



# Whānau Advisory Group Research Project

Ngati Kahungunu Iwi Incorporated

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#### **He Whakamārama**

The kōwhaiwhai design on the cover is featured in Te Wāhanga, a meeting room in the Ministry of Education's Head Office dedicated to te ao Māori. The kōwhaiwhai symbolises the journey from one generation to the other. The continuous line indicates the passage of time. The pattern in red depicts the generations of today and the black represents those who have passed on. The triangle is a symbol regularly used in tukutuku, raranga and tāniko designs to depict strength and determination. The cover, then, is symbolic of the challenge that education has offered and continues to offer those who have passed on and those of today.



**Ngati Kahungunu Iwi**  
INCORPORATED

# **Whānau Advisory Group Research Project**

## **Final Report**



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# Mihimihi

E Rongo, whakarongo mai rā

Kia tau te mauri ki tēnā ki tēnā o mātau

Kia tapatahi ai ō mātau ngākau ki te kaupapa kotahi

Kia tutuki ai i tā mātau e whai ai

Tūturu e Rongo whakamaua kia tina, tina!

Haumi e hui e tāiki e!

E ngā toi ikeike, e ngā awa kōpikopiko, e ngā roto kāniwhaniwha, tēnā rawa atu koutou e noho mai nā i raro i te āhua o Te Tāhuhu o te Mātauranga. Kāti rā, ka huri ngā mahara ki ngā mate, ngaro noa rātou aku tau i te huakanga ata, te whakarewatanga mai i te tara ki maumahara. Pākinikini ai te mamae, māringiringi ai te wai i te karu i te aroha e kaikino ana. Kei ngā puna o te kī, ki a koe e Parekura me koutou mā haere atu rā, haere atu rā, haere atu rā.

Haumi e hui e, e ngā taumata rau ki ngā taumata rau. Haumi e hui e, e ngā waiora ki ngā waiora e pupuri ana i ngā taonga tuku iho a kui mā, a koro mā. Ka huri ki a tātou ki te whai ao ki te ao mārama, tihei mauriora!

Ko Kahuranaki te maunga. Ko Ngāti Kahungunu te iwi. Ko Takitimu te waka. Ko Tamatea Arikini te tangata! Anei rā ngā uri takiaho o ēnei kārangaranga e tuku atu ana i ngā tai mihi o te pae o Matariki ki a koutou o Te Tāhuhu o te Mātauranga e noho mai nei ki Te Ūpoko o Te Ika-a-Mauī.

Tēnei mātou, tēnā koutou, tēnā tātou katoa.

## Executive Summary

The Whānau Advisory Group (WAG) initiative aspires to foster quality engagement between schools and their Māori communities in order to improve Māori student achievement. This report examines the impact of the Whānau Advisory Group initiative in fostering quality engagement between schools and the Māori parents of these schools' respective Whānau Advisory Groups in order to raise Māori learner achievement.

The success of the Whānau Advisory Group initiative across diverse communities and contexts is determined by a set of key components including a core group of committed whānau with diverse skills and experiences and, the total support of the school's principal. These components, in particular, provide the necessary platform for the 'Whānau Advisory Group' to progress, guided by realistic aims and objectives thereby providing a strong basis for recruiting and encouraging other whānau and community members to participate.

While whānau members of the Whānau Advisory Group are both directly and indirectly involved in strategic decision-making as whānau or through positions of governance on boards of trustees, there is little evidence of a correlation between the Whānau Advisory Group and Māori educational achievement. However, schools claim a positive connection between Whānau Advisory Group and Māori achievement but based on anecdotal evidence. Nonetheless, an improvement in Māori student educational achievement was definitely seen to be influenced by the Whānau Advisory Group.

The report emphasises the positive contribution of key whānau with skills and experiences to attract other whānau to the initiative, based on their standing and mana within a school's community. Without these core members the Whānau Advisory Group would not succeed according to the initiative's wider aims. Consequently, Whānau Advisory Group success factors, engagement strategies and narrative evidence of Māori student achievement in addition to the support of the Ministry of Education and local Iwi rūnanga are recognised as effective pathways for establishing and sustaining the Whānau Advisory Group initiative.

Finally, while the report also documents areas of limitations and the various contexts in which the seven Case Study schools are located, the overall findings support the Whānau Advisory Group initiative as a worthwhile intervention to address the goals of Ka Hikitia — Accelerating Success 2013–2017 and Māori educational achievement.

# Literature Review

“At the heart of a strong economy and healthy society lies the educational success of all young people” (Ministry of Education, 2009, p.8). Despite this, Māori achievement and success in education remains a concern when compared with non-Māori. In 1998, Te Puni Kōkiri’s (TPK) report noted that

*Since the mid-1980s Māori participation in all sectors of education has increased markedly. Despite this, disparities persist between Māori and non-Māori for most indicators of educational status. Historically, the scales of disparities between Māori and non-Māori participation and achievement have been so wide that improvements by Māori have had a minimal impact on reducing the difference. Compared to non-Māori, Māori are less likely to attend early childhood education, are less likely to remain to senior levels of secondary school, and are less likely to attain a formal qualification upon leaving secondary school. Māori are also less likely to undertake formal tertiary training, particularly in universities. Māori who are in tertiary training are more likely to be enrolled in second chance programmes (p.6).*

A number of educational initiatives and campaigns have focused on improving achievement and success in education for Māori since this TPK report was published. In 2001, *Te Mana ki te Taumata* was launched that set out to raise expectations of Māori achievement. This campaign was supported by recently recruited Pouwhakataki who worked effectively as information brokers and a 'bridge' between the education sector and the local community (Stewart, 2001). Pouwhakataki were able to facilitate improved communication and understanding between the school and Māori with the intention of gaining better access, participation and results for Māori learners and their whānau.

Following a series of consultation and drafting by government, *Ka Hikitia — Managing for Success: The Māori Education Strategy 2008–2012* was released. It set out the Ministry of Education's strategic approach to achieving educational success for and with Māori over a 5-year period. The ultimate outcome sought was that Māori enjoy and achieve education success as Māori. The strategy set four broad learner outcomes:

- Māori learners working with others to determine successful learning and education pathways.
- Māori learners excel and successfully realise their cultural distinctiveness and potential.
- Māori learners successfully participating in and contributing to te ao Māori.
- Māori learners gaining the universal skills and knowledge needed to successfully participate in and contribute to Aotearoa New Zealand and the world. (Ministry of Education, 2009a, p.18).

Significantly, *Ka Hikitia* advocated a Māori Potential Approach to achieve improvements in Māori Education outcomes. This approach recognised the strengths and potential of a range of groups to tap into and promote educational success for Māori. *Ka Hikitia* provided the means to challenge current structures and systems in the provision of education. Identity, language and culture were viewed as key contributors to successful learning. Positive relationships and partnerships between students, teachers, parents, hapū and iwi were recognised and promoted as beneficial to successful outcomes for Māori.

*Ka Hikitia* focused on three vulnerable areas for Māori: the Foundation Years; Young People Engaged in Learning; and Māori Language in Education. An added focus area was Organisational Success. The focus on

Organisational Success ensured the Ministry of Education “*reviewed and adapted its investments, policies, practices and services*” (Ministry of Education, 2009a, p.26) to support *Ka Hikitia*. *Ka Hikitia* took a narrow and deep approach to improve Māori Education outcomes to avoid spreading resources too thinly.

In 2011 the Ministry of Education released the teachers’ resource *Tātaiako: Cultural Competencies for Teachers of Māori Learners*. *Tātaiako* reflects and supports the principles espoused in *Ka Hikitia*, that is, teacher-learner relationships and identity, language and culture are important to successful learning. As a resource document *Tātaiako: Cultural Competencies for Teachers of Māori Learners* emphasises

*Teachers’ relationships and engagement with Māori learners and with their whānau and iwi. Designed for teachers in early childhood education (ECE) services and in primary and secondary schools, it will support teachers to personalise learning for and with Māori learners, to ensure they enjoy education success as Māori (Ministry of Education, 2011, p.4).*

A focus on teachers’ relationships and engagement with Māori learners and their whānau is a priority in other initiatives such as *Whakapūmautia, Papakōwhaitia, Tau ana — Grasp, Embrace and Realise* which was developed as a framework to support building and sustaining excellent relationships with iwi (Ministry of Education, 2011a). The school-based development programme *He Kakano*, focused ‘on growing culturally responsive pedagogical school leadership — leadership that actively takes account of the culture of Māori learners to build relationships that result in achievement success’ (Education Gazette, 2009b). *Te Kotahitanga* is another initiative that focuses on research and professional development aimed at supporting the development of teachers to create culturally responsive contexts for Māori learners. Research into educational success has highlighted a strong partnership between families and schools as supportive of educational achievement of learners (Alton-Lee, 2003; Biddulph, F., Biddulph, J., and Biddulph, C., 2003; Education Review Office, 2008) which has contributed to the current educational strategy for Māori.

This report examines Whānau Advisory Groups, which were established to support the development of partnerships between schools, Māori parents and communities, and the impact of these relationships on Māori learners’ achievement.



## Background

The establishment of Whānau Advisory Groups to support the development of a partnership between the school and Māori community was launched in 2005 in six pilot schools. The rationale behind the Whānau Advisory Group initiative was to:

- Foster quality engagement between the school and its Māori community in order to improve Māori student achievement.
- Involve whānau in strategic planning and decision-making within the school that makes a difference for Māori learners.
- Improve the wellbeing of Māori students by building safe, supportive and inclusive communication between school management and Māori students within the school.
- Involve more whānau and students in learning-centred discussions with educators.

(Ministry of Education, 2006).

The primary focus of the Whānau Advisory Groups was to support the school through the collection and analysis of Māori student achievement data and to develop a set of priorities and strategies that would address key messages that emerged from the data (Ministry of Education, 2006). In 2006 a progress report highlighted progress made and problems identified in the establishment of Whānau Advisory Groups. In summary the report emphasised that:

- The development of a Whānau Advisory Group was not always an easy path to navigate and took time to do so.
- Whānau Advisory Groups required time to be informed of available data and what, if any, information is relevant or useful to them in decision making.
- Knowledgeable and informed Pouwhakataki are essential to establishing Whānau Advisory Groups.
- The initial survey process had a marked impact before and after Whānau Advisory Groups were established.
- Positive outcomes emerged for every pilot school which provided future guidance for the Ministry of Education.

(Ministry of Education, 2006).

This 2013 report further investigates the establishment and function of Whānau Advisory Groups and how they have contributed to fostering quality engagement between schools and Māori communities and raising Māori learner achievement. This report sets out to respond to the following questions:

- What contributed to the success of the Whānau Advisory Group in the schools?
- What were the strategies the schools used to encourage whānau involvement?

- To what extent have the Whānau Advisory Groups contributed to strategic planning and decision making in the schools?
- How has the Whānau Advisory Group contributed to improved Māori learner achievement and what is the evidence of this?
- What would be the best approach to establish more Whānau Advisory Groups in schools and under what conditions?
- What were the commonalities, differences and unique aspects of the Whānau Advisory Groups?

# Methodology

## Kaupapa Māori

Kaupapa Māori research is defined as research over which Māori maintain conceptual design, methodological and interpretative control (Smith, 1999) and like Māori-centred research, it concerns the generation and transmission of Māori knowledge and so it too is an integrative process that reflects Māori ways of knowing and doing (Graham, 2010). A kaupapa Māori approach to research accepts a Māori worldview as valid and uses its parameters as the tool to generate and transmit Māori knowledge. This approach contrasts with past methods where early research about Māori was conducted through a 'colonial lens' by non-Māori researchers (Durie, 2002) that served to subjugate Māori people, Māori knowledge and a Māori worldview.

Essentially, kaupapa Māori research should be controlled by Māori institutions (such as iwi rūnanga). It is reasonable to expect that kaupapa Māori research will be characterised by Māori participation and the use of Māori focussed methods. Smith (2003) defined Kaupapa Māori as 'research by Māori, for Māori and with Māori'. Accordingly, this research project was developed with certain aspects co-constructed with the Ministry of Education in terms of the scoping phase. However, the research team have assumed overall control of the research and in doing so, have engaged in a process underpinned by tikanga Māori and certain kawa (protocols), that is, ethical considerations informed by a kaupapa Māori approach to research.

## Data Collection

Contact was initially made with all of the participating schools to establish consent to participate and to set a timetable for interviews. Data was collected through interviews (See Appendix One) of individuals and/ or focus groups that were conducted through applying the kaupapa Māori principle of kanohi ki te kanohi. Interviews were held in a user friendly and access friendly environment for all of the participants. All interviews and focus group sessions were audio recorded with the consent of each participant. Interview data was transcribed or abstracted by the research team in preparation for the analysis phase and the compilation of the case studies for each participant school and Whānau Advisory Group.

## Case Study Analysis

A combined case study approach (underpinned by kaupapa Māori methods) has revealed a multiplicity of factors that have combined to emphasise the unique character of the schools and their respective Whānau Advisory Groups. Case studies have the potential to involve description, explanation, evaluation and prediction of phenomena. Further research defines a range of purposes for educational case studies that include theory-seeking and theory-testing, story-telling and picture drawing and evaluative case study (Bassey, 1999). A case study may be developed around an individual or grouping to cover a community or culture and involves a consistent and sustained observation of a bounded system or community within a given timeframe.

Burns (2000) lists six reasons for carrying out case studies. Firstly, as preliminaries to major investigations, cases can generate rich data that may suggest themes for more intensive investigation. Secondly, case studies are aimed at probing deeply and analysing intensively' the many phenomena that make up the activities of the unit or community engaged in the research project. Thirdly, they may generate anecdotal evidence that can illustrate general findings. Fourthly, case studies may serve to refute generalisations. Fifthly, it is a preferred approach when pertinent behaviours cannot be manipulated. Finally, a case study may be the best possible description of a unique historical event.

Within the scope of this research project, the seven case studies provide rich anecdotal evidence gathered from the participant schools and their Whānau Advisory Groups. Accordingly, the research project therefore fits with the first four of Burns' (2000) suggested motives for carrying out case study research. Assembling case studies for each of the seven schools has allowed an in-depth examination of the Whānau Advisory Group initiative. The combined case study and kaupapa Māori approaches serve to illustrate how the Whānau Advisory Group initiative exemplifies both commonalities and differences across the schools.

The ensuing section of this report details the research findings for each of the case studies which offers significant insights from first-hand experience about the establishment and function of Whānau Advisory Groups. The extent of the contribution of Whānau Advisory Groups to fostering quality engagement between schools and their Māori communities, and raising Māori learner achievement is also outlined. Given the scope of the research project, each of the case studies is written and framed according to the Whānau Advisory Group research project questions. The report concludes with a set of tables that highlight the commonalities and or differences between each case study school through the application of the Ministry's MGF Rubric 3.1, *Māori Learner Progress and Achievement* (14/09/2011).

# Research Findings

## Case Study One

Case Study One is a decile nine state co-educational uniformed school that caters for Year 9 to Year 13 students. The total school roll is approximately 987 students, where Māori students number approximately 103 or 10% of the school roll. Since 2005, the school has been involved in the Whānau Advisory Group Project. Whānau advisory group members comprise students, Māori parents, staff members and senior management representatives. Members of Senior Management and students were interviewed.

### *What contributed to the success of the Whānau Advisory Group in the schools? ie, Indicators of Success.*

From the initial proposal the principal has been supportive of the establishment and operation of the whānau advisory group. He and members of the senior management team often attend whānau advisory group meetings. Reciprocal and transparent lines of communication exist between the whānau and senior management, the principal and Board of Trustees which ensures the whānau advisory group's voice is heard at each level of the school management and governance.

The school finds the whānau advisory group approachable and an important sounding board and consultative body. For example, the whānau advisory group were consulted about the schools plan to establish a student mentoring programme. Concerns regarding whether the initiative was realistic and supported by the whānau advisory group were discussed including suggestions about its establishment and implementation.

The whānau advisory group members are diverse in terms of education, skills, and personalities but all bring with them a wealth of knowledge about the community in which they live and as such are privy to the needs of the community. According to a member of senior management

*A part of being a good school is meeting the needs of your community. You can't really hold yourself up as a good institution if you are going to ignore what your community are telling you. So having the whānau advisory as an outlet to listen to what the community is telling you, is beneficial (Deputy Principal).*

The whānau advisory group members are passionate and committed to the kaupapa and willingly engage in robust dialogue on issues that are of concern to them. Whānau advisory group members are visible around the school a lot of the time.

In the process of establishing a whānau advisory group at least three significant outcomes eventuated. First, a survey of Māori students was undertaken. The purpose of the survey was to gauge student views about the school. The findings from the 'soft' data were used as the main lever for establishing the Whānau Advisory Group and for the creation of a dedicated Māori position on the student executive thereby providing a Māori voice at student executive level. This latter outcome was supported by a committee consisting of a representative from each student year group. Finally, the building of a specific dedicated Māori space was fast tracked and erected within one year as a result of the survey.

### *What were the strategies the schools used to encourage whānau involvement? Whānau Engagement Strategies*

Engaging whānau to participate is a challenging but worthwhile endeavour. Attempts to encourage wider whānau involvement have met with some success through a collective whānau approach and at the individual level.

Strategies include:

- Hui that are specific in purpose for example to discuss and form a Whānau Advisory Group.
- Annual school barbecue which attracts varying numbers of whānau where yearly goals and NCEA results are reviewed.
- Whānau Day — a day of celebrations around Ki O Rahi<sup>1</sup> and shared kai. A school event to “shoot the breeze as much as anything and make school an inviting place to come to and not get too heavy. Just come along and enjoy each other’s company” (Principal). Whānau Day attracts a wider group of parents and is considered to be a successful way of encouraging whānau along to the school.
- Personally shoulder tapping and encouraging key people to become involved.
- Empowering parents and sharing responsibility for children’s education, for example, whānau advisory group decisions can be actioned by parents or staff members.
- Emailing parents to inform them of what is happening at the school and how they might support the school.

### *To what extent have the Whānau Advisory Group contributed to strategic planning and decision making in the schools? Strategic Direction*

The whānau advisory group has the opportunity to voice their thoughts about school strategic planning and decision making through the transparent lines of communication that exist via their senior management representative and also whānau advisory group members who are also board of trustee members.

The whānau advisory group has made indirect and direct contributions to various areas of the schools strategic planning and decision making. The establishment of a Māori space and the organisational procedures of the student leadership group are influenced by the whānau advisory group. The whānau advisory group have also contributed to the way in which the Māori students are mentored. They were consulted about the establishment and implementation of the mentoring programme and have successfully promoted a greater commitment to kapa haka. The contribution to teacher professional development, via Te Ākonga Māori, has had a significant effect upon teachers’ skills and knowledge including an increased ability to pronounce Māori words.

### *How has the Whānau Advisory Group contributed to improved Māori learner achievement and what is the evidence of this? Student Learning and Achievement*

There is some indication that there has been progress in Māori learner achievement where ‘*analysed Māori student achievement data show improving results over time. Level 2 and 3 NCEA results show Māori students, as a group, are achieving higher than school and national level*’ (Education Review Office, 2010). However, there is no evidence that correlates improved Māori learner achievement with the efforts of the whānau advisory group although it is likely that the efforts of the whānau advisory group had contributed in some way. But it does raise

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<sup>1</sup> Ki O Rahi is a ball sport played in New Zealand with a small round ball called a ‘ki’.

important questions regarding the consultative role they played in establishing and implementing the Māori mentoring programme and whether it contributed in any way to improve Māori achievement? What impact has the views expressed by the senior management representative or their board of trustee representatives on behalf of the whānau advisory group had on Māori achievement outcomes? Have any of the activities initiated by the whānau advisory group contributed to improved Māori achievement?

According to students interviewed, parents should be involved in their children's education so they know and understand what is going on and can then provide relevant support to help motivate them. A survey of Year 12 and 13 Māori students is planned to investigate what they attribute success to be, including in NCEA, which may help to answer the question about whether the whānau advisory group's efforts have improved Māori learner achievement.

*What would be the best approach to establish more Whānau Advisory Groups in schools and under what conditions? Future Directions*

The initial Māori student survey that helped to establish the whānau advisory group was seen as a positive move. It served to inform the school of students' needs and resulted in positive outcomes for all students. Interviewing students' whānau would also be advantageous as a way of informing the school of whānau goals and aspirations for education and how they might be achieved. Having the survey administered by an outside body (not the college) provided the opportunity for students to be honest in their responses.

In the early stages of establishing a whānau advisory group it would be beneficial that key whānau people who are committed and supportive of establishing a whānau advisory group are identified and personally shouldered by key school personnel and/or whānau. This process of identifying potential members and consequently recruiting them should be on-going, whether they are initially approached by senior management or other key players.

It is important that students as well as parents and staff are represented on any whānau advisory group. Allowing students to contribute to strategic planning and decision making is empowering for the group by allowing, for example, transparent lines of communication for the student voice.

## Case Study Two

Case Study Two is a decile two state co-educational secondary school that caters for Year 9 to Year 13 students. The total school roll is approximately 310 students, where Māori students number approximately 175 or 56% of the school roll. In 2008 the Whānau Advisory Group initiative was established. Current membership consists of Māori parents and senior management representatives. Members of Senior Management, whānau and students were interviewed.

### *What contributed to the success of the Whānau Advisory Group in the schools? ie, Indicators of Success.*

The whānau advisory group is supported by senior management. The whānau members are visible and highly regarded by the students, staff and community alike. Their ability to network and move seamlessly between the school and the community has created a lot of goodwill towards the school. The success of the whānau advisory group lies in their ability to progress by building on current strengths and resources to meet the needs of the students, school and community. The continuity of the core membership is thus necessary in order to maintain forward momentum especially during challenging times of change when membership fluctuates and new projects ensue

The whānau advisory group members are diverse in education, profession, knowledge and skills and thus draw upon a broad range of networks, knowledge and skills to support school and student needs. Fortunately, the school and the whānau advisory group share similar philosophies and values about education and student achievement. The whānau advisory group considers the high level of support from the principal as a key factor in its success. If there is total commitment to the 'kaupapa', then there is a high probability that the whānau advisory group will succeed within its specific context and community.

### *What were the strategies the schools used to encourage whānau involvement? Whānau Engagement Strategies*

Initially the school called for expressions of interest from the community to form a whānau advisory group. After a period of uncertainty about the future of the school and whether it would close or remain open, a group of parents were eager and full of good intent to support the school. Parents with specific knowledge or skills that would enhance the whānau advisory group were identified and shoulder tapped to swell whānau numbers. This action was a deliberate move to create stability and a positive influence for the school.

The whānau advisory group is an important means to encourage whānau involvement. Membership is flexible and is dependent on a core group drawing upon their networks, knowledge and skills, to encourage whānau involvement. At various times numbers do increase as other whānau with specific skills and qualifications are drawn in to support the school for specific events

*So we have people who come in and out, for the kapa haka, for the stage challenge or whatever. It will bring those other whānau members in when it's something they feel as if they can contribute too. So some of that is building up confidence in the whānau that come, that what they actually bring is really valuable (Parent).*

A key strategy was introducing restorative practices that encourage whānau involvement thus influencing staff perceptions of the role of parents in their child's education. This created an environment conducive to building positive relationships in partnership with parents that were 'mana enhancing' and empowering for all. The school has also established relationships with local iwi at local marae and have consulted with iwi kaumātua on tikanga and protocols associated with the marae-a-kura situated on the school grounds. Rebranding the school so that the



philosophy and values are whānau driven has been instrumental in encouraging whānau to enrol their children and engage with the college. There has been a substantial shift in the way parents view the school and according to a member of the whānau advisory group, *“I think they look at this school as their whānau. That's the magic bit. They look at it as a whānau, they just fit”*.

The promotion, inclusion and practice of whakawhanaungatanga throughout the school has contributed to enhancing a positive and whānau centred school culture. The concept of whakawhanaungatanga does not end at the school gates but spreads beyond to the wider community.

### ***To what extent have the Whānau Advisory Group contributed to strategic planning and decision making in the schools? Strategic Direction***

Whānau advisory group involvement in strategic planning on a grand scale has not occurred since 2009 when a strategic planning group was formed. The group set about to establish the school motto, the mission statement and the foundation blueprint for the current strategic plan. Members of the whānau advisory group, including those who are also on the board of trustees or in senior management, continue to provide input into strategic planning and decision making at these various levels of management and governance.

The future direction for the whānau advisory group includes involvement beyond organising events to include on-going discussions on strategies to sustain the positive gains made to date, the outstanding results from ERO and recent improvements in Māori achievement at Level 1 and 2. The school is looking towards the whānau advisory group and local iwi to provide leadership in developing strategies aimed at strengthening a strong sense of identity for Māori students, and initiating place-based education programmes which would also enhance the professional knowledge and cultural competencies of teachers.

### ***How has the Whānau Advisory Group contributed to improved Māori learner achievement and what is the evidence of this? Student Learning and Achievement***

The whānau advisory group is consulted and has worked alongside senior management to improve Māori learner achievement. They have had input into drafting school ‘processes, policies and procedures’ but measuring their contribution in terms of student achievement is difficult. The whānau advisory group has contributed to a greater ‘whānau’ understanding of the NCEA qualification through information hui and discussions but they recognise that further work remains in order to build a greater understanding of the qualification and of its importance for whānau.

Since 2009 NCEA results for Māori students at the school have improved substantially. While the school acknowledges and celebrates this accomplishment, emphasis is now on sustaining and increasing the levels of Māori student academic achievement

*The recent ERO report outlined great improvements in key areas such as attendance, achievement and discipline. More specifically, recent NCEA results are a clear indicator of the academic gains that have been made in the past year. With Level 1 pass rates of 78%, the proof is in the pudding. Maori achievement rates in Level 1 are at 80%, which is above national averages (Deputy Principal).*

### ***What would be the best approach to establish more Whānau Advisory Groups in schools and under what conditions? Future Directions***

Having staff members who are committed to establishing and supporting a whānau advisory group and see value in its establishment is essential in the initial establishment of a whānau advisory group. It may require discussion and influencing staff thinking and understanding so they become committed to establishing a whānau advisory

group. Positive relationships between staff and parents, is essential to not only establishing a whānau advisory group but in actively supporting the goals of the initiative. Opportunities to increase and improve relationships between the staff and whānau should be actively promoted and on-going.

Establishing a whānau advisory group needs to be planned and purposeful. It is important that the purpose of the whānau advisory group is transparent to all. Transparency could provide an opportunity to identify and recruit parents or community members to the whānau advisory group.

Attempts should be encouraged to engage a diverse group of whānau advisory members who are supportive of the school philosophy and values and yet are willing to challenge them when they are at odds with whānau aspirations. The whānau advisory group should contain a core group of people to maintain *ahi kā* and to ensure continuity while allowing for flexible membership when knowledge and skills from outside the core group is required.

## Case Study Three

Case Study Three is a decile one state co-educational school that delivers education for Year 9 to Year 13 students. Approximately 23% of the school roll is Māori (135 of 585 students). The Principal is Māori as is one of the three Deputy Principals. The College has been involved in the Whānau Advisory Group Project since 2005. Members of the whānau advisory group are predominantly staff of the school but who are also parents.

### *What contributed to the success of the Whānau Advisory Group in the schools? ie, Indicators of Success.*

There were mixed views about the success of the whānau advisory group at this school due mainly to the difficulty the school has in recruiting whānau to participate in whānau advisory group hui. However, the whānau liaison officer and the social worker considered the success of the whānau advisory group was due in part to the constitution of the committee which included a BOT member, a Māori DP who is also a Dean and the two Māori whānau support staff. Both liaison staff have lived in the community for 15 years and 27 years respectively and they therefore saw their role as contributing to the success of the whānau advisory group. Their long history and knowledge of whānau, knowing how the local community ticks and having the confidence of the Principal were contributing factors to the success of the whānau advisory group. The DP considered indicators of the success of the whānau advisory group to include:

- regular monthly meetings
- involvement of some of the community in school strategic planning meetings
- encouraging a parent to stand for the BOT which was successful
- links to the BOT through the parent representative
- control of the agenda
- discussions on matters concerning Māori (eg, learning support group programme, kapa haka, fundraising, monitoring academic success, Māori school assemblies, wānanga).

By contrast the parent representative considered a major impediment to the effectiveness and success of the whānau advisory group to be the number of ‘paid staff’ on the committee which is also chaired by a staff member. She felt this raised conflicts of interest and that the whānau advisory group should be primarily a forum for parents that is driven by parents rather than staff. She maintained that where conflicts of interest exist for staff members on the whānau advisory group, invariably there is a problem when

*As a parent he wants to say something totally different to what he does as a staff member and always his responses are as a staff member because of the HOD, because of his respect for her....there has to be a line drawn somewhere (Parent).*

Students who were interviewed aspired to a good education as preparation for university study. Parental involvement was seen as ‘pretty normal’ and important to their wellbeing because it demonstrated whānau support for their education. The students knew very little about the whānau advisory group although two had attended meetings but were not involved in the proceedings or discussions. One of the students felt that whānau advisory groups should encourage an active student voice “because it is about Māori students and how they are doing”.

### ***What were the strategies the schools used to encourage whānau involvement? Whānau Engagement Strategies***

A major concern raised is the on-going difficulty of attracting parent involvement in the whānau advisory group. As the DP explained “*we started with a committee of nineteen students, parents, kaumātua and staff. It was really awesome. However we are struggling to get people onto the committee at the moment*”. Among reasons given for the lack of involvement is that most parents work several jobs so it is not easy for them to attend meetings especially for shift workers. In this respect the community mirrors the effects of a global financial and economic environment on the New Zealand economy that is in recession, manifested by high fuel costs, food prices and other household goods and services.

Another reason posited for the lack of whānau involvement is the name, and that the word ‘advisory’ is “*off putting to a lot of our whānau*”. When NCEA data and other information concerning student achievement is shared with whānau for feedback there is no response. According to the Deputy Principal

*The data frightens a lot of our parents. They only want to know what my child is doing. They come to our interviews. Our last interviews were held on the 20th March. We had 70–78% of our parents come. A lot of those parents were Māori and they only want to know how my child is doing? What have they achieved so far and where are they going? (Deputy Principal)*

However, the whānau advisory group has succeeded in encouraging whānau to participate in other hui through holding whānau wānanga at a local marae because the school does not have marae facilities, although there is a large rūnanga-type space used as a school assembly room. Marae based whānau wānanga has proved popular in attracting larger numbers of Māori parent involvement. While they are not specifically whānau advisory group hui, the wānanga do offer the whānau advisory group an opportunity to share relevant information with parents such as an overview of school NCEA results. Although Māori parent attendance is high according to the BOT member “*there aren’t a lot of people who say much. I’m not sure why...*” Recently there has been an effort to build up the kapa haka teams which have not been active in recent years.

### ***To what extent have the Whānau Advisory Group contributed to strategic planning and decision making in the schools? Strategic Direction***

Participation in strategic planning is largely accomplished by Māori staff through their various roles in the school. The DP contributes to the strategic planning and decision making as a member. Other staff members are also members of the senior leadership team. One of the strengths of the whānau advisory group is having a Māori voice at the Board level and as a forum for providing direction and governance for the school.

### ***How has the Whānau Advisory Group contributed to improved Māori learner achievement and what is the evidence of this? Student Learning and Achievement***

Professional development for staff is encouraged and supported by the Senior Leadership team. One of the DP’s portfolios and area of responsibility is driving the learning inquiry methods to raise Māori student achievement. Teachers are encouraged to identify where they need to strengthen their skills to enable Māori and Pasifika student learning to flourish. As the DP maintained

*In our professional development one of our other DP’s is good at putting our staff on courses because it comes back to the student being at the centre and we work around our students (Deputy Principal).*

There was no evidence available to link whānau advisory group activities and programmes with Māori achievement. Nevertheless the DP, a member of the whānau advisory group, is responsible for some of the

strategies aimed at raising the levels of student achievement adopted by the school, and the Māori liaison officers play an important role in student retention strategies and pastoral care.

The development of a state of the art learning facility for the school contributes to a positive environment for learning. Student voice is encouraged and so they have been able to emphasise the importance of whānau involvement in their education. One student described his grandmother as

*A teacher and always nags me about doing my homework and pushing me to do all my work. She was a Primary teacher when I was little. She used to teach me here in Wellington (Student).*

Many of the students come from educated whānau who value education and actively foster education success. The students spoke about goal setting with their learning coach as being important for decisions around subject choice especially in preparation for achieving their future goals which they discussed with their parents and whānau.

### ***What would be the best approach to establish more Whānau Advisory Groups in schools and under what conditions? Future Directions***

A number of key approaches were suggested in order to establish more whānau advisory groups in schools:

- Important to have parents involved and who drive the group.
- Communication about the objectives and function of the whānau advisory group needs to be made clear to parents.
- Important to have a clear aim, purpose and justification as to why a whānau advisory group is important for their school.
- Know what the benefits are so Māori parents are likely to buy into it.

## Case Study Four

Case Study Four is a decile ten school with a celebrated history and has an unequivocal emphasis on excellence, whether it is academic, sporting or cultural. The total school roll is approximately 1581 students, where Māori students number approximately 128 or 8% of the school roll. The school considers it fundamentally important for students to develop an ethic of concern for those who are struggling in the wider, global community. The whānau advisory group initiative was established in 2005 with current membership limited to Māori parents. Members of Senior Management, whānau and students were interviewed.

### *What contributed to the success of the Whānau Advisory Group in the schools? ie, Indicators of Success.*

From the outset the whānau advisory group named their group in order to reflect their rangatiratanga as well as the idea that the acronym 'WAG' held negative connotations and conflicted with their aspirations and modus operandi. The name Kauri has been used in this report to maintain the confidentiality and anonymity of the whānau advisory group. The school is fortunate that whānau work in a diverse range of professional occupations which has had a positive influence on the school and the work of Kauri. Having whānau who are competent movers and shakers in a Pākehā world as well as in a Māori world is a success indicator for the school because such whānau are conversant with, and knowledgeable of, 'the system' which is critical

*I was just impressed at the Kauri meeting the other night, just because there is a lot of guidance and there is a lot of demands there as well and that's great; and that's what parent groups should do. They obviously feel real ownership in the school. Māori parents don't always feel that in these institutions and I felt that Kauri do feel that (Principal).*

Despite most members of the whānau advisory group being relatively new, they have been committed to actively strategising their pathway forward including identifying key areas where improvements should be made. One priority is the need for succession planning by transitioning new whānau into the school's community to ensure they understand school systems and processes

*But in terms of what we do for Kauri as a whānau, succession planning is important and I guess we have just fallen into it without having followed any particular plan from previous whānau .... They have been a couple of faces though that have been here since its beginning (Parent).*

### *What were the strategies the schools used to encourage whānau involvement? Whānau Engagement Strategies*

Various strategies for engaging with family have been practiced with mixed results in terms of participation levels. These have included regular hui, promoting Māori representation at the school's governance level. In the last five years there have been Māori representatives elected and co-opted to the school's board of trustees. Whānau involvement is definitely seen as important at the school

*I'm very much of a Pākehā background and so I guess pretty aware of our inadequacies when it comes to cultural competency with Māori and so anything that is going to raise Māori consciousness in this school is something that I'm going to welcome, and have done so (Principal).*

A key strategy that the school has highlighted in terms of fostering whānau engagement in the whānau advisory group initiative is the pōwhiri for new students and whānau which is followed by the hākari. This, important event is a recent initiative of the school, and one championed by Kauri. This has been a powerful way of nurturing the

Māori cultural dimension as well as the historical significance associated with the geographic location of the school according to Māori traditions.

Recruitment of whānau through tapping into personal networks has had a positive flow on effect.

### ***To what extent have the Whānau Advisory Group contributed to strategic planning and decision making in the schools? Strategic Direction***

According to current whānau members on the whānau advisory group, strategic planning and decision making is a priority area. However, as mentioned earlier, most members are relatively new to their respective roles and with no succession plans to guide them, the senior management has acknowledged the need for consistent communication between the board, Kauri and senior management so that lines of communication are clear and everyone knows what 'page they are on'.

Previously Kauri had been involved in strategic planning exercises at the school so there is now impetus to resume and expand this commitment but with appropriate support structures in place

*The other thing that was laid so cleverly on the table at our last hui was what had been discussed prior to the hui, which was to have more than one voice or representation on the board. So, have a bigger voice at the governance and management level with support there too. We definitely want to get an elected member with the elections coming up, whether we can get more than that would be fantastic but then you know, even if the college would be open to co-option too (Parent).*

### ***How has the Whānau Advisory Group contributed to improved Māori learner achievement and what is the evidence of this? Student Learning and Achievement***

Kauri is very supportive of promoting and raising academic excellence amongst Māori students.

*I asked at the hākari how many of our boys are sitting scholarship Māori and he said none. And I said, well you know, that's not right because we've got boys who are more than capable, so why aren't we achieving at that level too? We have boys from kōhanga, kura kaupapa and they are smart boys who should be pushed (Parent).*

Recent National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) results show 89–90% of Year 12 Māori boys achieved NCEA level 2 and 20% of Year 13 Māori students, who left in the previous year, also achieved NCEA level 2. Given the percentage of Māori at the school, there is generally a high achievement rate across the yearly cohorts. The school attributes the whānau advisory group as having had some impact on this result. The principal is active in forming positive relationships with students and their whānau. For example, he interviews all Māori students individually to ascertain their aspirations and to assist them set goals.

Māori achievement is a priority at the school where targets are set for Māori. Kauri played a role in initiating this process soon after the group was established by fostering and enhancing positive relationships between the school, the Māori students and their whānau.

### ***What would be the best approach to establish more Whānau Advisory Groups in schools and under what conditions? Future Directions***

Several approaches to establishing more whānau advisory groups were identified. The principle of whakawhanaungatanga is highlighted as important, supported by a principal who is committed to the kaupapa and is seen to be personally applying this principle in his or her practice by getting out and actively engaging with

whānau. The whānau advisory group must be empowered to take a leadership role as the kaupapa Māori conduit between the school's wider Māori community and the school (governance, management, curriculum and so on). Open communication between the whānau advisory group and the wider whānau and between the school and the whānau advisory group was highlighted as critical.

Support and guidance from the Ministry of Education as well as local iwi is also considered important. The Pouwhakataki served an important role in providing such support for schools in engaging with local communities. The disestablishment of the Pouwhakataki positions was therefore a significant loss for a kaupapa such as the whānau advisory group initiative. Professional learning and development programmes for staff are necessary but hard to achieve if there is a lack of resourcing. The decision to change the name from 'Whānau Advisory Group' to Kauri was seen as important because the name emphasises the positive and aspirational focus of the group. Finally, if a whānau advisory group initiative is to flourish, it must be supported by a school's senior leadership team who are actively committed to its success.



## Case Study Five

Case Study Five is a decile nine state co-educational secondary school. The total school roll is approximately 1458 students, where Māori students number approximately 215 or 15% of the school roll. The students are drawn largely from an area, which has a broad socio-economic mix although a considerable number of students travel from out of zone.

### *What contributed to the success of the Whānau Advisory Group in the schools? ie, Indicators of Success.*

The main driver for the school's involvement in the whānau advisory group has been a focus on Māori achievement, Māori student performances in NCEA including achievements in waka ama, kapa haka and other related activities.

The success of the whānau advisory group is due in part to parents committing to the kaupapa and seeing the need for a Māori voice in the school especially as Māori are the minority. Parents have been very involved with the whānau advisory group and consider it an active way of showing their support for the principal, and as a vehicle to communicate the needs of Māori students to him and the good teachers at the school. They also felt it was important that their involvement helped to ensure Māori culture is accounted for and that Māori students are supported in upholding their identity as Māori. One parent put it this way

*I actually think from our personal view, that sometimes the culture gets lost within the education here which I think is a shame...being Māori or Pasifika is who you are first and foremost and I don't think some of that is addressed when it comes to the education side particularly here in ...hence the reason why we stay so involved to ensure that they [Māori students] don't slip through the gaps (Parent).*

Parents feel that culture not only counts but matters to them and their children if they are to succeed as Māori. Therefore Māori culture should be evident in all aspects of schooling. Students interviewed claimed that

*If it wasn't for our parents, Māori culture would not be that strong at our school...it is mostly a palangi school than anything else. Most of our teachers don't really see Māori as important here. With the help of our parents it's helped us....it's more whānau oriented for us...there definitely wouldn't be much Māori classes or Māori performing arts if we didn't have support from parents (Students).*

The Principal and Dean are committed to the whānau advisory group and attend all meetings. Parents are appreciative that the Principal and Dean take an active interest, which then allows parents to voice their expectations of the leadership and their role as education providers. Despite the interest shown by the Principal there was a feeling of disconnect between the parents and the school leadership. Reporting on Māori student achievement at whānau hui was one thing, but having parents on the whānau advisory group involved in the solutions to underachievement and providing a strong and overt Māori presence throughout the school, would demonstrate a real commitment to Māori students and their whānau in line with whānau aspirations. This issue was still being worked through in terms of the whānau advisory group and its aspirations.

### *What were the strategies the school used to encourage whānau involvement? Whānau Engagement Strategies*

The disconnect parents feel with the school leadership is at odds with the Principal who believes the school has endeavoured to work collaboratively with Māori whānau through the whānau advisory group. In encouraging whānau involvement, the Principal suggested it was important to:

- Connect with and encourage a whole whānau approach to attend whānau advisory group hui.
- Appoint enthusiastic staff who are passionate about Māori achievement.
- Appoint Māori staff who are good role models for Māori students.
- Have the right personnel on the committee - parents and staff - who bring a range of skills, experience and knowledge.
- Ensure teaching staff know how to build positive relationships with students by working at the grass roots and making a difference so that students not only feel they have some input but that they are respected and have a place at the school.

According to the parents, involving more whānau required a number of strategies that would increase the school's commitment to Māori student achievement. These suggestions and recommendations made by whānau included:

- Increasing academic support for Māori students who are struggling and/or who fall through the gaps.
- Implementing a more strategic approach to the whānau advisory group including parents being responsible for the agenda rather than an over reliance on the one Māori staff member.
- Having a Māori liaison person to support the Māori staff member who has recently been appointed to a Dean.
- Offering career advice for Māori students earlier in their schooling (Y9) than is currently provided.
- Being clear about the Māori achievement strategy for the school and monitoring how the school is meeting its targets.

### *To what extent have the Whānau Advisory Group contributed to strategic planning and decision making in the schools? Strategic Direction*

There is little evidence that the whānau advisory group contributes to planning and decision making other than the Māori staff member through the school system and as a Dean, and through the Māori BOT member. Strategic plans are open to all parents and teacher input, although specific consultation with the whānau advisory group has not been a consideration. The Principal made a distinction between the whānau advisory group and their role in receiving information such as regarding achievement rather than in terms of active participation in the schools strategic planning and decision making. This was confirmed by parents of the whānau advisory group. As one parent put it:

*I don't think the strategy of making decisions is made at our level I think that's already made at a board level or a teacher level but I think they make the strategies, they execute it and then we find out about it later.... (Parent).*

Issues requiring restorative practices involving Māori students and their whānau were considered an important reason for setting up a whānau advisory group. According to the Principal:

*One of the driving forces for having a whānau group that really dealt with issues associated with Māori at school was the high proportion of Māori students in the suspension and stand-down statistics (Principal).*

One parent who works in the area of restorative justice told how she initiated a restorative activity as a result of an incident involving her child and how she assisted the school in that process with reasonably positive outcomes. The principal agreed that such a process was important for the school and which he considered “...*I think fits more with the sense of justice according to Māoridom*”. One area the whānau advisory group has driven is the proposal and plans for a school marae but without success. In terms of strategic planning and decision-making one parent suggested:

*Māori teachers and Māori parents have an idea like a marae connected to the school and then we've got to try and push the barrow for it in the context of the strategy that's already been decided. Translated to 'we've got no money for your marae' (Parent).*

The whānau advisory group insists that a school marae would make an important contribution to Māori student culture and identity at the school with an expectation of a concomitant increase in Māori student achievement. At the request of the Māori staff member and whānau advisory group, Māori language classes and meetings were shifted from a top story building without a lift or toilet access for kaumātua on that level, and relocated to a ground floor space in E Block in rooms designated for foreign languages such as Japanese. According to the Principal, the cost of a purpose-built marae is fiscally prohibitive and ambitious “...*the cost of their plan was something over a million dollars... there's no way we can fund that sum of money*” although a staged approach to the plan was not ruled out. Furthermore whānau suggested that they could take a more proactive and strategic approach to the marae proposal project.

### *How has the Whānau Advisory Group contributed to improved Māori learner achievement and what is the evidence of this? Student Learning and Achievement*

Although there is no clear evidence that links student achievement to the whānau advisory group, a 2012 report notes that disparities between Māori and Pasifika students' achievement and that of their peers in Y9 and 10 have successfully reduced over time (Education Review Office, 2012). The Principal felt the school needed to work alongside the parents on providing early career guidance and one way to do this is through the whānau advisory

group. The school considered Māori student involvement in kapa haka, waka ama and in the choir demonstrated a level of Māori achievement although there was no evidence that such achievement transferred to academic achievement.

*What would be the best approach to establish more Whānau Advisory Groups in schools and under what conditions? Future Directions*

Among approaches suggested were:

- Involve key Māori people from the community who have credibility and are associated with the school.
- Build around the students interest — kapa haka, waka ama, international trips.
- Know your cohort of Māori students and their achievements and ensure academic mentors are in place to provide high quality guidance in terms of subject choice.
- Establish realistic targets and goals for the whānau advisory group.
- Have a communication plan to safeguard maximum Māori parent information exchange regarding the whānau advisory group as a specific group.
- Ensure clear aims, objectives and terms of reference are clearly articulated and understood by parents that the whānau advisory group is aligned with academic achievement.
- Regular meetings that are formalised with lines to the BOT and/or Senior Leadership team so that accountability by the whānau advisory group of the school can be assured.

## Case Study Six

Case Study Six is a decile two full primary school. The total school roll is 429 students, where Māori students number approximately 230 or 54%. The level of community engagement is high. The school vision of *'together we learn and achieve'* underpins all endeavours and is evident through relationships and interactions with students and whānau. A well understood and consistently implemented positive behaviour programme is helping to enhance learning outcomes for students. The principal leads the school's commitment to promoting success for Māori students. Achievement data indicates the need for continued effort in raising performance in reading and writing for it to compare more favourably with that of non-Māori students.

### *What contributed to the success of the Whānau Advisory Group in the schools? ie, Indicators of Success.*

Rimu is the name the whānau advisory group chose for their group in order to express their mana and rangatiratanga and to celebrate a positive kaupapa. Rimu's successes are the result of some key indicators that are both distinct from, but similar to the other schools in this study. They include:

- 100% support from the school principal.
- A dedicated core of whānau who have been the backbone of Rimu.
- Initial Ministry of Education advice, guidance and support.
- Utilising the diverse skill range of whānau.
- A commitment to monthly hui.
- Commitment to the kaupapa and to the educational success of the tamariki Māori.
- Building on strengths such as tikanga associated with 'kai' and 'kapa haka'.
- School and whānau working collaboratively in co-constructing a pathway forward in the provision of Māori education.

With experience and a proven track record behind them, Rimu enjoys the full support of the school leadership and staff, the board of trustees and the wider school community.

### *What were the strategies the schools used to encourage whānau involvement? Whānau Engagement Strategies*

On being appointed seven years ago, the current principal met with the Pouwhakataki from the Ministry of Education to seek guidance on Māori community engagement given the large Māori roll (55–60%) at the school. Following consultation hui, which were an important process with students, their whānau and the Pouwhakataki, the whānau advisory group initiative was established at the school.

Key strategies employed by the school include operating in a kanohi ki te kanohi manner to engage with whānau, the school, the board, teachers, students and the wider community, building on existing school celebrations and events such as 'mahitahi/kaitahi', and recruiting other whānau to play a role in Rimu's endeavours by shoulder tapping key personnel who are linked to the school and or its community.

*All of those students were interviewed. That information was put together and then we had an event where we had parents come along. We put it together with a kapa haka performance and then we showed this information. And then from there we asked, who would like to be involved with this new thing called the Whānau Advisory Group? (Principal)*

### **To what extent have the Whānau Advisory Group contributed to strategic planning and decision making in the schools? Strategic Direction**

Rimu have made positive contributions to the school's charter, the strategic plan and action plan. These areas are monitored by Rimu prior to being implemented. They are involved in analysing school data and targets and in the establishment of any school wide initiatives that result from these analyses; the summer reading programme is an example. Some members of Rimu including the principal also sit on the board of trustees and so are directly involved in school governance and management issues at the decision-making level. This is an on-going process where Rimu are an innate but 'normal' part of the wider operations of school life.

*The most recent example of this is last year with Tātaiako, which you know about. Rimu ran all of the staff workshops and so they took the staff through Tātaiako. So whanaungatanga, manaakitanga, ako, tangata whenuatanga and wānanga, they took that and told of what these mean to us, lets ignore the book for a moment and see that this is what it means for us. And so that's the first time anywhere here a group of whānau have taken PLD for staff (Principal).*

Rimu are currently in the process of applying for charitable trust status as a strategic move to access the resources necessary to fund their initiatives. Resourcing had become an issue where it was stated that:

*There is a definite limitation to accessing funding through a school body and a lot of charitable organisations will not fund schools directly. We have a project where we are supporting as Rimu, an internal mentoring programme called 'Ka Rewa'. If we made a funding application to an external entity, the chances are that it would have gone through. So we see value in becoming a charitable trust so that we can fund initiatives and make things happen here (Parent).*

### **How has the Whānau Advisory Group contributed to improved Māori learner achievement and what is the evidence of this? Student Learning and Achievement**

As a result of strategic planning at the governance level Rimu have actively contributed to Māori learner achievement through their annual summer reading programme 'Ka Rewa' that they resource and organise. Teachers and syndicate leaders feel confident to engage with Rimu and to ask for guidance around specific learning issues for Māori students such as in literacy. In fact the 'Ka Rewa' programme emerged as a result of such discussions.

Since the establishment of the whānau advisory group, Māori student engagement and achievement has improved. Given the success of Rimu to date and its ability to permeate the everyday school programme including the wider school community, there is a high probability that Rimu have certainly contributed positively to Māori student achievement. The scope of this project has not enabled a complete and thorough analysis of this specific relationship.

### **What would be the best approach to establish more Whānau Advisory Groups in schools and under what conditions? Future Directions**

There are a number of key observations that highlight the successful development of the whānau advisory group initiative at Case Study Six. These include:

- The school principal must certainly be committed to the kaupapa.
- There needs to be a core group of Māori whānau, ahi kā, to keep the fire that is ‘Whānau Advisory Group’ burning.
- Centre the initial hui and or engagement phase around a cultural feature that strongly resonates with Māori ie, kapa haka performance followed by kai/hākari.
- Communicate with local iwi and or rūnanga to build relationships for the future.
- Be supported initially by Ministry of Education to resource the project’s development.

## Case Study Seven

Case Study Seven is a state funded, decile two, multi-cultural and full primary school catering for students from Year One to Year Eight. The total school roll is 112 students, where Māori students number approximately 63 or 56% of the school roll. There are currently six classes arranged in two Syndicates — with Lower and Upper Syndicates located in the two main classroom blocks. In 2007 the whānau advisory group initiative was established at this school.

### *What contributed to the success of the Whānau Advisory Group in the schools? ie, Indicators of Success.*

Seven years ago the school underwent a change of leadership which is when the current principal was appointed. At the time, the school received a very negative Education Review Office (ERO) report and, in addition the school roll was plummeting monthly. The principal then engaged in a conversation with key personnel from the Ministry of Education including local Pouwhakataki which resulted in the school establishing the whānau advisory group initiative.

*There was a lot of work to do and I felt that there were a number of options but the best one was to get some advice and so they came highly recommended and I was really lucky to be able to talk to them and a couple of other people who very kindly came out to school to talk to me and had a look, made a few suggestions and basically it all started from there (Principal).*

The whānau group members were passionate about being involved and with Ministry of Education guidance and the principal's commitment, the whānau advisory group initiative flourished as did the whole school - community environment. From the outset the whānau advisory group assisted the school in building important relationships with a local marae. These relationships have become the backbone of whānau engagement for the school and a key indicator of success for the group because until that time the school had limited knowledge of how to go about engaging meaningfully with whānau of the school.

Capturing the students' voice was the other key success indicator for the initiative. Students were empowered to be actively involved in the kaupapa in terms of teacher - student relationships, curriculum development and whānau support.

### *What were the strategies the school used to encourage whānau involvement? Whānau Engagement Strategies*

The most significant strategy employed by the school to encourage whānau participation in this kaupapa has been kanohi ki te kanohi or face to face communication. As a result the school was able to identify community leaders amongst whānau to work alongside them in establishing the whānau advisory group. Other strategies have included:

- Calling hui in conjunction with local marae.
- Meeting whānau in the community and on their terms.
- Listening to the whānau voice.
- Respecting whānau by listening, learning and actioning their concerns.
- Identifying key whānau personnel to drive the kaupapa in the community.



- Including whānau aspirations alongside school goals in home — school communication such as school notices, emails, hui, sporting events, cultural and community events.

### ***To what extent has the Whānau Advisory Group contributed to strategic planning and decision-making in the school? Strategic Direction***

Many of the original whānau on the whānau advisory group have gone on to become school board of trustee members and therefore directly involved and responsible for the school's strategic direction by contributing to and driving strategic planning, curriculum development and other relevant work of the school's board of trustees.

The whānau advisory group has represented the local marae and in this capacity has contributed to school policy development, including through their representation on the school board of trustees. In collaboration with the board of trustees, the whānau advisory group has also driven whānau and community consultation in rewriting the school charter. Over time and with this level of representation (marae and school board of trustees), the whānau advisory group has evolved as an innate part of school life.

### ***How has the Whānau Advisory Group contributed to Māori learner achievement and what is the evidence of this? Student Learning and Achievement***

The whānau advisory group has made a huge contribution to the achievement of Māori learners by whānau having their aspirations met through contributing to the school's strategic direction and policy decision-making process. Comparing successive ERO reports since the establishment of the whānau advisory group and their active involvement reveal positive changes have occurred.

Some of the successes attributed to the initiative include no student stand downs for two years, where traditionally Māori students featured prominently. There is also an overall positive attitude at the school and amongst its community.

*We had a whole school assembly this morning and it went on a bit longer than usual but that was because we made four special presentations awarded to anyone in the school. A child must be nominated by a teacher for a mixed academic social and cultural contribution during the term; not one offs but consistently. I awarded four this morning to Māori students, three girls and one boy. I contacted their whānau during the week and every single one of the recipients had at least three to five of their whānau in the hall celebrating the fact; yep it was lovely and that would not have been the case seven years ago (Principal).*

Other than the improved ERO reports, no specific measurements have been conducted that show the relationship between the whānau advisory group initiative and its contribution to student learning and achievement.

### ***What would be the best approach to establish more Whānau Advisory Groups in schools and under what conditions? Future Directions***

At the outset it is important to identify the Māori community, make contact and meet with a local marae if there is one. That has been a key strategy at this school. Shoulder tapping key whānau people in the community is also recommended if there is no local marae to engage with. At the initial stages of establishing a whānau advisory group some key basics that have also been suggested include:

- The principal needs to be 100% committed to the kaupapa.
- The kaupapa must be genuine and not half-hearted or tokenistic.

- Time must be taken to meet with and hear the whānau voice(s).
- The school needs to get out into its community and not expect whānau to turn up at school.
- The school's interests in terms of Māori education must meet and align with whānau aspirations because children are the common ground when it comes to a school and its local community and whānau.

# Commonalities and Differences

## Whānau Advisory Group - Indicators of Success

	Case Study One	Case Study Two	Case Study Three	Case Study Four	Case Study Five	Case Study Six	Case Study Seven
Senior management/principal support and endorsement	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Transparent lines of communication	*					*	*
Member diversity	*	*		*		*	
Committed and passionate members	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
WAG members are highly visible within the school and community	*	*	*			*	*
Consistent core group maintains continuity during times when numbers increase or decrease		*		*		*	*
School and WAG share compatible philosophies and values about education		*				*	*
Whānau with strong professional roles and Māori backgrounds (bicultural)			*	*	*	*	
Initial Ministry of Education support and guidance				*		*	*
Strong tikanga Māori practice and belief in valuing Māori culture		*			*	*	
Access to and support of local marae		*	*				*
Regular monthly meetings			*			*	
Involvement of community in school strategic planning			*			*	
Control of the agenda			*				

## Whānau Advisory Group - Whānau Engagement Strategies

	Case Study One	Case Study Two	Case Study Three	Case Study Four	Case Study Five	Case Study Six	Case Study Seven
Hui with a select purpose in mind	*	*		*		*	*
Annual school barbecue / hākari to update whānau	*					*	
Whānau day around a theme	*					*	
Identifying and shoulder tapping individuals	*	*		*	*	*	*
Empowering and sharing responsibility for children's education	*	*				*	*
Emailing and newsletters	*			*			*
WAG is a mechanism to involve parents. Members draw upon their networks to support the school		*		*		*	*
Repositioning staff perceptions of the role of parents, community and iwi to create positive relationships and partnership		*			*		*
Rebranding of the school philosophy and values that is whānau driven		*					*
The promotion, inclusion and practice of Whakawhānaungatanga within and beyond school gates		*					*
Pouwhakataki / Ministry support				*		*	*
Kanohi ki te kanohi						*	*
Going 'to' whānau and not waiting for them to come into school							*
Whānau wānanga held at local marae			*				
New Staff appointments who are passionate about Māori achievement					*		
Pōwhiri to welcome new students and whānau to school				*			

## Whānau Advisory Group - Strategic Direction

	Case Study One	Case Study Two	Case Study Three	Case Study Four	Case Study Five	Case Study Six	Case Study Seven
Input through WAG members who are also representatives of senior management and/or board of trustees	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Direct and indirect consultation with school and board of trustees	*	*	*	*		*	*
Input into the current strategic plan		*	*	*		*	*
Future plans to include WAG in specific strategic planning		*		*	*	*	
School charter development						*	*
Development of education initiatives						*	
Growing WAG beyond its initial 'ToR'						*	*

## Whānau Advisory Group - Student Learning and Achievement

	Case Study One	Case Study Two	Case Study Three	Case Study Four	Case Study Five	Case Study Six	Case Study Seven
Positive views that WAG has contributed to student learning and achievement	*	*		*		*	*
Difficulty in measuring specific WAG contribution to student learning and achievement but cannot deny that such a contribution exists	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Student one on ones with SMT / principal to enhance student learning, achievement				*			
Specific initiatives to promote learning and achievement						*	*
Anecdotal evidence of Māori student engagement in their learning and improved performance at school				*	*	*	*
Anecdotal evidence of a correlation between the WAG and Māori student achievement	*	*		*	*	*	*

## Whānau Advisory Group - Future Direction

	Case Study One	Case Study Two	Case Study Three	Case Study Four	Case Study Five	Case Study Six	Case Study Seven
Draw upon an outside body to survey students and whānau to ascertain needs	*				*		
Identify and shoulder tap individuals who would be beneficial to the WAG	*	*		*		*	*
Ensure staff, parents and students are represented on the Whānau Advisory Group and that whānau drive the WAG	*		*	*			
Ensure transparent lines of communication are established	*			*	*	*	
Ensure WAG is empowered to contribute to decision making and strategic planning	*			*			*
Ensure that staff support and see value in parental involvement		*	*	*	*		*
Ensure an environment is conducive to fostering positive relationships between the school and parents		*		*		*	
Ensure the purpose of the WAG is transparent and realistic		*	*		*		
Ensure that WAG members are diverse and numbers are flexible		*		*			
Whakawhanaungatanga is promoted		*		*			*
Ministry of Education support				*		*	
Local Iwi/marae engagement		*		*		*	*
Total principal support and buy in		*		*		*	*
Whānau representatives have credibility within the community					*		
Communication plan that disseminates and receives information to inform the WAG and wider whānau					*		
Ensure that the WAG are informed of Māori students' achievement so that they can be informed on how they may support students					*		

## Discussion

A broad examination of the case studies and the data that each has generated reveals a number of key outcomes that are related to Māori whānau and the whānau advisory group project. Comparisons were made across each of the case studies on the impact of the whānau advisory group initiative in fostering quality engagement between schools and their Māori whānau in order to raise Māori learner achievement. An earlier whānau advisory group project evaluation report highlighted a number of limitations and positive outcomes in the first year of the pilot project's implementation. This report builds on these positive outcomes to highlight the successes of the whānau advisory group initiative, as well as areas that have not been so easy to provide hard evidence.

Factors that have contributed to the success of whānau advisory groups were identified by all case studies. These factors varied from school to school according to their perception of success. There was strong agreement from all schools that their whānau advisory group was successful when:

- They had a committed and passionate group of members.
- They had senior management and principal support.

At least half of the schools viewed their whānau advisory group as successful when:

- The members were drawn from a diverse background of education, profession, skills and knowledge.
- Members were highly visible within the school and community.
- A core group of Whānau Advisory Group members maintained continuity when member numbers fluctuated.

To a lesser degree, but no less important as indicators of success, initial Ministry of Education support and guidance, compatibility of philosophy and values between the school and the whānau advisory group, and transparent lines of communications were also seen as enhancing successful relationships in three of the case studies. It should be noted that other indicators of success were also identified but only by one or two case studies.

Encouraging whānau to become members of the whānau advisory group often occurred by shoulder tapping identified whānau members as opposed to 'calling' for volunteers. Six of the seven schools took this approach to engage whānau. Parents were not always shoulder tapped; rather they volunteered in order to be involved in their child's education. This may have occurred at hui to discuss children's learning and achievement. It was noted that once the whānau advisory group was well established, members from four of the case studies began to draw upon their networks to engage more whānau to support the school and children's learning. At least four of the case studies considered empowerment and sharing responsibility for children's education contributed to whānau engagement. Shifting or repositioning staff perceptions of parental involvement in education also featured as a strategy that contributed to whānau engagement. Three of the seven case studies had taken this position. In an attempt to engage whānau a few schools specifically identified and persevered with traditional strategies of engaging whānau like sending out newsletters and emails. Other strategies or events to engage whānau have received some favourable attendance numbers, for example, Whānau days, school barbecues or taking whānau hui



at the local marae. These strategies disclosed by the case studies demonstrated that the experiences were successful in terms of meeting with whānau to set the groundwork for future opportunities to engage whānau.

Involvement in strategic planning and decision-making occurred primarily through individual whānau advisory group members who were also senior management or board of trustee members. In terms of contribution to student learning and achievement most schools claimed a positive correlation between the whānau advisory group and Māori achievement. This correlation was anecdotal; a sense that the positive engagement of whānau had an impact on student learning and achievement. Despite obvious improvement in NCEA and claims of a correlation there was no empirical evidence from any case study that this improvement was due to the influence and impact of the whānau advisory group and their actions in any of the case studies.

There are no clear guidelines that would ensure the successful establishment and effectiveness of a whānau advisory group in all schools. However, according to at least half of the case studies there were several recommendations that should be considered when establishing a whānau advisory group. They include:

- Identify and shoulder tap individuals. This approach could be done by whānau advisory group members or senior management.
- Ensure that staff support and see value in parental involvement.
- Ensure transparent lines of communication are established and would ensure that the whānau advisory group voice is heard.
- Ensure principal and iwi/marae support.

While not as commonly recommended as those suggestions above, several other recommendations were provided and asserted as contributing to the establishment of a whānau advisory group. They include:

- Ensure that the whānau advisory group is empowered to contribute to decision making and strategic planning.
- Ensure an environment in which whakawhanaungatanga is promoted.
- Ensure staff, parents and students are represented on the whānau advisory group.
- Create an environment that is conducive to fostering positive relationships and partnerships between the school and parents.
- Ensure that whānau advisory group membership is diverse.
- Ensure the purpose of the whānau advisory group is transparent and realistic.
- Ensure Ministry of Education support.
- Ensure parents drive the whānau advisory group.
- Ensure whānau representatives have credibility within the community.
- Draw upon an outside body to survey students and whānau to ascertain needs.

All of the whānau advisory group research data has been analysed using appropriate qualitative methods to develop the seven case studies, and then charted against the Ministry of Education's Measureable Gains Framework (MGF) Rubric 2.5 titled, *Effective Parent, Families and Whānau Engagement (14/09/2011)* developed for *Ka Hikitia: Managing for success* (Ministry of Education, 2008). This particular rubric examines to what extent are parents, family and whānau effectively engaged with the educational institution in supporting the learners' education? How informed, demanding and determining are they in their engagement?

Given the overall research findings, this report confirms that all of the seven case study schools fall within and across the top three ratings (of six ratings in total) for this MGF; the top three ratings being, highly effective, consolidating effectiveness and developing effectiveness. The whānau advisory group initiative highlights that while there are positive outcomes across all of the seven case study schools in most areas of the project, there is diversity in terms of the extent in which whānau engagement for instance, occurs and is recognized. This ranges from:

- Parents, families and whānau knowledge and perspectives are well respected, highly valued and fully integrated in ways that benefit Māori learners' education;
- Parents, families and whānau report that they are able to engage as Māori in culturally appropriate and mana enhancing ways; and,
- Parents, families and whānau report that they are able to engage in culturally appropriate ways.

These analyses and comparisons with the MGF Rubric 2.5 reveal that the whānau advisory group project is certainly engaging whānau within the pilot schools. Furthermore, there is much recorded and or anecdotal evidence of whānau engagement taking place, at different levels and determined by context, support structures or resourcing (human and material). Consequently, levels and quality of parents', families' and whānau engagement vary but are certainly high enough to support their children's education; although there is always room for improvement that will come from reflective practice. Engagement between the school and its respective whānau advisory group that occurs in a consistent manner through monthly hui, whānau advisory group contribution to strategic direction and or through whānau advisory group representation at board of trustee level has facilitated the inclusion of Māori content and language in the teaching and learning process. This process, that replicates the concept and practice of 'ako' in action, reflects the intrinsic identity, language and culture of Māori learners and their parents, families and whānau. The whānau advisory group initiative has undoubtedly enabled and empowered whānau to participate in the education process.

The Ministry's MGF Rubric 3.1, *Māori Learner Progress and Achievement (14/09/2011)* provides a framework to examine a number of key questions related to achievement and includes, how well and how rapidly does a particular initiative achieve progress for Māori learners that will allow them to start to excel in education as soon as possible? How well is the potential of Māori learners realised? Are they enjoying and achieving success 'as Māori', realising their cultural distinctiveness and potential? How effectively is 'the initiative' reducing disparities in education success? The MGF Rubric 3.1 is able to be applied to specific Māori educational initiatives including the whānau advisory group initiative given that it aims to foster quality engagement between schools and their whānau in order to improve Māori educational achievement.

In all of the case studies, there is a range of data centred on positive school wide views that reveals the whānau advisory groups are contributing to Māori student engagement in education and subsequently, to their learning and achievement. For instance, the fact that many whānau and Māori parents are taking a direct role in the education process inspires Māori students and nurtures a sense of positive esteem, of being valued by the school system and

of their voices being heard by the school. No direct mechanisms have been used to measure actual whānau advisory group contribution to Māori learner achievement and success. Rather, the positive changes and results have occurred after the whānau advisory groups have been established. Significantly, all seven case study schools show a marked improvement across the board in terms of Māori education within their particular settings.

## Conclusion

The whānau advisory group research project set out to learn more about the contribution whānau advisory groups can make in the area of whānau and community engagement in schooling that supports Māori students' learning and to build on the research of an earlier whānau advisory group research project in 2006. From its inception, specific aims of the whānau advisory group have been to foster quality engagement between schools and their Māori communities in order to improve Māori student achievement through:

- Involving whānau in strategic planning and decision-making within schools in order to make a difference for Māori learners.
- Improving the wellbeing of Māori students by building safe, supportive and inclusive communication mechanisms between school management and Māori students within the school.
- Involving more whānau and students in learning-centred discussions with educators.

In terms of the degree and measure of success of the whānau advisory group initiative, whānau advisory groups will succeed if they are:

- Supported by a core group of committed and passionate whānau.
- Have senior management and principal support.
- Members are drawn from a diverse background of education, skills and knowledge.
- Members are visible and have local credibility.

In terms of engaging whānau and sustaining whānau engagement in the whānau advisory group initiative, the most successful methods have varied across the case study schools but include:

- Traditional strategies of engaging whānau like newsletter and emails.
- Innovative strategies or events such as Whānau Days.
- Meeting with whānau at local marae.
- Shoulder tapping identified whānau members.
- Shifting or repositioning staff perceptions of whānau involvement in education.

Regarding whānau involvement at the strategic planning and decision making level in schools, the research shows that:

- Some of the whānau advisory group members were part of senior management.
- Many whānau were represented on the respective boards of trustees and so carried whānau advisory group and 'whānau' aspirations on matters related to strategic planning and decision making.

Student learning and achievement is perhaps the most significant reason for the establishment of the whānau advisory group initiative and while all schools have claimed a positive correlation between the whānau advisory group initiative and Māori achievement, this correlation was anecdotal. Nonetheless, there was a definite sense that:

- Positive engagement of whānau through the whānau advisory group had a progressive impact on student learning and achievement.
- Māori student educational achievement had made improvements across the respective pilot schools since they had joined the whānau advisory group initiative.

Moving forward and based on their experiences, the case studies made four key recommendations regarding the scalability of the whānau advisory group initiative into other schools and communities:

- Identify and shoulder tap key individuals in the schools' Māori community.
- Ensure that all school staff including boards of trustees support and see value in Māori parental involvement.
- Whānau empowerment at a decision making and strategic planning is essential.
- Whakawhanaungatanga must be practiced and guided accordingly by whānau.

To a lesser degree, the following recommendations were also asserted through the case studies as important for growing the initiative:

- Equal and diverse representation of whānau and school personnel.
- Clear lines of communication and transparency between school and whānau.
- The creation of an environment conducive to fostering positive relationships and partnerships between the school and whānau.
- Ministry of Education and local Iwi support and resourcing is important.

# Appendix One

## Whānau Advisory Group Interviews

### Case Study Three

- Deputy Principal

### Case Study Four

- Principal

### Case Study Five

- Principal

### Case Study Six

- Principal

### Case Study Seven

- Principal
- Whānau Advisory Group member

## Whānau Advisory Group Focus Groups

### Case Study One

- Deputy Principal and Senior Teacher
- Senior Māori students

### Case Study Two

- Principal and Deputy Principal
- Whānau Advisory Group
- Senior Māori students (Years 12 & 13)

### Case Study Three

- Whānau Advisory Group
- Senior Māori students

### Case Study Four

- Principal and Deputy Principal
- Whānau Advisory Group
- Senior Māori students (Years 12 and 13)

### Case Study Five

- Whānau Advisory Group
- Senior Māori students

### Case Study Six

- Whānau Advisory Group

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