

Partner with whānau, parents, and caregivers

A suggestion for implementing the strategy
'Establish reciprocal relationships ' from the
Guide: [Supporting ākonga Māori](#)

Includes:

- What to ask whānau
- Establish home-school partnerships
- Utilise parents' skills and expertise
- Develop authentic partnerships with parents
- Support information sharing
- Useful resources

What to ask whānau

Connect with whānau to understand the strengths and needs of their child.

Find out about:

Tribal structures and cultural practices:

- whakapapa (genealogy)
- who they consider to be whānau
- tikanga – cultural values and practices they use (language, customs, traditions)
- about their marae.

People in the learner's life:

- parent and whānau hopes and priorities for them
- the important people in the learner's life
- the best methods and times to communicate with whānau
- the professionals working with the whānau
- the questions they have and the support they would like from the school.

Practical elements:

- the language/s spoken at home
- ākonga medications and allergies
- the equipment used at home
- what they do at home to support learning.

Learner's likes and dislikes:

- their likes, interests, what they're good at, need help with, and can do independently
- their dislikes, what can upset them, how they express this, and their calming skills
- their favourite hobbies, books, songs, sports, TV programmes.

Inclusive Education

From

Guide: [Supporting ākonga Māori](#)

Strategy: [Establish reciprocal relationships](#)

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Date

06 September 2025

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inclusive.tki.org.nz/guides/supporting-akonga-maori/partner-with-whanau-parents-and-caregivers

Establish home-school partnerships

Communicate and share information in a meaningful way, demonstrating understanding and support for whānau concerns.

- ✓ 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.
- ✓ Value what parents, caregivers, and whānau have noticed or assessments they have had done outside school.
- ✓ Involve parents and whānau in determining strategies to support ākonga learning and well-being.
- ✓ Ask about and work with any programmes or materials being used at home to maximise consistency and support for ākonga.
- ✓ Develop systems for passing on information about ākonga needs, progress, and next steps, in ways that are meaningful.
- ✓ Regularly communicate positive information and achievements to the whānau.

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Utilise parents' skills and expertise

Engagement also worked well when schools tapped into parents' skills, talents and expertise. It was important that kaiako trusted them as parents for the knowledge they had about their child. Having kaiako who believed in their child's potential was critical to successful and sustainable learning partnerships.

Source:

[Partners in learning: Parent's voices \(ERO, 2008\)](#)

<https://ero.govt.nz/our-research/partners-in-learning-parents-voices>

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Develop authentic partnerships with parents

We are true partners when:

- you listen to what I have to say
- you acknowledge my intelligence
- you want to learn more about my ways
- you don't judge me
- you engage me in genuine dialogue
- we make decisions together
- you show that my child matters to you
- you include my experience, knowledge, and viewpoints with yours.

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Support information sharing

Sharon Beattie, a parent of a child with low vision, shares her knowledge and experiences of what has worked for her family.



Video hosted on Youtube http://youtu.be/41ZZ3_3pXIU

Closed Captions

Source:

[BLENNZ \(NZ\)](#)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=41ZZ3_3pXIU

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Useful resources



Educationally Powerful Connections video kete: Learning partnerships

One of five videos supported by prompting questions to guide the effective and respectful practice of kaiako.

Publisher: Poutama Pounamu

[Visit website](#)



Connecting with Māori communities Whānau, Hāpu and Iwi

This resource gives school leaders, kaiako, and staff a process for thinking about why they should connect with and develop collaborative home-school relationships with their Māori communities.

[Visit website](#)

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