

OUR STORIES: MINI CASE-STUDIES

Kaiapoi Borough School

Nicola Gaskell and Julie Lewis
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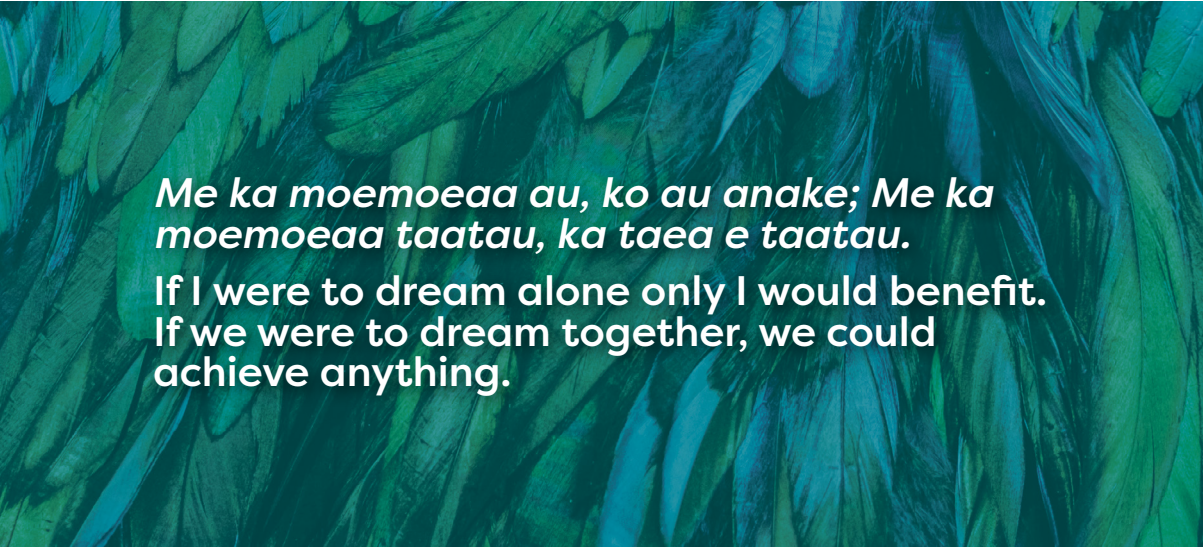
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Table of contents

The Discussion on the Doorstep	3
What we did:	3
Mini Project 1: How is our enrollment pack helping students transition to school?	4
Mini Project 2: Creating a Shared Understanding	6
Mini Project 3: What common features between ELS and Primary School facilitate a successful transition?	12
So, what are the implications for practice?	13





Me ka moemoeaa au, ko au anake; Me ka moemoeaa taata, ka taea e taata.

If I were to dream alone only I would benefit.
If we were to dream together, we could achieve anything.

The Discussion on the Doorstep

Kaiapoi Borough School is located in North Canterbury. Kaiapoi Borough School has a decile rating of five. We enrol new entrants from a wide range of local Early Learning Services (ELS) in our community.

We were invited into the project as we wanted to delve deeper into our transition process and ensure it was the best practice for our tamariki. Our overarching question was,

“What facilitates a successful transition to school?”

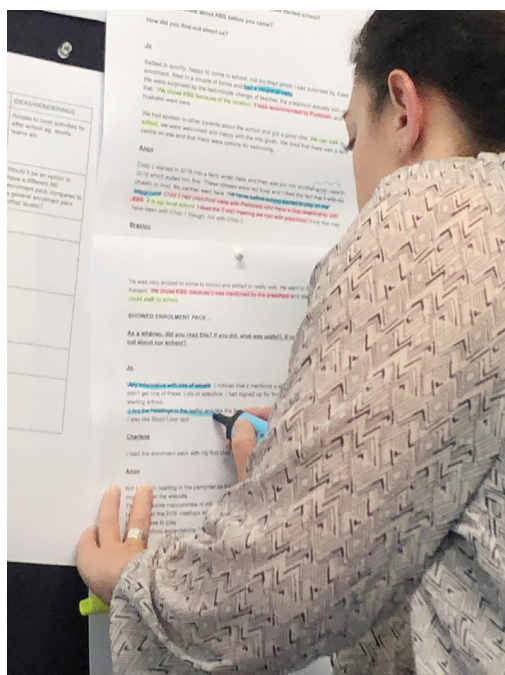
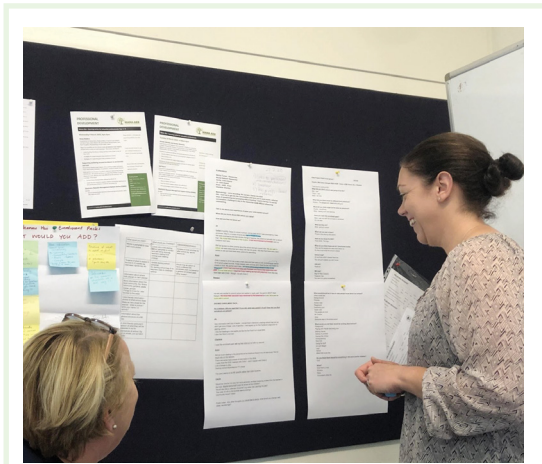
Initially, as first time teacher-researchers, we weren't sure where to start. As suggested by our research coordinator, the idea of mini projects

was manageable so we decided to look internally, at something tangible. Knowing the enrolment pack presents the initial impression to our new entrant whānau, that became our first mini project. The enrolment pack was due for an update, and the mini project presented an opportunity to step into the data gathering process.

What we did:

We wanted to find out from the Early Learning Services (ELS) if our enrolment pack was useful, effective and up to date, and whether it was accessible to the community. To do this we visited ELS centres and distributed the current enrolment pack with a survey.

Mini Project 1: How is our enrolment pack helping students transition to school?



Coding the data gathered from the whānau interviews

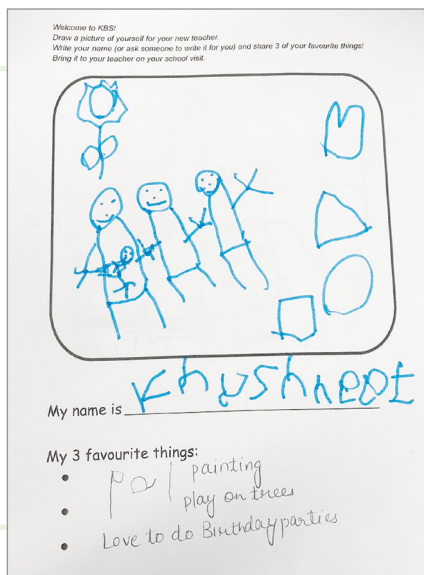
Our first mini project was focussed on the revamp of the enrolment pack to ensure it was fit for purpose. Before gathering the data, we posed a series of questions that we wanted to explore. For example:

- Are our assumptions about the purpose of the enrolment pack the same as whānau?
- What do whānau want to know from the enrolment pack?
- Is it attractive for children – what would they think if they looked at it? Does it really tell about our school?

We used several tools to gather the data: tamariki voice through focus groups, surveys to staff and ELS teachers, and semi-structured interviews with whānau.

From this, several changes were made to the enrolment pack: information was updated, a Social Story Booklet was created, and an 'All about me' sheet for tamariki to share with their new teacher was designed.





This is an example of a new entrant child's 'All about me' sheet. This gives a quick snapshot of the child's interests and developmental capability to the teacher. It is a useful tool to enhance the first steps of the child-and-teacher relationship. Giving the teacher some personal information to both generate conversation and ensure high interest activities are available in the classroom.



My New School Te Kura Tuatahi o Kaiapoi



The data from tamariki voice focus groups indicated that they wanted images and photos to develop familiarity and support a deeper understanding of their upcoming transition into school, hence the social story was developed. Kaiako gathered information from student voice focus groups and documented that tamariki 'Would like photos of the spaces and what happens in this place', (Kaiako Analysis). This child-centred bilingual story shared places of significance and everyday routines.



Mini Project 2: Creating a Shared Understanding

Through the process of gathering ELS voices, there was an informal discussion on the doorstep of the ELS centre between the teacher-researcher (Syndicate Leader) and the ELS manager which ultimately sparked a new inquiry. The ELS manager shared the centre's practices around school readiness and preparation for school, and indicated that the ELS had a set of academic skills for 4-year-olds to prepare for school. This differed from our view of school readiness which focussed on self management skills. We then shared this with our research coordinator who suggested we write a reflection. From here the inquiry took a new pathway into Mini-Project #2, *Creating a Shared Understanding with ELS and NE Kaiako in our community*.

The same week, the research co-ordinator visited our school. The syndicate lead shared that she was surprised at the ELS managers questioning around what academic skills the tamariki should be prepared with to come to school and the current practices in the centre for school readiness:

“We’re wondering where this message is coming from. Why are parents worried about building academic skills when what they really need to be building up is social skills, self regulation, self management and emotional skills. That’s more important”.
(Kaiako, Kāhui Ako meetup)

The teacher-researchers played with this thinking. Over time the school tried to promote the message that to prepare for school, self management skills are the priority as opposed to academic requirements. They had endeavoured to convey the idea that they would teach children from ‘where they were at’ when they started school. This is a message that is shared at once-a-term New Entrant information evenings and is also shared in a starting school pamphlet. The school’s philosophy indicated that there is no required academic skill set that tamariki must have to start school successfully. The conversation on the doorstep with the ELS manager indicated that this message wasn’t getting through to the community.

We then had hui with the teacher-researchers at Kaiapoi North School

And ever since then...

We have been thinking about the other information that we gained from talking with whānau, tamariki and colleagues from our staff and local ECE and from that we would like to begin our next mini project looking in to the expectations of a New Entrant starting school and building a shared understanding between New Entrant teachers and ECE teachers.

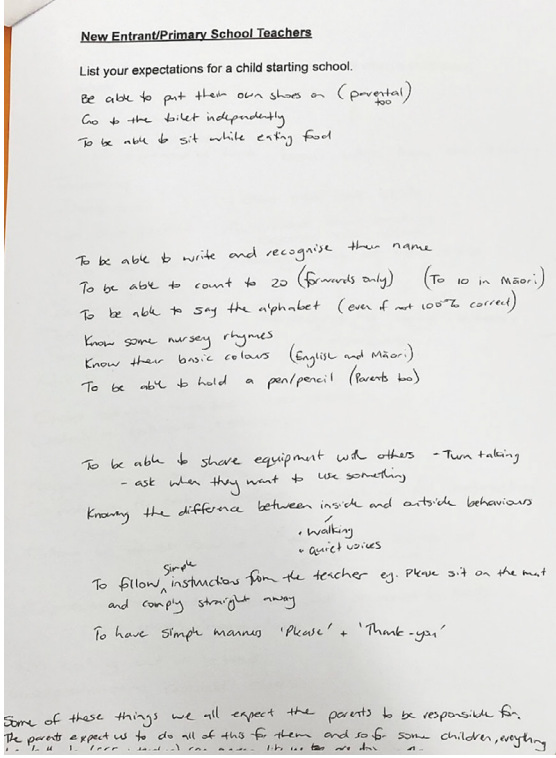
Slide shared at Kahui Ako 'Meet Up' to start gathering information for our latest Mini Project on for our latest Mini Project.

and they agreed with our hunch that we needed to build a shared understanding with our local schools and ELS community regarding expectations for starting school.

We approached the Kāhui Ako lead to present at the next hui as a 'meetup' as part of the Rātā project. She was excited to connect and this kaupapa which aligned with the Kāhui Ako current strategic foci around transition. We also saw this as mobilising and responding to data. We hosted a hui with the teacher-researchers of Kaiapoi North School with our local Kāhui Ako to share a general overview of the project and our findings with a presentation.



We then asked ELS teachers to share what they thought NE teachers expected of children starting school, and primary teachers to share what they expected tamariki to come to school with. Below are some of the images of this data.



New Entrant/Primary School Teachers

List your expectations for a child starting school.

Be able to put their own shoes on (parental)

Go to the toilet independently

To be able to sit while eating food

To be able to write and recognise their name

To be able to count to 20 (forwards only) (To 10 in Māori)

To be able to say the alphabet (even if not 100% correct)

Know some nursery rhymes

Know their basic colours (English and Māori)

To be able to hold a pen/pencil (parents too)

To be able to share equipment with others - Turn taking
- ask when they want to use something

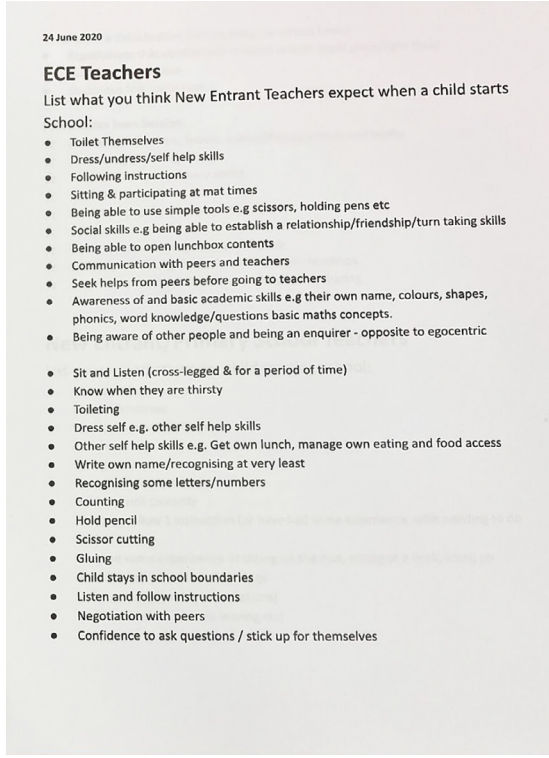
Knowing the difference between inside and outside behaviours

- walking
- quiet voices

To follow simple instructions from the teacher eg. Please sit on the mat and comply straight away

To have simple manners 'Please' + 'Thank-you'

Some of these things we all expect the parents to be responsible for. The parents expect us to do all of this for them and so for some children, everything



24 June 2020

ECE Teachers

List what you think New Entrant Teachers expect when a child starts School:

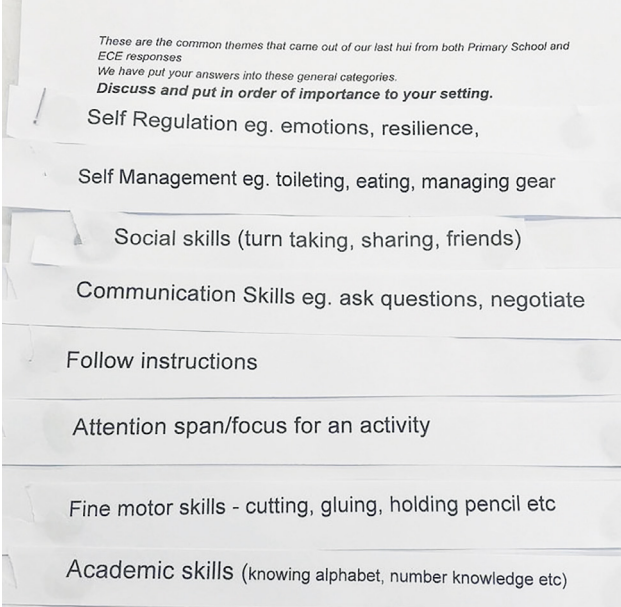
- Toilet Themselves
- Dress/undress/self help skills
- Following instructions
- Sitting & participating at mat times
- Being able to use simple tools e.g scissors, holding pens etc
- Social skills e.g being able to establish a relationship/friendship/turn taking skills
- Being able to open lunchbox contents
- Communication with peers and teachers
- Seek helps from peers before going to teachers
- Awareness of and basic academic skills e.g their own name, colours, shapes, phonics, word knowledge/questions basic maths concepts.
- Being aware of other people and being an enquirer - opposite to egocentric

- Sit and Listen (cross-legged & for a period of time)
- Know when they are thirsty
- Toileting
- Dress self e.g. other self help skills
- Other self help skills e.g. Get own lunch, manage own eating and food access
- Write own name/recognising at very least
- Recognising some letters/numbers
- Counting
- Hold pencil
- Scissor cutting
- Gluing
- Child stays in school boundaries
- Listen and follow instructions
- Negotiation with peers
- Confidence to ask questions / stick up for themselves

Left: Raw data from a Primary Team

Right: Snippet of the Summary from ECE

Example of a group's skill sets, ranked at a Kāhui Ako meet up.



These are the common themes that came out of our last hui from both Primary School and ECE responses
We have put your answers into these general categories.

Discuss and put in order of importance to your setting.

- Self Regulation eg. emotions, resilience,
- Self Management eg. toileting, eating, managing gear
- Social skills (turn taking, sharing, friends)
- Communication Skills eg. ask questions, negotiate
- Follow instructions
- Attention span/focus for an activity
- Fine motor skills - cutting, gluing, holding pencil etc
- Academic skills (knowing alphabet, number knowledge etc)

This raw data was coded into a group of skill sets that were used in follow up hui for participating kaiako to rank in order of importance.

This raw data was coded into a group of skill sets that were used in follow up hui for participating kaiako to rank in order of importance.

This data demonstrated that self regulation was considered the most important skill for tamariki starting school across both ELS and Primary teachers in our Kāhui Ako. Academic skills featured lower on the list.

Another element that was evident in the data was the clear divide between the first four skills (self regulation, social skills, communication, self management) that were ranked and the last four (following instructions, attention span, fine motor, academic). This was significant as it showed us that there was a consistency of viewpoint of key skills needed for starting school.

Ranked Skills Data

We gave each skill a score from 1-8 as they were ranked. These are the total scores:

Self Regulation - 10

Social Skills - 18

Communication - 22

Self Management - 23

Following Instructions - 38

Attention Span - 44

Fine Motor Skills - 50

Academic - 59



The second part of this hui was a post-it exercise where kaiako shared how they promoted or explicitly taught all of these skill sets in their own settings.

In your kura could you please record how you...

Promote/Teach self-management skills

- routines
 - sticker charts
 - role play
 - visual instruction plan (VIP)
 - positive praise
 - giving choice
- high interest activities
 - WITS
 - 1234 TEACH
 - Role play
 - clear expectations
- visual prompts
 - timers
 - routine
 - consistency
 - prompts
- Expectations that are discussed
 - Success criteria
 - Sign in book in home base in home, which tells out them to play
 - Rewarding when they do it

In your ECE environment could you please record how you...

Promote/Teach self-management skills

- encourage children to do it
 - encourage parents to bring their own toys, items
 - share materials they own for themselves
 - have materials for sharing
- Manaakitanga
 - Tuakana/Teina relationships
 - Kaitiakitanga
- Independence
 - giving responsibility for belongings
 - Educating parents
 - Have list of things they own at home
 - "I know you can do it"
- Giving Rewards for their Belongings to their kura
- Having structured times, routine, rituals
- Encouraging children to do things themselves
 - Tuakana/Teina relationships
 - activities encouraged
- Giving to teach to competent and capable, learning, playing, exploring, and taking
- It's group focused on:
 - academic skills
 - social skills
 - fine motor
 - attention span skills
- Routine and rituals
 - Positive praise
 - Giving choice
 - Empowerment

How do you promote/teach self-management skills

ECE	Shared	Kura
Rituals High expectations Empowerment Encourage independence Tuakana teina relationships Structured times eg mat time Agency Supportive Seeing tamariki as competent and capable "I know you can do it" Responsible for belongings Walk into preschool Carry own bag Toilet themselves Manaakitanga Kaitiakitanga Educating parents	Positive praise Giving choice Routines	Rewards Sticker charts Role play Visual Instruction plan/ visual prompts High interest activities WITS 1234 Teach Clear expectations Consistency Success criteria Sign in book, morning jobs Expectations are discussed



Kaiako shared how they intentionally teach, model and promote self-management skills

The post-it comments showed us that there were many ways in which teachers were already promoting and teaching these skill sets in their settings.

We hope to continue these once-a-term hui within our Kāhui Ako to strengthen the relationships between sectors and explore how to build our tamariki's self-regulation/ self-management skills.

Through a series of hui with the Kāhui Ako, and our own reflections, our third mini project emerged. We explored the physical environment of both ELS and NE school environments by examining the similarities and differences.



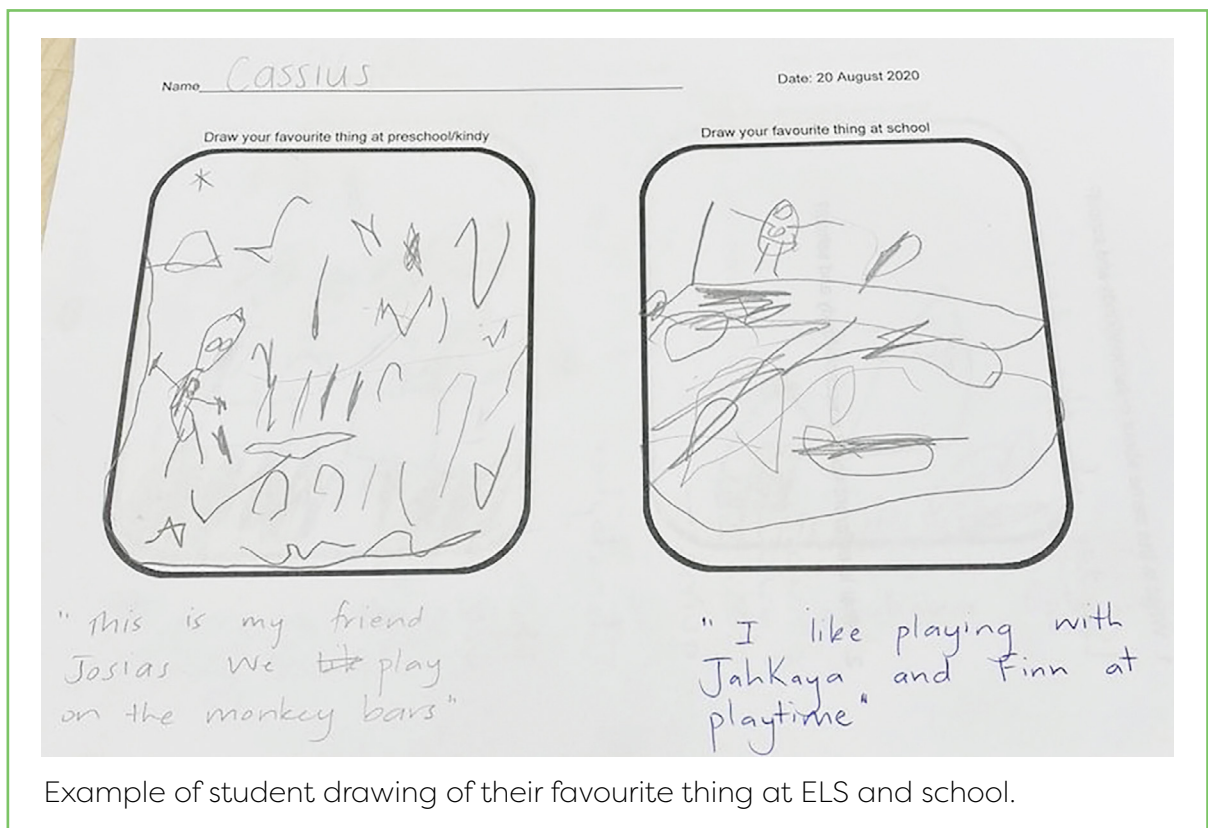
Mini Project 3: What common features between ELS and Primary School facilitate a successful transition?

We visited several local feeder ELS and observed their environment, programme and teacher language.

We asked a focus group of Year 1-2 students at our school to draw their favourite things about their ELS and their favourite things about school. This told us that the common themes coming through from both settings were 'Friends' and 'Playground'.

The student voice focus groups

reaffirmed that relationships were a key to successful transitions, and also made us continue to think about the structure of our programmes and children who are used to having access to the outdoor activities freely at ELS. However, due to staff ratio, limited resources and the physical environment that is set up, our school is limited to the same options for outdoor activities and choice for tamariki in comparison to ELS.





So, what are the implications for practice?

Throughout the project, and various Meetups, the relationship between Kaiapoi Borough School and Kaiapoi North School teachers has grown, as well as the cluster as a whole. Feedback from the members of the Kāhui Ako has been positive in terms of building relationships and developing a shared understanding.

We know that self-regulation is a priority skill because we continue to observe children who have difficulty with self-regulation, be it separation anxiety or resolving conflict in social situations with peers. An implication for practice is to develop a shared understanding about how to give tamariki opportunities to develop skills and strategies for self-regulation that align in both settings.

Through our Kāhui Ako we hope to provide professional development to our teachers on building children's self-regulation skills.

We hope to create a 'Transition Tips' kete as a collaborative tool, with input from everyone in the Kāhui Ako, that can be shared with any whānau starting at any school in our cluster.

In the future, we will engage in an action research approach as our inquiry tool. We now understand the importance of "gathering" multiple voices and not assuming outcomes. Instead of finding a solution quickly, and having a short reflection time in our own minds, we will draw on our new research capabilities.

"That unlike teaching when everything is on a tight schedule and that everything has to be done yesterday that sometimes being a researcher is about taking your time, seeing what comes up, and taking your foot off the pedal. Some of our best insights have come from chats, conversations over coffee, when you are relaxed and can let your thoughts come and go"
(Teacher-researcher).

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