

Nau mai anō e taku hoa!

Wow! Times are unstable at the moment. Anxiety levels are running high for whānau and students. The uncertainty of global issues, the cost of living and the upcoming election have everyone living in anticipation of what is to come. However, we have learnt many new things about ourselves and our students during this time and what we are capable of, and I hope this letter provides the opportunity for you to reflect, celebrate and plan.

As educators it is our responsibility to ensure that students feel secure in their surroundings. This may mean that you need to stop and reflect more on your practice and re-evaluate your teaching approach. For those of you who may find this challenging, remember ... teaching constantly challenges us and demands that we continue to change and develop our craft. So, how do you purposefully reflect on your practice?

Reflection plays an important role in student learning and should be an integral part of your teaching and learning programme too. It should occur naturally but also be planned for. At this time of the year, you will be collecting and curating evidence to include in your teaching portfolio – your reflections and those of your students provide great evidence to demonstrate your own development as a teacher. If you have been observed recently, take the time to reflect on the feedback. Whether you received verbal and/or written feedback, make the most of the experience by receiving it, reflecting on it, and using it to grow and develop as a teacher.

Here are some possible ways of deepening your reflective practice:

1. Deliberately create an area in your planning specifically for your reflections. After teaching a lesson or a unit of work, reflect and write your thoughts in that area. Look back on what you did and decide on how you might improve it in the future. Perhaps next time you won't talk as much when instructing your students, or maybe you need to design your learning space better to allow different working areas for students. Whatever you decide, your reflection should show how your practice is evolving.
2. If being observed, ask your colleague to write a few focus questions based on what you are being observed on. Afterwards, organise a time to sit together and discuss the questions. Allow them the opportunity to share what they noticed about you, your students and your classroom as they observed you. This is powerful because it gives you information you may not have thought about and gets you thinking more critically about you and your teaching practice.

3. As part of your 'learning focused culture', create space for student feedback and input. Seek it out, ask for it, and allow students to reflect with you on what they are learning. This fosters mutual trust and respect. Seek out their opinions and ideas so you understand their perspective. Take the time to reflect on what they share, as this is valuable information. Whether it be through a formal survey or simply talking with a small group of students at the end of the day, reflecting on student feedback is seeing yourself through their eyes.

E kare, we have begun another term. Term 2 was tough but now would be a good time to look back on what the year has taught you, so far, and to plan for what is ahead. Schedule reflection time into your programme in the coming weeks and record these and use in your planning for term 4. Keep learning and register for the upcoming Ako Panuku Hui ā-Tau to ensure you continue to develop your craft.

Kia manawaroa e hoa, kia manawa piharau! Oh, and don't forget ... breathe!

Atu i konei



Tracey Reid

Hei konei, hei konā!

