



Developing Māori Students Soft Skills to Support Improved Achievement Outcomes

A project by Matapuna Training Centre for Ako Aotearoa, led by Jodie Cook, Tumuaki
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Strategic overview

Tutors at Matapuna Training Centre (MTC) identified that supporting students to develop their soft skill capabilities had the potential to contribute to improved student achievement outcomes. This led to the one-year co-funded project with Ako Aotearoa to a one-year project, being undertaken by Matapuna Training Centre, to measure and evaluate the progress their Māori students made over time in “soft skills” and evidence the correlation between course achievement and students’ soft skills improvement.

Key findings

Staff at every level of the organisation observed the benefit of empowering students to take ownership of their own soft skill development, which resulted in improving TEC Educational Performance Outcomes for the organisation.

Benefits - for the learners and organisation

Relationships between staff and students improved with a greater focus on teaching and learning. The Soft Skill Descriptors supported the students in learning to learn and developing positive habits for learning. Behaviour management issues reduced and tutors noticed a significant improvement in the culture of the organisation.

Feedback from students and their whānau about the programme

- » “I have seen a definite growth in the attitude and character of my mokopuna this year.”
- » “My daughter is keen to go to course every day and is achieving her goals – she is very clear on what she needs to improve and where she already has strengths.”
- » “The connection between the tutors and students, the strong bond is amazing!”
- » “Maintain the magic of the relationships which are obviously between students/tutors and leadership management.”

Student views of the resources

- » “They helped with getting to know the people in my class also communicating and cooperating with them in activities.”
- » “I enjoy the environment we work in, we accept each other’s views and we encourage and involve each other.”
- » “We are making something happen for our future and we are doing our work. The biggest improvement I have noticed is ... everything is a lot clearer!”

Tutor insights

All youth tutors were engaged in the project; each incorporating the soft skill descriptors into their teaching in the way they felt best suited them and their students. They also developed their own methods for tracking progress and met regularly to discuss, share experiences, examples and success stories.

Valuing the process

Tutors realised the benefits of the resources as much as the students. The following examples demonstrate the value of using the Key Competencies resource (KC):

- » Managing self is always a Key Competency that is constantly a reminder from tutors to students, however, long discussions aren't needed anymore, just cue words given to students that are reminders to move to the next phase of their self-management plan, using their agreed strategies.
- » The language text and symbols allow students to work on building their KC in this area and this aids towards improving their literacy and numeracy attention. Tutors value this as it's another reinforcement of learning.

With all Key Competencies, tutors have fed back the ability to be able to support students to prepare for further studies, employment, life, to make better choices, to strive for possibilities.

- » We know that once students overcome the initial stages of having to work at developing or improving their KC, the benefits are huge for staff and students when students can display these skills confidently.

Tutor feedback on other benefits

- » "Tutors are able to see patterns emerging early and get on top of them right from the get-go. This allows tutors to put plans in place with students and involve other staff members where needed, e.g., social workers."
- » "It has given individual growth, knowing I am at times the mirror for the learners, they see me managing my time, participate in centre wide activities and how I relate to other learners and staff members."
- » "All the key competencies are of value, it is a measure on the learner's maturity levels cognitively through their journey at Matapuna, real life..."

Next plans

Tutors and students want to review the Key Competencies booklet to ensure the language is always student-friendly and statements are always positive. The tutor team would like to review, refine, and improve the systems and processes to ensure the resources are consistently applied and effectively used across the Centre, particularly with new tutors joining the team. They will also revisit the rankings for the students' progress reports to ensure consistency of interpretation and expectations.

To download the Full Report with resources go to: <https://ako.ac.nz/knowledge-centre/developing-maori-students-soft-skills/>