

## The New Zealand Curriculum

# Update



Teaching and Learning

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## Welcome to The New Zealand Curriculum Update

Curriculum Updates support school leaders and teachers as they work to design and review their school curriculum, in line with the New Zealand Curriculum and with current knowledge and understandings about effective classroom teaching.

Curriculum Updates are published in the *Education Gazette* and are available online at <http://nzcurriculum.tki.org.nz>

This Update focuses on engagement with whānau and Māori communities. Future Updates will include examples of building relationships with Pasifika, special education, and refugee and migrant communities.

Other common terms for community engagement include productive partnerships, whakawhanaungatanga, and home-school partnerships.



## Family and community engagement

***This Update is designed to support schools to work with their communities to improve student motivation, progress, and achievement.***

Community engagement is one of the principles that provide the foundation of curriculum decision making as outlined in *The New Zealand Curriculum*.

***The curriculum has meaning for students, connects with their wider lives, and engages the support of their families, whānau, and communities.***

*The New Zealand Curriculum, page 9*

Research shows that student outcomes are enhanced when links are made between the student's learning at school and other contexts important to the student, particularly home and community settings.

As schools work with the National Standards, teachers and school leaders need to consider the ways that they communicate with whānau and communities about their children's motivation, progress, and achievement. The case studies in this Update illustrate a variety of approaches to family, whānau, and community engagement that have proved effective, recognising that each school's relationship with its local whānau and community will be different.

Guiding questions (he pātai) are included in each case study. You may choose to use them to guide professional discussions within your school or to guide planning as you engage with your community.

## CASE STUDY

## School–whānau relationships: One family's experience

### Effective communication between home and school

Becky and Jim have two children at secondary school – the elder is in her final year. Becky is NZ Pākehā, Jim is Māori. Developing and maintaining a strong sense of their children's Māori identity is very important to both parents. They also value their relationships with their children's schools, seeing these as essential for supporting their children's achievement.

*It is often the small things, good and bad, that impact on how we feel about our children's school. It is important to us that schools show that they genuinely care about what we think and use that information when they make decisions about our children's learning.*

Jim

Becky's experience is that effective communication between home and school depends on the willingness of the teacher and principal to engage with families on an individual basis. She has found that group

communication, such as discussion at a whānau hui, is often ineffective when it is not focused on supporting students to achieve at school.

*We've found that often the school presents data in a way that makes it seem like the gap between Māori and Pākehā achievement is normal – and so we should be OK with it – rather than something the school can improve. We want our children to be the best – at te reo Māori, yes, but also in science, English, and all of the other subjects they study.*

Becky

Quality teaching of te reo Māori is particularly important to Becky and Jim.

*It is great when teachers incorporate Māori words into weekly spelling lists and ensure that the children's reo Māori is extended each year ... They get bored when they have to start at the beginning again every year.*

Becky

While valuing the relationship they have with their children's schools, Becky and Jim also see value in strong links between local primary, intermediate, and secondary schools. Such links lead to continuity and progress in students' education.

### Guiding questions He pātai

- What does our school do to engage with families and whānau?
- How do our strategies link to the evidence about what works?
- What can we do to improve how parents can relate to our school?
- How can we ensure that we are focused on students' learning and achievement in our interactions with parents, families, and whānau?
- In what way can decision making in our school be informed by student and whānau voices?

## Effective approaches for engaging with families and communities

Chapter 7 of the *School Leadership BES* focuses on creating educationally powerful connections with families, whānau, and communities. The chapter identifies the kinds of approaches that make the most difference to student achievement and reinforces the importance of the teacher in home–school partnerships.

A key finding in the BES is that there is great potential for school leaders to change patterns of underachievement when they work with parents and whānau to build home–school connections that are focused on teaching and learning. However, it is important to note that some well-intentioned attempts to engage with families and communities can have a negative impact on student achievement.

This Curriculum Update includes real-life experiences of principals, teachers, families, whānau, and communities. These case studies illustrate a number of the approaches that have proven effective in building powerful connections between education partners.

By genuinely engaging with whānau and communities in ways that make a positive difference for student outcomes, schools promote the New Zealand Curriculum values:

- **diversity**, as found in our different cultures, languages, and heritages
- **equity**, through fairness and social justice
- **community and participation** for the common good (page 10).



## Building educational partnerships with whānau and Māori communities

Each school will find its own approach for building a relationship with its Māori community. The resulting conversations will produce a wealth of ideas, knowledge, and possibilities for working with communities to support educational success for Māori learners.

- Meet with iwi and hapū that have mana whenua in your community. Find out their aspirations for their tamariki and brainstorm ways you can work together to support learning and achievement for Māori students.
- Build personal relationships with Māori students in your school. Find out where they are from, their iwi affiliations, and who their whānau are. Talk with students about their aspirations, their experiences at school, and their ideas for improving the school.
- Meet with Māori parents to discuss their involvement with the school and find out what you can do to improve communication. Find out how they prefer to consult about the curriculum, progress reporting, and Māori student achievement.

### > CASE STUDY

## Ngāti Whanaunga iwi

### Accessing knowledge from hapū and iwi

Ngāti Whanaunga is an iwi made up of 14 hapū, located in north-eastern New Zealand. They have a clearly defined education plan that includes specific goals about mana motuhake, reo Māori, the environment, and education. Building collaborative relationships with local schools is considered essential to achieving the iwi's long-term vision.

Ngāti Whanaunga representatives meet regularly with the eight schools in their area to plan together and ensure that iwi perspectives are included at all levels of the school curriculum. They also organise cluster hui, aimed at increasing the local teachers' understanding, confidence, and competence in the use of local kawa and tikanga.

*We provide teachers with an opportunity to understand our position as iwi, to understand kawa and tikanga. We walk them through Māori concepts and help them to understand the spiritual side of things they teach at school.*

**Michael Baker, Education Officer,  
Ngāti Whanaunga**

The schools are beginning to understand more about iwi dynamics and the

importance of te reo Māori me ōna tikanga to the well-being of Māori students and their iwi. They are considering how their improved understanding may impact on their students' achievement and progress.



The initiative is still in the early stages, but most of the local principals have welcomed the opportunity to work with Ngāti Whanaunga to ensure that their schools have strategies to access iwi funds of knowledge. Others are moving more cautiously as they come to terms with what it means to partner with a tribal authority.

### Guiding questions He pātai

- How might we plan to have purposeful conversations with iwi and whānau focused on teaching and learning?
- How can we build on relationships with whānau to engage with hapū and iwi?

### > CASE STUDY

## The Manurewa Literacy Project

### A joint parent/whānau and teacher intervention using Reading Together

The Manurewa Literacy Project is designed to raise the literacy and achievement levels of students in both Māori- and English-medium education. The project involves 29 schools and kura working in partnership with the local community, libraries, and the Ministry of Education.

A central feature of the project is the Reading Together programme. Developed by Jeanne Biddulph in 1983, Reading Together is designed to help parents support their children's reading at home. The programme is based on evidence that effective links between home and school result in positive outcomes for students.

The 80 teachers participating in the Manurewa Literacy Project trained as facilitators so that they could run the Reading Together workshops for whānau. They show parents how to support their children's reading at home.

*The principals and teachers who have trained as facilitators say that it's been an eye-opening experience. Many have never engaged with whānau at this level before, and they've been very positive about the experience.* Programme co-ordinator

Between each workshop, parents put their learning into practice. After just one term, results are showing gains for adults and children. The first phase is yet to be evaluated, but the feeling is very positive. By the fourth workshop, parents and whānau reported they had found time for reading at home and the relationships with their children had improved.

*I have learnt to be more patient, to let my child try and sound the words out, and to not stress out.* Parent

Reading Together was evaluated in 2007 during the programme's implementation at St Joseph's School in Ōtāhuhu. This evaluation identified significant and sustained gains in students' reading comprehension as well as positive changes in parents' relationships with their children. The constructive partnerships that are developed between parents, teachers, students, and local librarians help to raise achievement by linking students' learning at school with their learning at home.

### Guiding questions He pātai

- What do we know about the interventions we are using at the moment – are they making a difference for student outcomes? How do we know?
- How can we best communicate the benefits of a collaborative approach and work together for better student outcomes?

For another Reading Together case study, see page 236 of the *School Leadership BES*.

> CASE STUDY

## Seatoun School

### Creating powerful connections through learning at home

There is compelling evidence that certain types of homework promote learning more effectively than others. Homework that is specifically designed by teachers to engage parents in effectively helping their children with their learning is particularly valuable.

Sometimes known as interactive homework, this usually requires students to demonstrate or discuss homework tasks with a family member.

Seatoun School in Wellington has implemented a two-part homework programme that is proving to be a great motivator for out-of-school learning. In addition to regular compulsory homework, year 3–8 students can choose to take up challenges that have been specifically designed to involve families in their children's learning.

The TRUMP home learning programme was introduced after a self-review of the school's alignment with *The New Zealand Curriculum* highlighted an opportunity to explore out-of-school learning.

*The process was what made it work. We had buy-in right from the start and it's been incredibly successful: 97 percent of students in years 3–8 have taken up the voluntary TRUMP challenges. Some students completed a year's worth of challenges by the end of term 1.*

Principal Peter Pointon

Parents have been involved from the outset in the working party and in supporting their children as they take on new homework challenges. Students share their work and

receive feedback from their peers, teachers, and parents.

*My son has really embraced the programme. He's taking more responsibility for his own learning, and he's thinking about his regular after-school activities as learning experiences. He tells me that the programme acknowledges what he's learning through all the things he does after school. It's been nothing but positive.*

Parent of year 5 student

You can read about Seatoun's homework programme and the TRUMP challenge at <http://www.seatoun.school.nz/portals/81/files/Framework.pdf>

### Guiding questions He pātai

- How often and in what ways do we get parents and whānau feedback about homework?
- What is the school process for updating our homework programme? Are families, whānau, and communities involved in this process?
- Does homework always receive teacher feedback?
- How do we help families and whānau to support students' homework while avoiding the possible negative impact of well-intentioned "help"?

See page 154 of the *School Leadership BES*.

## Helpful resources

### > Ka Hikitia – Managing for Success:

**The Māori Education Strategy 2008–2012**  
<http://www.minedu.govt.nz/theMinistry/PolicyAndStrategy/KaHikitia.aspx>

The overarching intent of this strategy is "Māori enjoying education success as Māori". It emphasises the need for schools to develop productive partnerships with local whānau, hapū, and iwi that result in shared knowledge and expertise and produce better outcomes.

### > The Pasifika Education Plan 2009–2010

<http://www.minedu.govt.nz/NZEducation/EducationPolicies/PasifikaEducation/PasifikaEducationPlan.aspx>

This plan aims to increase educational achievement for Pasifika students. It encourages schools to engage with their Pasifika communities, for example, by participating in initiatives such as the Pasifika School Community Liaison Projects.

### > Home–School Partnerships

<http://home-schoolpartnerships.tki.org.nz/>

This site provides information, guidance, and resources to support schools developing and building on their home–school partnerships. It also contains specific information related to the National Standards and reporting to parents, family, and whānau.

### > School Leadership and Student Outcomes: Identifying What Works and Why: Best Evidence Synthesis [BES]

<http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/series/2515/60169/60170>

A key finding in the Leadership BES is that school leaders' commitment to building home–school partnerships makes a difference to students' progress and achievement.

# Support for parents and whānau

The Supporting Your Child's Learning series is a valuable resource for parents, whānau, and communities. The series recognises and supports the important role that families play in their children's education. It provides information and ideas that will help to build connections between learning at home and at school.

The series consists of fold-out sheets with information about a student's learning in reading, writing, and mathematics before school and in each of their first eight years at school. The sheets include information

about the National Standards as well as suggestions for how families can support their children's learning at home. Teachers will find them useful during conversations with parents and whānau about their children's progress and achievement.

To order copies of the fold-out sheets, email [orders@thechair.minedu.govt.nz](mailto:orders@thechair.minedu.govt.nz), with "item number 2010Y1–8" in the subject line. PDF versions can be downloaded from [www.minedu.govt.nz/ParentsSupportingYourChild](http://www.minedu.govt.nz/ParentsSupportingYourChild)