

Supporting and developing Maori and Te Reo Maori teachers

Angela Palalagi – Kedgley Intermediate

At least four times a year, Maori and Te Reo Maori teachers gather in South Auckland to discuss effective teaching practices for Maori students and to provide needs-based professional development for the teachers.

The Te Kahui Kaiako Reo Maori o Te Tai Tonga cluster was formed six years ago, after Kedgley Intermediate teacher Angela Palalagi attended a language acquisition course at Auckland University.

“At the end of the course we were challenged to share what we had learned with others. I collected the emails of every school in South Auckland and sent out an invitation to create a cluster to support Maori teachers and teachers of Te Reo Maori,” she said.

“I developed it as a Maori teacher. I didn’t feel I had enough support as the only Maori teacher at my school. We’ve come to realise that as Maori teachers and Te Reo Maori teachers in our schools that many of us are already leaders and need some kind of leadership support as well.”

Professional development sessions currently focus on language acquisition and are run by outside experts or by Angela and other teachers who attend Ako Panuku, a professional development agency that provides support for Maori teachers in intermediate and high school.

The cluster is now putting together a proposal to their schools to fund a teacher-only day once a term because the group currently meets on a Saturday and availability is real issue.

“This is really worthwhile professional development for us, but we’re really struggling to get people there regularly. We want to create plans, more long term, more sustainable. Currently on a Saturday, some people can make it, some can’t.

“The professional development we gain from the kahui cannot be found anywhere else, and is absolutely invaluable to our development as Maori and Te Reo Maori teachers,” she said.

Angela is a classroom release teacher and the Year 8 Te Reo teacher at Kedgley Intermediate. She is also the Maori Advocate at Kedgley and another nearby school.

She saw the need for whanau engagement, so created the role of Maori Advocate three years ago.

“It’s to do with whanau engagement and getting whanau on board, opening the doors so they’re happy to come into the school and have their say. You really need someone dedicated to that kaupapa so the whanau know there is that connection there any time they need it,” she said.

“It’s about a commitment to genuine collaboration with the wider community to allow their voice to be heard. This was no easy task. Systems were entrenched and whanau were used to being in the background,” said Angela.

Carefully creating opportunities for dialogue and interaction has resulted in exciting outcomes.

“Just last night the whanau came in and ran their own hui and talked about how they see things going for Maori. We had a noho last term that they asked for and now the korero is ‘I’m so glad that

we're creating these opportunities for our kids'. It's not just acknowledging who they are, but helping them to know who they are -helping them to find that identity. We're creating those opportunities and they're on board now, talking about ways to create opportunities. They're going to drive it. It's very exciting."

"From the noho we created – no, not created - we *found* some of the Maori leaders at Kedgley. They were already there. We just needed to provide the opportunity for them to reveal themselves and to grow. Also from the whanau hui we once again found whanau who are culturally rich, who lead other whanau who are still developing their cultural identity. We're all at different stages of the journey in terms of our cultural identity but coming together allows us to support each other in our journey."