



Shaping a Marautanga-ā-Kura with our Community

Helena Baker

Helena Baker is the principal of Te Kura o Tākaro, a decile 1 full primary for Year 0 to 8 students in Highbury, Palmerston North. The school enjoys the support of a loyal and established whānau and community. This sense of whānaungatanga provides a strong foundation for the school. In her project report Helena writes about how she worked with the community on the curriculum design process.

Our 2009 school development process began with a purpose. All staff, students, board of trustee members and whānau, and our wider community took on the mission to design a Marautanga-ā-Kura – school curriculum – that would build on both *The New Zealand Curriculum* and *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa*. We wanted the design to give genuine effect to the partnership at the heart of Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

Our goal was that the new Marautanga-ā-Kura had to have prominence and capture “kia ū ki te pai” – the combined vision we had for learners at Te Kura o Tākaro. It must ensure that our tamariki (students) and whānau (families and the wider school community) realised their potential to be effective learners and to be successful in taking their places in both Te Ao Māori and Te Ao Whānui.

With this challenging goal in mind staff spent time identifying what they needed to know to deepen their understandings of *The New Zealand Curriculum* and *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa*. Although these documents might come from different perspectives, both have aspirations for learners that are about student potential.

We started examining the key competencies because these seemed to be at the very heart of the curriculum as Ngā Mātāpono Whānui and Ngā Uara. Ngā Waiaro also appeared to set the foundation for *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa*.

With the support and guidance of some key resource people we examined and discussed both documents alongside related articles and research. We also spent time sharing our ideas and asking each other questions about learning and about the aspirations of our tamariki and whānau. In this way we made sure that we had a shared vision which would support and contribute to our Marautanga-ā-Kura.

This close work also encouraged us to reflect on how our growing knowledge and understanding related to tamariki and what it meant for them and their whānau. As a result ngā kaiako (the staff) developed four main learning characteristics that encompassed the key competencies of *The New Zealand Curriculum* and aspirations from *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa*.

Our next challenge came when we tried to combine the rich variety of views, thoughts and aspirations of our community. Responses were varied and had been gathered in a range of ways including: words written on Post-it notes, brainstormed at hui, posters made by ētahi mātua (some parents), pictures cut from magazines and drawings by whānau and tamariki. Some whānau sent back a written response. Most importantly though, information was gathered through conversations.

We held a teachers’ only day and as we were working directly with all this information, the story of our Marautanga-ā-Kura unfolded and provided us with a framework for thinking and shaping.

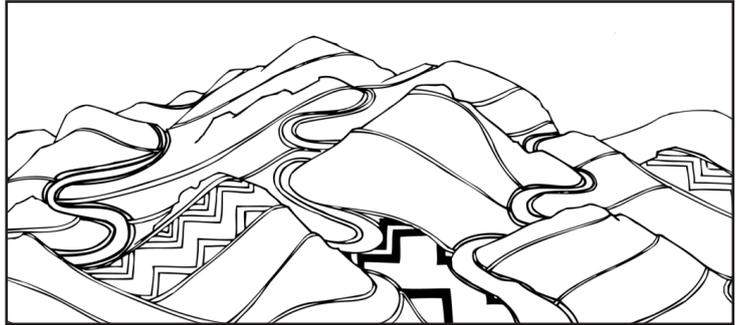
Our marautanga takes its shape from the land around us.



Our Marautanga-ā-Kura framework

KO RUAHINE NGĀ PAE MAUNGA

The Ruahine Ranges represent the mana whenua of our school in the same way that our whānau, hapu and iwi provide students with a strong foundation and place for them to stand tall. From here, they are able to look out towards the sea and view the endless possibilities for their future. As kaiako we are also connected to the whenua (land) and surrounding mountain ranges and together with whānau will ensure that this foundation sustains learning at Te Kura o Tākaro.



KO NGĀ AWA

Coming from the Ruahine Ranges are four major awa (rivers): Manawatu, Rangitikei, Ngaruroro and Tukituki. They are fast flowing rivers and tumble over high craggy ridges carrying huge amounts of shingle to fertile flats in both the Manawatu and Heretaunga rohe (districts). These four awa now represent our main learning characteristics as identified by us all.

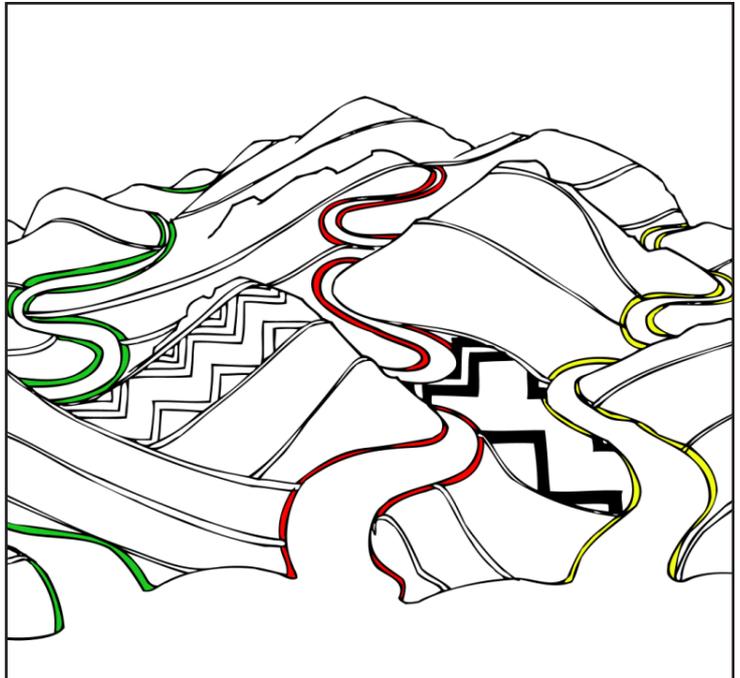
Whakamana: respect, support and honouring of others.

Ngā momo reo: communicating and participating in learning.

Ringa ueke: application and endeavour for learning.

Ihu nui: curiosity, thinking, and the desire for learning.

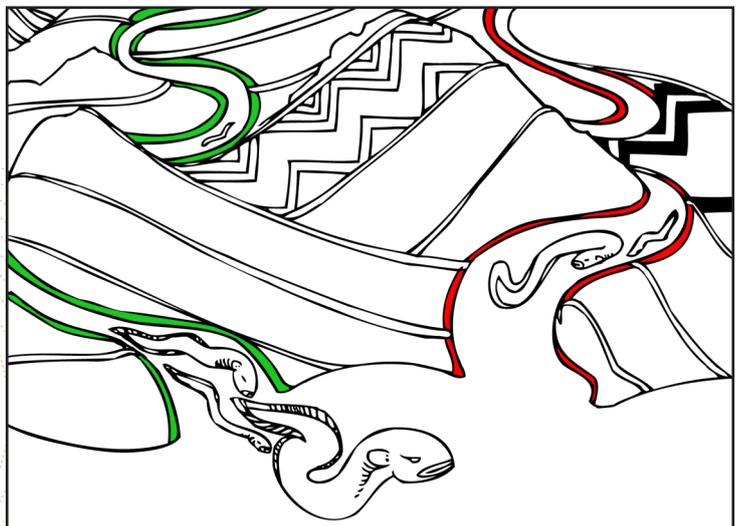
Each awa or learning characteristic also has a number of key indicators that help deepen their meaning. They will grow and change in relation to context and students' needs.



NGĀ TUNA

Immersed in ngā awa (the rivers) are tuna (eel). These tuna are our tamariki, nourished by these waters to grow and strengthen, and guided by them as they make their way to the sea and islands of the Pacific.

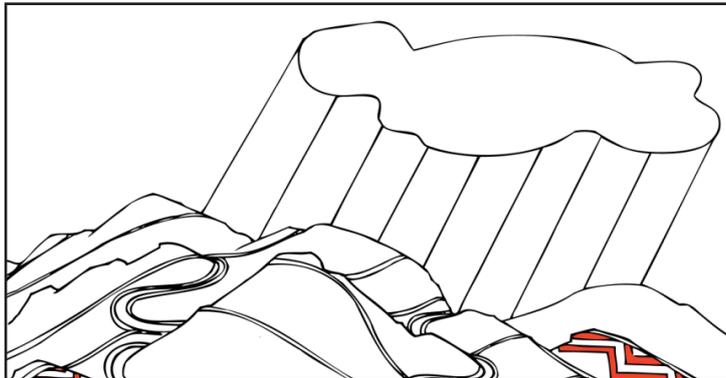
They are then able to use the experience and knowledge they have gained to competently participate in the Māori world as well as globally.



THE EIGHT BANDS OF RAIN

Our pae maunga and awa are fed by eight bands of rain that give them richness: the eight curriculum areas. These waters are being continuously fed by the actions of the water cycle or the teaching-learning cycle. This is important in focusing teachers' inquiry into the impact of their actions on student learning.

The poutama or steps form our school emblem. This reminds us all to continually strive for excellence. We have placed these steps on our pae maunga to encourage us to "step up", particularly in the areas of literacy and numeracy.

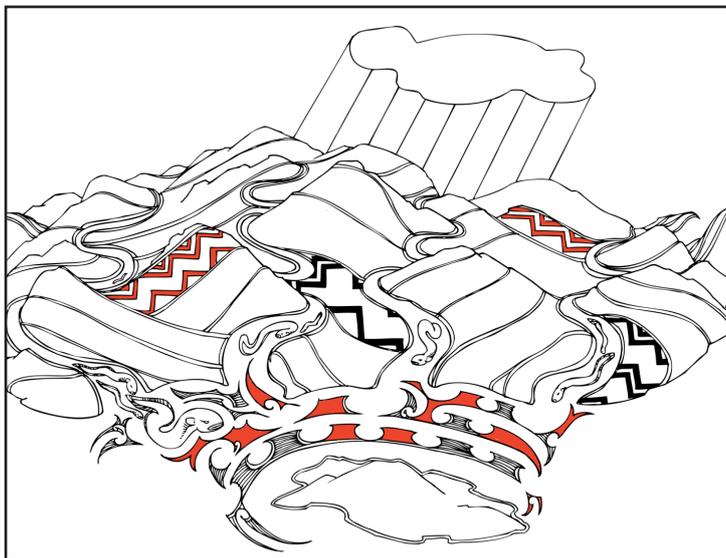


TE MARAUTANGA-Ā-TE KURA O TĀKARO

Our journey of curriculum development continues to move forward with a collective sense of purpose now that we have this learning framework.

Kaiako are developing practices to support an inquiry approach to learning. This approach will help embed the learning framework into our school culture. We have started along this path by reorganising our tamariki into the four awa. Each awa team will find out more about the physical habitat of their awa. Already we have discovered that each of our awa is under threat and currently being compromised in some way. This has raised a very real context for learning and thinking around their sustainability in the future.

We now have a sense of urgency about learning and are feeling excited about our way forward, our shared vision and belief that we can make a difference.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Graphics by Reweti Arapere