SUMMARY OF TAHURI (2007) LITERATURE REVIEW:

THE EFFECTIVE ENGAGEMENT OF FAMILIES, WHĀNAU AND COMMUNITIES IN MAINSTREAM EDUCATION AND THE BUILDING OF PARTNERSHIPS.

By Dr Ruth Gorinski

INTRODUCTION

This review provides a summary of Tahuri's (2007) literature review on the effective engagement of families, whānau and communities in mainstream education and the building of partnerships. The literature examined included reports, Ministry of Education publications, journals, texts and conference papers sourced from a range of data bases.

Six key conceptual themes were identified in the literature. These provide a framework for developing and nurturing effective home-school partnerships with Māori families, whānau and communities. They are:

- mana whenua – the unique and rightful place of Māori as equal partners
- tikanga – validation of Māori language, culture and knowledge
- whakawhanaungatanga – nurturing sustainable relationships
- mahi tika – getting it right
- ma te katoa te mahi - shared responsibility and
- ma te mahi tahi ka ea – collaboration leading to realised potential.

The following provides a brief overview of each of these themes and the ways in which they influence effective home-school partnerships.

THEMES

Mana Whenua – the unique and rightful place of Māori as equal partners

Mana whenua is the right and power the people of the land have to influence and manage what happens in their homelands. Acknowledging, respecting and valuing the important place of mana whenua is an essential element in developing relationships with the local Māori whānau and community.

Tikanga – validation of Maori language, culture and knowledge

Bishop, Berryman, Tiakiwai and Richardson (2003) contended that when teachers create culturally appropriate and responsive contexts for learning, Māori students are able to interact with teachers in ways that legitimise and validate who they are, and how they make sense of the world. Because Māori students are inclusive of their whanau, a deeper understanding of Māori culture, values and ways of being, is integral to developing effective relationships with the Māori community. It is also necessary if an environment conducive to meeting the needs of Māori in the mainstream context is to be created.

Whakawhānaungatanga – nurturing sustainable relationships

Critical to the effective engagement and participation of Māori families, whānau and communities in their children's educational journey, is the need to examine the current state of relationships and to

develop whakawhānaungatanga. Nurturing these relationships within a framework of Māori cultural practice and tikanga (ways of doing things) is equally important.

Mahi Tika – Getting it right

The Māori word 'tika' as an adjective means, straight, direct, keeping a direct course, just, fair, right and correct (Williams 1991). The noun of 'tika' is 'tikanga,' and translates as, rule, plan, method, custom, habit, anything normal or usual, correct and right (Williams, 1991). Pere (1982) described tikanga as rules, plans, methods, approaches, customs, habits, rights, authority, and control. Tikanga can apply to all aspects of Māori life, and the rules associated with it are numerous and diverse.

The literature suggested that the ways in which family, whānau and community partnerships are established, developed and function, are key components in nurturing and maintaining strong relationships. Collaboration and responsiveness to ideas and suggestions from whānau and communities is the key to "getting it right' for all involved (Velde, 1999). Similarly, partnerships based on open, honest, truthful and transparent processes are critical, as is a shared sense of conscientiousness and responsibility (Stoll & Meyers, 1998).

Mā te katoa te mahi – Shared responsibility

Effective partnerships between home and school necessitate a shared responsibility for successful outcomes for Māori students. As Durie (2001) noted "success or failure (of the advancement of Māori achievement) is the result of many forces acting together [the Principle of Integrated Action] including school and community; teachers and whānau, students and their peers; and Māori and the state."

Mā te mahi tahi ka ea – Collaboration leading to realised potential

The literature reflects the need for collaboration in order to develop a shared vision that is focused on learning, teaching and strengthening Māori student outcomes. Negotiating the vision, goals and desired outcomes are important aspects that need to be considered as relationships are nurtured, supported, and monitored (Alton-Lee 2003; Hohepa & Jenkins 2004).

Three key underpinning concepts – partnerships, ako and whānau - are defined in the following section. These provide a background to understanding what effective engagement of Māori families, whānau and communities in mainstream education entails.

Partnership

The term partnership when used with regard to Māori in any educational context necessitates gaining an insight into the partnership Māori have with the Crown under the Treaty of Waitangi. In 1988, the fourth Labour Government and the Royal Commission on Social Policy suggested that three principles - partnership, participation and protection were relevant to understanding partnerships. Bishop (2000) described the principle of partnership that is adopted for purposes of this literature review as:

*a principle of power sharing in decision making and goal setting so that those who govern can do so in the knowledge that they are realising these mutually accepted goals (*p. 30).

Participation is best defined as Māori involvement in particular activities or sectors and is closely aligned to the principle of protection. This refers to the need for government policies and programmes to guarantee Māori the same 'rights and privileges' as other New Zealanders to ensure

their full participation in contemporary society as Māori (Bishop, 2000). Inherent in the principle of protection are three educational goals that constitute a framework for Māori educational advancement.

Goal 1 is to prepare people to live and participate as Māori in society. This necessitates Māori having access to te ao Māori - the Māori world - including language, culture, marae, resources, tikanga, whānau, and kaimoana. Goal 2 is implicit within this goal and involves Māori actively participating as citizens on the wider global stage. Goal 3 focuses upon Māori enjoying good health and a high standard of living. This goal links education to personal well being and is premised on the belief that positive educational experiences lay the groundwork for a healthy lifestyle and optimal high standard of living.

Fundamental to this review, is the understanding that partnerships between schools and Māori communities are premised upon a shared vision for Māori students that encapsulates these three educational goals. Whānau have a central role to play in the realisation of these goals.

Whānau

Whānau means to give birth. The whānau or extended family is the smallest of the common Māori social structures and consists of three or four generations of extended family (Broughton, 1993; Gibbons, Temara, & White, 1994; Papakura, 1986 cited in Moeke-Pickering, 1996). The whānau is inextricably intertwined with hapu, iwi and waka. For purposes of this literature review the term 'whānau' is used inclusively of extended family members who are an integral part of the whānau. However, the term is used differently to the term family, which in much of the international literature refers to the parents or immediate nuclear family of the child.

Ako – Partners in learning

The term 'ako' in this review is based on one aspect of what it is in a traditional context; that is, that ako is interchangeable and means both to teach and learn (Williams, 1992). This encompasses the principle that "every person is a learner from the time they are born (if not before) to the time they die" (Pere, 1994, p.54).

KEY LEARNINGS

1. Mana Whenua – The unique and rightful place of Māori as an equal partner

Integral to the notion of mana whenua is whakapapa – one's identity (Bishop 1996; Pere 1982). It denotes where one comes from – kinship ties, whānau, hapu, and iwi connections. These are important aspects to understanding the self and where one fits in the wider context of life. Relationship building is an extension and enhancement of the internal need for Māori to be connected to each other and the world around them.

For Māori then, understanding and knowing how to establish relationships, and their role in the relationship with a school, are essential elements to the development and nurturing of productive partnerships. Defining the roles and responsibilities of all participants involved in the relationship is a key starting point in growing such partnerships.

Growing partnerships

Given that mana whenua will remain long after many teachers, principals, and buildings depart, consideration and respect needs to be shown to local iwi/hapu given that it is their children, mokopuna (grandchildren) and descendants who continue to be a part of the local land and community. The literature clearly suggests that in growing partnerships, schools should seek advice and guidance from local kaumatua on these issues (Better Relationships for Better Learning 2000, p. 24).

Whilst school, teachers and board of trustees must necessarily be considered partners in every student's education, whānau remain constant throughout a child's life and schooling experience. They are therefore integral to the life-long journey of all Māori students. There is a responsibility then, for schools to work closely with whānau in seeking to maximise the educational outcomes of Māori students.

When schools are endeavouring build relationships with Māori, communication with mana whenua or the local people or iwi of the land on which the school is located, is a priority. However, an understanding of the diverse nature of the Māori community is also required, as is recognition of the fact that Māori students exist as a part of the collective or extension of a whānau.

Māori: a diverse and dynamic people

As with any community, within the Māori community there is much diversity. Understanding the diverse nature of a Māori community is therefore, a distinct advantage in the development of productive partnerships. The Better Relationships for Better Learning, Guidelines for Boards of Trustees and schools on engaging with Māori parents, whānau and communities (2000) provide a cautionary note:

> Because Māori communities are so diverse, there is no one way to go about building relationships. What works for one group or community may not be appropriate for another. The style of approach depends on such factors as the school's size and location, the type of school (such as primary or secondary), the aspirations of the families and whānau associated with the school, and the social and economic make-up of the area. Above all, the approaches chosen will need to be chosen and developed in partnership with the Māori communities' concerned (p.8).

Just as cultural understanding can enhance relationships between school and whānau, understanding the diverse nature of Māori, sharing an understanding of Māori language and culture and creating opportunities and space for such knowledge serves to enhance relationships between schools and Māori communities.

So what might mana whenua look like in practice in my classroom?

Mana whenua in the classroom context is about giving the power back to parents and families to define what is important for them and their children's learning. Mana whenua acknowledges the diverse nature of the Māori community and enables you as the classroom teacher to seek advice, support, and input about the children you teach from their parents. It also helps you to determine appropriate and tailored teaching and learning styles or methods. Understanding the culture of a particular family and providing them space to be involved in the teaching and learning and putting yourself (at times) in the role of learner (ako), will validate the culture and understanding of that family. This in turn, facilitates trust, motivation and support from students' parents.

2. Tikanga – validation of Māori language, culture and knowledge

Understanding the identity of whānau and the ways in which Māori operate is key to validating Maori identity. Such understanding conveys to the Māori community that a school both validates and accepts what it means 'to be Māori', thereby creating the space needed for the inclusion of whānau values and practices. The validation of Māori language and culture is a challenge for many mainstream teachers. The following questions and answers provide a starting point for those wanting to develop their understandings and skill in this area.

How do I validate Māori language and culture if I don't know it myself?

One way to validate Māori language and culture in your classroom is through some initial learning and then sharing what *you think* you know with your students. Honesty is important - do not make out that you know a lot or even a little if you don't. This is an occasion when you can take a step back and become the learner. In doing so, you will allow students who may know some language or culture to feel sufficiently safe to share what they know with you. It will also give you credibility with Māori families as they recognise the sincerity of your endeavours.

It is important to seek validation of your own cultural knowledge from the Māori families of the students you teach, particularly given the idiosyncrasies within Māori language and cultural practices amongst iwi. The best way to approach this challenge is to be humble, respectful and genuine in your desire to learn.

Integral to the validation of Māori knowledge as a critical component to establishing positive relationships with Māori communities, is the understanding of whakawhanaungatanga and whānaungatanga. This is itself, the very process of developing relationships.

3. Whakawhnāaungatanga – nurturing sustainable relationships

Whānau, whānaunga and whakawhānaunga are three of the fundamental elements that contribute to and enrich the concept of Māori identity. Traditionally, whānau was based on kinship ties (whānaungatanga), the sharing of a common ancestor. Over time whānau has been reshaped to include a variety of arrangements (Durie, 1994, Metge, 1995) including utilisation of the concept of whānau as a management framework for organising and managing relationships (Walker, 1988).

Relationships provide a founding principle for Māori. Durie (2006) summarised the pivotal role of relationships saying: "Whānaungatanga, building relationships, is a critical whānau function that contributes to human potential and to successful engagement outside the whānau" (p.7).

One of the most prominent frameworks in the literature for school, family, and community partnerships is Epstein's Framework of Six Types of Involvement for Comprehensive Programmes of Partnership (2002). Epstein suggested that six types of involvement – parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning and home, decision making and collaboration with the community - are necessary in order to establish and maintain successful programmes of partnership.

Whilst Epstein's framework provides a useful starting point for developing home-school partnerships, Bishop (2000) argued that it fails to address or challenge the power imbalances that exist in terms of "Māori peoples' aspirations, preferences and practices for education" (p. 28). As a result of this, whānau may feel excluded from learning and teaching interactions and therefore marginalised in the educational experience. Bishop (2000) reasoned that when schools:

> develop and use a strategy that leaves people out of the conversation … [they] perpetuate a system that is hierarchical [and thereby] repeat the pattern of dominance and subordination that has characterised relationships in our country for far too long" (p.28).

It is incumbent upon schools then, to challenge historically marginalising practices and instead, develop approaches to partnership building that reflect an understanding of whānaungatanga and whakawhānaungatanga.

What are the benefits of a whānau – school partnership?

In developing a relationship between the student - as a part of the whānau and including the whānau - and the school, there is the potential to create a powerful link between home and school. An opportunity is also created to develop a relationship premised upon power sharing between the student as part of a whānau and the school.

In this way, kaupapa Māori has the potential to be a powerful transformative tool for students and teachers in their classrooms. It also facilitates the extension of relationships beyond the confines of the classroom and enables co-constructed partnerships for learning between students as part of a whānau and schools.

4. Mahi tika – getting it right

Velde (1999) provided a starting point for schools who seek to 'get it right' in terms of their consultation with whānau and families. He suggested that "schools have to take the cue from parents and the community about what needs to be done, rather than impose things" (p.1). Explicit and systematic attention is needed to ensure that an understanding of 'what is 'right' for whānau is understood by all participants in the relationship. An examination of existing power relationships that operate within the school community may provide insights into areas that need to be addressed as part of the process of 'getting it right'.

Three key elements are pivotal to the creation and development of effective and productive relationships with Māori whānau and communities. These include:

- trust and respect (Gorinski, 2006; Tuuta, Bradnam, Hynds, Higgins & Broughton, 2004);
- honesty, openness and transparency – particularly kanohi ki te kanohi – face to face interaction (Graham, 2003; Tahuri, 2005; Te Awekotuku, in Smith, 1999);
- the celebration of successes. (Durie, 2006, Graham, 2003, Tahuri, 2005).

When these elements are present, the opportunity for positive whānau-school partnerships is maximised.

I recognise and celebrate the success of my students by giving them certificates in my classroom. What else can I do to recognise Māori student success?

As a life long learner, it is always useful to review your current practice and to ask students and their parents/whānau how they see it is impacting on their learning. The following questions may aid your thinking around recognising and celebrating success in your classroom:

- Do you inform whānau and families of their child's success?

- How might you discover what parents/whānau believe are the important

things to recognise and celebrate?

- Have you asked parents or whānau how they think their child's successes might most appropriately be celebrated?
- How are you getting the message of success out to parents and whānau?
- Have you asked students how they would like to be acknowledged?
- Have you developed a system (versus an ad hoc approach) to acknowledge and celebrate student success?
- Do you give certificates or awards in Māori language?

The celebration of success, trust, respect, open and transparent relationships and practice are all noted in the literature as key to 'getting it right' when developing relationships with Māori families, whānau and community. Just as important, is the responsibility of all partners involved to take ownership and work together in order to achieve desired outcomes.

5. Ma te katoa te mahi - shared responsibility

Success or failure is the result of many forces acting together, including school and community; teachers and parents; students and their peers; and Māori and the state (Durie, 2001). Durie coined this the Principle of Integrated Action; many people working together to advance Māori achievement.

Shared responsibility for effective home-school partnerships involves the adoption and utilisation of a kaupapa Māori framework which includes tikanga Māori (culture and customs), manaakitanga (caring for each other), kanohi ki te kanohi (interacting in a culturally appropriate way) and ako (the concept of a learning community in which we are all learners). Teachers, leaders and whānau are all participants in terms of this shared responsibility for building partnerships.

There is a multitude of literature (Bishop & Glynn 1999; Darling-Hammond, 1996; Guskey & Huberman, 1995; Lieberman & Millar, 1999; Phillips, McNaughton & McDonald, 2001; Robertson & Allen, 1999 cited in Gorinski. 2005; Timperley & Robinson, 2002) that clearly indicates the pivotal role staff professional development has in building effective home-school partnerships. The potential of such professional development is yet to be realised. Initiatives such as Te Kauhua and Te Kotahitanga however, have certainly offered pathways towards a strengthened understanding of what effective, empowering home-school partnerships look like in practice.

How can I encourage students and parents to be responsible for their part of the learning journey?

Your commitment to modifying your own practice where necessary, will potentially serve to encourage and motivate Māori students and their whānau to be more involved in a proactive relationship built on and around enhanced learning opportunities. This compels you as a classroom teacher, to actively listen and respond to whānau and student desires and needs. It also necessitates your commitment to the notion of ako - having the confidence to make yourself open to learning new things and putting yourself in the position of a learner - rather than assuming expertise in all areas of learning and teaching.

6. Ma te mahi tahi ka ea – collaboration leading to realised potential

Key to establishing relationships, is the need for a school community to work collaboratively on the development of a shared vision or common goal that is focused on raising student achievement outcomes (Bishop & Glynn; Fullan, 1999; Stoll & Fink, 1996). Negotiating desired outcomes, shared goals, and a common vision, are all important elements that need to be considered as relationships are nurtured, supported, and monitored (Alton-Lee 2003; Hohepa & Jenkins 2004).

Bishop (1999) defined the process of collaboration as one of "weaving people together… [bringing] together those who can help solve a problem, rather than working with an exclusive group" (p. 233). Whānau must necessarily be part of any problem solving – in partnership with the school - if a quality relationship is to be established, nurtured and maintained (Biddulph & Biddulph, 2003).

Fullan (2001, p.67) argued that "moral purpose, good ideas, focusing on results, and obtaining the views of dissenters are essential" to fostering positive organisational cultures, and to the development of effective relationships and partnerships. Given that the *quality* of the home-school relationship is tantamount, in the New Zealand context schools need to take cognisance of the Treaty partnership that underpins any relationship as well as the responsibility to ensure power sharing approaches are practiced.

The results of studies which explored political interactions between schools and parents, (Becker, 1980; Connell, 1985; Lortie, 1975) revealed that teachers typically view relationships with parents as distant, distrustful and/or hostile. Given this propensity to non-collaboration, it is incumbent upon school personnel to develop strategies for dealing with families and whānau that are based upon notions of power sharing.

Further, it is imperative that home-school partnerships focus on learning. Indeed, Alton-Lee (2003) and Fullan's (2001) research concluded that working in collaboration with parents and whānau will not elicit successful outcomes unless the focus of the partnership is on learning.

How can I create a shared vision for learning with my students and whānau when I have a strict curriculum to deliver in a very tight timeframe?

As the classroom teacher, you can create the space for open dialogue in order to identify exactly what goals and aspirations parents and whānau have for their children. The literature reveals that sometimes parents and whānau aspirations and goals differ from those of the school and teachers. One common goal however, is held by all stakeholders – namely a desire to see students succeed. Learning success needs to be at the very core of the conversations between you and parents and whānau. Without the conversations with parents and whānau, as a teacher you will never actually know what they want and you will continue to work in isolation from the key people who can help maximise each student's achievement - their parents and whānau.

Key to building a collaborative relationship with parents and whānau is ensuring whānau are informed about their child's achievement status. Clear, open and honest information about how well students are performing is critical, as is creating further opportunities for dialogue and ways of working collaboratively to enhance learning opportunities.

BARRIERS TO MAORI WHANAU-PARENT PARTICIPATION

The literature identifies three key barriers to parent/whānau participation in the education dyad including: the dominance and monocultural bias of mainstream culture; cultural differences and deficit theorising. Each of these barriers and their impact upon effective whānau-school relationships is briefly discussed in the following section.

Dominant culture

The social and cultural context of the Western education system both implicitly and explicitly creates a barrier to the participation and engagement of Māori within mainstream education. There is an urgent need for educators to understand how the system perpetuates the social norms of the dominant culture and the complexities around engagement and participation of Māori in mainstream education settings (Gorinski, 2006).Unless school communities engage in better understanding the issues around a dominant culture ideology, whānau participation in mainstream schooling is unlikely to change.

Cultural differences

Cultural differences can also exacerbate tenuous whānau-school relationships. Such differences have historically served as a barrier to some Māori whānau participation in their children's education**.** Hemara (2000) encapsulated this sentiment stating that "Māori contact with the Western education system has been characterised by tension between European teaching methods and Māori perceptions and performance. The encounters of two different world views and ways of operating were sometimes contradictory"(p. 5).

Such cultural differences are reflected in the "values, norms, beliefs and symbols that define what is acceptable to a given society…and dictate behavioural transactions within that society" (Weiss, Kreider, Lopez & Chatman, 2005, p.137). Barriers are created when differences in world views and ways of operating, remain unresolved between a dominant and minority cultural group. Common ground needs to be found between Māori and non Māori as schools work towards forging positive home-school partnerships.

Deficit theorising

Deficit theorising is a term coined by Bishop, Berryman, Tiakiwai and Richardson (2003) that explains relational power imbalances in terms of favouring:

> cultural deficit explanations (victim blaming) of Māori students' poor educational performance and [in so doing] perpetuates the ongoing colonising project of pathologising the lives of these students, and maintains the power over what constitutes appropriate classroom interactions in the hands of teachers without any consideration of the culture of Māori students.(p.5).

Metge (1990) further added that "members of the majority group [referring to Pakeha in New Zealand] are typically mono cultural, knowing very little about the cultures of minority groups, even the Māori. Most are unaware just how often their way of doing things offends or disadvantages" (p. 3). Bishop et. al. (2003) endorsed Metge's view, suggesting that teacher professional development needs to be focused not only on ways of "relating to" and "connecting with" students of other cultures, but also on assisting teachers to understand, internalise and work towards redressing the power imbalances that are manifested as cultural deficit theorising (Bishop et. al, 2003). As Valencia (1997, cited in Shields, Bishop & Mazawi, 2005) suggested:

> Deficit thinking is a product of long-term power imbalances that need to be examined by educators in terms of their own cultural assumptions and a consideration of how they themselves might be participants in the systematic marginalisation of students in their schools and classrooms (p.6).

Whilst these three barriers continue to impact upon the development of positive home-school partnerships, the literature (Christenson & Cleary, 1990; Coleman 1998; Gorinski 2005; Hoover-Dempsey 1987; Robinson, 1994) also identifies a number of strategies that can have a positive impact upon the development of relationships with families, whānau, communities and schools.

STRATEGIES THAT SUPPORT PARTICIPATION

Whilst a number of strategies for enhancing parent, whānau and community-school partnerships are identified in the literature (Crump, 1996; ERO, 2004; Gorinski, 2005; Ministry of Education, 2006) five of the most effective strategies are:

- the establishment of a whānau support committee
- kanohi ki te kanohi – face to face interactions
- effective communication
- practicing ako and
- the development of local marae relationships

For a more comprehensive discussion of these strategies refer to Tahuri (2004).

SUMMARY

Fullan's (2001) research on parent and community involvement in schools revealed that the closer the parent is to the education of the child the greater the impact on child development and educational achievement. The key role of the [aren't/whānau was summarised by Fullan who said:

> teachers cannot do it alone. Parents and other community members are crucial and are largely untapped resources who have (or can be helped to have) assets and expertise that are essential to partnership…Parents are their children's very first educators, they have vested interest and committed interest in their children's success (p.199).

There is compelling evidence – both in Aotearoa New Zealand and internationally - for the establishment and maintenance of reciprocal relationships and partnerships between whanau and school if Māori student academic and social success in mainstream contexts is to be maximised. Tahuri's literature review (2004) highlighted the need for an organised, planned and collaborative approach to the establishment and development of productive partnerships between schools and Māori families, whānau and communities.

The acknowledgement, acceptance and validation of traditional Māori frameworks have the potential to inform the development of productive partnerships and the ultimate success of all students, including Māori students in the mainstream educational setting in Aotearoa New Zealand. Durie 2006) commented on the integral role of partnerships in growing Māori potential saying:

> Māori potential in the future will be strongly influenced by relationships – relationships between Maori and the Crown, between Iwi and the state; relationships within whānau, between whānau, and schools, and between whānau and wider society… through a series of extended relationships whānau, are gateways to education, the economy, society, and Māori potential (p.20).