Te Kotahitanga Observation Tool

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Kohia te kai rangatira, ruia te taitea.
Adopt what is good and forget what is bad.

Overview
This module provides the background to the development of the Te Kotahitanga Observation Tool. The module also outlines the protocols for conducting a classroom observation using this tool, and it introduces the process for implementing the cycle of observation, feedback, and co-construction within your school.

In November 2013, Te Kotahitanga was recognised internationally with the conferring of an award from the World Innovation Summit for Education
Background to the Te Kotahitanga Observation Tool

The Te Kotahitanga Observation Tool provides the framework for monitoring how teachers are incorporating the interactions and relationships described in the Te Kotahitanga Effective Teaching Profile in their everyday teaching.

Side 1 of the Te Kotahitanga Observation Tool is a variation of the time sample sheets developed for the Mangere Guidance Units (Glynn, Thomas, & Wotherspoon, 1978) and the collaborative home and school behaviour management programme, Hei Āwhina Mātua (Glynn, et al., 1997). This aspect of the observation tool, and the recording conventions used, were developed and refined by the research team during Phases 1 and 2 of Te Kotahitanga. Side 2 of the Te Kotahitanga Observation Tool was also developed during Phase 1. It aims to objectively quantify evidence of relationships in the classroom.
Understanding the Te Kotahitanga Observation Tool

The Te Kotahitanga Observation Tool is linked directly to the Te Kotahitanga Effective Teaching Profile. It provides the framework for classroom observations of teacher/student interactions and teacher relationships with Māori students. It also provides the means to identify the strategies teachers use in the classroom. The impact of these actions on Māori students’ educational achievement can thus be monitored and reviewed.

This tool acknowledges that there are many factors in the classroom that contribute to student behaviour and learning. Observations that focus on students alone are likely to be located within a functional limitations paradigm that suggests the problem or deficiency is found within the child. Te Kotahitanga observations are located within an ecological paradigm that takes into account a wide range of contributing factors when considering student behaviour and learning. This breadth provides greater scope for effective and meaningful solutions for all participants.

Bishop and Glynn (1999) suggest that professional development should create power-sharing contexts where self-determining individuals work together to set goals and reflect on outcomes. The cyclic nature of the in-school professional development programme (classroom observation, individual feedback, group co-construction, and shadow coaching) ensures that there are ongoing opportunities for reflection, feedback, and goal setting.

The information provided by the Te Kotahitanga Observation Tool enables observers to give teachers feedback and feed-forward on their learning interactions with students and their relationships with Māori students. The tool thus allows teachers to share in the process of monitoring and reflecting on their attempts to implement the Effective Teaching Profile and to co-construct new directions for future teaching.
Using the Te Kotahitanga Observation Tool

The Te Kotahitanga Observation Tool has two sides. Side 1 is used to gather evidence about the lesson, including:

- Māori student engagement
- work completed by target Māori students
- location of target Māori students
- teacher location throughout the observation
- description of the lesson
- cognitive level of the lesson
- teacher interactions.

It is also used to gather background information about the teacher and the class.

Side 2 of the Observation Tool is used to gather evidence about:

- the teacher’s relationships with Māori students
- the visibility of culture in the classroom
- the responsiveness of the teacher to Māori students’ culture / prior knowledge and experiences
- the strategies being used by the teacher.

Prior to Observations

Each school-based facilitation team will need to negotiate clear understandings of appropriate times for in-class observations. This will need to include the principal and teaching staff and should take place prior to the first term of observations.

Schools need to begin observations within the first few days of each term to ensure that the cycle of observation, feedback, co-construction, and shadow coaching is completed within the term.

Draw up a timetable for observations with dates, observers, teachers, and classrooms clearly marked. Circulate the timetable within your team or use a whiteboard to ensure everyone in the team knows when and where they are scheduled to conduct an observation. As a team, make decisions about the best way to inform staff of an impending observation.