Culturally Responsive Practice 8201.2

The importance of having robust culturally responsive practice when addressing challenges and opportunities in contemporary pedagogies and practice in Aotearoa New Zealand.

<u>Te Whakamānawa - Culturally Responsive Practice - Teaching and Leadership:</u>

One of the greatest challenges in terms of contemporary pedagogy and practice in Aotearoa New Zealand is shifting the locus and the focus that we have been bound to for the last 200 or so years. The problem, for us as educators, is this is regarded as modern practice. Sadly, for our learners, I contend it is doomed practice.

Harking back to Critique 8201.1 - Whole Child Holistic Approach To Learning:
Quoting from my first treatise, "Alvin Toffler in Chapter 18 of his 1970 book, 'Future Shock, says this, "Mass education was the ingenious machine constructed by industrialism to produce the kind of adults it needed. The problem was ... how to pre-adapt children for a new world – a world of repetitive indoor toil, smoke, noise, machines, crowded living conditions, collective discipline, a world in which time was to be regulated not by the cycle of sun and moon, but by the factory whistle and the clock." (1)
The solution was an educational system that, in its very structure, simulated this new world.
It was a new model designed to prepare workers for automaton work in the new industrial age of factories - it was a factory model.

The time for this model is past, but inertia born of tradition is hard to overcome. It is hard to return to something that we did not know - the system of teaching and learning that existed for tens of thousands of years, and which got our human race very successfully to this point, is foreign to our immediate knowledge of learning.

In passing, I would argue that with the industrial age came a focus on profit at the expense of the land - something our ancestor educators would never have allowed to happen.

In "Thrive: Schools Reinvented for the Real Challenges We Face:" by Valerie Hannon, (2) Valerie focuses on the question she was tasked with answering for a report on the Future of Learning - "What Is The Purpose of School?"
Valerie contends our great purpose must be 'Learning to Thrive in a Transforming world'.

Achieving this goal requires us to work together, as a cooperative learning community. Humans do best in communities. This concept is addressed, explained and expounded upon in works such as

- "Sapiens - A Brief History of Humankind" by Yuval Noah Harari (3)
- "The Book of Humans - The Story of How We Became Us" by Adam Rutherford (4)
- "The Social Leap - How and Why Humans Connect" by William von Hippel (5)
- "The Laws of Human Nature" by Robert Greene (6).

Martin Luther King, Gandi, the Dalai Llama, Mother Teresa and many more expound the values and virtues of a service mindset and servant leadership. Mankind has benefitted greatly from such luminaries.
In a school context, the great Booker T Washington wrote in his autobiography about his school Hampton,

“One of the things that impressed itself upon me deeply, the second year, was the unselfishness of the teachers. It was hard for me to understand how any individuals could bring themselves to the point where they could be so happy working for others… I began learning that those who are happiest are those who do the most for others.” (7)

Historically many have not lived their lives according to this calling. As a result, we have now entered the ‘Age of Consequences’ (8). This Age of Consequences applies to both the disenfranchised, dispirited, disadvantaged, indigenous people, as well as to the land.

The Age of Consequences applies in a learning context too. New Zealand has invested millions in trying to reverse the trend of underachievement in Maori and Pasifika students. This is an issue for indigenous people in all countries. The rates of poverty, unemployment, ill health, life expectancy and incarceration are worse for indigenous peoples in New Zealand, Australia and USA than they are for non-indigenous people. (9)

All of this demonstrates the challenge we must accept to bring education back on track. Back on track through robust culturally responsive practice as we address the challenges and opportunities in contemporary pedagogies and practice in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Culturally Responsive Teaching Practice:
In our increasingly diverse schools, culturally responsive practices support the achievement of all students by providing effective teaching and learning in a “culturally supported, learner-centred context, whereby the strengths students bring to school are identified, nurtured, and utilised to promote student achievement” Richards, Brown, & Forde, 2006. (10)

There are several keys to effective Culturally Responsive Practice
- Using student strengths as starting points’ and building on their funds of knowledge
- Investing and taking personal responsibility for students’ success
- Creating and nurturing cooperative environments
- Having high behavioural expectations
- Reshaping the prescribed curriculum
- Encouraging relationships among schools and communities
- Critical literacy; engaging students in social justice work
- Making explicit the power dynamics of mainstream society
- Sharing power in the classroom. (11)

Demmert and Towner (2003) further defined culturally based education programs for American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian students as
- the recognition and use of heritage languages
- pedagogy that stresses traditional cultural characteristics and adult-child interactions
- pedagogy in which teaching strategies are congruent with the traditional culture, as well as contemporary ways of knowing and learning
- curriculum based on traditional culture that places the education of young children in a contemporary context
- strong Native community participation in the planning and operation of school activities
- knowledge and use of the social and political mores of the community. (12)

Erik Erikson advises, “The more you know yourself, the more patience you have for what you see in others.” (13). Patience is one of the key traits we as a teaching staff settled on as a key to being a great parent - and therefore a great teacher.

The recently released (2018) Ministry document, “Tapasā Cultural competencies framework for teachers of Pacific learners” has some wonderful guidance for us as culturally responsive practitioners.
The document begins by reminding us that in order to know and understand others, we must first know ourselves.
“It is important that teachers understand their own distinctiveness, identity and culture in deep and meaningful ways in order to genuinely engage and respond to the distinctive identities, languages and cultures of others. The ability to reflect on the beliefs and ideas that are held within ones’ own culture will enable teachers to recognise their inbuilt assumptions…
This is the beginning of the development of the openness and reflection that teachers need to create relationships for learning with learners who have cultural knowledge, languages and experiences different to theirs. Knowing yourself is not only about identity and self-reflection it is to also understand ones’ own biases, prejudices and actions of privileging.” (14)

Tapasa identifies the following characteristics of a ‘good teacher’:

- Understands that my identity, language and culture is important to me
- Pronounces my name and words in my language properly
- Recognises that English might not be my and/or my parents’ first language and communicates with us in a way that we can understand
- Respects my parents’ limited English language skills if we don’t speak it fluently
- Makes an effort to learn and use simple words like saying ‘hello’ and ‘thank you’ in my language
- Knows that I want my parents to be part of my learning journey and that my parents value being part of that journey
- Communicates well and isn’t afraid to ask me and my parents questions
- Does research to know more about me, my family and my culture and island nation(s) that we come from
- Incorporates stories, legends and myths, events, activities and symbols that I understand and are relevant to me when they are teaching
- Understands the values that are important to me such as faith, spirituality (church) and family
- Is a strong, kind, honest, passionate, open-minded, understanding, flexible and compassionate leader who cares about me
- Knows that I want to learn but in a way and at a pace that is suitable for me. (14)

Point two is addressed in the reference to Mitchel’s work (2019) on the importance of pronouncing names - further below. (30)
Point nine addresses the importance of story - something that is covered in detail further below.
Point eleven references the importance of relationships and is covered in the section on ‘In Loco Parentis’ further on. (28)

Culturally Responsive Leadership:
“Culturally responsive leadership supports inclusive environments and improved learning for students and families with culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. It involves developing leadership pedagogies, practices, and policies that create inclusive schooling environments.”
Williams, 2016 (15)
Culturally responsive leaders:

- exhibit an ethic of care
- develop cultural awareness in the school and community
- demonstrate and promote inclusive practice
- challenge deficit theorising, inequitable principles and practices.

Regardless of position or age, any member of the staff and any student has the ability to be a culturally responsive leader. (16)

Two areas of particular concern, and therefore of particular relevance in any reflection on the importance of Culturally Responsive Leadership, are Maori and Pasifika student achievement. An article by Dr Maree Roche, Senior Lecturer and Co Director – Leadership Unit, Waikato Management School, University of Waikato, addresses the five key values of Maori Leadership. (17) There are overlaps with our Pōhatu Tūmu referred to later in this dissertation.

1. Whakaiti – Humility
Whakaiti is a key term in Māori leadership. The leader does not self-nominate as a leader, does not take credit for work, but enables others. There is no self promotion. Humility means that great leadership is behind the scenes.

2. Ko Tau Rourou and Manaakitanga – Altruism
This theme is one of generosity, giving for long-term or future benefit and taking care of others. Manaakitanga is a related concept that reflects the importance of caring for another person, doing the right thing for them, and ensuring their well-being.

Ko tau rourou can be described as generosity of spirit, but it also has a number of other dimensions. It can refer to offering assistance in a way that creates a sense of wealth (non-material, usually). Essentially, this is a form of cooperation that enables development through giving.

3. Whanaungatanga – Family and Others
This concept is central and is mentioned in almost all literature on the importance of others in Māori leadership. Broadly, it has touch points with the concept of collectivism but also refers to the span of relationships with current, future and past generations. It also refers to the closeness and depth of relationships.

4. Tāria Te Wā and Kaitiakitanga – Long-Term Thinking, Guardianship
The long journey, with a clear direction but the need for patience when waiting for results. Long-term orientation is also reflected in the concept of kaitiakitanga, which refers to the need for sustainable guardianship and protection. Māori hold a great connection to past generations, environmental preservation and care for the collective future generations.

5. Tikanga Māori – Cultural Authenticity
This concept also underpins almost all literature on Māori leadership. Tikanga Māori is viewed as a fundamental guideline for how Māori leaders behave. “The Māori way of doing things” is a guiding value.

Leadership success for Māori can be viewed as drawing on traditional principles while managing the interconnected world.
These values also relate to employee well-being and their thoughts on ethical leadership. (17)

Pasifika is the other area of particular concern in terms of equality of achievement and outcomes for student achievement in New Zealand.
“Tapasa” (2018) reminds leaders that culture is more than just ethnicity and race which means the notion of culture is not just the domain of others or minority groups, as they themselves also have ‘culture’. Culturally Responsive Leaders further… “recognise that good outcomes are dependent on good teaching practice and that in order to address educational inequality, a change in thinking and practice is required; recognise the importance of *’cultural locatedness’ in education settings, and for learner well-being and achievement.” (14)

* *Cultural locatedness refers to the focus of the competencies at different stages of a teaching career. It means teachers shifting (physically, mentally, emotionally and professionally) learning, teaching*

and practice into locations or spaces that are safe, comfortable that culturally 'fit', and are receptive to the learner. (14)

Research that demonstrates culturally responsive practices have an impact cited by Demmert and Towner is the Kamehameha Early Childhood Education Program and research from the Kamehameha Schools (Hawaii). (18)
I had the privilege of visiting this school in 2016 and seeing their programmes in action. I also studied alongside the principal of this school at Harvard University in 2018.

My own experience includes many years focusing on and presenting my findings and experience in improving Maori Student Achievement.
The following whakatauki expresses the essence of what it means to understand Culturally Responsive Practice.
Ehara taku toa i te toa takitahi engari he toa takitini.
I come not with my own strengths but bring with me the gifts, talents and strengths of my family, tribe and ancestors. (19)
As teachers this whakataukī emphasises the importance of knowing our learners, understanding their essence of being, and appreciating they draw strength from their family, iwi, hapu and ancestors.

As Rameka says, "the past is central to and shapes the present and the future. Māori perspectives of the past can provide models, inspiration and guides to re-conceptualise learning provision in Aotearoa New Zealand if they are approached with honesty, humility and a genuine desire to make a difference." (20)
Culturally Responsive Practice requires we look to and draw from the past as we walk (backwards) into the future.

Just as one of the greatest challenges in terms of contemporary pedagogy and practice in Aotearoa New Zealand is shifting the locus and the focus that we have been bound to for the last 200 or so years, so is the opportunity to do just this. We are fortunate to have reached a point where we are asking questions - as evidenced in Valerie Hannon's work, and in the work of our Education Review Taskforce. This is an opportunity such as we have not had, in 30 years at least, but perhaps 80 years, if we think back to the revolutionary thinking of Dr Clarence Beebe back in the 1940's. (21)
The opportunity is for us to return our focus to the people and the land.
Culturally Responsive Practice focused on Learning Communities addresses an important aspect of the focus on the people.
The land is equally important. We are from the land and of the land.
For Maori, their connection to the land is at the core of their identity. The whenua and pito (umbilical cord) of the first human created from earth were buried in the earth. This is the origin of the proverb 'He taonga no te whenua, me hoki ano ki te whenua' (What is given by the land should return to the land). (22)

Our opportunity is to return to Original Practice in teaching and learning - that which ensured the success of our race for tens of thousands of years, and that which can address and start to undo the damage we are experiencing in this new Age of Consequences, where people and land are of secondary importance, behind the acquisition of power and wealth.
Original Learning Practice involves hands on, practical, experiential, play-based learning. It is social, interactive, mentor based, relationship driven, involves mixed ages and a mix of fun and challenge. It has clear purpose. Often songs and stories are involved. It is visual - you see what to do. It involves problem solving, asking questions and finding out. It offers tremendous opportunities for marriage with modern technologies and ways of thinking.

I contend this marriage of the best of original practice with the opportunities and tools of the 21st century provide an opportunity for our learners unlike anything we have known or conceptualised up until now.

Putting this into Practice:
Our brains are hard-wired to process learning and communicate learning in three ancient and distinct ways. These are via the three Original Languages.

- Music
- Visual Language
- Story Telling

"Story is the most human thing in existence. It's how we assemble the random data of daily life into memories, how we communicate lessons, how we bond. Empires rise and fall on the backs of stories. And writing is the first step in transforming the raw information thumping around in our heads into those stories. No matter where we push our technology, story will be the link that binds us to it, and we will always need a method to take these ideas in our minds and turn them into stories." (23)

Storytelling is a universal human trait. It emerges spontaneously in childhood, and exists in all cultures so far studied. It's also ancient: Some specific stories have roots that stretch back for at least 6,000 years. These tales aren't quite as old as time, but perhaps as old as wheels and writing. Because of its antiquity and ubiquity, some scholars have portrayed storytelling as an important human adaptation. (24)

Story is a practice in Indigenous cultures that sustains communities, validates experiences and epistemologies, expresses experiences of Indigenous peoples, and nurtures relationships and the sharing of knowledge. Storytelling is also a central focus of Indigenous epistemologies, pedagogies, and research approaches. Elders' stories inform discussions of

- storytelling types (mythical, personal, and sacred)
- storytelling as pedagogical tools for learning about life
- storytelling as witnessing and remembering, and (d) sharing stories of spirituality as sources of strength. (25)

Story is a basic foundation of all human learning and teaching (Cajete, 1994). (26)

Thomas King (2003) warns us that "once a story is told, it is loose in the world. So you have to be careful with the stories you tell. And you have to watch out for the stories that you are told" (p. 10). (27)
I contend that President Trump and his supporters would do well to reflect on these two points.

Story telling is as old as civilisation and as fresh as the new morning. Words, both written and spoken, can bring people together. They can stimulate the imagination. They can open a child's eyes to worlds of wonder and to the hope of humanity. One of the greatest gifts we can share with our children is the gift of stories and story telling.

Story telling is everywhere. From the obvious such as movies, television programmes, novels and comics; through to the less obvious such as advertisements; from an artist, to fashion designer, to musician, to choreographer, to rapper, to stand-up comedian. Every person who is passionate about his or her job is a storyteller at heart.

I contend storytelling is imbedded in our DNA. In my (culturally responsive) practice I see children as stories. This is how Māori see people too. The first question is always, 'where are you from?'. The answer is to tell your story of where you are from - your mountain, river, iwi, hapu, Marae and whanau. Establishing that connects people to the land and people to people and people to common stories.

Children then don't just have a story, they are their own story. Culturally responsive practice sees them as such. Making this mind-shift changes the relationship and empowers the learning potential. Each child is a story to be understood. They have poetry and beauty, there are conflicts and resolutions, passages of

action and drama, but through it all there is pathos, humanity, love, and the rise of the human spirit in the face of adversity. Our goal as the "ghost writer, come prompt, come editor of their story for a time, is to help each child and their story towards a fulfilling, uplifting, happy ending.

Continuing this analogy a little further, when we read a good story we become immersed. We see the story through the protagonist's eyes, we feel the connection, we empathise and we engage and connect emotionally.
At its heart this is Culturally Responsive Practice. We seek to see the world through each child's eyes. We empathise and connect at a visceral level. Teaching is governed by the Education Act 1989, which goes under the heading "In Loco Parentis". (28)
Whoever wrote the Act this way was inspired. In Loco Parentis means Parent in Place. This in turn means between 9am and 3pm (at the minimum) we are the mum and/or dad to each child in our care. The parent in place. Each child becomes our son or daughter. Each child becomes our own flesh and blood, and takes the place of primary importance in our life - for that is what it means to be a parent.

As parents, we love to tell our children's stories. We want to understand our children, seek the best of them and for them, and support them to be happy and successful.

One of the challenges identified in my first treatise regarding contemporary pedagogies and practice in Aotearoa New Zealand was how to measure, track and share progress when returning to original practice that emphasises the people and the land as our two driving principles.

A quote often attributed to Albert Einstein states, "…not everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts can be counted." (29)
Measurement is like a religion in the business world. The focus is on yardsticks that measure and determine success. We fell into this trap at Western Heights where we judged the success of an event by how many parents attended, rather than what parents brought to and took from the event. Much harder to measure, but of far more importance.

Two answers that deserve much more thorough explanation than space permits are

- ePortfolios such as Seesaw (our tool of choice).
- Professional trust

This is how we operate as teachers too. At Western Heights we introduced and funded a Seesaw digital portfolio account for every child. This allows us to share learning experiences and achievements in real time. It allows each child to share and have a permanent record of their learning stories much as a parent has photo albums of their children's life stories at home.
Parent in place principals and the importance of story-telling married into a clever application.

Great teachers understand that the best, most durable learning happens when content sparks interest, when it is relevant to a child's life, and when the learners form an emotional bond with either the subject or the teacher in front of them. Meaningful learning happens when teachers are able to create an emotional connection to what might otherwise remain abstract concepts, ideas or skills.
The emotional connection that can result when teachers make learning personally relevant to students is what differentiates superficial, rote, topical assimilation of material from a superlative education marked by deep mastery and durable learning. There are no silver bullets in education, but emotional engagement and personal relevance are the tools that can improve the educational experience, and performance, of every child, in every school.
Story-telling is an exceptional vehicle for ensuring emotional engagement.

Culturally Responsive Practice in Practice

Culturally Responsive Practice requires we understand each child has a story and is a story. Each child's name is a story, though sadly not every child knows this. For all children their name is important. For many, their name is hugely significant - in terms of culture, heritage, family.

"My name is where I come from," Michelle-Thuy Ngoc says. "It's a reminder of hope."

A junior at Alum Rock High School, in California, Michelle-Thuy Ngoc (Michelle knock twee) is among the students backing "My Name, My Identity," a national campaign that places a premium on pronouncing students' names correctly and valuing diversity.

The campaign focuses on the fact that a name is more than just a name: It's one of the first things children recognise, one of the first words they learn to say, it's how the world identifies them. (30)

"If students encounter teachers who are not taking the time to learn their name or don't validate who they are, it starts to create this wall," said Rita Kohli, an assistant professor in the graduate school of education at the University of California, Riverside.

"It can also hinder academic progress." (30)

Language is also an important tenet of Culturally Responsive Practice. Dr. Anne Poelina, when researching the Nyikina people, who are located in the West Kimberley region of Western Australia, was told, "we are our language." (31)

Language is central to our cultural and spiritual identity. It is the medium by which we describe cultural practices, our attachment to land and place, and other cultural and spiritual activities. The use of our language is intrinsically linked to the social and emotional well-being of our people, leading to improved health and educational outcomes for individuals and communities. Numerous studies have shown that bilingual education enhances Indigenous children's learning experience, including their English literacy levels. Bilingual education also provides our children with the foundation to engage with the dominant culture of our country while maintaining their own cultural identity. Nyikina Elder Lucy Marshall believes, "It is important for our young people to learn their language so they know who they are and who they can be." Elder Jeanie Warbie, who has been instrumental in working to save the Nyikina language, echoes this view: "When you know your language, you feel good in your liyan (spirit)." (31)

Culturally Responsive Practice requires that we respect each child's linguistic heritage. We find ways to include and incorporate each child's language and linguistic heritage within our learning programme and learning environment. One of the ways we do this at Western Heights is have children record their stories in video and/or written format in their own language. Sometimes this is enough. Sometimes this is shared with sister schools overseas or with classmates of the same culture. Sometimes it is translated into English to assist with their development in that language.

Culturally Responsive Practice, as stated, requires we understand each child has a story and is a story. CRP requires us to see the world through their eyes, rather than expecting them to see everything our way.

An example of this in practice was when I walked up the slope to our school at 9 am one morning. I meet and greet as many children and parents as possible in our carpark every morning, and farewell them in the same way every afternoon.

This particular morning I walked up alongside a little Māori boy who was running late. I looked at our pretty stunningly designed front entrance and wondered what he saw in it that connected to his world? My answer was, 'nothing really'.

I began a process of consulting, discussing and reflecting and out of this came a whole new front of school environment. We have five huge Pōhatu Tūmu out in front of our school now. These rocks as ancient as the earth represent the five foundation values our school is built on:

Whanangatanga - being a family; living, learning and playing together as a family
- engaging in positive and collaborative relationships with our learners, their families and whānau, our colleagues and the wider community

	- **Family Always**
Manaakitanga	- caring, respect, guardianship, empathy, thinking(especially about others) - creating a welcoming, caring and creative learning environment that treats everyone with respect and dignity **- Caring Always**
Whakamana	- empowering us as learners and leaders to love learning and be the best we can be. Managing self. Self-control. Providing and expecting high standards of teaching, learning and leadership. **- Our Best Always.**
Pono	- being honest with ourselves and others. Doing the right thing - even when it's hard. Understanding. Grit in the Pit. Showing integrity. Being fair, honest, ethical and just. **- The Truth Always.**
Turangawaewae	- our standing place, where we belong, where we stand tall. Participating. Self-confidence. Our safe place. **- Our Home Always.**

These five Pōhatu Tūmu are at the heart and core of everything we do now. At one end is Whanaungatanga, at the other Turangawaewae. This represents the People and the Land - encompassing the other three.
Every class, at the start of each year comes out and sits on and among the rocks and hears the story of each one.

- **Pono** is tall and straight like a soldier or a Policeman. It reminds us to be straight and true, to always tell the truth.
- **Whakamana** is big and solid and immovable. It is like an All Black prop - immovable and resolute. All Black's are leaders, they always do their best and they never give up.
- **Manaakitanga** is small. It reminds us that the little things we do, those little acts of kindness, make all the difference in the world.
- **Whanaungatanga** is like a mum. There is a channel running down her face from the tears she has cried. We want these to be tears of joy and pride, but they will always be tears of love.
- **Turangawaewae** looks like a big old turtle with lots of hollow places on his back where we can stand or sit. He takes his home with him on his back, and we have WHS as our home that we carry with us in our heart. It is a place you can always come back to and be at home in.

The rocks are surrounded by tall grasses and there are big natural timber seats in front to sit on. There are stepping stones to hop and skip across.
There are trees for shade and murals that represent who and why we are.

Every day children swarm over and through this sanctuary. Every day elderly take a rest on the seats. Many days family members take photos of their children on the rocks and in the gardens.
Now when that little Māori boy walks up the slope to our school, he sees himself, his stories and his culture.
As we share and celebrate this sanctuary, we emphasise the universal nature of the values represented here. We share - and invite our children to share - how these stones connect to their culture, their stories, their values.
Last year I was awarded a Woolf Fisher Fellowship. I visited 15 countries in 15 weeks and one of the things I brought back was photos of rocks of significance from many of those countries and cultures.

The best story for me of how this initiative has brought change and empowered children is the story of a little girl that was shared with me by her grandmother one morning.
Esme used to have grandma come to her class with her. When they got to the classroom, Esme would shed some tears and take some time to get herself together enough to be able to go into class.

Now, grandma proudly informed me, grandma stops at the start of the stepping stones and is allowed to come no further. Esme explains she skips across the stepping stones, then stops in the circle of stones and waits quietly for a little bit, and gets the strength and confidence she needs to go into school and into class and have a great day. These were and are her own words.
I had had no idea. This was profoundly moving though - for grandma and me - and demonstrates the very real value and purpose of Culturally Responsive Practice.

In our senior school we have a redesigned FLE - Flexible Learning Environment. This features some large wall spaces as we have a very high ceiling. Those spaces now feature large-format posters of each child grouped into countries and featuring their flag. It's a visual celebration of who we are and where we come from.
All over our school are art works, murals and features created by children that represent who they are and how they are a special part of our school whanau.
Two junior classes created a huge tree mural that covered a whole end of a building. Each child in our school then painted their own round disc that was affixed to the giant tree. It is a stunning example of Whanaungatanga, Manaakitanga, Turangawaewae, and Pay It Forward.

Culturally Responsive Practice involves teaching children they are part of a community, and through contributing to community, all can thrive.
At Western Heights, every class, every year, has to complete a 'Pay It Forward' project. We watch a few scenes from the movie of the same name, and share and celebrate examples from previous years, then children go out and come up with their plans.
Examples of projects include:

- A group of boys who stayed up until 2 am baking and (pink) icing over 550 cupcakes - one for each child in our school - to promote the national anti-bullying campaign.
- A senior class who collected, then washed and ironed quality second hand clothing which they then donated in person to the Salvation Army.
- A junior class who collected quality hard toys, washed them and personally delivered them to children at Starship Hospital
- Two classes who organised a shipping container of goods to be sent to Fiji after the hurricanes there
- Junior classes who made hand-crafted Christmas presents and delivered these to Aged Care Homes, and sang songs and performed plays for the residents.
- There are so many more, but this gives an idea of what is involved.

Every child needs to be loved, this is what a parent does, and we are Parents in Place. Every child also needs to have someone to love. "There is only one happiness in this life, to love and be loved." George Sand. (32)
This is where Culturally Responsive Practice principles require us as teachers to share our story. We have stories, and we are our own stories, just as our children are.
By sharing our story with our children we give them something to connect to so we can be someone they connect to, and love.

Culturally Responsive Practice is Original Practice:
Titiro whakamuri
Kōkiri whakamua
Look back and reflect so you can move forward. (33)
Original Learning Practice (35) involved hands-on, practical, experiential, play and practice-based learning. It was social, interactive, mentor-based, relationship driven, involved mixed ages and a mix of fun and challenge. It had a clear purpose. Often songs and stories were involved. It was visual - you saw what to do. It involved problem-solving and finding out.
The village raised and educated the child applying Original Practice.
It was successful - for hundreds of thousands of years.

It was a ‘cultural’ way of learning - a way of learning embedded in their roots, their history, their traditions, their beliefs, their shared-experiences and understandings.

The Thoughts of Professor Russel Bishop :
In a recent opinion piece written for the New Zealand Herald, Russell Bishop, Emeritus Professor of Māori Education at the University of Waikato, summed up many of the key points raised in this treatise to this point.
Quoting from the article that he writes with regard to the current review of education in New Zealand, “What is of concern is the assumption that changing the structure of the education system will somehow promote equity and excellence. This has in fact been the focus of many policies and projects since the 1960s.
The problem is that there is no clear overarching educational theory in this report that can guide how educators should operate so as to promote equity, let alone give expression to Te Tiriti.
However, the report does suggest that relationships are important.
As columnist Deborah Hill-Cone observed in the Herald last October, as social creatures we are wired to connect, and our very well-being and mental health rely upon our developing positive and effective relationships, something few Māori students report experiencing in our schools.
What is needed is an explicit theory of positive relationships that promotes care and commitment, high expectations, and improved and sustained educational outcomes.
What makes up such a foundational theory of relationships? Research has shown that developing schools and classrooms as if they were (extended) families provides educators with settings where Māori students' belonging, participation and individual learning is supported and developed.
This sense of family-ness, for example, promotes a relationship-based education that has much to offer teachers and school leaders currently trying to support those marginalised from the benefits of education.
However, family-like relationships are not enough in themselves to promote improved learning.
Classrooms also need to be places of interaction and dialogue where students of different cultures can bring who they are, what they know and above all, how they understand and make sense of the world to the conversations that generate learning.
A relationship-based approach means that teachers and other school leaders can focus on improving learning.
That Māori students are not provided with this type of education is the root cause of the lack of equity in our system…” (34)

Conclusion:
The purpose of this dissertation is to address the importance of having robust culturally responsive practice when addressing challenges and opportunities in contemporary pedagogies and practice in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Robust culturally responsive practice is obviously about addressing the place, purpose and value of each child’s culture to not just their learning but their personhood.
In this dissertation I have occasionally shortened Culturally Responsive Practice to CRP. In answering the central question, I would take some poetic licence with the letters CRP and contend that they could more appropriately be considered as standing for Child Responsive Practice.

“Tapasa” (2018) advises us that, “teachers are responsible for groups of learners with histories, perspectives, values and cultures that may differ from their own. These differences can even vary between each learner, in significant ways.” (14). In other words, Culturally Responsive Practice is not enough. There can be so many differences with the culture, that Child Responsive Practice within culturally responsive practice is that which is required of us to be effective facilitators of learning for all learners.

Child Responsive Practice requires of us the understanding that each child is a story - that incorporates their culture, language, name but is also so much more than that. As quoted at the start of this

dissertation, CRP is understood to be “culturally supported, learner-centred context, whereby the strengths students bring to school are identified, nurtured, and utilised to promote student achievement” Richards, Brown, & Forde, 2006. (10)

At an Apple Distinguished Educators’ Conference in Sydney recently I listened to an Aboriginal Film-maker as he shared his life story.
He told us how traditional school had failed him - he found no meaning, no connection and no purpose in school. He left school as soon as he could, and began on a path of dissolute behaviour and petty crime. Fortunately an intervention programme put him into the outback with two Aboriginal elders. He was given a video camera and he used it to record his education at the hands of these elders. He documented their daily lives in a way that had not been done before. He learned through Original Practice. He learned through the incorporation of the Three Original Languages. He learned real-world and hands-on. He connected with and engaged his culture, language and identity. He married new technologies and modern thinking with ancient ways of learning, living and being.

As he stretched his arms out across the screen on which the black and white images of these elders moved, he connected again, and we his audience were deeply moved and connected in our own ways. I was so moved I had to leave the room for a tangi in a quiet place.
For me this exemplified the marriage that Culturally Responsive Practice requires of us as educators.
The partners in this marriage are the cultural heritage, passions and interests of the child, partnering the opportunities and power of digital media, story-telling, visual language and music - the three original languages.
This young man’s life was turned completely around. The learning he gained and that could in turn be shared - with the world - was as deep, powerful, impactful and meaningful as any learning could be.

Obviously our learning environment, staffing and budgetary constraints mean that fully replicating this young man’s experience is not possible for most. However, it shows us what best practice can achieve. It shows us a way forward - by looking to the past and bringing that with us as we embrace the 21st tools available to us and walk bravely backwards into the future.
I look forward to exploring and developing this concept further, in research, theory and practice, over time.

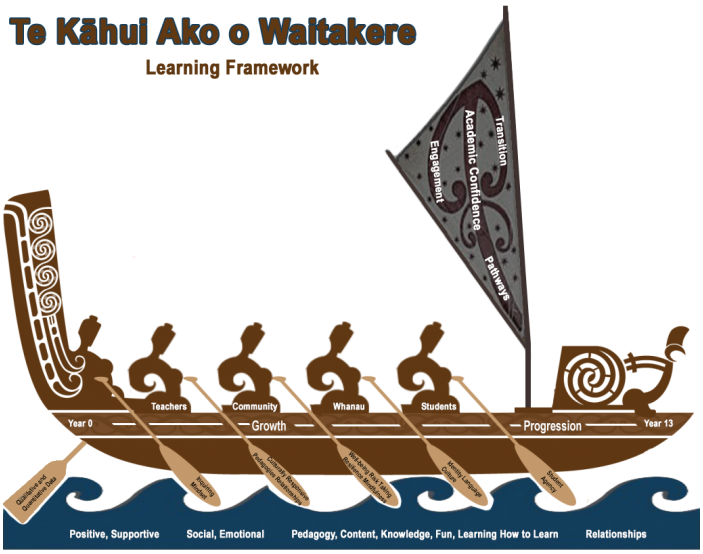


This image for me, represents original practice.
Hand-on, mentor-modeller guidance, experimental, trial-and-error, mistakes don’t matter as the clay is infinitely re-mouldable, experiential, practical and purposeful, connected to culture and connected to us, tells a story. (35)









Our Pōhatu Tūmu school entrance and the logo I designed in response to our CoL's collaboratively agreed priorities.

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