

Whakawhanaungatanga in the classroom

Me aro ki te hā o te ākonga

Be responsive to students learning, identities and wellbeing

Introduction

For more than a decade, researchers and educators have been investigating and implementing culturally responsive practices and strategies in an effort to enhance and increase the academic achievement of Māori learners. Initiatives such as Te Kotahitanga, Ka Hikitia and Kia Eke Panuku being cornerstone approaches to the improvement of pedagogical leadership and teaching practices in the secondary education context. An overarching principle common to each of these initiatives being the development of culturally responsive teaching and learning contexts for Māori learners through the professional development of school leaders and teachers. The central aim being to improve the academic achievement of Māori learners.

A common thread underpinning Te Kotahitanga, Ka Hikitia and Kia Eke Panuku is the concept of relational practices as a means of developing genuine and collaborative teaching/learning relationships with and for our learners. Evidence from student voice and a large body of research articulates both the importance and value of strong relationships (whanaungatanga) and its contribution to the success of Māori learners.

Focus of my inquiry

As a new teacher and counsellor to Morrinsville College, I have no established relationships with our rangatahi. I am interested relationship between whanaungatanga and student engagement in both the classroom and the counselling room.

Whanaungatanga is about relationships through shared experiences where we work together with our learners to develop a sense of belonging. It is also about *connecting* to one another as whanau developing our relationships with one another through whakawhanaungatanga - the process of getting to know one another.

Learner focused learning environments are strengthened through good relationships founded on shared expectations, belief in the capacity of our rangatahi as capable of achievement and drawing on their own experiences as a means for connecting with the teaching and learning process. Vital to authentic whakawhanaungatanga is a genuine desire to know our rangatahi and value their diverse abilities, knowledge and cultural context.

How effectively do I engage in whakawhanaungatanga with our rangatahi in the classroom?

What will whakawhanaungatanga look like in practice for me?

I will implement three strategies over the course of 2017:

- ★ Puppet People
- ★ Me, myself and I
- ★ Korero & Kai

Puppet People

This strategy is an interactive activity I have designed encouraging students to visually represent themselves and their identity. Each student is given a blank and bare felt puppet person and a selection of clothes, footwear, facial features (eyes, mouth, ears etc.). They are then invited to dress or design their puppet in a way that communicates to me who they are.

While students are working on their puppet they are encouraged to engage in conversations with others at their tables if they are unsure of how to 'dress' their puppet. I also walk around the room joining each table and chatting with them about their selections for their puppet.

Me, myself and I

Me, myself and I is a worksheet I have developed that invites student's to articulate with words their goals, aspirations, challenges, strengths and preferences. This sheet asks questions in relation to:

- ★ Academic goals
- ★ Career and/future educational plans
- ★ Family background – parents and siblings
- ★ Hobbies and sport activities
- ★ Favourite foods
- ★ 3 things that teachers do that make it easier to learn class or learning fun?
- ★ 3 things that teachers do that make it difficult to learn class?
- ★ When you were at primary school what did you want to be when you grew up?

Once students have completed their worksheet, the next step is a conversation with each student discusses their answers/responses to the questions on the sheets.

Kai & Korero

The philosophy behind Kai & Korero is to engage in meaningful conversations with students over kai. As well as one on one teacher-student conversations, this approach will also provide an opportunity to encourage and develop student-to-student conversations and relationships.

Where & when will I implement strategies for engaging in whakawhanaungatanga?

I will make use of these strategies in my hub and General Studies class throughout terms 1-4

When will I review/evaluation my progress?

Week 6 of term 4