E-Learning for Two Generations

A case study of how ICTs can support learning at a teen parent centre

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Abstract

E-learning for Two Generations is a participant case study of a teen parent centre, Te Whare Whai Hua, in Gisborne. It investigates to what extent and in what ways ICTs can support the unique needs of teen parents. This study pointed up four significant areas in which ICTs can have a positive impact on teen parent education. These comprise a sense of whanaungatanga or belonging, parenting, lifeskills and academic achievement. Online learning has the potential to promote social relationships, critical thinking and flexible learning for students who have gaps in attendance. ICTs can also enhance the parent’s engagement with their child’s learning. Through the co-construction of narrative stories the teen parents can reflect on and participate in the process of their children’s learning.

Introduction

Whaia te kotahitanga o te wairua. Ma te rangimarie me te aroha e paihere.
Pursue unity of spirit, which is bound together by peace and love.

Teen parents face enormous challenges. They are learning about their own identity as teenagers with the associated issues of relationships and sexuality. Many of these students live complicated lives, facing the adult responsibility of raising at least one child. They confront adult pressures of running a household, budgeting and setting goals for the future. The choice to return to school is often a triumph over adversity. Often these students perceive that by continuing their education they are giving their babies a better chance in life. This project aims to investigate how ICTs can support the educational needs of teenage mothers in a teen parent unit.

This research is a case study of one centre, Te Whare Whai Hua, located on the grounds of Lytton High, a decile two school, in Gisborne. This qualitative study relates a story about the challenges facing teen parents. It goes on to explore how information and communication technologies (ICTs) can support students in a holistic way.

Te Whare Whai Hua is a unit attached to Lytton High school which aims at supporting teenage parents, their children and families. It aims to promote positive parenting and lifeskills that awhi and assist young people in their endeavours to pursue their education, learning and development. Education at the centre is holistic. The staff embrace Durie’s (1994) “whare tapa wha” model for hauora or (health), that there are four interrelated dimensions of well being; the physical, social, mental/emotional and spiritual.

These young women face many challenges. Many have had less than desirable educational experiences to date. Factors include literacy difficulties, learning gaps and negative attitudes toward their learning.
They have had significant life experiences. They range in circumstances, numbers of children and whanau support. Many students have itinerant lifestyles, where they move on a regular basis. There is often inconsistent attendance.

Students follow independent learning programmes designed to meet their needs. ICTs can be utilised to support these learner centred programmes, linking students with providers and experts, supporting cooperation and interpersonal communication. Courses are currently offered through the Correspondence School, through classes at Lytton High School and through the provision of unit standards in the classroom. ‘Whanaungatanga’ (a sense of belonging within the family setting) is encouraged so that whanau can help one another and achieve in a positive, safe and culturally appropriate environment. This nurturing culture supports students in their learning in a holistic manner.

The Unit aims for all students to achieve national qualifications. Students are very focused on formal learning as a priority. Nevertheless, the weekly programme includes sport and arts such as pottery and weaving classes. Students are also encouraged to participate in a range of parenting and lifeskills programmes provided by community groups and health providers.

This research examines one unit and how the teachers and students use ICTs to provide solutions for the various challenges they face. The research approach reflects an awareness of kaupapa Māori methodology. As a pakeha researcher I acknowledge I may not share the cultural perspective of most of the participants in this study. Consequently, drafts, visual images and transcripts have been shared with participants and discussed collectively before this report was written. The story is a shared one.

Te Whare Whai Hua Staff
In 2005 there were three teachers who worked part time at the centre, Gemeaux Riddell, Tarsh Koia and Carly Rangiaho. Tarsh was employed to relieve for Gemeaux. Gemeaux was finishing her secondary teacher education studies, majoring in Art and Health. Gemeaux, the teacher in charge, will be adopting a full time position at the centre in 2006. Tarsh is currently undertaking an early childhood qualification having become qualified and taught in the secondary sector. Carly is an art teacher and an artist. All three teachers are mothers and empathise with the teen parents. The three teachers understand how complex it is to juggle study, work and family commitments.

Paul Smith, who is the counsellor at Lytton High School, holds the dual role of Head of Department at Te Whare Whai Hua. Jo Ashwell, who holds a social work background is experienced in the area of youth advocacy. Lois Smiler is the centre’s newly appointed social worker. Christine Taare, an experienced early childhood educator, is the centre supervisor.

Main Question
To what extent and in what ways can ICTs support the unique needs of teen parents?

Subquestions
What special educational needs do these students have?
How are ICTs used to address these needs and challenges?
Definitions

Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs)
(IT) is the term used to describe the items of equipment (hardware) and computer programs (software) that allow us to access, retrieve, store, organise, manipulate, and present information by electronic means. Personal computers, scanners, and digital cameras fit into the hardware category; database programs and multimedia programmes fit into the software category. Communication technology (CT) is the term used to describe telecommunications equipment through which information can be sought, sent and accessed, for example, phones, faxes, modems, and computers. (Digital Horizons)

Digital literacy
Digital literacy is the ability to appreciate the potential of ICT to support innovation in industrial, business and creative processes. Learners need to gain the confidence, skills, and discrimination to adopt ICT in appropriate ways. Digital literacy is seen as a ‘life skill’ in the same way as literacy and numeracy. (Digital Horizons)

Information literacy
Information literacy is the ability to locate, evaluate, manipulate, manage, and communicate information from different sources. As learners become increasingly information-literate, they develop skills in discrimination, interpretation, and critical analysis. ICT offers opportunities for higher-order thinking and creativity in processing, constructing, and conveying knowledge. (Digital Horizons)

E-learning
E-learning is flexible learning using ICT resources, tools, and applications, and focusing on interactions among teachers, learners, and the online environment. E-learning usually refers to structured and managed learning experiences, and may involve the use of the internet, CD-roms, software, other media, and telecommunications. (Digital Horizons)

Online learning
Online learning is more specific to the context of using the internet and associated web-based applications as the delivery medium for the learning experience. (Digital Horizons)

Constructivism
“Learning is an active process, during which learners construct new ideas based on their current understanding and perspectives. They do this by selecting, then transforming information by organisation, elaboration, scaffolding, and other cognitive strategies” (Campbell, n.d.). http://crossroads.georgetown.edu/vkp/resources/glossary/constructivism.htm

Outline of Chapters
In the next chapter I review relevant literature on how students with different learning needs have their educational needs met through the use of ICTs. Chapter three outlines the methodology used during the research. Chapter four illustrates
the challenges that teen parents and their teachers experience. Chapter five describes how ICTs are currently used at the centre. It illustrates the interventions that were trialled over the duration of the research. In chapter six the report is concluded with the findings summarised and recommendations made for further research.

References

Chapter Two Literature Review

Ehara taku toa i te toa takitahi engari he toa takitini
I come not with my own strengths but bring with me the gifts, talents and strengths of my family, tribe and ancestors

Introduction
This section reviews literature related to the topic of teen parents, in particular in New Zealand. It points up Māori perspectives, as reflected in the whakatauki (proverb) above, where identity is a wider concept than individualistic western discourses allow. This review also looks at the role of the narrative in regard to early childhood learning and the role of ICTs in education, how there are new literacies developing and new pedagogies.

A Kaupapa Māori Framework
The teen parents in Te Whare Whai Hua are predominantly Māori. There is an ethos in the centre which embodies tikanga Māori. Hence the programmes are embedded in this kaupapa Māori context. So to understand this lens I commence this review with literature, which discusses Māori perspectives.

We need to care for kids as culturally-located human beings (Bishop, 2003). According to Durie (2003) “being Māori is a Māori reality. Education should be as much about that reality as it is about literacy and numeracy” (p.200). To explore this reality let us reflect on the whakatauaki (proverb) which commenced this review. It represents a construct of the child and learning that is holistic and multi-layered. It values community knowledge and ways of knowing and locates learning in the realms of past, present and future, within whānau, hapu and iwi, and within Te Ao Māori (the Māori worlds) and Te Ao Pakeha (the Pakeha world). The child is embedded within community, a living connection to the family – past, present and future, an embodiment of ancestors, a link in descent lines that stretched from the beginning of time into the future. The Māori child is perceived in the context of their place in the universe, the receptacle of the combined understandings, abilities and strengths of their forbearers, ‘taonga’ precious treasures to be held in trust for future generations (Rameka, 2003).

Rameka (2003) further suggests that the Māori child is an integral part of a web of relationships that is not commonly understood by Pakeha teachers but is central to who the Māori child is. The difference is not so much that Māori children grow up as part of a web of relationships and Western children do not. The way relationships are enacted in the Māori world is significantly different from they way they are understood and enacted in the Pakeha world. Differences in perspective are important to understand as a pakeha teacher or as a teacher/researcher. Penetito (2001) comments that pakeha teachers are not culturally neutral. They need to be open to the expression of other cultures, specifically in this case to Māori.

A kaupapa Māori approach is important for Māori students who may have experienced failure in the past. Research has revealed that mainstream teachers have had lower expectations of Māori children. They have failed to effectively identify or reflect on how their practice impacts on the educational experiences of Māori students. In addition, they have had limited support to address these specific issues (Alton-Lee, 2003). Māori students' outcomes will improve when they see themselves reflected in a curriculum, and when their teachers are supported to be reflective about their practice and to be agents of change for Māori students (Tuuta et al., 2004). Te Whare Whai Hua places an emphasis on academic achievement. Teachers in the centre have high expectations that the students will succeed. Success however is a holistic concept.

The work of Mason Durie has been included in this review as it is deemed of importance by the staff and students of Te Whare Whai Hua. While I was doing fieldwork a group of staff and students went to Hawkes Bay and listened to him speak. The centre has purchased two of his books as reference material.

Durie (2001) recognises that education is about preparing people to actively participate as citizens of the world as it is about being Māori. If years at school do not lead to some readiness to confront the world, and to participate actively in it, then the opportunities for Māori advancement will have been sacrificed. A successful education therefore is one that lays down the groundwork for a healthy lifestyle and a career with an income adequate enough to provide a healthy lifestyle. It is unacceptable for Māori students to leave kohanga, primary school, or high school without achieving the best possible outcome.

Durie (2001) believes that we should have zero tolerance of educational failure. He describes 60,000 young Māori who, on present trends, will never experience anything like a reasonable outcome. Instead they will become trapped in lifestyles that are essentially incompatible with healthy growth and development and will struggle to participate in either te ao Māori or the wider global community. Simply blaming the home, or the whānau, or the school, will do little more than produce a stand off when what is needed is a joint resolution, by all parties, that failure will not be tolerated.

Durie (2001) suggests that educators find excuses for failure and poor performance. He suggests that zero tolerance of failure should become the starting point and the expectation as Māori head into the next phase of development. This starts with a greater co-operation between institutions such as homes and the school, but there is also a need for better co-ordination across sectors. Education policies by themselves will not overcome the effects of poor housing, or unsafe streets, or alienation from customary land, or low incomes, or polluted environments, or physical and mental abuse. Nor does it make sense to talk about the knowledge economy and the knowledge wave if access to higher centers of learning is conditional upon loans that are often higher than parents would have contemplated for a home mortgage. This is applicable across the spectrum of low income New Zealanders.

Across the range of policies and programmes, outside the formal education sector as much as within it, there needs to be some consistency and a shared sense of direction. Messages about the value of education will not be well received where deculturation,
loss of identity, unemployment and indifference prevail. Education by itself will not
be a panacea for all Māori ills (Durie, 2001).

A kaupapa Māori approach to research and education in general is important to
recognise. Diversity is important to our society. Durie, (2001) suggests that no
advancement is being made in addressing cultural diversity in general as current
educational policies and practices are developed within a framework of colonialism.
The system continues to serve the interests of the monocultural elite. Hence, we need
to encourage minority groups to have their own voices without putting words into
their mouths and allow research, which reflects their perspective, to inform our
practice.

Teen parents
Educating teen parents is important if we want to improve opportunities for young
Māori women and their children. The 2001 census indicated that the biggest
differences in childbearing rates between Māori and non-Māori women is at ages 15
to 19 when the Māori fertility rate is nearly four times that of non-Māori women.
Hence Māori comprise a large number of the teen parent population, particularly in
Gisborne (Statistics New Zealand, 2001).

Before Susan Baragwanath opened the first teen parent school He Huarahi Tamariki
in Porirua in 1994 the only option for pregnant teenagers was to enrol in
correspondence courses and struggle away silently in isolation away from their peers.
There are now 16 teen parent units and 34 another planned to open.

Baragwanath looked at the models of teen parent schools in four countries; the United
States, England, France and Switzerland. She suggested that childcare is desirable on
site or as near as practically possible, with parents able to participate in learning
programmes. She suggested that if the mother is anxious about her child her learning
and productivity are severely restricted. Extended family involvement is vital. An
education programme for teen parents needs to be implemented as early as possible
for both the teen parent and their child (Baragwanath, 1999).

Linday & Enright (1997) outline that “for every teenage mother
• who recognises her worth and value other than her sexuality
• who learns to properly raise their child
• who maintains contact at school with caring, responsible adults who model
  appropriate behaviour and good values.
• who is imbued with goals and ambition
• who continues or resumes their education
• who is empowered to strive for independency and self sufficiency
• who aspires to improve their lot and that of their child
• who succeeds in a role in addition to that as a parent
…for each of these we, the taxpaying public benefit” (p. 15).

Baragwanath (1997) also uses this rationale. She suggests that four years of secondary
education for teenage mothers may avoid forty years on a government benefit and
save millions of welfare dollars.
Baragwanath (1999) comments that there is mounting evidence documenting the unfavourable consequences of an unintended pregnancy resulting in teenage parenthood. Contraceptives are increasingly available in New Zealand but the rate is not changing very much. The types of risk factors associated with teenage parenthood are: early school failure, early behaviour problems, family dysfunction and poverty.

The United States has the highest rate of teenage pregnancy in the developed world. New Zealand has a rate of 34 births per thousand. The United Kingdom is in a similar position to New Zealand regarding the rate of teenage pregnancy and the education of teenage mothers (Baragwanath, 1999).

In her study Baragwanath (1999) note that it was widely accepted that teenage mothers who finish their basic formal education increase their chances of getting off welfare by up to three times over mothers who do not finish their schooling. There is also a major motivation to “socialise” mothers by including them in special parenting classes. This is seen to be a good example to the children as it brings a structure into their lives that may have been absent. Paul Smith, the Head of Department, commented that an important feature of the centre was that it provided stability for the students who may not have had routines before.

Linday & Enright (1997) point up the uniqueness of the job of teaching teen parents. Teachers of young parents, particularly those in rural and small school districts, say that none of their fellow teachers have workdays quite like theirs. They suggest that other teachers cannot quite appreciate the special challenges that are inherent in working with pregnant and parenting students.

Being a teen parent can be a lonely experience as relationships with friends and family may change during pregnancy and once the baby is born.

“A pregnant teen may experience a sense of isolation. She’s having new feelings and experiencing physical changes. Talking with other teens undergoing similar experiences can help. A support group gives her a chance to talk about her feelings, get information about her health and her baby’s health, and learn about needed resources available to her in the community” (Linday & Enright, 1997, p42).

Flexibility is crucial. The ability to be flexible is especially important in a teen parent programme. Attendance may be a problem. A guest speaker may be invited to the class, yet half the students are absent. The teacher needs to take advantage of teachable moments. A student’s baby cried all night. Today may be the best time to brainstorm and investigate effective ways of dealing with a crying baby. “Cognitive learning cannot take place in a state of affective disorder. When the student is upset, learning may not happen” (Linday & Enright, 1997, p51).

The needs of the students must be met before they can learn anything that is in a lesson plan. The teacher needs to be non-judgmental. Linday & Enright (1997) describe the characteristics of a teen parent teacher.

“She is very flexible. Things don’t have to be a certain way. She doesn’t prejudge, and she has problem-solving abilities. She sees the big picture and
tries to work it. She knows her students are adolescents, and when things get tough, she knows it won’t be this way forever (Linday & Enright, 1997, p52).

They suggest that a teacher of pregnant or parenting teens has a range of roles. Four of these roles are trust builder, facilitator, probing questioner and networker. Most importantly they also identify that building and maintaining trust with pregnant and parenting teens is crucial (Linday & Enright, 1997).

The Digital Divide
According to Maharey (2000) there is a significant overseas literature that suggests that certain groups are more likely than others to be left behind by the "information revolution". Among groups identified most likely to be disadvantaged in terms of ICT access and skills in New Zealand are Māori and Pacific peoples; those on low incomes; sole parents; people with low or no qualifications or poor literacy; the unemployed and underemployed and women and girls. The teen parents in Gisborne are likely to be reflected in more than two of these areas. Therefore, it is important to ensure teen parents receive the benefits of a digital education.

In 2001, the census indicated that 25% of Gisborne households had access to the Internet. Over the last four years this figure will probably have risen, however this low number may correspond with the socio economic circumstances of Gisborne residents in general. There are marked difference between households along ethnicity and income lines. According to the 2001 census figures (Maharey, 2000) only 23 percent of Māori households and 17 percent of Pacific Island people’s households had computers. While 57 percent of households with incomes over $71,600 had computers, this dropped to just over 50 percent for households with incomes from $31,400 to $48,999, and 16.6 percent for households with incomes below $20,000. It is estimated that 50 percent of Māori and around 60 percent of Pacific Island people are in households in the bottom two income quintiles compared with only 37 percent of Europeans.

The digital divide is a racial and socio-economic issue. This is particularly pertinent to teen parents in the Gisborne region. It is also an issue that has relevance to the teen parents as young women. Computers are a lens on the world, a way of gaining information and disseminating a perspective or world view. When the printing press was first invented women were prohibited from publishing. Spender (1995) suggests that the design of cyber contexts and the dominant culture is one that excludes women.

Spender (1995) states that
"the computer is not a toy, it is the site of wealth, power and influence, now and in the future. Women-and indigenous people and those with few resources cannot afford to be marginalised or excluded from this new medium. To do so will risk becoming information poor. It will not be to count; to be locked out of full participation in society in the same way that illiterate people have been disenfranchised in a print world" (p.16).

Spender (1996) comments that men own the cyberworld. She suggests that “the reason they’re in charge is, like Bill Gates, they got there first. Whether the mogul is Mr Murdoch, Mr Packer, Mr Turner or Mr Berlusconi it’s clear that it is not women’s
experience that is being used as the basis for prioritizing, planning and shaping the
new information society” (http://www.newint.org/issue286/mouse.htm.)

At Navcon 2k4, Dale Spender, in her keynote, commented on the risk that girls face if
they do not become skilled in using digital tools to claim their stake of the
information highway. She says, in her article Of Mouse and Man (Spender, 1996),
that there is an irony that just as some women have made it in the print-based system,
the rules of the game have been changed. Our society believes that girls are not as
‘good’ as boys when it comes to machines. In a computer-based world it is boys who
have the edge. The ‘reticent’ relationship that women have with computers says more
about the limitations of the technology (and the consciousness that gives rise to it)
than it does about women’s abilities.

When we consider teen parent involvement in the Te Whare Whai Hua childcare, it is
valuable to consider our beliefs about the nature of learning. There is a strong
emphasis in the centre that children are culturally located.

This sociocultural perspective has profound implications for teaching, schooling, and
education. Scherba de Valenzuela (2002) suggests that a key feature of the
sociocultural view of human development is that higher order functions develop out
of social interaction.

“Caregivers are agents of culture who set an infant's nascent actions within an
intimate setting that is deeply informed by the caregiver's cultural knowledge.”
http://www.unm.edu/~devalenz/handouts/sociocult.html

Hence it is of value that the teen parents are supported to support and extend their
children in their learning.

Dewey (1916) suggested that learning is socially and culturally located.
“If the living, experiencing being is an intimate participant in the activities of
the world to which it belongs, then knowledge is a mode of participation,
valuable in the degree in which it is effective. It cannot be the idle view of an
unconcerned spectator (p. 393).

In keeping with this perspective, Rogoff (1990) describes a participatory
appropriation view of how development and learning occur. Children and their social
partners are interdependent, their roles are active and dynamically changing, and the
specific processes by which they communicate and share in decision making are the
substance of cognitive development.

This view that roles are fluid and context is important, differs from other perspectives.
“Developmental research has commonly limited attention to either the
individual or the environment - for example, examining how adults teach
children or how children construct reality, with an emphasis on either separate
individuals or independent environmental elements as the basic units of
analysis.”
http://www.education.miami.edu/blantonw/mainsite/Componentsfromclmer/C
omponent1/Rogoff.1.html.
Even when both the individual and the environment are considered, they are often regarded as separate entities rather than being mutually defined and interdependent in ways that preclude their separation as units or elements (Rogoff, n.d.).

Hence when we consider narratives we have to consider that these conversations are the intertwining of the social with the cultural. Sociocultural theorists emphasize that this intertwining is a primary activity of knowledge co-construction and appropriation. (Rogoff, 1990).

During the study of teen parents it became apparent that one teen parent did not understand the centre philosophy and consequently looked to didactic teaching as a more productive model. However, educators in the childcare adhere to a more child-centred model. “Guided participation” stresses the mutual involvement of individuals and their social partners, communicating and coordinating their involvement as they participate in socioculturally structured collective activity (Rogoff, 1990).

The concept of participatory appropriation refers to how individuals change through their involvement in one or another activity, in the process becoming prepared for subsequent involvement in related activities. With guided participation as the interpersonal process through which people are involved in sociocultural activity, participatory appropriation is the personal process by which, through engagement in an activity, individuals change and handle a later situation in ways prepared by their own participation in the previous situation. This is a process of becoming, rather than acquisition (Rogoff, n.d.).

Gemeaux, as a result of her studies of the Health curriculum, spoke of how she subscribed to a socio-ecological perspective. Naturally her view has a significant impact on the types of learning experiences she is likely to promote in the classroom. This perspective suggests that people can take part in the health promotion process effectively only when they have a clear view of the social and environmental factors that affect health and well-being.

Therefore, through learning experiences that reflect the socio-ecological perspective, students seek to remove barriers to healthy choices. They help to create the conditions that promote their own well-being and that of other people and society as a whole. Through this perspective, students also come to a better appreciation of how and why individuals differ.

“Through the socio-ecological perspective, students will learn to take into account the considerations that affect society as a whole as well as individual considerations and will discover the need to integrate these.”


This is an empowering perspective as the student is given the mandate to make informed choices. The ability to critique messages portrayed by the media and develop meaningful links with individuals and organisations is enhanced by the use of ICTs. The Health and Physical Education in the New Zealand Curriculum states that students need to “develop the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and motivation to make informed decisions and to act in ways that contribute to their personal well-being, the well-being of other people, and that of society as a whole” (Ministry of Education,
2003, p.6). ICTs link people with resources directly without mediation by the teacher. Increasingly the teacher’s role is facilitatory, supporting students to evaluate and critique the messages they access. In this way they will be more empowered to discriminate when they do not have a teacher or an institution filtering their access.

Comments made by Gemeaux and Tarsh through the course of the study reflect a critical perspective. School is not simply an agent of social and cultural reproduction where students learn how to earn (Brown, 2003). Critical Pedagogy looks at society and the systems we have and asks who benefits? The primary concern is social justice (Burbles, & Berk, 1999).

Children should not simply be socialised into an already existing life at school they should learn to question this system to enhance their own critical thoughts. They need to question the status quo. Teachers can empower students by asking them to critique the outside world as well as the classroom they learn in. This equips them with life skills (Shor, 1992).

Critical thinking is defined in Health and Physical Education in the New Zealand Curriculum (1999) as “examining, questioning, evaluating, and challenging taken-for-granted assumptions about issues and practices” (p 56). This has important ramifications to us as teachers in an information age. Gemeaux as part of her Health programme planned to implement a resource devised by Tasker, (2000). Social and Ethical Issues in Sexuality Education: A Resource for Health Education Teachers of Year 12 and 13 Students.

Tasker (2000) suggests, in relationship to media advertising, “critical analysis of media portrayal of sexuality and gender, and the reflection of the negative impact of this on personal identity and feelings of self worth, students will be better able to value diversity and their own uniqueness, and to challenge and take critical action in relation to commercial exploitation” (Tasker, 2000, p45).

Why use ICTs in Teen Parent Centres?
How do the ICTs and teen parents connect? Teen parents are in a unique situation. They have to contend with isolation, if they are parenting alone. As a group they have diverse learning needs. Clearly, a one-size fits all approach does not work and the demands of a programme of this complexity requires a creative approach.

According to Hattie (2003), there needs to be a lively debate about the post-internet, 21st century New Zealand schooling that we desire. Our schools still look like industrial age egg crates, with 25 students listening to an adult (80% of all instructional time is spent in listening). Although we have arrived in the Information Age many teachers still use Industrial Age models of teaching that encourage passive learning and knowledge mastery (Huitt, 1997). It is not enough to see ICT as a means of improving efficiency in the educational process. Schools that fail to progress will not survive in such a rapidly changing world. To remain static is to become obsolete (Leu, 2001).

New tools alone do not create educational change (Semple, 2000). "Technology doesn't change practice people do" (Loveless, DeVoogd, & Bohlin, 2001, p64). Purposeful planning on the part of the teacher, as well as integration into the
curriculum must accompany its use (McDonough, 2001). It is inappropriate to integrate ICTs because they are 21st century tools and students need digital skills. They should be utilised because they support the kaupapa of the centre and enhance the educational programmes.

ICT is changing the nature of teaching and learning (Wheeler 2001). In our increasingly visual media-saturated world, the definition of what it means to be literate continuously evolves as new technologies of literacy rapidly appear. This creates both new opportunities and new challenges for educators (Leu, 2001). Students need to be critically and digitally literate, in addition to possessing basic literacy skills. There is an acknowledgement students need to develop their higher order thinking skills. In this project teachers were asked to teach online. This area of online teaching and learning is a relatively current phenomenon in mainstream high school settings. Most of the literature is embedded in a tertiary or distance learning context.

Technology creates the possibilities for mass customization (Johnson, 1998). Technological literacy can support the learning of a diverse range of students. Different types of software available allow the locus of control of instruction to be varied from the computer to the learner. Educational opportunities created by programmes, which bring text, sounds, graphics, video clips, student work, and web connections into multimedia experiences are limited only by the imagination (Ackley, 1999). Teachers, using information technologies, are able to provide a number of different learning options to suit a variety of individuals with a broad range of student learning styles (Wishart & Blease, 1999).

In the last decade, as ICT is increasingly used as a teaching/learning tool, to facilitate higher order thinking, there has been a pedagogical paradigm shift (Leu 2001). There is much literature on how students and teachers need to change in order to develop skills they will require to contribute to society in the 21st century.

During the course of this research Gemeaux and I examined the possibility of integrating curriculum in order to facilitate constructivist learning. The constructivist perspective assumes that knowledge is built by individuals from within instead of being transmitted to the learner by the teacher (Cobern, 1993). Students engage in critical thinking, solve real-life problems, collaborate on group projects, write articles or stories, develop models or diagrams, journal, and investigate solutions to research questions (Howard, McGee, Schwartz, Purcell, 2000). Instruction that is organized around relevant ideas is more likely to motivate students who take ownership of their learning (Tyner, 1994). When a tool is introduced in an authentic learning experience, students will be more likely to remember how something is done and use what they’ve learned (Newman, 2000).

Organizing instruction around big ideas, empowering students, and creating classroom environments that promote learning through social interaction are key components of constructivism that can be supported by effective use of the Internet (Gould, 1996). The World Wide Web can illustrate to students the complexity of any one topic. By its very nature, it can offset the more static content of textbooks. Furthermore, the Internet provides for the immediacy of events. With the Internet, teachers have ready access to current information (El-Hindi, 1999).
Students who work on individual correspondence programmes can miss out on valuable cooperative learning opportunities. The lifeskill and parenting programmes at the Whare Whai Hua provide opportunities for cooperative learning strategies to be implemented. When children collaborate, in cooperative learning groups, they share the process of constructing their ideas with others. This collective effort provides the opportunity for children to reflect on and elaborate not only their own ideas but also those of their peers as well (Lunenberg, 1998). The biggest impact that ICTs are having and will continue to have is on the relationships between people and between people and organizations. These new relationships derive from these new electronic forms of communication. What is important is the emphasis on relationships rather than information (Bigum, 2003). This suggests that ICTs can promote whanaungatanga in educational settings.

In keeping with the goals of Te Whare Whai Hua, constructivist strategies allow for cultural diversity and diverse educational outcomes. However, these strategies are not applicable to individualised textbook based correspondence courses. Constructivism challenges instructional systems that were designed to meet prespecified learning outcomes (Newman, 2000). Traditional assessment-driven practice does not lend itself to the different approaches expected of constructivist theory.

This points up a challenge to adapt approaches to new forms of learning. New assessment practices need to be developed to measure the effectiveness of ICT based classroom learning. An integrated enquiry approach at the teen parent centre could utilise a constructivist approach and the meaningful use of ICTs.

As education becomes a cooperative effort between children, and educational methods transform to emphasize the actual process of children's construction of new ideas, new techniques for measuring performance become necessary (Strommen & Lincoln, 1992, Semple, 2000). Teaching and learning environments that foster higher order thinking do find it difficult to use methods of assessment, which are based on artificially constructed situations over which the teacher exudes total control. Authentic assessment focuses on analytical thinking and performance, whereas norm-referenced, standardized tests focus on low-level rote skills (Lunenberg, 1998).

The staff at the centre identified the higher order thinking skills of evaluating and judging as important for the teen parents that they work with. According to El-Hindi (1999) teachers need to work deliberately to develop higher order thinking in classes and not assume it is implicit in any software application they use. Social interaction is essential to developing sophisticated thinking The construction of knowledge from information requires much more than the ability to use a variety of ICT techniques or skills with the latest range of software applications; it relates more to an ability to question, access, interpret, amend, analyse, construct and communicate meaning from information (Loveless, DeVoogd, & Bohlin, 2001). When students use ICT as a tool to foster higher order thinking skills, the way in which students learn changes. When used in this way ICT has a direct positive impact upon student achievement (Cohen, 1997).

Interestingly, Wegerif (2003) maintains that the teaching of thinking skills using ICT is potentially a white, male and middle class response by teachers, which may simply
reproduce social inequality. The definition of thinking reflects what the dominant class values as thinking at any given time (Brown, 2003). In the past definitions of higher order thinking have overlooked the intuitive, holistic feminine and non-western ways of thinking (Wegerif, 2003). Consequently, teachers at Te Whare Whai Hua need to frame their definition of higher order thinking in feminine Māori kaupapa.

Real world contexts can promote relevant learning experiences for teen mothers. Lepper, Woolverton, Mumme & Gurtner (1993) note that we are challenged by activities that we perceive as meaningful and where we are uncertain of their outcome. Shasek (2000) found ICT to be a useful motivator. Students who had never spent more than a minimal amount of time on homework, or who rarely wrote more than a paragraph for an assignment, worked on useful and personally important Web sites for two or more months. Learning became authentic, with technology as the important tool.

**Online Learning and teaching**

Hopper (2001) suggests that the online context does not readily lend itself to traditional teacher-centred approaches. However, this Bonk (1999, p 400) comments that web based learning “offers a chance for students to enter into dialogue about authentic problems, collaborate with peers, negotiate meaning, become apprenticed into their field of study, enter a community of experts and peers and generally be assisted in the learning process.”

Stacy (1999) has identified that online environments can support; the social construction of knowledge, the clarification of ideas, feedback from other group member, sharing the diverse perspectives of group members, new ideas and expert advice and group problem solving.

Salmon (2000) suggests students grow in their ability to participate in online discussions through a 5 step incremental model. This would be helpful when implemented.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1</th>
<th>The Stages of Student’s Ability to Participate in online discussions</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Stage 1</strong></td>
<td>Access and motivation acquisition</td>
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<td><strong>Stage 2</strong></td>
<td>Online socialization</td>
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<td><strong>Stage 3</strong></td>
<td>Information exchange</td>
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<td><strong>Stage 4</strong></td>
<td>Knowledge construction</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Stage 5</strong></td>
<td>Independence development allowing learners to take charge of their own learning</td>
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According to Sands (2002), interactive online activities, which involve the analysis and summarizing of others’ ideas, leads to growth. There are ramifications for teachers who want to work in this cyber teaching space. Haavind (2000) comments that using face-to-face strategies online is ineffective. Posing many questions puts the reader off. By being purposefully vague the course participant is required to do the thinking. When a valuable comment strikes the facilitator he/she draws attention to it making it the focus of discussion. This research supports my practice-based
understandings that online forums can support learners in their co-construction of ideas.

**Conclusion**

Literacy is no longer an end point in itself but rather a process of continuously learning how to become literate (Leu, 2001). It involves being able to make sense of and navigate through several forms of information, including images, sounds, animation, and ongoing discussion groups (El Hindi, 1998). Interactive programmes offer teachers different and potentially more engaging ways to facilitate learning for their students. Many of these new literacies converge with the Internet (Leu, 2001).

The literature suggests that teen parents are at a disadvantage if they do not possess the cultural capital to utilize ICT resources. The digital divide is wide and growing wider if women, Māori and those on low incomes do not have access.

There are no absolutes and clear cut answers to educational issues. Schon (1983) called the model of technical rationality into question. He suggested that in areas of uncertainty effective practitioners become researchers who identify a problem, develop a hypothesis, and conduct an experiment to see how it changes the problematic situation. A technical rational model will not suffice. There are unique dynamics in our schools, classrooms and relationships with our students. Teen parent centres are unique educational environments and educators, by being reflective, can develop new practices that are grounded in the reality of their own contexts (Delong & Wideman, 1998).

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Chapter Three: Methodology

This chapter recounts the methodology used during the two terms of data collection of this case study. Although the nature of research was descriptive, I engaged with the staff of Te Whare Whai Hua facilitating interventions to strengthen and support ICT capabilities of the teachers in the unit.

Differences in perspective are important to understand for researchers. “Researchers who write of Māori and do research on Māori often suggest solutions that are divorced from a Māori reality” (Bishop & Glynn, 1998, p67). Hence, as a researcher I wanted to ensure that I was a conduit for a story that belonged to the students and staff at Te Whare Whai Hua.

Bishop and Glynn (1999) suggest that an imposition of a model (of change) from outside of the experiences, understandings and aspirations of the community group is doomed to failure. “Failure that is, if the objective is other than assimilation or the perpetuation of a situation of dominance and subjection” (p 45). Consequently as I am not a teen parent teacher and hold a pakeha perspective it was appropriate that I learn more about a kaupapa Māori approach to research.

Bishop & Glynn (1999) describe an “imposition” of a model, which occurs from outside of the experiences, understandings and aspirations of the community group. This model is doomed to failure. “Failure that is, if the objective is other than assimilation or the perpetuation of a situation of dominance and subjection” (Bishop & Glynn, 1999, p 45).

To reduce imposition, this study required an inclusive Kaupapa Māori approach. Bishop and Glynn (1999) advocate in-depth semi structured interviews, which resemble detailed “conversations”. This promotes and provides legitimation, representation of voice and determination of accountability processes. “Kaupapa Māori research calls for self determination and the associated ideas of collaborative, reciprocal participation which supports participant control over the initiation of research projects and guarantees them a say in determining the focus of the benefits of the research” (Bishop & Glynn, 1999, p102).

Traditionally researchers have been storytellers from outside who have historically gathered stories about others and made sense of them in terms of perceived patterns and commonalities. The researcher has been the storyteller, the narrator, and the person who decides what constitutes the narrative. Bishop & Glynn (1999) suggest that when researching in Māori contexts simply listening and recording the stories of other people’s experience is not acceptable. Researchers need to acknowledge our participatory connectedness with the participants. We need to promote a means of knowing that denies distance and separation and promotes commitment and engagement.

It is important to recognise the epistemological foundations of research involving Māori. As Rameka (2003) suggests we must acknowledge the diverse realities and contemporary worldviews of Māori people. There is no one Māori perspective of what constitutes quality in education as a whole. In fact, she suggests that is no such thing as the Māori identity, there are only Māori identities. Hence, the validity of this
study relies not on creating replicatable data, indeed it is a case study of one setting and this is a unique story. However, by ensuring all parties have had input into the research story I have attempted to achieve an approach which is inclusive and has research validity.

Bishop and Glynn (1999) comment that the history of our country reflects a model for change imposed from outside of the experiences, understandings and aspirations of the community group. This approach, they suggest, is doomed to failure. “Failure that is, if the objective is other than assimilation or the perpetuation of a situation of dominance and subjection” (p 45).

For this reason it is important that I acknowledge that I may have a different worldview as a pakeha researcher. Most of the students are Māori. The staff are predominantly Māori and there is a kaupapa Māori ethos at the centre. Hence, without making assumptions regarding the perspectives that people have, I see my role as researcher is to listen, record and reflect the stories that people share with me. I weave the stories together and with appropriate consultation and feedback, adapt it to a mutually acceptable representation of the students and staff.

**The Role of Colleague Researcher**

In my role as Head of English at Lytton High School I have already met many of the students at the centre. Some have previously been in my class. I believe the establishment of positive relationships and trust to be very important in my role as researcher. Consequently it was appropriate that I adopted the role of participant observer. As Lofland & Lofland (1995) point out this is an advantage if the observer already knows the cast of characters. They suggest that known researchers must present themselves so as to keep the flow of data coming. Participant observers enjoy the tremendous advantage of being able to move about, observe, or question in a relatively unrestricted way. This is certainly true of this study. As the students develop that sense of whanaungatanga or belonging, so did I in my role of teacher researcher.

Detachment and anonymity was not an option. Alton-Lee (2001) comments on the reality that classroom research impacts on classroom life. It was inappropriate for me not to participate in the class, in a centre where the ethos focused on whanaungatanga. Consequently, I participated in a range of activities within the class. When I was asked to support students with senior English, I gave my assistance. I also gave just in time professional development to teachers in regard to technology. When students required technical assistance that their teacher could not provide, I endeavoured to assist.

**Ethical Considerations**

Informed consent was gained from all teachers and students involved in the research. I gained permission from the teen parents to gather information about their experiences and their children. Where the student was under 18, I sought the consent of their parents or caregivers in order to access the two generations. Only one student’s caregiver declined to participate in the study. I duely disposed of material pertaining to her. If at any time participants chose to pull out from the project they were free to do so and any materials gathered as a result of their participation would have been destroyed. If at any time participants felt uncomfortable with the data collection
methods (e.g. an interview) I offered to adopt other more acceptable research techniques that they may feel more comfortable with.

The students were always shown the visual and written material I had gathered. I gave them the option if they did not want me to include any material in this project.

Data Collection Methods

E-mail transcripts
I kept a record of e-mail messages from the teachers.

Meeting minutes
All departmental meeting minutes were kept and used as data. During the first meetings I used my journal to respond to what was happening. I did not want to audio tape the meetings as I perceive teachers would have felt uncomfortable with it going while they were voicing their opinions and it would have had an impact on the honesty of the data gathered. Note-taking, although flawed, was a less intrusive form of recording events. During later meetings I recorded the minutes and e-mailed them to the staff. At a two hour meeting with the teacher in charge I recorded the entire dialogue but selectively transcribed the footage. I gathered data that pertained to the students’ experiences, the way the programmes operate in the centre,

Teacher /Student Interviews
Intensive interviewing or unstructured interviewing is a guided conversation where the goal is to elicit from the interviewee rich detailed material that can be used in qualitative analysis (Lofland & Lofland, 1995). The initial interviews in term one were tape recorded. The ideas were coded in terms of what the educational challenges were that the students faced and what ICTs were currently being used in class and at home.

The interviews at the beginning of term two were video taped. I interviewed the teachers, childcare supervisor, and whanau support workers. The findings were coded by editing the clips into themes. The students were also asked to read over audio interview transcripts in order to clarify any details or to add any additional information.

Journal
Anecdotal notes relating to any ICTs initiative were kept. I recorded notes from conversations with participating English Department staff. Any anecdotal information that I saw or aspects of my practice I reflected on was recorded in the journal.

Term One
The first term comprised a reconnaissance data gathering period over term one. As the e-fellow project objective was to strengthening the ICT capability of teachers and increase the effective use of ICT as a teaching and learning tool, it was appropriate for me to provide professional development for the teachers and ICT support in class for the teachers and students. I found out about the challenges the students and teachers experienced. I ascertained which ICTs students used in their class and at home. I also found out about the programmes operating in the centre. I took journal notes
anecdotally of anything I saw which pertained to the topic. In addition I recorded and transcribed interviews with the three teachers and five students. Four themes emerged; whanaungatanga or a sense of belonging, lifeskills, academic programmes and parenting. Subsequent data was coded in accordance with these themes.

**Term Two**

During term two I focused on the second research question, to what extent and in what ways ICTs could be used to support the unique learning needs of students in Te Whare Whai Hua. I further built on my understandings of what challenges students and teachers identified as barriers in their learning and teaching. I gathered data on how ICTs were used in class. It was appropriate that we implement targeted interventions. The responses to these initiatives were recorded. Both Tarsh and Gemeaux, undertaking further study and their learning journeys, considering a constructivist pedagogy, promoting tikanga Māori and a socio-ecological approach to learning, dovetailed with my own as the classroom researcher.

I attended class most mornings taking anecdotal notes in my journal. I recorded an aural interview with Christine Taare, the childcare supervisor, and transcribed it to gather data on parenting and the childcare component of the centre. I videoed interviews with the three teachers, seven students, Jo, the centre manager, Lois, the social worker, and Christine.

These videos were edited together into 72 QuickTime movies. I coded them into the following themes parenting, lifeskills, academic studies and whanaungatanga. These movies were later transcribed and selected parts were used with other interview transcripts in the final written research report.

By using these interview transcripts, journal notes, meeting minutes and information from questionnaires, I was able to triangulate the data to ensure I had an accurate representation of what was happening in the classroom. A kaupapa Māori research framework suggests that decisions about access, description, involvement, initiation, interpretation and explanations are embedded in the process of storytelling (Bishop and Glynn, 1999). Chapters three and four of this research reflect this narrative.

In keeping with this shared ownership protocol, the data I gathered was presented back to the participants so that they could provide feedback. When interviews were conducted with the students and staff any transcripts were given back to the participants to review. In accordance with this research kaupapa, the process was part of an ongoing narrative record. When I completed a draft, the material was returned to the staff and we had a meeting to discuss the findings so that any amendments to the material could be made.

Five childcare staff attended the feedback meeting. A hardcopy of the research had been available in the office and a number of childcare staff read it beforehand. The findings were used for professional development in the childcare and interventions were planned for further parent education, promoting their involvement.

I asked the teachers to consider the following questions while reviewing the material: *Are there parts of this story that are irrelevant? Are there parts of this story which are inaccurate?*
Have I missed something you would like to add?
Is there something in that is not appropriate from a Māori perspective?
Would you like me to omit parts of this story as they do not respect the people concerned?

A technical rational (Shon, 1983) model of education would suggest there are absolutes. There is a rulebook, a right and a wrong in our practice. However, if we acknowledge the complexity of our role as a learning journey, we can reflect on areas where we need to develop with an honesty, which the technical rational model does not allow for.

This approach also acknowledges different worldviews. Through this story the research participants share their perspectives with openness about their identities and their practice. The educational choices documented during the study are those the participants believe to be the best under the circumstances. Their willingness to share their views and experiences so openly is a reflection of the warmth and sincerity of those at Te Whare Whai Hua. It is the wish of all those involved that you, as the reader, reading about the similarities and differences to your situation, are provoked to contemplate the possibilities that educational technologies can facilitate.

Teen parent centres throughout New Zealand are diverse and have their own ethos and reflect the cultures of which they comprise. If there are commonalities in this story and these can support reflection and insight into possible solutions, this research study has addressed it objective.

References


Chapter Four
This study recognises four key areas of importance for staff and students at Te Whare Whai Hua; having a sense of whanaungatanga, developing lifeskills, positive parenting and the experience of academic success. Firstly, I will address what the key issues are that staff and students have identified in these areas. I will then discuss how they felt ICTs could address these issues.

Whanaungatanga
(A sense of belonging)
The ethos of whanaungatanga reflects the social and spiritual dimension within the whare. It is the glue that gels the people together. It reflects the wairua of the whare. Students and teachers recognise this spiritual dimension to the centre. There is the sense that people are welcomed and loved by the other members of the extended whanau for who they are.

Te Whare Whai Hua provides a place where young mothers can form friendships with other young women, who understand the challenges of parenting as a teenager. There is an important sense of belonging; they are part of a whanau where they and their child or children are valued for their contribution.

Whanaungatanga is an awesome thing for their spiritual health. All the encouragement and praise we can give them builds their self-esteem.

The main thing is a sense of belonging, which is quite simple, but in itself has huge impact because they are belonging to a very positive and health promoting place. It is a place where they are valued for who they are and their children are valued and loved for who they are. They are respected. I always say to the girls you take one step forward in the right direction and you have everybody all the parts of this organisation trying to help and lift you up….you have got people here whose hearts are really in their mahi and this makes is a beautiful place to work. It has a lovely feeling of support for all of us, staff and students.

Gemeaux Riddell (Teacher)
This sense of belonging is really important, as some students may have previously felt disenfranchised from the education system. These students, in particular, were at risk before they became teen parents. They attended school sporadically, consequently had low levels of literacy and were in a spiralling curve, experiencing failure and opting out. The provision of stability and routines is an important component of this sense of belonging.

According to Bishop & Glynn (1999), positive relationships, where there are high expectations, have a significant impact on Maori achievement. Their research shows that, in terms of influences on student achievement, relationships between the teacher and the student are twice as significant as the factors outside of the school. This

Whanaungatanga is a really big one. It is all about relationships in the whare. If the atmosphere is cold, unfriendly and distant, a person is not comfortable about being here. For whanaungatanga to be maintained there need to be good friendly interactions, and for some of us, motherly, as some students are very young and may not have had that caring relationship with another adult perhaps. We try and maintain a lot of laughter and joviality to keep the spirits up.

You hear so many comments from people who say wow there is a really good feel about the place. The girls belong here. The babies belong here too. I suppose that the whole big thing about whanaungatanga. Everyone belongs and has a place so they can walk in here and feel at home here. That’s what we try to create.

This sense of family or whanaungatanga fosters a belonging that some students may not have previously experienced. It also makes the centre accessible to other family members. I noted a teen father who was in Year 10 at the adjacent school regularly visiting his child in the centre.
They love to help that’s why I like this place. I don’t really want to leave. I wish the next place I go to is like this. I like this place. Its choice, the people, the routine. I am used to this environment.

Reremoana (teen parent)

Everyone is made to feel a part of this place here. Everyone feels needed and wanted here. A lot of people who just walk in, you know, they can feel the love, the tightness the strength within our whanau.

Saz (teen parent)

I suppose our role is as extended whanau. If there are gaps missing in their own whanau we try to help out by accessing support. We view their babies as like our babies. That’s the Maori thing you know we manaaki and care for each other and it’s a reciprocal thing. I really push that tuakana- teina concept. I try and get the older ones to be role models for the younger ones. I say it’s your responsibility to care for and look after them just as it’s their responsibility to look up to you guys and give you that respect. It’s that reciprocal thing.

Tarsh

The extended whanau concept is an important one. The development of tuakana/ teina relationships reinforces the Maori students’ sense of identity and also perpetuates understandings of tikanga Maori.

The extended whanau concept is an important one. The development of tuakana/ teina relationships reinforces the Maori students’ sense of identity and also perpetuates understandings of tikanga Maori.

The day commences and concludes with a karakia. Teachers, early childhood staff and students are all encouraged to korero Maori as much as they can to model and perpetuate Te Reo. The karakia serves as a way to disseminate panui but it also is a way of celebrating whanaungatanga. New students and any visiting manuhiri are introduced and made to feel welcome. These routines are extremely important, as some students may not have developed this sort of consistency in their lives prior to attending Te Whare Whai Hua.

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Saz (teen parent)
The students identified whanaungatanga as an important feature of the centre. They recognised the importance of belonging and the value of routines.

There is a spirituality or wairua in the centre that relates to this feeling of connectedness. For many students there is this strong sense of belonging and spirituality in the whare.

**Whare Tapa Wha**

Gemeaux described a socio-ecological perspective when looking at the hauora of the students. She suggests that we should take students’ wider cultural environment into consideration and teach in a holistic manner. This approach empowers the student to critically examine the dominant messages in his/her environment. It encompasses the concept of whanaungatanga.

Durie (1994) advocates this approach he calls Whare Tapa Wha. This philosophy of hauora comprises the interrelated dimensions of taha tinana (physical well-being), taha whanau (social well-being), taha hiriangaro (mental and emotional well-being), and taha wairua (spiritual well-being). He compares these four aspects of hauora to the four walls of a whare. All four dimensions are necessary for strength and symmetry.

The teen parents are supported by staff at Te Whare Whai Hua in a holistic way which does not divorce the student from her social context.
Relationships

Teenagers undergo a maturation process, which impacts on all their relationships. They are defining themselves while also exploring their roles in a variety of relationships as they mature into young adults. Teen parents not only have the added responsibility of parenting their child, they must also include their child, as part of them, in these other relationships. The process of maturing emotionally can be a turbulent time for many teenagers. Consequently, if teen parents are experiencing difficulties, it is essential they receive support so that they can regain a balance in their lives.

There are some students who are in relationships with partners who hold them back from developing their own goals and making their own opportunities. Students need to have enough support derived from their peer relationships and the whanaungatanga of the centre for them to overcome their other barriers and attend.

Lois Smiler, the social worker, is there to support students with these situations. Teachers make referrals to Lois if they think a student needs extra pastoral care.

I think the greatest thing about this place is that it offers support and socialisation with other young mums in the same situation. Even though it may be more study, it’s not actually a drag. They quite like it as they get support, peer support as well as through teachers, social and childcare workers.

Tarsh

Sometimes it is difficult for the girls to rise above their present circumstances. So what I am say is that if they have got a lot of relationship problems with either a partner, parents or whatever, it can impact on their presence here at the centre. And by that I mean that if there are problems its very difficult to concentrate on school work when you have got more personal issues at home.

Jo

Like I had bit of a rough time with (baby’s) dad and that is why I left. It’s not that difficult because you know you have got your support here.

Lovey (teen parent)

Sometimes their partners do not want them to come here because they are going ahead and improving their lives. Sometimes a partner can feel threatened by that.

Depending on what has been going down at home...that here is a safe place and a safe place for their children. It’s a place where they are going to be loved and helped to sort their life out if there is something going on that needs attention.

Tarsh
Some teen mothers experience relationships, which impact on their sense of self worth. They need to gain a perspective on their relationships so that they can examine what is healthy for them and their children. This is not achieved by lecturing them. This risks the alienation of a young woman who may already be kept isolated by her partner.

You get used and abused. I guess that is why girls feel so down about themselves. So negative. Maybe that is another reason why they don’t come because their men make them stay home. I have a friend who can’t go anywhere. We have to always go and see her and as soon as her tane comes we have to get out of the house. And that’s her home, her children. It just sucks being treated like a dog when you shouldn’t be.

That is why when we have new girls start I say come here and you can do something for yourself. Think about yourself and your children. It’s going to be hard. Don’t let them try and rule you and take over your life. Once you let them do that you are basically saying you are nothing. They own you. I have been through that and it’s just not nice.

Trish  (teen parent)

These personal issues impact on the students’ ability to learn. If they are troubled they have difficulty concentrating and in the worst-case scenario do not attend school and may drop out altogether.

The building of confidence is a hidden curriculum in Te Whare Whai Hua. Although it is not taught overtly it is implicit in the types of relationships developed and maintained within the whare. It also underpins the lifeskills and parenting programmes.

Teen parents at the centre, much like their peers in the mainstream, are learning about peer relationships. They need to relate to

Their personal relationships are not always supportive. So we’ve found over the years that if they have a lot of those sorts of issues in their personal life it is very difficult for them to come to school and concentrate on getting some kind of tohu or qualification. We realise that it is important if we can to give them assistance to deal with some of these issues. It gives them a little more peace. We find that when they have that peace of mind they are more able to come into the school environment and do their learning.

Jo

They also bring a lot of their own take, their own whanau backgrounds, their own issues, their partners, relationships and that’s huge for a 16/17 year old who has got a kid and maybe hapu again.

Tarsh
They need to unload it and spend time. And that can be disruptive to other students. It covers a lot of those kinds of issues that come into the classroom. Not that we necessarily want them to come in here but they find their way in.

Gemeaux

By encouraging open communication in a supportive non-judgemental way students may feel safe enough to discuss these issues with their peers, teachers or the social worker.

Tarsh

One of the big things is that desire to come back to school and finish their schooling. They have had a break from school and it’s about rising above that mindset really.

Jo

Being a teenager is hard enough as it is. A lot of these girls their lives are complicated. Relationship issues, whanau issues, drugs, alcohol. On top of that they have a baby. The awesome thing is that they choose to come here to continue their education. It’s very brave.

A lot of young people stay home and continue living whatever lifestyle. One of the students yesterday said “oh its really good that I come here because if I hadn’t I would be at home just drinking all the time.”

Tarsh

They need to unload it and spend time. And that can be disruptive to other students. It covers a lot of those kinds of issues that come into the classroom. Not that we necessarily want them to come in here but they find their way in.

Gemeaux

It’s a huge thing. Sometimes it’s the first person in their family who has ever got a certificate or anything at school. It’s really big.

Gemeaux

The centre promotes an ethos where students feel safe to share their problems and feel they are not going to be judged by authority figures who know more than they do. There is a lot of power sharing.

Students respect the teachers and childcare staff, however this is usually a more sincere relationship once trust has been established.

Teachers are addressed by their first names and their role is one of support person, learning facilitator, mentor and older member of the whanau.

The students who attend the centre are the success stories. They are the ones who have chosen “the road less travelled”.

New students experience barriers returning to school for a number of reasons. Taking the initiative to further their education may be a totally foreign experience for rangitahi who do not have role models of higher education in their family.

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New students experience barriers returning to school for a number of reasons. Taking the initiative to further their education may be a totally foreign experience for rangitahi who do not have role models of higher education in their family.
The students and teachers reported that returning to school having left the institution can be challenging for teen parents. They may have to opt away from an appealing lifestyle with peers who have also left school and do not aspire to employment. This lifestyle may involve drugs and alcohol abuse. Making the choice to opt back into the education system, establish routines and develop goals can be life saving. This study points up four key areas of importance for staff and students at Te Whare Whai Hua;

Even our manuhiri who come in we teach the girls they must manaaki them and make sure they fit in here. As well as our new girls. It is scary coming to a new place, new faces, everything’s new and you are a teen mum so we make sure the girls manaaki them.
Tarsh

New girls they are not so confident in themselves. They probably have a lot of things to say but they are too scared to say it in case they get shut down. When we get new girls some of the big girls get smart. I don’t know if they don’t come because of that. I think I have met three or four new girls who were supposed to start and we only see them once a week or not at all. Trish (teen parent)

They are a bit whakama, a bit intimidated by the other girls. They are just too shy or can’t be bothered. They stay home and do nothing.
Reremoana (teen parent)

Sometimes for their own personal reasons, they may feel uncomfortable. They may not be used to the whole whanaungatanga concept- the way things go around here. We have had quite a few of those people actually who come and go. Sometimes they come here and are getting used to the place but then they have money problems. That has been a reason for some of the girls to cruise out and go into the workforce. Sometimes they feel uncomfortable here especially if they are young and the younger ones here are not that friendly sometimes.
Saz (teen parent)

Entering the new environment is a challenge for students who lack confidence. Three of the older teen parents described how the younger students could be unfriendly to new students. Although the staff and most of the teen parents welcome and accept any new students, it is a challenge for newcomers to develop routines, to attend every day, accept the whanaungatanga ethos of the centre and relate to the other students.

The socialising process is a challenge; for the students who are there to learn to accept differences in others and share their
environment and for the new students to find their niche in the centre with their peers.

Leaving school is a rite of passage to adulthood and having to step back into the framework and accept the parameters of an educational setting can be a challenge. Even the mandatory requirement of routine attendance can be a barrier for young women who have had a taste of “freedom.

The staff reported that there is a tension between living an adult life, which includes the responsibilities of parenting and the requirement to conform to society’s perception of when someone has come of age. Conforming to the school environment requires that regulations are enforced that may not apply in a tertiary environment.

As young adults, many students over 18 and some aged 20. The centre has to consider how it can ensure the students and their children maintain safety standards yet it does not take on a policing role it cannot enforce. This pertains to students driving their babies or their peers to school while they have a learner licence. They are not legally permitted to carry passengers. Do regular school rules apply where students have their vehicle permit revoked? It is a complex issue and any kawa need to be supported by student education, so they are able to contemplate the consequences of their actions.

One of the main goals we have is to help them set goals for what they want to do. A lot of it is confidence. I am thinking of one particular student who has returned. The reason why she returned was because she freaked out at the thought of having to go to polytech by herself. She’s about 20 now.

I think this place can get too comfortable here. It’s so supportive. Support isn’t bad. It’s when it becomes a soft option. It’s then that I question it. I have been trying to come up with some answers for that. I have got someone from the careers advisory service. She is there to help with them with their confidence and help them find out about the world of work. What they need to do now to prepare themselves.

Our job here is to get them thinking about the next step. Getting them ready for what is out there. Hopefully they will go into further learning. Helping them to be proactive for their own lives instead of victims.

Tarsh
Smoking is a contentious another issue. It is forbidden on school premises, as Lytton High School is smoke free. Te Whare Whai Hua students, should they choose to smoke, have to leave the premises. In contrast, Lytton students are not permitted to smoke at all during school hours. The staff reported that these mothers, particularly those in their late teens, live in an adult world and the centre tries to bridge these differences so that students are not alienated by the regime at the centre.

To empower their students and to promote the acceptance of the centre kawa, the staff ask their students to input into the rule making in the centre. They are consulted about significant decisions. However, there is a tension between ensuring standards are maintained and respecting student autonomy. This dichotomy is addressed through the emphasis on kawa or collectively agreed upon rules of conduct.

It is also a challenge for students to leave Te Whare Whai Hua and enter the world of work. It is familiar at the centre, where their friends are consequently it is a challenge to move them into that bigger sphere. There is a need for students to develop their long term and short-term goals and to make new connections beyond the centre.

Some students are fearful of leaving and go on to bridging courses only to return to the nurturing environment of Te Whare Whai Hua. This presents a challenge to the staff to empower students with the skills and confidence to find their feet in either employment situations or further education environments.

As part of the life skills component of the programme a careers advisor ran a series of workshops promoting the students’

They may not want to accept our rules. When they come here they have to change their thinking. They have to work in a school setting and abide by the rules and the routines that we have here. That is the challenge for us personally because they constantly want to rock the boat. But now we have really pushed the kawa and the kaupapa of the place. So that’s good. Keeps us on our toes.

Tarsh

Each day, today impacts on tomorrow and next year. Like having long-term goals and short term ones. They are still very much like teenagers in that they think day to day as opposed to ok I have got to plan the next five years.

Tarsh

When I first came I was shy and quiet if you could believe that. I think it’s like a self-esteem kind of thing. They helped me stand up on my own two feet and be who I am. Be proud of who we are and you know of our kids.

Saz (teen parent)

I think a lot of the girls in here are proud of what they have done and achieved with their babies. Being a teen mum is not really a down side now. They are proud of what they have achieved as being a teen mum. I am proud of what I have done so far. I have had a lot of experiences and been a lot of places.

Saz (teen parent)
confidence, their awareness of the need to goal set and also to market themselves to potential employers.

It is a sophisticated skill to plan for the future. Many 14 year olds have no plans for the path their lives may take. However, being a teen parent requires them to goal set for the future. The staff at Te Whare Whai Hua recognise the importance of encouraging the students to be proactive instead of victims.

The staff at Te Whare Whai Hua recognise that the skills and attitudes they are developing are building a foundation for the students to be lifelong learners. They are aiding them to see the big picture and goal set for the future.

**Credit model**

Students attending Te Whare Whai Hua are, on the most part, success stories. They are rangitahi who want to improve their options for their children and themselves. For some students actually making the choice to return to school requires that they overcome barriers. Some may have lost confidence in their ability. They need to recognise their achievements at mothers and as learners. It is important to adopt a credit model not a deficit one.

We don’t celebrate enough is that we are who we are and we do what we do. There are just so many things that these young mums are having to face; having a child, coming to school still completing their studies, facing all the issues at home.

Christine (childcare supervisor)

Even though they have had babies young, I am trying to think from a more Maori perspective, it is not a bad thing always. I think being a mother gives you amazing skills. You learn you can’t be selfish. You have to think constantly about another human being, especially when they are babies, about their well-being and their safety.

There are positives. It is not all negative. These mums do have a lot of aroha for their babies and they want to try hard for them. The reason why they are here or come back to school is because they have had a baby. Their focus is not on themselves. They see a bigger purpose for their lives...You see these girls trying really hard, irrespective of all their barriers. They still want to go hard for their babies.

Tarsh

They make you realise that you can do what you think you can’t do. They get you out of that mindset of thinking that you can’t do nothing. ‘Cos a lot of people stay stuck in that that they can’t do this, they can’t do that, cos they haven’t even gotten out there and tried. They make you realise that well if you ain’t going to do it you are dumb, if you don’t give it a go.

Reremoana (teen parent)
Some students need encouragement and support to build their confidence. Although Reremoana thinks that it is laziness that prevents people from striving, this risk taking stems from a confidence and belief in oneself. The young women bring rich life experience with them to the centre setting. They have had to develop a maturity that other young women have not had to develop.

Although there is a respect for the students as individuals, members of the centre whanau, parents and as learners, Christine commented that there could be more celebration and recognition of their choice to work toward a better few despite their adversity.

**Academic Programmes**

Education at the centre encompasses more than academic credentialing, although it is an important focus. Self esteem, confidence when advocating for themselves and their children, positive parenting are valuable skills and attributes the teen parents are developing within the centre. By educating mothers, outcomes, educational and social, are improved for two generations.

The Whare Whai Hua staff recognise that one way to help to students to develop confidence is to experience academic success. Paul and Gemeaux commented that, as some of these students have never had positive academic experiences and do not see themselves as educational achievers, there should be a credit focus to their programmes.

The teen parents reported that they welcomed the opportunity to study in a facility alongside their children. It

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Even though it’s a loss of freedom and opportunity as a teenager, when you look at it it can be a good thing. Those girls have turned their lives around. They have got another reason to have another go at their education.

Gemeaux

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Paul Smith (Head of Department)

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University is the yard stuck everybody uses. However there are more educational outcomes to consider. There are the students’ sense of achievement and self perception. A key educational outcome is the multi generational stuff. Role modelling and early childhood education. Te Whare Whai Hua is an intervention, which hit two levels.

Paul (HoD Te Whare Whai Hua)

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Being able to come back and study at my own pace, a second chance I guess, at my own pace. Give me a bit of a boost for tertiary next year, for university. ….Being able to bring my little girls here beside me. I guess it’s like one less stress to worry about. At least you know they are here beside you and you know everyone here its whanau whanau here. Really cool.

Trish (teen parent)
enhanced the sense of whanaungatanga within the centre and reduced the stress of separation.

Students at Te Whare Whai Hua undertake a range of courses. These comprise a Parenting with Confidence course, a targeted lifeskills programme and academic studies. Tikanga Maori values underpin all programmes at the centre.

These skills cover areas like advocacy, financial management, the justice system and nutrition. There are group projects which reflect the tikanga Maori ethos for example korowai or weaving. Students can choose from a range of correspondence academic courses tailor made for them individually in accordance with what they have identified as their goals.

There are a variety of challenges students and teachers of Te Whare Whai Hua address when promoting academic

Because the girls here often have previously failed academically, one of our focuses here is to make what seemed impossible for them possible. To give them a taste of academic success. By academic I mean gaining a nationally recognised certificate. It could be the National Certificate of Employment skills, which is 60 credits at level one. A lot of lifeskill stuff is in there. Once they have achieved that its like wow I can do it. Then they get 20 more credits and they get NCEA level one.

Gemeaux

It is a challenge that you have got make up all these different programmes. But we have got correspondence, Starr programmes. We have got mainstream over here, which they can choose it they want to. There are unit standards so there is a whole lot available for them. As a teacher you have to be organised. Your systems have to be quite good. You have a general overall plan for each student. If they are plodding away on what they have to do it can be quite easy really because I am not having to do the teaching so its more a supervisory role, keeping them on task. Once you have got that down pat then its not that difficult at all.

Tarsh
learning at the centre. The students need individual educational programmes to meet their needs. Due to literacy levels, different vocational goals and varying levels of attendance teachers need to manage a flexible programme to meet each student’s needs.

The students’ programmes are compartmentalised to compensate for any intermittent attendance. Qualifications are cumulative so that students achieve building block qualifications that they progress on from.

Students undertake the national Certificate of Employment Skills. From there they build up to NCEA Level One. This gradual accumulation of qualifications supports the students’ sense of achievement and perception of themselves as successful learners.

Programmes are diverse and teachers need to be flexible to manage so many individual programmes. There are correspondence school programmes, encompassing unit standards and achievement standards, Starr courses, or the mainstream option. The academic teaching role is largely a supervisory one. This is due to the complexity of the students’ programmes.

Students may arrive with learning gaps due to absences. Some students had intermittent attendance before they became teen parents. Some students left school from the third form, which arrested their academic development. Consequently, they have diverse literacy levels.

One of the big things is the lack of continuity. Just like Natalie today. She could have been working on something and now baby is sick. It interrupts the flow and continuity of their mahi. It’s a personal thing for the students to keep the continuity of the work going with all the interruptions that they have. For me as a teacher I might not see Natalie for a week but I have to think where is she up to and what was she doing.

For me as a teacher they are all on such different levels. It’s not like your are teaching the class one particular topic. Oh yes last week they were there. Its ten people all doing different things so keeping your head up with the play with each individual student.

Gemeaux

It is a challenge to fit schooling with family. If my children are sick I have to stay home. I can’t come to school and achieve that daily goal.

Trish (teen parent)
One of the biggest challenges facing staff and students are the gaps in attendance at the centre. Absences have an enormous impact on the continuity of programmes. For this reason the students’ programmes are compartmentalised so that they can achieve the standards over a set period of time. If the standards are too complex and take too long to achieve the students can lose motivation or the flow of what they are doing.

These absences are due to illness and the regular demands of parenting small babies. I noted that absence due to the illness of a child proved a significant barrier to the education of these students.

These absences prevented the teachers planning structured class programmes, where students could learn collaboratively. Often there is an element of serendipity whether students are in attendance.

Consequently, the teacher has to tailor programmes to the needs of individuals and be flexible enough to resume it days and sometimes weeks after a period of absence.

With the gaps in attendance and the possibility that the students are shifting house, teachers require learning materials to be retained at school. Although this addresses the problem of students losing their work, it does not promote student responsibility and the culture of homework.

The student programmes often place demands on teachers beyond their areas of specialist knowledge. Teachers can ably assist students in their area of expertise but it is a

They are really understanding because they know we have got kids here and we can’t always get the work in on time. You know we might have to stay home with baby if she is sick.
Saz (teen parent)

First week I was sick. And then this week my son got asthma so we have just got back today.
Lovey (teen parent)

It is a struggle just keeping the flow being able to focus on their work when there is so much happening at home. That is unsettling.
Gemeaux

When they have stuff happening at home they don’t come. That’s hard.
Tarsh

Some girls have an unsettled lifestyle. They have to shift three or four times a year. Shifting is a big thing. Stuff gets lost or somebody throws away their work. They can’t find it. They might blame the teachers, saying that we have lost it. 99 times out of 100 it has got misplaced within their sphere of things.
Gemeaux
challenge for teachers to aid students in domains they are unfamiliar with.

There is specialist assistance available through the subject departments at Lytton High School but that has its limitations as that process takes time.

There are a number of factors that impact on the management of academic programmes at the centre. Curriculum knowledge, particularly in senior subjects is a challenge. A larger centre would enable specialist teachers to be brought in.

Running group programmes is problematic due to the students’ erratic attendance. Students also have differing courses as they have various educational goals.

Managing individual programmes requires the teachers to have efficient systems and communication with one another so they can keep track of what students are doing and where they are up to in their studies. This requires the teachers to be flexible, as they have to multi-task in the classroom.

Although the students are doing correspondence work the teachers need to support them in a diverse range of curriculum areas, many they have little knowledge of and have not been trained in.

Although the centre is near the High School and curriculum support is accessible, teachers at the centre are quite isolated. The teachers are in the process of establishing links with teachers in the adjacent high school to further improve collegial relationships and access to professional development opportunities. It is possible that links with other teen

With us as the teachers sometimes it’s not our area. So we can’t help them out. Tarsh can help them out with Health and Te Reo and I can help them with Art and Te Reo. Gemeaux is pretty good with maths and things like that. But if Gemeaux is not in, I can’t help them out because that is not my strength area. We can go into the school but they have to wait until we have asked someone. It’s probably quite hard for them and frustrating too at times. They don’t have the specialised teacher for everything that they are doing.

Carly

If we set up relationships between the different teen parent centres then the girls could correspond with one another and through that the ones who are doing certain things with correspondence could have their own classroom.

Gemeaux
parent schools, with a view to establishing a curriculum support network or a learning community, could be helpful.

Individual work through The Correspondence School has its advantages as well as shortcomings. While it can address the difficulty of running various programmes to meet different needs, students miss the opportunity to learn alongside their peers, co-constructing their knowledge in a way that is relevant to their situation.

In addition, the units require the students to decipher pages of text in order for them to understand what the tasks require of them. Information is largely delivered through written instructions. Students who have difficulties with basic literacy struggle with this form of learning. I observed students skip over pages of text containing vital information to get to the spaces where they are required to fill in the answers. In this way they only understand and tackle half the activity.

Students appreciate their opportunity to work on their own educational programmes. They find it motivating, as it is relevant to them and links directly with what they want to achieve in the long term. A number of teen parents I spoke to indicated that they had already lost interest in their education before they became pregnant and left school.

Gemeaux recognises the importance of a student centred programme in motivating students. It is a challenge to set assessments that are of interest to the students and accessed and assessed externally. However designing, teaching

We just do Units. Nah they are boring to me. They ask stupid questions. They need to break their questions down. They get all confusing the questions. Yeah its stupid actually. I tell the teacher to come and look at it and then they will come and have a look and then they will explain it. Its like so simple but its written stupid.

Reremoana (teen parent)

I left in the third form….I don’t know I just didn’t feel like going to school? Um at girls high I was in with bad people…and when I came to Lytton I knew everybody and I felt I just didn’t want to see them again.

Hiria (teen parent)

As much as possible I try to dovetail the two things together so they can be doing something they like with something that will achieve a unit standard. I try and look for ways for those things to happen, to build that interest, that personal touch into what they are doing.

Gemeaux (teacher)
and moderating assessments within the centre presents its own problems. The complexity of the various student programmes and inconsistency of student attendance impact on this latter option.

The students appreciated the opportunity to have individual educational programmes. They valued the proximity to their children. As Reremoana acknowledges, it is preferable to have a course which addresses the students’ goals directly.

As Lovey comments there is flexibility allowed for the completion of assignments. The programmes take into consideration the students’ hectic lives and extra responsibilities.

There is however, value placed on course coverage as opposed to the intrinsic value of learning something. Saz describes her work as being pumped out. Her emphasis is on quantity achieved and completion.

Correspondence work enables diversity in the classroom. Nevertheless, there is a delay in feedback for teen parent students. Even students in the mainstream can be inattentive when their classroom teachers offer corrective feedback after the task has been marked. A further delay, like the time it takes to post material back and forth reduces the likelihood of students taking the opportunity to reflect on that very important feedback.

Correspondence courses can lack real world relevance to these students. Their teacher has no input into their design. Sometimes the teachers are challenged to identify what the task is requiring of the student. Students with literacy difficulties are put off by the wordiness of the assignments.

I found them pretty awesome. When you are on a roll and you are having a good week you can pump out a lot of the work.

Saz (teen parent)

Its alright ‘cos we are all doing our own thing and its alright. We are doing what we want to do not being in a classroom doing what everyone else has to do. So it’s better doing it this way. You seem to learn more. ’Cos you want to know about the units that we are doing. Over there they are just doing it because they have to and a lot of them do not want to do it.

Reremoana (teen parent)

It’s a lot more cruisier. Like with mainstream you have to have things in at a certain time. With (these) unit standards you can take them as you go. Of course you have got your baby just out the door.

Lovey (teen parent)

It’s really hard to maintain your motivation especially when you come up against a question in the booklets and I don’t know the answer to it so where do you go? They don’t like reading so sometimes they miss out all the teaching part in the unit standard which is on the reading. They will skip it and will go over to... oh I have to write something down here. If they don’t know the answer instead of going back and looking at the text they will just guess something.

Gemeaux
Working on tasks in a workbook and setting goals of achieving a set number of pages is not engaging for some students. The Correspondence School staff have been very supportive, working to build distance relationships with their students at Te Whare Whai Hua. Paul believes with all the mitigating factors that is the best option available at this stage.

The centre is undergoing a transitional phase. There is an expansion underway; a new building is planned for 2006. This will enable different forms of learning to take place instead of everybody remaining in one room doing the same thing. It is a challenge under these circumstances to address the students different needs in the small classroom.

The current centre does not allow for various activities. Students either have a group korero or work silently on individual programmes so as not to disrupt others trying to concentrate. It is an extremely confined space. A new larger centre, which will better meet the needs of the students. This environment lends itself to a more diverse type of programme for the students.

It is a disadvantage that students, due to their intermittent attendance and diverse courses are not able to work together on their academic studies. (The centre supports cooperative learning in other areas.)

Students working individually miss the opportunity to co-construct knowledge with their peers. It may also be embedded in the individualistic pakeha model of education. There may be cultural barriers that these Maori students

The workbook based approach is not an ideal. Given the constraints that we have is this the best option available.
Paul (HOD)

When we have our new facility and more than one space it will be possible to have more than one thing happening at a time.
Gemeaux

When we are all doing maths we are all at different stages. You are not working as a group. Like I can help the younger ones with their maths but not many people can help me when I am trying to do my maths. That is probably why I pulled out because it got too hard.
Saz (teen parent)

When you are in a mainstream classroom you have the support of your friends. So you sort of bounce off one another and they don’t sort of have that.
Gemeaux
experience when undertaking this form of learning.

Working with other students deepens understandings, as they experience different students’ perceptions on a topic. It strengthens social and cooperative skills.

Group work supports students who are not motivated by reading material and completing an activity based on it.

It is more empowering for students to reach their own conclusions as opposed to receiving knowledge unquestioningly from a source. Group work, as Gemeaux points out enables the learners to gain a broader picture.

Gemeaux, in the process of completing her teacher education studies, has currently been reflecting on the best way to approach learning in the centre. It would require an investigation into the way enquiry based approaches were operating in other centres and possibly in other secondary environments.

One solution we discussed was an integrated approach using Health resources to identify a context in which to embed Maths and English Achievement or Unit standards. Health provided a relevance to the students as parents and young women who have to tread an adult path. The curriculum areas of Mathematics and English target literacy and numeracy and lend themselves to a cross curricula approach.

As they are not working as a group they are not getting other people’s ideas feeding in. They don’t like reading so they don’t read the ideas that are written down there. I think if they could do it as a group and feed off ideas with one another as well as developing social and cooperative skills as you do when working as a group. You get people’s different ideas and perspectives feeding into a particular question, which makes it a whole lot more interesting. It’s hard to maintain motivation and I do not think they get as broad a picture as they do when working as a group.

Gemeaux

I don’t have answers at the moment. I just have questions. I am looking for paths and ways to make things happen. We are considering how unit standards from English or maths could fit with a Health achievement standard so they are achieving more than one at a time.

Gemeaux
Gemeaux expressed enthusiasm for the sort of learning that is relevant to teen parents in their unique situation. She described how an integrated type of approach would give students a broader perspective as opposed to a narrow compartmentalised form of education.

There are no obvious quick fix solutions which will address student motivation, attendance and achievement. However the first step is to examine and reflect on what is happening at the moment, question it and look for alternative ways to do things differently and potentially better.

Any change has to be well planned and monitored. The Lytton principal, when I asked about his philosophy on the implementation of change suggested that there were four principles of change he subscribed to. It has to be educationally sound, better for teachers and students, administratively efficient and an improvement on the status quo. Action research is an excellent vehicle to facilitate this type of change, as there is reflection and often collegial input.

Developing a student centred enquiry approach poses some problems in the Te Whare Whai Hua setting. Some students, to meet their goals would be best suited to correspondence courses or courses through other providers. This would require the teacher to run two systems. Setting assessments and marking them is very challenging if it is in addition to the task of coordinating correspondence programmes. It requires the teacher to have ongoing professional development in these three areas.

I think it requires me to be aware of the unit standards and achievement standards over a wide variety of levels and subjects. At the moment I am still doing my training and trying to come to terms with how it all fits together in the subjects that I have chosen which are Art and Health and I am really enthusiastic and excited about Health and how I see it fitting in to this environment. It is very real and it is what the girls are going through and it is important to them.

Gemeaux

To implement it I would look at professional development in English and maths, probably to start with up to level one. Try and map out ways to join things together. Look at other people who are using enquiry-based approaches and find out their ideas and how they manage it and their systems for managing it.

Gemeaux

A problem arises when it comes to assessing students. It requires teachers to have multiple competencies. They are required to know how to assess across the curriculum...It is time intensive to devise programme and to devise assessments. They have to be devised around individual students. It is very demanding on the teacher....Another challenge is the itinerant nature of many of the students. There are gaps in attendance. Students don’t come in and follow through.

Paul (HOD)
senior subjects and also to have a support person to moderate these assessments.

Any newly devised Achievement or Unit standard tasks would need to be checked to ensure they transposed onto the requirements of the standards appropriately. Students may appear at school and then disappear for possibly weeks. It is hard to run a programme under these circumstances.

There is a challenge to provide contextual, relevant programmes based on the students’ interests, which allow flexible learning that can be resumed after absences. Primarily, the students are mothers who are balancing many responsibilities on top of their studies. Any programmes have to take account of this.

Gemeaux described that at the Apenz conference she listened to the experiences of staff located in larger centres, which have a larger pool of specialised staff working with the students. The teachers and students work in a large open plan classroom on individual work. However, when a teacher wants students to work on a task collaboratively they can move to another teaching space. Some centres are already taking a cross curricula approach. Gemeaux described a scenario where they were integrating Information Technology and English Achievement Standards. Teachers are subject specialists yet they work collaboratively to provide a programme to suit the unique needs of their students.

Keeping the various programmes at the Te Whare Whai Hua centre in balance is a juggle. Students get consumed by

Teachers had prior experience in the mainstream and were familiar with Achievement Standards and the curriculum.
Gemeaux

It’s about keeping them engaged and learning. If they have got a real goal about where they want to go and they are really motivated then it is much less likely they will slip into the kind of behaviours that will set them up for getting pregnant really.
Gemeaux

Just keeping a balance is important so once doesn’t take over from another. We try to keep things separated so the morning is when they do their Unit and Achievement standards.
Gemeaux
the non-academic tasks that they value and find motivating. However as academic work is of great importance it is the focus of the morning when the students are fresh. Lifeskills and parenting courses are addressed in the afternoon.

**Lifeskills**

Lifeskills programmes are negotiated around what students and teachers identify they need. These comprise the students’ social and emotional needs. Lois, in her capacity as the social worker, has a health assessment or “one on one” with the students and discusses what support they need and what they need to know more about. She then works with Jo (centre manager), the manager and the teachers to put a programme in place, which may also include bringing in speakers or going out of the centre into the community.

The lifeskills programme encompasses a range of areas; cooking and nutrition, youth rights, social and communication skills.

Financial worries are a burden many teen parents carry with them as they shoulder adult responsibilities. For students who are young their family carry the extra responsibility. Where finances are stretched, this may induce students to leave the centre and search for employment.

From the health assessment we can devise what sort of programmes they feel they might be needing. One that has come up is around contraception, information and sharing about that, dental care, access to additional funding to help support them while they are here. Things around stress, budgeting, how they manage their money, what their rights are as citizens are as citizens, as youth. ...issues around basic physical health, issues around relationships, how they deal with them, whether its their family with other students in the school or the teachers they have got. So it is around social and emotional needs.

Tarsh

But at the same time I realise there are a whole lot of lifeskills like parenting, cooking and budgeting, values, social skills and communicating with others.

Gemeaux

Their financial situation and their support situation, who is able to support them while they are coming to school and reintegrating into the education system, I would say, is a challenge. One student here is not entitled to anything. Financial support just is not there. She has to rely on her parents.

Tarsh

Well you have got your financial situation at home and stuff like that and you come into the school and you’re still thinking about those things and it makes it hard for you to concentrate on actually things you are supposed to be doing when you are actually in the school.

Layla (teen parent)
Older students may need to learn about budgeting. A student spoke with me of her hire purchase agreement for her digital video cameras. It was a lengthy contract and she no longer used it as it was broken. These types of contractual arrangements need to be carefully reviewed as they can entice rangitahi into debt.

Teen parents in the process of developing a sense of their own identity. They need to advocate for themselves and their children. Lifeskill programmes support students to access resources from the various agencies they deal with. Students learn what support is available to them. They have to work with health nurses and doctors to ensure their children are healthy and government departments to manage their financial affairs. This can be problematic at times. Jo, who has had experience with youth advocacy has encountered situations where teen parents have had difficulty accessing the resources to which they were entitled. This was due

They are taken advantage of in many ways simply because they have not got that knowledge of what they should know when dealing with banks and dealing with businesses where they have hps and dealing with government departments in various ways. Because they haven’t got that knowledge then obviously it is easy to pull the wool over their eyes and they don’t get their full eligibility. They don’t get the full guts of the information that they should know. So we believe that by utilising the lifeskill programme they will enhance their understanding and their knowledge of how that system out there is working for them.

Jo

Advocacy for young people, from my experience anyway, has been that usually they need to be shown the information and given the resources so that then they can make up their own minds about what they want to do. It’s about teaching them what is out there and the resources that are out there for them to tap into. They need to use it in a way that is meaningful for them. They are able to know their rights and are able to stand up and say this is what I want.

Tarsh (teacher).

to go along and sit with her. I didn’t have to say a word. This young lady couldn’t believe how quickly she got out of their, how effectively everything was done. I think it was because these people know I have knowledge as far as advocacy is concerned. For some reason this made them a move a lot more efficiently and a lot more quickly. This is something that really aggravates me. Our young people are used and abused. People’s concept is well you made a wrong choice and you are a silly thing so I am not really interested in you.

Jo (centre manager)
There is a stigma attached to being a teen parent and possibly a further stigma about being a Maori teen parent.

According to the staff and students at Te Whare Whai Hua, people in the community can be judgemental about teen parents. However, having a strong sense of self worth and a strong sense of identity can equip the students to deal with adversity.

Saz comments on people staring at her on the street and suggests that the teen parent centre is a support for students, in particular, those who do not have support from home.

The students acknowledged a public perception that teen parent centres encourage young women to get pregnant. Although they recognised that these facets of the community did not endorse teen parent education at Te Whare Whai Hua, they were clear on its purpose and value; providing pastoral support and assistance to young mothers with their education.

The students appreciate the network of support available at the centre. Lois and Jo liaise with different providers in the community to access the teen parents to the people, resources and information they need.

I think there is stigma attached to the simple thing of being a teenage parent quite frankly. So if we can give them skills that will help to eliminate all that. If we can just improve their own self worth. Then it's likely then they will be out in the community saying well hey you can't treat me like that. I know who I am and I know where I am going so who do you think you are to treat me so disrespectfully. Just because I don't know something. I think that is a big one for us. Jo

When I was pregnant I got like a lot of looks and stares walking up the road in town and stuff, whispering. But I don't really care. Some people just won't accept it. All that stuff about this place encourages it. It doesn't really, it just here to give support. Some of the teen parents they need a place like this because they may not have the support at home either. Saz (teen parent)

I think it was last year. I don’t know who they were but there were a few people saying that by having this place it is encouraging us to have more kids and stuff like that, encouraging young mums to get pregnant. Nah it’s just a place where you can get on with your education while having your baby. Lovey (teen parent)

They can hook you up with what you want to do. They send you to the right people or they bring those people in. You know they are a lot of help. You just have to use your mouth and ask and they’ll set everything up. So it’s quite good.

Reremoana (teen parent)
There is the need for students to voice their opinions confidently in the presence of authority figures and to ensure they can gain access to the resources our society offers. Many students when they arrive are whakama and they need to learn assert themselves.

Building a sense of self-esteem is an important facet of the lifeskills programme. Through this programme the students develop a sense of self worth and a belief that they have a voice. Hence it is important to develop a sense of identity and an understanding of their place in the world.

As Tarsh, who has a social work background points out, they need to be able to develop their own opinions and support them with a rationale. They need to be proactive and have a critical mind, able to challenge the way things are or they will be victims in the system.

They need to understand their place in the world and how systems political systems, community systems work. For example you have a teenage mum who is 15 or 16 and Maori. There are all those negative connotations. Walking into a shop or down the road, people are going to have their own whaakaro about them. They need to understand how the world works and how people think and why.

They need to have their own opinions. This is a lovely and supportive environment but in the real world a lot of the time it is not like that. They need to be able to have their own whakaaro and to be able to back up what they think.

They need to have a critical mind, always challenging why things are or else they will just go along and be victims of the system instead of being proactive. Tarsh

Just being part of a whanau and belonging to a place like Te Whare Whai Hua is really important for their self-esteem

Gemeaux

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Tarsh
Like Tarsh, Gemeaux also acknowledges that it is important for the students to develop a critical mind. Gemeaux suggests that students should critique the messages presented by the media and those who represent the power structures in our society. Students need to question where these messages come from and sift through conflicting points of view to decide on their own beliefs. She advocates a process of reflection where the students acknowledge their own experiences and judge the material they are presented with from their own unique lenses. In this way Gemeaux validates the students’ perceptions as valid and of value. Jo also comments that the students are empowered when they question what they are told. She suggests that the ability to critique and to advocate for themselves.

They need to be able to think now is this real? Is it pertinent for me? Does this make sense? Does it add up? Is it different to what someone else has said? They need to be able to sort and sift through the information that hits them and not just to accept everything that comes their way. You know don’t believe everything you read. They need to actually be able to analyse and think is this real? Do I have to accept this? In my experience, in my actual real experience does what somebody else is telling me add up? Do I want to take this on board? So they need to be able to do that and that’s all part of thinking about things critically. Gemeaux If we can first initially find a way to bring out the self worth in each student, their value in themselves and their family then I think we are on the right track. What happens I believe is that you start questioning things I lot more. You start standing up for yourself. You start perhaps wanting a little bit more than you have already. It is because you are challenged. Jo
is derived from a strong sense of identity and self worth.

Parenting

Parenting is an important focus for the centre. Parents, returning to work or study, may fret about leaving their children in the arms of caregivers. It can be very upsetting for a parent on a tight timeframe, to leave a childcare facility with their child crying at the gate. It can also be upsetting for parents if they know their child is off colour. Having access to their child on the premises is an advantage for these teen parents.

The teachers, all mothers themselves, are mindful of how challenging it is for a parent of a young baby. Gemeaux described her years parenting young children as a “blur.” For many of these young parents nights are punctuated with wakeful children.

They take care of baby while I am doing work. And that’s a big thing.
Shayla (teen parent)

Sometimes I worry about my kids. They may have a cold...stuff like that. I may feel that my kids are not being how they usually are and I will sit in the classroom. Sit there and think about what I think is wrong with them and I won’t concentrate on anything else around me.
Layla (teen parent)

It’s a huge battle they have just getting themselves here and managing all the things they have to manage to look after baby. Like doctor’s visits and all the things that go around, with tantrums for two year olds etc. Having to wake kids up to come to school as they are not in a settled routine.... It’s a huge ask, having possibly been woken up with babies. I have a real understanding for that. On some days I know not to push them at all. It’s enough for me that they are here. If they can accomplish one small thing then they have done a lot. Some days it better that they go into the childcare and play with their babies.
Gemeaux

If they do want to talk to us we are pretty open. It makes it a little bit easier if we know what is going on. Then we can accept that they might not be in the mood to do the work that day.
Carly
It is a feat of organisation for many teen parents to juggle all their family responsibilities. Most teen parents commented that dressing and feeding their child/children and meeting the deadline to come to school was a challenge.

Teachers are empathetic, adapting the programme to students’ energy levels. The teachers recognise that students are at times exhausted from looking after their babies in the night.

Indeed, as Elle said, 9 o’clock is early when the mother has been awake during the night tending to a child. However as Tarsh said, there is balance required between supporting and challenging them to achieve.

It is interesting to note that while some students do take advantage of the diverse courses offered within the mainstream high school setting most students prefer to work within the centre. Students find it difficult to return to regular classes when they regularly miss classwork and cannot keep up with the class programme due to these absences.

Most Te Whare Whai Hua students prefer to work at the centre, near their children, where they can work alongside other students who have had similar experiences. The students offer support to each other with parenting and child minding so the mother may have a break. There are times when Te Whare Whai Hua staff look after a child to give a mother a well deserved break away. For Hiria, having children was an immense lifestyle change. She reduced her smoking and drinking and mostly remains at home with him.

The girls have their babies. They have to feed them and dress them, get them up in the morning and get their own selves up. It’s hard enough to get yourself up, let alone a one year old. So that’s hard…. The biggest thing is your rapport with the students and the other stuff beyond teaching. One of the girls might say I have been up all night with baby or my partner has been difficult so you have to accept that and tautoko them. They may not have got that book in to correspondence last week but you just balance that with challenging them, keeping them on task and the reality of their lives.

Tarsh

Getting up in the morning. It’s like early. I don’t go to sleep until past 11-12 o’clock at night before Tony goes down. You know and like I have only got half an hour’s sleep before he gets back up again. He’s there playing. He’s like one of those energetic babies.

Shayla (teen parent)

Just looking after two kids as well. Getting up in the morning. You know when you are up all night 9 o’clock is pretty early.

Elle (teen parent)

Here you get more education. More knowledge. Getting to know other mothers who can help you with the situation because this is my first baby. And then there are other people who have had two or three kids and they can help you. Its really good. Then you have got baby sitters.

Hine (teen parent)
A number of teen parents return to school because of their children. They want to offer them opportunities that would be unavailable without a career and income. A number of students have more than one child. This puts more pressure on a mother to be organised an makes studying that little bit harder, especially if the children are close in age.

As a condition of enrolment at the centre the teen parents are required to undertake a Parenting with Confidence course. It covers strategies for engaging co-operation, creating a positive atmosphere through love & play and generally aims to grow and consolidate the students’ perceptions about what parenting is.

Everything changed. It's good I stay home and I don’t go out drinking and smoking. Just once a month. (laugh) I do but that’s all.
Hiria (teen parent)

Well because I have got my two kids now it has sort of opened my eyes. To what I have to do for my two kids and for myself. I have to get an education for my kids. I’ve gotta make my life easier by actually coming back to school. Learning something that I didn’t learn back then when I had the chance to before I had two kids. Now I have got two its... its Ohhhh.
Layla (teen parent)

We have parenting a programme. That’s everything from behaviour management with children, nutrition, peer pressure those types of things that our children and young people are working through.
Christine

It basically deals with identifying their own parenting styles. It helps them become equipped with skills to deal with child behaviour. They learn about child development and the importance of good nurturing. So that is what we teach our students through the parenting with confidence programmes is how to nurture your child in a good and safe environment.
Jo (centre manager)
Parents are empowered, as they have an important voice and an ongoing role, advocating for their children. Communication between childcare staff and teen parents is of paramount importance. A positive rapport is essential for that important interchange to occur. Parents provide knowledge and understandings of their child and the childcare staff can support and provide parent education. This relationship builds on the whanaungatanga concept.

Christine acknowledges that it is important not to patronize the young parents. The parents are the primary caregiver and are respected as such. It is important for staff to look for opportunities to mentor and guide the teen parents so that any assistance is accepted. These reciprocal relationships are of value as most of the teen parents are not confident and can be easily silenced. As Christine points out, there is a holistic nature to this relationship and what genuine input the teachers have will translate into the home environment.

Trish suggested, during a conversation, that she did not raise an issue she felt strongly about with the childcare staff. She pointed out that this was not because the staff were unsupportive but because she did not have the confidence to do so. This is an extremely important life and parenting skill; advocacy for our children.

Christine acknowledges parent education as a significant part of her job. Instead of lecturing and taking a top down approach with the parents, childcare staff take a cooperative approach, modelling appropriate

I respect them as parents. It’s so easy to look at them as a student but we need to know that they wear two hats in this whare and as a parent they know their child best. I am always looking for ways in which we can better our relationship with our young mums so that when I can offer them some assistance or give them some advice they are open to it. I don’t want to come across as a battleaxe who’s telling them what to do because they don’t know better. They are the primary caregiver even though they may be 14 or 15. So I try to empower them as a parent. Its walking a fine line.

Christine

Good relationships really help you to input into these young women’s lives without coming across as threatening or overbearing. ERO said that they were pleased with the parent partnership that we are endeavouring to keep in tact here, that parents have a say, that their contribution for their child is important. It is not just what we are doing as teachers, its what the children are doing at home.

Christine

(Would it be successful talking with the childcare supervisor) Probably. Yeah. Just got to have to confidence.

Trish (teen parent)
interactions with their babies. Christine advocates a constructivist approach where the children have their learning extended by the social interaction with an adult or peer. This gap between the understandings of the child and the knowledge of the adult or peer is described by Vygotsky (1978) as a zone of proximal development.

Christine identifies language as an important area for development. The teens use a lot of slang with their children. It is of value that staff model language use that builds the child’s vocabulary.

I think a big part of our job is modelling for the parents being an example they can interact with their child in relation to child development. Playing with their child introducing their child to proper language. A lot of our mums use a lot of slang in their conversations. How they speak they will model that for their children. Hopefully a part of our job as teachers is to model appropriate behaviour and how it’s going to extend children’s learning. What their child is doing is fantastic and really important for their cognition and growth and development. A big part is parent education.
Christine

The staff also share with the mothers how this strategy can support their baby’s cognitive development.

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Communication between childcare staff and teen parents is of paramount importance. A positive rapport is essential for that important interchange to occur. Parents provide knowledge and understandings of their child and the childcare staff can support and provide parent education. This relationship builds on the whanaungatanga concept.

Different Early Childhood centres have different philosophies. It is important that rationales for these educational philosophies are conveyed to parents.

During the course of an interview it became apparent that Trish, having witnessed the routines at her older daughters’ kohunga reo, believed that learning was not taking placed at Te Whare Whai Hua.

Trish saw the didactic, high structured and teacher centred approach as more valuable. She did not recognise the learning that was taking place through play at the teen parent centre. Trish believed that learning to write was an important skill for pre school age children.

This view was not prevalent. When I asked Reremoana about learning in the childcare she understood about the constructivist approach implemented at the centre.

She described how children who undertake activities on their own volition gain more form the learning experience. She saw the centre offering a wide variety of programmes for her children.

Maybe have a set routine for the children to learn...do quite a bit more learning. I noticed that there is not much learning. It is just play or paint or playdough. At kohunga or kindy they have set routines for them. A bit more learning. I take Maia to kohunga. They actually do work. How to spell their name. They get split into two groups. The children they just learn more -writing. They get up and have to do little talks about themselves, they go round and do counting, and they sing a lot of songs. Yeah it’s just different. You come bring baby. They play. They sleep. It’s not really a set routine.

Trish (teen parent)
Christine valued the feedback and spoke positively about the role of research in the process of gauging the perceptions of parents and the community. She had thought this concern had been addressed in the past and was unaware that Trish still believed that her child was not learning. There was a communication barrier for Trish. She did not feel confident broaching the subject with the childcare supervisor and also assumed Saz, as her student rep understood her viewpoint. When I spoke to Saz, she did not see a problem.

It was clear further education was required so that Trish and other parents who may have similar perceptions could learn more about the philosophy at Te Whare Whai Hua.

I think they are quite good the way they run programmes for the children. They let them explore. They let them do what they want to do. I find that better because they learn more when they do what they want to do ‘cos that is what they are interested in. When you hold them back from doing things they don’t seem to learn. All they are learning is you do what we tell you to do. More or less making them into a machine. But they can explore. They can do dress ups, painting, drawing, play outside. You know all those kind of things. What they feel like doing. Then they have sit down reading time and all that.

Reremoana (teen parent)

A couple of the parents have spoken to me about that whole aspect “can my child learn to write their names now instead of just playing.” From their lens play isn’t learning. Again it’s an opportunity for us to explain the importance of play. That children are socialising and developing their language skills. At other centres where the philosophies might look more structured it looks as if more learning is taking place. In our childcare situation our philosophy is based predominately on play. Children have their own choices they can choose where they want to be. In a childcare situation they see their children just playing or in the sand pit or just doing art. They want more writing skills. So for a child to learn how to write their name then that means they are learning. So it is a challenge for us and I wish we had more time to address these issues with parents. We need to have a hui and nut out some of the key aspects of the philosophy of play and what children are doing so that they do not think that we are just babysitting them, as that can be the mentality.

Christine
**Conclusion**

There are many challenges teen parents face on their return to the school. From observations in the class and interviews with students and staff four themes emerged: whanaungatanga; lifeskills; parenting and academic achievement.

Students require special programmes. This places an enormous demand on teachers. They have intermittent attendance and many need additional pastoral care for support. These unique educational requirements are challenging for teachers, however, the sense of acceptance and belonging fostered within the centre helps to bond this community of learners together.
References


**The Road Less Travelled**

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveller, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth

Then took the other as just as fair
And having perhaps the better claim
Because it was grassy and wanted wear
Though as for that, the passing there
Had worn them really about the same

And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet, knowing how way leads onto way
I doubted if I should ever come back

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence
Two roads diverged in a wood
And I took the one less travelled by
And that has made all the difference

Robert Frost
http://www.geocities.com/Paris/LeftBank/2940/frost8.html
Chapter Five
This chapter looks at what ICTs are used by the students at the centre and at home and their attitude toward their use. This chapter also details ICT interventions which were trialled and discusses the staff and student’s reflections.

Over the course of this study the students and teachers trialled an online classroom using the Learning Management System, Interact. We also looked at how communication could be enhanced between the childcare and the classroom to support parenting. This chapter documents how students and teachers see ICTs can be used to address the areas of whanaungatanga, parenting, lifeskills and academic studies.

Use of ICTs at the Centre
In the classroom there are four stand alone computers with filtered Internet access. There is one printer and one digital camera available to students.

The students regularly use ICTs for their correspondence work. They undertake internet research and word process on the four stand alone classroom machines. Some would also use e-mail. They would use CDs to assist them with specific learning tasks.

The students commented that the filtering system limited their access to email providers and to sites that are deemed inappropriate to a school setting. Hiria commented that she found the filtering system overly zealous.

Students at the centre regularly use the computers to play music, which they have downloaded or burned onto CDs and brought into the classroom. Most students also like to use the classroom digital camera to capture images of their

Saz is texting while working on an assignment for her Tourism qualification.

| I only like doing art and music on the computer and photos. Putting meke photos of the kids and stuff on. |
| Saz (teen parent) |

| I don’t go on the Internet here. I just look at my e-mail and that. You can’t go onto interesting thing cos they are all blocked out. |
| I like to play games, chatting and some of the e-mails. Yahoo and hotmail e-mail I can’t get into. |
| Hiria (teen parent) |

| They are only good for chatting. That’s all I like doing on them. |
| Hiria (teen parent) |
children to print. Phones are used to text friends, to video and to view downloaded short videos of a comic nature.

Interestingly, there is a difference between the educational use of technologies and recreational use. Saz uses the computer to look busy when she is not working. The students tend to emphasise the communication aspect in their recreation. Some students play games in their spare time however, most students use phones and computers to connect with others.

Some students use their phones to perform complex tasks. They download videos, make videos and use them for communication with peers. It appears these uses are more complex than the applications they use in class for academic purposes. The stand alone computers in class were used for students find their recreational use of ICTs, digital images of their children included, engaging. Conversely, they find the conventional classroom use of ICTs as merely functional, and as a means to an educational end.

**Teacher Perceptions of ICTs**

The teachers recognise that the students belong to a culture where there is a heavy emphasis on media. They are a generation raised with ICTs and consequently it has an enormous impact on their lives.

The teachers used computers in their own academic work. Both Tarsh and Gemeaux had taken courses extramurally, which had an online component. However they still saw themselves as immigrants to the digital landscape and many of the students, although not all, were digital natives.
The teachers believe that ICTs appeal to their students’ different learning styles. It can support a multisensory approach. The teachers recognise that the interactive nature of ICTs can support student creativity and enhance communication.

Gemeaux, Tarsh and Jo commented that the confident students, who have had access, are risk takers, prepared to troubleshoot to address any problems that they have. They are the “technology generation.”

The technology generation creates a new power-structure. It can be daunting, as Gemeaux illustrates, to be the teacher learner. Students, who are proficient, are so quick to navigate around a machine.

Gemeaux points out that it is easy to forget the “little steps” when mastery has been achieved. This is pertinent in our classes when we are supporting students to develop any skill. Possibly some of the best teachers are those who have struggled in their learning. Consequently, they understand how to deconstruct their understandings to support their learners by building their skills incrementally.

**Student and ICTs**

There are a range of ICT skill levels at the centre. Some students are highly proficient with the technologies and are comfortable experimenting and troubleshooting. They can key board quickly and prefer using the computer when they do their work.

There is a big difference in skill level between students who have access at home and those who do not. Although most of the students used ICTs in the

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**Jo (centre manager)**

I think ICT is really beneficial for our students especially because it is visual kinaesthetic and interactive. If they can utilise that medium to enhance their learning, to make their learning easier then I think it’s a good thing.

**Kids who have grown up with computers just seem to know. I say to my kids as they navigate round the thing what did you press? What do I do now? And as you get more au fait with whatever you are doing you just forget about all the little steps.**

But for me because I am so very new...(but getting better...) because I am soo new I am still struggling with them. Because I know the way that I go but I don’t understand the way that I go if anything changes I am lost.

Gemeaux (teacher)

**Natalie (teen parent)**

I like to use computers for doing my assessments and all that. It is easier for me to type than write. Yeah ‘cos I hate writing. I would rather do it on the computer and look up stuff on the Internet.

(Interact) was choice because I could do it instead of writing, and I don’t like writing much, I just prefer to type because is faster.

Trish (teen parent)

**Gemeaux (teacher)**

Their computer literacy is enhanced if they have access at home. Most people who want to go on a computer at school don’t have to wait to long. They do have access in the classroom. I know some of them who have a computer at home spend a lot of time playing games and searching things out so they are a lot more experienced.
form of mobile phones, music downloads, email, games and chat for recreational purposes, the students who have less experience did not use them in class with proficiency. Students who have access at home or who were at school longer where they were a part of their regular programme are more confident using them.

There is also a concern that the students feel whakama among their more efficient friends and therefore they defer to them for help.

The gap between leaving school and returning can have a significant impact on the students’ skills and confidence academically. One Atpenz (Association of Teen parents Educators New Zealand) questionnaire respondent indicated that students do not have access to computers in their learning due to their early departure from the school system. This may have an impact on the confidence of some students. They may not want to take risks but prefer the method they feel confident with; the pen and paper.

The difficulty students experience with learning technologies appear to be due to a range of factors which conspire together, the lack of access at home, the

Some of the girls have difficulties and that is why they don’t use computers. They get frustrated only because they don’t have experience. They probably don’t have a computer at home. They just have it here that is why they don’t use it much. But the ones that do... you can tell the ones who have a computer or the one’s who have used it because they are always on the computer. Just go hard.

Trish (teen parent)

whakama: I should know how to do this. And when you don’t I must be dumb or I must be stupid. And I there are probably a couple of girls who don’t get onto the computers because they don’t know what to do. They are too scared to ask.

Gemeaux

I get annoyed when I can’t do it. Saz gets sick of explaining so she ends up doing it and I say Oh Saz you do it. Just a simple thing like turning the computer on because these computers are different to the one I am used to. They are slow.

Reremoana (teen parent)

I really like doing it on paper. I am more faster doing it on paper than doing it on the computer.

Hiria. (teen parent)

I just write it in my diary book. Cos I don’t want to walk all the way over to the computer and log it all up just to write it all up...Its quicker just to grab my pen. I would rather do it in my book. It’s easier to just walk over there. Pull it out. Grab my pen and do it.

Reremoana (teen parent)
early departure from the school environment and learning gaps caused by absences. It is easier, in Hiria and Reremoana’s case to use pen and paper than to log into and use a computer.

Darlene had no access at home and very intermittent attendance. It was an achievement for her to attend school. Consequently, the staff focused on building her confidence in all spheres at the centre. Her insecurity with ICTs was part of a wider picture.

**Interact as an Online Environment**
Toward the end of term one we established a cyber classroom using Interact as a Learning Management System. We set up an informal discussion forum, a folder for formal work and an online journal which was only visible to the student concerned and the teacher.

The login process was time consuming and some students later forgot their passwords. We commenced an ice breaking discussion to familiarise the staff and students. Most students liked the discussion and added graphics they downloaded from the Internet. It was interesting to note that Hiria saw the activity as a break away from work. This may be due to a perception that ICTs are not enjoyable and educational at the same time.
Trish enjoyed using Interact, however she had confidence using ICTs and had access at home. She had a level of confidence where she could experiment and was not flustered when she made mistakes.

It proved a good space to load non-assessed unit standard work for students. However there were difficulties accessing materials as the computers were stand-alone and students were never sure where their work was located. In addition, they forgot their passwords to the system and to the Interact site.

It was possible to upload unit standards onto the site for student access from resource CDs. It is also an easy place for students and teachers to post resources they have located form the Internet.

We established a shared images folder and a student was able to access pictures taken at school from home for printing.

The anytime anywhere component of Interact supports student and teacher access. The students could access class materials from home without any risk of losing the. They could send assignments into their teacher via a drop box. This form of work can be achieved around their babies sleeping patterns.

Currently, students are not encouraged to take work home because they may lose their materials. Working online could circumvent this difficulty.

\[
\text{I did my journal. Meke. Really helpful. Its just there. You do your Journal; whatever you need to be focused on of the week is there. You can just write things to your friends and leave messages. It’s really fun. Trish (teen parent)}
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\[
\text{I think Interact could be helpful thing it is just getting into the habit of using it. Gemeaux}
\]

\[
\text{You can use Interact for anything. Journal work...its really useful. I enjoy jumping on it anyway and going for a tutu. You can’t make a mistake..Well you can but you learn from it. Trish (teen parent)}
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\[
\text{We don’t really encourage them to take a lot of work home as they lose things but if its on the computer they can type away and it will all be saved on the computer. If the babies are asleep and they have nothing much to do its better than watching TV. Tarsh}
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\[
\text{When students take their work home it often gets lost someone else tidies it up it gets burnt or they move houses and it disappears or whatever else something happens to it. We have considered that if they were doing their work online that wouldn’t happen. Bits that were for assessment or records could be printed off and we would have the hard copy. Gemeaux}
\]
This year it has been a challenge only being here three days per week and still trying to wear the hat of the person with the overall charge of things and not having much overlap time with the other main teacher, Tarsh. Carly has just come on board this year so she is learning about things and finding her place, where she fits in. Just coordinating everybody has been a monumental task and we have been trying to find ways and strategies to make it more workable and I think we are getting there slowly.

Gemeaux

The discipline to work outside of set hours would stand the students in good stead if and when they went on to further their education through online study.

Tarsh, Gemeaux and Carly would meet with Lois and Jo regularly. During these meetings they discuss how to best support the young women, discussing pastoral care issues, their academic and lifeskill programmes. Communicating the details of the students’ developments as they progressed over the week was an important focus.

However, effective communication can be a challenge for the staff. Especially considering the diverse programmes and student needs. The staff saw Interact as a way to keep secure anecdotal student records for staff to refer to and update regularly. With different staff present during the week, a staff forum was suggested as a way to address this issue.

If teachers are to use ICTs to their potential they need to contemplate their pedagogy. In our media-rich culture some educators are able to put learners at the centre of the curriculum and encourage them to become actively engaged in knowledge acquisition (Davis & Mansour, 2001).

The Internet can allow communication between us and our colleagues and students in cyber settings, in addition to face to face contact in schools. If teachers plan to work online they need to consider their workload and ensure they develop patterns where they check their e-mail or cyber classroom discussions and moderate them regularly. As Gemeaux commented: “It’s just getting into the habit of using it.”

We have talked about using Interact to help the teachers with communication. I think it could be a helpful thing. Its just getting into the habit of using it. Things that you could see would work will only work if people use them. I am not quite up to using them as I need to for interact to be a glue.

Gemeaux

You need staff to have the skills or it its just another thing to do and they do not have the time.

Tarsh

We would need more time to plan and look at it in different subjects. How is it going to make my job easier? How is it going to give the students a hunger for learning? Its not about us its about the students and if they are really keen and want to run with it.

Tarsh
The practice of checking email and engaging online is a ritual or a habit. Until teachers develop these skills and patterns they will leave cyber communications to lapse. Neglecting these cyber relationships can result in the failure of an initiative, especially if students are looking to form an online bond with a teacher who does not show up.

Teachers would also have to plan for it to be implemented in the classroom on a regular basis. They would have to sell it to the students, many of whom lack confidence communicating their ideas on an interpersonal level and especially in a written form.

Fullan (2000) suggests that in regard to the implementation of any initiative, schools must build their own model and develop local ownership through its own process, as the experience of outsiders can never provide a complete answer.

For Interact to be sustained in this setting, the teachers would require further professional development and ongoing support.

The software is used across of number of subject areas at Lytton High School therefore there are resource people on location. Te Whare Whai Hua staff are quite isolated in their location. Developing these professional ties with the school would aid the staff access to professional development and resources.
ICTs and Educational Needs.

Whanaungatanga

As outlined in the last chapter the sense of whanaungatanga is a powerful bond for the students, staff and infants of Te Whare Whai Hua.

Powerful connections are made online. Increasingly people, separated by distance, are finding a sense of connection and/or community. Saz commented that she retained close links with a friend using her email.

As any parent of a teenager who wants to use the telephone can verify a connection with peers is an important facet of being a teenager. Parenting alone can be a lonely path. ICTs may be a means to transcend the isolation. Hiria already uses the Internet to connect with her teen parent peers when they are not at the centre. Having a cyber classroom with a heavy emphasis on community communication could support that whanaungatanga concept.

Teen parents may be absent for weeks at a time from the centre for a multitude of reasons. For young mothers an online classroom support network could reduce the sense of alienation. It can be lonely when you have to stay at home with a very young or a sick baby. A cyber connection with students could support the whanaungatanga of the centre, a link to peers and teachers, and keep up the continuity of schoolwork. This may result in an easier transition to school after absences.

It also supports the students in their communication with one another as they have to give considered thoughts when in a structured discussion forum. However using the message board forum can privilege writing as a form of

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You can keep in contact with people from around the world. New friends. I met someone at a God thing and then we got talking. We ended up over at my house. We grabbed each other’s email and we keep in touch.

Saz (teen parent)

I give messages to Saz and them when they are not here.

Hiria (teen parent)

Students come and go. One student this month has not really been here. If we said to here look what’s going down and if she said look in reality I can only come three days per week. Maybe could do the whole Interact thing. She could write to us on the computer or ring. Maybe they can only come three days a week. I can post them comments and just communicate with them using ICT. Especially if they have a little baby that’s not three months yet and they want to say home for like three days and come only two. We can communicate that way.

Tarsh
expression and this can be prohibitive for students with literacy difficulties. So to break through these barriers the focus needs to be on relationships and making connections, not on spelling.

There can be a dichotomy between the language and content of teenage cyber environments and that deemed appropriate for a school context. When considering this issue of student representation and engagement and the social and educational context, consideration needs to be given to the culture of the online environment. For some teen parents alcohol and drugs are powerful influences in their lives. It is the currency of their relationships. To disallow any reference to it can disenfranchise them from the cyber classroom as they feel that they are censored when they express themselves.

This also pertains to the type of language they use. If slang and colloquial language is disallowed the students may not perceive themselves to be represented in the online environment. The example illustrated by Saz has rich potential for a classroom discussion on parenting. It is a real world example of a dilemma that parents have to face up to. Saz reacted with embarrassment and confusion. By reflecting and discussing the incident online with her peers she could contemplate appropriate parenting strategies and potentially develop confidence dealing with conflicts such as these.

It would keep up the continuity if they were not able to come to school.
Gemeaux

Saz: Its really trippy how they can filter it like that eh. How they can block us from going into all the drug sites and stuff and all the music ones. Its good though ‘cos these computers are supposed to be used for study.

Reremoana: Not for our enjoyment. (Both laugh)

Saz: That’s what my phone is for.

Reremoana: You should hear her jokes

Saz: No you shouldn’t hear these jokes.

Mr Smith said you can’t send messages with swearing in them. Cos I was telling my mate how Tonya swore at this lady at McDonalds and I didn’t know what to do. (laugh) It was like she had a good meaning to what she was saying. She was trying to tell an old lady that she was not allowed in the garden. It is not your garden. Its Mr MacDonald’s garden. So she said “Hey f**ker” get out of the garden. It is Mr MacDonald’s garden. So Mr Smith gets everything we put on there. He is looking at all our stuff. He was sweet though. He didn’t read it.
Saz (teen parent)
The diverse ages of students in the forum of such a small teen parent centre points up an issue for reflection when considering whanaungatanga online. The online culture that teachers may want to support for eighteen year olds who are deemed by society as young adults, as in Saz’s case is likely to be different to the environment appropriate for thirteen and fourteen year old students. Already these young mothers have adult responsibilities. It would be desirable to encourage them to work in an age appropriate context. For this reason it may be appropriate to set up separate groups for the juniors and seniors, however, this probably would not work in a small setting like the existing classroom at the centre. It would be divisive.

The students planned and organised a field trip with their babies to Rotorua. They emailed away to arrange accommodation, to find out what activities were available and to plan costings.

The teachers took a secondary role in this activity. They supported the students to allocate responsibilities. The ethos of whanaungatanga was reflected in this activity as it required the students to collectively make decisions, considering the financial constraints of everyone the group. The students also had to consider the needs of their children when planning their entertainment.

The comment from Reremoana that she would defer to Saz to access the information indicates that she does not have confidence in using computers. She does not persist when a problem crops up and asks Saz to support her with technical aid and, at times, to do a task for her. By doing this Reremoana does
not further develop her skill in using electronic media to communicate. As there is such a growing value placed on the ability to communicate online, she will be disadvantaged if she does not develop these important information literacy skills.

One student, Lovey, was proficient at using Trademe, an online auction site. Although she raised it as an option for Rotorua fundraising the other students did not take up the challenge. This site has potential as a vehicle for senior students to gain an understanding of basic economics, buying and selling.

**Academic Programmes**

By devising a contextually relevant programme teachers can promote a sense of whanau and simultaneously promote purposeful learning. Activities that have meaning for students are engaging and at times the teachers have a challenge motivating them to complete correspondence work.

ICTs can be motivational for some students who may have literacy difficulties. However, the amount of text in a website can be prohibitive for some students who tend to skip over the text and look at images. This is very much like students who, on visiting the school library, skim through books looking only at images. Contextually relevant material can be extremely motivational. ICTs can support a constructivist approach where students can source material on topics that are relevant to them i.e. parenting.

The challenge is to find engaging interactive activities where there is a purpose for reading and an authentic audience for their writing. The students are currently considering a video link

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*Trademe was an idea we had of fundraising for the end of year trip. The girls could see baby clothes or paraphernalia to make money for spending, accommodation or other costs of the trip.*

Gemeaux

*Anything that gets them reading and writing. If there is humour it can engage them and can get them writing where they may not usually write. Some of the girls don’t like to read very much. They don’t read for enjoyment.*

Gemeaux
with a teen parent centre in the United States. The visual stimulus could support the development of online relationships, either through e-mail or a site like e-pals.*

Within the teen parent centre students were using CDs from Learning Media to support their reading. They used CDs to practice road code questions. Students with access, usually at a whanau members’ house, would engage in chats and email communications.

As attendance is intermittent and students are undertaking various correspondence courses it is not possible to run a enquiry learning model. The possibility is there for Gemeaux to run an integrated Health/English/Maths programme but the diversity of student needs and the intermittent nature of their attendance makes it prohibitively difficult at this stage.

An e-learning correspondence programme would be ideal where teen parents could link in cyber space throughout the country and form a group who could share their experiences and learn together.

Saz summed up the difficulties when she commented on the diversity of programmes. It was also interesting to note how she saw it as a functional communication tool which would engage students if we use silence as an indicator.

There is scope for teachers to upload student Achievement and Unit Standard material from CDs onto the Interact site instead of printing out all assignments for students to complete hardcopy. They could work at home on formative assessment work and email it to the staff.

(Can you email your tutor?)

I don’t know I haven’t even tried.
Hiria (teen parent)

It’s just hard because people are on different units. People aren’t working on the same units together or as a class. Could use it more to gossip then it would be a lot quieter with everyone just typing.
Saz (teen parent)
or place it into a drop box in an online classroom.

By accessing NZQA materials from the site directly and retaining them electronically it may be more efficient way to keep them updated. If the teachers are familiar with the NZQA website it would be possible to check for outdated assessments rather than storing printed material in the classroom.

Teaching so many different subjects is extremely complex. As the centre is not large it is not possible to have subject specialists. Correspondence work is the best option for credentialing. However, ICTs can support learning holistically at the centred as illustrated by the whanaungatanga section. An online classroom can support a range of skills and values identified as relevant within the centre context.

**Life Skills**

The centre targets a range of life skills. Liaison people are brought into the centre to address the students. The networking aspect is an important facet of Te Whare Whai Hua which the students value.

Resource people are regularly brought in to address the class. Lawyers, careers, health professionals are all invited into the classroom. A cyber context could also allow providers to support the students. They could hotseat any queries the students have. Follow up forum discussions could support face to face meetings. Students could raise queries and they could share their ideas in the weeks afterwards. This may support those students who are reflective.

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Even if we had a topic and they had to do research themselves what do you think and why. Can you back your whaakaro with evidence, facts or other people’s whaakaro? Then that’s good because quite a lot of their subjects here, their unit standards are not higher thinking stuff. Its just information and knowledge that they are learning, not critical thinking, not a lot of analysis or critiquing of ideas.

**Tarsh**

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Because I am very reflective I contribute more in an online discussion than a class discussion.

**Gemeaux**

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Anything that is getting to read and getting them to read and examine and be critical is bringing up their literacy.

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I suppose with the Interact thing we thought of having a discussion topic. It might be teen pregnancy or what ever. We could have a statement and the girls could voice their opinions. If we had a debate it would be powerful for them to say what they think as a lot of them don’t have the confidence. Before that if they could air their ideas on interact and then have discussions through that it could be less intimidating.

**Tarsh**
Some students need time to process ideas. Gemeaux described herself as someone who needs to contemplate and process new ideas. Linking online could also support those students who are less confident in face to face circumstances. In addition, it would give a real world context for student reading and writing.

As outlined in Chapter Four, students at the centre need to build their confidence to be able to advocate for themselves and their children. To do this they need to assert their beliefs and support their ideas with evidence. Online discussions could potentially help to develop these skills.

It became apparent from my observations in class and from discussions with Gemeaux and the student that students need to have experience supporting any assertions they make with evidence.

If we consider the Health curriculum “students will develop the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and motivation to make informed decisions and to act in ways that contribute to their personal well-being, the well-being of other people, and that of society as a whole” (p.6).

_Health and Physical Education in the New Zealand Curriculum_

The teachers suggested that, by building on the rich life experience on the students, it is possible to promote powerful discussion and collaborative learning.

As an example of a learning experience Gemeaux spoke about how the students could look at sexist and/or racist language in movie. Gemeaux suggested

One thing that we can do is to expose them to all those things in an educational setting like say the movies and get them to start thinking about them and posing those difficult questions, those challenging questions that will get them to think about a particular issue. Maybe we could look at a movie and start a discussion on interact and in the classroom.

One thing I think would be really interesting to follow up is the swearing that goes on. Its just the language that these girls have been brought up with. We need to get them to question that language. Maybe we could do it through movies. Instead of getting them to look at their own language and how they talk we could distance it from the student. We could look at the issues behind it, how devaluing it is to women.

I can see it could be used as a forum for discussion and debate. I think for students who are intimidated by loud outspoken students in a physical, they might have a better chance contribute to a discussion. I think you get a chance to think and reflect more online.

Gemeaux
that Interact could be used for students to discuss the meanings and implications of their language.

Gemeaux suggested that Interact would be useful for class discussions. She thought that students who are easily overpowered and are shy to speak in a whole class setting would benefit in the cyber environment. She also commented that online discussion forums allowed students to reflect on their ideas and those of their peers.

**Tikanga Maori**

One facet of education at the centre is an emphasis on tikanga Maori. In regard to the four areas identified in this study of whanaungatanga, lifeskills, academic studies and parenting tikanga underpins them all. It is relevant to everything in the centre as it relates to the worldview of the majority of those who work and learn there. Te Reo is used in the classroom and the childcare. There is a strong emphasis on Te Reo as a cornerstone of the culture.

Trish found that her when she left school to have her children she lost ground in her ability in Te Reo. Trish was sitting level three examinations through correspondence at the end of 2005. She had assistance form Tarsh and Carly with it as they have strength in this area. Trish found Interact very useful for journaling in Te Reo. She would sit with a dictionary for reference and write her thoughts in her journal area. The students were offered a choice if they wanted to journal online or on paper. Trish was experienced with computers and confident. She preferred to journal digitally and found the opportunity to write in Maori “meke.”

**They just did a unit on korowai. One of the girls started e-mailing a girl down south. 99% of our girls are Maori so its relevant to their identity. It is something they wanted to make for their babies incorporating the whole tikanga in making korowai for their babies. Learning not only how to make one but the tikanga behind it.**

**We had one of the nannies from the community come and show us. It was just for the research. At the end they took photos with the digital camera of the girls and babies and the korowai. They had moko. It is their pride to show the pictures from the digital camera to everyone. So that’s cool. Instant pictures.**

Tarsh

(Using Te Reo) was easy, pretty much easy. For me its like a strength. I have to use it more and more just to remember it. I have lost a lot from finishing school to coming back. I have lost a lot and (its just about) just building my confidence up.

Trish (teen parent)
She did however experience frustration when she had written a long entry and due to a computer or human glitch lost it. However as she was a confident user it did not put her off the software. Less confident users found difficulty logging in or the loss of work more of a barrier.

Activities are run which develop the students’ understandings and skills of tikanga Maori. One programme involved Korowai or cloak making. A kuia was invited into the class to share her expertise with the students.

The students learned about the tikanga behind the korowai. The student made cloaks for their children and took digital photographs of them. The students found this process engaging.

The students researched the topic of korowai on the Internet. Saz, who has good ICT skills, went a step further emailed a person she located on the net to find out about it further.

Tarsh suggests that if she was in the centre consistently as the classroom teacher she would adopt an approach which would involve the real world experiences of the young women with their babies. She would teach language using a functional approach.

Tarsh illustrated this approach; describing an activity she did with the girls where they used digital images to match text in Te Reo. Tarsh further suggested that she would consistently use the mother’s experiences with their babies to support their learning of Te Reo. Digital images could support this.

**Parenting**

We take photos of our babies and our korowai stuff and put them on the computer and print them out. In this English book I had to do a whole book on Te Whare Whai Hua and I had to use heaps of printing out pictures and that.

Hiria (teen parent)

I use the Internet for research and stuff. When we were doing korowai I found this lady’s email address on the Internet so I just e-mailed here and she gave me lots of information.

Saz (teen parent)

Its pretty good aye. You find out things. I like Maori stuff.

Reremoana (teen parent)

I did this Maori game to teach the girls koopu and different sentences around bath time. I took different photos of my baby taking her clothes off and washing herself. There were different sentences for each stage. They were all jumbled up. They had to put them in order. They really loved it. And they could do that for their own babies. That is how I would teach Reo if I was full time. The whole kaupapa would be around their babies if I was teaching Te Reo. It would be functional language, bath time teatime going out all language that you would use practically. I did not want to teach Reo that is not relevant to them.

Tarsh

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Tarsh
Providing information for parents at the centre and eliciting their input is important in most educational settings. This reciprocal sharing is particularly pertinent in Te Whare Whai Hua, where the childcare staff support parents by modelling parenting skills, sharing ideas informally and by running workshops.

ICTs can support this communication in a variety of ways. During the course of this study Christine, the childcare supervisor, used Powerpoint as a means to share information about the centre’s policies with the teen parents and to gain their input, as advocates for their children. The staff also identified areas where parent education could be enhanced through the use of ICTs.

Christine developed a slideshow presentation and projected it through a datashow for the purpose of sharing and collectively amending Te Whare Whai Hua childcare policies with the teen parents. She trialled this with a view to replace the extensive use of paper material.

The students responded enthusiastically. Christine believes that she would have had a different response form students had she photocopied reams of paper and handed it out. They found it more engaging than the regular paper delivery. It catered to students who prefer a more visual approach and it was a more efficient use of time. Christine reported that the staff commented positively on the student engagement.

It was positive that Reremoana knew that she could contribute to the policy making process if she wanted to. This has a lot to do with her confidence. She understood the policies and deemed them “reasonable.”

I thought it was great. For a lot of people things have to be explained simply in order to comprehend it properly. If you get too wordy a lot of people are going to miss the boat. I think for our students it was simple, visual and to the point. Also they had something to do with their hands. A couple of students intimated to me later that they found it enjoyable which was quite mind boggling. I think they enjoyed it and understood it because of how it was delivered.

Jo (centre manager)

It was fast, really simple, easy to understand. Everything was there. You get to know all the routines, what is expected of you, what you can expect from the childcare. It was really easy to understand. Enjoyable. You don’t have to like sit there and listen to some one go on. You could actually look at things, especially if you prefer not to listen or find it hard to listen. You could just look up at the board. It was really easy, clear to understand, choice.

Trish (teen parent)

I thought it was cool. It refreshed our memory about the kawa at this school. And it let me know a few things I didn’t know that they do in the childcare. …that they look for children being abused. I didn’t know that kind of stuff. It was more interesting. (I didn’t comment) because it didn’t really matter. Cos they have all those things put in place for the safety of the children and the safety of everybody. I didn’t have a problem with anything they were saying. (If I did have a problem) I would say it! But no I thought it was quite reasonable.

Reremoana (teen parent)
In this incidence ICTs supported the administration at the centre to communicate more effectively with the teen parents.

The childcare care staff are currently considering how they can use ICTs to not only record and assess but to support meaningful and powerful learning experiences and to make connections with parents and whānau.

Christine was very enthusiastic about utilising ICTs for observations and assessments.

The ICT hardware, although not hard to operate, can be time consuming to set up. Christine suggested that more contact time would be of benefit to organise equipment and to reflect on the data. Gathering information for reflection could relate to an Action Research form of Professional development.

This reflection process could support childcare staff to evaluate whether an innovation or strategy they implement is effective and if or how it could be amended. It also enables participants to reflect collegially and develop initiatives as a collective which will support sustainability.

In this way ICTs can support the staff to formulate unique solutions, devised for the specific needs at the centre.

Christine suggested that ICTs could be used to record aural material and moving images to support learning programmes. She commented that digital cameras are widely used in the early Childhood sector particularly as she illustrates in her example to promote language.
development. However ICT use could go beyond that to use a multimedia approach.

A multimedia approach is more accessible for young children as they can hear their own voices as well as seeing their images. Christine comments that this relates to the empowerment and belonging components of Te Whariki.

This could potentially translate into a powerful educational tool with tamariki sharing their own stories digitally.

The students at Te Whare Whai Hua, like most parents, find it rewarding to capture images of their children. The digital camera is a well-utilised tool. One student purchased her own video camera on hire purchase when her first child was born. On occasions students use their mobile phones to video footage of their babies. Working with digital images is very engaging for students. They often download pictures from the camera and burn discs of tamariki pictures.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, it is easy to assume that teachers and parents share similar understandings when they do not. One way to promote the teen parent’s understanding of pedagogy at the centre and also to enhance parenting skills would be to involve the parents in the learning story process. This penchant for using ICTs to document their children’s development could be tapped into in the classroom setting. During the interviews Christine, Tarsh and Gemeaux spoke about encouraging the students to document their shared experiences with their babies. The staff suggested that the teen parents could capture footage of their children during learning activities and,

Belonging, well being and empowerment are all aspects of Te Whariki. So by taking photos of the child, taking photos of their family, bringing those connections together, the importance of whanau, all of those things, of empowering the child, getting them to communicate, share their own stories, their own voices- all of that are key aspects of Te Whariki, mana reo, communication. That whole social interaction is a key aspect of Te Whariki.
Christine

Reremoana took meke portraits of Tonya using the digital camera. They came out really nice.
Saz (teen parent)

In the childcare they do learning stories. If they involve the parents, parents will actually see what their babies are learning, while they are painting this picture or eating sand in the sand pit they are exploring and creating for themselves.

Sometimes the mums get too preoccupied thinking my baby can’t write her name, concepts about what they think learning is. So if he childcare are able to use ICT, a digital camera to take shots and write a little korero about it.
Tarsh
with the guidance of the childcare staff, write their children’s learning stories.

Tarsh had modelled this approach during an activity where she captured images of her daughter and asked students to match and sequence the story in Te Reo.

This involvement would promote the idea of a community of learners with both levels engaged in the learning process. As Tarsh suggests “It is about learning together.”

**Teen Parent Educator Community**

There is scope for ICTs to support the Atpenz community. A listserv could provide just in time support for teachers of teen parents. It could also afford an opportunity for teachers to dialogue on professional matters. This could be modelled on the English online listserv. Teachers who have subscribed receive emails from other English teachers who wish to discuss professional matters. They can email the group when they need support or want to initiate a professional discussion.

Interact could also be utilised to support a closed professional learning community, however, it could be hard to sustain as teachers would need to log in regularly for it to work.

Gemeaux identified the potential of Interact as a means to link students to create a learning community between teen parent centres. This could mitigate against the isolation of working on Achievement Standards without their peers. They could access specialised teachers and share ideas with other teen parents who are working in the same area.

It is creative and its personal because they love to take photos of their babies. They can map out a story. The girls and I talked about making a book about their child. They take photos of an activity, going to the park, feeding the ducks. Make the book we could have the book in Maori and in English and they could take a book home for their child that their child will adore because it has got them in it. It’s a book all about them.

They loved the activity that Tarsh did. It was a group thing and they were working together.

**Gemeaux**

I find that hard. Because of the nature of their attendance and all the different things they are doing, there is always one person working by themselves. Within the whole range of teen parent schools there maybe someone else working on such and such or who has just finished it. They might be able to work together.

**Gemeaux**
At Te Whare Whai Hua ICTs are currently used by the teen parents effectively as recreational communication devices. However, additionally, they can be used further in the classroom and beyond to promote community, critical thinking, student confidence, parent education and literacy.

ICTs have the potential to support flexible learning to address the challenge of student absences. Parents can become involved in their children’s learning through the shared authorship of their Learning Stories.

* Epals is the Internet's largest community of collaborative classrooms engaged in cross-cultural exchanges, project sharing and language learning. http://www.epals.com/*
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Chapter Six: Conclusion

With definitions of literacy changing (Leu, 2001) it is desirable for students to develop these new literacy skills within their classroom programme. Spender (1996) believes that in the future most learning in the arts and sciences will take place via computer. And those who have no access, no expertise in the area, will be as severely limited as those who are illiterate in a print-based culture. Teen parents are seen as disadvantaged if they cannot use the tools to access the cultural capital of our age (Spender, 1996, Maharey, 2000). E-learning comprises more than the use of ICTs tools. According to the Ministry of Education

“e-learning is flexible learning using ICT resources, tools, and applications, and focusing on interactions among teachers, learners, and the online environment.”

E-learning has a collaborative facet, with students relating to their peers. It certainly retains an emphasis on teacher expertise. However, as teachers, we are challenged to extend our pedagogy to an understanding of teaching and learning in online environments. We are challenged to do things differently and better with ICTs.

ICTs enable students to learn in new ways that were not possible previously. Our society is changing dramatically and it is important to consider what skills are essential for our students to have and what knowledge is important for them to possess. All teachers have a vested interest in basic literacy and numeracy. In a digital age, media literacy skills are also integral in a 21st century classroom. Individuals who can access information the fastest, evaluate it most appropriately, and use it most effectively to solve problems will be the ones who succeed in the challenging times that await our children. This will make informational literacy a crucial determinant of success (Leo & Kinzer, 2000).

There is also the need for teen parents to develop critical literacy. They are growing up in a world where there are surrounded by digital images and they need to know how to access and interpret them successfully. Many media images involve marketing in some form or another. Societal power structures, gender roles, racial roles are created or reproduced by those who control the media. Programmes we watch on television are purchased by those who pay for advertising. Product placement is increasingly prevalent in movies and in music videos. New Zealand youth are learning about American culture and aping it as it extends its economic arm into our society. The Internet allows anyone to publish, which can emancipate us or constrict those who cannot discern fact from fiction. Consequently, as
educators, we need to raise awareness in our rangitahi so they can make choices about what they believe.

Most of the teen parents at the centre do not have access to a computer or the Internet at home. Currently, there is a difference between the way students use ICTs for recreation and for learning purposes. The teen parents see their use of phones, with their capacity to txt and video, as enjoyable. They particularly like to use computers to listen to music and chat. They like to manipulate digital images of their children.

The students who do not have access at home are significantly disadvantaged in their ability to use computers. Due to learning gaps and a possible history of learning difficulties some students lack confidence in their ability to do academic work in general. They also feel whakama at their inability to use learning technologies. This is concerning as they are excluded from resources afforded those who can effectively communicate through digital media.

The teen parents and staff at Te Whare Whai Hua have identified four significant areas in which they experience educational challenges. These comprise whanaungatanga; establishing a sense of belonging, lifeskills, parenting and academic studies. In each of these areas, students currently use ICTs. However, there is potential to further develop ICT initiatives to enhance existing programmes and to implement new strategies.

Education at Te Whare Whai Hua is holistic. The staff embrace Durie’s (1994) “whare tapa wha” model for hauora or (health), that there are four interrelated dimensions of well being; the physical, social, mental/emotional and spiritual. Whanaungatanga is an important concept. It is the glue that encourages students to support each other as a community of learners. The students live complex lives, raising at least one child. It can be a very isolated existence living an adult life as a teenager. With illness and possibly other issues to contend with, inconsistent attendance can be a barrier to learning. The staff at the centre work hard to foster this connection, community and belonging. A cyber classroom can potentially support these connections among the students and staff. It would be an interesting area for further study to investigate if and how these four dimensions; physical, social, emotional and spiritual can be supported online.

The centre offers meaningful learning in the form of lifeskills and parenting programmes. These programmes are very engaging for the students, however the teachers recognize that our society is changing rapidly and ICTs could enhance some of the learning experiences.

An online classroom can support student interactions. For an online environment to work the students would need to develop ownership and feel free to express their ideas. There is a tension in face-to-face classrooms and cyber ones to balance youth culture and educational purpose. This relates to language choices and content, i.e. drugs and alcohol.

The teen parents have illustrated during the duration of this study that they have a penchant for recording and manipulating images. There is potential for teen parent
educators to harness this passion, supporting further learning related to the areas of academic goals, parenting, lifeskills or whanaungatanga.

Digital images have the potential to support these connections. By encouraging teen parents to become involved in the narratives of their children learning occurs at two levels. Students can tackle curriculum, like Te Reo acquisition (outlined in chapter four). They can learn about their child’s development and support them with their cognitive and linguistic skills. In addition, if we take a sociocultural perspective to the tamariki’s education, learning is not considered in isolation. This “participatory appropriation” view of how development and learning occurs involves a perspective in which children and their social partners are interdependent (Rogoff, n.d). Their roles are active and dynamically changing, and the specific processes by which they communicate and share in decision making are the substance of cognitive development. If we value the cultural context in which learning takes place, it is clearly desirable to have parental involvement in the process.

This sociocultural perspective links with the concept of whanaungatanga as the sense of belonging and connection link with the readiness to learn. As a consequence of this research, Christine and the childcare staff implemented an interactive workshop with the teen parents called “What learning takes place?” A Powerpoint and digital images were used as the focus of discussion and shared learning. Whanaungatanga is “a settling of the spirit,” students, mothers and infants, are not educated in isolation, away from a cultural, social and spiritual context. This is an area worthy of further investigation, the capacity of an online classroom to support whanaungatanga, that sense of belonging and connectedness? Another area for further research could be the involvement and shared authorship of teen parents in the narrative stories of their children.

On the television we see sites websites touted at the end of religious programmes. These sites appear to support the sense of belonging, as a way for the organisation to connect with television viewers. They provide an interactive connection with the spiritual provider and possibly a connection between the congregation. This 21st century way of reaching diverse people separated by location but connected by vision and purpose may have relevance to the way teen parent centres link with their pupils. Some people seek and seem to find an emotional and spiritual connection online.

Online learning could be a solution through which teen parent centres can foster a sense of community, belonging and find their own sense of whanaungatanga. Routines and structure are important concepts, especially for those students who have not had them in the past.

This research highlights an issue for teachers in regard to the ethos of their cyber environment. How can they make it inclusive of teen culture without compromising the appropriateness of content? I believe this is influenced by the culture the teacher promotes in his/her class. A teacher with personality and charisma and a genuine rapport with students can translate this into an online environment.
If this is the case it also begs the question whether the nurturing and sense of belonging, so needed by many teen parents, can be translated into this setting. I believe there would need to be a significant face to face component for any online environment aiming to support teen parents. These rangatahi may be isolated in their situation. They would need to establish trust, building relationships with their peers in a face-to-face setting. These bonds are very important, particularly for students who would be required to communicate in writing when they may be whakama about their literacy.

At Te Whare Whai Hua students do not take learning materials home as, due to absences and the family shifting houses, past experience has proven that they tend to lose them. Access to the Internet could support flexible learning where the student could work around their children’s routines. Material could be uploaded electronically circumventing the problem of students losing the hard copy.

There is a tension between running contextually relevant student-centred programmes and operating correspondence programmes that are a “one size fits all approach” but offer important credentialing for students. Having observed students undertaking correspondence work and discussed their experiences with teachers and students, I have concluded that although correspondence work can cater for the diversity of the students’ programmes it does not allow for collaboration or immediate feedback. Operating so many different programmes and accommodating students who are absent on a regular basis is very demanding on teachers. Unless there is some way of connecting with other teen parent centres to offer achievement standards online, students will have to go on functioning with individualized text based programmes.

Other centres have more students and consequently specialist teachers who can facilitate contextually relevant programmes. It would an area for further investigation if and how these programmes are or could be interactive so that students can access their learning materials and peers anytime and anywhere. Online learning has implications for teaching in regard to workload. It is too much for teachers to interact with their students at night as well as all day. So any initiative developed would have to take this into consideration for it to be sustainable.

Online classrooms can reflect the educational beliefs of the teacher. Some online environments focus on knowledge transmission. If educators adopt constructivist principles when working online, they need to find ways to promote collaborative learning through reflection and social negotiation (Huang, 2002).

**Life Skills**

Resource people could be invited into the online environment to address the class. Lawyers, careers, health professionals are all regularly invited into the face-to-face classroom. A cyber context could also allow providers to support the students. They could hotseat any queries the students have. An online classroom could support the students to network with resource people.
Teenagers are in the process of forging their identities as individuals. They are defining themselves in their community and learning important lessons about relationships on their path to maturity. The young Maori teen parents at Te Whare Whai Hua need to understand their place in the world. It is valuable to deconstruct the messages promoted through the media so that they can choose whether to believe them. The staff identified that the teen parents they work with need to present a reasoned argument and assert themselves to access resources. In their role as parents they need to have a strong voice for their children.

Consequently this is another area for further research. How can online environments encourage teen parents to substantiate their views? Can these environments support teen parents to develop the confidence they need to advocate for themselves and their children?

There is an increasingly interactive element to the media. Young people vote for their favourite singers (NZ idol). They choose who remains in reality television programmes. They give feedback to companies who amend their marketing and products to cater for them. Our students arrive at school with a penchant to interact with the content and material they encounter. They expect to exert an element of control over what they learn and how they learn it.

The students at Te Whare Whai Hua were engaged by the interactive appeal of the ICTs they used. These included digital video and static images they recorded of their children, dialogues online via email or “Interact” the learning management software we trialed. In their homes students with access downloaded music and chatted online with people they knew and those they didn’t.

Most of the teen parents I worked with during this study were proactive in their quest to gain an education. Many of the students at Te Whare Whai Hua chose to return to school having had little success in the past. Their child is their redemption. Although it is a loss to have responsibilities so young, for most of the teen parents at the centre it has given them a reason to strive for an education and a better future. They want to make a difference for their babies. Being a teen parent is life changing and sometimes that can be for the better.

Lerman (1997) commented that although they had not been lucky before they got pregnant, many teen parents she encountered considered themselves lucky now, even though they knew they were too young to be mothers. They felt they’d been rescued by their pregnancy; they’d been rescued from their own ghettos of poverty and neglect. They were now getting an education in alternative schools which met their needs and where they had found loving caring adults, essentially new mothers, in their teachers and councilors.

For all the teen parents in Gisborne who are working toward a better future through further study, there are those who choose to remain at home with little education. An area
for further investigation would if and how an ICT rich classroom environment can entice teen parents to attend their local teen parent centre?

The difficulty students experience with ICTs appear to be due to a range of factors which conspire together, the lack of access at home, the early departure from the school environment and learning gaps caused by absences. Access at home is a pivotal factor for any programme, which aims to support flexible learning for students.

Some teen parents have low levels of confidence. Any programme needs to build incremental steps of success. As computers provide access to information and a vital communication portal with the rest of the world, students are extremely disadvantaged if they do not know how to interact through them. More than merely an information processing or communication device, ICTs enable students to develop higher order thinking skills. These skills equip them with the ability to decipher the dominant messages marketed to them directly and indirectly through all the different types of media they encounter. Pivotal to this new form of literacy is the students’ self esteem and sense of cultural identity through which all these messages are filtered. If the lens is clouded, the student cannot deconstruct information and be empowered by it.

I think there is room for Interact to be useful in that setting for the girls who have computers and Internet access at home. At this stage there are not many of them.

Gemeaux (teacher)

Access at home is a prerequisite to the use of Interact. Aside from its application in the classroom its benefit is in its ability to provide a classroom communication portal with access to learning materials anywhere and anytime. Hence the provision of access is an important component for any programme that aims to support students in this flexible way. Nevertheless, routines and face-to-face contact are important to maintain. There is value in the establishment of routine, especially for those students who have never had it. Balance is important.

Gemeaux commented that as a novice to ICT she said, “it is mind boggling because of my limited practice with that medium… I feel like an immigrant from Mars or something. It’s a whole new world.”

As Prensky (2001) comments

“today’s teachers have to learn to communicate in the language and style of their students. This doesn’t mean changing the meaning of what is important, or of good thinking skills. But it does mean going faster, less step-by step, more in parallel, with more random access, among other things.”

Gemeaux, Carly, and Tarsh, the teachers at Te Whare Whai Hua are particularly open-minded about new ideas, and they are genuine about embracing strategies that will add value for their students. As Paul Smith (HoD) said, Te Whare Whai Hua targets a range
of educational outcomes. It is an intervention that strikes at two levels. ICTs can support teen parents holistically. They can enhance learning for teen parents and their tamariki.

**Further research**
For all the teen parents in Gisborne who are working to improve their future through further study, there are those who choose to remain at home with little education. An area for further investigation would if and how an ICT rich environment can entice teen parents to return to education?

Other research questions which emerged from this study include:
- Can an online classroom support whanaungatanga, that sense of belonging and connectedness?
- How can ICTs support the involvement and shared authorship of teen parents in the narrative stories of their children?
- To what extent and in what ways the dimensions of hauora; physical, social, emotional and spiritual can be supported through online environments?

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