Sabbatical Report
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> Sabbatical Purpose
> To investigate programmes and practices that enhance the relationship between families, communities, schools - in particular those that improve the achievement and engagement of Māori children and their Whānau.

A) Introduction

The 'impetus' for choosing to examine this topic, as part of my sabbatical, came about from my enrolment in a University of Waikato Leadership Centre course:
   "Building schools as places for learning: The role of trust, families and communities."
The course was facilitated by the Director of the Leadership Centre, Jeremy Kedian.

It was established that there is a 'mass of evidence' demonstrating that schools and student learning are strongly influenced by 'trust'. Similarly there is solid evidence to demonstrate the impact of families and communities on student learning and achievement.

Exploring the relationship between trust, families and communities, schools and effective leadership - in influencing student learning, was the focus of this seminar series. We were (subsequently) required to inquire into practices in our own schools with the aim of developing strategies to assist in the further development of our schools and contribute to on-going self-review and professional development initiatives.

We set ourselves two key questions to examine
1.   If 'social capital' is one of the primary contributors to learning and improving student achievement
- how can we describe it?
- how do we develop it?

2.   If 'high trust' organisations "out-perform" low-trust organisations
- how do we describe trust?
- how do we develop it?

B) Background 'Commentary' - the Theory?

Social capital refers to social cohesion. It represents social networks, reciprocity and trust. It includes collegiality, conviviality, communication, community contribution, goodwill, fellowship and compassion and belief in the value of the community. It is seen as the currency of successful communities. It values equity, voice and collaboration.

Field (2003) says that the theory of social capital is, at heart, straight forward. Its central thesis can be summed up in two words: "relationships matter". By making connections with one another and keeping them going over time, people are able to work together to achieve things that they either could not achieve by themselves or could only achieve with great difficulty. People connect through a series of networks and they tend to share common values with member of those networks.

We can conclude with some confidence, that there is a close relationship between peoples social networks and their educational performance. Social capital then, is essentially about networks, trust, engagement, communication, shared values, aspirations and interconnectedness.

Further examination of the concept of 'social capital' finds that most models include the following elements:
• a strong sense of shared values and social aspirations
• a shared sense of social/geographical identity
• levels of trust
• levels of interdependence and sharing
• collaborative action
• levels of voluntary and social engagement
• co-operation in economic and social projects
• a sense of control and investment in the future

The question can then be asked - <u>why does there seem to be a 'paucity</u>' of "social capital" 'out there'??

<u>Mulford and Sims</u> (2001) in their study of the factors influencing the development of young people in the USA referred to a 'crumbling infrastructure' reflected in the following observations:
• most adults no longer consider it their responsibility to play a role in the lives of their children outside the family
• parents are less available for their children because of demands outside the home
• adults and institutions have become more uncomfortable articulating values
• society has become more and more 'age segregated'
• socialising systems (e.g. families, schools, congregations) have become more isolated, competitive, suspicious of each other
• the mass media has become influential shapers of young peoples attitudes and norms
• as problems and solutions have become more complex more of the responsibility for young people has been turned over to the professionals

Other reasons have been reflected in the following:
• less political and civic engagement (membership of clubs, less political activism)
• a decline in 'informal social ties' (the things that involve you doing something with someone else e.g. entertaining at home)
• a change in tolerance and trust (more police, lawyers, security personnel than ever before!)
• changes in family structure (more people living alone)
• suburban sprawl (less time and inclination to be involved in groups because of the travel involved)
• electronic entertainment (this has profoundly privatized leisure time - T.V. may contribute up to 40% of the decline in involvement in groups)

<u>Given this scenario - what then are the benefits of 'building social capital</u>?

<u>In the 'big picture'</u>,
the outcomes would be a more civil society, where tolerance, mutual respect and meaningful relationships prevent social disintegration in the form of family breakdown, delinquency, crime, interest group conflict, ethnic violence - and where business can thrive.

High 'social capital' also enhances academic success. One answer to academic under achievement might not just be to strive to improve the efficiency of schools - but also to increase "social capital".

'Putnams' assessment of this remains an important reference point also:

• child development is powerfully shaped by social capital (trust, networks across family, school, peer group effect opportunities and choices, educational achievement.

• in the 'public arena' - places have higher crime rates in large part because people don't participate in community organisations, don't supervise younger people and aren't linked through networks of friends.

• where Trust and Social networks flourish and individuals, firms, neighbourhoods - even nations prosper economically. Social capital can help to mitigate the insidious effects of socioeconomic disadvantage.

• there appears to be a strong relationship between the possession of social capital and better health. 'As a rule of thumb', if you belong to <u>no</u> groups but decide to join one, you can cut your risk of dying over the next year <u>in half</u>!

- regular club attendance, volunteering, entertaining or church attendance is the equivalent of getting a college degree or more than doubling your income!!

In the context of a <u>school</u> environment, Dewey <u>writing in 1915</u> argued:

The role of the community in making the schools vital is just as important as the role of the school itself. For in a community where schools are looked upon as isolated institutions, as a necessary convention, the school will remain largely so in spite of the most skilful methods of teaching. But a community that demands something visible from its schools, that recognises the part they play in the welfare of the whole.....Such a community will have social schools, and whatever its resources, it will have schools that develop community spirit and interests. (Skilbeck (1970) p125).

'Social schools' is a very powerful image in this context, as is the notion of a school being 'visible'; <u>both reinforce the notion of schools being of their communities, not just in their communities.</u>

In the context of <u>school leadership</u>, the implications are also obvious. <u>Michael Fullan</u> argues that 'it remains the case that social factors are disproportionately significant in their impact on children's academic achievement. It may therefore be an appropriate time to focus on the social environment of the learner than increasing the emphasis on the technology of teaching.....Any school reform that seeks to improve relationships has a chance to succeed and that which doesn't is doomed to fail. If we are to take on a new role as school leaders what strategies are available to us?

• First schools need to make <u>relationships</u> their core business

• Finding better ways to bridge community and school is the essence of a leaders role - (and combining that with the many other responsibilities of school leaders, is a daunting task)

C) <u>So what</u>?

How then is this 'theory' being reflected in schools and their communities - and through Ministry of Education and ERO (Agencies) initiatives? (or is it?) (my focus here has been to focus on developing social capital, by examining how engaging parents/whānau in schools contributes positively to the education of their children and then could be reflected in student achievement).

- As a way of analysing (thinking about) parent/whānau involvement/engagement in schools and the education of their children the following table was published by the Ministry of Education a number of years ago.

Levels of Consultation / Parental Involvement	
1	**Being Informed** Parents are informed about the school and its programme, and they are encouraged to give the school information. They are not asked for their views or opinions.
2	**Taking Part in Activities** Parents are involved in activities, but in a limited way; they may listen to speakers, attend social or sporting functions, or respond to questionnaires.
3	**Being Involved through Dialogue and exchange of Views** Parents are asked to consider needs and goals, and to discuss these with teachers.
4	**Helping to make Decisions** Parents are asked for their views when decisions affecting their sons and daughters are being made. They help to decide on the content and emphasis of school programmes.
5	**Having Responsibility to Act** Parents make decisions in partnership with the school; they are involved in both planning and evaluating programmes.

The table shows a way to analyse the contributions and levels of involvement from parents and caregivers. Also by knowing these levels it allows schools to recognise that parents need to feel they can contribute at a range of levels according to their willingness, knowledge and availability.

This framework could be a good starting point for schools to undertake a review of how parent engagement might 'look' and lead to some actions/initiatives that could be developed further.

The Education Review Office has prepared two major reports in recent years.
(a) In June 2008, " Partners in Learning: Schools engagement with parents, whānau and communities" was sent to schools.

Partners in Learning: Schools engagement with
parents, whānau and communities: June 2008

- Engagement was defined as "a meaningful, respectful partnership between schools and their parents, whānau, communities that focuses on improving the educational experiences and success of every child.

- The 'executive summary' referred to six key factors, that are critical to enhancing and strengthening engagement.

1. Leadership: - a vision and commitment from school leaders to working in partnership with parents.
2. Relationships: - both formal and informal; trust and respect.

3. <u>School Culture</u> - inclusive, actively involved in decision making, responding to concerns and questions promptly.
4. <u>Partnerships</u> - effective learning partnerships help parents understand and share in their child's learning and achievement.
5. <u>Community networks</u> - school involvement in community activities and events; priorities established for student achievement.
6. <u>Communication</u> - timely, useful and easily understood - barriers are identified and overcome.

Relationships that parents have with their child's school and teachers are often determined by their initial experiences. Times of transition into school, between classes and between schools are often crucial to the establishment of meaningful and respectful relationships.

A wide range of 'recommendations' were made to schools: identifying ways in which schools could further strengthen their engagement with parents/whānau. The report also developed some "<u>indicators</u>" for successful engagement based on what worked well for schools (included in the discussion section of the report). They could form part of a schools review of a schools 'effectiveness' in engaging parents/whānau.

This report also 'recommended' some "next steps" for schools which wanted to further improve this important element of its culture.

• take stock of their school community by:
   - identifying groups of parents who are well engaged;
   - identifying those who are not engaged and what the barriers to engagement might be, particularly in relation to their children's learning and well-being; and
   - putting in place strategies to develop partnerships with these groups;
• identify and discuss the values and beliefs of school personnel towards parents' involvement in the school and as partners in their children's learning;
• review the success of current policies and practice in engaging with all parents, whānau and families in their community (the indicators in the Self Review section of this report provide a framework for such an evaluation); and
• explore ways to strengthen networks with the wider community

Two companion reports to this study were released later in 2008. These reports provided schools with more in-depth findings about examples of <u>good practice</u> and about the perspectives of diverse communities of parents and families in their engagement with the schools that their children attend.

> He kai poutaka me kinikini atu, he kai poutaka me horehore atu, mā te tamaiti te iho
> Look after the children to ensure the future strength of the people

A subsequent ERO Report "<u>Promoting Success for Māori Students: Schools Progress, June 2010</u>" states:
The success of Māori students at school is a matter of national interest and priority…… schools can make a difference to the achievement of Māori students by 'putting effort where it will count most…...by [1] using achievement information to improve practice, [2] by monitoring and making useful changes to classroom practice' and [3] by <u>consulting Māori parents and whānau and valuing their input</u> - schools have improved outcomes for Māori students.

In writing this report ERO prepared a response sheet (Feb 2007) for schools to complete and discuss at the time of their ERO review. It could be used to initiate discussion in your own school.

The report comments further: "Although schools engagement with the Māori community has improved overall in a sizable minority of schools, consultation with Māori parents and whānau is limited - and Māori parents engagement in their children's education is not valued".

A schools capacity to promote success for Māori is a key focus in EROs methodology for school reviews. The impact of school practice on improving Māori success will now be a critical factor in deciding the timing of each schools future review. ERO does not consider any school can claim to be high performing unless the school can demonstrate "that the majority of Māori learners are progressing well and succeeding as Māori".

One of the 'recommendations' from this report is: for school leaders "to use a variety of ways to engage parent and whānau regularly and involve them is student learning".

Partners in Learning: Sept 2008
Partners in Learning: good practice Sept 2008

ERO established the following findings in relation to the engagement with schools of Māori parents and whānau.

What did parents expect of schools?
• Involvement in the education of their children was critical
• they expected teachers to have a range of skills and strategies to engage children in learning
• they wanted accurate, honest and useful information about their child's progress and achievement
• they wanted to be involved in their child's learning and be invited to come to school and be part of their child's learning
• they wanted their culture and values acknowledged through the use of Māori protocols, where applicable
• they expected schools to provide programmes in te reo Māori and tikanga that supported their child's learning

What did schools expect of them?
• to support systems, expectations and procedures for attendance and behaviour management
• to follow protocols for visiting classrooms, teachers
• to attend school hui and support children with their homework

What worked well?
• children to relate well to their teacher(s) - who respected and acknowledged their cultural identity
• opportunities to celebrate success and discuss children's learning
• as parents they were listened to and their ideas valued
• having Māori trustees on the Board helped engagement with the child's school
• whānau groups for support and discussion about learning and wider school matters

<u>What made engagement difficult</u>?
teachers who held negative or deficit views about children
• not being well informed when their child had difficulties with learning
• when school information was not 'clearly' stated or not made available to them
• not having clear procedures for raising concerns if they occurred
• parents own negative experiences in their own schooling
• not having the time to go on trips
• not having the money for additional activities e.g. camp

<u>What would help</u>?
• having a receptive principal (Snr management team) who actually listened to them
• importance / ease of being able to contact their child's teacher
• 'different' ways of conducting hui / consultation activities to express views and give feedback
• being involved in helping their child set learning goals
• see homework as a way of strengthening the home-school partnership (clear expectations as to purpose and level of parent involvement)
• open to different ways of communicating (texts, emails)
• school Māori Support Group in place and Kaumatua backing strengthens engagement

The report (Partners in Learning 2008) Appendix includes a list of "Indicators of successful home school engagement" and questions to support self-review in schools.

Finally, according to this ERO report
What could a proactive school endeavouring to engage parents/whānau of Māori students "<u>look like</u>"?

With leadership from the principal and board, the school demonstrated a strong commitment to success for Māori. Māori student achievement information was comprehensively analysed. Targeted interventions for Māori students were closely monitored, reviewed and reported to the board. The principal discussed *Ka Hikitia - Managing for Success* with the board, and trustees incorporated its principles in their 2009 to 2011 charter and strategic plan.

The board was proactive in seeking ways to improve success for Māori students, and showed willingness to fund new initiatives. Board members were knowledgeable about how well Māori students achieved and what responsibilities they had as trustees to fully engage them in learning.

The following school initiatives demonstrate how this school strives to engage them and their whānau:
• The school ensured that Māori children were represented in leadership, cultural and sporting positions at the school.
• The board employed (part-time) a Māori woman as Kaiawhina. She discussed syndicate planning with team leaders and assisted with the integration of a Māori dimension in each unit. The kaiawhina also taught te reo Māori to small groups of Māori children, using simple Māori texts to extend their reo. Teachers were expected to attend sessions to learn alongside the children.
• A part-time teacher aide who is Māori worked with Māori children who needed help to improve their reading.
• The board knew about their obligation to consult the Māori community, and fulfilled this in different ways to ensure high attendance by parents at school hui. The most successful method has been personalised interviews with each whānau. Student achievement was

discussed and individual goals and targets for each child set with parents. Parents preferred this one-to-one conversation with the principal, as it was specific to their own child's needs.

D) Policy to Practice? (case studies)

("Stepping up the performance of the education systems to ensure Māori success - as Māori)

1. Ka Hikitia - Managing for Success: The Māori Education Strategy 2008-2012, provides a key focus for strategies to improve the 'achievement' of Māori children. The strategy among many other themes refers to the importance of "productive partnerships". "Learning relationships and productive partnerships with parents , whānau and iwi are essential to Māori students achieving agreed education pathways to success. Māori students will benefit when teachers, leaders collaborate with students, whānau, iwi - to share knowledge and expertise."

So how does the Ka Hikitia document see this happening in 'everyday' school practice??

While all 4 Development Focus Areas (Foundation years; Young People engaged in learning; Māori Language Education; Organisational Success) would indirectly reflect overall engagement of whānau in the education of their children - direct reference is only made specifically in Focus Area One: Foundation years.

Improve transitions to school.	• Support whānau and their children to make an effective transition to school through the provision of resources and information programmes to whānau. • Develop a 'transition toolkit' and, through professional development, support teachers in early childhood education and schools to work with whānau and improve the transition from early childhood education to school for and with Māori students. • Establish evaluative reviews to report on the effectiveness of the transition to school for Māori children as a priority in 2008/09 and 2009/10. • Support schools to use the best evidence about effective teaching and learning in early childhood education settings to influence quality teaching in the first years of school.

Strengthens the participation of Māori whānau in their children's learning in the early years at school.	• Integrate evidence that supports involving whānau in the teaching and learning process into all professional development contracts, evaluations and quality teaching and leadership programmes. • Strengthen home-school partnerships by supporting schools to identify and access effective home-based literacy programmes; for example, the Reading Together programme.. • Support effective whānau participation in implementing the New Zealand Curriculum and Te Marautanga o Aotearoa in 2008-10. • Develop a home-based literacy programme to support whānau with children in Māori-medium education. • Use existing communications programmes and other resources to clarify what whānau can expect quality early childhood education services and schools to provide in terms of teaching and learning, and their rights and responsibilities as parents and whānau. • Through the iwi partnerships programme, support iwi to build the capacity of hapū and whānau to engage and participate in early childhood education and early years schooling.

2. "Better Relationships for Better Learning" (MOE 2000) was a set of guidelines for Boards of Trustees and schools on 'engaging' with Māori parents, whānau and communities. (an oldie but a goodie?? category?)
Sections of these guidelines that relate particularly to this report include:

(a) "Schools activities and interaction with Māori parents"
Initial contacts can grow into greater parent participation in decisions about their children's education……. There are many ways in which Māori parents can be brought into the school and welcomed as valued advisors and participants. Suggestions included:

• Being 'whānau-friendly' - first impressions count (induction days, grand parent days, appointing a Māori liaison officer to help make parents feel comfortable and positive about the school.)

• Using the schools resources to enhance Māori parents learning - developing opportunities for parents to learn can be a very successful way of bringing Māori parents into your school. (te reo classes, computer courses, training tutors or for the pause/ prompt/praise programme, Reading Together programme) often having spin-offs for their children's learning.

• Organising social activities to bring Māori parents to school. Concerts, sport activities, pot luck dinners, BBQ - informal ways of 'consulting' with parents - although formal questionnaires also have their place as well.

• Finding practical ways to help parents get to meetings - child's creche, transport.

• Identifying the skills of Māori parents and whānau (weaving, kapahaka, coaching sport, classroom support, vocational,/professional skills.)

• Improving how information is provided to Māori parent and whānau - often what's missing is clear information about 'simple matters', how can interviews be organised in a more 'relaxed' / friendly way.

(b) Relationships with the community
Schools can provide a positive lead to positive change in community attitudes to things Māori and provide a model for local organisations to follow. They have the opportunity to develop relationships with Māori that involve mutual commitment and communication, leading to enhanced co-operation - and parent engagement in their school. e.g. allowing the community to use the school facilities (hall, school grounds), obtaining business sponsorship, developing networks (Kohanga reo, local Kaumatua, social service providers).

(c) Relationships with other schools (helps foster parent engagement)
- developing networks visiting other schools to see what they do in relation to Māori education, sharing consultation issues that bring whānau of other schools together
- developing a collective community strategy for teaching te reo Māori (providing a range of options for the development of bilingual, partial immersion, total immersion and kura kaupapa programmes.

These guidelines also provide guidelines for school self-review. The section on 'Linking home, community and school' is particularly relevant to the topic of this report.

3. Hangaia he huarahi hei Whakarewa ake i ngā tauira Katoa
    "Making a bigger difference for all students"
    Schooling Strategy 2005-2010
One strategy priority was "Children's learning is nurtured by families and whānau".
Reference is made to the Best Evidence Synthesis, June 2003 "The Complexity of Community and Family Influences on Children's Achievement in New Zealand."

Through everyday activities, parents, caregivers, grandparents help their children and mokopuna develop a whole range of necessary skills in language, in reading, writing, mathematics as well as social skills, self-reliance, decision making and leadership skills.

The government set out to support families/whānau through the following priority areas:
• The Parents and Families Communication Programme (Team-Up) (including information about learning and schooling directly to families - and developing quality material for use by other intensive support programmes for whānau who might need it.)
• Programmes to identify and build on effective practices that support families to nurture children's learning and connect better with schools.
• It was acknowledged that if families were to support their children's learning better, they needed considerable support from across a range of government social agencies. These related 'cross government interventions' included: opportunities for all, strengthening families, Primary Healthcare Strategy, Working for Families, Youth Development Strategy Aoteoroa.

4. Te Mana Kōrero - Relationships for Learning
This programme is a key resource for evaluating and developing further, family and community engagement in the education of their children.

Te tīmatanga o te matauranga ko we wahangū te wāhanga tuarua ko te whakarango
The first stage of learning is silence the second stage of learning is listening

The resource focuses particularly on the need to build and sustain strong and effective school-whānau partnerships if Māori student achievement levels are to be raised, Māori students are best served by schools when they are regarded as members of a whānau; that when a Māori child stands before you, behind them is a whānau, hapū, iwi and their tipuna.
- remembering that "schools are required to consult with their Māori community [to] develop and make known to the schools community policies, plans and targets for improving the achievement of Māori students. (NAGIV)

The key priority themes addressed in Te Mana Kōrero are:
      1. AKO (effective teaching and learning)
      2. Culture counts (validity and valuing culture)
      3. Productive partnerships
These rely on both partners valuing and sharing each others knowledge and expertise

"Every parent wants children to be successful, Māori parents are no exception to this - it's just sometimes they are not so sure how they go about doing that. Part of our role is to make them more comfortable about that role." (School Principal)

In developing "Relationships for Learning" the resource sets out to 'facilitate' discussion about - and answers/responses to the following types of initiatives:
• making whānau welcome in the school setting
• encouraging and valuing whānau involvement in school strategic planning and vision setting
• fostering warm, positive, clear and honest communication with whānau, including communication about student achievement
• providing opportunities for whānau to contribute to students curriculum learning
• encouraging whānau involvement in school activities more as students get older
• making students intended learning outcomes clear to whānau so that they can support student learning more explicitly

- bringing whānau into school through extended learning opportunities for adults
- going into the community as well as expecting the community to come into the school
- ensuring that students learning comes from topics or contexts that students (and their whānau) relate to culturally
- ensuring that learning is about seeking answers to questions that are important to students and what they want answered - the whānau might be involved in helping students find answers
- ensuring that students (and their whānau) always know what (and why) students are learning and what achievement looks like
- how to let students whānau know what (and why) students are learning and what constitutes good achievement. What this looks like. How this enhances whānaus engagement in their children's learning.
- ensuring that students (and their whānau) always know how students are achieving in relation to expectations and what they need to do to make better progress
- ensuring that there is always an authentic purpose and/or context for student learning

Before addressing any of these factors the school should discuss Māori student achievement levels from analysed data and if appropriate compare these levels with other cohorts in the school. "Are our Māori students making the progress we would expect? How do we know? Why or why not?

The principles that contribute most significantly to building and sustaining strong and effective school-whānau links, from a schools perspective are also referred to (p13) and should always provide an overview as schools facilitate these initiatives in their school.

The 'principles' of 'Te Mana Kōrero' are reflected in a number of MOE publications initiatives in our schools. The 'literature' and reports are readily accessible and have been reported widely. They promote a basis for schools to develop further their own efforts to enhance the engagement of whānau in the education of their children - and in so doing contribute to improved student achievement.

🌀 Te Tere Auraki: Māori students success in English medium.

🌀 Te Kauhua: This is a project that supports school-based action research projects. These projects help schools and whānau to work together in ways that improve outcomes for Māori learners. Schools projects are based on data they collect about their Māori learners. Projects may be curriculum specific and/or of another nature that impacts on effective learning. Schools support these projects by establishing an inclusive learning community, strong participatory leadership, and strong links to whānau.

Over the last seven years more than 30 schools and 350 teachers, principals and their communities have participated in Te Kauhua. My interest in these projects focused on schools that looked at 'relationships' as the basis of their research. The single factor common to all 'pilot' schools was the development of caring, collaborative, consultative relationships between teachers and students; students and students; teachers and teachers; teachers and whānau; and school communities and whānau. The development of these relationships is critical to Māori student success. The following case studies provided insights into my research topic and ideas to consider following up:
- Greerton Village School (Tauranga) - "strategies to strengthen home-school relationships"
- Otautahi Christchurch Cluster - "relationship building with Māori parents and whānau"
- Te Akau Ki Papamoa School (Tauranga) - "student/teacher/parent goal setting evaluation and reporting strategies"

- Tauranga Boys College - "relationship building with the wider Māori community"
- Waitakere College - "building a supportive whānau environment"
- Taihape Area School - "whānau-school partnership model" - with facilitating, liaising with staff/parent/students

Recent Education Gazette Articles/Publications contributed to my research into this topic and provided possibilities to progress initiatives in my own school:

- Sylvia Park School (Auckland) (Gazette Article Oct 12 2009)

The school considered the findings of the Best Evidence Synthesis: "Community and Family Influences on Children's Achievement" - especially the importance of not undermining but supporting what takes place in the home and the need for some parents to receive and share information in an informal setting.
  - parents were surveyed to find out what they 'know' about the school
  - home visits / early childhood centre visits and transition to school sessions are organised
  - a "community-based" position was established - a project manager (teacher) was appointed to promote this "Learning Partnership" which included helping parents to understand assessment in greater detail; develop 3 way conference approaches to improve engagement; introduce and monitor a "Reading Together" programme, plan 'parent education' / home-school partnership initiatives. (Funding for this, over 5 yrs, has come from the ASB Community Trust Māori and Pasifica Education Initiative - to promote educational excellence.)
  - as the 'partnership' progresses over the next 4 yrs, parent will know how they can get involved in some of the more 'formative practices' teachers use.

In all of this - children's learning starts to gain.

- Wadestown School (Wellington)
  - facilitating their home-school partnership initiatives through a parent education programme utilizing the MOE Resources "Supporting your Child's Learning". Helping parents linked to the TCI site allows them to download all of the resources. Having teachers, children and parents all on the 'same page' makes the process of goal setting much easier. It's a resource that helps parents share in their children's learning

NZ Curriculum update: Issue 10, Sept 1, 2010 provides a focus on "Family and Community engagement". Specific 'case studies are used to show how educational partnerships can be built with whānau and Māori communities.

- Ngati Whanaunga Iwi - (North Eastern NZ) has a clearly defined education plan that includes specific goals about mana motuhake, reo Māori, the environment and education. Building collaborative relationships with local schools is considered essential to achieving the iwi's long term vision. Iwi representatives meet regularly with the 8 schools in their area to plan together and ensure that iwi perspectives are included in the school curriculum. They also organise cluster hui, aimed at increasing local teachers understanding, confidence and competence in the use of local kawa and tikanga.

Guiding questions are suggested: e.g. How might we plan to have purposeful conversations with iwi and whānau, focused on teaching and learning?

• <u>The Manurewa Literacy Project</u> - a joint parent/whānau and teacher intervention using
  <u>Reading Together</u>

This project is designed to raise the literacy and achievement levels of all students, involving 29 schools and Kura working in partnership with the local community, libraries and Ministry of Education. The central feature of the project is the Reading Together Programme (developed by Jean Biddulph in 1983) - and designed to help parents support their children's reading at home. Facilitators are trained so they they can run the Reading Together workshops for whānau, showing how to support children's reading at home. Evaluation of the programme has identified significant and sustained gains in student reading comprehension - as well as positive changes in parents relationships with their children - by linking student learning at school with their learning at home.

An 'International Perspective

During this sabbatical I also researched a wide range of initiatives, among them the outcomes of the USA 'Home Communication forum - 2007' and England's 'Nottingham Schools Strategies' (which included employing a health nurse to run 'on-site' health clinics, creating parent pods using key people to gather small groups of parents off-site to discuss school issues/learning at home; running computer classes for parents, exploring relevant learning sites).

I also attended the International Confederation of Principals conference in Toronto. Specific workshops attended included:
• leading student engagement - increasing student achievement through effective parent and community engagement
• all things are possible in a collaborative environment
• engaging parents and communities
• engaging every family, new standards for global family engagement

<u>Where to now for our school</u>? - <u>a way forward</u>

As a result of this investigation the following initiatives will be contemplated/actioned to help progress "parent/whānau engagement" in the school to help enhance student achievement.

• use the <u>Te Mana Kōrero - Relationships for Learning</u> programme as the basis for a school self-review initiative. (Staff development; whānau engagement) "Off the shelf - and on the table!"
• establish a plan for action around the <u>Key Concepts to infuse within the school</u>
        * culture
        * language (words, phrases, resources, environment)
        * identity
• plan and action 'home-school' partnership initiative(s)
        e.g. Reading Together Programme
             Homework Support
             use of MOE Support for Learning resources
• establish a dedicated '<u>community liaison</u>' role within the school to facilitate home/school partnerships e.g. parent education/Wananga input, whānau engagement
• progress parent/student/teacher/teacher reporting/learning discussions
• complete the 'Waharoa/Artworks' project telling the story of 'our place'
• incorporate the 'Touch-stones' (Local Community History) project into our school curriculum

- progress the teaching of Te Reo/Tikanga across the school through:
    * He Reo Tapu, He Reo Ora (Prof. Development)
    * Te Ahu-Arataki Marau (Te Reo Māori Curriculum)
    * Wananga-Parent Education Course

- Whānau Support Group - wider input into community links, strategic planning and decision making
- reviewing our 'transition to school' programme, (pre-school, transition between classes - and to other schools) ensuring parents are aware of the important information that will follow children to improve communication
- sharing and celebrating learning for all children: Building on Units of Inquiry teaching strategies
- ensure we have a robust, on-going, meaningful data base of the achievement of Māori students as a basis for those initiatives
- follow up on 'models' for parent/whānau engagement (as applicable) referred to in this sabbatical report
- report and respond to a 'Questionnaire'/Survey outcomes

In addressing the above it needs to be remembered that "good things take time". (Not just in the cheese making business!) Therefore requiring commitment and perseverance. We need to acknowledge that there will be barriers to success - determine what they are and address them.

Koreotia ōku painga
Kiangaro ōku mahi Karotake
Highlight my strength and my weakness

In progressing the above, we will be building upon a solid foundation of positive, parent/whānau engagement already established within the school.

Concluding Statement

"Most Government policies fail to address the issues of personal accountability, internal motivation and uniqueness. Rather they emphasize consistency, conformity - and compliance. If academic standards are to be raised in <u>sustainable</u> <u>ways</u> and broader educational aspirations achieved, then educationists will have to see their role in terms of creating social capital rather than just improving classroom practice".

"Educational Leadership to build capacity in communities requires a range of qualities and strategies implicit to running schools, but which need different horizons and priorities:
A vision for the community based on consensual values and aspirations.
Building capacity through dialogue, conversations and engagement.
Highly developed relational skills rooted in trust and respect.
A commitment to democratic processes.
The ability to work with networks.
A commitment to shared learning through experience.

There is a symbiotic link between schools and their communities - children. Schooling is a necessary, but not sufficient, component of education. The purpose of schools is to help families and communities educate young people. Schools need to be successful with their communities, not in spite of them.

<u>Source</u> -   Educational Leadership and Social Capital - a paper by George Otero and John West - Burnham (University of Waikato Leadership Centre Course 2010)

<u>References/Readings</u> used during the preparation of this Sabbatical Report:

1. University of Waikato Leadership Centre
     - Readings used in the course
     "Building Schools as places for Learning: The role of Trust, Families and Communities
     Facilitators - Jeremy Kedian and Invited Practitioners

2. MOE TKI Website

3. BES Report 2003 Biddulph, F Biddulph, J Biddulph: The Complexity of Community and
    family influences on children's achievement in NZ

4. Education Gazette Articles (numerous)

5. Te Mana Kōrero - Relationships for Learning
     Facilitators notes
    MOE - and associated references