Māori students experiencing success: A pilot research project
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Final Report to
The Ngāti Whakaue Education Endowment Board (NWEEB)

On behalf of
Te Ara a Ihenga (TAI) Research Group

Submitted to NWEEB June 2009

This (edited) version completed March 2010

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| **February 09** | Milestone 3 & 4 Report Submitted 10 Feb 2009 | |
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**April 09**

- Draft report sent to NWEEB for comment, 21 April 2009.

**May 09**

- Feedback received from NWEEB in regards to draft report, 17 May 2009.
- Audience with NWEEB in regards to draft report, 27 May 2009.

**June 09**

- Final report submitted to NWEEB, 15 June 2009.
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1.0 Background

1.1 Research Project Team
In September 2008, the Te Ara a Ihenga (TAI) Te Arawa researchers group secured a Discretionary Research Grant from the Ngāti Whakaue Education Endowment Board. The group’s founding members include Pouarahi (Research Mentor) Angus Hikairo Macfarlane, Kaiarahi (Project Director) Hiria McRae and Kairangahau (Researchers) Candy Cookson Cox and Melinda Webber. Angus has recently been appointed as Professor of Māori Research at Canterbury University in Christchurch, Hiria is a lecturer and doctoral student at Victoria University in Wellington, as is Melinda at Auckland University and Candy is a consultant based in Rotorua. The group has a wide range of areas of research expertise, and chose to base their first project in Ngāti Whakaue with Ngāti Whakaue.

1.2 Project Focus
The project focused on investigating Māori student success in one Rotorua secondary school. This study is significant in that it actively shifts the emphasis from deficit thinking (looking at the negatives - Māori educational failure) to affirmative repositioning (highlighting the positives - Māori educational achievement). This focus is refreshing, and to our knowledge, relatively unexplored. It is anticipated that this study will provide sufficient impetus and evidence to inspire educators in this country as they continue to search for meaningful and responsive ways to enhance educational achievement for Māori students. Surely, looking at ‘what works – and why’ is one of the most productive pathways to follow. The benefits that will accrue to Ngāti Whakaue - and wider - will be highly significant if particular themes and messages are heeded, moving forward.

1.3 Current Policy
There has been a major change in the Ministry of Education’s policy position
regarding successful gifted and talented students, spurred on by the vision statement from the Working Party on Gifted Education in 2001, and subsequently adopted by the Office of the Minister of Education (2002). Successful gifted and talented learners are defined as those with exceptional abilities relative to most others of their age group, having certain cognitive, creative, and affective characteristics that give them the potential to achieve outstanding performance (McAlpine & Moltzen, 2004). Success can mean different things to different communities and cultures; according to Jenkins (2001), it must be conceded that there are different ways to meet the needs of these students.

1.4 Current Research
There is very little documented research information about teachers’ and children’s attitudes, knowledge and values regarding Māori students who show exceptional qualities at secondary school in New Zealand. Nationally there is growing evidence of the importance of making culture count in education (Bishop & Glynn, 1999; Bishop & Berryman, 2006; Macfarlane, 2004; Macfarlane, 2007; Macfarlane, Glynn, Grace, Penetito & Bateman, 2008) but the particular experiences, features and characteristics that predispose for ensuring Māori student success (ie: successful Māori students) have yet to be explored more comprehensively. The last known research project of this kind, was carried out twenty years ago (see Mitchell & Mitchell, 1988). This study profiled Māori students with high marks in School Certificate English and mathematics. It is time to revisit the gifts and talents that Māori students demonstrate in the cognitive domain, and to move beyond and toward other dimensions of success.

2.0 Project Aims
This is a pilot project aimed to define, quantify and reason the experiences of successful Māori students in their final year of state schooling at one Rotorua secondary school. The major focus of this project was to investigate the influential factors that contribute to Māori students succeeding at school. We aimed to ascertain the nature of any trends of teaching, learning; and home
socialisation patterns that support or constrain success. The results of this pilot project will set the scene for a wider research project that will incorporate all the secondary schools and wharekura (Māori medium secondary schools) within the Ngāti Whakaue school zone.

3.0 Methodology

3.1 Participants
For a range of reasons the TAI team decided to conduct their project at Western Heights High School (WHHS) in Rotorua. The main reasons included the team having established relationships with current staff at the school and that there was a high population of Ngāti Whakaue students attending. The main method of data collection was individual interviews with 6 students, their parents, the school principal and one teacher.

3.2 Research Questions
Parent and Student Questions
The key questions included:

1. What is it about WHHS that has helped/assisted/supported/guided or mentored you / your child to get to where you / they are today?
2. Who at this school has had the most influence on you / your child?
3. Do you think WHHS does anything differently (to other schools) which has helped you / your child become so successful?
4. What do you think makes you / your child successful as a student?
5. Do you believe you / your child possess any special qualities that make you / your child different from other Māori students?
6. What does being successful mean for you?
7. Have you / your child always been motivated to succeed?
8. If so, why is that?
9. In what way is being successful related to being Māori? Can you be both? If so, how?
10. What aspects of being Māori have contributed to your success?
11. What do you think Māori students need to have lots of if they wish to succeed?
12. Why do you think other Māori students have not been able to succeed?
13. What makes you / your child different to them?
14. If you could advise or mentor younger Māori students who want to do well at school - what advice would you give them? What hints would you give them for 'staying on course'?
15. How does being a successful student pay off for your whānau?
16. How will being a successful student pay off for you?

**Principal and Teacher Questions**

The key questions included:

1. How might success in a school setting be conceptualized from a Māori worldview?
2. What does WHHS do that assists Māori students to recognise their potential for success?
3. Is this necessarily different to other High Schools in the area?
4. What special characteristics do Māori students who succeed demonstrate?
5. Why do some Māori students succeed where others (Māori) do not?
6. How much influence does whānau have in terms of a Māori student’s ability to succeed at school?
7. How much influence does WHHS exert over a Māori students potential to succeed?
8. When is the desire to succeed at life/school demonstrated in Māori students? (i.e. in the junior years or the senior years of high school or other)
9. What are the motivators for success in Māori students?
10. Do Māori students embrace success in the same way that Pākehā or Tauiwi do?
4.0 Emerging Findings
The main themes from the parent, student and teacher interviews will be discussed separately, and then overlapping themes will be identified.

4.1 Parent interviews
4.1.2 Parenting Arrangements
The parenting arrangements of the students were mixed, including two students being brought up by two parents, three students cared for by a single mother and one student living away from a two parent family, being cared for by a single mother of another student in the interview group. Each student parenting arrangement included a strong mother figure, whether in a single parent, divorced, or two parent situation. In contrast the parents own parenting arrangements were very mixed with strong or tentative relationships with both or either parents. For some parents it was a conscious decision to parent differently from their own parents, and a sense of doing it better or proving others wrong. However all parents were raised in working households.

4.1.3 Parent Schooling & Work Backgrounds
Parents also had mixed experiences at secondary school. Five remained at school and gained at least School Certificate before entering the work force. Only one left school to work to support their wider family. One showed exceptional leadership during secondary school and one had the opportunity to enter tertiary education, however chose to pursue a career in kapa haka (traditional Māori cultural performance). All parents showed strong work ethics after leaving school. All went into vocational work straight out of school and demonstrated loyalty with long service to either one or two employers. One parent chose later to stay home with their children and devote a lot of time to their children’s learning.
4.1.4 Key Themes

Five clear themes emerged from the parent interviews that contributed to their children’s success. These included the strong presence of positive role models; education being highly valued; having a supportive environment in the home and school; being self-disciplined; and aspects of te ao Māori.

Role modeling

As stated earlier all parents demonstrated strong work ethics to their children with their loyal and stable work histories. One parent spoke about their child gaining a good work ethic from both parents at an early age and in turn becoming a good role model at school.

“I remember at primary school I wanted to keep her and her brother home one day for just to stay home with my kids you know and she was really upset because she didn’t want to miss a day off school. She was all of what, six or seven years old. And she was really upset, ‘I’ve got to go to school Mum, I can’t not go to school you know’... Like she’s not a sporty type of girl but when she started in year 12 this year she said things like, ‘Oh I’m going to sports day today because I’m a senior and I’m a role model and I should be there.’” (Parent J)

Other positive role models such as grandparents and other extended family members, close friends and peers also influenced children. These relationships have been constant in the student’s lives. One parent commented on the extended whānau being a positive influence.

“She was a real extension of us too from the day she was born and everybody would say she was the perfect baby. She was happy and I think it may have been the sense of security around her and I guess the love too that they must feel and she was just adored by her kuia ... Had lots of friends and her cousins were always over next door, but I think a major impact on her was her kuia. (For her father) His daughter so she was a real gem for him...she was precious to him.” (Parent P)

“She (has) great artistic ability and that comes from her grandmother on her father’s side and father. They’re very artistic... and her grandmother used to
spend time making things with her. So she had stimulation of all sort...we had a kapahaka group in Australia and we used to go shows and take the kids you know and perform.” (Parent J)

Value of education

For some parents, learning was a conscious effort taught from the womb.

“So when I did fall pregnant it was planned and I really wanted it to be the best, give my child the opportunity that she could possibly, or he, could possibly have so I was tracking her growth in my womb and doing things like playing classical music and stimulating you know all those things that you read about. So I did all of the right things, followed all the rules.” (Parent J)

Learning was encouraged as being fun for children by parents. Learning opportunities often involved elders and extended family members. Pre-school education, involved parents teaching children at home and children attending kōhanga reo (Māori early childhood settings).

“I ended up learning all about to garden so that we could have our own produce, taught my children to do it as well. I sewed, taught my children to sew. They didn’t get to watch television. We had instruments, art, … anything else that brings us together as a family as opposed to do(ing) things separately. I didn’t want to be rid of my children, I wanted them around.” (Parent N)

“She went to kohanga…and I think from there I think that was the building of the person she is now with the support of us as a family and my extended whanau on both sides. She’s had lovely friends and cousins that she spends a lot of time with.” (Student C)

All parents viewed school as an avenue to provide their children with choices and opportunities.

“She’s (interested in) various things…army or the navy. I said no. And I suggested what about a kohanga teacher or getting into Māori television. I said you’ve got the knowledge there and I said go into something like that because the world’s your oyster.” (Parent C)
Supportive Environment

There was a high level of support and involvement from the single parent or parents in their children’s daily life and activities, including schooling, sporting and cultural activities.

“No matter what the kids wanted to do I made a point of being there and supporting them all the time. (At report evenings) I actually want my child present because then I can support you in what you’re doing but I can also tell my child that I support them so that we’re all on the same waka.” (Parent N)

There was varying input from the father, however as stated earlier all students had a strong mother.

“So their relationship with their father has been close, even though he’s lived in Australia, always been in touch with them…never been tension in our relationship with our children.” (Parent J)

There was constant praise and encouragement from parents, which provided an environment of potential and opportunity. This may have contributed to their children being confident in trying out new things and taking risks.

“And I think that it’s a solid foundation that we as a family I think have built …is that whatever they’ve endeavoured to do, we’ve always supported them… and it’s a loving environment …you can support them to a certain age until they making decisions for themselves and you just hope what you’ve instilled in them is that they’ve carried on their adult lives.” (Parent C)

Discipline

All parents had clear rules and boundaries established with their children, and have never experienced any serious discipline issues.

“You give them the basics and they know the rules and they know the boundaries and it’s really up to them when they’re adults …you’ve still got to give them a nudge and put them on the right track but I think they know what’s the expectations.” (Parent C)

Most parents commented that their children developed both a strong work ethic early at school as well as a developed sense of responsibility to do well.
“She’s very structured in a lot of things she does. (Fundraising) for her touch tournament she’s got everything itemised down (to) who’s sponsoring her and who she’s collected off, keep it in your head… I’ll say to her, ‘About time you did some study’. She says, ‘I’ve been doing it at school, I’m up to date, I’ve finished I’ve got my credits for that’. It gives her time to carry on with whatever else she’s got to do after school. She goes to touch and she’s working. She has been working since age 14/15 and I think that’s given her a bit of independence as well.” (Parent C)

**Te Ao Māori**

All parents involved their children in te ao Māori in some way, either by teaching them the Māori language, enrolling them at kōhanga reo or participating with wider whānau. These were all positive influences on their children succeeding.

“I wasn’t a fluent speaker of Māori, (but) her first words were Māori because I would count in Māori to her and sing to her in Māori.” (Parent J)

“As she turned three she went to kohanga reo… that was what (her father) and I had decided we would like her to do, is to be a fluent Māori speaker. But it’s her Māori side that’s bringing out that confidence in her leadership training…she’s just great.” (Parent P)

“(We) don’t speak Māori so she’s done it all on her own… and I think it’s respect… and … humility that I think she’s picked up from kohanga.” (Parent C)

“You know very strong that she is a Māori. The fairest Māori you might see and very proud of that too. That’s another thing that she’s just proud to be Māori and thinks that she can achieve and make a difference.” (Parent N)

### 4.2 Student interviews

#### 4.2.1 Key Themes

Students had a lot of praise for the support they received from teachers, peers, the school, and their whānau. This large amount of support contributed to their self-motivation and confidence to do well. All students commented on wanting to make a difference and give back to those who had supported them. Some
commented on wanting to make a difference so that Māori would be seen in a positive way.

Teacher Support
All students gave high praise for the large amount of support they received from their teachers. Teachers ensured all students stayed on track, guided with appropriate credits, right information, one on one time and helped with grants. All students were able to meet with the school principal one on one, twice a year. Guidance counselors were also beneficial assets for students.

“I’ve had a lot of great teachers over the years and they’re not like those teachers that are boring and just give you work and put work up on the board or anything. They will actually talk things through with you just to get you to understand everything, that’s what I really like and that’s what helped me a lot.” (Student A)

“Get to know your teachers cause they’re probably the biggest help… getting you to where you want to be.” (Student J)

Teachers and students had positive relationships, where all students were encouraged to be involved and participate in the wider school environment.

“They offer things and they make sure you get involved and that you can participate whether you need to or not, or you (need help financially), they help out.” (Student N)

Students described teachers as being like friends, easy to talk to and good listeners.

“They get to know you as a person as well, so that you can connect better with them. So it’s not, it’s just like teaching a student kind of relationship.” (Student E)

Students in the immersion pathway appreciated that they had Māori teachers in front of them, which followed them through out their secondary schooling.

“The encouragement of our, I won’t say all the teachers, but it’s mainly the Māori teachers in the Te Akoranga Māori area…their support and their pushing
us to sort of do our best and the mainstream teaching as well I suppose.” (Student P)

Peer Support
All students had a good strong peer network, academically, socially, culturally and sporting. All of these networks influenced them to stay at school. They showed respect for all their peers, including those who chose not to stay at school.

“Friends who are just helping me pretty much with anything I need, any studying and stuff like that.” (Student N)

“I wanted to stay at school cause like all my friends and my teachers made me want to finish school.” (Student C)

“We’re pretty (close), like a whole, it’s not really split in the middle. It’s just we’re all one just big group.” (Student E)

“We can go to each other for advice. Just talk about any family related issues or any issues we have in general and we’ll just help each other out like that.” (Student A)

“They’re like a good influence because they’re staying at school with me through the whole way and it’s good.” (Student J)

School Environment
Students also praised the school for the wide range of subjects it offered. Students were being schooled in both the mainstream and immersion units in the school and all students described school as a family environment. Students acknowledged the different programmes that the school had trialed to support the diverse needs of students to achieve.

“I think it’s the opportunities that are offered, like the range of subjects and cultural subjects that you can get involved in, it’s kind of like a big family really. They offer things and they make sure you get involved and that you can participate whether you need to or your can’t or you’re financially or anything like that. Everything’s offered, so it’s great there.” (Student N)
“(WHHS) has a course for students who find it hard to concentrate in class. So our school started that programme just so they can learn in a different sort of environment, the way that they can learn.” (Student A)

“We had the Institute, a kind of different course to everyone…was just their own area of learning, it didn’t work out that well so they’ve cut the whole thing. But those were exactly the same as the ones who couldn’t really work and but most of them were sporty and into the other side of school but not the academic side of it.” (Student E)

**Being Māori**

WHHS has a unique immersion-teaching environment for Māori students called the Ako unit. Students acknowledged the opportunity to have Māori teachers and the Māori language around them, as being a positive experience for them. Students also appreciated the opportunity to study te reo Māori from Year 9 and complete university te reo Māori papers during their secondary schooling. Students saw the Ako unit as a pro-active way to relate to Māori students and support Māori students to achieve.

“Being in (the) Ako (unit) it’s like another family that helps as well…It’s your choice…In third and fourth form (te reo Māori) it’s compulsory…they like learn science and all that through Māori as well but then when you go to fifth form you just go into the mainstream classes”. (Student C)

“(WHHS) does offer like a lot of support for Māori students, like (the) Ako (unit)…I don’t know if any other schools have something like that. And they have Māori teachers in there which makes it much better and they can relate to the students like growing up as Māori students and compare and (offer) guidance.” (Student E)

Some students wanted to be successful and make a difference to defy Māori student stereotypes.

“You see… the bad stuff and it’s always Māori and you want to kind of change it and make it, make Māori be up there as well.” (Student J)
“I don’t know that it’s because it’s (being) Māori or not, maybe it’s just the way (some Māori students) just seem a bit lost sometimes…some teachers used to say I was really struggling and behind and that really pushed me at high school to do my best… it really motivated me to get rid of that chain, those chains you know, just restrictions.” (Student A)

“Being Māori I just think it means more to us, I don’t know like other cultures they might embrace it more but I think we do, but anyone Māori is kind of like emphasise it, so it’s like a big achievement…Some Māori are struggling to achieve because of the political side of everything and stuff like that. So I think we have to kind of work for our achievements whereas (for) some Pākehā (to be) specific (it’s) kind of it’s just there, whereas we have to work hard to get there and then beyond that. Heaps of Māori are struggling.” (Student E)

“Like sometimes put limits on it, but it’s a good challenge for us to break it.” (Student A)

Whānau Support
All students appreciated the constant and consistent support they have from their whānau, who have pushed them, and supported success and in return they want to make their whānau proud.

“They’ve been there for me (since) the day I was born really, instructing you, give advice, done heaps of things.” (Student A)

“I’m like the only one in my family who will be going to uni next year… just trying to make my family proud, that’s probably my main one. Or everyone back at home (give) congratulations… that’s probably my success.” (Student E)

“Pride, respect. I feel that they taught us well.” (Student J)

“It’s been a push from home to be the best that I possibly can…to the best of my ability.” (Student N)

“It was actually my Dad pushing me to, he actually forced me to think about what I wanted to do. I said I don’t know, I don’t know don’t ask me. He was like you’d better think about it otherwise you’re going back to school next year. I guess it’s my family pushing me to try and be successful.” (Student P)
Some had a competitive whānau environment and one was motivated by being the first to do well at school.

“I’m the youngest out of ten children, so my competitiveness in my family is huge… all my sisters they dropped out of school and my brother also has a big part in my striving…together right through school growing up…I’d say ‘You want to be an All Black I want to be the Silver Fern’…you’d be surprised what the little things can mean to you in the long run.” (Student E)

Some had high expectations from whānau. Some were given extrinsic rewards from whānau for doing well, but it was the intrinsic motivation to do well for their whānau that stood out.

“It’s like family being there all the time, making me go to school, telling me that I have to go to university and then give you rewards if you do get things.” (Student J)

“It just makes them proud of me I guess. No rewards though. I would like to see rewards but I get no rewards but oh I just have to live with it. Making them happy.” (Student P)

All students commented on having constant strong role models, praise and acknowledgement from their whānau.

“When you get an achievement, like a great achievement there’s always someone that will call you up and congratulate you.” (Student A)

“Mum taught me to do that, so that’s good…family’s just really supportive and anything that I don’t understand they make sure that I get it before I move on.” (Student N)

“My family’s extremely proud which is a great, a great thing. My sisters have done quite well, one of them’s an architect and the other one will become a vet and my brother works for Peter Jackson, so it’s really cool.” (Student N)

“(My kuia) she was sort of my role model…she was like New Zealand’s first movie star…she was sort of my role model…she was successful and travelled the world and everything. It would be nice to be like that.” (Student P)
Self-motivation
All students were self-motivated with a desire to succeed and get a good education. They commented on having a commitment to learning and willingness to put the time and effort in to do the best they could.

“I just (have) the commitment to learning and willingness to learn. Some people have it, some people don’t I’ve got it. I’ve got it, but I don’t really know.” (Student P)

“You know if you put the time and effort into learning things then you’re going to become successful and it’s a really great feeling to be able to say that yes I’ve got all of my credits from school. I’ve got uni entrance you know it’s fantastic not having to worry about it or anything like that.” (Student N)

“A student that’s willing to learn and (be) so that they can learn everything they can learn.” (Student J)

“I reckon mine’s come from just hard, like hard work. Pretty much being successful in doing things. I have my sports but I also want to get a good education. I want to be successful. I mean my netball’s not going to take me you know sort of put food on the table and stuff like that.” (Student E)

“I think the motivation for me has grown over the years. I wasn’t that motivated until I was coming here (to WHHS). I started to get onto it for some reason. I don’t know why, I just did.” (Student A)

Each was focused, and even though some were not clear what their career pathway would be, they all had a plan for tertiary study. They acknowledged this was not the case for all Māori students.

“I’ve got a map which is really great, and I’m just willing to get involved, help out in any way I can. I really apply myself to everything and try to do the best that I can.” (Student N)

“At our school the non Māori students are always focused and willing to learn in class. The Māori students are all just taking it as it comes and just don’t work as hard really… (Some) know what they’re focused on. A lot of Māori are just in school cause school’s what kids do, but then there are some who know what they want to do and so it’s more focused on.” (Student P)
“I feel that I’ve done and taken everything that I possibly could and get out of school which is fantastic and I think it’s going to benefit me in my future and I’m really excited about and looking to start my own business with my friend next year.” (Student N)

“At first I was wanting to be like an early childhood teacher because I like kids but that’s sort of a bit of babysitting… then I thought about a child psychologist and with my Māori background apparently there’s a demand for Māori child psychologists so that’s what I want to go into, do psychology at university.” (Student P)

**Confidence**

Students showed confidence in that they were willing to get involved and give anything a go, without worrying about failing.

“I think they just need to be not afraid to apply themselves to everything, you know give everything a go, everything try you know no matter how stupid it may look.” (Student N)

Many of them were successful in a number of areas, involved in sport and cultural groups.

“Just get involved, I reckon sports has a lot to do with why I’m so focused in my academic is you know the team environment and leadership and all those qualities and groups with sports and the supporting environment of team involvement, I put that into my academic side of (schooling).” (Student E)

“(Kapa haka group) I’ve been in there since year 10, it’s a really good experience and builds your confidence. Came first place in the competitions…we only have three weeks to prepare for (another) kapa haka competition. We came second in that. It was really good. And then there’s sports kapahaka for the school and a club. There’s the senior kapahaka group that I’m in as well.” (Student P)

“I’ve made a few rep teams for netball… just started playing touch last year and then made like a few rep teams in a New Zealand squad.” (Student C)

“Yeah academic’s pretty all good. Cultural (I’m in the) choir. It’s neat
“(I’m) over confident about myself you even though it’s probably not the greatest thing…and a lot of other Māori students at school are kind of not so sure about speaking up about things and I think it’s kind of how I was brought up, as to why I’m like that.” (Student N)

Schooling has contributed to their confidence by giving them opportunities to work towards qualifications, which support their dreams and goals.

“For us now (we’ve finished schooling) we’re able to follow our dreams, fulfil our goals, both going to university.” (Student E)

“I like all different kind of areas of education but I’ve decided to start off doing arts and in my arts doing languages, Spanish and French and law, the international side of things. Or I could do professional management, or sciences because I really like sciences as well. I want to do all the subjects here at university.” (Student A)

Service
All students valued reciprocity and wanted to give back to their whānau, peers and community.

“(I’m) Head boy, outside of school (I’m doing a musical). Singing and dancing, it was great…social sport with my friends as well: And community service…helping out in the community when we can.” (Student A)

“(I’m) refereeing netball games. Helping out the little kids. We’re both involved with…New Zealand Māori sports awards.” (Student E)

“(We have a) peer support programme for the year 9s so that the year 13s are like their buddies for the first term.” (Student C)
4.3 Teacher interviews

4.3.1 Key Themes
The teacher and principal commented that the qualities of successful Māori students included, having a strong work ethic, self-motivation, good relationships and involvement in all aspects of school life. They also commented that links to te ao Māori, on-going positive support from others and a “school that cares” also contributed to Māori student success.

Self-motivation
The teacher and principal commented that the desire to succeed at school demonstrated by Māori students was variable.

“(Desire to succeed) can be identified at lower levels and then nurtured. Many Māori students are ‘late bloomers’.” (Teacher)

“Students in years 9 & 10 are classed according to literacy and numeracy levels. There is opportunity to move throughout the years and within the class levels. Numbers of Māori seeking extension and diligence levels and (in) Te Akoranga Reo Rua are steadily improving.” (Principal)

Relationships
Like the parents, the teacher and principal agreed that having good relationships with staff, tutors, coaches, friends, a strong work ethic, having goals, family support and interest, involvement in all aspects of school life, were characteristics of a successful Māori student.

The teacher and principal believed that whānau had a varying influence on Māori students. The teacher commented that, “Sometimes negative attitudes (towards school) are inter-generational”. Both teacher and principal agreed that for most Māori students, whānau were a positive influence but not necessarily major in influencing success.

“Some Māori success stories are individualistic. For (the) majority (whānau are) a lot of influence, for others they put their “trust” in the school.” (Teacher and Principal)
School Support
A key focus for the school is to retain Māori students and currently has a fifty percent success rate in doing this. The teacher and principal commented that acts of manaaki, tautoko and whanaungatanga supported Māori students. Examples of support systems for Māori students included the employment of a large number of Māori staff and individual interviews to discuss career pathways. The principal commented as a result, “Students stay at school longer and attend school regularly.” Both teacher and principal were unsure of what other high schools do to support Māori students, but assumed their focus was also to keep Māori students in formal schooling. The teacher commented that the school provides Māori staff who, “really push(es) high performance, really support “their own”.

“(We) like to think we encourage success with excellence of all students. Māori generally feel it is ok to be a Māori who is successful – school (also) holds recognition assemblies to acknowledge all successes.” (Principal)

4.4 Combined Themes
Five common themes that contribute to Māori student success were identified from the interviews. These included role models and quality relationships; valuing education; a supportive environment; discipline & self-motivation; and strong links with te ao Māori.

4.4.1 Role models & quality relationships
As stated earlier all parents demonstrated strong work ethics to their children with their loyal and stable work histories. Other positive role models such as grandparents and other extended family members, close friends, teachers and peers also positively influenced students.

4.4.2 Value of education
All parents and students viewed school as an avenue to provide students with
choices and opportunities.

4.4.3 Supportive Environment

Whānau Support
All students acknowledged the constant and consistent support they have from their whānau, who have pushed them, and supported success and return they wanted to make their whānau proud.

Teacher Support
All students gave high praise for the large amount of support they received from their teachers. Teachers ensured all students stayed on track, guided with appropriate credits, right information, one on one time and helped with grants.

School Environment
Students also praised the school for the wide range of subjects it offered. Students acknowledged the different programmes that the school had trialed to support the diverse needs of students to achieve.

4.4.4 Discipline
Most parents commented that their children developed both a strong work ethic early at school as well as a developed sense of responsibility to do well.

Self-motivation
They were all also highly self-motivated, focused, enjoyed challenges, and acknowledged hard work as contributing to achieving well at school.

Confidence
Students showed a high level of confidence in that they were willing to get involved and not afraid to give anything a go.
4.4.5 Te Ao Māori
Māori student support
All parents involved their children in Māori cultural activities. Students, the teacher and Principal acknowledged the opportunity to have Māori teachers and the Māori language around them, as being a positive experience for them.

4.5 Key Barriers
Students identified the key barriers for their peers not doing well at school. These key barriers were a direct contrast to the key themes identified by parents and students as contributing to Māori student success. Where successful Māori students had role models and quality relationships, the student participants commented that a key barrier for some of their peers to achieve was the lack of a whānau unit or support, especially a lack of financial support. As a result they were easily influenced by peers and chose to give in to what the student participants identified as ‘Māori stereotypes’ such as underage drinking and illegal drug taking. Where successful Māori students valued the benefits and opportunities of schooling, they observed some of their peers were only at school to play sport and lacked a balance of sport, culture and academia activities. Student participants identified peers who knew school was not for them had left school early to pursue other study and career opportunities. Student participants also commented that having a lack of positive influences was a barrier for some of their peers. This resulted in a lack of expectations to do well and settling for less. Student participants also commented that without any support or role models, some of their peers also lacked discipline and any motivation to work hard.

5.0 Discussion
There has been a history of deficit thinking of Māori student achievement. A poor schooling environment with minimal cultural acknowledgement has been a contributing factor. The level of a student’s self-esteem, locus of control and self-
efficacy are positive factors contributing to Māori student success. Positive attitudes of being Māori and the motivation of being a contribution to Māori are optimistic outcomes of Māori student success.

5.1 Deficit thinking
The failure of indigenous ethnic minorities to achieve academic or social success at a level comparable to that of the majority culture in a society, has concerned educators in a number of countries (Duncan, 1991; McLennan, 1996; Pullinger & Summerfield, 1998). Similar concerns exist in New Zealand for Māori children (Macfarlane, Glynn, Presland, & Greening, 2000). The reasons for this lack of successful achievement for indigenous minority groups include: societal factors such as ethnic stereotyping and oppression; schooling factors such as teaching practices that are insensitive to minority cultural practices or values; and familial factors such as low parental expectations of children's schooling (Ogbu, 1992). It is not surprising that the contributing factors that enabled Māori student success for this project's student participants were in total opposition to these reasons. Students stated that they worked hard not to fulfill Māori stereotypes. They had role models and quality relationships that supported them against any forms of oppression. The school environment for the students was highly supportive of Māori, with a special immersion unit available for Māori students. Parents were also supportive and pro-active in their children's education.

5.2 Poor schooling
There is also literature that argues that Māori participation and performance in education is undermined through low teacher efficacy and expectations, low student self-expectations, inadequate teacher subject, pedagogic and cultural knowledge, and a rigid curriculum framework that creates little space for Māori determined pedagogy (Jenkins, 2002; Hill & Hawk 2000, Holt 2001, McKinley 1996, 2005). The student participants gave high praise and extensive positive examples of how teachers and their school were supportive in their learning. Without the one on one support from teachers, specialised programmes, quality
teacher / student relationships, that the project students experienced, many indigenous minority children have less positive school experiences than majority children. While some of these experiences may influence achievement directly, factors such as attitude to school, value for academic tasks, achievement motivation, and sense of self-efficacy also influence Māori student success. The parent participants all commented on their children’s enjoyment of school, strong work ethic, self-motivation and confidence. These are positive contributing factors to an individual’s self-esteem, which has a direct correlation with student success.

5.3 Self-esteem
Research indicating that self-esteem is correlated with school achievement and motivation (Bridgeman & Shipman, 1978; Byrne, 1984; Wright & Taylor, 1995), has led some educators to argue that increasing self-esteem is indispensable to subsequent school learning (Friedland, 1992). However, there is debate about the direction of influence between self-esteem and success (Caslyn & Kenny, 1977; Purkey & Novak, 1984; Shavelson & Bolus, 1982; Zimmerman, Copeland, Shope, & Dielman, 1997). Although it is likely that there are reciprocal effects, many educators encourage teachers to focus more on successful achievement than self-esteem, since achievement is a better predictor of self-esteem than vice versa. (Gage & Berliner, 2002; Stipek, 2002). It is evident from the student participant’s comments, that the teachers and their school went to great efforts to support individual student achievement, through one on one support and trialling specialized programmes for diverse learners.

5.4 Locus of control
Another explanation offered for underachievement in minority children is locus of control. This construct stems from the work of Rotter (1990) and refers to a generalized belief about the extent to which a person’s behaviour influences subsequent successes and failures. A person who believes that their actions have little impact on outcomes has an external locus of control. A person who
believes that outcomes are contingent on actions that are under their control has an internal locus of control. Students who believe in their ability to control success and failure in learning should be more motivated and achieve higher. All student participants in this project study were self-motivated, were confident to take risks and knew that hard work contributed to their own success.

5.5 Self-efficacy
Self-efficacy refers to a person’s belief in their capability to bring about desired learning outcomes. Students with high self-efficacy enter learning situations believing that they can be successful, and they bring to bear all the resources they have to accomplish this learning, thus enhancing motivation and achievement (Bandura, 1997; Schunk, 1989). Student participants all had confidence in their own abilities and in accessing support. Students who believe they have low competence will typically avoid difficult tasks in order to minimize risk to self-worth and protect self-esteem, whereas students with high self-efficacy will engage with challenging tasks whose successful accomplishment enhances feelings of pride and self-esteem. Student participants all commented on enjoying taking on challenges.

5.6 Being Māori
The pilot group of students and their parents identified role models, quality relationships, valuing education, a supportive environment, discipline, self-motivation and strong links to te ao Māori as being key contributing factors to Māori student success. These factors align with characteristics of Te Arawa tūpuna Ihenga that enabled him to be successful in his explorations and contributions to the Te Arawa people, such as resilience, determination, focus, commitment and self-discipline. Recent literature states that ‘a gifted Māori’, is exceptional in a culturally valued area, and will also use your outstanding skill, ability or quality to help others in some way (Bevan-Brown, 1992, 2005). Student participants all commented on wanting to make their whānau proud and make a difference. Renzulli (2002) refers to this service component as 'constructive
action' and states that more emphasis needs to be placed on the ways successful individuals transform their assets into positive, beneficial and productive action.

5.7 Future of Māori education

Education should be an opportunity for skilful young Māori to harness their collective strength and focus on developing innovative solutions and strategies in order to participate in the global community, as Māori. In order to succeed and to enter the global context, learners must be encouraged to see ‘being Māori’ is integral to success. All parents immersed their children in aspects of te ao Māori. All student participants had a positive attitude of being Māori. Cultural confidence goes hand in hand with accomplishments in sport, study, and personal development. All student participants were successful in a range of areas including sport, academic and cultural activities. The learning environment has dual responsibilities to Māori learners: to prepare students for full participation in wider society, and to prepare students for full participation in te ao Māori.

6.0 Next Steps

The Ngāti Whakaue Education Endowment Board’s Mission Statement is:

“To enhance the legacy of Ngāti Whakaue Tūpuna by the responsible and effective management of the Endowment and the provision of financial support to the beneficiaries of the Trust for educational purposes that add value and benefit to our community.”

Ngāti Whakaue is in a position of strength in having a significant body of personnel who are leading academics in all New Zealand universities and wānanga. We are a tribe that is research active. Given the current positive thrusts that are transpiring within the iwi, we can capitalise on this current advantage and advance our role as a contender in terms of innovative and high
quality educational research.

With the emerging findings of this project we intend to:

- Apply for further funding from the Ngāti Whakaue Education Endowment Board, to conduct a wider research project with all secondary schools and wharekura in the wider Rotorua area.
- Develop tangible recommendations from the wider study, possibly in the form of student, teacher or whānau education programs.
- Disseminate recommendations to educators and interested parties.
- Develop a research paper describing emerging findings to present at a national conference by the end of the year, and publication by the end of next year.
- In all publications and presentations, acknowledge the support from the Ngāti Whakaue Education Endowment Board.
7.0 References


Renzulli, J. (2002). Expanding the conception of giftedness to include co-cognitive traits and to promote social capital. *Phi Delta Kappan, 84*(1), 33-58.


