

# It begins with the big people!

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I am privileged in my work and personal life to be surrounded by a multitude of highly intelligent, diverse people in a range of roles and responsibilities, including education, management, sales, finance, sport, agriculture, and self-employment, to name but a few. I am constantly reflecting and learning after my interactions with these wonderful individuals and living the dream of being a lifelong learner.

One particular area I am learning a lot about over the last 3 years is Pasifika Education in New Zealand from [Anthony Faitaua](#) and [Aiono Manu Faaea-Semeatu](#). Their passion for Pasifika Education has really rubbed off on me and sparked a number of self-reflections. This has led to my own growth; having a better understanding of the different cultures that are in our classrooms and schools.

The pathway to leadership is through service (O le ala i le pule o le tautua).

Serve to lead — developing emergent leadership skills

Until writing this blog post I did not realise that I hold the above value quite strongly, no doubt influenced by my learnings from Anthony and Aiono Manu as well as the values instilled in me by my own family, whānau and friends. I have grown up happily being the “boy” serving others, however in the last few years I have had more of a desire to begin to lead. In a mad last-minute decision, I decided to run for the local high school Board of Trustees, even though my own children are still a number of years away from attending the high school. I felt this would be an opportunity to give back to the community, while also learning a whole new set of skills and knowledge especially around leadership and governance.

“If we are to successfully implement the Learn Create Share pedagogy with the children we teach, it has to begin with the big people — the adults.”

— Russell Burt, Pt England School Principal

This statement has resonated very strongly with me over the last 18 months and helped inspire me in my decision to join the Board of Trustees. ‘It has to begin with the big people – the adults’ is the part of the statement that I have taken across and have tried to replicate both in my own work on the Board of Trustees and in my role with CORE Education.

If we are going to govern a school, we must be putting our money where our mouth is and practicing what we or our school’s leadership preach.

As one of the big people, some of the things I have learnt so far to ensure wānanga (communication, problem solving and innovation) are:

- Māori representation is a must on the board as the mana whenua of New Zealand. It is very difficult for me to truly understand what it means to be a minority culture when I have never experienced what it is to be in a minority group (this is reinforced by this [blog post](#) by Wharehoka Wano). A challenge with trying to diversify a board is that the members are not just chosen to tick a box, but instead are chosen to add their



unique personalised perspective to the discussions around Ako, so that a partnership is developed that leads to better wellbeing, engagement and achievement for all members of a learning community.

- Knowing who is in the room and where they come from, to allow them to create Whanaungatanga (relationships), is a crucial part of being on a successful board. At the first formal board meeting there is potential for board members to have challenging and robust dialogue about issues that affect achievement of learners. This can only be achieved if there are connections and relational trust built between board members. Knowing your fellow board members and how they like to be communicated and interacted with, how they learn, deal with stress, differences and conflict, understanding their emotions and motivation are important to ensure a successful board.
- Understanding and giving life to manaakitanga should underpin all your board interactions. This is vital as it provides a lense to guide and evaluate all your decisions in relation to the governance of the school. Some key points for a board in relation to manaakitangi are:
  - acting with integrity, trust, sincerity and equity when communicating with the school community
  - understanding, following and modelling local tikanga and culture sufficiently
  - acknowledging and following local protocols when engaging with the community
  - leading and supporting school leadership and staff to embed manaakitanga
  - having knowledge of the Treaty of Waitangi.

To enable a diverse curriculum that ensures the school is an extension of the community, a board must recognise and embrace Māori as Tangata Whenuatangaa. A board will require an awareness of local environment, community and their interrelated history, and to actively acknowledge the Māori community as a key stakeholder in the school.

Having a board library with some key books, articles, blogs and videos is important to help develop understanding and innovation.

Some key readings I would recommend are:

- [Tātiako – Cultural Competences for Teachers of Māori Learners](#)
- [KaHikitia -Accelerating Success](#)
- [Pasifika Education Plan](#)
- [Is Māori representation Māori Privilege?](#) — Wharehoka Wano

It definitely starts with the big people. I challenge you to become a member of a board or community and begin to serve to lead!



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