

# Positive Youth Development through Education

## Addressing Issues of (Dis)Engagement in Aotearoa/New Zealand Schools

He ariā whakawhanake hunga taiohi: He tirohanga ki ngā take pīroiroi i ngā kura o Aotearoa



*A resource for practitioners working with disengaged young people in Aotearoa/New Zealand schools  
- He rauemi mō ngā mātanga e mahi tahi ana ki ngā hunga taiohi kua whakawareatia*



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The resource is the culmination of research which investigated the factors leading to engagement and disengagement in secondary schooling for young people at risk of truancy. The full research report is available at [www.teorahou.org.nz](http://www.teorahou.org.nz).

This resource has been produced in electronic form in the interests of sustainability and is available at [www.teorahou.org.nz](http://www.teorahou.org.nz). The intent of this document is that it be disseminated and discussed widely, so please feel free to print off copies and distribute to interested parties as you see fit.

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Feedback on this resource is welcomed, and can be emailed to [christchurch@teorahou.org.nz](mailto:christchurch@teorahou.org.nz) with the subject line "PYDE Feedback".

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## Introduction *He kupu whakataki*

Young people disengage from schooling for a range of complex reasons, and steps toward re-engagement are also often complex. This resource provides insight into factors leading to dis/engagement, and suggests a range of possible strategies for practitioners (including teachers) when supporting young people. Both the reasons for disengagement and re-engagement in schooling suggested in this resource come from a range of sources including the stories of young people with a history of truancy, their parents, and expert practitioners working in the field, as well as international and national research. This resource is the culmination of a research project: *Dis/Engagement in secondary schools: Toward truancy prevention*<sup>1</sup>. This resource is aligned to the *Positive Youth Development Aotearoa*<sup>2</sup> resource which provides a framework for practitioners working in the field of youth development. *Positive Youth Development Aotearoa* calls for a reimagining of practice toward the development of the whole person and connected communities through an approach which fosters respectful relationships, strengths based practice, and ownership and empowerment. In this education-focused document, we suggest an approach which is cognisant of effective youth development practice, and the *Positive Youth Development Aotearoa* resource provides a useful framework for such considerations.

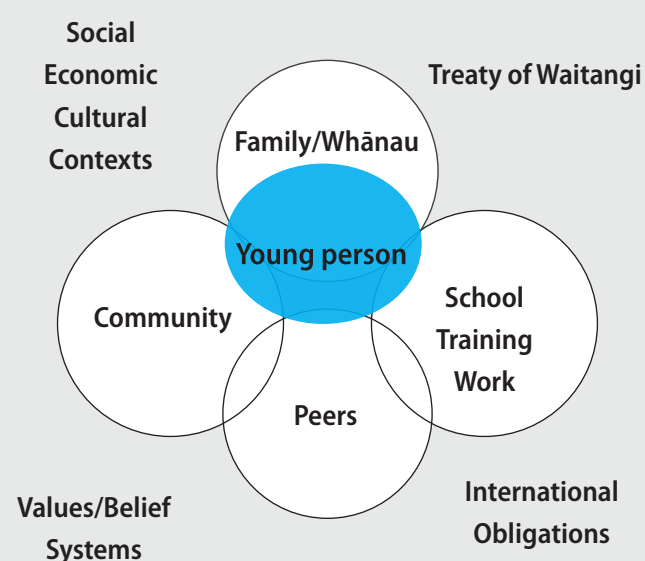
A *Model of Youth Development through Education* proposed in this resource recognises that a young person's development takes place in the context of their varied worlds including schooling, home, and both geographic and cultural communities. Additionally, within each of these contexts a young person's wellbeing will be impacted in different ways, including taha hinengaro (psychological); taha wairua (spiritual); taha tinana (physical); and taha whānau (relational). Any strategies toward more fully supporting young people to re-engage in schooling ought to be cognisant of the inter-connectedness of both the layers of wellbeing within a person, and the ways in which these are affected through different contexts.

### Worlds of a Young Person<sup>3</sup> – A socio-ecological perspective

This perspective aims to connect young people to their four worlds—their respective geographical communities, cultural communities (e.g. sport), school/work context, and peer and family relationships and has suggested that the behaviour and development of a young person cannot be explored in isolation from their environment.

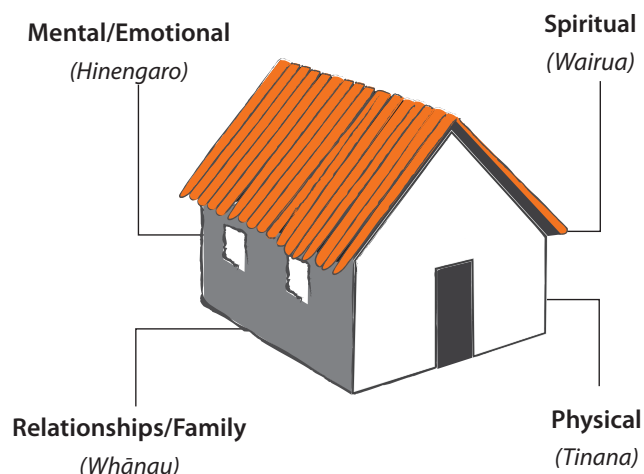
Bronfenbrenner also stated that “all children need at least one other person who is irrationally crazy about them.”

#### Social environments that shape youth development



### Te Whare Tapa Whā - Holistic Development<sup>4</sup>

Hauora - developing wellbeing Te Whare Tapa Whā (house with four walls)



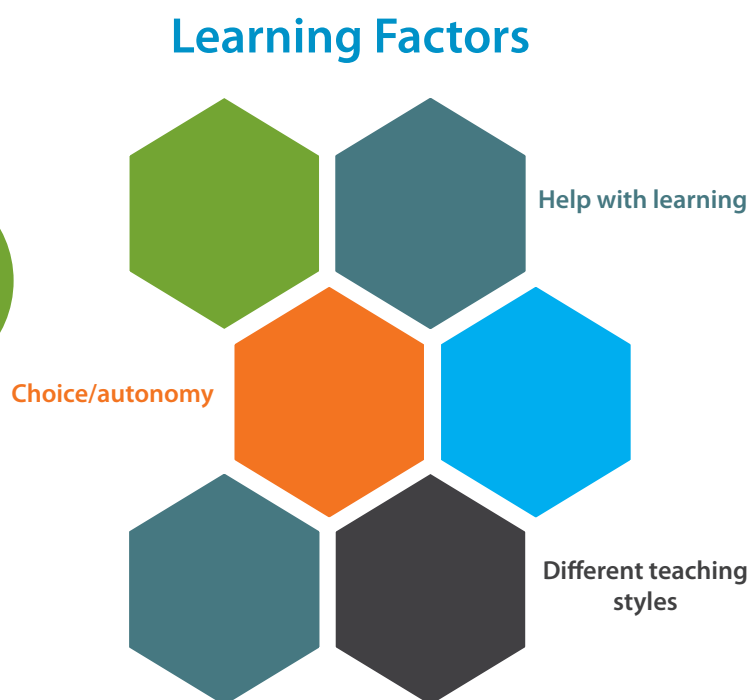
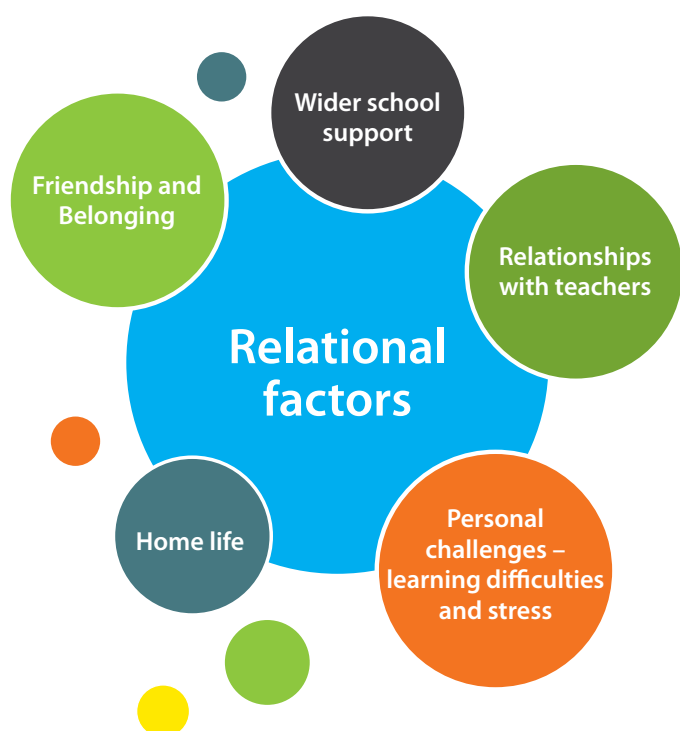
<sup>1</sup>Bruce, J. (2014). *Dis/Engagement in secondary schools: Toward truancy prevention*. Report for the Ministry of Education. For a copy of this report email: [christchurch@teorahou.org.nz](mailto:christchurch@teorahou.org.nz) or go to: [www.teorahou.org.nz](http://www.teorahou.org.nz)

<sup>2</sup>Wayne Francis Charitable Trust (2011). *Positive Youth Development in Aotearoa*. [www.wfct.org.nz](http://www.wfct.org.nz)

<sup>3</sup>Bronfenbrenner, U. (1986). Alienation and the four worlds of childhood, *Phi Delta Kappa*, 67, 430-436.

<sup>4</sup>Durie, M. (1994). *Whaiora: Māori health development*. Oxford University Press: Auckland, New Zealand.

# PART 1: A Model of Positive Youth Development through Education *He ariā whakawhanake hunga taiohi mā te mātauranga*



The Model of Youth Development through Education proposed here draws together key themes from the findings of the research, along with existing research in the field<sup>5</sup>. The model demonstrates the inter-connectedness of a range of complex issues facing dis/engaged young people including:

- o **Relational** factors affecting dis/engagement in schooling (with a focus upon friendship and belonging, relationships with teachers, personal challenges including stress and learning and mental wellbeing, home life, and wider school support)

## Lead to the need for...

- o **Learning** factors affecting dis/engagement in schooling (with a focus on getting help with learning/learning difficulties, choice/autonomy, and pedagogical variation in the classroom)

Each of these areas will be explored in the first part of this resource.

In the second part of this resource, a range of strategies and implications for practitioners (including teachers) will be presented. These themes stem from the research and include the following practitioner insights and implications for practice:

- o Informed practice
- o Culturally responsive practice
- o Relating to young people
- o Collaborative models of intervention

<sup>5</sup>Bruce, J. (2014). Dis/Engagement in secondary schools: Toward truancy prevention. Report for the Ministry of Education. For a copy of this report email: christchurch@teorahou.org.nz or go to: www.teorahou.org.nz

# Section 1: Relational factors affecting dis/engagement

## Ngā take hononga

Relational factors are critical in influencing levels of engagement. The following issues will be discussed in this section: friendship and belonging, relationships with teachers, personal challenges including stress and learning and mental wellbeing, home life, and wider school support.

### 1.1 Friendship and belonging *Whanaungatanga*

Having **positive relationships** with friends and teachers is a significant reason that young people engage in schooling. Having a sense of belonging within a school context also means that young people are more likely to engage.

Conversely, destructive peer relationships (e.g. through being bullied), or having negative relationships with teachers (e.g. through not feeling cared for, or understood by teachers) are

both strong factors which lead to truancy for many young people.

**Feeling connected** and having a sense of belonging is critical for young people to develop and engage in learning. The Circle of Courage model (adapted by Te Ora Hou) recognises the centrality of belonging to develop in young people.

“Like, just there were really annoying people that pissed me off, yeah... teasing as well, and like, making fun of me”

#### Circle of Courage<sup>6</sup>

The circle of courage is a youth development model concerned with the development of a young person strengths. It blends North American indigenous philosophy with Western resilience research and focuses on the development goals of generosity, belonging, mastery, and independence. Its premise is that in order for a young person to successfully transition to adulthood, they need to first develop competence in these four developmental areas.

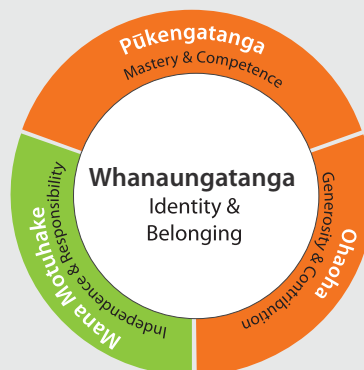
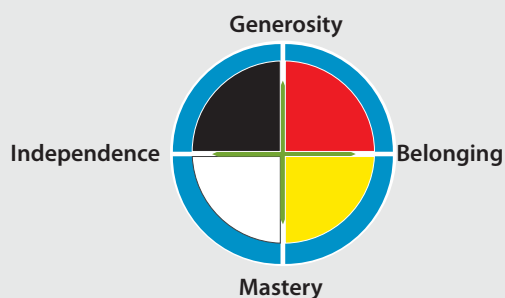
The central theme of this model is that a set of shared values must exist in any community to create an environment that ultimately benefits all. The authors of this model suggest that children who are often referred to as “alienated”, “troubled”, or “difficult” are at risk because they live in an environment that is hazardous - one that breeds discouragement. By contrast, an environment that promotes courage is one that fosters changes to meet the needs of the young person and society and subsequently reclaims youth at risk.

The model is represented by a circle - the medicine wheel - that is divided into quadrants. The circle is sacred and suggests the interconnectedness of life. Likewise, it expresses the sacredness of the number four - the four directions (East, West, North, South), the four elements (wind, water, fire, earth) of the universe, and the four races (red, white, black, yellow). Each quadrant of the circle of courage stands for a central value - belonging, mastery, independence, and generosity.

Connections have been made between these four concepts and similar concepts in Te Ao (the Māori world) and are:

- Whanaungatanga - Belonging / Identity
- Pūkengatanga - Mastery / Competence
- Mana Motuhake - Independence / Responsibility
- Ohaoha - Generosity / Contribution

(Te Ora Hou, 2014).



<sup>6</sup>Brendtro, L., Brokenleg, M. & Van Brockern, S. (2002). Reclaiming youth at risk: Our hope for our future. Solution Tree Press, Bloomington. [www.reclaiming.com](http://www.reclaiming.com)



## CASE STUDY

For some young people engaging in mainstream secondary schooling is too difficult. This was how it was for Lisa. She found the large class numbers and the lack of teacher support too impersonal. When Lisa was going through a hard time, she felt like the teachers just didn't really care. And because there were lots of different teachers, Lisa didn't feel any sense of connection or belonging. Lisa remembered one teacher though, who helped her learn, and cared about her education.

After nearly two years of sporadic attendance at school, Lisa was eventually moved into an alternative education programme. There Lisa felt like she was part of a family where everybody was welcoming and got along well together. During her time in alternative education Lisa tried many new things and after she established a sense of belonging, her confidence grew. She recalled doing things there:

"...like I thought I'd never do in my life, like with rock climbing, I was like, 'I'm not going to be able to climb, you know, to the top', and the first time I did it, I got to the top, and I was so proud of myself, like it just shows you, you can do anything. Like you've just got to believe in yourself and that's what they taught me [in AE], because I used to just not believe in myself really".



## COMMENT

Lisa's story shows that it was for her, first of all necessary to establish a sense of connectedness and belonging, before meaningful learning and development could take place. As her sense of belonging within the alternative education programme grew, she was able to challenge herself and grow in confidence and strength.

## 1.2 Relationship with teachers *Ko au te kaiako, ko te kaiako ko au*

Many young people with a history of disengagement in schooling require positive relationships with their teachers in order that they can learn. It was found in the research<sup>7</sup> that young people were more likely to engage in learning if teachers were positive and funny; and this was followed by the extent to which teachers were helpful. Being positive and having a sense of humour are qualities that young people value and these qualities set the tone for learning.

*"He's just really fun and cool... he's friendly and does jokes and then we actually get our work done".*

Young person

*"He like picks on us but it's in a funny way and he makes the whole class laugh and everything."*

Young person

Being able to get help in the classroom is critical for disengaged young people. Young people with a history of truancy often experience (or have experienced) high levels of stress. Because of the negative impact that stress has on learning (see section on Stress and Learning), they often require additional support and help with their learning. As one young person noted:

*"I was able to learn when there were teachers that actually help you, that talk to you and tell you step by step on what you needed to do, because I didn't get told that. I just got told to do this, and they wouldn't give me instructions or anything and, I'd just sit there and be like, what do I do? And it affected me so much".*

Young person

*"I had this teacher, he would always like come up and help me, individually and stuff, about it, try and help me and give me feedback and stuff, and um, yeah, same with um all my other classes, like most of my other classes, like they tried to help me because I'd like missed a lot [of classes]."*

The process of building relationships is considered central to the work of engaging young people, and this is known as *whakawhanaungatanga*<sup>8</sup>. Unless teachers are able to establish meaningful connections with young people who have a history of disengagement, it will be very difficult for them to make progress.

*"Schools know that relationship is everything in education. Without relationships your kids won't learn."*

Practitioner

*"The ability of the teacher to actually connect with [disengaged young people] is critical".*

Practitioner

One young person lamented the way in which he was not really known by one of his teachers. He reported *"a couple of times when I was there, I'd sit at the back, he'd mark me as absent, and um, I'd have to talk to the Dean and stuff, because he'd like just assume that I wasn't there so he'd just mark me off"*. For this young person there was no sense of connection with this teacher, and he was consequently disengaged in the classroom.

Connections between young people and teachers are also made through *manaakitanga* which is the process of exercising an ethos of care<sup>9</sup>. By showing respect, care, and kindness teachers demonstrate that they are invested in ensuring—to the best of their ability—that young people in their classes will learn and develop.



<sup>7</sup>Bruce, J. (2014). Dis/Engagement in secondary schools: Toward truancy prevention. Report for the Ministry of Education. For a copy of this report email: [christchurch@teorahou.org.nz](mailto:christchurch@teorahou.org.nz) or go to: [www.teorahou.org.nz](http://www.teorahou.org.nz)

<sup>8</sup>See for example: Bishop, R., & Glynn, T. (1999). Culture counts. Changing power relations in education. Palmerston North, NZ: Dunmore Press.

<sup>9</sup>Macfarlane, A.H. (2007). Discipline, democracy and diversity: Working with students with behaviour difficulties. Wellington: NZCER Press.



## 1.3 Personal challenges *He wero*

It is not surprising that young people disengaged from schooling encounter a range of personal difficulties across home/whānau, community, friend, and schooling contexts. There are often physical and mental health difficulties, and the longer a young person is disengaged from school, the higher the levels of anxiety and stress regarding reengagement. Young people disengaged are more likely to have experienced significant trauma, grief and loss, anxiety, and depression. This section will explore issues relating to stress and learning, wellbeing, home/whānau challenges, and the importance of wider school support to help with engagement.

### 1.3.1 Stress and learning *He hēmanawa*<sup>10</sup>

#### Engaging Students in School: A Brain Development View

The brain evolved with its prime directive to survive, not so much to learn. That's the short version of this summary! The remaining text is about understanding how and why this relates to truancy, and then what we can do about it as the people responsible for trying to help engage children into school.

A short biology lesson is needed first to understand the three different sections that make up the entire brain (hint - section 1 is for survival and section 3 is for learning).

A clever guy called Paul McLean noticed in the 1960's that the brain can be divided into Reptile, Mammal and Human sections (sections 1, 2 and 3). It is obviously the third section that is responsible for learning the complex things we need to learn at school – with the best teachers in the world and unlimited resources, you still won't teach my dog to read. He simply doesn't have the section required – section 3 (or the *frontal cortex*).

The reptile has only the first section at the bottom of the brain (*the brainstem*), while a mammal has sections 1 and 2 (the *limbic system*). And you guessed it – the human has all three sections.

The brainstem is the first part of the brain to develop with the job of survival – our prime directive. It keeps your heart beating and generally keeps you alive. It really kicks into gear when the human stress response is activated and *fight, flight or freeze* takes over. Even though the brainstem is the most primitive part of our brain, one of the complexities you have to wrap your mind around is that the brainstem is very clearly in charge of the other sections. Simply put, this means if the brainstem decides it needs all the body's resources for survival, you ain't gonna get no learning! The brain hasn't evolved with a prime directive to learn, as much as to survive. In fact, learning is an optional extra for the brain. Put another way, you can survive a whole lifetime without learning to read or write, but you won't survive for long without a beating heart, so survival is in charge and brainstem trumps cortex.



<sup>10</sup>We are grateful to the author of this section, Nathan Mikaere-Wallis, from *Brainwave Trust*.

An easy way to visualize this is to imagine the brainstem and cortex on a set of scales . . .



. . . if one is active, the other is not.

#### **What does this mean for those of us working and living with young people?**

It means that all of the qualities we require and desire them to have – an understanding of consequence, empathy, planning, follow-through, social skill, working memory, self-regulation and learning (to name a few) – are in a part of the brain they only have access to when their survival brain or brainstem has been disengaged/made to feel safe/had its needs met.

#### **How does it relate to truancy?**

Without going into a complex explanation about the formative nature of the first three years of life (which the reader is able to access via [www.brainwave.org.nz](http://www.brainwave.org.nz)), suffice to say that many of these disengaged young people are more likely to have an *automatic pilot* in which the scales we referred to earlier are set to be more in a brainstem mode than a cortex mode. Most of us experience a good enough first three years of life and don't experience (or are supported through) major trauma in our childhoods. For a multitude of reasons this is not the case for everyone. Therefore while 90% of the school population (teachers included!) are able to spend *most* of their time in the cortex and only sometimes disengage, the other 10% of the population have their scales set the other way and only sometimes show empathy, an understanding of consequence, and an active frontal cortex, but spend most of their time disengaged from the cortex skills needed to participate in learning.

#### **So how do we calm down this brainstem and provide support that works?**

Relationship consistency. Most infants spend their early years

in a consistent relationship with primarily one person – we were repeatedly soothed, that's how the rest of us learnt to calm our brainstem – a kind of an apprenticeship. It's been that way for thousands and thousands of years. It is now subsequently built into our genes and biology to expect this dyadic or two-people relationship in order to learn how to calm the brainstem. The good news is it is never too late to learn, but it is still going to require a dyadic relationship, over an extended period of time – preferable across the whole primary or secondary school experience. It is possible to change the automatic pilot, but it's going to take a consistent quality relationship and a period of time to allow for the "apprenticeship".

Practices such as Mindfulness, whakawhanaungatanga, breakfast in schools, and ritual/routine are a few of the practices that also help to meet the needs of the brainstem and allow it to calm. For many of the children we are discussing however, their brainstem may be on a *hair trigger* so it's a good idea to minimize anything that is likely to set off a brainstem reaction (like for instance the practice schools have of using a fire alarm to signal class transition time. This is fine for the 90% of the school that have a one second brainstem reaction, but can disengage again a child you just spent 20 minutes calming their brainstem! Maybe Mozart on the intercom instead?)

For many students just teaching them how to self-calm and engage the cortex will suffice, while others have issues more relating to section 2 of the brain – the limbic system – that also need addressed. The limbic system is basically the emotional brain. In many ways this is what we respond to the

world with first, followed by the skills we have access to in the cortex. When relating to practice you can think of self-esteem, feelings, and learning dispositions. To summarise an extensive body of research relating to this – you have to have some form of self-worth and to have experienced some success as a learner before you are likely to engage in learning the school curriculum. Or, as I hope you are starting to see, you have to meet the needs of the limbic system before the cortex is able to fully engage – and that won't do you any good if you haven't met the needs of the brainstem first. While supporting the development of socio-emotional (or limbic system) dispositions should be supported by all teachers, it is again the dyadic relationship which anchors these skills. Their successful development is the result of at least one consistent, responsive and respectful relationship.

So in this way it can be thought of simply as a 1,2,3 method:

- 1 calm the brainstem**
- 2 provide emotional support to the limbic system**
- 3 engage the cortex**

Once the cortex is biologically able to engage, then we are able to extend and improve learning skills and abilities. The cortex skills that underlie higher intelligence and the young person's ability to engage in the curriculum – like working memory, meta cognition, and self-regulation – have all been shown to be fluid rather than crystallised: that is they can be changed



and extended and are not as set as previous generations had thought. Improving these executive functions can greatly enhance the child's ability to participate and engage at school. However, if we fail to successfully engage and meet the needs of the sub-cortical regions (sections 1 and 2) then we are unlikely to get the young person to a point where they choose to extend these executive functions and successfully engage in school.

## KEY WEBSITES AND RESOURCES

### [www.brainwave.org.nz](http://www.brainwave.org.nz)

This provides research and explanations as to the formative nature of the early years, as well as other links to resources.

### [www.childtrauma.org](http://www.childtrauma.org)

This is really the on-line home of understanding the neurological impact, consequence, and therapeutic aspects mentioned in the above text.

Siegel, D. J. (2014). *Brainstorm: The power and purpose of the teenage brain. An inside-out guide to the emerging adolescent mind.* NY: Tarcher.

The title says it all really! This helps the practitioner to understand and work with the changes taking place in adolescence and furthers our understanding of current neuroscience.

Perry, B.D., & Szalavitz, M. (2006). *The boy who was raised as a dog and other stories from a child psychiatrist's notebook: What traumatized children teach us about loss, love, and healing.* New York: Basic Books.

This is a very easy to read resource that serves as an excellent introduction to aspects of early brain development, teenage brain changes, and therapeutic application of neuroscience research. Highly recommended.

## Personal challenges

### 1.3.2 Mental wellbeing *Taha Hinengaro*

The World Health Organisation phrase 'there is no health without mental health' demonstrates the importance of addressing the mental wellbeing of our young people. Enhancing mental wellbeing is fundamental to ensuring young people have the knowledge, understandings and skills to enjoy life by meeting the challenges that everyday life brings. The importance of mental wellbeing is recognised in the New Zealand Curriculum (NZC) key competencies: for example developing strategies to meet challenges, reflecting and thinking critically about one's experiences, learning to share emotions, and relating to other people.

Aligning to a health promotion perspective and drawing on positive psychology and strength based models, mental wellbeing focuses on wellness rather than ill-health. When conceptualising mental wellbeing the focus shifts from a reactive deficit model (what is wrong) to a strength-based proactive model that views **mental health as a positive resource for life** (what is right in people). Put simply a young person can be said to have good mental wellbeing and to be flourishing if they perceive that their life is going well, they feel good, and they are functioning effectively most of the time. Enhancing mental wellbeing therefore develops the knowledge, understandings, and skills that ensure young people have a toolbox full of strategies to enhance their daily life and support themselves, and others, in times of distress. Young people who develop social competence, a positive sense of self-worth and hope, and have the ability to problem solve and set goals are more likely to meet the challenges that life brings. It is important to remember that a young person who is 'problem free' is not necessarily 'fully prepared' for the challenges and changes of life.

To enhance the mental wellbeing of young people requires an understanding of not only how people conceptualise mental wellbeing but the nature of a young person's social relationships and the broader determinants which influence their lives.

Utilising a socio-ecological approach, where the young person is at the centre, encourages reflection on the interrelatedness of a young person's mental health and the broader cultural context in which they exist (Diagram 1). Exploring how a young person's strengths and needs, connections with friends, whānau, school, culture, and wider community enhance or harm mental wellbeing enhances interconnectedness between the young person and their environment. For example: does a school have programmes that empower young people in managing their emotions; are whānau encouraged and supported to engage in mental wellbeing initiatives; do the school policies support respectful relationships or foster 'bullying' behaviours?

Fostering a change of mindset from a 'mental ill-health' focus towards a more holistic approach of 'mental wellbeing' supports the Positive Youth Development framework by empowering young people to take control of their own wellbeing. This change of mindset is reflected in the work of the New Economics Foundation (NEF) and the NZ Mental Health Foundation. The '5 ways to wellbeing' approach utilises international evidence-based research that demonstrates when we draw on our understanding of what makes people's lives go well people are better resourced to enjoy life and cope with tough times.

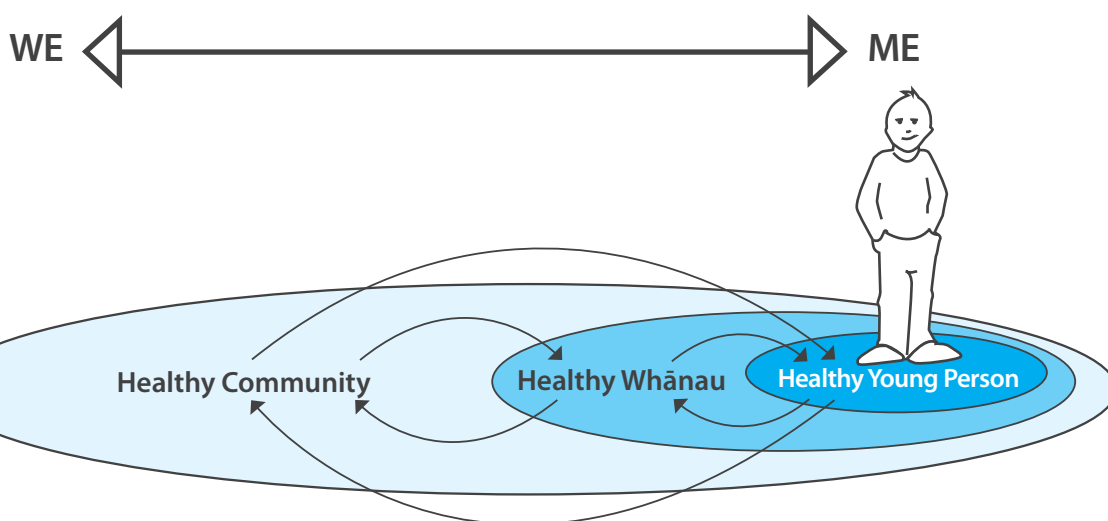


Diagram 1

We are grateful to the author of this section, Tracy Clelland from University of Canterbury College of Education



## 1. Key features of a wellbeing approach to mental health

Key inherent features of mental wellbeing need to be understood and utilised when working with young people. Drawing on the work of Huppert and So's<sup>11</sup> features of flourishing; Pittman et al<sup>12</sup> model for building resilience through the 5 C's; the New Zealand Mental Health Foundation's 5 ways to wellbeing approach (based on research by NEF); and Fredrickson's work on positive emotions, the following core features have been identified as a starting point for enhancing the mental wellbeing of young people.

### Core features

- a) **Positive emotions** For every negative emotion experienced (such as jealousy, envy, anger, fear, disgust, embarrassment) we need positive emotions (such as joy, gratitude, love, hope) to counter the negative. This does not mean that we should banish negative emotions but over time with repeated experience of positive emotions, young people can accrue a set of resources that serve as protective factors when faced with challenges and obstacles. Good examples are: learning to take notice and be grateful for the things we have rather than being envious of the things we do not; developing positive optimistic self-talk strategies to deal with frustration rather than anger and blame towards others.
- b) **Engagement** Young people need the skills to engage in meaningful contexts. Engaging develops connections, builds competence, and enhances confidence in one's abilities.
- c) **Interest** Young people's passions and interests need to be nurtured. Often through the development of new skills young people gain confidence because they have a sense of competence.
- d) **Meaning and purpose** A sense of purpose in society is crucial for any young person as it builds confidence and character. Giving time to others, such as volunteering or doing random acts of kindness are associated with happiness and life satisfaction as they often build connections, communication skills, and confidence, and give meaning to a young person's life.
- e) **Identity and self-worth** A strong sense of one's own personality and individuality can be fostered by a focus on spirituality. Through exploring the values and beliefs of self, others, and the community enhances connections, builds character, and can aid in setting personal and shared goals that have meaning and purpose. For Māori youth, connection with traditional values and beliefs is critical and therefore a nurturing of cultural connections needs to underpin all work on identity.
- f) **Optimism** Many young people find it is difficult to see a positive future. Developing the skills of positive self-talk and optimistic thinking are crucial parts of any social and emotional learning programme (SEL).

- g) **Internal control** Whānau and the community play a crucial role in ensuring young people develop a sense that they can control parts of their life. Competence comes from experience and being given the responsibility to make their own decisions.
- h) **Connections / positive relationships** Feelings of belonging and connectedness within positive relationships are the cornerstones of mental wellbeing for young people. Fostering healthy connections with friends, whānau, and the wider community is a strong buffer against mental ill-health. The ability to sustain mental well-being and achieve positive outcomes in the face of challenging circumstances depends partly on the support a young person receives from their support network. Developing positive connections that foster caring, clearly communicated high expectations, and the ability to achieve goals should be fundamental to any mental wellbeing approach.

## 2. Developing skills for mental wellbeing through specific social and emotional learning (SEL)

Many of the core features above need to be developed in young people through specific education strategies. All young people need guidance in developing the skills that they need for life-long wellbeing and in particular to counter the negative emotions many experience. SEL needs to address the numerous social and emotional variables that place young people at a place of strength rather than a place of risk. Rather than SEL programmes focussing on single 'problems' or issues the focus clearly needs to be aligned with developing lifelong emotional and social competencies that ensure young people can recognise and manage emotions, establish positive relationships, develop concern for others, make responsible decisions, handle challenging situations effectively, resolve conflict, and importantly feel good about themselves and the world around them.

## 3. Linking with whānau and the wider community

The role of the family is crucial in enhancing the mental wellbeing of young people. Supportive families help students manage emotions, establish positive relationships and effectively handle challenging situations. Developing the whānau and wider community's understanding of the above core features of flourishing is an essential component of any youth mental wellbeing initiative. Furthermore ensuring that any SEL strategies engage with whānau and the wider community can only strengthen any initiative. Consulting with a community through hui or surveys are a starting point. Two websites, [www.wellbeingatschool.org.nz](http://www.wellbeingatschool.org.nz) and [www.mindmatters.edu.au](http://www.mindmatters.edu.au) have a range of surveys for students, staff and whānau that can be adapted for this purpose in determining what are seen to be the community's needs.



## CASE STUDY

Jo was a Year 10 student who did not enjoy the formal class structure of a large secondary school. She was disruptive in many of her classes and frequently called out with inappropriate remarks. As year 10 camp was approaching the school discussed whether she should be allowed to participate. However her PE teacher discussed with the school how Jo engaged in PE class and that camp could be a chance for her to develop positive connections with other students, decision making skills, and possibly an interest in the outdoors. Before camp a meeting was arranged with her PE teacher, who agreed to support her, to discuss how she was feeling about camp and to set expectations for her behaviour. The PE teacher was surprised to find out that Jo was anxious about camp because she might not be able to do the activities or she would look foolish in front of others. Jo had limited experience in the outdoors and many 'negative emotions' were overtaking her thought processes. To alleviate her fears the teacher described the camp activities, the daily plan, answered questions, and set goals with Jo for what she wanted to achieve.

At camp, the teacher took time to regularly engage with Jo. They discussed her daily goals, her successes, and her 'WOW' moments, and set new achievable goals related to the next day's activities. The teacher was careful to ensure that Jo was achieving success and was given responsibilities that she could manage without losing mana with her peers. The particular focus was on the things that went *well*, instilling a sense of hope, optimism and joy (positive emotions) in the camp experience.

At the conclusion of the camp, the teacher asked Jo to write and deliver the farewell speech to the OE instructor on behalf of the class. What surprised the teacher was how much time and effort Jo put into writing the speech. It was brought to staff at least 6



times to make sure it would be "okay". Just before she was about to start she said she could not do it, the nerves started to creep in. With some encouragement however she started the speech and as the first class member laughed with her, you could see her eyes light up. At the end of the speech, as the rest of the class clapped, a very happy and joyful young person beamed a large smile.

Jo developed a passion for the outdoors which, in conjunction with a school mentor and guidance support, saw her take an outdoor pursuits and leadership focus through to the senior school.

## COMMENT

This story recognises the importance of people engaging with and developing positive connections with young people. The PE teacher drew on the strengths seen in Jo and identified key negative emotions of embarrassment and fear that were impacting on her mental wellbeing. By drawing on the core features of mental wellbeing, the teacher developed a positive

relationship with Jo and fostered her interests. Through setting clear goals and focussing on what was going well, the teacher engaged Jo and ensured a level of success that fostered hope and optimism. Finally the responsibility given to Jo to deliver the speech gave her purpose and enhanced her confidence through being competent. A stroke of genius by the teacher!

<sup>11</sup>Huppert, F., & So, T. (2013). Flourishing across Europe: Application of a new conceptual framework for defining wellbeing. *Social Indicator Research*. 110(3): 837–861

<sup>12</sup>Pittman, K., Irby, M., Tolman, J., Yohalem, N., & Ferber, T. (2002). Preventing problems, promoting development, encouraging engagement: Competing priorities or inseparable goals? Washington, DC: Forum for Youth Investment.

## KEY WEBSITES AND RESOURCES

### Common Ground

<http://www.commonground.org.nz/>

This is an interactive website created through the Prime Ministers Youth Mental Health project. It is a place for family, whānau, and friends to help our young people enjoy positive mental health and wellbeing.

### KidsMatter and MindMatters

<http://www.kidsmatter.edu.au> and

<http://www.mindmatters.edu.au/>

KidsMatter (primary) and MindMatters (secondary) are two websites that provide extensive frameworks that promote mental health through utilising the World Health Organisation's Health Promoting Schools approach. The websites provide practical ideas and resources underpinned by mental wellbeing research about the benefits of social and emotional learning in schools. Mindmatters provides excellent lesson ideas on topics such as dealing with change, bullying, and resilience.

### Mental Health Foundation- information on the 5 ways to wellbeing

<http://www.mentalhealth.org.nz/page/1413-wellbeing>

The wellbeing section of the Mental Health Foundation offers straightforward information and practical tools on how to implement the 5 ways to wellbeing and mindfulness into daily life.

### Skylight

<http://skylight.org.nz/>

Skylight offers support to people facing tough times of change, loss, trauma, and grief. A wide range of resources are available for individuals, whānau, and the wider community on topics such as emotional resilience, parental separation, moving house, bereavement, managing feelings, bullying, trauma, and disaster. It contains an excellent section specifically designed for young people (<http://skylight.org.nz/Video+Clips+of+Kiwi+Teens+Talking+about+Getting+Through+Tough+Times>). Here you can access videos *by* young people *for* young people on how to support yourself through tough times.

### CASEL

**(Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning).**

<http://www.casel.org/>

The CASEL website provides a strong research base supporting educators in advocating for SEL. It identifies the importance of young people acquiring and applying the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to manage emotions, achieve health enhancing goals, make responsible decisions, feel empathy for others, and develop positive relationships. It utilises a whole school approach and aims to make social and emotional learning (SEL) an integral part of education from preschool through high school.

### Wellbeing@school website

<http://www.wellbeingatschool.org.nz/>

This website provides tools and support for schools to review how different layers of school life contribute to a safe and caring climate that deters bullying. It also offers support to help schools engage in a journey towards building inclusive practices for all learners. Schools must register to access information, surveys etc.

## 1.4 Home life *Te kāinga*

Many young people struggling with school attendance and engagement have challenging and complex home situations which affect their schooling. There are a wide range of issues including: domestic violence; drug and alcohol use; shift work and solo parenting; whānau illness requiring young people to provide support; bereavement resulting in significant grief and loss for a young person; cultural barriers including English as a second language and understanding school systems and values; transience; mental illness in the whānau; and social isolation.

There are also other forms of isolation and community disconnection that families experience such as both valuing and accessing services that may help. In some cultures, for example, caring for family members is of greater importance than attending school. That is to say, family needs come first, and educational needs second. Additionally, a significant challenge for some families when accessing education services is a lack of relationship with key personnel. As one practitioner has observed, some families “remain quite withdrawn and don’t know how to be proactive at accessing services... and those services often go in when there’s a crisis, and they’re out again when the crisis is over. But the problem never actually gets resolved”. Consistency of personnel is needed to ensure a greater level of support, advocacy, and understanding takes place which is culturally appropriate.

### CASE STUDY

Jane is a solo working mum and she lives with her 14 year old son, Ryan. Jane works shift work and keeps irregular hours. She has no other whānau support or connections. As the only provider Jane often has to work night shifts and sometimes, early mornings. When working early mornings Jane wakes Ryan at 6am before leaving for work, but he doesn’t really need to get up until 7:30am and so he just falls back to sleep. Anyway, he hasn’t been sleeping a lot at night, especially when Jane is working night shifts. Ryan has developed a habit of staying up and playing PlayStation with his friends. Sometimes he’d go home from school and sleep, and then get up at midnight. Other times he’d go to bed at 12, or stay up until 2am. Not surprisingly when Ryan was at school, he’d often fall asleep in class, or else he would be awake but not really engaged.



### COMMENT

The isolation that Jane experienced as a solo working mum without support also contributed to a sense of isolation and disconnect from schooling for Ryan.

## 1.5 Wider school support *Te whānau whānui*

Young people struggling with school attendance and engagement require wider school support, beyond the classroom. This could include the dean, supportive teachers, youth workers in schools, pastoral care (e.g. school counsellor), or outside agency support personnel.

Schools are ultimately limited with the level of support that they can practically offer. Creating effective forms of multi-agency engagement and collaboration is one way of making progress with disengaged young people and this theme is explored in part two of this resource.

### CASE STUDY

Ange was struggling to attend school, and managed up to 2 or 3 days a week. The constant interruption led to significant difficulties in the classroom. During this time Ange recalled how much school dean continued to support her:

*“My dean knew everything and she was really supportive... My dean was the only person I could go to. And she'd understand. Like everybody else really didn't care and they were just like out to get me because, I don't know why, but she was the only one that stuck by me and actually seen the good in me, because most of the teachers there just thought like I was naughty, like*

*a bad kid that didn't do anything. I was just good for nothing. But yeah, my dean was the only person that didn't see that”.*

Ange's mother also spoke of the way in which the school offered a high level of pastoral support and this included being flexible. She recalled how *“the whole way with Ange they did everything they could for her...um, giving her less hours at school. Giving her, um, more opportunities to opt out of a class when things weren't good...and changing some of the curriculum and some of the subjects it would sort of make it more accessible for her”.*

### COMMENT

While Ange eventually left the school for alternative education, there were nevertheless a number of key factors which led to successful school support during this difficult time:

1. There was one key staff member who genuinely cared about Ange and her future and took the time to develop a meaningful relationship with her that reflected *Whanaungatanga* and *manaakitanga*.
2. The school was flexible and tried to find unconventional and creative ways to support Ange. This level of flexibility

within schools is a critical component to increasing the chances of successful reintegration, such as *“allowing some young people to start later in the day...and recognizing that attendance twice a week for some young people is success”.*

- While this does present challenges for the classroom teacher, it also can result in reengagement.
3. The parent felt supported and listened to. The home-school communication was efficient and effective.

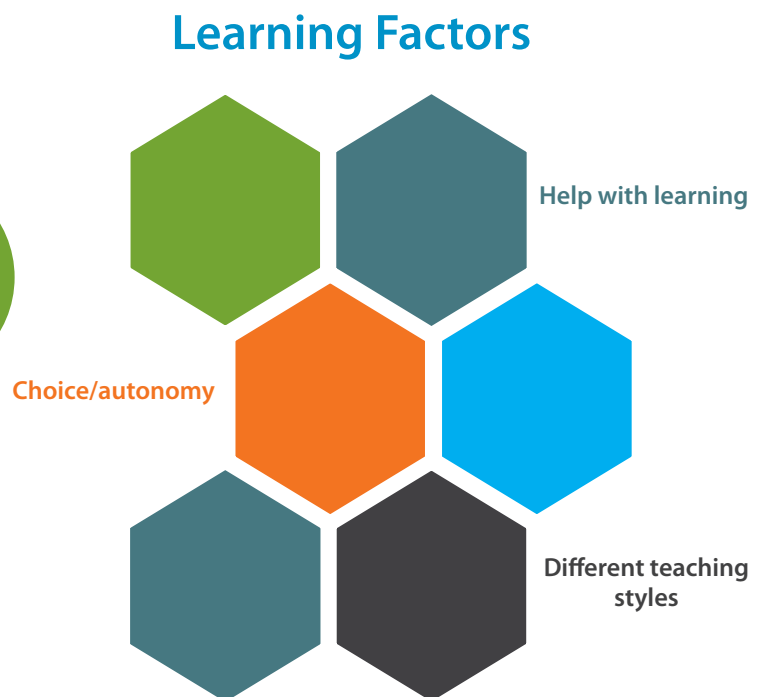
## Section 2: Learning factors affecting dis/engagement *Ngā pūtake ako*

Where young people face significant relational and personal challenges, it appears that most often their ability to learn is also affected. As the figure below indicates, there is an association between relational and personal challenges which – where significant – seem to lead to learning challenges

For disengaged young people, their ability to learn, process information, and concentrate are often negatively affected and therefore impact on academic progress. As we saw in the Stress and Learning section of this resource, these cognitive challenges are likely to mean that young people will need extra help and support with their learning. There are a range of strategies that will help young people, and these include one-on-one help, curriculum and pedagogical variation, and greater choice/autonomy.

Being able to access extra help and support in the classroom is critical for young people with a history of truancy and/or disengagement. This is particularly important for young people transitioning to secondary schools. One young person with a history of truancy recalls:

*“There were heaps of big classes and only one teacher. And I felt like I didn’t get all the support that I needed because I was going through a hard time, and they just didn’t care... I was just like, my teachers for each class I went to didn’t really know, because you had heaps of different teachers. And it was hard for them to keep up as well!”*





## 2.1 Curriculum and pedagogical variation *He rerenga marautanga, he rerenga ariā*

'Practical' curriculum subjects such as Physical Education, Music, Art, and Technology are often more enjoyable and rewarding subjects than traditionally 'academic' subjects. Reasons for this could be that the subjects are more tactile and kinaesthetic, less reliant on reading and writing, and potentially therapeutic. One young person struggling in school recalled how she found Music calming: "you can just sit there and put the headphones on...and just go into your little zone". Likewise, young people disengaged from schooling often prefer variation in the teaching methods used in secondary schools.

"[Classroom learning] gets boring...just kind of the same things over and over again, yeah. I just lose concentration easily, yeah, so it's kind of hard for me to focus, yeah...if I was in class and if we had to like sit down and just like do our work and couldn't talk and stuff I just don't like that, so don't really like the way they teach".

## 2.2 Universal Design for Learning *He akoranga mō te marea*

There are a number of strategies that teachers can use to vary their teaching methods. *Universal Design for Learning* (UDL) is an approach to teaching and learning that begins with the premise that no one young person learns or even thinks in the same way, so variation and multiple means of representation, action and expression, and engagement are required. The UDL programme sets diversity at the centre of learning, so that flexible learning and assessment approaches are the starting point, rather than the add-on.

UDL is emerging as a practice in New Zealand Schools. This practice will enable teachers to be more flexible in curriculum, pedagogy and assessment.

The UDL website: [www.udlcenter.org](http://www.udlcenter.org) explains that "UDL provides a blueprint for creating instructional goals, methods,

materials, and assessments that work for everyone - not a single, one-size-fits-all solution but rather flexible approaches that can be customized and adjusted for individual needs".

UDL recognises that everyone learns differently, and so UDL classrooms are diverse and involve multiple ways of connecting ideas, people and processes. UDL classrooms include variation in the way instructions are given, variation in teaching material used in the classroom, and variation in the way in which young people's work is assessed.

Flexible learning options are offered through a range of different ways and this also allows young people the possibility of greater choice.

### Three Primary Brain Networks for Learning



**Representation**



**Expression**



**Engagement**

**For further information about UDL contact:**

[www.udlcenter.org](http://www.udlcenter.org)

[www.cast.org](http://www.cast.org)

<http://www.vln.school.nz/groups/profile/126400/universal-design-for-learning>

[http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/special\\_education/education-that-fits-review-of-international-trends-in-the-education-of-students-with-special-educational-needs/chapter-sixteen-universal-design-for-learning](http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/special_education/education-that-fits-review-of-international-trends-in-the-education-of-students-with-special-educational-needs/chapter-sixteen-universal-design-for-learning)

## 2.3 Choice/autonomy Whiringa/rangatiratanga

Young people are more likely to engage in curricular and co-curricular activities when they are able to exercise autonomy and a sense of choice. Having a sense of agency and control over their lives is an important developmental mind-set for all young people, and this is no less important for those who are disengaged.

As secondary schools tend to be teacher-led and hierarchical, young people are unlikely to be given opportunities to make decisions across a range of settings. UDL, mentioned previously, may be one way of changing this in classrooms. Developing an understanding of the importance of autonomy for young people may help schools, practitioners, parents, etc. to negotiate some of the challenges that this no doubt entails.

The Circle of Courage identifies *mana motuhake* (autonomy) as one of the four key developmental needs of young people as they transition toward adulthood.

In addition to recognising that all young people need to know that they belong, believing that they can, and knowing that they want to are critical steps toward engagement in schooling. The Check and Connect programme<sup>13</sup> distinguishes these ideas in the following way:

When a previously disengaged young person says “**I can**” they are able to make a choice to act based on a belief in their capability. Saying “**I want to**” reflects a desire to move toward engaging in a cognitive and sometimes affective way. And equally important is saying “**I belong**” which indicates a level of affective engagement and social connectedness<sup>14</sup>. The process of working with a young person to develop these skills is undoubtedly complex and multifaceted, and these ideas will be explored further in the section: *Relating to Young People*.



<sup>13</sup>Christenson, S.L., Stout, K. & Pohl, A. (2012). *Check and connect: A comprehensive student engagement intervention: Implementing with fidelity*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota, Institute on Community Integration. [www.checkandconnect.org](http://www.checkandconnect.org).

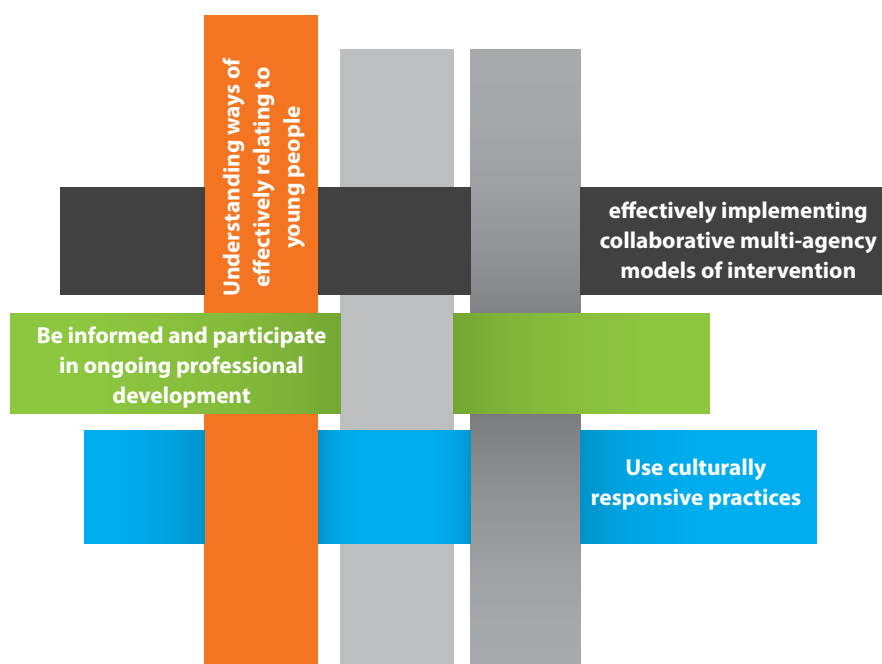
<sup>14</sup>These ideas draw upon intrinsic motivation theory (see for example National Research Council. (2004). *Engaging schools: Fostering high school students' motivation to learn*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press).

## PART 2: Practitioner Insights and Implications for Practice *Tō te mātanga tirohanga*

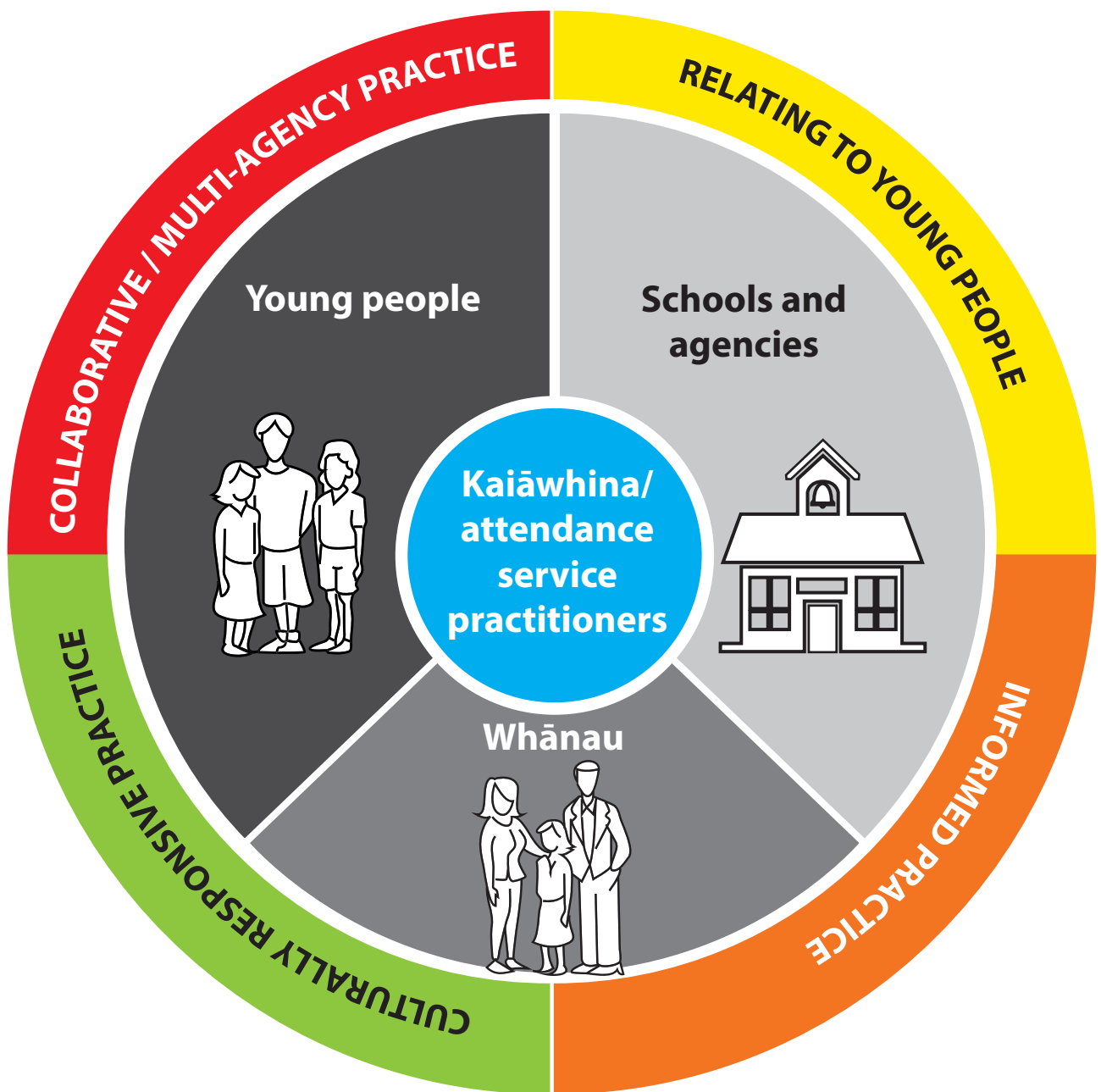
In part two of this resource, four themes relating to practice will be explored. This section has particular relevance to kaiāwhina/attendance service practitioners. Working effectively with disengaged young people and their whānau, may be enhanced through a number of ways including:

1. being informed and participating in ongoing professional development which will lead to increased knowledge and skills relating to the field;
2. using culturally responsive practices, particularly for Māori and Pasifika whānau;
3. understanding ways of effectively relating to young people, including a knowledge of youth development; and
4. effectively implementing collaborative multi-agency models of intervention.

These themes inter-connect, like kete (woven basket), so it is difficult to separate them out as different issues. There is significant interrelatedness across the four identified areas. For example, professional development needs to include all of the other three areas: culturally responsive, relating to young people, and understandings of collaborative practice. Likewise culturally responsive practice is also critical to the effectiveness of relating to young people, whānau, and community partners. Similarly, effective and meaningful relationships are foundational to all areas of effective practice. Nevertheless, within each area identified, there are a number of key issues worth highlighting.



The figure below illustrates the way in which the four areas of good practice shape and influence key relationships that kaiāwhina have. These key relationships are with young people, school personnel and related agencies, and whānau and communities.



## 3.1 Informed practice

For kaiāwhina/attendance service workers, and others working in this field with disengaged young people, informed practice is varied and context dependent; however the findings of this research<sup>15</sup> highlight four main areas requiring attention. Practice is likely to be enhanced when practitioners:

- a) Understand the centrality of effective relationships across all parties, including young people, whānau, and community partners and agencies.
- b) Are able to work effectively across a range of cultural contexts; particularly among Māori and Pasifika communities.

- c) Are able to work through multi-agency collaboration.
- d) Have a knowledge of youth development issues, including the impact of stress on learning, and ways of improving wellbeing among young people.

Throughout this resource we have explored each of these areas. In the following sections, we will look more closely at cultural responsive practice, relating to young people, and multi-agency collaborations.

## 3.2 Culturally responsive practice

### 3.2.1 Communicating with young people and whānau

#### *He kōrerorero ki te hunga taiohi me tana whānau*

Engaging young people and whānau in culturally responsive ways means being responsive to a range of different contexts. It is especially important that practitioners do not make assumptions about the cultural practices of a particular whānau. A New Zealand-born Samoan aiga, for example, will most likely practice in cultural different ways to a Samoa-born and raised aiga. While it is not possible to be prescriptive about engaging whānau, there are guidelines which may be applied across a range of contexts. As one practitioner observed:

*"...[you need to be able to] work consistently with families, and maintain relationships, so one of the key elements of that is, 'how do you maintain a relationship in a very, what can be adversarial environment? What sort of model can you use to actually keep consistently in there and maintain a non-adversarial kind of approach?'"*

Some of the approaches that effective practitioners use include:

- Showing honour and respect to all young people and whānau members
- Having genuine care and concern
- Recognising that trust takes time to build
- Engaging in culturally responsive ways
- Being able to inform young people and whānau about what really matters
- Being solutions focussed<sup>16</sup>

Developing and maintaining relationships *"is probably the most difficult aspect [of this work]"*, as one practitioner observed, *"because sometimes relationships break down and so what are you going to do with that? Are you just going to pretend it's not broken...as practitioners we actually have to find a way to rebuild that and if we don't then our clients suffer"*. And this central role of relationality is critical to success in reengaging young people

<sup>15</sup>Bruce, J. (2014). Dis/Engagement in secondary schools: Toward truancy prevention. Report for the Ministry of Education. For a copy of this report email: [christchurch@teorahou.org.nz](mailto:christchurch@teorahou.org.nz) or go to: [www.teorahou.org.nz](http://www.teorahou.org.nz)

<sup>16</sup>For a more detailed description of ways of effectively engaging families, we recommend the following resource: Christenson, S.L., Stout, K. & Pohl, A. (2012). Check and connect: A comprehensive student engagement intervention: Implementing with fidelity. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota, Institute on Community Integration. [www.checkandconnect.org](http://www.checkandconnect.org).



and reducing truancy. While this essential element of the work of practitioners also extends to other relationships (personnel within agencies, schools, etc.), it is never more important than when engaging whānau.

One of the key communication roles of practitioners is “getting whānau to understand the education lingo...[it’s about] that really clear concise communication but in a language that the whānau can understand and so that brings change because they are informed”. This may take different forms, for example, explaining written communications from the school, or bringing in an extended whānau or community member to support whānau to understand the issues.

One of the other guidelines identified above is the belief in, and the valuing of, whānau. As one practitioner explained:

*“Every family has a value...we’re not there to trample the garden they’ve created for their family. I tell [practitioners] never, ever offer your help to any family...you offer support because by offering support you’ve saying ‘you can do this, you just need someone to get alongside you to get you there’. Always respect, value and respect”.*

The offer of support is something that parents also identified as critical to helping them reengage their young people back into school. One of the parents advised other parents to:

*“...keep asking for help. Um, because that’s one thing I’ve done right from the word go, I don’t care how many agencies are involved, I’ve got nothing to hide, and I want all the help I can get, because I want the best for my kids, um, all of them, not just the troubled one. And I’ve had...I’ve had that whole wrap around system in place for quite some time now...And you feel surrounded by people that are actually trying to help you, and I also think that if you find one that you don’t like, ask for a new one, because I’ve done that too”.*

When supporting whānau, one practitioner cautioned against “promising something that you cannot do”. She considers this to be “foundational” to working with whānau and reiterated how important it is to “always be a person of your word”. This reliability will in turn help to establish and maintain a trusting relationship which in turn will help in reengaging young people in school.

In the following sections we will look at a model of engagement for Māori young people and their whānau, and consider culturally relevant practices for Pasifika aiga.



## 3.2.2 Te Pikinga ki Runga: A culturally responsive framework for educators

### BACKGROUND

Culturally responsive frameworks should reflect Aotearoa New Zealand's bicultural heritage; an aspect that underpins the unique sociocultural context of our country. A great deal of policy making in education has emanated out of the bicultural relationship between Māori (as the indigenous people) and Pākehā (descendants of the British settlers). This relationship is enshrined in our nation's founding document, Te Tiriti o Waitangi, signed by the representatives of two peoples in 1840. The agreement between the Treaty partners on the governance and organisation of our nation is acknowledged in key legislative (including educational) documents, such as *The New Zealand Curriculum (NZC)*<sup>17</sup> and *Ka Hikitia*.<sup>18</sup>

The NZC states that the curriculum will "...help schools give effect to the partnership that is at the core of our nation's founding document, Te Tiriti o Waitangi..." (p. 6), while *Ka Hikitia* positions "The Treaty of Waitangi ... [as] a valued relationship management tool, symbolic of our past and central to our future" (p. 9). The Ministry of Education Specialist Service Standards,<sup>20</sup> also states that the practice of specialists working with babies, children and young people (0 to 20 years of age) who have special education needs must reflect standards "developed through a process that reflects the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi" (p. 6).

Understanding how the Treaty impacts on educational theory and praxis is essential if provision is to be culturally responsive to rangatahi Māori and their whānau. The intentions of the NZC, *Ka Hikitia* and *Specialist Service Standards* make it a natural progression for educators to consider how the Treaty principles might be operationalised within a practice framework.

### PRINCIPLES THAT COUNT: Te Pikinga ki Runga

*Te Pikinga ki Runga* is a planning framework intended to guide education professionals in their interactions with rangatahi Māori and their whānau. It was developed to facilitate work with ākongā Māori exhibiting severe and challenging behaviours in education settings and therefore at risk of educational underachievement – or even failure. The intention is to 'raise possibilities' for rangatahi Māori as they grapple with learning, socialisation, peer interactions, and – in some cases – the very essence of their own identity.

Its application is guided by three fundamental human rights principles which sit at the very heart of our bicultural society in Aotearoa New Zealand:

- Principle 1 - Partnership: Whānau engagement.
- Principle 2 – Protection: Rangatahi wellbeing.
- Principle 3 – Participation: Inclusive ecologies.

### PRINCIPLE ONE: Partnership – partnering and engaging with whānau.

Whānau is at the core of this principle. A breadth of research highlights the critical importance of education professionals building and maintaining positive relationships with whānau and caregivers. In Aotearoa New Zealand, we recognise that effective engagement and consultation with whānau is a crucial component of educational decision making, and of education outcomes achieved by ākongā.<sup>20</sup>

Glynn, Berryman, Walker, Reweti, and O'Brien<sup>21</sup> employ a "life partnership analogy" that highlights the destructive outcomes that occur within relationships when one partner hold a far more powerful and dominant position than the other. Effective partnering with whānau needs to consider how power is shared and balanced.<sup>22</sup> *Te Pikinga ki Runga* includes a range of dimensions that need to be addressed when responding to the principle of partnership, set out under the heading *Huakina Mai* (opening doorways) in Figure 1.

### PRINCIPLE TWO: Protection – protecting and enhancing the wellbeing, identity and self-concept of the rangatahi

The rangatahi is at the heart of this principle. It acknowledges the importance of protecting and enhancing their self-concept and cultural identity by utilising strengths-based and holistic approaches to overall wellbeing. Durie's (1998) research supports the belief that rangatahi Māori who are secure in their cultural identity and self-concept have higher educational aspirations and outcomes than those who are not. *Ka Hikitia* urges moving away from a focus on deficit towards a focus on potential. This strategic document stresses the importance of "realising Māori potential" by emphasising strengths.

When developing *Te Pikinga ki Runga*, holistic frameworks promoted by Durie<sup>23</sup>, Irwin<sup>24</sup>, and Pere<sup>25</sup> were drawn on to identify four domains deemed relevant to an educational approach to wellbeing. Three domains (hononga, hinengaro, tinana) comprise the core configuration, with a pervading and emanating fourth (mana motuhake). The symbol of the whale tail (muri paraoa) indicates the support often shown by whales and dolphins to humans in distress. It is a symbol of protection, strength, good luck, and safe passage over turbulent waters. The four domains have been broken down further into 12 dimensions, known as The Huia Grid: a name gifted by a kuia who felt that the 12 dimensions metaphorically represent the 12 prized tail feathers of the now-extinct huia bird. She stated that if we do not care for the feathers (her metaphor for rangatahi) then they are at risk. A set of reflective prompt questions are included to stimulate deeper thinking (refer Figure 2).

### **PRINCIPLE THREE: Participation – enhancing the curriculum and learning ecology to support presence, participation, and learning**

The rangatahi as a member of (and contributor to) the education setting is central to this principle. It is responsive to the intentions that underpin the key competencies of the NZC – the vehicles by which the learning ecology, pedagogy, and curriculum are enriched, and rangatahi learning (through participation, socialisation, language, culture, and identity) are ignited<sup>26</sup>. The key competencies highlight the need for learning environments (context and content) to be inclusive of, and responsive to, the needs of each rangatahi. A planning template has been developed to guide planning, implementation, and monitoring (refer Figure 3).

### **CONCLUSION**

*Te Pikinga ki Runga* is underpinned by the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi, appreciative of the impact of engaging with the home environment, responsive to the holistic wellbeing of the rangatahi, and cognisant of the NZC key competencies that secondary school educators wish to promote. This framework seeks to untangle some of the intricacies for educators in their work with rangatahi Māori – indeed with all children – and their whānau.

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<sup>17</sup>Ministry of Education. (2007). *The New Zealand Curriculum*. Wellington, NZ: Ministry of Education.

<sup>18</sup>Ministry of Education. (2008). *Ka Hikitia: Managing for success*. Wellington, NZ: Ministry of Education. Ministry of Education. (2012). *Ka Hikitia: Accelerating success*. Wellington, NZ: Ministry of Education.

<sup>19</sup>Ministry of Education. (2006). *Specialist service standards*. Wellington, NZ: Ministry of Education.

<sup>20</sup>Bevan-Brown, J. (2003). *The cultural self-review: Providing culturally effective, inclusive education for Māori learners*. Wellington, NZ: New Zealand Council for Educational Research. Kingi, T. K., & Durie, M. H. (2000). *Hua Oranga: A Māori measure of mental health outcomes* (report to the Ministry of Health). Palmerston North, NZ: School of Māori Studies, Massey University. Macfarlane, A. (2005). *Inclusion and Māori ecologies: An educultural approach*. In D. Fraser, R. Moltzen, & K. Ryba. (Eds.), *Learners with special needs in Aotearoa New Zealand* (3rd ed., pp. 77–98), Melbourne, Victoria, Australia: Thomson Dunmore Press.

<sup>21</sup>Glynn, T., Berryman, M., Walker, R., Reweti, M., & O'Brien, K. (2001, July). *Partnerships with indigenous people: Modifying the cultural mainstream*. Keynote address at the Partnerships in Education Psychology Conference, Brisbane, Australia.

Irwin, J. (1984). *An introduction to Māori religion*. Adelaide, South Australia, Australia: Australian Association for the Study of Religions.

<sup>22</sup>Bishop, R., & Glynn, T. (1999). *Culture counts: Changing power relations in education*. Palmerston North, NZ: Dunmore Press. Brewerton, M. (2004). *Reframing the essential skills: Implications of the OECD Defining and Selecting Key Competencies Project*. Background paper prepared for the Ministry of Education. Wellington, NZ: Ministry of Education.

<sup>23</sup>Durie, M. H. (1994). *Whaiora: Māori health development*. Auckland, NZ: Oxford University Press.

<sup>24</sup>Irwin, J. (1984). *An introduction to Māori religion*. Adelaide, South Australia, Australia: Australian Association for the Study of Religions.

<sup>25</sup>Pere, R. (1991). *Te Wheke: A celebration of ultimate wisdom*. Gisborne, NZ: Ao Ako.

<sup>26</sup>Brewerton, M. (2004). *Reframing the essential skills: Implications of the OECD Defining and Selecting Key Competencies Project*. Background paper prepared for the Ministry of Education. Wellington, NZ: Ministry of Education.



## CASE STUDY

### Background

Tyrone (an eight-year old Māori boy, in a year 4 class in an urban primary school) was causing his teacher increasing concern in terms of his behaviour and personal safety. The third of five children who were all living at home with both of their birth parents, his nana (who lived with the family since Tyrone was born) had died a year earlier of a brain tumour. He had been very close to her and missed her immensely. Following his nana's death, the whānau moved from their wider whānua and rural marae into the nearby city, sometimes returning for visits, to spend time with the wider whānau, and to go to their marae.

A shy, withdrawn and anxious boy, Tyrone was frequently absconding from school in a highly agitated and aroused state, for no apparent reason. His father would bring him to school daily, and Tyrone would be restrained so that his father could leave. Tyrone would refuse to speak to anyone at school (apart from one boy) and often cried for up to an hour if asked to participate in verbal activities. He had previously been in receipt of RTLB support and was recently referred to the Ministry of Education; Special Education for further intervention.

The teacher reported that Tyrone was accomplished at drawing and art, and also loved reading and maths. He had one special friend (Kepa) who looked after and spoke for him: Tyrone occasionally whispered things to Kepa. Tyrone was not bullied at school; his peers liked him. He was having many long absences from school, which was affecting his learning.

- o Because of the stress that this was causing the family, Tyrone's parents started keeping him at home – sometimes for periods of up to two weeks.
- o The school was never informed about these long absences.
- o Tyrone's mother was no longer working due to a recent accident where she was knocked from her push-bike and sustained a minor head injury.
- o Tyrone was quite vocal at home.

### Applying Te Pikinga ki Runga

#### The principle of *Participation*:

The teacher and special education practitioner realised that they needed to build a closer relationship with Tyrone's parents so that they could gain their trust and support, and work more closely as a team. They had never met as a group to share collective thoughts, aspirations or concerns. Communication between the school and whānau had only ever been 'one-way' via a home-school notebook (when there was something

negative to report about Tyrone), or by phone (if the school urgently required his father to help find Tyrone when he had absconded).

The school had not shared anything positive about Tyrone with the whānau – even though there had been many opportunities to do so. It was decided that the school would initiate a meeting with the whānau immediately, so that both parties could begin to build closer working relationships, share thoughts, start collaborating and co-constructing specific strategies, and to also determine how a two-way communication process could support everyone more effectively.

#### The principle of *Protection*:

The teacher and special education practitioner drew from the Te Huia Grid and prompt questions, so that they could identify which of the muri paraoa holistic domains needed further understanding and support, and also identify strengths and opportunities. A great deal of information had been shared by the whānau during the initial meeting which informed this process.

- (a) *Hononga* (relational): they all realised that Tyrone was actually suffering from severe trauma. During the school day, he was continuously worried about his mother, fearing that she would die (just like his nana had) because of the nature of her head injury. Throughout the school day, his fear and anxiety would increase until he could no longer bear it. It was also clear that Tyrone (and the whole whānau) was missing extended whānau and their marae.
- (b) *Tinana* (physical): they all realised that Tyrone's outward demeanour at school was indicative of his high levels of inner tension and fear, which was resulting in his absconding behaviour (a serious physical safety issue) as well as his choosing not to speak at school.
- (c) *Hinengaro* (psychological): they all realised that Tyrone was holding in his most worrying thoughts, feelings and fears, which was obviously causing him a great deal of trauma during the school day. Tyrone had many cognitive strengths and abilities that could be used as opportunities to enhance his attitude and spirit, both at school and at home.
- (d) *Mana motuhake* (self-concept; potential): they all realised that Tyrone was feeling sad, worried and scared for most of the school day – which was severely affecting his self-confidence, his attitude towards others, and his ability to participate in the school curriculum.

**The principle of Participation:**

They all realised that the key competencies (He Tikanga Whakaaro) needed to be focussed on in order to support Tyrone in the classroom:

- (a) *Manaakitanga*: Relating to others: facilitating Tyrone's inclusion, safety, and connectedness in the classroom.
- (b) *Tātaritanga*: Thinking: using language, symbols and text: reducing Tyrone's stress so that he could think about, process, and use information.
- (c) *Rangatiratanga / Whanaungatanga*: Managing self: providing Tyrone with opportunities to safely manage himself when he started to feel anxious.
- (d) *Whaiwāhitanga*: Participating and Contributing – supporting Tyrone to participate and contribute in the areas that he most enjoyed and felt successful doing.

The following goal was agreed to, with a set of strategies that were co-constructed:

**Goal:**

*To alleviate Tyrone's trauma and anxiety during the school day so that he is able to participate and function fully and positively.*

**Strategies:**

- o Tyrone's father would stay on at school with him for a longer period in the morning to enable him to settle into class (decreasing over time)
- o Tyrone would have access to a specific number of 'phone cards' each day, which he could 'cash in' to ring his mother at selected intervals (reducing over time)
- o Tyrone's mother would explain to him that she was not at risk of dying; it was agreed that she would take Tyrone to her doctor so they could talk about that
- o Tyrone would have a personalised learning plan which focused on his strengths and preferences
- o Tyrone would be encouraged to continue exploring art as an medium for expressing his thoughts and feelings – both at school and at home
- o Kepa would remain Tyrone's 'mouth-piece'
- o The school and whānau would maintain regular and positive communication that involved and included Tyrone
- o There would be a weekly debrief at school each Friday lunchtime over shared kai. This debrief would include Tyrone, his parents, Kepa, the class teacher, the special education practitioner, and the principal. The focus of this debrief would be to monitor progress, capture and report on the positive gains, and to modify the strategies as required.
- o Tyrone and his whānau would schedule regular trips home to the extended whānau and marae



Figure 1: Te Pikinga ki Runga: Raising Possibilities

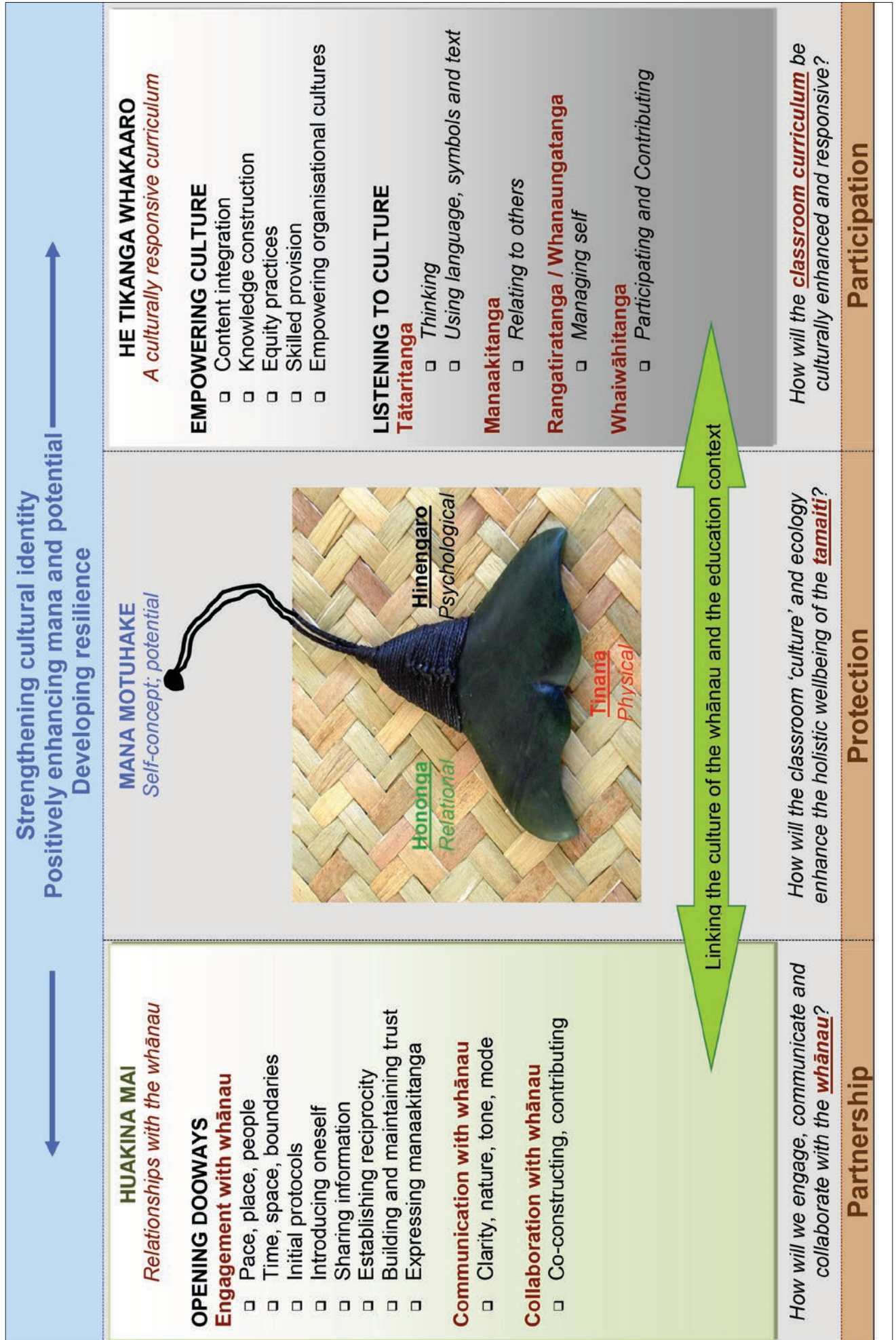


Figure 2: Te Huia Grid

Domains			
Hononga (Relational aspects)	Hinengaro (Psychological aspects)	Tinana (Physical aspects)	Mana Motuhake (Self concept; potential)
<b>Whānau</b> <i>Interdependence and connectedness</i>	<b>Motivation</b> <i>Inspiration and drive</i>	<b>Demeanour</b> <i>Appearance and body language</i>	<b>Cultural identity</b> <i>Pride and security</i>
<b>Whenua</b> <i>Kinship and belonging</i>	<b>Emotions</b> <i>Thoughts and feelings</i>	<b>Energy levels</b> <i>Alertness and zeal</i>	<b>Attitude and spirit</b> <i>Manner and disposition</i>
<b>Friendships</b> <i>Cooperation and empathy</i>	<b>Cognition</b> <i>Learning and understanding</i>	<b>Physical safety</b> <i>Respect for self and others</i>	<b>Resilience</b> <i>Courage and confidence</i>
<b>Dimensions</b>			
<b>Domain</b>			
<b>Hononga:</b> <b>Relational aspects... with and within the whānau, and with others</b> <i>Consider how planning will strengthen relationships so as to maximise special qualities and potential</i>	<b>Reflective questions</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> How strong are whānau relationships ... connectedness to whānau?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> How strong are the student's connections to / relationships with others (whānau whanui, hapū, iwi...)?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> How is the student's position in the whānau being acknowledged (ie: the eldest, youngest, only son....)?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> How strong are the student's connections to / relationships with places (papa kainga, marae, whenua...)?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Whānau whanui....how might wider whānau contribute or feature?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> How strong (positive) are the student's relationships with key others (peers, teachers...)?</li> </ul>		
<b>Hinengaro:</b> <b>Psychological aspects... thoughts and feelings, learning</b> <i>Consider how planning will enhance motivation, thoughts and feelings so as to maximise confidence</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> What are the things that inspire and motivate the student?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> How are the student's emotions (verbally, non-verbally) displayed / expressed?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> How respectful is the student of others' thoughts and feelings?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Does the student understand what others are communicating to him / her?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> What might be the barrier(s) to the student's engagement and participation in learning activities?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> How might this be impacting on enjoyment, learning and achievement - and reaching potential?</li> </ul>		
<b>Tinana:</b> <b>Physical aspects... demeanour, physical health and wellbeing</b> <i>Consider how planning will elevate energy, alertness and vigour so as to maximise wellbeing</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> How is the student's 'ahua' (demeanour, appearance) – how does the student 'look'?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> What messages might the student be expressing by way of body language?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> What are the student's energy levels like?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> How alert is the student / does the student appear to be?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Are others respecting the student's personal space?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Is the student respecting others' personal space?</li> </ul>		
<b>Mana motuhake:</b> <b>Self concept, ... potential, cultural identity, attitude</b> <i>Consider how planning will maximise the expression of special qualities and potential</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> How is cultural identity being supported and strengthened by others (education setting, teachers, peers)?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> How is meaning derived from the student's name?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> How might self concept be affecting the student's attitude – ie: responses to others, manner, outlook?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> How might motivation and mana be enhanced and uplifted?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> What opportunities are being provided which enable positive choices to be made?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> How can the student be supported to build confidence and strengthen resilience?</li> </ul>		



**Figure 3: Planning Template - He Whakataua**

Ingoa / name: Iwi / tribe: Marae: Rā whānau / birthday:	Kura / school: Kaiako / teacher: Rōpū / class: Te reo / language:	Specific issues and concerns:
Hypothesis:	Strengths and opportunities for success:	Barriers to success:
<p><b>PARTNERSHIP</b> Engagement, communication and collaboration with the whānau</p>	<p><b>PROTECTION</b> Enhancing the well-being of the tamaiti</p> <p><b>Hononga:</b> Relational aspects</p> <p><b>Hinengaro:</b> Psychological aspects</p> <p><b>Tinana:</b> Physical aspects</p> <p><b>Mana motuhake:</b> Self-concept; potential</p>	<p><b>PARTICIPATION</b> A culturally responsive education setting</p> <p>Tātaritanga: Thinking / Using language, symbols and texts</p> <p><b>Manaakitanga:</b> Relating to others</p> <p><b>Rangatiratanga / Whanaungatanga:</b> Managing Self</p> <p><b>Whaiwāhitanga:</b> Participating and Contributing</p>
<p><b>Identifying supports:</b> People and resources.</p>		<p><b>Reactive Strategies:</b> Preventing, defusing and managing incidents</p>
<p><b>Programme Plan: Summary details:</b></p>		
<p><b>Timelines and Reviews:</b></p>		

### 3.2.3 Engaging Pasifika families and communities

#### *Ngā whānau me ngā hāpori o te moana nui a Kiwa*

The Ministry of Education *Pasifika Education Plan 2013-2017*<sup>27</sup> is cognisant of processes, methodologies, theories and knowledges that are fa'asamoa (the Samoan way), faka-Tonga (the Tongan way), faka-Tokelau (the Tokelau way), faka-Niue (the Niue way), akano'anga Kūki 'Āirani (the Cook Islands way), and vaka-Viti (the Fijian way) for the major Pasifika populations. Recognising that there are diverse cultural contexts is important when considering ways of engaging young people and their families. There are two overall areas that require consideration for increasing levels of engagement for Pasifika young people:

1. effective engagement with parents, families and communities, and
2. effective teaching for Pasifika students.

Recent research has found that Pasifika parents and families (aiga) are more likely to engage when:

1. there is a clear reason for them to do so,
2. they see their children enjoying school and achieving, and
3. the sharing of knowledge, resources and practices is reciprocal<sup>28</sup>.

#### **Engaging Pasifika Students in the Classroom**

With regards to the effective teaching of Pasifika students, research is still emergent and required; however there were a number of issues identified in the Ua Aoina le Manogi o le Lolo: Pasifika Schooling Improvement Research - Final Report including a range of strategies such as that there are:

- a) explicit instruction for both basic knowledge and strategies,
- b) high levels of elaborative talk and inquiry,
- c) a focus on the language needs including those for vocabulary well-developed forms of feedback,
- d) [the need for teachers to] be clear and explain goals and needs for learning, and
- e) the twin dimensions of positive relations and incorporating students' resources were identified to varying degrees in classrooms (p. viii).

Findings in this research<sup>29</sup> also indicate the necessity of engaging with Pasifika aiga in a way which honours the cultural practices and reflects an understanding of this. Likewise, in a comprehensive research study<sup>30</sup> it was suggested that:

- (a) "parents' understanding of information about their own individual child's learning and achievement, both strengths and weaknesses as well as progress across time, can increase parental impact on motivation and skills; but
- (b) parents need guidance and advice on both motivational and academic involvement; and (c) parents are keen to receive advice and they have ideas about practices both at home and at school that could contribute. The latter may or may not be effective but they are important ideas that can be the basis of reciprocity – an example is the role and forms of homework" (p. vii).

Furthermore, the report goes on to explain that "pasifika pedagogies that are being developed...[which] draw on background knowledge including topics and event knowledge, language patterns and activities...[and] there is the dimension of a strong emotional relationship which, together with the instructional attributes, has elements of being both rigorous and challenging as well as being respectful and empathetic" (p ix). Interestingly, the findings of this study were similar to those found in *Te Kotahitanga*<sup>31</sup> which explores effective pedagogies for rangatahi Māori.

The following case study illustrates some of these ideas.

<sup>27</sup> Ministry of Education (2013). *Pasifika Education Plan 2013-2017*. Retrieved from: <http://pasifika.tki.org.nz/Pasifika-Education-Plan>

<sup>28</sup> <http://pasifika.tki.org.nz/Engaging-with-parents>

<sup>29</sup> Bruce, J. (2014). *Dis/Engagement in secondary schools: Toward truancy prevention*. Report for the Ministry of Education. For a copy of this report email: [christchurch@teorahou.org.nz](mailto:christchurch@teorahou.org.nz) or go to: [www.teorahou.org.nz](http://www.teorahou.org.nz)

<sup>30</sup> Amituanai-Tolosa, M., McNaughton, S., Lai, M.K., Airini' (2010). *Ua Aoina le Manogi o le Lolo: Pasifika Schooling Improvement Research - Final Report*. Retrieved from: [http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/pasifika\\_education/ua-aoina-le-manogi-o-le-lolo-pasifika-schooling-improvement-research-final-report/executive-summary](http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/pasifika_education/ua-aoina-le-manogi-o-le-lolo-pasifika-schooling-improvement-research-final-report/executive-summary)

<sup>31</sup> Bishop, R., Berryman, M., Cavanagh, T., Teddy, L. (2007). *Te Kotahitanga phase 3 Whanaungatanga: Establishing a culturally responsive pedagogy of relations in mainstream secondary school classrooms*. Report to the Ministry of Education. Wellington: Ministry of Education.

## CASE STUDY

Sione (14 years) and Tina (13 years) are brother and sister. They live with their Samoa-born parents and are very involved in the local Samoan church. The commitment to the church includes a lot of service and hospitality, and this includes frequently hosting people in their home. Sione and Tina play a very significant role in serving and hosting visitors, both at home and at church. They are often up very late helping with duties. In addition to this Sione and Tina are both very good at sport. They have numerous sporting commitments which take up a lot of time. Due to carrying a lot of responsibilities, Sione and Tina started to become overtired and run down, and this led to both of them becoming sick.

Over several months the siblings' school attendance became very poor and sporadic, and the school referred them to the Attendance Service in their area. The first Attendance Service worker engaged the police, and the police visited the family. The visit was apparently brief, and school attendance did not improve. The case was referred to Junior, a Samoan Attendance Service worker. Junior visited the home and gathered information about the family. He noticed that the home was a traditional Samoan home and he recognised that to be effective, he would need to get advice and support. When getting advice, Junior was careful not to disclose any information that would identify the family.

After getting advice Junior arranged for a second home visit and asked that Sione and Tina, as well as both parents be present for the meeting. He wanted everybody there so that a plan could be made together. When Junior arrived at the house, this time he gave a traditional Samoan greeting which began with an apology for visiting their home and entering into their private space. He spoke with humility and the upmost respect. Both his words and his tone, signalling that he was there in humble service, set the tone for the meeting. When Junior was welcomed into the house he took off his shoes, and followed other cultural practices, signalling respect.

After the greeting, Junior then took care to give the whole picture. He outlined clearly and gave all of the details about what had been happening, and what would happen if non-attendance continued. By giving the whole picture, the parents were able to understand the importance of regular attendance and the consequences of non-attendance.

After the meeting, the students reengaged in school on a regular basis. As Junior continued to work in the school and community, he would often be seen by the students. In this way he was a gentle reminder of the need to be at school.

### Key points

There are several key issues raised by this case study that need to be emphasised.

Engaging with parents is the priority when working toward getting Pasifika young people reengaged. The family's privacy needs to be respected; both acknowledging their home as sacred and as their place, but also in not sharing any information that would identify them. Always approach parents with the upmost respect and humility. As Junior says "you are not there as a flash light, but as a candle". Understanding the parent's background and cultural ways is very important. Identifying whether parents are NZ born, or born in the Pacific Islands, indicate different ways of being and knowing. It is important not to make assumptions. Like all best practice, confidentiality and anonymity is very important. When speaking with parents, always take the time to give the whole picture of what has been happening and what could happen if non-attendance continues. Making each stage very clear and using everyday language is really important. Where possible it may be helpful to identify whether or not there is already a Pasifika worker engaged effectively with the family, or the community; while also being mindful that there may be a Pasifika worker who is not effective. Seek advice from Pasifika elders or people in the community who are experienced and effective in cultural engagement. There are some resources below that may help.

## KEY WEBSITES AND RESOURCES

Pacific Trust Canterbury <http://pacifctrust.co.nz/>

The Pacific Trust is a key provider of health, social and education services to children, young people and families delivered by Pacific people with Pacific values.

### Churches

Many local Pacific churches provide advice and support.

Ministry of Education Regional Pasifika Education Coordinators:

<http://www.minedu.govt.nz/NZEducation/EducationPolicies/PasifikaEducation/ContactUs.aspx>

We are grateful to the contributors of this section Junior and Ivan Taula

### 3.3 Relating to young people *Te whātorotanga ki te hunga taiohi*

Engaging young people effectively is multi-faceted and complex. In this resource we have already explored some of the principles and strategies, particularly as they apply to key relationships at school, matters of learning and development, and culturally relevant practice.

Existing models of youth development (both western and indigenous, including Māori) highlight two critical factors which are worthy of further exploration here:

- the centrality of relating to young people in ways that show genuine care and concern, and
- engaging with young people in a guided way which recognises their need for agency

As previously indicated, *whakawhanaungatanga* (the process of building relationships) is central to the work of engaging rangatahi Māori, and this is also evident for young people from other cultural backgrounds.

“in every person there is goodness”

*(Quote from a practitioner)*

As many experienced practitioners are no doubt aware, without the ability to establish meaningful connections it is difficult to make any form of progress with young people. Connections are made in a number of ways including, MacFarlane<sup>32</sup> suggests, through two important processes:

- *manaakitanga* (exercising an ethos of care), and
- *rangatiratanga* (the right of young people to exercise self-determination).

Part of the essence of *manaakitanga* is having a genuine belief in the mana of a young person.

Unless a practitioner is able to see the goodness in another person, and have hope and a belief in the worthiness, then it is also likely that progress will be hindered.

Working within an ethos of care means that young people feel valued and cared for by the practitioner, and self-determination includes the need that young people feel to have a sense of agency and control over their own lives.

“this is a very effective model and the reason for this is that it is non-adversarial, it's very neutral, and it never engages in change talk unless the client is beginning to engage in that themselves”.

*(Quote from practitioner about M.I)*

Because young people need to have a sense of agency and autonomy over their lives, working with them to determine their readiness to engage in change behaviour may be better served through a guided rather than direct style.

#### **Motivational Interviewing**

*Motivational Interviewing* may be a useful tool to employ in this process of guided behavioural change which acknowledges the necessity of agency and control. As an introduction to this approach, Rollnick et al (2010) suggest that practitioners begin by practising three skills needed when using this guided approach to engaging people in behaviour change:

1. ask open-ended questions relating to areas that require change;
2. listen so that you are able to really hear what is being said about their experiences, and reflect your understanding back to the young person; and
3. inform – which involves asking the young person if you can share your own thoughts about the situation, and then discuss the implications of these ideas.

*The Motivational Interviewing Model*<sup>33</sup> (MI) of intervention with young people involves Kaiāwhina using the MI model to assess the young person's motivation for change, and also to assess where each person who has involvement with the child is, in relation to Prochaska and DiClemente's Wheel of Change model. The use of Prochaska and DiClemente's Wheel of Change is how clients are assessed and evaluated. It is realistic when working within the confines of this model that individuals and groups will be at different points of understanding and motivation in relation to a young person's ability to change inherent or learned behaviours within the school environment. The Wheel of Change is a useful guide to identify where each person's level of motivation is in relation to assisting the young person in the development of new ways of being in the school environment. It can also be applied directly to the young person to assess their motivation in relation to the change process. Prochaska and DiClemente describe behavioural change as moves through a sequence of six stages on the Wheel of Change, and these stages are described here.

<sup>32</sup> Macfarlane, A.H. (2007). *Discipline, Democracy and Diversity: working with students with behaviour difficulties*. Wellington: NZCER Press.

<sup>33</sup> Rollnick, S., Butler, C.C., Kinnerley, P., Gregory, J., & Mash, B. (2010). Motivational Interviewing. *BMJ*, 340, 1242-1245. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1136/bmj.c1900>



### **Pre-contemplative**

Pre-contemplation is the beginning point and entry stage on the wheel. It is the point where individuals are not considering making any change in their approach to the problem. They sincerely do not believe that their learned reactions or behaviours in relation to their non-attendance issues will have any effect on their ability to function in a school environment. This assessment of motivation also extends to any of the other stakeholders involved with the intervention for the child. This could include parents/caregivers/extended family whānau, teachers, teacher aids, RTLB and GSE staff, youth workers, and/or CYF workers.

At this point it is counterproductive to provide options for assistance as the individual or individuals involved do not believe a problem exists, or that the problem is insurmountable, and therefore it is not practical to intervene. The interviewer must remain impartial and non-biased at this point.

Individuals and groups that are presently involved with the young person may not be considering change because of a lack of information, or a passive response to the dilemma. The most effective way to deal with this is to respond with sensitive and empathic feedback in order to raise awareness of their problematic behavioural traits. Pre-contemplators may also be committed to maintaining their set behaviours, and therefore it is important to provide new choices for change. Also parties or individuals may be resigned to the behaviour. They believe changing the behaviours is immensely difficult and just too difficult a task to undertake. Helping them to believe that they can change their behaviours with help and support from others, along with identifying the barriers that prevent them from changing, will assist them to believe there is hope. Rationalization of the problem may also be a contributing negative influence to behaviour change. Empathic and reflective listening is an effective way to counter justification of the problem.

### **Contemplative**

Contemplation is the first stage of change. While young people may be identified as being at the contemplation stage this does not always mean they are committed to the change process. They can oscillate between being motivated to change and lacking motivation to change. It is crucial that the kaiāwhina recognizes this ambivalence and works in an appropriate way with it. This involves the kaiāwhina recognizing that there are factors which continue to influence the individual or individuals' continued negative behaviour traits. This includes social groups he/she is involved with, attachment to the learned behaviour patterns, or what it means to the person to keep these behaviours in their life. It is crucial at this stage that the kaiāwhina does not dominate and assume he/she has the answers to the young person's

problem. Otherwise this may lead the young person to adopt defensive tactics, and may not allow them to work through their ambivalence to change.

### **Preparation**

This is when young person, family, whānau, or school staff move from contemplation and begin to take the necessary steps to reduce the problematic behaviours. This is where the kaiāwhina must begin to introduce practical methods that can be applied to assist all parties with effective behaviour change strategies. However these strategies may not be adopted initially, and each person may continue to cycle through the Wheel of Change until methods designed to assist in behaviour change are developed in a way that is more acceptable to them.

### **Active Change**

This is the stage where the development of self-efficacy and where behaviour change strategies are implemented. This is the point where the young person begins to utilise the methods and processes that have been offered to him/her as ways to change their behavioural reaction to the school environment. It may also be the time when parents, teachers, and others involved with the young person begin to adopt new ways of reacting, particularly when it becomes apparent that the young person is attempting to change old patterns of behaviour. At this stage the plan may also need to be refined and altered as the young person adopts new behaviour change strategies. It may also be a time where parents and teachers have begun to genuinely believe there is hope for the young person. The generation of hope and faith is essential for the longevity of the intervention, particularly in relation to parents/caregivers and teachers, otherwise the long term outlook for the young person and the success of the intervention could be severely compromised.

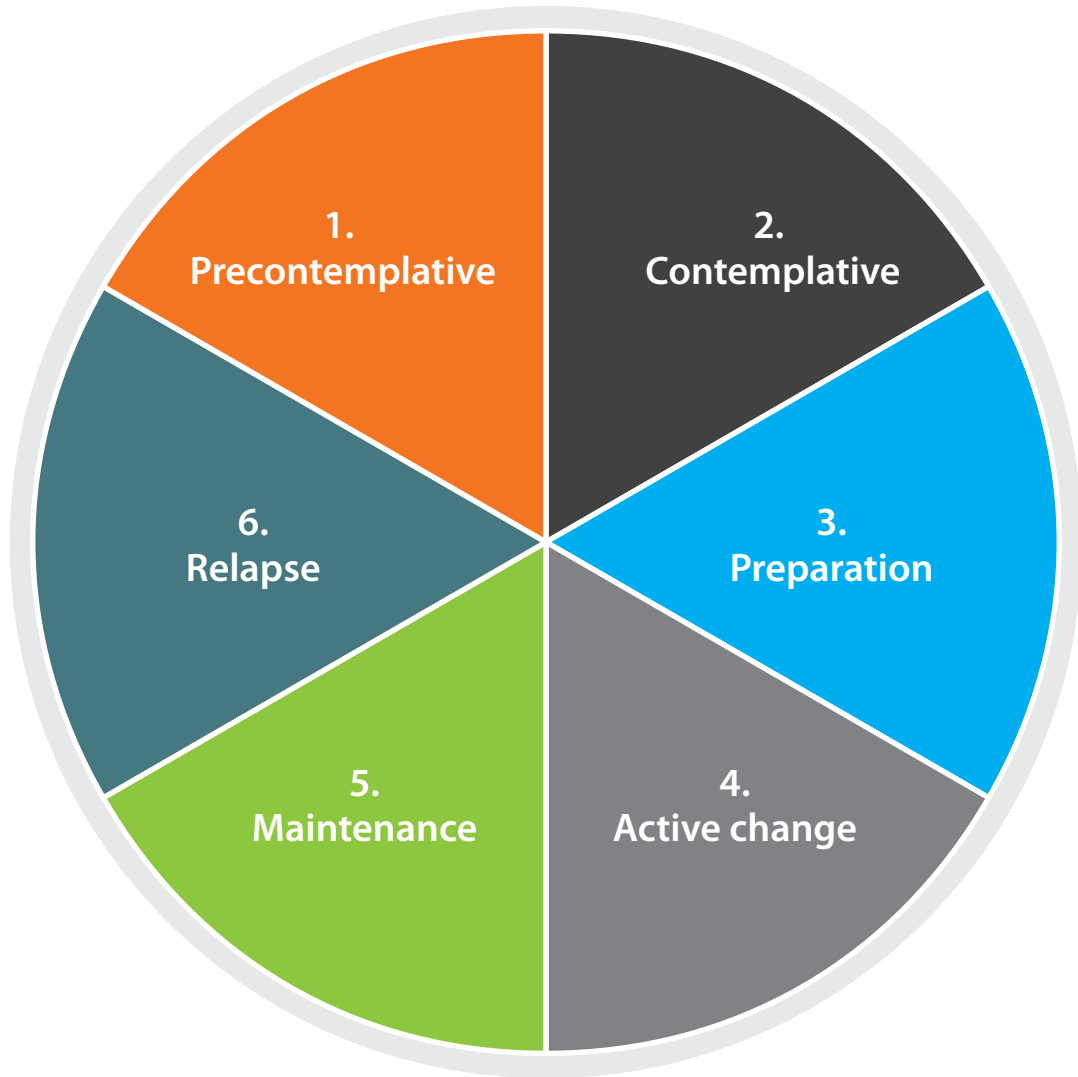
### **Maintenance**

Ongoing maintenance is required to assist in keeping the change process in place; this involves the adoption of new skills and behaviour patterns. However, knowledge as to what is required to maintain these patterns is also essential.

### **Relapse**

A return to old behaviour patterns could be triggered by stressful events in the family/whānau, at the school, or in the community. This would be reinterpreted as a relapse triggered by psychological stress. It is an important component of the intervention to remind the parents/caregivers and the young person that even though new behaviours have been adopted, a relapse into old behaviours could occur at any time. Therefore relapse prevention training is an important component of the intervention.

## Model of Stages of Change



(Dr Eddie McNamara 2009)

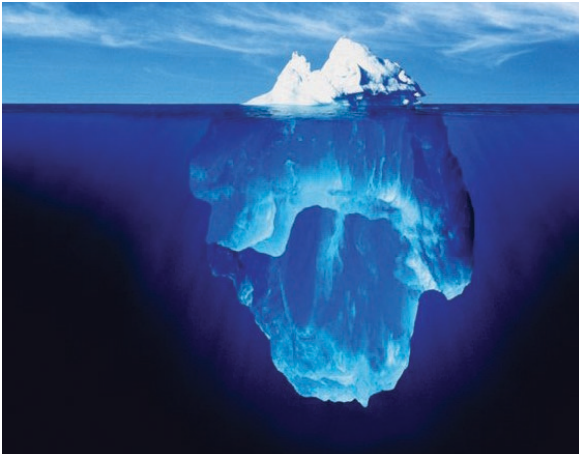
### 3.4 Collaborative models of intervention: effective relationships

#### *He ariā hei whakapakari i te whanaungatanga*

As this resource has shown, children and young people who don't attend school present with multiple issues that contribute to attendance problems. The factors that lead to this outcome require extensive analysis in order to understand the causes of absenteeism. The implementation of interventions to mitigate the contributing factors is often a comprehensive time-consuming process for professionals. Absenteeism from school can be caused by a multitude of contributing factors. As one study explains "It is clear that the issue of school attendance and absenteeism is a complex one which impacts not only on the school but also on the relationship the school has with its board of trustees, parents and the wider community".

*"Mā iti mā rahi ka oti ngā mahi"  
"From the united collaboration of  
individuals the project comes to fruition"*

*Alex Tuira 2014 Tuahiwi*



#### **The non-attendance iceberg**

The iceberg is a pictorial analogy of the contributing factors of non-attendance and the level of work that is sometimes required to return students to school. Non-attendance from school is represented in this image of the iceberg, by showing one tenth of ice above the water. Contributing factors leading to non-attendance are represented by nine tenths of the iceberg hidden below the water.

Because of the complexities of some young peoples' lives, responding effectively requires multi-agency collaborative models of intervention, as the following case shows.

## CASE STUDY

Julie is a 14 year old girl who has not attended school for an extended length of time. There has also been a history of intermittent non-attendance extending back to year 6 in primary school. The situation escalated when she refused to attend her local high school whereupon a referral was made to the high school's Rock On programme. Due to the high levels of anxiety Julie was presenting with, a referral was made to the local mental health service. Julie continued to refuse to attend school and the recommendation from Rock On was that Police Youth Aid would support Julie to school; however Police Youth Aid were reluctant to pursue this intervention. So a referral to a Family Group Conference with Child Youth and Family was initiated with the intention to move the case towards a prosecution. At this point the family moved to another city.

Unfortunately Julie refused to attend her new local high school and after the school had met with their Attendance Service kaiāwhina a formal referral to the service was considered pending a case history search by the kaiāwhina. This included phone calls and emails to the previous high school's pastoral care staff, and phone calls to her last primary school. (When there has been a history of failed multi-agency interventions kaiāwhina/attendance advisors may need to assist a school with how to approach the problem and what the appropriate referral pathways are).

After completing a case history analysis, the kaiāwhina then initiated a phone discussion with the Principal and the Deputy Principal of her new school which led the school to making making a Non-Enrolled Notification referral through ENROL. This was the preferred option due to Julie being disengaged from the school system for more than twenty consecutive school days.

In conjunction with this, Julie's parents were reporting to the kaiāwhina serious concerns in relation to Julie's mental health as she was continually lying in bed presenting with low mood and superficially cutting herself daily. The kaiāwhina initiated a referral to Mental Health Services moderate to severe level care and assessment. This referral was made by calling the 0800 assessment intake number for Psychiatric Emergency Services for young people.

Mental health staff stated there were no significant identifiable mental health contributing factors to this young person's continued non-attendance, other than mild anxiety that was now being treated with medication. The mental health social worker stated the psychiatrist's diagnosis was that Julie was being non-compliant and the problem was 80% behavioural and 20% low level anxiety. The mental health social worker's recommendation was the young person should be assisted to go to school with the support of Police Youth Aid. Police Youth Aid were reluctant to continue with this intervention due to their concerns about the young person's mental health.

Further discussion was initiated by the kaiāwhina with the Deputy Principal of pastoral care, the Principal and the Guidance Counsellor of the school. Due to the complexities being present in the case a multi-agency approach was recommended as the next best intervention to try. A referral was made to the Rock On Programme by the kaiāwhina. This programme is administered by the Ministry of Education, Police Youth Aid, CYF, a mental health service, and Attendance Service kaiāwhina.

Continued work with the family and young person by the kaiāwhina identified severe social anxiety issues. This included huge social isolation factors impinging on the family and young person.

In *Reclaiming Youth at Risk*<sup>34</sup> it is stated there are four quadrants for a young person to achieve a balanced lifestyle: Belonging; Mastery; Independence; and Generosity. Julie had withdrawn from all social interaction with peers or adults and was significantly at risk of not achieving in at least three identified developmental quadrants. To help counter this, a process was undertaken with the school and family where Julie's needs would be met by the school when she was able to attend. This plan included Julie attending school in a small classroom monitored by a Teacher Aide and the school Guidance Counsellor. Julie stated that she could not cope with the classroom environment and felt unable to mix with the main student population in classrooms or in the playground. This was a huge challenge for the school as it is very difficult to allocate limited resources to look after

<sup>34</sup>Brendtro, L., Brokenleg, M. & Van Brockern, S. (2002). *Reclaiming youth at risk: Our hope for our future*. Solution Tree Press, Bloomington. [www.reclaiming.com](http://www.reclaiming.com). The RAP programme that has emerged from this book has been trialled in some of the most challenging communities around the world. It has been accepted as a unique indigenous approach to working with young people. A fabulous resource for agencies to engage with as a well-researched and practiced model of social service delivery for young people.

one student on their own. The school's goal was to help Julie achieve a sense of Belonging and Mastery. Julie remained in the small classroom with one or two students. Most days she felt incapable of leaving this environment except to walk to the library and back, or walk out and have a drink of water.

The school tried to integrate Julie with the main student population but each attempt resulted in Julie choosing to not come back to school for several days afterwards. Through the Rock On process a multiagency email list was established and reporting to all parties involved was undertaken on a weekly basis. Collectively, the agencies decided a Family Group Conference with Child Youth and Family may assist, and this was initiated and undertaken. An outcome of this was that family counselling would be provided for the family which they then undertook. This improved the communication between the school staff and family, along with other support agencies involved.

Constrained mental health resources continue to limit the likelihood of an improved educational outcome for Julie;

however community-based NGO's continue to help with raising funds through philanthropic donations for further psychological assessment. A youth worker is currently working with Julie alongside the Kaiāwhina. The goal is through continued community-based agency support she may achieve her life's goal to work in hairdressing. This goal can be realised through a range of education options provided by the multi- agency response.

### Summary

A collective response by multiple governmental and NGO social services and schools around individual complex cases is an attempt to utilise limited resources more efficiently. This collective approach often opens the way for unique and innovative solutions for students to reengage in education. It can also reduce the workload for individual kaiāwhina via a shared collaborative approach as multi-agency complex cases are extremely labour intensive for individual kaiāwhina.





### 3.4.1 Rock On<sup>35</sup>

The Rock On programme is a generic programme originally developed by Hamilton Police to support social service agencies to work collaboratively around individual school based non-attendance and non-enrolled cases.

Some Rock OnS have chosen to focus on year nine and ten students as a form of early intervention. Often these referrals are resolved with either a letter or the Hui and usually require less intensive interventions in comparison to the more complex cases that already have multi-agency involvement (CYF, Police Youth Aid, Youth Justice, etc).

The value in using Rock On to address truancy problems early through a year nine to ten focus is that this may prevent some cases from progressing to chronic truancy status.

An early intervention focus needs to be seen as a priority by school Deans and other pastoral care staff in schools, as Deans and Deputy Principals overseeing pastoral care of students are often the first to notice attendance problems. When initial first meetings between school staff and parents/caregivers, or repeated SMS texting do not yield any results, this may be the time to refer to Rock On.

Deans and Deputy Principals may be unsure when the right time to make a referral to Rock On is, however most Rock On groups will discuss a potential referral with all parties at the Rock On meeting. This is a very useful process as it indicates to all the Rock On stakeholders that there could be a problem

for this student's attendance. Some individuals on the Rock On team may be able to provide further information that is unknown to the school that could be useful to the school staff. At this point the case could progress to a referral to Rock On or remain with school staff. The Rock On team's recommendation could also be that a referral is made to school Attendance Service kaiāwhina.

Having some flexibility in the referral process allows all parties to make full use of the collective knowledge that is present at each Rock On meeting. The Rock On group can collectively decide on care and protection referrals to Child Youth and Family, Early Learning Exemption (ELX) suitability, or Health School, for example; as well as unique and innovative solutions that can emerge from local resources and community support networks.

All stakeholders should be encouraged to use the Rock On programme, and its shared knowledge base from the multiple social service agencies represented, as a valuable resource that is available in the school. Each Rock On group strives to meet the needs of the school and the community it resides within.

Rock On programmes are a voluntary shared collective process and everyone contributes their perspective and point of view on best practice with the support of Ministry of Education staff and Police Youth Aid.



<sup>35</sup>Student Support Team at the Ministry of Education Hamilton and the Hamilton Police: updated for Canterbury Rock On Programmes by Rock On Governance Group (2012) Operational Guidelines for Rock On New Zealand.

This resource was developed by John Robinson, Christchurch Police Youth Aid and Senior Ministry of Education Advisors, Christchurch. It forms a guide to best practice however most schools and Rock On stakeholders adapt the programme to suit the needs of the community they operate within.

## 3.4.2 Community development and restorative approaches

The community development process to school Attendance Service delivery focuses on each kaiāwhina building strong relationships with key professionals located in their area of service delivery. This is likely to include school staff, Police Youth Aid, CYF social workers, youth justice social workers, and Ministry of Education staff. Additionally key working relationships are likely to extend to non-governmental agencies such as youth groups, sporting groups, marae based social service providers, counselling agencies, early intervention staff, churches, and the associated educational support staff such as RTLB's etc.

Although the list of people and agencies initially appears daunting, once kaiāwhina actively engage in relationship building with young people, their whānau/family, and schools in their respective areas, relationships are quickly built. Many of the support services listed are often already engaged, or will be referred to as part of the process of the Kaiāwhina's intervention.

A community development approach to non-attendance can be defined as it "is that the community must be responsible for the delivery of services, but also for the identification of the needs, the planning of the services to meet those needs".<sup>36</sup>

Kaiāwhina who engage in active community-building process often experience a high level of support from schools and the communities these schools reside within. This includes the early indication of attendance problems being reported to kaiāwhina by families/whānau and other community stakeholders. This can assist in early intervention and prevention of attendance

problems from occurring. It may also inform the school that they need to discuss referral options with kaiāwhina.

Kaiāwhina can support communities and schools to develop their own initiatives to prevent non-attendance as well as utilising the community's resource pool to create an inclusive and supportive environment to work within. One initiative that may be useful in increasingly school engagement is restorative practice.

### Restorative practice in schools

Restorative practices supports the "*Culture of Caring Environment*"<sup>37</sup>. Restorative practices embedded in schools can help students to build strong relationships with schools and the communities they live in. It can also contribute to the successful creation of safe learning environments for vulnerable students who are susceptible to non-attendance issues.

Restorative practices from a hui whakatika kaupapa Māori restorative conference process (Margrain & Macfarlane, 2011) can also contribute to the creation of safer learning environments for Māori students.

Restorative conference practice in schools can enable students who feel unable to return to school after incidences of bullying or other traumatic events to overcome their fears in a safe environment that encourages resolution of the issues that have prevented them from returning.

## KEY WEBSITES AND RESOURCES

In addition to other resources cited in this section, we have found useful the following text:

Donn, D., Bennie, N., Kerslake, J., (1993). Who's Not Here...? Research and Statistics Division Ministry of Education Wellington. Retrieved from. <http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/series/2503/28554/24685>

Although developed in 1993, this very old resource from the Ministry of Education highlights the key problems that are

present in today's delivery of attendance services. It was most likely a foundation document to the development of the original District Truancy Service set up in 1996 by the Ministry of Education. It describes the complex issues that often exist with non-attendances cases, and that unless all issues are addressed for young people and their whānau/families it is highly unlikely that interventions will succeed. The document has an emphasis on non-attendance being a community problem not just a school and attendance service problem.

<sup>36</sup>Ife, J. (1997). Community Development: Creating community alternatives-vision, analysis and practice. Addison Wesley Longman Australia Pty Limited: South Melbourne.

<sup>37</sup>Margrain, V. & Macfarlane, A. (2011). Responsive pedagogy: Engaging restoratively with challenging behaviour. New Zealand Council for Educational Research: Wellington NZ. This is a very good well-researched resource on best practice with restorative processes in schools an essential guide for teachers and school management staff when applying restorative practice in an educational environment.

## Summary

The Model of Positive Youth Development through Education proposed in this resource demonstrates the interconnectedness of a range of complex issues facing dis/engaged young people including:

**Relational** factors affecting dis/engagement in schooling (with a focus upon friendship and belonging, relationships with teachers, personal challenges including stress and learning, and mental wellbeing, home life, and wider school support).

**Learning** factors affecting dis/engagement in schooling (with a focus on getting help with learning/learning difficulties, choice/autonomy, and teaching and learning variation in the classroom).



## Learning Factors



In order to address these issues, a range of strategies and implications for practitioners (including teachers) has been presented in this resource. These include the need for:

- o Informed practice
- o Culturally responsive practice (with a focus on Māori and Pasifika engagement)
- o Relating to young people
- o Collaborative models of intervention





