

# Deepen relationships with ākonga and whānau

A suggestion for implementing the strategy  
'Foster relationships and partnerships' from  
the Guide: [Behaviour and learning](#)

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## **Includes:**

- Strengthen relationships
- Connect with culturally sustaining frameworks
- Commit to understanding ākonga
- Involve family and whānau
- Innovate with getting to know your learner
- Successful home-school partnerships

Inclusive Education

From

Guide: [Behaviour and learning](#)

Strategy: [Foster relationships and partnerships](#)

Suggestion: [Deepen relationships with ākonga and whānau](#)

Date

18 June 2026

Link

[inclusive.tki.org.nz/guides/behaviour-and-learning/deepen-relationships-with-students-and-whanau](http://inclusive.tki.org.nz/guides/behaviour-and-learning/deepen-relationships-with-students-and-whanau)

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## Strengthen relationships

Respectful caring relationships are at the heart of the McAuley High School learning community. Maintaining these relationships involves every member of staff.



Video hosted on Vimeo <http://vimeo.com/221215196>

Closed Captions

**Source:**

[An inclusive learning community, ERO](https://ero.govt.nz/our-research/an-inclusive-learning-community)  
<https://ero.govt.nz/our-research/an-inclusive-learning-community>

## Connect with culturally sustaining frameworks

Learn from ākonga and whānau using culturally sustaining frameworks. Build a holistic learner profile to understand how to support ākonga wellbeing and learning.

For example, use dimensions from the Māori health model, Te Whare Tapa Whā

### Taha Whānau – family, people and relationships

- whānau, friends, iwi and hapū
- cultural, religious, social and recreational connections
- professionals working with the family.

### Taha Wairua – spiritual wellbeing or life force

- spiritually strengthening aspects, for example, faith, being in nature, creative activities and meditation
- special interests, hopes and priorities for ākonga and whānau.

### Taha Tinana – physical wellbeing

- physical activity and recreation preferences
- physical abilities and challenges
- medications and allergies.

### Taha Hinengaro – mental and emotional wellbeing

- strengths and talents
- dislikes, what can upset them
- signs that the learner is beginning to feel upset or anxious
- strategies used to calm ākonga.

### Whenua – connection to the land and environment

- important places
- iwi and hapū, maunga and awa – mountains and rivers
- interests in the environment, plants and animals
- connections to people and ancestors.

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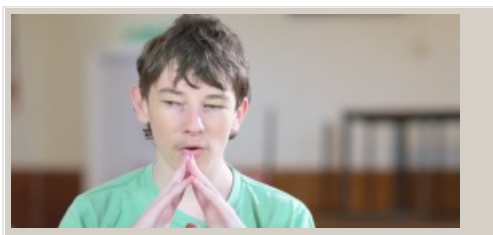
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## Commit to understanding ākongā

Hamish describes the positive impact of being “known” by his teacher.

He also reflects on the impact of being invisible.



Video hosted on Youtube <http://youtu.be/McAgVbOsLnc>

Closed Captions

Source:

[Inclusive Education Action Group \(NZ\)  
https://ieag.org.nz/voices/videos/](https://ieag.org.nz/voices/videos/)

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## Involve family and whānau

“We talk,  
we meet,  
we listen”.

Educators  
talk about  
engaging  
with and  
welcoming  
Pacific  
families  
and  
whānau  
using a  
Tapasā  
approach.



Video hosted on Vimeo <http://vimeo.com/519265219>

Closed Captions

Source:

[Ministry of Education Te Tāhuhu o te Mātauranga \(Vimeo\)](#)

<https://vimeo.com/showcase/8206263/video/519265219>

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## **Innovate with getting to know your learner**

Learner profiles can help school staff build relationships with ākongā and their whānau, understand their perspectives and design learning to meet learner needs. There are many creative and innovative ways to build knowledge about your learner.

Creative alternatives to learner profiles:

#### 1. All About Me Interviews

- One-on-one chats with a teacher or peer using simple, structured questions.
- Use visuals or yes/no prompts.
- Record answers through voice, video, or drawing:
- "What do you like at school?"
- "What helps you learn?"

#### 2. Video Introductions / Self-Presentations

- Learners record short videos introducing themselves.
- They can show their strengths, interests, and needs.
- Great for visual and verbal expression — use prompts or interview formats.

#### 3. Photo Collages or Vision Boards

- Learners select photos of people, places, things, or activities they like.
- Use magazines, printed photos, or digital tools (like Canva or Book Creator).
- Add labels or short captions if appropriate.

#### 4. Learning Choice Baskets

- Use a basket or box filled with objects that represent learning preferences (e.g., headphones, timer, picture of a friend, fidget, iPad).
- The learner selects what helps them learn best.
- You can record their choices as a profile.

#### 5. Interactive Poster or Wall Display

Create a classroom wall or board where learners can add post-its or pictures under categories:

"I feel calm when..."

"I like learning with..."

"I want to get better at..."

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## Successful home-school partnerships

Build a partnership that has a clear focus on learning, where everyone can make positive and active contributions that benefit learning.



Video hosted on Vimeo <http://vimeo.com/113879057>

[View transcript](#)

Source:

[Pasifika Education Community \(NZ\)](#)

<http://pasifika.tki.org.nz/Media-gallery/Engaging-with-Pasifika-parents-families-communities/Parents-matter>

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