

Otumoetai Community of Learning/ Kāhui Ako

Kia ora Koutou,

This is the first of regular updates you will receive from me as the Lead principal for the Ōtūmoetai Community of Learning/ Kāhui Ako.

Since the launch of our Community of Learning/ Kāhui Ako at Ōtūmoetai College last year, a lot has happened and we are moving from the establishment phase to working with teachers and students across and within our nine schools.

What we are doing and why

Communities of Learning | Kāhui Ako are primarily about raising student achievement, encouraging a more joined-up, collaborative approach to education. They are about improving student progress, achievement and well-being throughout the learner pathway – it is a transformational opportunity for the New Zealand education system.

Overall Governance

The over sight of our Community of Learning/ Kāhui Ako is carried out by a steering committee who have met regularly since the establishment of our Community of Learning/ Kāhui Ako in 2015. Representatives on this committee are principals and / or senior leaders from each member school, Iwi partners, 2 x Early Childhood Education (ECE) reps and Ministry of Education advisors. Boards of Trustees Chairs have participated in the past and are welcome to all meetings of this committee.

Achievement Challenges

Our achievement challenges were endorsed by the Minister of Education on 17 February, 2017 and are as follows:

STUDENT WELL-BEING / WHOLE CHILD	(over riding focus for CoL)
ORAL LANGUAGE (English) / KŌRERO	(priority focus for work in the ECE to Year 3 area of our CoL)
KŌRERO TE REO MĀORI	(priority for Maori medium classes and Te Wharekura o Mauao and an area for development in mainstream classes.)
READING / PĀNUI	(One of our challenges which goes hand in hand with writing)
WRITING / TUHITUHI	(Priority focus for work in the year 4 to year 13 areas of the CoL.)
PRIORITY LEARNERS	(These are students with learning support needs and Maori boys in particular.)

This endorsement enabled us to commence with the appointment of our 7 across-school and 35 within-school teachers. You may be aware that we have had two rounds of recruiting across-school teachers from within our schools and have successfully appointed five teachers.

As lead principal I have been meeting with these across-school teachers and they have begun to work across the Community of Learning/ Kāhui Ako. Their first task is to get to know the schools in their area of work and the staff they will be working with.

Each school was given the responsibility to appoint their within-school teachers and we have 35 of these teachers in our CoL.

ECE Involvement.

An exciting development in our CoL is the involvement of our Early Childhood Centres and Kohunga Reo. Our 37 local ECE's have come together and are committed to working with our Community of Learning/ Kāhui Ako. They have elected two representatives who participate in our steering committee meetings.

We are also developing closer relationships with our Marae based Kohunga Reo.

The ECE's don't get any funding from the Ministry of Education to join our CoL, however we hope to give their teachers opportunities to join with us in professional development they may not normally access.

Transition is important as children move from ECE to primary school so this is a major focus as well as the acquisition of oral language in the junior area of our Community of Learning/ Kāhui Ako

Iwi Involvement.

Our Community of Learning/ Kāhui Ako is committed to forming enduring partnerships with our Tauranga Moana Iwi.

Marina Kawe-Peautolu representing Ngati Ranginui Iwi, has been a member of our steering committee since its inception.

I have also combined with Andrew King, the lead principal of the Tauranga Peninsula Community of Learning/ Kāhui Ako in meeting with CEO's and senior leaders of our local Iwi.

As our Community of Learning/ Kāhui Ako develops and builds on collaborative practice between our schools and between teachers in our schools, we recognise and acknowledge the importance of forming close and meaningful relationships with our whanau and Tauranga Moana iwi.

New Learning Support framework Co-construction and Trial

Our Community of Learning/ Kāhui Ako has been asked by the Ministry of Education to assist in the development of a new framework for Learning Support. This replaces what used to be known as Special Education and the intent is to create a new streamlined system for parents and schools to access support for students with Learning Support needs.

We have combined with the Whakatane and Taupo Communities of Learning/ Kāhui Ako in co-constructing and trialling a new system for referrals and support.

Theresa Rosborough, Deputy Principal at Pillans Point School has been selected to represent the three Communities of Learning/ Kāhui Ako as an experienced practitioner who understands the needs and frustrations of students, their parents and schools in accessing the right support for students with additional needs.

She has been seconded to work with the Ministry of Education, school SENCOs and Learning support service providers to assist with the formation of a new system.

A number of consultative meetings have been held as part of this process including a parent consultative meeting held at Otumoetai Intermediate School. Over 180 parents came along to find out what is proposed and provided feedback from a parent and whanau point of view.

Community of Learning/ Kāhui Ako working groups

Our Community of Learning/ Kāhui Ako is organised into four broad levels and led by learning mentors nominated by and drawn from the nine schools in our Community of Learning/ Kāhui Ako.

The learning mentors are deputy principals and senior leaders in their own school whose role is to mentor and give advice and guidance to our new across-school and within-school teachers. We have a combination of learning mentors and across-school teachers in each of the following levels and working groups:

ECE through Year 1 to Year 3, Year 4 to Year 6, Year 7 and Year 8, Year 9 to Year 13.

The across-school teachers have been meeting with their learning mentors and myself as lead principal to develop action plans for collaborative practice across our nine schools.

The focus for the ECE to Year 3 area is the development of oral language and good progress is being made in linking ECEs with our teachers in years 1 to 3.

The focus for Years 4 to 6, Years 7 and 8 and Years 9 to 13 is writing. The learning mentors in these areas have brought together student data from across the Community of Learning/ Kāhui Ako and are now developing actions for building teacher capacity in specific areas of writing using the Learning Progressions as a basis.

We are starting to see collaborative practice within each level, across the levels and between English and Maori Medium schools and classes.

Teachers in each school can expect to become more involved as the across-school teachers make contact with them and start leading collaborative practice across our collective schools.

At this stage the within-school teachers have been tasked with coming to grips with their roles and developing leadership of collaborative practice in their own schools.

The intent is to have all teachers and school leaders working collaboratively within and across our schools in partnership with our key stakeholders: parents and students in lifting student achievement in the achievement challenges above.

Professional development for teachers

A lot of professional development is happening within and across our schools in oral language, writing, and mathematics. Our schools have begun to work together in delivering professional development to all teachers in our Community of Learning/ Kāhui Ako and we are seeing the benefit of collaboration and the sharing ideas between teachers as they meet and work with colleagues from other schools in our Community of Learning/ Kāhui Ako.

I will endeavour to provide everyone with an update on our Community of Learning/ Kāhui Ako at least twice a term or as significant changes, developments or events take place.

Nga mihi nui,

Henk Popping
Lead Principal.