”. Our main focus was the processes that were used to create a culture that decreased the likelihood that these challenges would happen in the first place, or work through the situations that did occur.

## **How do schools address racism, bullying behaviour, and conflict? Key messages:**

- At these good-practice schools, racism in the community or at school is experienced by staff and students. So is bullying behaviour.
- Schools were proactive in putting in place a foundation that decreased the likelihood that challenges to wellbeing would occur, and helped students and staff deal with these challenges. Common aspects of this foundation for staff included:
  - PLD that assisted staff to recognise and address structural and individual racism and respond restoratively to conflict
  - a commitment to never giving up on relationships and clear communications, which provided a foundation for addressing conflict
  - a commitment to addressing problems early on so they do not become bigger issues.
- Common aspects of this foundation for students included:
  - learning experiences that gave students the skills needed to express emotions, understand peers, collaboratively develop solutions, and self-manage conflicts
  - interactive teaching that ensured students understand how to recognise bullying and know how to be an active upstander.



## Māori staff and students experience racism

Many Māori school staff talked about how they experienced racism in their wider community. Many also described experiencing or addressing racist micro-aggressions at school. These micro-aggressions could come from staff, whānau, or people who visited the school. A few mentioned structural racism in the form of a Eurocentric curriculum, and education agencies' apparent prioritisation of achievement over wellbeing, or expectations that schools would form connections with marae, kaumātua, and kuia without the support and resourcing to do so. Some Pākehā staff also described situations where they had challenged micro-aggressions from their colleagues. Staff also talked about how they addressed times when students had engaged in individual discrimination or racism such as putting down peers because of their culture or how they looked.

At nearly all the schools, students could describe situations that made them feel bad about being Māori (a question we asked as a starting point to explore students' experiences of racism).

### *I feel bad about being Māori ...*

- when they disrespect culture
- when people say all Māoris are hoodrats.

I've never felt bad to be Māori because whether or not people down our culture I'm still proud to represent my culture.

(STUDENTS)

### *I feel bad about being Māori when ...*

- I'm the only one in the room I have no one to relate to
- you're like, the only person in your culture and all your other friends are not
- they mock the haka
- they say our names wrong (like in assembly)
- people make fun of others' names or culture
- people are talking about Māori in bad ways.

(STUDENTS)

The interpersonal examples of racism described by staff, whānau, and students are all micro-aggressions that can have a negative cumulative impact (Blank et al., 2016). Likewise, institutional and structural racism can also have a negative cumulative impact on minority groups (Lawrence & Keleher, 2004).

## Students see or experience bullying behaviour at school

Schools' Wellbeing@School survey data showed that students at the schools in this study reported experiencing lower levels of aggressive and bullying behaviour than their peers at other schools. However, experiencing or witnessing at least some bullying or other forms of aggressive and unwanted behaviour from their peers was mentioned by students at all schools. Common examples included repeated put downs or name calling or making fun of a student's culture. When asked what could make their school better, "less bullying" was a common response.

*School could be better if ... there was no threats ... people stop bullying, people stopped being rude and mean to other people ...* (STUDENTS)

As commonly noted in research about bullying behaviour, teachers or other adults appeared to be less aware of the extent to which this behaviour was happening.

## **Schools built a foundation that helps address challenges**

Schools were proactive in putting in place a foundation that acted both to diminish the likelihood that challenges to wellbeing would occur, and, if they did, also helped students and staff deal with these challenges. Across schools, these foundations had features in common.

### **Schools are proactive in assisting students to develop the confidence, understandings, and skills they need to deal with challenges**

A complex set of actions and focuses acted together to provide a foundation that enabled students to develop the confidence, understandings, and skills they need to deal with situations that were not tika. This foundation drew on different aspects of the schools' wellbeing focus.

Schools' valuing of diversity (discussed in Section 6: Building a wellbeing environment) and focus on building students' sense of identity and pride provided part of this foundation. Students who felt strong in their identity appeared to also feel more confident in addressing racist micro-aggressions or other forms of aggressive behaviour. The focus on social and emotional learning and strategies such as WITS, the Zones of Regulation, and circle time (see Section 9: Fostering wellbeing through the curriculum, and Story 11) provided another layer. Students learnt the skills they needed to express their emotions, understand their peers, collaboratively develop solutions, and self-manage conflicts.

Student leaders and role models were another part of this foundation. Some schools offered leadership training to students so they could be role models who supported younger students; others set up student leaders who acted as peer mediators or buddies. Other schools had a focus on learner attributes that included leadership. Overall, the aim was to support students to become agentic learners who had the strategies they needed to address issues, support their peers, or seek help if needed (see Story 12 below).



STORY 12

### **Empowering learners to be leaders who can deal with challenges**

School 6's current focus on wellbeing started around 8 years ago. PB4L School-Wide PLD was a catalyst that assisted staff to reflect on how they fostered student wellbeing.

The first change was developing a set of values that the school focused on for a few years. School leaders wanted to make sure students lived these values and were capable learners who could self-manage their learning and relationships. So the school decided to develop an aspirational profile that blended the values with learner attributes. The starting point was a consultation process that involved students, staff, and community members.

**We did a community consultation. It was really successful. We invited people from three local marae ... And we had quite a few parents who we don't often get coming to school events. We asked everyone, 'What do we want learners to come out of school with?' (SCHOOL LEADERS/TEACHERS)**

The school also consulted with local iwi leaders. The result was a learner profile with a symbol representing their connection to the local iwi. This profile gives teachers and students a shared language and aims to build learners who are:

- curious, innovative, self-managing, problem solvers
- literate, numerate, and have digital capabilities
- connected, sociable, inclusive, fair, compassionate
- culturally located and aware, and kaitiaki.

Staff considered that their focus on school values and building learner attributes gives students a strong foundation. The foundation starts in the junior school through active teaching of the values and profile attributes.

**In every classroom we break down the profile. The focus has been to unpack and deliver the profile, so kids understand it. It is now embedded. The junior classes do play-based learning. In each play session we break down one of the values like using manners, being kind. The learners know them and can tell you what they are ...**

**We developed a whole-school way of communicating, so everyone was on the same page, everyone is building those attributes in the learners.**

(SCHOOL LEADERS/TEACHERS)

In the senior school, students have personalised timetables and earn different levels of licences based on the school values and profile attributes. Those at the highest level self-manage their learning locations and times.

Student leadership is another part of the foundation. Staff aim to build students' confidence by letting every student know they can be a leader, and students are acknowledged for lots of

different forms of leadership. They manage whakatau for visitors, senior camps, and the school gardens. Senior students will step up and do roll calls or other classroom activities if a teacher has another responsibility to attend to. Students are respected by teachers and are welcome in the staffroom.

**A big thing is equality. The kids see us just as adults—adults and kids—there is no ranking, no hierarchy. They will just go up to any adult and talk confidently, whether it's the principal, another leader, teacher ... or a learning assistant.**

(SCHOOL LEADERS)

Building pride is another core aspect of the approach. The school's commitment to te reo and tikanga Māori builds students' pride in their identity, the school, and the community. All students learn the school pepeha and waiata and develop their own pepeha. Learning activities make connections to local marae and other spaces and places. The school also has lots of visual branding that links to local places.

**Our logo, the harbour and the maunga, is now on our uniforms. Every child understands the school waiata—it's all based around us, who we are. If a child doesn't have their own pepeha we encourage them to use that school one because that's who we are.** (SCHOOL LEADERS)

Together this focus on teaching and acknowledging values and learner attributes, fostering identity, and building students' leadership capabilities, acts to give students a sense of pride in themselves and belonging to school. This focus also builds students' confidence and skills to self-manage conflict. The school now has senior students who help sort out any issues.

***Bullying behaviour—How does your school respond?***

We have very few behavioural issues. Senior students often manage that—they've stepped up ... Our focus through PB4L is that you need to be respectful to other learners—if you see something happening in the playground, you're responsible as well. We try and explain what bullying is, that it is consistent, and more than one time. We ask, 'Is it bullying, or have they just called you a name?' and 'Can you deal with that by walking away or saying don't do that?' (SCHOOL LEADERS)

***Unconscious bias or racist behaviour—How does your school respond?***

Sometimes students say, 'You're a hori'. Usually the [senior] ones in my class will turn round and say, 'That's not nice', or we talk about it in class. [We talk about how] you don't have to be friends with everybody, but you need to respect people. (TEACHER)

The sense that the school was giving students the foundation they needed to deal with challenging situations was confirmed by students. The students we talked to had a strong sense of their own identity, and felt very connected to their school's culture and people. They were confident in managing the racism or bullying behaviour that sometimes happened, or in seeking help if needed.

*I feel I belong at school because ...*

Our school is loving ... Everyone's friends with everyone. We never leave anyone out. Everyone's chilled. We don't go, 'You can't play'. [*Have you always done that?*] When we were little we didn't [always include others]. (STUDENTS)

*I feel bad about being Māori when ...*

People think that we are poor because we are Māori. Kids think that for some odd reason. We're not poor bro, just because we are Māori. They say, 'Aren't you supposed to be having a bath in a trough?' They are so sad. [*What did you do when that happened?*] I said, 'Could you please stop talking kaka about our culture. We don't say bad stuff about your culture.' We are who we are, and you can't change that. It's just stupid talk ... [*Are there other ways things get put right?*] We tell teachers. They say 'Why are you doing it?' and they say 'Stop saying mean things'. The teachers are there for you. It's just stupid talk about us—they are in the wrong country bro! (STUDENTS)

### PLD helps staff to recognise and address bias and racism

Whole-school PLD was one foundation that helped raise staff's awareness of the need to recognise and address unconscious bias, white privilege, and individual, institutional, and structural racism. In particular, PLD, combined with guidance from Māori champions, helped to raise some school leaders' and lead teachers' critical consciousness. Some schools had joined Poutama Pounamu PLD with their Kāhui Ako/CoL. Others had a whole-school focus on te reo and tikanga Māori. All these forms of PLD took staff on a journey to explore their obligations to Te Tiriti. Poutama Pounamu PLD, in particular, provided a framework for teachers to explore assumptions and biases and use inquiry processes to make changes to their practice. PLD could be challenging for staff. However, school leaders considered most staff had accepted the challenge to grow.

[Change] takes time if you're going to affect teacher attitudes and if you're going to do it in a way that doesn't compromise staff wellbeing as well. Non-Māori staff need time to think about those things and to deal with their own thoughts, cultural thoughts, feelings, and cultural upbringing.

For Māori staff, it doesn't matter if we've got degrees—if we go to Kmart we don't have a sign over our head saying we have degrees, we are still [seen as] potential shoplifters when we go into Pak'nSave. [We share our experiences]. It burns for them; it burns for me. These [teachers] are people who care, they are white middle class European ... you've got to have confidence to do that [exploring and challenging your beliefs].

... Poutama Pounamu PLD is touted as being about achievement and addressing systemic racism. When you've got white people working hard for brown people and having to say to them actually some of what you're doing is racist. That was hard.

(SCHOOL LEADERS)

## Schools have similar ways of addressing racism or bullying

### Strong relationships provide a foundation that helps to address issues

Across schools there were clear similarities in how schools managed challenging situations that could be about racism, bullying behaviour, or other incidents. The people involved could be students, staff, or whānau, or other members of the local community. Relationships were at the forefront, and school leaders, and sometimes other staff, did not shy away from potentially challenging conversations or “give up” on difficult situations. School leaders were skilled at managing these hard conversations in ways that upheld everyone's mana. At many schools, at least some of the SLT had attended restorative PLD and used this way of thinking and working to address challenging situations with students, whānau, or staff. A few school leaders were working on growing all teachers' ability to have hard conversations about a range of topics in ways that maintained relationships.

We heard about or saw examples of staff challenging their peers about micro-aggressions. This was done in non-confrontational ways with a focus on valuing and maintaining relationships. Māori staff were also active in supporting their colleagues to understand language or behaviours that were offensive to Māori.

### Reflection space

Are staff comfortable having challenging conversations with each other in ways that maintain relationships?

Are there new ways staff could model these processes to students and build their capabilities?

The teachers are good—they pronounce the words—they make an effort to pronounce whole names, not shorten them like at other schools. Pākehā children are also trying—it's because of the culture [at the school].  
We educate the teachers about the names—if we shorten them, we take away all that mauri. (KAPA HAKA TUTOR)

Some Pākehā staff noted how their personal learning journeys had raised their critical awareness and helped them develop the confidence they needed to address micro-aggressions, and institutional and/or structural racism.

### **School staff listen, communicate, and address issues quickly**

A commitment to addressing issues quickly was common across schools, and this was something that whānau particularly valued. Staff and whānau told us it was very important to deal with small things early so they do not become big things. Listening and acting was key—schools listened if whānau or students raised issues, and school leaders or teachers contacted whānau quickly if there were any issues arising with their child.

Consistency was also key. In terms of concerns relating to student wellbeing or behaviour, most schools had clear policies or processes. Some had policies about how they addressed bullying, or on appropriate use of social media. Many school leaders used restorative approaches or scripts to help them work through a process.

For situations that involved students, and that were not quickly resolved, face-to-face whānau conferences were an important part of the process. These hui enabled everyone to be heard and to contribute to finding a way forward. Knowing that, for some whānau, school or the school leaders' offices were not a safe place, some schools worked hard to create welcoming and neutral spaces for these discussions; for example, some schools had a comfortable room set aside for staff and whānau to meet. In the past they would have met in the principal's office.

The commitment to open communication continued through the process with staff following up with whānau to make sure they were kept well informed about any additional support or further actions that involved their child.

One issue that was common across several schools was finding a way to work with staff or parents who were not fully supportive of the school's focus on uplifting te reo and tikanga Māori. Examples included staff wanting to include statements in their pepeha that could be perceived as disrespectful, or parents who wanted interpreters at pōwhiri, families that did not think learning te reo or a focus on other aspects of mātauranga Māori was beneficial or necessary for their child. Story 13 shows one school's commitment to building and upholding relationships as a way of working through these differences in views.

## STORY 13

### **Whanaungatanga is a foundation for dealing with racism and conflict**

#### **A commitment to ongoing relationships helps the school address the conflict**

A deep commitment to whanaungatanga is a key underpinning of School 2 (see Story 3 earlier). Staff are committed to building long-term relationships and connections with students, whānau, and the community. These relationships provide a solid foundation that helps the school deal with any issues that arise.

Maintaining relationships is key and school leaders never walk away from situations, even if people are angry or things get difficult. The school culture is about *kia tau* (be calm and settled), modelling good relationships, and everyone “being able to admit when you are wrong”. School leaders listen to concerns, work through these, and have hard conversations “with the utmost respect”. When working with whānau who are not happy with school actions, school leaders make sure these discussions are face to face and use restorative scripts to ensure whānau are heard.

I have restorative scripts which I use to work with parents. If someone rings up and they are angry I say, ‘I hear you are upset, I’m glad you rang me, I would like to meet you face to face to talk this through so I can see how you are feeling. I can’t see that over the phone.’

When they come in, I say ... ‘I’m sad you feel like that, I’m glad you’ve come to me.’

I use the kinds of phrases that make parents feel listened to. (SCHOOL LEADERS)

As one example, the school experienced criticism of their tikanga. A parent wanted someone to interpret for her at a pōwhiri so she could understand what was being said. School leaders carefully considered the best way to relate to this parent and took the time to explain about pōwhiri. They also included the parent in meetings where they could better understand white privilege and how other parents at the school had very different experiences to their own. The relationship was maintained, and over time the parent became a strong advocate for the school’s focus on mātauranga Māori.

#### **Building staff’s ability to have difficult conversations**

One current focus is training all staff to have the skills they need to have calm, safe, but robust conversations with their peers and whānau. This focus came from SLT realising that teachers could be too “nice” and did not feel comfortable challenging each other.

School leaders are working with the SLT so they are all able to ask inquiring questions of staff that assist people to reflect on situations and identify issues and solutions themselves. School leaders are also inviting teachers to discussions with whānau so they are seeing ways of managing these conversations.

### Building students' ability to have difficult conversations

The school's holistic approach to wellbeing and focus on different forms of social and emotional learning provides a foundation that assists students to deal with issues that arise. As for staff, *kia tau* (being settled and calm) is also important for students. In Māori-medium classes, *mau rākau* and *hā ki roto, hā ki waho* (breathing) help with this.

Kaiako take time to explain and talk about feelings and key wellbeing words, so students understand them accurately and how they relate to real life. One example is that bullying is not just a one-off action.

At the end of the day it is about just wanting our kids to do well. To get the [foundation] in place so they can learn. Kids are *tau* this year and they are seeing the benefits. Just having that foundational stuff: relationships, being happy, being *tau*. Crap happens but we can carry on. We have all sorts of *kupu* we have *kōrero* about—resilience, perseverance ... this also links with *Kiwican kupu* [an external provider that makes connections to school values]. (TEACHERS)

In class, students learn how to engage in debate about topical local issues that impact on Māori *whānau* and teachers coach students on strategies for building friendships and dealing with difficult situations (like using WITS strategies). Classes have sharing circles to get to the bottom of any issues. School leaders explain the process and how circles are formed in many cultures to have discussions.

### Students value the *whānau* feel of the school and the inclusive culture

Students value the way their school felt like a home. Although they sometimes experience instances of racist or aggressive and bullying behaviour, they could also describe a range of ways they are learning to deal with these situations. If sorting things out themselves did not work, teachers “had their backs” and helped resolve issues.

#### *I feel I belong at school as ...*

- We learn from mistakes; you don't get told off. It feels like a home, it's comfy and warm. If you get in a fight, you have to tell the teacher (and you want to do that).
- Everyone is welcome—all cultures. Everyone is a team. (STUDENTS)

#### *How do unfair things get put right?*

- The teacher will sort it out. You can sort it out. Mum or Dad will sort it out.
- Keep trying. Don't stop, keep going. Ignore them.
- I walk away and think ‘they are wrong’. (STUDENTS)



## Whānau value the quick action and open communication of schools

Whānau valued the schools' approaches to communicating about any issues that arose. They found their concerns were listened to and most situations were resolved quickly in ways that enabled everyone to move forward. In particular, whānau valued the timely and upfront communication from the school if their child was involved in any incidents. They felt well informed about the steps that were being taken.

I had a couple of calls from the principal; once when my girl was in trouble, and once when she was on the receiving end. It was an after-school incident that could have turned pear shaped. We welcomed how the school communicated what happened and came to a resolution really quickly. That was important to us. They dealt with it as soon as it happened, and we didn't hear about it from any other source. (WHĀNAU)

My son had his lunch taken by four boys. He was upset. I spoke to the teacher through the Seesaw app. He did not tell me the names. I did not think I could deal with it appropriately as I would give those boys the eye when I saw them ... I spoke through the app, 'Can you talk to my son and can you address this?' It never happened again. She let me know what had happened. She addressed the whole class and told them what is the right thing to do ... At the previous school, bullying was rife, and no one did anything about it.

(WHĀNAU)

## Making sure people understand what bullying is and how to deal with it

In terms of bullying behaviour, many school leaders and teachers were clear that students and whānau needed to understand what bullying behaviour was, and was not, so they spent time discussing this in class, or with individuals and whānau. Assembly time was also used for staff to talk to the whole school about behaviour like bullying and the strategies students could use to address this.

A few schools had an explicit focus on creating a culture where all students acted as helpful bystanders. The role of bystanders in upholding prosocial peer norms is important in addressing bullying, as bullying behaviour stops faster when peers intervene (Denny et al., 2015; Salmivalli, 1999); however, this has to be carefully managed to ensure students do not use aggressive means of supporting each other. Recent studies suggest it is important to consider how to foster a prosocial culture by building "moral engagement" collectively as well as for individuals (Sjögren et al., 2020). At a class level, this could be about ensuring learning experiences foster empathy and a respect for diversity, and assist students to develop a peer culture that values and rewards caring behaviours. At an individual level, students can learn effective ways to be a prosocial bystander, as opposed to someone who actively or passively rewards bullying behaviour.

The quote below shows one school's focus on working through bullying incidents by addressing any issues immediately and through active teaching of caring bystander behaviours.



Bullying—we don't walk away from it—if a parent comes in and says 'My child is being bullied' we deal with it. We clarify if it was bullying.

We stand down children—but it's different [non-punitive]. We get whānau in, do interventions, give support when things are going wrong.

[We looked at the data and see] ... OK, there's a missing area in the [lunch] duty, so we added that area in and it disappeared ... If it happens on the basketball court, we don't ban the basketball. We would have done that in the past. Now we teach ...

[We look at the problem behaviours] and have sessions in class.

We teach, we don't punish—it's the biggest no. We don't focus on bullies, we say 'Don't stand around and watch'. We focus on 'I care' and being a proactive bystander.

What gets focused on gets the attention. We focus on the behaviours we do want to see. (SCHOOL LEADERS)

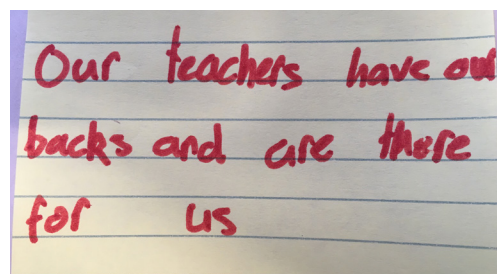
### **If needed, schools get people in to help**

As a first port of call, schools use their own resources to manage unwanted behaviour like bullying. Some schools had student learning support units on site and therefore had access to specialist staff. Schools also had SENCO or SWiS who provided initial assessment services, ran programmes related to current needs (see Section 8: Offering tailored support removes barriers), or brokered extra support. For example, one school was having difficulty finding ways to work with a new student who was bullying other students. The local SWiS spent some time with him and arranged for him to attend a camp for at-risk youth which helped settle him at school.

### **Students can address minor incidences of racism or bullying**

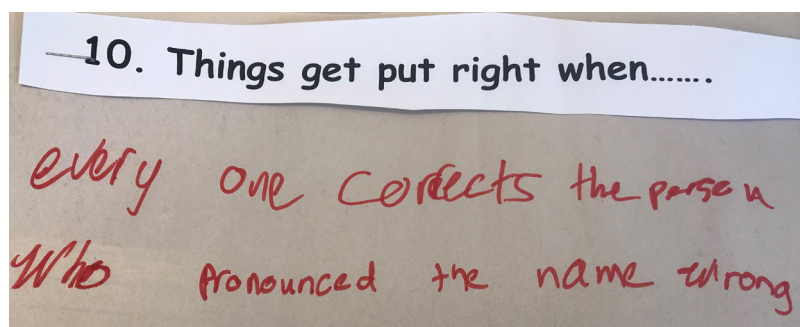
On the whole, students told us they self-managed minor examples of aggressive or bullying behaviour or interpersonal racism. Within and between schools, students varied as to whether they felt they had the agency to address more serious incidents. At most schools, students told us that strategies such as WITS were useful, but they did not always work; for example, if a student was taunting a peer and it turned into a fight. However, across schools, students were clear they could seek help from teachers, school leaders, or their parents if needed. Overall, students felt that staff cared about them, acted quickly, "had their backs", and got things sorted out.

We don't get put down by the teachers, but sometimes from the kids. Like people call us brown. It's only happened a few times. They call us black. *[How do you deal with this?]* We go, 'We don't care about what you think'. We sometimes tell the teacher and they [students] stop 'cause they don't want to get in trouble ... We can be ourselves ... (STUDENTS)



Our teachers have our backs and are there for us

As one example, across several schools, students told us they felt bad if someone pronounced their or someone else's name incorrectly. Overall, they felt safe to raise this with staff or students. If a teacher mispronounced a name, they would listen and then correct themselves.



—10. Things get put right when.....  
every one corrects the person  
who pronounced the name wrong

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# 11. Summing up and implications for the future

My hope for this whole wellbeing focus would be that kids will get better. Not just knowledge, but a feeling of self-esteem, and that we see it spill over and it will stay with them. (SENCO & SOCIAL WORKER)

## What's key?

Each school in this study has a high level of student wellbeing and is continuing their journey to foster wellbeing. These schools have put in place many interrelated approaches that span different aspects of school practice. These approaches reinforce each other to support students' wellbeing. These good-practice schools also self-review to ensure they continue to evolve.

Strong values drive these approaches. At the centre of school actions is a holistic view of wellbeing and a belief in the value of fostering wellbeing, relationships, inclusion, diversity, and identity. School staff at these good-practice schools knew that students are better able to learn if their wellbeing needs are being met. Staff also knew students' learning can be enhanced if their cultural and other identities are recognised at school, and they feel they belong. Prioritising the development of trusting and mutually beneficial relationships, communication, and consultation with whānau is also vital to support the learning of tamariki and to shape school directions.

Many of the school leaders we interviewed had been, and were still on, a journey to deepen their understanding of Te Tiriti and their obligations as good Treaty partners. This journey was raising their critical consciousness about the existence of institutional and structural racism and the need for schools to be active, anti-racist champions of diversity. Schools were deeply committed to acting on their obligations to Te Tiriti and making conscious decisions to make language, culture, identity, and place a visible and important part of school life. They were prioritising whanaungatanga and values that emphasise wellbeing as a necessary precursor to learning.

Through their experiences, school leaders increased their understanding that the purpose of education is not to assimilate Māori to a Western idea of achievement but to support learning in a holistic sense, and in a way that affirms and supports culture, language, and identity. With this focus, schools can support tamariki to learn about being in the world "as Māori", or as a member of another cultural group.

To do this work, schools need to challenge taken-for-granted systems and worldviews. These schools were challenging racism in its different forms; for example, by reflecting on practices that appear to be tokenistic and developing more authentic ways to integrate mātauranga Māori into school

life. These schools were also challenging their previous Eurocentric views of curriculum. Some were moving on from culturally responsive pedagogies and towards culturally sustaining pedagogies (Paris & Alim, 2017). Culturally sustaining pedagogies value pluralism. For these schools, this meant valuing all forms of diversity, placing mātauranga Māori in the centre of the curriculum, developing school tikanga, and supporting reo Māori revitalisation through a reo Māori curriculum. It also meant valuing all other cultures.

These practices are assisting schools to challenge the taken-for-granted Eurocentric world as they work to build understanding of the deep structures of knowledge that are located in concepts such as whanaungatanga.

Strong values, critical awareness of the obligations for schools as good Treaty partners, and active learning experiences appear to be helping staff develop the confidence and capabilities they need to keep moving forward. Being able to work through challenges whilst maintaining relationships contributes to the wellbeing of staff and students, and promotes and maintains relationships with whānau.

Both Māori champions and learnings from PLD are supporting staff in their journeys. Schools could not have achieved meaningful change without partnerships, input, and support from Māori. The Māori champions who worked with schools were all strongly committed to the education of tamariki Māori. Often their view of the changes they wanted to see was long-term and multi-generational. These champions could be school staff, whānau, community members, or PLD providers.

School leaders need processes that take all staff with them on a change journey. These processes need to assist staff to develop a critical consciousness about racism and a sense of urgency about the need to act. Long-term whole-school PLD is assisting schools in this process. For most schools, this included PLD about behaviour (such as PB4L School-Wide, IYT, or restorative practices) which was assisting schools on their journey towards strengths- and values-based approaches. This was combined with PLD that was supporting schools to honour their obligations to Te Tiriti (such as Poutama Pounamu or te reo Māori PLD). The second form of PLD was assisting school staff, and particularly those in lead roles, to build their critical consciousness about institutional racism and ways to address it. While they could influence their own micro-ecologies in terms of culture and practices, it was harder for individual schools to address the macro-level structural and systemic racism that surrounds them.

## What's next?

Schools are committed to continuing their wellbeing journeys and have many plans for the future. Common focuses include:

- finding new ways to form partnerships with whānau
- developing stronger connections with local marae, hapū, iwi, and communities
- continuing to build staff capability in te reo Māori and tikanga Māori and culturally sustaining pedagogies
- further incorporating mātauranga Māori within school ways of working and curriculum
- developing new ways to foster teacher wellbeing.

As this study rests on a Māori-centred approach, the suggested next steps focus on changes that are likely to benefit Māori learners and all tamariki.

## Structural support for Māori who partner with schools

Reflecting a core principle of Te Tiriti, partnerships are key for change. Māori champions supported schools in many ways. They are assisting schools to foster the wellbeing and learning of tamariki and build reciprocal relationships with whānau, and are supporting schools to action the vision of strategies such as *Ka Hikitia*.

Some of these champions are school staff in leadership roles, but many are kapa haka or reo Māori tutors, local kaumātua and kuia, or individual teachers. These champions often have many commitments and roles that are not reflected in their job titles.

To promote a stronger sense of reciprocity and partnership, and to ensure these people are not over-burdened, there appears to be a need for more structural support within the education system that recognises and values the strategic and long-term commitment of Māori who support and guide schools.

### Reflection space

What is our school's or organisation's role in decolonising education?

What is the role of Pākehā in decolonising education and in indigenising education?

What is the role of Māori in decolonising education and in indigenising education?

## Building reciprocal relationships with iwi

Many schools want to build stronger relationships with local marae and iwi. Some are not sure how to do this and may benefit from more structural support. Schools have different approaches to form relationships with iwi and there is no one-size-fits-all approach. Some schools connect with iwi as part of their Kāhui Ako/CoL work, others work alongside iwi on local conservation projects to establish a connection, and some directly approach iwi and/or marae leaders.

Iwi have different levels of time and resource available for connecting with schools. Therefore, it is important to let iwi direct the process of engagement, and to support iwi to do this. Building and sustaining relationships takes time and commitment. A long-term view is needed that includes transition plans for schools to ensure that if school staff or leaders leave there are still people who hold the relationship.

## The place of te reo Māori and Aotearoa New Zealand histories in the curriculum

The journeys of these six schools affirm the equity and wellbeing benefits of honouring Te Tiriti and placing reo, tikanga, and mātauranga Māori in a central place in school life. The experiences of these schools are likely to be relevant to other primary schools that are thinking about how to foster te reo and tikanga Māori learning and incorporate more Aotearoa New Zealand histories into the curriculum.

As evidenced by the stories from each school, and their student Wellbeing@School survey data, when schools prioritised reo, tikanga, and mātauranga Māori, this appears to benefit the wellbeing of Māori students *and* all students. Students gain both learning and wellbeing benefits from learning te reo and tikanga Māori, connecting with people in the community, and exploring local spaces, places, and history. These learning experiences all contribute to Māori students' sense of pride in themselves and their cultural identity, as well as their feelings of belonging at school.

Assisting all young people to explore who they are and where they are from can help them locate themselves in the different narratives that are part of Aotearoa New Zealand histories. Exploring their own personal and family connections to places, spaces, and people is a way of making history more relevant to young people. This relevance is enhanced by making connections between past and present events and experiences.

The schools in this study were in different places in terms of designing learning experiences that enable all students to engage critically with the acts and legacy of colonisation. Thinking critically about the impact of colonisation, and having a sense of collective agency about creating better futures, are some of the experiences and capabilities young people need to shape their world.

Future-focused or 21st century learning approaches suggest we need to be educating *for* diversity (Bolstad et al., 2012) so we can better support young people to find ways to live well in a globalised world without losing a sense of who they are. Addressing pressing issues such as racism, inequalities in society, and climate change requires young people to be able to form connections and work with others with different views and cultural identities. Young people also need to find ways to work together to create a society that fosters wellbeing through valuing bicultural and multicultural identities and worldviews (Bolstad et al., 2012).

The schools in this study listened to and sought ongoing feedback and input from whānau, including Māori champions, to ensure that their actions in incorporating mātauranga Māori were not tokenistic. They were learning about tikanga, and deepening their understandings of concepts such as manaakitanga and whanaungatanga. The current wave of interest and activity around te reo Māori and Aotearoa New Zealand histories is intended to benefit tamariki. We need to be aware that this wave could also create opportunities for re-colonisation and superficial interpretations of cultural practices. Therefore, it is vital that schools and the education sector have long-term partnerships with Māori champions who can guide them in this space.

## Final thoughts

The schools in this study were selected because their students reported high levels of wellbeing. These schools are on ongoing journeys to foster wellbeing and celebrate the unique individual and collective identities of tamariki. Māori champions are central to schools' journeys; they offer active support, encouragement, and opportunities for critical reflection.

These schools have multidimensional approaches to nurturing the confidence, capabilities, and wellbeing of tamariki so that they can take their place in an increasingly diverse world. These approaches are assisting tamariki to know who they are, feel a sense of belonging and connection to school and community, and develop a range of wellbeing-related capabilities.

The stories from these schools highlight the benefits of having a strong wellbeing environment. It is our hope that these stories will provide inspiration and strategies for others on a journey to support the wellbeing of tamariki.

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# Additional resources

## **Aotearoa New Zealand frameworks and self-review tools for schools and BoTs**

- Tātaiako: Cultural competencies for teachers of Māori learners (Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand). <https://teachingcouncil.nz/resource-centre/tataiako-cultural-competencies-for-teachers-of-maori-learners/>
- Tapasā: Cultural competency framework for teachers of Pacific learners (Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand). <https://teachingcouncil.nz/resource-centre/tapasa/>
- The Hautū Māori cultural responsiveness self-review tool for school BoTs. <https://www.nzsta.org.nz/assets/Uploads/Hautu-2021-FINAL.pdf>

## **Aotearoa New Zealand videos and blogs about racism and culturally responsive practice**

- Rongohia te Hau: Effective support for culturally responsive teaching. <https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/topics/bes/rongohia-te-hau-effective-support-for-culturally-responsive-teaching> Including the video, Racism: Taking those blinkers off.
- Developing mathematical inquiry communities: Culturally responsive pedagogy resources and videos. <https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/topics/bes/developing-mathematical-inquiry-communities/14-culturally-responsive-pedagogy>
- Give nothing to racism: Human Rights Commission. <https://cfnhri.org/updates/new-zealand-give-nothing-to-racism/>
- Ann Milne Education: Blog <https://www.annmilne.co.nz/blog>

## **Aotearoa New Zealand PLD: Raising critical consciousness and addressing racism**

- Unteach racism (Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand) includes PLD modules and videos: <https://www.unteachracism.nz/>
- Poutama Pounamu. <https://poutamapounamu.org.nz/about>
- Ann Milne Education: Online courses. <https://www.annmilne.co.nz/online>

## **Aotearoa New Zealand books and articles**

- Alansari, M., Hunia, M., & Eyre, J. (2020). *A rapid review of racism in schools: Working paper*. New Zealand Council for Educational Research. <https://www.nzcer.org.nz/system/files/Racism%20in%20schools-Rapid%20review%20working%20paper-FINAL.pdf>
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- Bishop, R. (2019). *Teaching to the north-east: Relationship-based learning in practice*. New Zealand Council for Educational Research.
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### International books

- Paris, D., & Alim, S. (Eds.). (2017). *Culturally sustaining pedagogies: Teaching and learning for justice in a changing world*. Teachers College Press.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (2009). *The dreamkeepers: Successful teachers of African American children* (2nd ed.). Jossey-Bass.

### International webinars

- White fragility webinar, Dr Robin DiAngelo: White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism - Community Research. <https://communityresearch.org.nz/webinar/white-fragility-why-its-so-hard-for-white-people-to-talk-about-racism/>
- Talking about racism in the classroom. Global Centre for Pluralism. <https://youtu.be/Cs7spyAFarw>



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