Te Ara Hou
Independent Research Report on the Māori Achievement Collaborative
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Since early 2014, an independent team of researchers from the University of Auckland and Auckland University of Technology has been collaborating in partnership with Māori and non-Māori school principals from the Māori Achievement Collaborative (MACs) to analyse data collected throughout MACs' six regional clusters (Tai Tokerau, Tāmaki Makaurau, Kirikiriroa, Rotorua, Taranaki, and Kahukura). The purpose of this analysis is to support, identify, strengthen, and promote sprincipals' voices engaged in school leadership to improve Māori success as Māori. The following analysis reflects the findings from 44 leadership surveys, 87 hui reflective statements, 7 individual and 3 focus group interviews that have been collected to date. Data were aggregated into three time points (May 2014, December 2014 and May 2015) in order to chart MACs principals' personal and professional growth over time. Two of these three time points aligned to the annual MACs wānanga held at Kia Aroha College, Auckland in May, 2014 and Owae Marae, Taranaki in May, 2015. Data were then qualitatively analysed and grouped by themes consistent with previous reports, as well as emergent themes, highlighting the importance of key elements to consider when working in schools to improve Māori achievement. Each theme that follows is supported by data collected from principals on the leadership practices and strategies they are prioritising in their schools to support Māori success.

I. Whānau Engagement

According to the Ministry of Education (2013):
> *Ka Hikitia – Accelerating Success 2013–2017* emphasises the power of collaboration and the value of working closely with iwi and Māori organisations to lift the performance of the education system. For education professionals, collaboration is about creating ways for whānau, hapū, iwi, Māori organisations and communities to contribute to what and how Māori students learn, as well as working together to provide support for Māori students' learning" (p. 14).

During 2014, MACs principals reported common priorities for building positive relationships with whānau to build trust and support student learning. Through whakawhanaungatanga, principals sought after whānau perspective and voice through korero, surveys, hui, informal gatherings, and building links with their local marae in order to integrate students' whakapapa within their schooling experience. Engaging with whānau enabled principals to better meet all students' needs (spiritual, social, physical and educational), while, at the same time, supporting whānau to improve student learning within the home. For whānau engagement to occur, principals noted

the importance of having an 'open door' policy to create a welcoming environment for parents to feel invited to serve as equal partners in their children's education.

In 2015, MACs principals continue to express the need to foster home-school relationships to engage whānau in student learning. Principals are working to implement effective strategies (e.g., conducting three-way parent-teacher-student conferences) to enquire about what parents really want for their children in schools. For example, consulting with kaumātua, kuia, and other MACs principals was one strategy for empowering the voices of whānau and tapping into the knowledge of more experienced school leaders (Māori and non-Māori) to provide more appropriate, culturally responsive strategic direction to schools. Establishing specific committees focused on improving whānau maths language, promoting healthy eating and living, and providing whānau an opportunity to earn a Level 2 adult education certificate in Family Learning in Literacy were other types of strategies MACs principals have implemented to increase their whānau presence and engagement within their schools. As demonstrated here, greater numbers of principals across the MACs clusters have moved from establishing the need for whānau engagement (2014) to implementing community-informed practices that establish strong whānau partnerships for supporting student learning (2015).

Ministry of Education. (2013). *Ka Hikitia – accelerating success 2013-2017*. Wellington, New Zealand: Ministry of Education.

II. Engagement with Hapū/Iwi to Build a Contextually Appropriate and Localised Curriculum

In 2014, MACs principals highlighted the importance of establishing culturally responsive pedagogy and curriculum. Principals fostered strong partnerships with hapū to identify ways of improving how their schools provide education for their tamariki. Some principals did this by ensuring tangata whenua sat on their Boards of Trustees and/or by consistently consulting with hapū to inform school decision-making. Some principals also provided a designated office space for hapū within the school and invited hapū education representatives/kaumātua to provide teachers professional development to make curriculum more relevant to their tamariki.

In 2015, MACs principals are advancing their efforts towards culturally responsive practices in order to directly link pedagogy and curriculum to their school community's local and historical context. Principals are now seeking their community's local narratives to position their schools within the history of the lands of their students' iwi and hapū. Principals see this as a means to make learning more relevant and purposeful for students, as well as a means to develop more personal relationships with students and whānau. During the 2015 Wānanga at Owae Marae in Taranaki, several principals reported the need to approach their whānau to enquire into parents' personal and historical connections to their schools and local areas in order to collect stories that could be then used to promote the school's image within the community.

Developing a graduate profile that reflects students' social, developmental, spiritual and academic learning experience was another strategy shared by MACs principals for adopting a more culturally responsive approach towards schooling. Going beyond the

required business of reading, writing and maths enables principals to foster school cultures that honour students' taonga (culture, language and identity) and raise students' critical consciousness as Indigenous navigating within a Westernised context. MACs principals noted the challenges with integrating these two worlds within the mainstream schooling environment, but expressed strong conviction to confront the barriers before them and courageously lead their schools for change.

III. Māori Identity

Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory suggests that micro-systems that Māori students interact with directly (including their teachers, peers and parents), along with exo-systems, such as school policies and practices, impact on their academic, cultural and social development. Research has also shown that school type can influence the strength of ethnic identity development (Lysne & Levy, 1997). Positive ethnic identity is important for Māori students because it frames who they are, how they belong and their academic achievement aspirations. Despite the fact that negative stereotypes are prevalent and powerful in the lives of many Māori students, a strong Māori identity may enhance their resilience, providing them with the capacity to prevent negative pressures from interfering with their educational engagement (Webber, 2012).

Māori identity is a broad concept and can be considered as something "we are", something "we do", something "we develop", and/or something "we belong to" (Rata, 2014). It can encompass both traditional Māori concepts that locate identity within whānau, hapu and iwi, as well as social identity approaches that focus on how students "feel' about being Māori across a range of key contexts. School is a particularly powerful context for positive Māori identity development. Durie (2003, p. 68) has noted that, "cultural identity depends not only on access to culture and heritage but also on the opportunity for cultural expression and cultural endorsement within society's institutions."

The December 2014 MACs data suggested that many of the MACs school leaders wanted to implement activities that enabled Māori students "to understand and value their Māoriness – including their identity and culture" allowing them to "connect with core Māori values". A number of MACs school leaders also mentioned the importance of activities like "kapahaka, waiata, pepeha and karakia" to Māori student expression of identity and cultural growth.

The May 2015 data indicates that a number of new school interventions have been undertaken in order to improve the cultural wellbeing of Māori students and their whānau and the overall expression of the school's commitment to affirming and acknowledging Māori identity. Many of these school interventions have been implemented to increase levels of Māori cultural promotion and the strength of Māori students' ethnic identity, and include embellishing the school's environment with "waharoa, pou" and other "visual representations of Māoriness". According to one of the MACs principals, such practices have resulted in "a growth in Māori student confidence and capability" which is starting to impact their learning. In addition, one school in Tai Tokerau proposed that schools should ask themselves, "how do Māori students see and

hear themselves in your school and…can they connect with things Māori in your school and how visible and audible is Māori in your school?". Other indicative quotes include one school leader who stated, "As a school we have really learnt about our place, the history of our place…and the children have really strated to get into and understand who they are, where they are from and the history of our area". Another school leader also stated, "We have tried to find out about our local stories…to add a Māori dimension to their learning, to their understanding about who they are".

IV. Networks – Collaboration, Collective Leadership

The MACs project has enabled schools and school leaders to engage a range of models, programmes, and strategies, within and across the various clusters, to establish and maintain effective networks. The MACs project has also supported clusters to develop tailored approaches to professional development and collaboration which have been unique, localised and which were seen as being highly appropriate by all schools - regardless of their specific challenges, starting points, and identities. MACs schools engaged in "purposeful peer interaction" (Fullan, 2009) and Fullan suggests that this works best when the broader values of the school and those of the leaders and teachers mesh, when information and knowledge are shared openly, and when monitoring mechanisms are installed to detect poorly implemented actions and highly effective practices.

All of the clusters have made substantial progress in reframing the mainstream school experience for Māori students. The MACs clusters have engendered enthusiastic participant involvement, collaboration and teamwork. It has created much interest, better communication, better understanding, and a substantial leap in hope and belief in the possibility of improved educational achievement for Māori students among school leaders. A key theme that emerged from the December 2014 data was the importance of "building a positive and collegial school culture…moving away from working in our separate cells to working more collegially to raise student achievement".

The May 2015 data paints a clear picture of the range of new strategies employed to increase Māori student achievement via increased collaboration and inter-school networking including "problem solving, sharing practice, sharing understandings, supporting each other…and making sense of our new reality and our future". Other participants spoke of "sharing ideas and success stories", collective leadership and support and a general willingness by other MACs schools to participate in transformative practices. The data also indicated that the process of involvement enabled MACs school leaders and other key staff to become more confident and more effective at meeting Māori students' learning needs. MACs school leaders spoke of growing through reciprocal learning opportunities created through engagement with other MACs schools, and they were subsequently able to improve their own confidence/effectiveness in their roles. MACs has allowed aspects of existing school culture to improve, including inter-school collegiality and collaboration, particularly between Māori and non-Māori leaders. One non-Māori school leader from an isolated rural school stated "if you are in a school similar to mine don't worry because [in the MACs project] you are not alone, not alone".

V. Leadership

There is a basic shared understanding that school leadership involves the provision of direction and exercising influence. This includes the ability to mobilise and work with others to achieve shared goals. According to seminal research on the subject (Leithwood & Riehl, 2005) and what we have learned from MACs principals thus far (Santamaría et al., 2014; current data files), effective school leadership:

- Significantly impacts student learning (second only to direct classroom instruction – we are looking to gather more data to substantiate this claim).
    - "Students are taking more owneship of their learning journey as they monitor their levels of expectations and share their journey with peers, staff, and whānau" (Rotorua, December 2014).

- Can be shared amongst others beyond the borders of the school (e.g., whānau, hapu, iwi, elders, and community members).
    - "Ensuring parents and whānau are listened to and action is taken in relation to what is heard" (Tai Tokerau, December 2014).

- Serves as a compass; involves PD for leaders and teachers; and is also inclusive of whānau, hapu, iwi, and community (e.g., Māori ways of knowing and Indigenous researchers).
    - "Open honest heart with a willingness to learn, listen, be humble and show reverence to people. Role model your own personal value of Māori and have that expectation of your staff." (Kahukura, December 2014)

- Responds productively to challenges and opportunities created by, in our case, the MoE (e.g., inception of MACs – as 'talking and taking back')
    - "It is important to be seen to lead and promote te reo and tikanga Māori and discussions around success as Māori" (Hamilton, December 2014).

- Appropriately responds productively to challenges and opportunities of educating Māori learners within specific contexts (e.g., geographical, socio-political, hapū, iwi,).
    - "Recognition that Māori students need a whānau atmosphere to learn and providing that in the school" (Rotorua, December 2014).

We are confident based on the evidence we have been commissioned to collect and analyse that as a critical mass MACs principals demonstrate attributes that align with and in many ways surpass what we know about successful school leadership.

Following these points, mainstream researchers who study educational leadership essentially want to know (1) how educational leaders increase student learning, and (2) how they foster equity in educational outcomes (Firestone & Riehl, 2005). As researchers committed to serving the needs of Māori students working on behalf of MACs principals, we want to impress our shared interest in lifting student achievement by way of equitiable learning opportunities for Māori students as a priority inclusive of all learners in the schools being served. *However, our point of empirical difference* is that we and *MACs principals are equally interested in ways in which leaders 'walk the talk,'*

*lead by harnessing positive attributes associated with being Māori, and our ability to
utilise data in ways that make sense to us and our world-views.*

Points of Growth and Difference: Identity Impacts Leadership
Our data continues to provide evidence for *effective leadership that is differeniated and
tailor-made for each school*, grounded by localised Māori perspectives. From our most
recent data capture we have learned MACs principals are saying and enacting the
following with regard to leadership:

- " I am going to continue with personal narrative in our whānau hui- what is
  their personal connection to our school?" (Tāmaki Makaurau, May 2015).
- "MACs is about leaders stepping up and leading the way" (Kirikiroa, May 2015).
- "I will model what 'this' [learnings from MACs hui] looks like with my
  colleagues" (Tāmaki Makaurau, May 2015).
- "If I can lead the way then everyone else will follow" (Taranaki, May 2015).
- "I will define already established mahi centered on core values for a deeper level
  of understanding for ākonga, whānau and staff" (Tāmaki Makaurau, May 2015).

The spirit of 'going there' and leading by example is increasing with words that are
backed up by MACs leaders' actions or plans for actions and consistent with findings
that suggest that highly localised critical leadership is also taking place in MACs schools
(Santamaría & Santamaría, 2012). Principals' and leaders' efficacy with regard to
leading their schools with Māori students and families appears to be increasing as well
as their confidence to lead more effectivley.

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VI. Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

As we know, there is a rigorous body of research-based literature on culturally
responsive pedagogy that is germane to Aoteroa New Zealand (Bishop & Berryman,
2006; Bishop, Berryman, Cavanagh, & Teddy, 2009; Durie, 2001; MacFarlane et al.,
2007). The approach takes the perspective from within a socio-political and geographic
space shared by "descendants of the European colonisers and Indigenous Māori people"

(Bishop et al., 2009, p. 734). These researchers (2009) maintain, this uneven power dynamic manifests as social, economic and political disparities, which are reflected in educational outcomes for Māori learners at every level. It is important to foreground culturally responsive pedagogy in this context because many scholars have written on the subject from their own unique spaces (e.g., Gay, 2000; Santamaría, 2009; Sleeter, 2005)—however here in this place we join Bishop and researchers in Aotearoa to specify, name and define what this kind of pedagogy means and looks like for MACs principals.

Bishop and research associates define culturally responsive pedagogy in Aotearoa New Zealand as having the following attributes (we review these here because we cannot assume that we all have a working knowledge of Te Kotahitanga) illustrated by the words lifted from data collected up to December 2014. We use Bishop's work as a baseline and point of relevance to organise and frame our findings:

- Rejection of deficit theorising as an explanation of Māori student achievement.
  - "Valuing, engaging with, respecting and embracing students' history, who they are, their struggle and their victories, as well as cultural practices" (Tāmaki Makaurau).

- Teachers (and leaders) involved have knowledge of and are committed to changing academic achievement outcomes for students.
  - "The change in curriculum to best reflect the needs of our community and how this is developed through growing responsibility and ownership by the students and all stakeholders" (Rotorua).

- There is manaakitanga as care for students as culturally located human beings.
  - "Providing opportunities for Māori students to understand their heritage/ culture, language to empower them as individuals" (Hamilton).

- Mana motuhake as caring for the performance of students.
  - "Helping students to understand and value their Māoriness – identity, culture and allowing them to connect with our core values and living these values as Māori" (Tāmaki Makaurau).

- Whakapiringitanga as the creation of safe, secure, well-managed learning space that incorporates pedagogical knowledge and imagination.
  - "Māori art-desiging pou for school entrance, designing artwork for school gardens, designing kapahaka uniforms" (Hamilton).

- Wānanga as effective and authentic teaching interactions engendering the notion of 'Māori interactions as Māori.'
  - "Getting whānau and student 'voice' about learning needs, and direction. Practices need to be open and initiatives must be inclusive of Māori at all levels. Educating the whole school whānau in the importance, relevance and reasons for practices used at school" (Unidentified).

- Ako as the use of strategies promoting effective teaching interactions and relationships with learners.

- "Promoting ako and tuakana-teina learning across the curriculum" (Taranaki).

- Kotahitianga as the promotion, monitoring, and reflection on outcomes that lead to improved educational outcomes.
  - "Encouraging Māori students to be the best they can. Providing more opportunities to help them find their passion and to learn about who they are" (Kahukura).

Points of Growth and Difference: Iwi, Whānau, and Research Matter
As can be seen here, in the most recent data analysis of MACs data (May 2015) there are clear demonstrations of the operationalisation of Te Kotahitanga. Our analysis indicates that MACs principals' conceptualisation and practice of culturally responsive pedagogy is **becoming more specific and contextual over time**. MACs leaders want to increase their reo skills (50%) and increase tikanga Māori (e.g., waiata, pepeha, kapahaka) as regular components of instruction. A few mentioned Noho Marae opportunities as well in terms of authentically situated, culturally responsive pedagogical practice. There is a major emphasis on bringing in "local iwi to inquire into our history to develop a more culturally responsive and localised school curriculum" (Tāmaki Makaurau), for example as well as "asking iwi to develop curriculum with local stories and tribal knowledge" (Tai Tokerau). There was multiple mention of drawing knowledge and *history from whānau* as a source of legitimate knowledge to "improve whānau engagement in learning" (Kirikiriroa), including the "increase of parent consultation related to policy direction" (Tāmaki Makaurau). MACs leaders are also calling for the incorporation of knowledge from Māori researchers and local role models from which to draw and develop their curriculum by "identify[ing] and invit[ing] key skilled community members to share experiences" (Rotorua), as well as by "incorporating the 5 kinds of mana into behaviour management" (Rotorua). Many appreciated the contextualised approach to research… "So much of what we learned in this hui is research-based, which is fantastic" (Christchurch).

Bishop, R., Berryman, M., Cavanagh, T., & Teddy, L. (2009). Te kotahitanga: Addressing educational disparities facing Māori students in New Zealand. Teaching and Teacher Education, 25(5), 734-742.

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gaps between best pedagogical practices for all learners. *Teachers College Record, 111* (1), 214-247.

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VII. Esteeming Māori Knowledge and Belief Systems

Any attempt at educational reform and change with respect to Māori needs to align with the deeply held cultural aspirations of Māori people before they can be successful (Smith, 1991). Pathways, school cultures, and educational practices that are embedded in Kaupapa Māori practices or Māori "ways of knowing" that incorporate Māori world views, and knowledge and place emphasis on culture, identity and an ethos of care reveal success (Bishop, Berryman, Powell & Teddy, 2007; Bishop, Berryman, Tiakiwai, & Richardson, 2004; Bishop & Glynn, 1999; Bishop, O'Sullivan & Berryman, 2007; Macfarlane, 1997; 2004; Macfarlane, Glynn, Cavanagh & Bateman, 2007; Santamaría, Santamaría, Webber, & Pearson, 2014).

In the December 2014 MACs data, a number of school leaders spoke of promoting, valuing and celebrating all things Māori (Māori culture, identity, language, knowledge and heritage) in their schools. Some school leaders also spoke of the expectation that staff continue to improve their knowledge and proficiency of te reo Māori, and understanding and implementation of tikanga in classrooms.

Esteeming Māori knowledge and belief systems remains a priority for school leaders and progress continues to be made to this end. In particular, the May 2015 data indicates that schools are ensuring that te reo Māori is increasingly "visible and audible" on school grounds. One school in Whangarei asked themselves, "how do students see and hear themselves in the school and can they hear themselves and can they see themselves and can they connect with things Māori in the school and how visible and audible is Māori in our school?" Some schools held pōwhiri to welcome new staff, parents and students at the beginning of the school year, and some karanga when the flag goes up and goes down. Many schools are beginning staff briefings with Māori greetings, karakia and waiata. One school in particular introduces a kupu at staff briefings each week to encourage staff to learn and speak te reo Māori. That same school, which does not have any Māori staff, has also developed a "Mana Māori team" which consists of a representative from all year levels to encourage te reo within each year level through various activities. Other school leaders spoke of attending te reo language development courses and one school leader spoke of the desire "to make sure that our teachers are given the best shot when it comes to improving their own proficiency with te reo". One school has identified senior students that can now karanga and whaikorero on a marae. Another has extended the need to make te reo Māori more "audible and visible" and has implemented te reo classes for whānau, which also includes classes on iwi-specific tikanga.

The 2015 MACs data also suggests that many schools have tried to find and implement local stories as "a vehicle and a means to add a Māori dimension to their learning and understanding of who they are". Some school leaders spoke of establishing school values based on tikanga Māori and iwi-specific tikanga. One school is promoting their

school's values through increasing visual stimulus – by renaming classrooms, for example, "to link reflecting growth such as purapura whetū for our new awakening through to tū maia which is about standing confident as seniors". That same school is also designing pou to represent something significant to Maniapoto and that will be also be based on their school's values. Another school is offering professional development to their staff to ensure that they understand what "Māori principles and values are and, from the start of last year, created a visual chart on the wall" of these principles and are getting staff to try to discuss how they are implementing manaakitanga, whanaungatanga and wairuatanga, for example, in their classrooms.

In speaking of the progress made in their school, one school leader commented that, "They had a few waiata but no kapahaka, they had no signage, they had nothing really and *they've got it all now*." (emphasis added).

VIII. Impact of MACs – Conscientisation, Critical Mass, Success Stories

Freire (1970) brought the notion of growing a critical mass of progressive like-minded thinkers to push back on injustices faced by systemically underserved, where decolonialism is the aspiration of the group. Here in Aotearoa, Smith (2003) and others like our own Hoana Pearson and the MACs principals and leaders at present are engaged in similar work with a Māori success as Māori focus to transform education , schooling, and leadership. To this end, the December 2014 data indicated that MACs is, as one school leader put it, "an excellent vehicle for starting conversations and exploring the possibilities". MACs provides spaces for school leaders to come together to be "inspired by others", to network, to hear about and share what works in other schools, and to support each other. As one school leader notes of MACs, "I have gained inspiration, knowledge, mentors and connections. Excellent!" To borrow the words of another school leader, "The 'group' helps change the 'group'. Together we can make a difference".

The May 2015 data suggests that the themes of collegiality, supporting each other and sharing success stories (developing a critical mass and conscientisation) not only continue to be evident, but have grown in strength as a result of MACs. School leaders increasingly spoke of working "as a cluster", brought about and facilitated through MACs. School leaders also spoke of becoming "really close" and meeting "regularly" to continue to support each other, and to share, "as a cluster", practices and understandings that promote and sustain Māori achievement as Māori. One school from the MACs cluster in Whangarei has gone so far as to give themselves a name: Te Puawai.

School leaders also spoke of collaboration across their respective cluster and that "a lot of that is about sharing and understanding where each one of us is [at]". One cluster in Whangarei has brought together lead teachers of Māori from their respective schools to work in a professional learning group "to build capacity". Another MACs cluster has approached the Ministry of Education for funding to develop and run te reo Māori courses for staff in, and Boards of Trustees of, their five schools. In relation to MACs wānanga, one school leader commented that, "Sharing part of our day is probably the most important because that's where we are getting all the ideas". MACs continues to provide platforms for school leaders to come together to establish a critical mass of

effective school leadership practices that promote and sustain positive Māori student achievement and success as Māori.

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Implications for Future Practice

As MACs continues to forge forward with building cultural and critical consciousness toward improving and transforming outcomes for Māori achievement, the independent research team recommends that MACs cluster facilitators consider the following:

- Continue to standardise common methods of student achievement data collection across regional clusters to strengthen the findings from this report to support and validate current MACs principals' culturally responsive leadership practices, while, at the same time, deliberately shift from theory to practice;
- Continue to collect stories from MACs principals that provide exemplars of authentic and appropriate pathways for implementing effective practices aimed at promoting whānau/iwi/hapū engagement, culturally responsive pedagogy, tikanga, and whanaungatanga within mainstream school contexts;
- Continue to coordinate annual wānanga that foster in-depth personal and professional learning amongst current and newly identified Māori and non-Māori school leaders willing to align their values, beliefs and assumptions in order to answer the call for Māori success as Māori; and
- Continue to identify innovative pathways for growing new clusters of practicing school principals across all levels of schooling to further establish collective leadership through a critical mass of educational professionals working towards improving achievement outcomes for Māori and for the betterment of all students.

We wish to honour and pay respect to the Māori Achievement Collaboratives (MACs) Project. We are humbled by the opportunity to partner with this innovative and forward-thinking collective group of school leaders. We can only hope that our efforts to support your work can adequately reciprocate the aroha and wairua you share with ngā tamariki o te Aoteroa.

Kia kaha!