

THE KIA EKE PANUKU TEAM

Māori students enjoying and achieving success as Māori

85% NCEA Level 2 & qualifications for tertiary education

The team's purpose

Kia Eke Panuku aims to achieve sustainable change in schools. It responds to the needs identified within each school. Some schools are quite advanced in terms of their understandings. Other schools need a lot of support in terms of what they could do differently to realise culturally responsive and relational pedagogy, in order to be sharing power in a genuine way with students, whānau, hapū and iwi. We explore with them some ideas, some knowledge and theory, and best practice from other schools.

A kaitoro is an explorer - not so much an explorer of land, but an explorer of ideas. Together with the schools we explore ideas and try to come up with solutions.

Complex dynamics

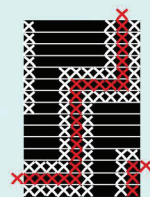
No theory enters into a school-based context that is a clean slate or is already devoid of theories. Any theory that we lay down is always going to fractionate based on what it hits in context. Some of those hits are going to be people's anxieties; the extent to which deficit theorising still exists within the school; the extent to which people have the capacity or capability to use evidence as a tool to open up and expose what's happening; the ability of schools to be able to seriously, authentically, value their relationships with whānau, hapū and iwi; and to value their relationships with each other.

We need to be open to those complex dynamics so that we can be moving in ways that resist the 'stake in the ground' mentality that says, 'whatever it is we're doing today is totally immutable or resistant to whatever evidence might come tomorrow or the next day'. It is requiring us to be more responsive. And that doesn't mean that we lose sight of what the end goal is, but the complexity of what happens in schools needs to be addressed in dynamic ways. We can't have single solutions to complex problems.

A responsive model

The school's contexts are very important. Just like teachers need to understand their learners, schools are our learners and we need to understand where they are at. The first conversation we have is, 'what are the successes in your school that we can build on?'

It's been important to look at successes, rather than just what hasn't worked. That's an important start to the conversation, and positions it so that it's not a deficit model. We recognise that hard work has gone into where they are now.



Kia Eke Panuku
building on success

A responsive model cont'd

We are totally responsive to the people in front of us and where they are at, but to accelerate their success you have to keep disrupting them. It's about us being that critical friend knowing when we can challenge them and when to pull back.

We need to ask the right questions. It's not about us giving the answers -it's about taking an inquiry approach. So if a principal tells you that streaming is something they've done in the school for a hundred years and they will continue to do it, then, our questions might be, 'so who benefits from that? Who's making the decisions? Could there be another way?' You start to open the conversation up to possibilities.

They have to own the thinking. We can tweak it a little bit and if they go off track bring them back to the kaupapa. It's having the ability to read that, and being able to bring those conversations back. It's knowing enough about the people we're working with, the skill base that they have. You do a lot of listening and body language reading.

It's creating that space where not just the dominant voice is heard, where all voices are valid, just as valid and valued as each other.

The people we work with directly in schools, they are committed to this work. It's too hard to do it otherwise. We need to move from committed individuals to institution-wide adoption of the kaupapa. Spread is the challenge; it has to be school-wide and community-wide.

This work takes a lot of moral integrity. It takes a lot of strength, a lot of courage, to respond to the moral imperative of the people with the smallest voice.

Māori students at the centre

I think our role as kaitoro is to reveal the true intention of why they're there and to make them really feel it in their heart, because if they don't then the head can't catch up to do the mahi in the classroom.

I think we're pretty honest that we are co-inquirers and learners in the process. We don't walk in and say we're experts so we've got all the answers. We're on the same journey, we're just in a slightly different place, and I think that's been important for schools to recognise that.

Schools sometimes believe we're being responsive to them, but really our job is being responsive to Māori students, whānau, hapū and iwi. The work that we do is about tino rangatiratanga and I think we are the voice that helps to raise the awareness and the focus back on that. As Treaty partners we've all agreed to certain rights and responsibilities, so how are we upholding that?

Bringing your 'A' game

If you're on your 'A' game as kaitoro, your questioning makes people go 'oh, I need to think about that.' If as a kaitoro you come out of one of those conversations and things that you've said have landed heavily and it's caused conflict, you've probably missed the point. Somewhere along the line you didn't hear the cues. It requires concentrated listening, a really hard listening to what they are saying - and to yourself.

We are here to hold you to account and I think that's been an interesting space to walk. We are not just here to have a cup of tea in the staffroom with you, and chew the fat. We're actually here for us to talk about what the work is, and how it will be different, and what you will be doing next, and how you will be ensuring that those Māori students are getting a fair deal.

Our vision of excellence

It's based on principles, not based on a series of strategies or a framework. These principles generate new actions out of any context. When schools first engage they say, 'tell us what the strategy is, tell us what it looks like' because that's what you do, when you first get something new you want to get a concrete sense of it, and when people really gain a hold of the principles, it makes good sense. 'You're not asking us to change everything to fit a prescribed framework. We can share power in the way that we deem is appropriate. Our vision is our vision of excellence.' It is their vision.

We're using their vision in connection with Ka Hikitia and Māori students achieving and enjoying success as Māori. It's about people's values, and when you're connecting to people's values it feels right and you're going to get that engagement.

Considering the future

I'm excited by the prospects that could happen under Kia Eke Panuku. I'm optimistic that things are going to change. There are schools that are just firing, taking on as much as they can and having wonderful deep conversations about what needs to happen in their schools, and that's exciting. But we also have schools where there's still hardly any traction. That's not so exciting. That's saddening, and so you just have to say, 'okay, what next? What do I have to do next to try and move this along?'

I think schools are getting that message too, that we're prepared to go on this journey with them. We're not walking in front of them, dragging them behind us. Nor are we walking behind them trying to push them. We're actually walking beside them, asking questions of them. Increasingly they're starting to ask questions of us.