



Supporting Inclusion for All; Especially for Students Vulnerable due to their Economic Circumstances: Introducing Manuaute o Te Huia

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, New Zealand schools have been challenged to cater for increasing numbers of students in material hardship without comprehensive support. New Zealand once led the world in putting equity at the centre of education policy and practice, this is no longer the case. Recent Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) findings reveal that modern, high-performing education systems balance excellence with equity. Programmes in North America and Australasia such as *Bridges Out of Poverty* and others are growing in popularity although featuring an underlying deficit ideology. “Te Manuaute o Te Huia”, supported by local kaumatua, is applied here in one school to support learning conversations to achieve inclusion, particularly for economically-vulnerable students.

This article examines how one school, the RTLB service and its community leaders, including Māori advisors, used a shared understanding of ‘equity literacy’ in an education setting and the appreciative inquiry process to enhance learning opportunities for all students and especially those from low socio-economic backgrounds. It also outlines how a New Zealand version of an equity literate framework and a strengths-based process, used with key community input, can generate additional support to create and sustain ongoing success, especially for those students vulnerable due to their socio-economic circumstances.

Storied experience

Keywords:

appreciative inquiry, change, deficit ideology, equity, equity literacy, inclusion for all

MY JOURNEY: THE EXPERIENCES OF AN RTLB AND EDUCATIONAL INEQUITY

Financial hardship is having an increasing impact on learning engagement and success of children in Aotearoa New Zealand schools. As an RTLB I have faced first-hand how financial hardship has been

experienced, and been privy to a variety of narratives from RTLB colleagues, principals, students and their whanau. For instance, I once stood on a chair to take a school photo while a professional photo was being taken of the school so that affordable copies could be provided for whanau. Principals I have spoken with, shared that some of their children are unable to complete homework because they don’t have access to a computer or the internet at home. Further examples of whanau financial hardship include a lack of personal resources such as the requirement for a bike to participate in class trips, a Year 10 student being unable to attend a preferred outdoor education option as by doing so would compromise resources to a sister, and the embarrassment incurred by having no food for lunch.

Recently, the New Zealand media has featured the growing socio-economic pressures upon families when preparing their children for school. For example, the cost required for some mandatory items such as uniforms, stationery and the controversial scheme of school ‘donations’ (sometimes referred to as the annual or activity fee) is exacerbated by ‘Bring Your Own Device’ (BYOD) systems, additional sport/extra-curricular activity fees and school camps. Some schools have adopted innovative solutions for payment of school donation fees (even though these are non-compulsory) given that a quarter of whanau cannot afford them.

My notions of equity were heavily influenced by articles by Paul Gorski, one called *The Myth of the “Culture of Poverty”* (Gorski, 2008) and another called *Unlearning Deficit Ideology and the Scornful Gaze* (Gorski, 2010). Such was the impact of his writing I made personal contact with him and suggested my idea of pulling the best bits from *Bridges Out of Poverty* (Payne, DeVol & Smith, 2006). Gorski commented that this would be like “... saying I am only going to use the non-offensive aspects of white supremacy to teach about race” (Gorski 2015, personal communication). Nonetheless, Gorski challenges many common myths about the poor that are often echoed in the

media. For instance, he challenges the theory that poor people are unmotivated and have a weak work ethic; are linguistically deficient, and tend to abuse drugs and alcohol. Additionally, he debunks the notion that poor parents are uninvolved in their children's learning largely because they do not value education. In recent years, the National Treasury office, in collaboration with the McGuinness Institute, also identified common myths prevalent in Aotearoa New Zealand. These deficit assumptions have included comments such as: "poverty doesn't exist in New Zealand"; "people on a benefit have it easy"; "benefits cause people to become dependent on the system", and "if only poor people would just get a job": a resounding 'victim blaming' rhetoric that suggests that the issue resides with those facing the harsh realities of financial hardship.

Many of these myths have been vehemently challenged in a book I read titled "An African Centred Response to Ruby Payne's Poverty Theory" by Dr Jawanza Kunjufu. He identified issues of deficit thinking, common myths, ingrained stereotypes and a 'blame the victim' ideology as factors that can sabotage efforts to address student achievement – notions that are also supported by a massive body of work that highlighted deficit theorising regarding Māori achievement in Aotearoa New Zealand. As Dr Kunjufu writes, "if teachers believe low-income is the major cause for the achievement gap, it would be futile to provide a workshop on raising expectation" (Kunjufu, 2007, p. viii). He goes on to write, "some people would rather talk, study, and have workshops on poverty than solve the problem." In wanting to solve the problem as suggested by Dr Kunjufu, I am reminded of the opportunity I had to travel to high-performing clusters of schools in Ontario, Canada in 2011, where I met teachers who had attended workshops called "Bridges out of Poverty" (Stone, 2011). It has been described as the most popular professional development to address the education needs of students in poverty for teachers in North America and the USA. I explored this programme and spoke to principals in Northland, NZ, who had been addressed by an Australasian "Bridges out of Poverty" facilitator at a principal's conference in Taupo. Some Māori principals from Northland were excited and refreshed by the notion of addressing the 'tail-end of under-achievement' through the lens of poverty rather than the bicultural perspective and were keen to explore this approach.

Referring back to Gorski (2013), he provides an *Equity Literate Framework* that has been developed without a deficit ideology and challenges many myths regarding those who live in poverty. He advocates an approach which examines beliefs about the poor,

avoiding all forms of (even popular) deficit thinking as it is applied in a school setting to the circumstances of some students. He comments that in the school setting, the most influential factor in how a student in vulnerable financial circumstances performs or engages, is linked directly to the belief the student's teacher holds about why the student is in these circumstances. Those teachers, who may exhibit a range of practical strategies but cling to a view where the attribution lies entirely within the individual, are holding views that are an antithesis of equity. Gorski would state that a teacher cannot hold a deficit ideology and set high expectations, which is a key factor in student achievement.

The notion of stereotype threat is relevant here. According to Spencer and Castano (2007), stereotype threat occurs when people, who share a particular identity such as socio-economic status or ethnicity, perform below their potential on a test or assigned task due to the fear or anxiety that their performance will confirm negative stereotypes people already have about them. Its subtle yet powerful and negative hold it can have on learners is worth highlighting. It is well-described in Gorski's (2013) book *Reaching and Teaching Students in Poverty - Strategies for Erasing the Opportunity Gap*. The negative impact can be significant for learners of many identities such as gender, ethnicity, age as well as socio-economic status. A negative comment about a certain group or identity prior to an assessment can be shown to negatively affect the performance of that group for the duration of the test. For example, Gorski (2013) comments:

when informed that their socioeconomic status is relevant to a task they are being asked to complete, such as by being told before a test that students in poverty do not do as well on it as wealthier students, low-income students perform worse than they do when nobody names the disparity (p. 69).

Given my observations, experiences and, in particular, the inspiration of Gorski's work, it is clear a framework is needed which places at its core a focus on principles of equity that avoids deficit ideology, and challenges myths within the context of financial hardship. As such, I am keen to keep equity at the centre of my discussion presented in this paper rather than an aspect of bi-cultural education, which in Aotearoa New Zealand, as previously noted, is very strengths-based and inclusive. My hope is that the framework I present will impact positively on the provision of equitable opportunity in a school setting for those students vulnerable due to their financial circumstances and ultimately on their future life chances.

POVERTY IN THE AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND CONTEXT

The New Zealand Salvation Army released their tenth State of the Nation Annual Report earlier in the year and reported that “entrenched child poverty has become the new normal” (New Zealand Salvation Army, 2017, p. 4) with numbers of children facing material hardship increasing by an estimated 5000 in 2016 (ibid). The 2016 *Child Poverty Monitor Technical Report* developed in partnership with the *Office for the Commission for Children*, the J.R. McKenzie Trust and the *NZ Child and Youth Epidemiology Service* at Otago University identified a strong link between material deprivation and school achievement: “For students attending schools in areas with the highest deprivation scores, 65% achieved NCEA in Level 2 in 2015 compared with 92% of students attending schools in areas with the lowest deprivation scores” (Simpson, Duncanson, Oben, Wicken & Gallagher, 2016, p. 5).

In November 2016, a parliamentary inquiry investigated why students with learning difficulties such as dyslexia, autism and dyspraxia received more help if they came from wealthier schools. More than half of decile one schools have no students receiving assistance at New Zealand Certificate Educational Attainment (NCEA) exam time according to New Zealand Qualification Authority (NZQA) figures (Report of the Education and Science Committee, 2016). Students from high decile (wealthier) schools are receiving three times as much support than students in low decile secondary schools. This assistance came in the form of reader/writer, computer, rest breaks, braille or enlarged papers. Although the situation has recently improved, the initial concern was that only wealthy schools could afford the psychologist fees needed to assess special assessment conditions (SAC) criteria or that “parents of children at these schools can afford to pay for diagnostic services” (Report of the Education and Science Committee, 2016, p. 28) or that parents from low decile schools “cannot afford to pay for the technology their children need” (ibid, p. 45).

Some recommendations from the inquiry included that the government task the Ministry of Education (MOE) to:

- publicly fund services for Māori and Pasifika
- continue to work to provide more equitable access to special assessment conditions – in particular for low-decile schools
- ensure that Special Education Needs Coordinators (SENCO) and professional development focus on creating school culture of inclusion and providing advice about access to additional services.

In light of these recommendations it was noted that, “Equity of access to learning support services is an area of concern for the Ministry (of Education) ... we (the Education and Science Committee) consider that equity of access issues warrant further investigation” (Report of the Education and Science Committee, 2016, p. 23).

Additionally, the OECD has produced a range of reports that feature equity, especially in relation to students from differing socio-economic backgrounds. The *Equity and Quality in Education Report* (OECD, 2012) states the highest performing education systems across OECD countries are those that combine high quality and equity. In such education systems, the vast majority of students can attain high level skills and knowledge that depend on their ability and drive, more than on their socio-economic background ... the benefits of investing in equity in education outweigh the costs for both individuals and societies (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) 2012, p. 14). Similarly, an historic report from the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) indicated that poverty, if unaddressed, can explain up to 46 per cent of the difference in PISA scores in OECD countries (OECD PISA, 2012).

EQUITY IN AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND

It is considered difficult to succinctly define concepts of quality and equity. Levin (2003 cited in Field, Kuczera & Pont, 2007) noted that “while we may not be able to define [quality], we know it when we see it. For equity, it may be that while we cannot define what it is, we know when we are far from it” (p. 31). Field, Kuczera and Pont (2007) continue to argue that equity in education is a key objective of education systems and that it needs to be addressed on three fronts: the design of education systems, educational practices, and resourcing. They describe equity in education as including two dimensions - fairness and inclusion. Fairness implies that personal and social circumstances such as gender, socio-economic status or ethnic origin should not be an obstacle to educational success, inclusion implies a minimum standard of education for all.

In September 2016, a United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF) Report – *Our Voices, Our Rights* - written and produced by Aotearoa New Zealand young people, identified hopes, concerns and ideas for New Zealand (UNICEF, 2016). Over 1100 young people ranging in age from 7 to 18 years of age and from all over New Zealand responded to a range of questions. Youth were asked if they felt some children/tamariki in Aotearoa New

Zealand are treated differently by others and if so, for what reasons. Four reasons predominated, with ethnicity identified as the reason by 43 per cent of respondents, socio-economic status identified by 23 per cent of respondents, bullying identified by 11 per cent of respondents, and religion identified by 9 per cent of respondents. Young people recommended “providing more training and tools for teachers to enable them to create classroom environments that will support diversity and overcome unconscious bias” (UNICEF, 2016, p. 31). Unconscious bias was described as “where people unconsciously form social stereotypes about certain groups of people. Everyone holds unconscious beliefs about various social and identity groups as the human brain prefers to categorise everything it can to make its job easier” (ibid, p. 31).

When asked what areas should be given more attention by the government to help children/tamariki in Aotearoa New Zealand, the feedback showed that education and educational achievement was the area children/tamariki were most concerned about. In relation to this, 47 per cent of children/tamariki interviewed felt the government should do more for education and educational achievement and ideas included “... making education cheaper or free and providing breakfast or lunch in schools (UNICEF, 2016, p. 34). Other issues were healthcare 35 per cent, safety on the streets and at home 18 per cent and improved housing 19 per cent.

OECD findings echo concerns regarding the impact of material hardship and child poverty in the New Zealand community and its subsequent negative impact on learning. The New Zealand Treasury has commented on OECD findings reporting that:

... the socio-economic background of NZ students exerts a much larger influence on their achievement than in most other OECD countries ... in other words, NZ education system does not appear to be very good at enabling students to succeed, regardless of their background (Treasury’s Advice on Lifting Student Achievement in New Zealand Evidence Brief, 2012, p. 2)

The New Zealand Treasury went on to comment, “... the link between parents’ socio-economic status and a child’s educational outcome is very high in New Zealand compared internationally, suggesting that New Zealand’s education system does not lean against socio-economic background as much as education systems of other countries” (Treasury, 2013, p. 2), and that “Since education is the main way for enhancing intergenerational mobility, we are concerned about the equity implications of the

fact that New Zealand has the greatest percentage of the variance in school performance explained by a family’s economic status in the OECD’s Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) tests at age 15” (Treasury, 2013, p. 10).

It is interesting to remember that, as reported by Renwick (1998), New Zealand ... can claim to be the first country to reconstruct public education with the objective of providing equality of educational opportunity” (p. 337). The often-quoted statement by the New Zealand Director of Education from 1940 to 1960, Clarence Beeby is worth remembering: “The Government’s objective broadly expressed is that every person, whatever his level of academic ability, whether he/she be rich or poor, whether he/she live in the town or country has a right as a citizen to a free education of a kind for which he/she is best fitted and to the fullest extent of his/her powers.” This statement became the mission statement for the Department of Education for decades. Beeby was regarded as the architect of New Zealand’s world class education system and went on to work in the Pacific Nations, UNESCO and Harvard University. From a variety of sources the value of an equity focus for students from vulnerable financial circumstances and others is vital for an overall gain in excellence over the whole education system.

TE MANUAUTE O TE HUIA: INTRODUCING A UNIQUE FRAMEWORK OF EQUITY IN AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND:

The *Manuaute O Te Huia* is the Aotearoa New Zealand version of the Equity Literate Educator Framework and is represented by a kite. This manuaute (or kite) is made up of fourteen sticks signifying the ten principles and are combined with the existing four skills of the *Equity Literate Educators (ELE)* Framework provided by Gorski (2013). The metaphor of a kite in Māori is traditionally shaped like a triangle or bird (manu) and ascends to high places for all to view. This journey to high places (a quality, service or school) includes all in view. Aotearoa New Zealand, the last large landmass in the world to become inhabited was unique in that birds occupied every ecological niche. The Huia was most abundant in the region within which this Aotearoa version has been developed (i.e. Tamaki Nui A Rua) and is the most royal of all the ‘Children of Tane’.¹ These birds, with the male and female having different beaks, were seen to work together to survive. The male with the short beak broke away the bark and wood for the female to extend its longer beak to extract the grub. Such reciprocity of action is necessary for any effort or programme to succeed to support inclusion for all.

¹ Tane is the Māori God of the forest and birds

The *Manuauete O Te Huia Framework* has been developed as a strengths-based alternative to those perspectives that have, in the past, promoted a deficit view of poverty, and locate the problem with disadvantaged groups rather than focus on external factors pressing upon the vulnerable group or individual.

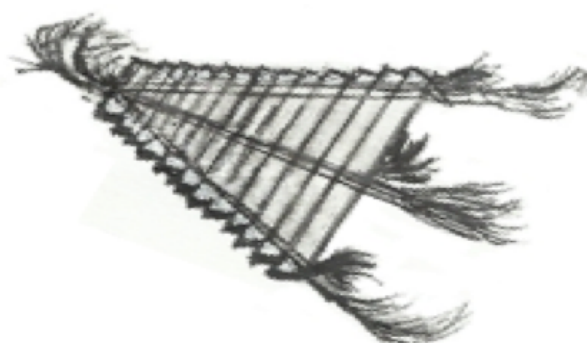


Table 1
Te Manuauete o Te Huia (or Aotearoa version of Equity Literate Educator Framework)

Whakatauki or Māori Proverb	Principle or Mātāpono	Commitment of Equity Literate Educators (ELE)
<p>He aha te mea nui o te Ao? He tangata, he tangata, he tangata. <i>What's the most important thing in the world? It is people, it is people, it is people</i> (Riley, 2013, p. 130). Inference: All people are valuable and need opportunities.</p>	<p>1. The right to equitable education opportunity is universal.</p>	<p>ELE believe that every student has a right to equitable educational opportunity.</p>
<p>Ruia te taitea, kohia te rangiura. <i>Strip away the sapwood and gather up the red heartwood</i> (Mead & Grove, 2004, p. 351) Inference: Look deeply into the detail of what is going on, rather than the surface features.</p>	<p>2. Poverty and class are interrelated.</p>	<p>ELE understand that class is related to a variety of identities. To understand how class inequities operate in our classrooms, we must learn to understand how inequities relate to income, education, ethnicity, gender, language, immigrant status, disability and other identities, and respond with strengths-based inclusive teaching practices.</p>
<p>Ahakoia iti, He iti mapihi pounamu. <i>There is singular beauty and immense value of even the tiniest piece of fine greenstone</i> (New Zealand Gazette, 2008, No. 32, p. 740). Inference: Each individual has unique characteristics and strengths.</p>	<p>3. Lower socio-economic status does not reflect a homogeneous group and embraces people with diverse values.</p>	<p>ELE recognise diversity within low income families and students. To study a singular culture of poverty would not develop our understanding but may instead strengthen our stereotypes.</p>
<p>E mohiotia ana o waho kei roto he aha. <i>One cannot tell what a vessel contains unless one can see inside</i> (Riley, 2013, p. 79). Inference: It is good to examine motives and values and share what is important.</p>	<p>4. Our beliefs, biases and prejudices about people in poverty inform how we teach and relate to them.</p>	<p>ELE know that our teaching philosophies and practices are in part driven by belief systems. We become ELE when we are willing to change fundamental stereotypical beliefs about low income students and their families, and aspire to maximise potential in all.</p>
<p>Mā whero, mā pango, Ka oti te mahi. <i>By red (education) and black (poverty) the work is finished</i> (Mead & Grove, 2004, p. 292). Inference: We must understand the key aspects of these two elements to fully be able to effectively cooperate to achieve success.</p>	<p>5. In order to understand the relationship between poverty and education, we must understand the biases and inequities experienced by people in poverty.</p>	<p>ELE, in addition to changing what we believe about low-income students, are committed to developing deeper understanding of the biases and inequities faced by low-income families both in and out of school and how these biases and inequities affect their performance and engagement in school.</p>
<p>Ka mate kaainga tahi, Ka ora kaainga rua. <i>One dwelling place is overcome but the second is secure</i> (Mead & Grove, 2004, p. 169). Inference: Putting all education effort into test scores only, without a focus on inclusion for all (including students) is fraught.</p>	<p>6. Test scores (National Standards) are inadequate measures of equity.</p>	<p>ELE are aware that equity (or its absence) cannot be captured by standardised testing. The scores measure levels of prior access to educational opportunity. It cannot capture student experience or diversity. Raising test scores is not the same as creating an equitable learning environment.</p>

<p>Ki te kore ngā pūtake e mākūkūngia, e kore te rākau e tupu. <i>If the roots of the tree are not watered, the tree will never grow</i> (Riley, 2013, p. 446).</p> <p>Inference: It is important to examine beyond the surface features to the heart of the matter to achieve long-term outcomes.</p>	<p>7. Class disparities in education are the result of inequities, not the result of cultures.</p>	<p>ELE understand that educational disparities do not primarily result from cultural conflicts but from inequities. The goal of eliminating disparities requires us to eliminate inequities rather than changing students' cultures.</p>
<p>Hurihia to araro ki te rā, tūkuna to atarangi kia taka ki muri i a koe. <i>Turn your face to the sun and the shadow will fall behind you</i> (Riley, 2013, p. 303).</p> <p>Inference: It is important to adopt a half full rather than half empty mindset.</p>	<p>8. Equitable educators adopt a resiliency rather than a deficit view of low income students and families.</p>	<p>ELE recognise and draw upon the strengths, knowledge and resiliencies accumulated by low income families. ELE reject deficit views that focus on fixing disenfranchised students but focus on factors that disenfranchise students.</p>
<p>Mā te huruhuru ka rere te manu. <i>With feathers a bird may fly</i> (Riley, 2013, p. 569).</p> <p>Inference: Ensure pedagogy is evidence-based, so that the student is progressing well and becoming less dependent.</p>	<p>9. Strategies for bolstering school engagement and learning must be based on evidence of what works.</p>	<p>ELE are aware of the societal bias against low income students and families. We are committed to basing instructional decisions not on popular biases, but on evidence of what works in New Zealand settings.</p>
<p>Whāia e koe ki te iti kahurangi; ki te tuohu koe, me he maunga teitei. <i>Pursue your dreams (excellence), if you should bow your head, let it be to a lofty mountain</i> (Riley, 2013, p. 851).</p> <p>Inference: Seek the very best.</p>	<p>10. The right to equitable educational opportunity includes the right to high expectations, higher order pedagogies and engaging curricula.</p>	<p>ELE demonstrate high expectations for low income students and families. This is through providing higher order pedagogy and engaging curricula.</p>

Skill	Examples of Associated Skills and Dispositions of Equity Literate Educators
<p>1. Ability to <i>recognise</i> biases and inequities, including those that are subtle.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notice even subtle bias in classroom materials, classroom interactions, school policies and practices (examples may also come from classroom practises and out-of-school activities, such as sports and outdoor education opportunities) • Reject deficit views that locate the sources of outcome inequalities (such as achievement disparities) as existing just within, rather than pressing upon, low-income families • Can articulate "Five Poverty Myths Debunked, (TacklingPovertyNZ - McGuinness Institute, 2015)" and "Common Stereotypes, (Gorski, 2013)"
<p>2. Ability to <i>respond</i> to biases and inequities in the immediate term.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have the facilitation skills and content knowledge necessary to intervene effectively when biases and inequities arise in the classroom or school • Cultivate in students the ability to analyse bias in classroom materials, classroom interactions, school policies and practices • Foster conversations with colleagues about bias and equity concerns at their schools
<p>3. Ability to <i>redress</i> biases and inequities in the long term.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocate against inequitable school practices and advocate for equitable school practices that are identified during an appreciative inquiry process or problem-solving process using the principles of Equity Literacy • Teach in relevant and age-appropriate ways about issues of disadvantage

4. Ability to *create and sustain* a bias-free and equitable learning environment.

- Express high expectations for all students through higher order pedagogy and curriculum e.g. PB4L (Positive Behaviour for Learning -- www.pb4l.tki.org.nz) and Quality Teaching for Diverse Students in Schooling (BES) by Adrienne Alton-Lee (2003)
- Consider how they assign homework and communicate with families, understanding that students have different levels of access to resources like computers and the internet
- Be alert to and avoid stereotype threat
- Cultivate a classroom/school environment in which students/parents feel free to express themselves openly and honestly and see themselves, their culture and other identities reflected positively
- Form productive partnerships with iwi, community groups, community and government organisations, which understand “It takes a whole village, to raise a child “
- To form/sustain above partnerships with a process, which models the principles, featured such as; appreciative inquiry and the “Most Significant Change” (Evaluation) Technique (Dart & Davies, 2005)

Support for the development of this framework is acknowledged from Tamaki Nui A Rua elders, Mrs Noa Nicholson (QSM) and Mr Manahi Paewai (QSM), who have assisted me in a range of community projects for over twenty years. Thanks also to Tamai Nicholson and Paul Gorski for working with me to form this NZ version of the framework.



TE MANUATE O TE HUIA FRAMEWORK AND ITS APPLICATION IN AN EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

Context

In the last few years, a Decile 3 rural school has received a number of new enrolments some of whom came from a community nearby, which is vibrant, has a steady population and, according to census data, has a deprivation index of 9. This means that a significant number of people in the wider community have no access to a vehicle, telephone, their own home, have below threshold incomes and limited access to other well-being indicators. In my regular liaison meetings as an RTLB, I heard comments about a lack of resources that form barriers to engagement and heard of school efforts to address family hardship issues. The school had funded resources for households in extreme hardship, for example, food parcels. Also, class teachers had themselves paid for: food, some (school) clothing, and as well (provided some) with coats for school trips. The Board of Trustees (BOT) had paid some bus and all sports

fees one year to enable engagement in out-of-school sports competitions.

The Ministry of Education Senior Advisor/BOT and support services (e.g. Social Workers in Schools [SWIS]) had identified non-education barriers to learning and these had been discussed with the principal and RTLB. The principal identified a wish to understand complex issues to ensure all learners had equal opportunity to strengthen well-being and achieve excellence. The principal was acutely aware of the subtle impact of missed learning opportunities for those in vulnerable financial circumstances.

These discussions were at a time when the RTLB service contract with host schools featured students from low socio-economic backgrounds as a priority cohort. The new and current MOE contract between host schools and the RTLB service provider does not give students from low socio-economic backgrounds the same priority as groups such as Māori, Pasifika, and those with special needs. Hence the casework as outlined fitted with RTLB casework as a school referral.

Data Gathering and Analysis

I worked collaboratively with the principal to gather student, parent and staff voice to introduce the equity literate framework and through the appreciative inquiry process. An overall description of the framework assisted to get everyone on board this effort and the appreciative inquiry supported the next step process. It was important to have the 'right people in the right bus going in the right direction'.

This appreciate inquiry approach is emerging after 25 years of development in business and more recently in education. The appreciative inquiry (AI) process "offers a means of engaging colleagues and students in educational development without the baggage of these deficit-driven, performance management approaches ... The focus throughout then is not on problems, failings and deficits but on strengths, successes, opportunities and innovations, an inclusive approach to inclusion" (Kadi-Hanifi, et al., 2014, p. 585).

Cooperrider & Barrett, 2001, p. 192, as cited in Kadi-Hanifi et al., 2014, p. 586).

The Discovery phase seeks to establish the positives in the current situation (see whakatauki in ELE principle 8). It is the key research phase, and involves the collection and collation of positive comments from key stakeholders. The school community including staff, student voice, parents and community groups such as service clubs or charities could be involved in identifying the strengths. This is a focus of what's strong, not what's wrong, and is based on the following questions:

- What conditions exist within our school and community that foster inclusion for all/equitable learning opportunities for all?
- What is going on?
- Who is involved?
- What makes it work?



Figure 1. The AI Process. Sourced from: Kadi-Hanifi, Dagman, Peters, Snell, Tutton, & Wright, (2014, p. 587).

This process seeks to engage key stakeholders in the conversations at the outset. It can include student voice and it can be used to include the wider community. In particular, key members of local groups such as charities, local government leadership, service clubs, social services and other groups, which already support members of the local community, can be involved.

According to Kadi-Hanifi, et al. (2014), "The Appreciative Inquiry (AI) process works through a four-stage model, the 4D cycle, of discovery, dream, design and destiny. The focus is important in AI as the approaches underlying theory is that "organisations move in the direction of what they study" (Ludema,

- How are we explicitly supporting students from poorly resourced households now?
- How do we scaffold those students who are poorly resourced now?
- How do we provide our students with a level playing field now?
- Why have some students from low-income families made significant learning gains here in this school?

Students responded to a questionnaire which was a focus on what was currently working well (see whakatuaki ELE principle 3). Parents responded with an invitation to describe the school in four

separate words. A one page wordle summarised and highlighted the most common words used. Staff were brought together to examine the elements and skills of *Te Manuauate o te Huia* and identified those practices that currently worked well.

After identifying the best of what is, the next stage (Stage Two) is to dream what could be (see whakatauki in ELE 10). According to Kadi-Hanifi et al. (2014) "The whole group is encouraged to work together to build on the best of what is and envision a future where these statements are not just true in certain cases, but as a matter of course" (p. 586).

Questions are asked such as:

- How can all students maintain or enhance their literacy levels over the summer?
- How could we "create and sustain a bias-free and equitable learning environment?" (Gorski, 2013, p. 21)
- How can we be sure that all educational opportunities we provide give all students the chance to succeed?
- How can we strive to have high expectations for and positive relationships with those students and their families?

The third stage moves on from the vision to a co-construction design (see whakatauki ELE principle 2). It responds to the question, "What should the school community look like and what would be its guiding values, principles and practices?" At this point, stakeholders are invited to be involved in applying the principles outlined in the *Te Manuauate o te Huia* framework. Action plans are formed with timelines and those with responsibility for implementation are made transparent. Ideas may emerge from questions such as:

- How can we understand the biases and inequities experienced by people in vulnerable financial circumstances in our community?
- What local resources are available but as yet unused in our efforts to provide equity, such as Charitable Trusts (especially those that feature on the NZ philanthropic trust database) and funding unique to this geographic area?
- What other groups could support our efforts in this area of concern?

- What services are contracted to support vulnerable families in this area that we may be unaware of or not yet used?
- Are our educational resources expressing positive outlooks for all learners?
- How have we been aware of our own stereotypical beliefs about some identities learners have and how has this changed our practice?
- How have we determined that what we do when planning/implementing learning programmes is based on evidence of what works?

Finally, the Destiny phase invites participants to live their ideas, to innovate and act to move the school community towards the vision. It is more than an action plan but about "establishing a sense of purpose and a will to move forward" (Kadi-Hanifi et al., 2014, p. 587). It is a commitment to form the first steps towards a shared future. It answers the question: What can we (and I) do now to help us move forward inclusively?

Intervention

I worked collaboratively with the school principal and we held two engagement meetings including one call-back day for staff in the mid-year break. In the morning, participants explored feedback and voiced shared understandings of *Te Manuauate o te Huia*. In the afternoon, we attended a meeting with key iwi services, the local *Strengthening Family Service Coordinator*, the town mayor, a Lions Club member, the BOT and local service provider groups. The group agreed to:

- Register with *Kidscan*² to support clothing, shoe and healthy snack needs and other items
- Review the planning and implementation of the NZ Curriculum programmes in reference to *Te Manuauate o te Huia*
- Apply to *Charitable Foundation* and invite local service clubs to host the application for fresh fruit
- Involve the *NZ Women's Institute* in teaching home craft skills to a small group
- Involve *Iwi*³ Services and Community Trust services in whanau⁴ support
- Apply to a special Mayoral Fund (unique to this geographic area) for individual student support

² A NZ charitable trust providing food, clothing and basic healthcare in schools to disadvantaged children

³ Māori word for an extended kinship group or tribe

⁴ Māori word for family group

- Set up a community garden
- Review the design phase with a community participant group

Approximately one term later, after the call-back day in the school holidays, another community engagement meeting was held. This meeting included key agencies unable to attend the first meeting and lasted for nearly two hours.

Outcomes

An emerging method of evaluating complex change in schools is a method called “Most Significant Change” technique (MSC). This involves participatory monitoring and evaluation through gathering a range of participant’s impact statements (in this case; student, staff and principal). These stories are then selected by a small group to reflect the most representative outcomes of the effort. It is in variance with the more external and judgemental evaluation practices. It is designed to enable local ownership and provide project sustainability and align with the overall approach that Gandhi (1924) stated: “As the means, so the ends. There is no wall of separation between the means and the end.” I see it as an application of the *whakatauki* - *Hurihia to aroaro ki te rā, tūkuna to atarangi kia taka ki muri i a koe* (ELE principle 8).

Within six months of the original community engagement meeting, all the agreed efforts were taking form. There was a delay in seeking seed funding for one project, however much had been accomplished. The principal commented, “I have been absolutely astounded with the amount of support been offered and been given. The support has come in many forms. Students have been placed in the very centre of decisions.” One staff member commented: “All schools would benefit allowing opportunities (to get support) for families and students without feeling like they are the only one.”

The Kidscan application had been successful and resulted in jackets for all students and shoes where necessary. A comment from a staff member was “(jackets) ... were a huge benefit at recent sports events where many children are usually cold, they were protected, warm and dry – but most of all proud to be wearing them. They were also able to gain energy by eating supplied scroggin and bars – many children don’t eat at events (or even at school).” Healthy snack food was also readily available. A student commented, “The rain jacket was warm and comfortable also the shoes were properly made and I stayed dry and was able to attend the events without

getting wet.” Another commented about the food that partly came through Kidscan, “It was helping my mum with food and clothing because money is hard to get.”

It was decided primarily from the student feedback during the appreciative inquiry process to form a “Putting the Play into Playground” Project. This was an opportunity to make over a tired playground and involved inviting a regional sports advisor into the school to work with students in the design phase. We were able to identify a potential seed funder and a promising top-up funder. A community leader at the community afternoon meeting encouraged an application to come from the school to a funding organisation he was to be appointed onto.

A school and community garden has now been set up and developed. Some students commented, “I always learn something in the school garden like how much you water them a day. How you plant them in the ground. It been so awesome doing garden”, and another, “I like the feeling when a plant pops out of the ground it feels like I achieve something.” The community garden coordinator and parent commented that “all the children asked to take radish seeds home last week” and “they now know that they can grow a radish in 3 weeks or a lettuce in 4 weeks.” She also commented that a “troublesome boy’s behaviour has greatly improved ... he’s got an interest and some (positive) attention.” She said that, “All children were given ... seeds ... (last term) ... and tomorrow at the school assembly there will be prizes for the tallest plant, biggest flower, etc.” She also commented that “a couple of parents have come along (to learn about gardening) because their kids are excited about it” (the community garden). Over the next school holiday period there will be a working bee and next term each student in the school will have a fertile area to grow a variety of seeds in. There is now a special library shelf just for gardening books. The local gardening group was reported to be looking to support this effort more in the future.

Connecting with local and regional groups has been enhanced. A comment from the principal was;

“I have been in this job for four years and I never knew these people existed.” There was also a link made to a very strong charitable agency in a nearby town. This agency provided a Christmas hamper within 24 hours to a family where both parents, one more recently, had been diagnosed with life-threatening illness and were under pressure from the bank with loan repayments. On hearing of the circumstances of the family the agency also offered

a cash gift for Christmas expenses. Another agency attending the second community meeting was very responsive to a school request for support and towards the end of the year the principal commented, "watching families/students receive support was truly overwhelming. As school professionals, we now know who to turn to for support in different areas. We have experienced people dealing with serious needs."

CONCLUSION

Te Manuauate o Te Huia has defined the principles and skills that support equitable education opportunities for all in a New Zealand context and especially those vulnerable due to their economic circumstances in a local school community. The framework resonated with staff and attracted diverse and supportive community participation. Applying the principles using the appreciative inquiry process has involved gathering student, parent, and staff voice, and after a twenty-week intervention, their stories highlight the positive impact of this ongoing collective effort. Putting equity conversations at the centre of a school review through the ELE lens and applying the ELE skills has enabled other local groups and community leadership to support these efforts with resources and a more coordinated approach. A Marian Edelman quote seems appropriate here: "The future which we hold in trust for our own children will be shaped by our fairness to other people's children."

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