The purpose, power and promise of culturally responsive practice: taking a strengths-based approach to fostering Maori success

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In this presentation I will speak about the importance of whanau aspiration, school connectedness, and mana (cultural pride and honour) to Maori student success and wellbeing at school. I argue that if we want to implement school initiatives to increase cultural efficacy, pride and aspiration, and consequently accelerate Maori student potential and wellbeing at school - we need initiatives that acknowledge and speak to the lofty aspirations, goals and rich histories of Maori students.

We must celebrate the whakapapa of Maori students and become more familiar with what enables Maori wellbeing and success at school, and how communities themselves conceptualise it. Sadly, many Maori students never learn about the rich history of scientific endeavour and entrepreneurialism in te ao Maori. Nor, do they experience seeing themselves accoladed in school books as academically exceptional.

Our curriculum should be localised to ensure they learn as much about Sir Hekenukumai Busby, the great ocean navigator, as I they do about Sir Edmund Hillary. We need to ensure Maori students know that they descend from greatness too. We need to arm them with powerful and promising narratives that speak back to the negative stereotypes and ruinous stories about Maori they see in the mainstream media. This 'cultural turn' in education is critical for Maori student wellbeing and engagement in learning.