

Empowering children's learning, efficacy, aspirations and success

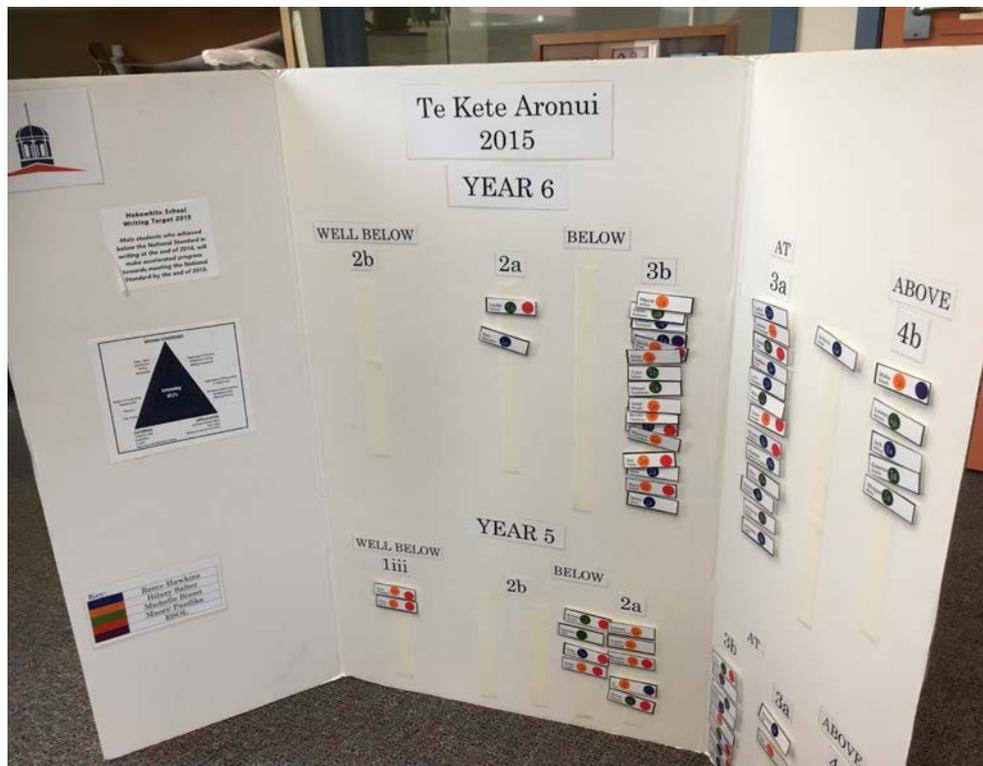
Hokowhitu School in Palmerston North has approximately 350 children in Years 1 to 6. About half are Pākehā/European and one-fifth Māori. The remainder are from more than 30 different cultures.

Members of the school's leadership team were able to explain why the achievement trajectory of their children was trending upwards. Teacher and leader inquiries had quite specifically identified what was working for their students, what should be extended across the school, and what further developments were required. In their assessment, the practice of teaching as inquiry, professional learning and development (PLD), heightened expectations and new pedagogies and guidelines had collectively made the difference.

During the previous five years the school had gone through considerable leadership, teaching and environmental changes. Teaching was now more innovative, taking place in more flexible learning spaces. The children had increased choice about how and what to learn. Crucially, robust systems were put in place to make sure evidence informed all initiatives and changes to practices, and their impacts carefully monitored and tracked. Successful changes were extended across the school and became expected practice.

Teaching as inquiry to improve teaching and outcomes for students

Systematic, collaborative inquiry processes and challenging PLD aligned with the school's values, goals and targets. Leaders encouraged a culture of continuous improvement, with a resolute focus on 'what works for the kids.' A key innovation was the linking of teaching as inquiry to appraisal, school targets and target students, which led directly to improved practices that were then embedded across the school.



Leaders and teachers used data boards (as shown here) to show the names, achievement levels and progress of students. These were reviewed and adjusted regularly to reflect the children's progress.

When discussing, for example, writing, teachers looked at and moderated writing samples, compared judgments, and then agreed which students had progressed. In this way, they were easily able to identify their target students.

All teachers undertook inquiries related to charter targets and the needs of the target students for which they had particular responsibility. These inquiries started at the beginning of the year. Teachers reported and discussed progress at team meetings throughout the year and as part of the formal appraisal process. An inquiry timetable incorporated:

- > deadlines or times for research and investigation
- > types of assessment and their use
- > ongoing reflections about progress and challenges
- > discussions in team and staff meetings
- > observations by team leaders
- > presentation to staff about the inquiry and its impacts for children.

For example, a school goal for 2015 was to accelerate the writing progress of boys who were below the expected level. Each teacher set specific goals for the children in their class. In some cases teachers found as many girls as boys were below the expected level so they included them in their inquiry too. These goals varied, as did the teacher's actions and strategies, depending on the needs and strengths they identified in their students.

One teacher's end-of-year reflection

I have implemented:

- > Daily free writing time
- > Free writing prompts on the wall
- > Free writing ideas and questions
- > Whānau modelling of writing 'think alouds'
- > Google Docs set up
- > Writing goals developed alongside the children and stuck in books
- > Celebrations of writing on blog, walls, and in newsletter
- > Writing for authentic purposes (letters to Prime Minister and newspaper, posters for Wildbase Recovery)
- > Interest-based writing groups.

Inquiry plans included eight sections:

- > initial data and analysis of data
- > goal(s) for the target students
- > to achieve these goals, the target students need to...
- > to facilitate learning, my high-quality practice focus is...
- > I need to...
- > a summary of what I am going to trial
- > by the end of this cycle I expect my learners will...
- > I will know they have achieved (or not achieved) the goal because...

During the year, teachers reviewed and recorded the impact of their deliberate acts of teaching on the students' achievement. They also identified challenges. Some interviewed children to gain their perspectives on what was working.

At the end of the year teachers documented changes they had made to their practice, successes enjoyed and challenges encountered, and they proposed further steps for the next year. These reviews were collated for each team and summarised for the whole staff. Updates of the school's teaching and learning handbook, *Key Foundations for Pedagogy*, incorporated findings from these reviews.

Teachers of most year groups worked collaboratively in flexible learning spaces. Three teachers shared each space and worked together to lead workshops and act as learning coach. The learning coach reinforced workshop learning or coached children while the others led workshops. All teachers continuously reviewed how their teaching aligned with high-quality practice as described in *Key Foundations for Pedagogy*. PLD focused on strengthening agreed pedagogical practice.



The primary focus of the board was the achievement, progress and wellbeing of the students. Members were well informed about the progress and achievement of different cohorts.

Since effective tracking and reflection systems had been put in place, the quality of information in board reports had improved. Trend data and teacher presentations about practice, programmes and innovations informed resourcing decisions. Trustees interrogated the data, sought clarifications and challenged school leaders:

- > What are we doing for children who have not moved?
- > Are these children the same in each set of data?
- > What else can we do?
- > Are we being effective in supporting identified students?

Tools to guide teaching practices

School leaders deliberately and strategically supported teachers to develop the systems and structures needed for successful implementation of agreed practice. Decisions relating to teaching practice were documented and incorporated into a multi-layered change agenda.

A record of long-term improvement strategies was kept with the strategic goals where they would contribute to the reframing of teaching and learning expectations.

Teachers had focused on changing how they operated in flexible learning environments and how they collaborated to meet student learning needs.

Over time, they had developed clear understandings and shared expectations, which were collated as 'Curriculum Essence Statements'. These outlined expectations for:

- > the classroom environment
- > what teachers should know
- > what the class programme should consist of
- > instructional strategies to be used
- > what teachers should say and do
- > effective pedagogy in the learning area
- > assessments and overall teacher judgements.

Essence statements were fully developed for reading, writing, mathematics, and health and physical education. They were partly developed for science, te reo Māori, and becoming digital citizens.

1. INSPIRING LIFE LONG LEARNERS WHO TAKE OWNERSHIP OF THEIR OWN LEARNING

1. Teaching children 'how to learn' by promoting formative practice with specific learning goals / scaffolded steps to foster self / peer assessment.
2. Ongoing teaching of the Key Competencies to enhance students' ability to persevere / reflect / show resilience, collaborate / cooperate and make meaning for themselves.
3. Promote the home / school learning partnership.
4. Encouraging teachers to embrace new ideas and ways of learning and collaborate to improve their own practice.



2. VALUING DIVERSITY BY PROVIDING AN INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENT FOR ALL.

1. Developing a positive learning culture where our students' languages, identities and cultures are supported and celebrated.
2. Showing equity and empathy for the needs of priority learners.
3. Developing effective programmes and support for ALL learners.

3. CELEBRATING CREATIVITY THROUGH CHALLENGE, CURIOSITY AND RISK TAKING.

1. Enabling students to feel safe and take risks with their learning knowing they will be supported and scaffolded.
2. Enabling students to accept challenges that take them out of their comfort zone and to be the best they can be.
3. Allowing and encouraging creativity and curiosity through inquiry learning, fostering 'thinking skills', open-ended questions, and providing rich learning tasks.

4. AIMING FOR EXCELLENCE THROUGH HIGH EXPECTATIONS.

1. Focusing on ensuring that all students make progress with their learning in order to meet with success.
2. Establishing high expectations for students in both learning and behaviour by promoting the STRIVE concept 'to do our very best'.
3. Encouraging excellence for academics, the arts and sport, and celebrating individual successes in each of these areas.
4. Setting annual targets to improve skills in literacy and / or numeracy.

5. PROVIDING AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT

1. Working to establish flexible, adaptable working spaces which foster personalised learning opportunities.
2. Enhancing learning through using the latest technologies to engage learners.
3. Further developing the Hokowhitu School curriculum in line with the NZ Curriculum and National Standards to give clarity and focus to the most important learning for our community.

Effective pedagogy at Hokowhitu School

- > The whole school maintains an unrelenting focus on student achievement and learning.
- > Whole-school alignment is around evidence-based practices.
- > Teaching is responsive to students' learning processes.
- > The relevance of learning is transparent to students, with links made to their daily lives.
- > Teaching builds on students' prior experiences and knowledge.
- > Tasks and classroom interactions help students understand each incremental step they need to take to make progress.
- > Students receive specific, frequent and positive feedback.
- > Students have a strong sense of involvement in the process of setting specific learning goals.
- > Teachers collaboratively reflect on practice to improve teaching.

School document

Writing strategies introduced as a result of inquiry, and other changes

The learning environment was managed in ways that supported student participation, engagement and agency. Teachers offered children choices and opportunities to learn in flexible ways. School-developed progressions and explicit feedback made learning – and strategies for learning – visible. During writing lessons, two teachers would usually facilitate workshops while the third acted as learning coach supporting children working independently or in pairs. Authentic writing tasks would be situated in a familiar context (for example, the family), or related to learning in the wider curriculum (for example, in art or science). The thought that their writing could be published in the school newsletter was a huge motivator for children.

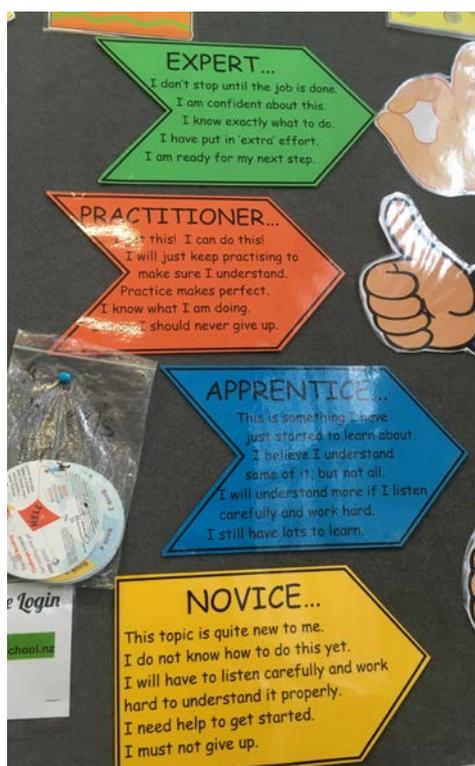
Children would sometimes self-select a workshop, but teachers would usually guide their decision making to make sure children targeted the skills they most needed to learn. Children would indicate their workshop choice by placing their photo in the appropriate column on a chart (see below).



In one flexible learning environment, we saw children moving with a sense of purpose to begin and progress their learning. They used a template to plan their week and had decisions to make about what they would do and when they would do it.

Children were able to explain to us their 'must do/can do' sheets, the concepts they were working on, and what they needed to complete.

Teachers used the writing progressions as a tool to sharpen the focus of their teaching. They also explicitly shared them with the children in the form of goal sheets so children knew what they were trying to master and could self-manage their learning in workshops and conferencing activities. Children would evaluate their own progress and the teacher would indicate with an arrow when they were close to moving up a level or sub-level.



Behaviours that support learning were described under the headings Novice, Apprentice, Practitioner and Expert (NAPE). The children knew what these behaviours were and to what extent they were exhibiting them. They could see how independent they were in their learning and what they needed to do to become more independent.

Short, sharp lessons and a wide variety of teaching activities kept children highly engaged and focused.

Teachers had high expectations of their students. In Term 3, the deputy principal worked with a group of Year 3 and 4 Māori and Pacific boys. The aim was to have those who were below the expected level move to 'at' or 'above', and those who were 'at' the expected level, to 'above'.

The nine boys used comics, building a tree hut, and superheroes as contexts for writing. They also did writing tasks related to the wider curriculum, for example, visual arts and science.

Other strategies included:

- > the use of digital technologies to remove scribing barriers
- > pre-reading and vocabulary building
- > exemplars and modelling books or sheets for individual students
- > hands-on, making and doing activities followed by writing about the experience
- > increasing student reflection using the school's writing matrix.

Five of the nine students had met the target by the end of the intervention; the other four were still being supported to do so.

Another innovation involved holding several open days in Term 4 so parents could see for themselves what their children were experiencing. This gave school leaders an opportunity to 'share the journey' as they explained flexible learning environments and how the students were increasingly managing aspects of their own learning and collaborating with others to achieve learning goals.

Changes in teaching practice and an emphasis on learner agency helped keep students engaged and motivated as they moved through the school. Teachers understood clearly what was expected of them, and were working collaboratively to make improvements benefiting all children.

FLEXIBLE LEARNING SPACES (FLS)

OUR FLS ARE DESIGNED WITH ENGAGEMENT IN MIND

<p>ENVIRONMENT:</p> <p>Open and flexible students and teachers. Have breakout spaces for small groups. Moveable and flexible furniture Environment set up around effective pedagogy rather than purpose-built facilities. Acoustics are a consideration - sound systems will be used where possible to support giving instructions.</p>	<p>OUR STUDENTS:</p> <p>Have choice about where they 'learn' best. Can self direct their learning by setting goals and opting into workshops. Understand their next learning steps. Able to reflect and revise Are self motivated Plan and track their learning. Manage their learning time effectively Use a wide range of technology including iPads... Have opportunities to work with some specialist teachers.</p>
<p>TEACHING, PLANNING & ASSESSMENT</p> <p>Targeted workshops that cater for specific learning objectives Key Competencies are woven throughout diverse learning programme. Creation of individual learning plans and timetables are specific to the needs of both groups and individuals. Team teaching of both large and small groups, using a range of strategies, resources and technologies. (co-teaching) On going daily reflection and review, where student achievement is discussed and groupings are flexibly organised to meet next learning steps. On going collaborative reflection, and refinement to improve learning, teaching and student outcomes.</p>	<p>WHAT WE EXPECT TO SEE:</p> <p>Using a wide range of technology Student working in small groups Team teaching of both large and small groups, using a range of strategies Learning through "passions" Choices in learning (Must do / Can do Tasks or Contract based learning) Monitoring, Checklists, feedback, marking, accountability... E- learning tools are used to promote and support future learning</p> <div style="text-align: center;">  HOKOWHITU SCHOOL </div>

In 2015, the percentage of Māori students achieving at or above the expected level was the same as for non-Māori in both writing and mathematics and only slightly lower in reading. Over 92 percent of all Year 6 children were at or above the expected level in reading and writing.

The following case study illustrates how Hokowhitu School's teaching and learning strategies empower children, lift aspirations, increase self-efficacy and accelerate achievement.

Ariana

Ariana moved to the school fairly recently. When she arrived her mother pointed out that she was very young for her class and was struggling quite a bit in that year level. Together they decided to place her in a composite class and classified her at the lower year level.

This change, combined with a focus on understanding her learning and achievement, has benefited her. She is motivated and engaged in her learning and talks knowledgeably about the assessment tools and processes she uses to get the information she needs to set goals and monitor learning.

"I am on Level 2A and my goal is to use grammar and tense better so I can move on to my next goal." "I know if I get an arrow by my name I am close to moving up." She points to the goal sheet she is using to track her progress. "Every time I write I look at my goal sheet and use that." Teachers "help us if we need help." "Sometimes I can't think that well so I think again and write my ideas in my book to make them work and then I write them up and edit them."

Ariana knew and could talk about the school's values (expressed using the acronym **STRIVE**):

Step up and be the best you can
Try new things and persevere
Respect self, others and things
Investigate, wonder and learn
Value others
Enthusiastically live by our virtues.

She could also discuss strategies that encouraged students to take risks, work independently and 'give it a go'.

"In maths my goal is to improve my division. It took me four weeks to 'get' place-value so now it is division I am working on." "We have tests in whānau class. They tell us in workshops how we did and say these are helpful tests for learning." "I am at the standard and I want to get better and get a scholarship to be a teacher."

"I am happy here; people speak my language." "The teachers are not Māori but they speak te reo every day." "The three classes have Māori names and we have three teachers now, not just one." "We always have more time with a teacher. You can get to know your three teachers."

She liked the fact the school had a Māori name. She had a strong sense of belonging at this school.



Children in front of the school's STRIVE values display.