



South Wairarapa
'Super'
Whānau Advisory Group



WHĀNAU ADVISORY GROUP

What is it?

The Whānau Advisory Group (WAG) initiative aspires to foster quality engagement between schools and their Māori communities in order to improve Māori student achievement.

What is its purpose?

From its inception, specific aims of whānau advisory groups have been to foster quality engagement between schools and their Māori communities in order to improve Māori student achievement through:

- Involving whānau in strategic planning and decision-making within schools in order to make a difference for Māori learners.
- Improving the wellbeing of Māori students by building safe, supportive and inclusive communication mechanisms between school management and Māori students within the school.
- Involving more whānau and students in learning-centred discussions with educators.

Who is it for?

The Whānau Advisory Group (WAG) consists of members of the Māori community, leaders within schools, ECE services and other educational institutions.

Indicators of success:

A recent evaluation of the Whānau Advisory Group Initiative identified the following:

- They had a committed and passionate group of members.
- They had senior management and principal support.
- The members were drawn from a diverse background of education, profession, skills and knowledge.

- Members were highly visible within the school and community.
- A core group of Whānau Advisory Group members maintained continuity when member numbers fluctuated.
- Compatibility of philosophy and values between the school and the whānau advisory group
- Transparent lines of communications
- shoulder tapping identified whānau members as opposed to 'calling' for volunteers
- once the whānau advisory group was well established, members studies began to draw upon their networks to engage more whānau to support the school and children's learning
- empowerment and sharing responsibility for children's education contributed to whānau engagement
- Shifting or repositioning staff perceptions of parental involvement in education featured as a strategy that contributed to whānau engagement

Recommendations for establishing a whānau advisory group:

- Identify and shoulder tap individuals. This approach could be done by whānau advisory group members or senior management.
- Ensure that staff support and see value in Māori parental involvement.
- Ensure transparent lines of communication are established and that the whānau advisory group voice is heard.
- Ensure principal and iwi/marae support.
- Ensure that the whānau advisory group is empowered to contribute to decision making and strategic planning.
- Ensure an environment in which whakawhanaungatanga is promoted.

- Ensure staff, Māori parents and Māori students are represented on the whānau advisory group.
- Create an environment that is conducive to fostering positive relationships and partnerships between the school and Māori parents.
- Ensure that whānau advisory group membership is diverse.
- Ensure the purpose of the whānau advisory group is agreed on, is transparent and realistic.
- Ensure parents drive the whānau advisory group.
- Ensure whānau representatives have credibility within the community.
- Draw upon an outside body to survey students and whānau to ascertain needs.
- Make links with your local marae.

What have we learned?

The evaluation report emphasises the positive contribution of key whānau with skills and experiences to attract other whānau to the initiative, based on their standing and mana within a school's community. Without these core members the Whānau Advisory Group would not succeed according to the initiative's wider aims. Consequently, Whānau Advisory Group success factors, engagement strategies and narrative evidence of Māori student achievement in addition to the support of the local Iwi, hapū and marae are recognised as effective pathways for establishing and sustaining the Whānau Advisory Group initiative.

The most important outcome of the Whānau Advisory Group is that it has highlighted the issue of Māori student academic achievement by clarifying the story in the data in a more publicly accountable and transparent way. This has compelled and encouraged the pilot schools to be more proactive in developing initiatives to improve the academic achievement levels of Māori students.

Further, the Whānau Advisory Group enables whānau to influence the core business of the schools, empowering whānau to get involved in the education of their children in a constructive relationship with the school.

The overarching conclusion from the findings is that the Whānau Advisory Group has transformative potential to positively change the process of education for Māori in New Zealand through a process of engaging and involving whānau in the education of their children in a proactive partnership with a school using data to set academic targets and gain a clear understanding of patterns in school and Māori student performance.

WHĀNAU ADVISORY GROUP – TERMS OF REFERENCE

Purpose: (brainstorm and agree on the purpose of the group)

Vision: (What is the vision for the group? How does it align with the ECE service, School and other education organization?)

What are the aims/responsibilities of the group?(the education organisation and whānau need to be clear about what is possible in there roles)

What are the assumptions and expectations? (what is it and what is it not)

Membership: (Who will be members of the group?)

Accountability: (How will the group report to other whānau, teaching staff, governance?)

Review: (How often will the group review the relevance and value of it's work and the terms of reference?)

Working methods / ways of working: (What method/approach to working will you agree on? Will any subgroups be formed? What will the agreed working method involve in practical terms?)

Meetings: (How often will meetings be held and where? Who will organise and chair meetings? How will topics for the agenda be generated? How and when will meeting minutes be circulated? Will non-members be invited at times? How will minutes be recorded?)

Sharing of information and resources: (How will group members share information and resources? How will confidential information be dealt with?)