

## Mana Ūkaipō:

Enhancing Māori engagement through pedagogies of connection and belonging

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Project dates: 01 January–31 December 2020

### Introduction/Project description

Mana Ūkaipō investigated the specific interventions that made the biggest difference to Māori student engagement in learning in 12 schools within one Kāhui Ako (Community of Learning) in a regional city in the North Island of New Zealand.

### Aims

A key aim of the Kāhui Ako is to broaden the pedagogical and leadership response to Māori students and whānau in order to improve student achievement, retention, engagement and attendance. This TLRI project supported the Kāhui Ako to develop an evidence base to inform current and future interventions aimed at improving the engagement of both Māori students and whānau. The three research questions were:

1. What intervention strategies have been utilised to address inequity for Māori students within the Kāhui Ako?
2. To what extent do strategies and interventions in these schools impact on Māori students' engagement and academic achievement?
3. When deliberate culturally responsive pedagogies are enacted, what are the social and academic gains for Māori students?

The project also investigated how students develop positive attitudes, motivation, and engagement towards school by examining student, whānau and teacher perspectives about aspects of learning that work best for them; with particular attention to iwi-initiated projects and localised curriculum.

### Why is this research important?

The persistent “achievement gap” between Māori and non-Māori students reflects the larger issue of racial and social injustice in education. This research is important because it addresses the disparities in student achievement by considering which interventions targeted toward Māori student engagement are most effective. The research provides an evidence base for kura to use in future planning and could have wider applicability in other areas of Aotearoa New Zealand that have a high percentage of Māori students. This project involved teachers as practitioner researchers (many of whom whakapapa to Ngāti Whakaue), working alongside academic researchers, to identify the specific interventions and teacher and leadership practices that Māori students and their whānau identify as supporting them to be successful on their own terms.

### Our partners:

Te Maru o Ngongotahā Kāhui Ako

**Kahira Morris (Kāhui Ako lead, 2020), Ruth Broadley, Kath Mason, Bubby Solomon, Tamara Simpkins, Debbie Holmes**

### Nine Key findings

1. Localised curriculum is a key feature for all schools and provides opportunities for genuine iwi–school collaboration and shared decision making.
2. Increasing the use of te reo Māori has a positive impact on student and whānau engagement.
3. Hauora of students is a consistent focus in all schools with benefits for student engagement.
4. Kāhui Ako initiatives have improved transitions between schools and ASLs are focused on continuing improvement, especially in Māori-medium contexts.
5. Developing relationships with the wider school community has a positive impact on student engagement and success.
6. Ongoing teacher professional learning and development is vital for teachers' confidence and development of culturally responsive classrooms.
7. Students in this Kāhui Ako may benefit from specific direction about postsecondary school educational pathways.
8. Māori parents have high expectations for their children's academic success and seek educational pathways they perceive will provide the greatest opportunity.
9. The use of digital technology during the Covid-19-lockdown period was critical for teaching, information sharing and guiding students back to school post lockdown.

### Implications for practice

1. School leaders within the Kāhui Ako need to develop a culture of relational trust.
2. School leaders need to systematically track and monitor the effectiveness of targeted interventions/initiatives so they understand the extent to which Māori are achieving at or above expectation.
3. School leaders and teachers need to continue developing partnerships with whānau, iwi and community.

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