

Provide options to support flexible communication and collaboration

A suggestion for implementing the strategy 'Support reciprocal relationships' from the Guide: [Parents, whānau, and communities](#)

Includes:

- Consulting with whānau
- Evaluate family-centred approaches
- Suggestions for working with parents and whānau
- Communicating with Pasifika families
- Useful resources

Inclusive Education

From

Guide: [Partnering with parents, whānau, and communities](#)

Strategy: [Support reciprocal relationships](#)

Suggestion: [Provide options to support flexible communication and collaboration](#)

Date

01 January 2026

Link

inclusive.tki.org.nz/guides/partnering-with-parents-whanau-and-communities/provide-options-to-support-flexible-communication-and-collaboration

Consulting with whānau

We've got to stop thinking we know what whānau want and just ask. Because whānau will tell you, as a school, an institution, it's what you do with that after they say it which is the important step.

And it's how we ask, and it's how often we ask. And it's how many opportunities we provide for people to be safe in terms of responding openly, honestly, and frankly about what we are doing.

Benita Tahuri and Keriana Tawhiwhirangi

Source:

[Te Mangōroa](#)

<http://temangoroa.tki.org.nz/Video-stories/TMK-Whanau-involvement-1>

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Evaluate family-centred approaches



"FAMILY-CENTERED APPROACHES"
GONE BAD.

Source:

[Michael Giangreco](#)

<https://www.uvm.edu/cess/cdci/profiles/michael-f-giangreco-phd>

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Suggestions for working with parents and whānau

- ✓ Regularly communicate positive information and achievements to parents and whānau.
- ✓ With Māori whānau, develop a shared understanding of tikanga (cultural practices), such as language, customs, obligations, traditions.
- ✓ Promote regular kanohi ki te kanohi, face-to-face contact to reinforce strong communication and engagement with parents and whānau right from the start.
- ✓ Communicate and share information in a meaningful way, demonstrating understanding and support for parent and whānau concerns.
- ✓ Value what parents, caregivers, family, and whānau have noticed or assessments they have had done outside school.
- ✓ Involve parents, families, and whānau in determining strategies to support student learning and well-being.
- ✓ Ask about and work with any programmes or materials being used at home to maximise consistency and support for the student.
- ✓ Develop systems for passing on information about a student's needs, progress, and next steps, in ways that are meaningful.
- ✓ Hold discussions in environments where families feel safe, and that support their identity and connections e.g. a whānau space, marae, church or community center.

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Communicating with Pasifika families

Suggestions for enhancing communication with Pasifika communities and families

- Use accessible language in communications to families. Avoid professional jargon that might confuse or disempower families.
- Build greater understanding of school activities by providing a rationale for them.
- Ensure that parents know about school activities and opportunities for participation.
- Advise families on the protocol for parent or subject selection meetings (for example, whether the family is expected to ask questions or to simply receive information).
- Use bilingual community liaison people to help bridge language and cultural differences between homes and the school.
- Get parents involved in planning and management (for example, in parent/whānau groups or on boards of trustees).

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Useful resources



An open door policy that works

Chrissie Rumpler from Owairaka School discusses how to ensure an effective open-classroom-door policy through making connections with the community and having a school structure that values the engagement. She shares some of the things her school has done to ensure that teachers understand why and how to engage with the diverse cultures represented in their school.

[Visit website](#)



Perspectives of whānau

Parents of students needing additional support outline their needs and how schools can best work with them to meet those needs. Key information is from the ERO report *Partners in learning: Parents' voices*. An example of practice from a primary school and discussion questions are provided on this page from the Inclusive Practices website (NZ).

[Visit website](#)



Community engagement

This article explains the effectiveness of links between home and school, including links to tools and resources.

[Visit website](#)

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