



Co-constructing a culturally and Linguistically Sustaining, Te Tiriti –based Ako Framework for Socio-emotional Wellbeing in Education: A Collaborative Project Among Teachers, Whānau, Hapū and Iwi to Enable a Holistic Approach to Education

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Project Team: Principal Investigators: Professor Letitia Fickel (University of Canterbury), Dr Amanda Denston (University of Canterbury), Dr Rachel Martin (University of Otago), Dr Veronica O’Toole (University of Canterbury) **Research Team:** Simon Scott, Raewyn Davis, Marina Shehata, Terry Mitchell, and Chris McLaren (Hornby High School), Kate Mclachlan, Heather Matthews, and Alethea Dejong (Hornby Primary School), Dr Seema Gautam (Senior Research Assistant, University of Canterbury) Hannah Bennett (Research Assistant, University of Canterbury)

Project description

We worked with eight teachers and leaders from two schools to support the development of SEL practices that are culturally and linguistically responsive and foster student SEW. Teachers expanded their SEW and SEL knowledge and skills and developed classroom practices to support their students’ development of social-emotional knowledge and capabilities. Throughout our project we were supported and guided by the education committee of Te Taumutu Rūnanga.

Aims

Our project was underpinned by Kauapapa Māori principles and utilized a design-based research approach. Our aims were: 1) to develop an educationally focused framework for SEW that incorporated Māori values and conceptions of wellbeing and guide schools in implementing SEL; 2) enable teachers’ development and integration of SEL practices that affirm student identities, cultures and languages; and 3) to identify exemplars of culturally and linguistically responsive SEL practices in schools.

Why is this research important?

SEL programmes have been shown to be effective in fostering student wellbeing through social-emotional capability development. However, these programmes have been critiqued for being burdensome additions to a full curriculum, and for their lack of attention to the role of culture and local socio-cultural contexts. This project provides a response to these critiques.

Key findings

Teacher, student and whānau perspectives on SEW/SEL are valuable foundations for developing culturally responsive and sustaining classroom practices: Engaging with teachers, students and whānau, we identified three inter-related strands of SEW: relationships, belonging and feeling connected, and identity and sense of self. SEL competencies and knowledge to support SEW included: Communication, knowledge of emotions and emotional states, and normalizing and reframing social-emotional experiences. These perspectives informed the development of our framework.

Mātauranga Oranga: Te Tiriti-based ako framework for SEW: Is an educationally focused framework for SEW that incorporates Māori values and conceptions of wellbeing. The framework includes **Ako Torowhānau**, an enabling construct of SEL. The framework can be used by schools to guide their development and implementation of culturally responsive and sustaining SEW/SEL approaches and practices that support all students.

SEW/SEL can be addressed and developed without the need for rigidly implemented programmes: Teachers refined existing practices and identified new practices to integrate into their classroom routines and curriculum. Three principles of practice were identified: 1) Use of reflective tools to develop emotional awareness; 2) explicit coaching of SEL; and 3) an ako approach to student-teacher and student-student relationships in the classroom.

Strengthening teacher SEW/SEL knowledge and skills enhances practice: Through intentional noticing teachers were able to develop a more conscious and intentional SEL/SEW practices. They became more aware of the emotional states of students, and within themselves; were more conscious of their assumptions and beliefs about SEW/SEL; and challenged previously unexamined practices.

Anticipate teacher vulnerability and provide support: Teachers’ sense of vulnerability was heightened as they explicitly engaged students in SEL through an ako approach and incorporated new practices and ways of enacting their role. Their vulnerability related to both their own and other’s assumptions around being viewed as competent. Having a community of teachers engaged together was critical in supporting and sustaining their efforts to shift their classroom practices.

Implications for practice

- The development of SEL practices to support the enhancement of SEW needs to be responsive to language, culture, and identity. The development of such practices does not need to rely on the implementation of established programmes. Rather, it can be achieved by supporting teachers to develop and/or modify practices that are woven into their existing curriculum.
- The development of culturally responsive and sustaining SEL practices requires that teachers gain understandings of culturally-grounded perspectives of SEW and SEL.
- SEW in students is enabled through a relational approach where communication is key to relationship building. Tamariki and kaiako require support to develop related emotional literacy; emotional vocabulary, emotive language and emotional states, including verbal and non-verbal behaviours; and the supporting metacognitive and reframing skills.
- A focus on SEL practices creates vulnerability for kaiako and their wellbeing and identity. Support for SEL practices can be achieved through communities of practice that provide safe spaces.
- A focus on SEW underpinned by a holistic approach is a worthy investment for schools, including for tamariki, kaiako and whānau; however, this requires school leadership to join alongside teachers in engaging with culturally and linguistically responsive SEL to foster SEW.

Our partners:

Hornby High School - Simon Scott, Raewyn Davis, Marina Shehata, Terry Mitchell, and Chris McLaren
Hornby Primary School – Kate Mclachlan, Heather Matthews, and Alethea Dejong
Taumutu Rūnanga Education Committee, Chair Liz Brown

Contact details

Professor Letitia Fickel, letitia.fickel@canterbury.ac.nz
University of Canterbury