

Ngā Huatau Taiohi - Te Rau Aroha Marae

Enjoying and achieving education success as Māori is:

- **Being able to resist the negative stereotypes about being Māori**

We can embrace our Māori culture, especially with our successes. If we do well, we know that we have some influence. We can gain Excellence in any subjects we want. Being Māori doesn't stop us at anything. It isn't a boundary, and we can steer past those stereotypes - especially with our school. It allows us to grasp hold of our excellences and success and just fly.

Our success shows, and it leads down to future generations. When we achieve, it proves that more and more of us can achieve to get out of the thing of being, oh, being *troublemakers*, because our success will go down the line to our next generations.

Every year, apart from Year 7, I've had an academic prize, so I've excelled in some of my subjects. I'm pretty good at Science. It's one of my favourite subjects. And one day I hope to be a scientist. Which would be pretty cool, because do you know a Māori scientist? I have done well in competitions like Te Manu Kōrero, and I also do speeches in Japanese as well.



- **Being strong in your Māori cultural identity**

It's realising who you are and where you came from, and just carrying that through your schooling.

Being in touch with your culture, but in a way that means you're enjoying it, and that success is you doing what you love, and being encouraged to do what you're passionate about.

I'm really interested in history, but when I look back and think of the inter-generational hardship our grandparents and our ancestors who are Māori have had to deal with since the Treaty and the New Zealand wars, that inter-generational cycle of hardship that they've had to overcome and endure, I think how lucky I am and how lucky we are. We have the opportunity to take on different experiences and can go to school where there are teachers who are supporting us. That we can be proud to experience our culture, rather than being punished for it like our grandparents were so long ago. I think how lucky we are to enjoy success as Māori, and for that success not only to be for ourselves, but for the collective, for our whānau, for our village.

Being down south, achieving as Māori is empowering, as there are not as many Māori as up north. Achieving down here as Māori in sports, culture and whatever we do, it gives us more empowerment to be Māori, when we are not as exposed to our Māori culture as other regions of Aotearoa.

One particular teacher, he was quite a big influence on me. He made me feel proud to be Māori, he

encouraged it. He just made people express themselves more in that area. You're expressing your Māori culture, and you're being proud of your culture. When you have that success and you show that you're enjoying yourself and enjoying your successes, that reflects back on to your culture.

Being Māori, it's a way people see you. When I've travelled internationally to compete no one knows who I am, no one knows my culture. It's really cool to compete and show them where I come from. I come from a place that's little. I don't have your big cities or multiple coaches around me. I can work off the little things and still make big things out of it, especially by being Māori - just being able to show that my culture has defined who I am and where I'm going in life.

- **Being able to contribute to the success of others**

My dad's a shearer in the summer and I'm a rousey. So, being in the sheds and working hard is a big reason for what I'm doing. I want to be successful for my parents. Another big reason for why I want to be successful is for my school. We have a bit of a reputation for being the underdog that continues to succeed. Despite public perception, we always have students that thrive, and we always have students that love to succeed. So despite all of this, being a role model for them and eventually being able to give back to my parents is why I want to be successful.

An assessment I had this year involved the idea of researching a sustainable action. The action that I chose was cultural sustainability at our school. A part of this was interviewing students at our school, especially senior Māori students. I asked them for reasons why they think Māori were not achieving at our school. Forty percent of our school are of Māori descent, yet less than 5% are attending Māori subjects or have Māori activities in their lives, and I asked them why. The two reasons were that being Māori wasn't important in a Euro-centric society, and the second was that they were not brought up with Māori being as important in their households.

Next year I'm attending Otago University. I'm going to be studying sociology, Māori studies and indigenous development. I want to study these subjects with the intention of working for the Ministry of Education. I want to bridge the gap for Māori in education. I want to increase Māori success rates overall, and I want to be the figure for all Māori students - to prove that we can be successful, we can be inspirational, and we will succeed despite everything that comes at us.

- **Developing and maintaining emotional and spiritual strength**

I think it means someone that is being themselves, using their passion to get them where they want to be. Also using the support of their family around them as motivation and to make them proud, so then everyone's proud.

Being a successful Māori means a real strengthening of identity. The more we succeed, the more we identify with who we are, which resonates with where we're from, and obviously, we're Māori. By succeeding we give more power to our people, to our culture. It just means being able to grow, become bigger and spread our wings to other people, other Māori. And it's just really, really cool.

Doors are opening, the doors to our dreams are opening. We are journeying to the wider world, to our dreams. The big things on our journey are te reo and our customs, and the support of our families.

- **Knowing that you can access explicit and timely direction**

I've got a lot of teachers that I look up to; they're actually helpful with my subjects like Maths, but also my stepping up and partaking in cultural competitions. Like one, well you'd think the dude who's literally come from the UK wouldn't really be into our cultural activities. He's actually always there up the front, singing in his accent. And he's always saying, "Oh, good on you, stepping up there, and actually up the front, leading." You know, it's pretty good.



- **Experiencing the power of whanaungatanga**

My parents have been there for me, my sister, my whole family. They push me, tell me: "Go out do something with your life" - something that they couldn't do when they were younger. Financially, it's taken a toll - Mum and Dad having to work non-stop. They've been there for me and also with my grandparents and uncle and aunts who've also supported me. They've sacrificed a lot for me to achieve. There are teachers at the school who are quite good at helping us as well. Definitely exposed me more to Māori culture, so I can put that towards my work. They have high expectations for me.

It means getting rid of the idea that Māori, Māori youth in particular, aren't really worth much. By achieving, succeeding, and enjoying, we're a lot better than people think. We might even be better than everyone else because we can actually relate to each other. We have this whānau culture that supports us. It's not about the individual. It's katoa (all). Everyone's there.

- **Knowing, accepting and acknowledging the strength of working together**

Teachers are a huge help, especially at our school. If you need anything, to talk to anyone, just to help you get to where you need to go, to do what you need to do - say sporting, academic, cultural, arts, anything like that - they'll help you out in any way. My school have helped me to get to where I am, giving me that encouragement to be able to push past and be the best I can be.

