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*Tackling Racism Through Developing Culturally Sustaining Practice:
Aotearoa|New Zealand*

“He mana tō te tangata”

Every person has the power and potential to positively transform the world around them

Te Tumu and Professor Melinda Webber

Sarah Finn

2024 Churchill Fellow

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Without the support and enthusiasm of the staff members I have met throughout this Fellowship, I would have been unable to gather the information required to develop this report. So I must give thanks and gratitude to all the schools and educators who have welcomed me and shared their stories with me so openly.

There are a couple of people who have been instrumental in helping the overseas learning part of my Fellowship. A huge thank you goes to Andrew Marshall from Rototuna High School, who welcomed me into his school, connected me with appropriate staff members and also helped me make networks outside of his school so that I could speak to people at different levels of the education system within Hamilton. Thank you, Andrew!

Another key person in my Fellowship has been Nichola McCall, Deputy Principal at Manurewa High School. I met Nichola on her tour of Wales during July of 2024, and I am indebted to her for her openness and willingness to share her stories and experience – as well as sharing the Manurewa Magic, which has been entirely inspirational and eye-opening! Ngā mihi nui, Nichola.

Finally, I must thank my partner for his patience throughout this entire process. From submitting my application to report writing, I am always grateful to have someone so steady to lean on, and to listen to my evolving understanding!

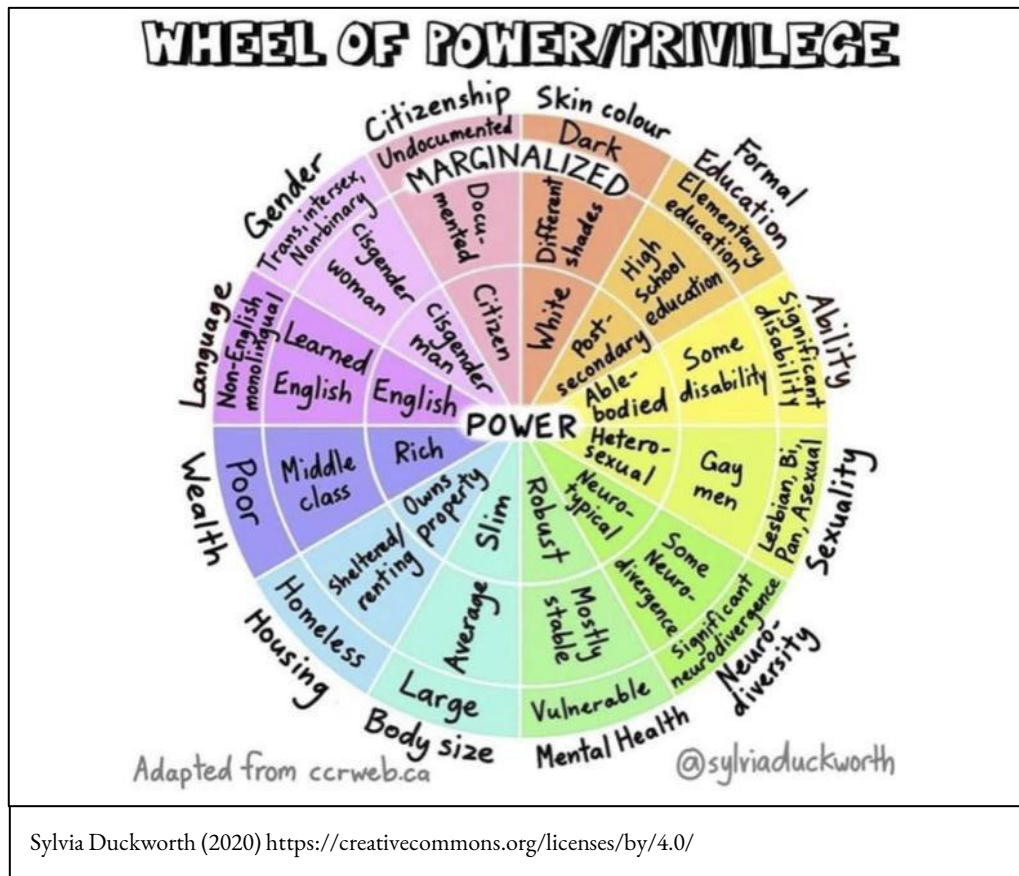
About the Fellow



Nichola McCall and Sarah Finn at Polyfest 2025.

I am a primary school teacher who has taught in South Wales since 2020. The school I worked in is a leader within the country for Anti-Racist practice with many of our school leaders being involved with the development of the agency DARPL (Diversity and Anti-Racism Professional Learning). Therefore, in the context of my school and locality, I feel I have a good understanding of some of the things we can do in order to address inequality within education. However, I was curious to look to other countries who have more developed systems than our own.

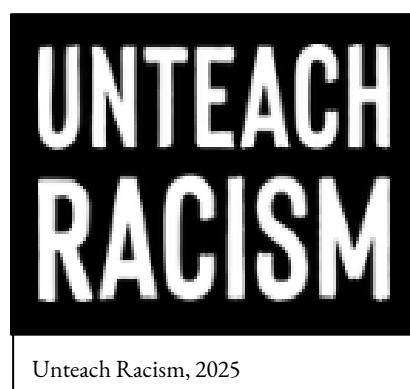
When conducting this Fellowship my own intersectionality must be acknowledged. I fall pretty centrally in the ‘Wheel of Power/Privilege’, as do the majority of Wales’ school teachers. As well as being a visitor in the country of research, Aotearoa|New Zealand, I must acknowledge that my experiences will be influenced by my personal intersectionality which others may experience differently due to their intersectionality.



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Why was this Fellowship Undertaken?

Between 2015 and 2023, there was a steady increase in police recorded race hate crimes in England and Wales (House of Commons Library, 2024), with a small decrease of 5% in the numbers of race related hate crimes between 2023 and 2024 (Gov.uk, 2025). A report by Runnymede (Joseph-Salisbury, 2020) investigated racism within secondary schools, and they found a range of issues including uneven and sometimes inadequate approaches to interpersonal pupil on pupil racism in schools. Furthermore, a report by the YMCA (2020) found that 95% of young Black people report they have heard and witnessed the use of racist language at school, whilst 49% felt racism was the biggest barrier to success at school for them. Whilst there has been some policy change since these reports were published, and a raised awareness of race related issues, there is more that the education sector can do to improve outcomes for all. In addition to these frightening statistics, the Welsh Government would like to be an Anti-Racist nation by 2030, as well as developing one million Welsh Speakers by 2050.

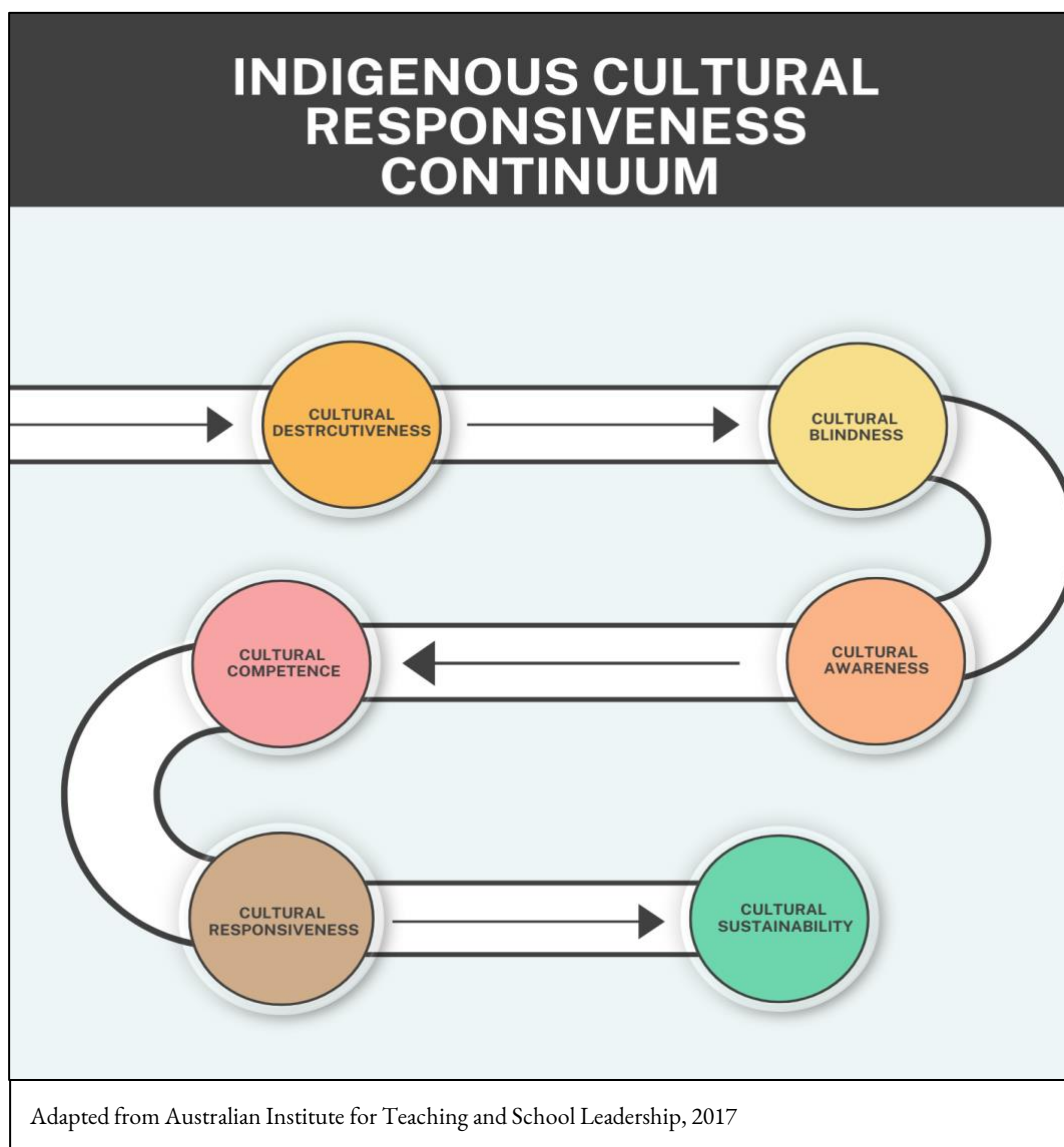


The Teaching Council of Aotearoa|New Zealand has been working with the Human Rights Commission in order to develop a support programme called ‘Unteach Racism’. ‘Unteach Racism’ recognises the pivotal role of teachers in shaping attitudes and supports them to identify and tackle the huge range of impacts racism has on those experiencing it. The impacts include, but are not limited to, underachievement and low self-esteem (Unteach Racism, 2025). It is primarily focussed on supporting professionals to initially identify their own unconscious biases, and address these in a proactive way. It then goes on to support professionals to navigate addressing the impacts of racism within their settings, ranging from self-esteem issues to incidences of racism within the workplace, from both staff and learners. Due to Aotearoa|New Zealand’s history and the demographic make up of the nation, the Teaching Council of Aotearoa|New Zealand has also developed two competency frameworks for teachers to support professional development and practice specifically relating towards outcomes for Māori and Pasifika learners. These are called Tātaiako and Tapasa respectively. I wanted to investigate the impacts of the Unteach Racism professional learning tool, as well as to find out about how Tātaiako and Tapasa translate into practice. My aim was to share good practice, mainly relevant to Wales, in a bicultural and bilingual system.

This report will use Curriculum for Wales as an underpinning document, as the recommendations are focussed towards Welsh Government aims. However, there is nothing to prevent schools and school leaders within England and Scotland also applying the learnings from Aotearoa|New Zealand within their own settings.

Executive Summary

I set out to learn about the enablers and barriers to the professional learning package of Unteach Racism which the Teaching Council of Aotearoa|New Zealand developed, as well as any positive impacts of translating policy into practice. Perhaps most importantly, to establish whether something similar to Unteach Racism could be developed in order to benefit a Welsh context. As often happens, you set off to find out about one thing and you learn about something different, although related. What I actually learnt about was how different schools in different contexts are empowered to translate policy into practice in a range of different ways. I was greeted and welcomed by multiple schools across Auckland and Hamilton, all with slightly different ways to develop a bicultural and bilingual school community within a multicultural context. Lots of the practice I witnessed worked along the continuum of culturally responsive organisations, working towards being culturally sustaining. All the schools I visited were somewhere along the continuum, some further than others. The power of coming from a place of aiming for culturally sustaining practice is that rather than coming from a narrative of negativity, the script is flipped to



addressing systems to enable more of positive practice, recognise mistakes and, crucially, move forwards from them in a more informed manner. Throughout my visits to schools and interviews, I found five main themes of practice which I feel would benefit schools within the Welsh context, in order to support aims of culturally sustaining practice. Many centre around crucially knowing and understanding the complexity of individual settings, although there are some crucial systemic changes which I believe are necessary to include.

- ❖ Community connection with the essence of ako (*See Focus 1 for an explanation of ako*)
- ❖ Embrace the power of the localised curriculum
- ❖ Alterations to measures of success, at both policy and school level
- ❖ Improving diversity within staff teams
- ❖ Professional development and addressing unconscious biases.

Glossary

Within this report you will find some Aotearoa|New Zealand specific language. Some words utilised in this report have several meanings within te reo Māori, and for the purposes of this glossary the one which is most appropriate to the report has been used. I have also included any Welsh specific vocabulary for clarity for a wider audience. Te Aka Māori dictionary (2025) has been used to support the development of this glossary where appropriate, combined with my personal experiences within Aotearoa|New Zealand, unless otherwise stated.

Aotearoa – New Zealand

Ako – the principle of reciprocity in teaching and learning between teacher and student. It also recognises that the learner and whānau cannot be separated (Ministry of Education|Te Tahu o te Matauranga, 2009)

Cynefin – a Welsh word, which has no direct translation into English, but can be roughly translated as follows: “the place where we feel we belong, where the people and landscape around us are familiar, and the sights and sounds are reassuringly recognisable. Though often translated as ‘habitat’, cynefin is not just a place in a physical or geographical sense: it is the historic, cultural and social place which has shaped and continues to shape the community which inhabits it.” (Welsh Government, 2024c)

Global majority – “refers to people who are Black, Asian, Brown, dual-heritage, indigenous to the global south, and or have been racialised as ‘ethnic minorities’. Where possible, it’s best to be specific about the racialised identities of those being described” (DARPL, 2024)

Hapū – kinship group, clan, tribe, subtribe

Iwi – a large group of people descended from a common ancestor and associated with a distinct area. Similar to a tribe

Kaiārahi – guide, leader or advisor

Kaitiaki – a person, group or being that acts as a carer, guardian, protector and conservator

Kapahaka – a group who perform dances and songs from specific to the Māori culture

Karakia - similar to a prayer used to encourage positive outcomes in everyday life

Kura – school

Marae – meeting grounds, often with a small building in the centre

NCEA – “New Zealand's main national secondary school qualification for years 11 to 13. Student achievement is assessed through a mixture of project work and exams. Assessments are either internal (set by the school) or external (set by the New Zealand Qualifications Authority).” (New Zealand Education, 2025)

Pākehā – a New Zealander of European descent

Pasifika – describes people who have Pacific Island heritage who now reside in Aotearoa (Cambridge University Press & Assessment, 2025)

Tikanga – customs and traditional values, especially in a Māori context

Te reo – the Polynesian language of Māori, sometimes referred to as te reo Māori.

Te Tiriti o Waitangi – Treaty of Waitangi. Te Tiriti o Waitangi has two texts, one in English and one in Māori. It was signed in 1840. They have slightly different wording and there is much debate in Aotearoa about the differences and what they mean. Te Tiriti was signed as a partnership agreement between Māori chiefs and the British Crown about the land and people within Aotearoa. The agreement gave pākehā the right to settle in Aotearoa, but to self-govern, while Māori would retain their land rights and government systems. Over time and due to changing circumstances, the role Te Tiriti plays within Aotearoa has changed, but the essence remains the same. Throughout this report I will refer to it as ‘Te Tiriti o Waitangi’ or ‘Te Tiriti’ (Te ara, 2023).

Wānanga – it has multiple meanings, in the context of this report two of them are made reference to. First, the tertiary institution which caters to Māori learning needs, which was established under the Education Act 1990. Secondly, as a time to meet, discuss and deliberate in deep learning.

Whānau – extended family

The Aotearoa Context

“The Treaty of Waitangi is not just a bill of rights for Māori. It is a bill of rights for pākehā too. It is the treaty that gives pākehā the right to be here. Without the treaty there would be no lawful authority for the pākehā presence in this part of the South Pacific. The pākehā are tāngata tiriti [people of the treaty, non-Māori citizens and residents], those who belong to the land by right of that treaty.” Sir Eddie Durie, Waitangi Day 1989

Aotearoa sits in a unique position in contrast to many other colonised nations due to Te Tiriti o Waitangi. It is the main reason Māori in Aotearoa have a very different position to other indigenous communities within other colonised nations, such as Australia or the United States of America. This is not to say that atrocities have not been committed over time by colonisers, including loss of land, culture, connection and language, through various systemic practices. It is to say that Te Tiriti has been a legal obligation between the two communities in order to develop an active and working partnership between Māori and pākehā to ensure that Māori and the wider community’s needs are met, which requires compromise. Whilst Wales has a different national history, there are some themes which remain the same in regards to loss of culture and language over time, as well as governmental decisions which disproportionately impact Welsh communities. For example, loss of primary industries such as mining, and the loss of Welsh as an equal language to English from 1530 until 1967 (Brain, n.d.). It wasn’t until 1990 that it became compulsory to learn Welsh up to the end of Key Stage 3 throughout Wales (Jones, 2016).

Similarly to the UK, Aotearoa schools are funded in a range of ways. There are five different ways in which schools can be set up to be managed financially. This impacts on the decisions which are made by the board of trustees (similar to a board of governors) and school leaders about how schools are run and influences each individual school’s curriculum. State schools are owned and funded by the government, they teach the national curriculum and are non-religious. They may ask for donations from parents in order to supplement government funding. State-integrated schools are owned by a private entity, often a church, and are mostly funded by the government. They will have a special character, for example, Catholic schools. They will often charge fees to cover the cost of maintaining the special character. They also teach the national curriculum. Charter schools are also government funded, but they operate entirely independently. They set their own curriculum and teaching methods. They cannot charge fees to domestic learners, but can charge maintenance fees for the school assets. Private schools, however, mostly rely on fees from parents, but unlike UK private schools, may have some government funding. They have their own learning programmes and do not have to follow the national curriculum. Māori medium education are schools, similar to Welsh medium schools, where the learners are taught in

the indigenous language for at least 51% of the time (Ministry of Education|Te Tahuhu o te Mātauranga, 2024b).

Throughout this report I refer to the Equity Index of a school. The Equity Index system is similar to the Pupil Deprivation Grant (PDG) Funding that schools in Wales receive based on the catchment of a school. However, the Equity Index of a school is calculated by a model of 37 different factors which affect the socioeconomic position of learners and the extent to which these may affect educational outcomes for learners. It is designed to target resourcing dependent on the level of socioeconomic need within communities (Education Counts, 2025). Each school is given an Equity Index Rating between 344 and 569, the higher the Equity Index rating, the more extra funding a school receives per learner (Te Kāwanatanga o Aotearoa, 2025).

There are three levels of education within Aotearoa: Early Childhood Education, which is not compulsory and can start from birth to five years old and Primary and Secondary Education, which can start the day a child turns five and continues until a child is 17. It is common for primary schools to teach children from Early Entrants (5 years old) to Year 8 (12 years old). Early Entrants can join primary school the day after they turn 5; however, some schools choose to wait until the next new term to start a small cohort each term. Children proceed through primary education, and sometimes an intermediate school, before joining high school education for Year 9 through 13, where they are 13 to 17 years old. It is compulsory for children to be in education from age 5 to 16 in Aotearoa. When learners reach senior high school level, they may begin to specialise in vocational training. There are several options for learners at this stage, which often teach trade and technology skills. These are funded by both government funding, and industry priorities. There is also the option of Wananga which is an institution of higher learning that iwi have been instrumental in setting up in order to deliver tertiary education options in te reo Māori. This can go up to a doctorate level of qualification. There is the option of university option delivered in English for learners, which offers academic studies (Ministry of Education|Te Tahuhu o te Mātauranga, 2024c).

Between the overseas research proportion of this Fellowship and the writing and publishing of the Fellowship report, there were further changes by Aotearoa's government to their education system. These changes include pedagogical changes and an overhaul of the qualification process learners undertake during high school. This report will focus on the things that I learnt about during my overseas learning in relation to the aims of this Fellowship.

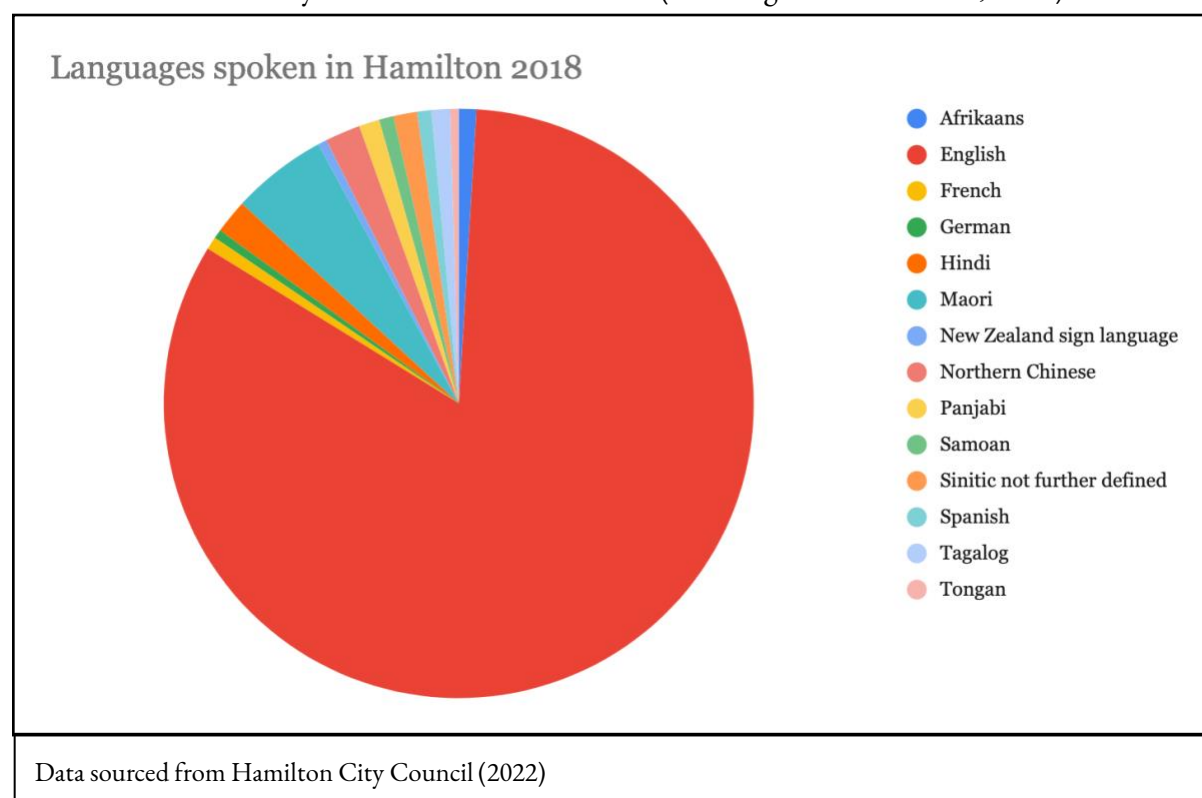
Approach

During the preparation stage for the Fellowship, connections were made with teachers and leaders from different schools which have different contexts and Equity Index Ratings throughout Auckland and Hamilton.

The main body of data comes from interviews lasting between 30 and 90 minutes with staff members from the various organisations, including the Unteach Racism team. Some students' views were also sought through interviews and email surveys. Tours of schools were undertaken in order to develop a wider understanding of the processes within schools. I attended different festivals where schools were demonstrating certain parts of their practices. A description of the organisations visited will be given, and these will be referred to within the recommendations via case studies.

Hamilton

Hamilton is the largest inland city in the whole of Aotearoa|New Zealand, as well as one of the fastest growing urban areas in the country. It is situated about 130 km from Auckland, on the Waikato River. Hamilton's population is very young, with over half of its residents aged under 30. It is also an extremely diverse place with people from over 80 different ethnicities calling Hamilton home. Whilst Hamilton is rapidly growing, agriculture remains the largest industry within the city. The Waikato region is where a large proportion of Aotearoa's dairy comes from. Other key industries within the city are education and research (Working in New Zealand, 2025).

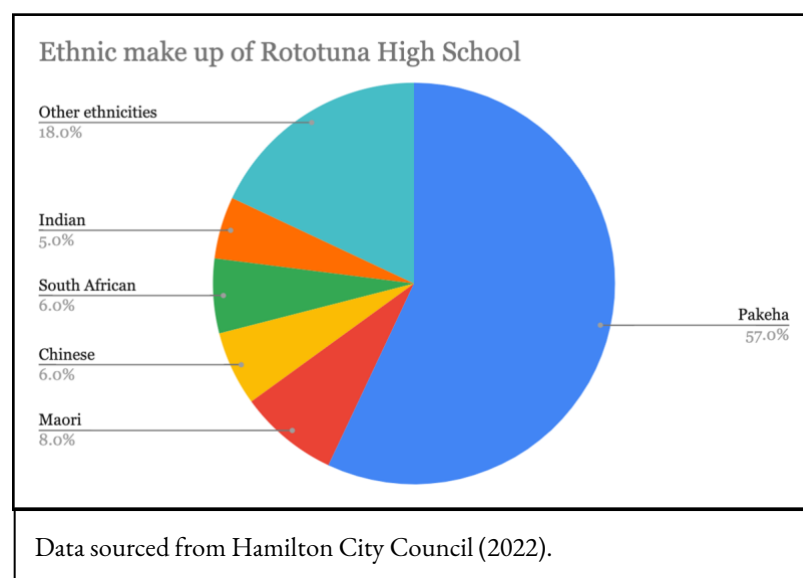


See Fig. 1 in the Appendix for further census information which will help to give a wider picture of Hamilton as a city. The most recent published census data is from 2018, and in 2025 it must be acknowledged that further changes to Hamilton’s population may have occurred. Especially given the rapid growth and development of the city (Hamilton City Council, 2022).

For a city with a population of over 160,900 people, similar to the size of Newport, Wales, there is a huge variety of different heritages. Combined with a rapidly growing population, this can naturally lead to some challenges for schools and also some fantastic learning opportunities for all.

Rototuna High School

Rototuna High School is made up of two separately operating schools which have a common approach to education. Both schools are on the same site. The Junior High School goes from Year 7 to Year 10, and has roughly 1,400 pupils on roll. The Senior High School has Year 11 to Year 13 and has a roll of about 900 pupils. The schools are



located in a relatively newly built estate which has seen massive growth since it was built. The Junior High opened in 2016, and the Senior High opened in 2017. The Junior school has an Equity Index rating of 427, and the Senior school sits at 457 (Jake Wills, 2024). There is a hugely diverse student population with over 70 different ethnicities represented (Rototuna High Schools, 2016).

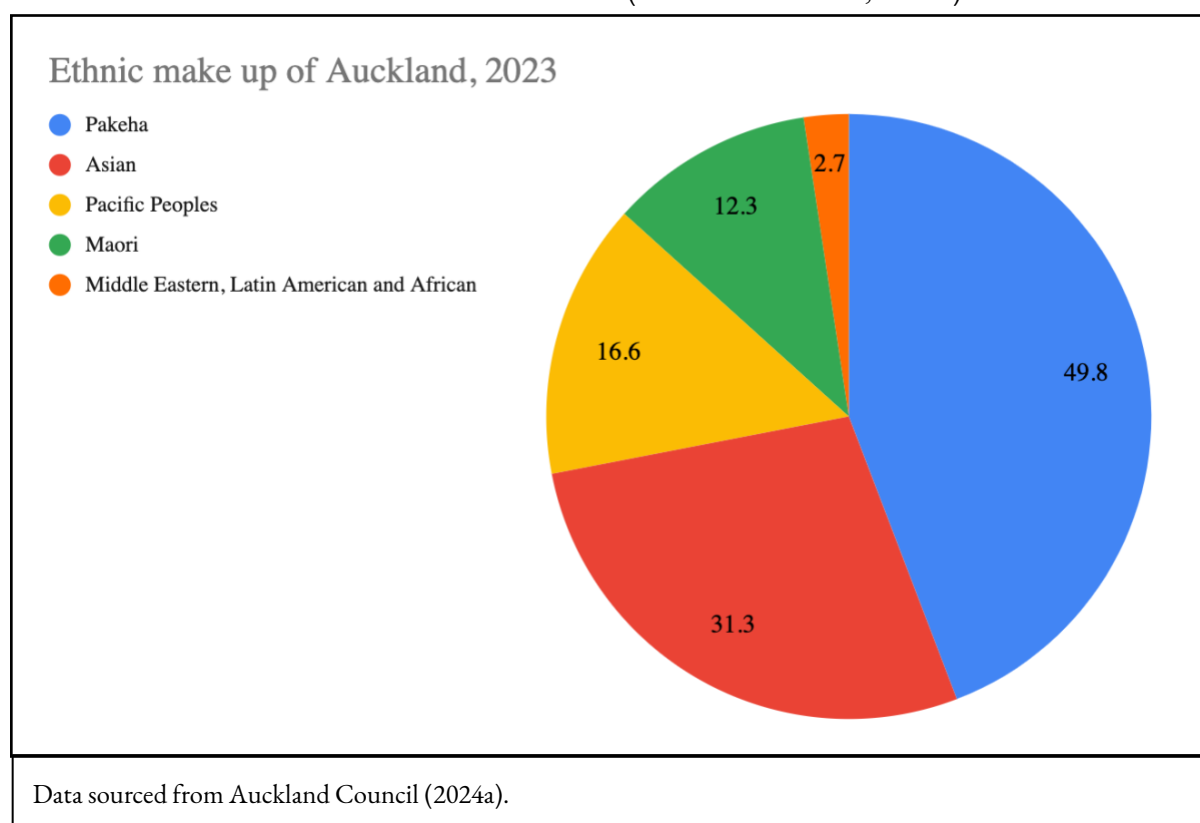
Woodstock Primary School

Woodstock Primary School is located in an older suburb of Hamilton. There are approximately 400 pupils on roll (Woodstock School, unknown) and has an Equity Index rating of 439 (Jake Wills, 2024). The school has been open since 1954 (over 70 years). Woodstock Primary School supports pupils from new entrants (reception) to Year 6. It also has a Wana Tamariki Trust room where children with physical needs and/or learning needs which can’t be met in a mainstream classroom are supported to learn (Woodstock School, *unknown*).

Auckland

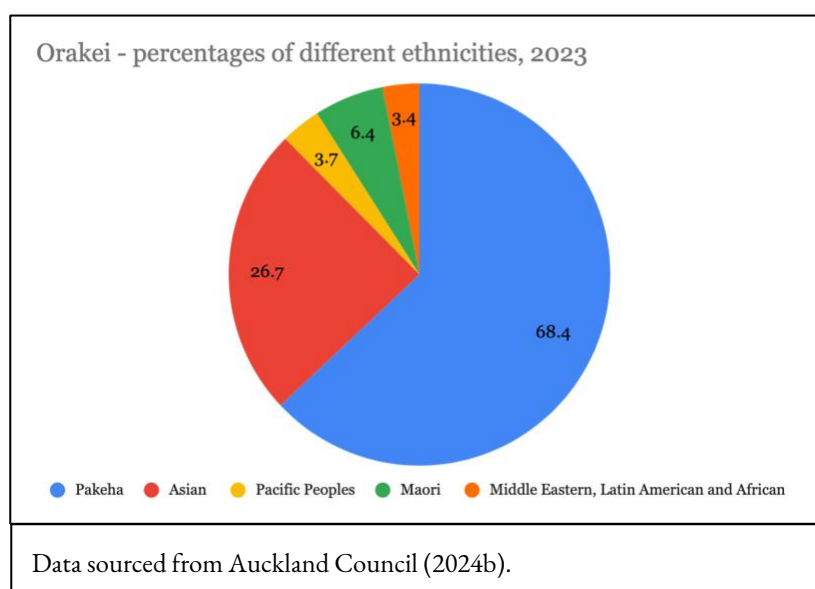
Auckland is Aotearoa's largest city with over a third of the nation's population residing in the city. Over 1 million people call Auckland home. It is a hugely popular place for migrants to live, due to the large range of job opportunities, attractive lifestyle and the natural beauty of the place.

Auckland is home to over 120 different ethnicities (Auckland Council, 2024a).



Stonefields School

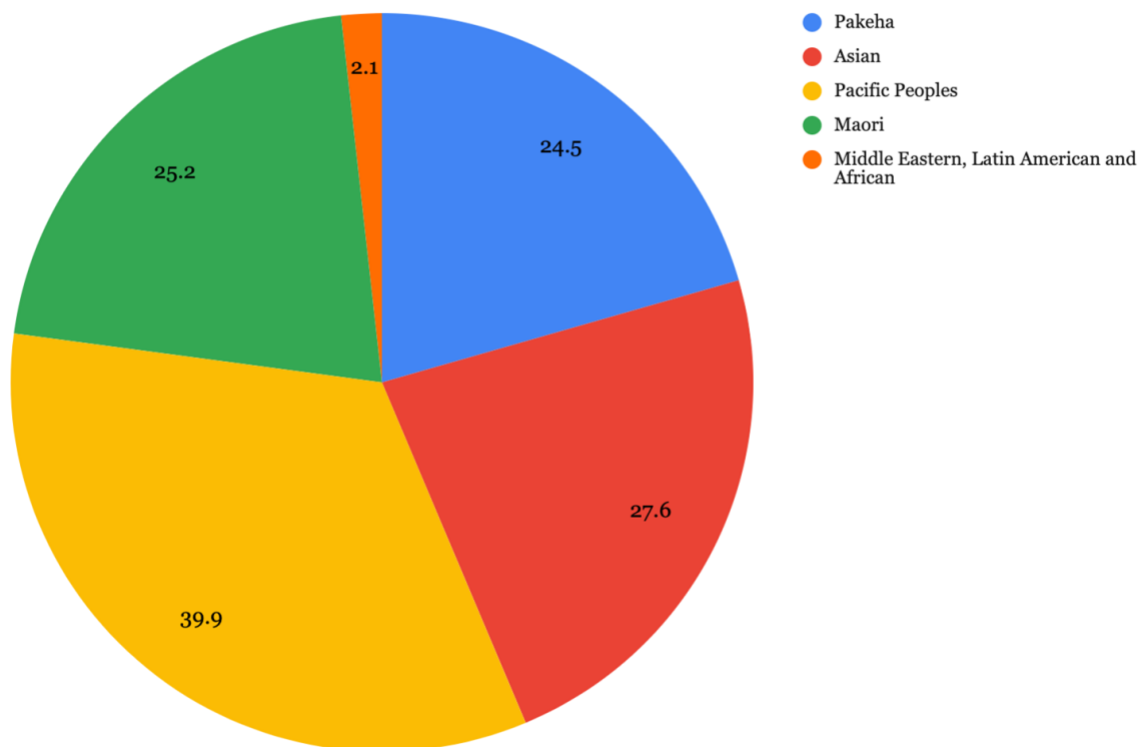
Stonefields School is a school with 626 pupils on roll, located in Auckland within the region of Orakei. It is a school which combines primary and intermediate years, which means it runs from Year 1 to 8 (Education Review Office, 2024). Stonefields School has an Equity Index of 360. Due to the location of the school, it sits between two slightly different catchments resulting in a dramatically changing student body profile each year.



Manurewa High School

Manurewa High School is a large secondary school serving pupils from Years 9 to 13 in South Auckland. It has about 2,300 pupils on roll. A large percentage of its student body are Pasifika but these pupils come from many different islands meaning that the largest community within the school is Māori. The school has been on a journey with developing culturally sustaining practice and systems, using indigenous knowledge in order to best provide for its pupils (Education Review Office, 2018, Manuvera High School, 2025a). Its Equity Index rating is 511 (Jake Wills, 2024).

Manurewa - percentages of different ethnicities, 2023



Data sourced from Auckland Council (2024c).

Findings

From my findings I have condensed the learning into five main areas of focus:

- ❖ Community connection with the essence of ako
- ❖ Embrace the power of the localised curriculum
- ❖ Alterations to measures of success
- ❖ Improving diversity of experience within staff teams
- ❖ Professional development centred on addressing bias.

These will now be discussed in detail via the use of case studies of practice. What you may notice is none of these processes or recommendations are overtly Anti-Racist, instead they are about developing a culturally sustaining system within schools where everyone is supported to thrive through collaborative work which values communities for their strengths. By accomplishing this you undo the systems which are currently in place in many settings which, without critical reflection, can be damaging, even with best intentions.

Focus 1 – Community connection with the essence of ako

Ako is a central part of teaching in Aotearoa and is in essence the concept of reciprocity between teacher and learner and that both can learn from one another. It also recognises that a learner cannot be separated from whānau (Ministry of Education|Te Tahuhu o te Matauranga, 2009). As I have experienced teaching and learning in Aotearoa, it is clear that in the schools I have visited ako extends past the teacher-learner relationship, and schools make active efforts in order to develop purposeful, meaningful kura-whānau connection.

At high schools it is common to have whānau groups, similar to a form group, which meets most mornings for between 30 and 45 minutes. The difference to the UK is that at both Rototuna High School and Manurewa High School these whānau groups are made up of learners from across the school, meaning there is a cross-section of ages in each group. Manurewa High School will assign those with whānau connections from outside of school to the same whānau group, for instance siblings and cousins. This mirrors how a whānau exists outside of school. The learners remain in the same whānau group throughout their school career. Each whānau group has a kaiaarahi (Rototuna) or a kaitiaki (Manurewa) assigned and this person becomes the main point of contact for parents and guardians throughout the learner's school journey, allowing for deep relationships to be formed. The kaiaarahi/kaitiaki is also the person who the family meets with on the equivalent of parents' evenings. Any learners from the family attend along with an adult representative from the family. This is normally a parent, but could be an aunt, uncle or grandparent. The kaiaarahi/kaitiaki shares each learner's journey across the school curriculum and supports the learner with making decisions about their future educational goals. This is an example of where indigenous frameworks and systems are used effectively in order to support the learner to thrive. By putting in place systems which support deeper relationships to form through the school

journey, where all partners feel represented and heard, challenges which learners may face can be positively managed with future focussed outcomes. In turn this improves achievement and outcomes for learners who are given a meaningful purpose and context for learning. Within a Welsh context, approaches such as the above could be supported by developing a strengthened sense of cynefin within the school community.

Manurewa High School extends working through indigenous frameworks to its behaviour policy. The school deems four behaviours as unsafe behaviours, these are: in-school truancy, defiance, vaping and illegal substances, and damage to property. If a learner is found to be displaying any of these four unsafe behaviours, the whānau are contacted and requested to collect the learner from school. This is a key part of the process as there is an expectation that the learner will be nurtured and nourished by the whānau and reminded of both the values they were brought up with and the values of the school. To support this the school has developed a hybrid learning guide which supports both learner and whānau members to reflect upon the behaviour and look to finding ways forward. The key to this is the use of the school's value system and indigenous framework in order to build ako. The learner returns to school with the booklet, which can be as early as the following day. The completed booklet will then be reviewed by the learner's kaitiaki who will connect with the whānau and the learner. There is an escalation of this process if the unsafe behaviours continue, as the priority of the school is to keep its community safe. But at every stage, connection between learner, whānau and school is prioritised, continuing the building of the ako. Rethinking the behavioural structures within schools is essential in order to improve a sense of cynefin and connection which can support a reduction in further escalation of unsafe behaviours within the school community, as well as supporting the staff to identify underlying reasons for the unsafe behaviours. By building connection between staff and whānau the sense of belonging and community is strengthened, which can have a positive effect on learners' sense of self, belonging and esteem.

Stonefields School takes a different strategic approach in order to develop meaningful parental partnerships. Their approach is built on the indigenous ideology that the child cannot be removed from the whānau, as discussed earlier in this section. However, they have strategically used data in order to inform their approach. Within this, they have specific focuses on groups of parents who they have identified through their data analysis as being more challenging to engage with school life. Within this approach they have made effective use of working groups made up with members of their community in order to develop a co-led approach to school development in this area. This also involves an elder from their local iwi. Perhaps unsurprisingly, they found that when the learner is central to the experience the more likely the family members are to attend the event. For instance, they started a fortnightly Friday Cafe where the learners perform or share learning, while their whānau and parents sell food and drinks. Each Friday Cafe has a slightly different theme

depending on what is either going on in the school calendar or the wider community. This is a popular event with learners and their whānau. Prioritising informal connection events can support the building of relationships between staff and parents by allowing parents who have negative connotations with school from their own experience, to be involved in a non-threatening and casual way. For those who have had their own school experience tinged with racism this is a critical step.

Whilst each school takes a slightly different approach, their goal is to meet the same aim – meaningful relationships between school and home in order to support better outcomes for learners, for the most part, viewed through an indigenous lens of family structure.

Focus 2 – Embrace the power of the localised curriculum

Aotearoa|New Zealand's histories curriculum places a heavy emphasis on a localised curriculum, which prioritises connections with whānau, hapū and iwi. It actively promotes teaching of an accurate view of Aotearoa's history from multiple worldviews, and the impact of colonisation on the nation. It reinforces the importance of every part of Aotearoa having a connection with a history before colonisation and the important stories of the land and the people of the land. Further, it promotes the idea that learning should start where learners' feet land, i.e. grounded in their locality, before exploring wider (Ministry of Education|Te Tahuhu o te Matauranga, 2023). There are naturally different ways that schools have tackled this and curriculum is a vast area. As a result I have picked out a few examples of processes the schools I visited used in order to develop their localised curriculum. The approaches that these schools have taken are influenced by their school communities. It should be recognised that if Curriculum for Wales is to be realised as a powerful tool to challenge racism within our society and systems, radical change must occur with how schools both structure their curriculum and develop their pedagogy.

At Woodstock Primary School, in line with Aotearoa|New Zealand's histories documentation, the Principal undertook a project of collating the stories of the land in their immediate locality. She collated stories from the iwi, local research hubs, and a te reo immersion course she had attended. She shared this document with staff for feedback, and this now makes up a large proportion of the school's curriculum. She explained that predominantly the learners explore the local history through the arts. This comes through particularly strongly in their visual and dramatic arts area of learning, but also through their Kapahaka group. The Principal discussed with me how in recent years, the staff had taken the documentation she'd collated and in collaboration with learners developed a large school performance embedding understanding of local histories with their learners.

Some schools create a 'Graduate Learner Profile'. These are often co-created with key stakeholders within the school community. This is what Manurewa High School did, developing in collaboration with their school community over several years, a learner profile which helped them to structure their local curriculum in order to best serve their community. To frame the learner profile, they pay respect to the stories of how lands came into being. The holistic vision of what a Manurewa graduate will be able to achieve pays close attention to the fact that success can be determined in multiple ways, but allows aspirations to be raised for all.

Manurewa High School harnessed the power of their learner profile when making decisions about how to improve their English NCEA results. The learners had two 90-minute lessons a week for English. The school streamed the classes by cultural group, where percentages of learner population allowed. Then, rather than doubling up on exam preparation, they dedicated one session to teaching the learners about their own cultural heritage. This in turn developed personal pride, raised learners' self-esteem and went on to improve exam results, and university entrance rates. At the end of 2024 Manurewa High School's NCEA results were above national average.

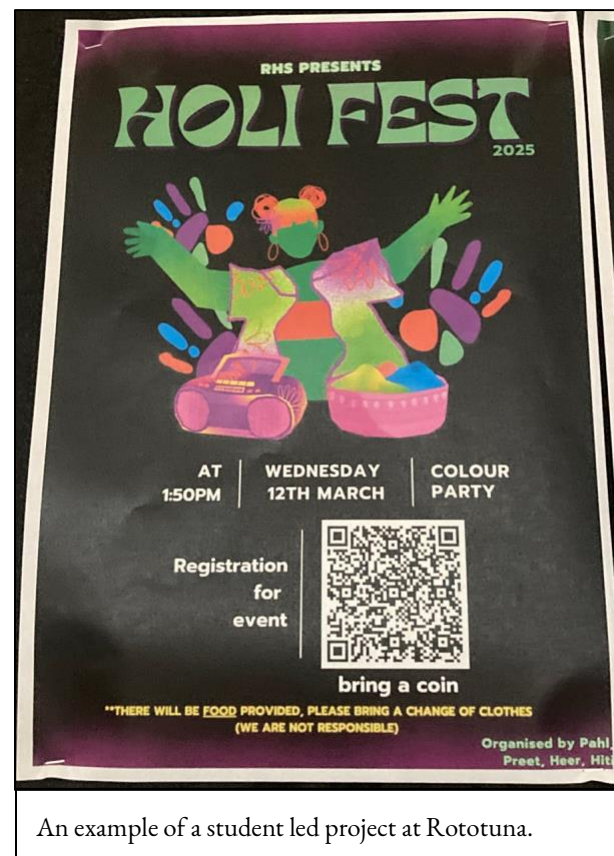
With the flexibility of the school curriculum that Curriculum for Wales also allows, Welsh schools could take a similar approach to the schools discussed throughout this section. Rototuna High School has taken a different approach. They have a three-strand curriculum. One part of this is a range of integrated modules where cross-curricular links are made effectively, for example when the school combined a physical education course with a te reo Māori course. The vehicle for learning was developing outdoor skills such as map reading, but the teachers collaborated to weave through the local Māori histories of the mountains as the learners were exploring, as well as teaching tikanga. The power of this approach is that learning is deepened by meaningful, authentic experiences which is central to the Curriculum for Wales.

A prominent feature of both Rototuna High School and Manurewa High School is project based and/or passion based learning. On a Wednesday in both schools, normal school day structure is altered. The learners choose a specific area of interest at Rototuna, which is more project or challenge based and the aim is to create a solution to a modern problem. These normally aim to give something back to the community, whether the school community or it can also be extended into the local community. For example, whilst I was visiting the school it was the start of term, but one group was passionate about cars. They wanted to design a process of being able to teach other learners about how to maintain their own cars properly. To do this they had found a way to buy an old car to practice their skills. This would then become a resource for the school. Other projects identified issues with food waste in the school, and were looking at ways to make electricity from the gases that food waste produces. Their first aim was to be able to power a coffee machine. Another project the learners undertook was developing the whole school celebration

from the Hindu festival of Holi. It can also be used as time to develop connections with local businesses in internship type roles. The teacher then acts more as a supporter of projects than explicitly teaching skills. The main focus is to develop learners' soft skills, and again this could be seen to be inline with Curriculum for Wales as it promotes an integrated approach to learning as well as supporting some of the pedagogical principles (Welsh Government, 2023a, Welsh Government, 2024b). It also supports a wider vision of success and looking at problems from multiple worldviews, which is critical to developing culturally sustaining practices.

At Manurewa High School, one of the ways Wānanga Wednesdays are used is to prepare for performances. These hold a high value for learners and the community, being crucial for developing cultural and school pride. I was fortunate enough to be able to attend Polyfest during my time at Manurewa High School. This is an Auckland-wide competition for cultural dances. Its tagline is 'many cultures, one community'. There were about four stages which each held a different cultural group's dances, songs and speeches. They had a Niuean stage, Samoan stage, diversity stage and Kapahaka stage. Each stage is judged differently based on their cultural expectations. The sense of pride, connection and community was palpable in the air. It was hard to believe that the learners were not professionals given the standard of the work they produced. Essential to this is the time and priority given to cultural intelligence at Manurewa High School. The learners are evidently proud to be who they are and have a secure sense of self. Other successes include their hip-hop group producing a piece for Air New Zealand's opening video on every flight. Whilst the high performing groups have experienced choreographers it is not uncommon for graduates of the school to come back and help with future

performances. By supporting learners to develop increased levels of self-esteem and confidence through a deep sense of cultural identity and celebration, Manurewa High School's approach could help mitigate some of the negative impacts of experiencing racism and discrimination in wider settings. These include, but are not limited to, increased levels of depression, anxiety, perceived stress, and decreased self-esteem (Perry et al, 2015).



An example of a student led project at Rototuna.

Across the year there are fifteen language weeks which are nationally recognised within Aotearoa. Manurewa High School fully embraces language weeks, as a whole school effort. There is a team of three who coordinate language weeks across the school year, but for each language week a different teaching or admin team will be responsible for running the language week across the school, and any events which are related to this. I was able to attend some of the events at the Rotuman Language Week, a language which is primarily spoken in Fiji. The staff team responsible for certain language weeks has to organise six different aspects, including ‘do nows’ which include changing email signatures, key phrases staff will need in the week, alter Hybrid Learning Guides for learners who are learning from home, decorating a space within the school, include one celebration within the school, have a connection within the community, and show reciprocity by giving something back to the community. By spreading the workload across the whole school team, language weeks can be fully embraced by learners and staff. The impact of creating meaningful celebrations of language and as a result a range of cultures, elevates learners’ experiences and values the range of languages spoken within the country.

At a primary level, Stonefields School makes use of indigenous frameworks in order to present learning in a different world view. For instance when exploring wellbeing they have used a Māori model to frame their theme for Term 2. This is one way of ensuring that learners are not only presented with colonised knowledge as the only way to learn. This is a different way to ensure that Māori worldviews are included within the school curriculum. By including a range of worldviews in teaching and learning, learners are supported to conceptualise that there are many views and ideals people hold about the world. This practice of widening the worldviews presented within schools should be promoted as Curriculum for Wales’ Humanities Area of Learning and Experience, which states that “Learning how various worldviews and factors can influence their own and others’ perceptions and interpretations will encourage learners to develop an appreciation of how contexts influence the constructions of narratives and representations” (Welsh Government, 2022a).

Focus 3 – Alterations to measures of success

There are two levels that could have positive change for Wales. Firstly, in their review materials of how they are making progress to becoming an Anti-Racist nation, the narrative is purely of quantitative data. A more powerful, and perhaps informative view would be similar to Aotearoa’s approach of more qualitative data. Whilst harder to collect and directly compare, it would provide valuable insights into the challenges of racism within Welsh systems. Aotearoa’s documentation of Māori learner success includes indicators of what they would expect learners and whānau to be saying in order to determine the success of changing different aspects of the system. By doing this, the real life lived experiences of people are prioritised, reducing othering and allowing for voices to

be heard. A combination of both qualitative and quantitative data would give a broader and more informed picture for the next priorities in systemic change.

Secondly, Aotearoa's structure for gaining credits towards NCEA at Level 2 and Level 3 is very different to the UK's current system of external exams and evaluation. Learners must achieve 60 credits within University Entrance (UE) accredited areas in order to be able to go to university. They must achieve 14 or more credits to be awarded their level 3 qualification, but this may not necessarily be UE accredited. This allows for schools to build their courses and curriculums in a way which best allows their learners to succeed. For some subjects there are essential externals which must be taken, generally in traditionally academic areas. This is something the Welsh Government could consider when restructuring GCSEs in line with the Curriculum for Wales' aims in order to develop learners who embody the Four Purposes. For example, the high level of performances that the learners produced for Polyfest can be used towards their NCEA qualifications.

Another focus for Manuwera High School is being a lead Trade School in the area. They support a thousand learners across South Auckland through a Trade School programme in a range of areas including construction, ICT and technology. The programme has been running for over ten years, which has allowed it to develop as fully as it has. The Trade Schools programme is well funded by the Ministry of Education, which has allowed it to expand and continue to benefit learners. The programme is structured so that while the learners are not in school, the group of learners in the Trade School programme have a different school timetable to those who are in at school full time. This allows them the opportunity to achieve UE, and they can use this later on in life if they choose. The aim of the programme is to support learners to develop a skill set which is relevant to an area of industry they are interested in. By engaging with the programme, learners have the opportunity to gain industry connections, references and essential experience which supports them into employment when they leave school. Organisations are often chosen by the school for their potential to upskill their learners to be able to access higher pay bracket job roles, which in turn supports learners to break the poverty cycle. The school employs someone in a pastoral role who continues supporting learners as they go into the workplace, ideally this would extend to the first two years of a school leaver's working life. This connection back to school gives learners a secure relationship to fall back on when they face challenges in the workplace, and the link back to school can help them navigate these challenges successfully. The Principal says once they have successfully navigated their first two years of working life, the learners have usually formed new relationships within that space to take on the pastoral role of the school, which supports school leavers to remain in work.

Focus 4 – Improving diversity within staff teams

A notable challenge across developing systems which authentically support a wide range of cultures in teaching and learning is supporting the development of a diverse, representative workforce. In the Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan Update (Welsh Government, 2024a) they report that only 1.7% of school teachers are from Global Majority backgrounds, whilst the 6.2% of the overall Welsh population are of the Global Majority. Aotearoa had concerns regarding a lack of Māori representation in the teaching workforce, and the impact this had on the partnership of Te Tiriti. As a result the University of Waikato began a pilot programme in partnership with an iwi in Northland. Northland has the highest percentage of Māori population in the country, but this historically has not been represented in schools. The teacher training pilot invited teaching assistants to apply via the iwi for an accelerated program. The local iwi in conjunction with the Teaching Council of Aotearoa|New Zealand developed an eligibility criteria for applicants which demonstrated that the candidates already had the skills first year trainee teachers would be expected to have developed. This included evidence of their experience as teaching assistants and how they had contributed culturally to the community over the preceding three years. This meant that the applicants would be able to develop the skills to meet the teaching standards in the shorter time period of two years. This resulted in a cohort of mature students with rich teaching experience in schools. The traditional first two years of the degree course were combined with the cohort completing the third year in line with the mainstream cohorts. The programme was conducted at the local marae which enabled applicants to continue working and living in their home area whilst they studied, reducing barriers for individuals. For many of the cohort, their personal experiences of school were not positive ones, and one of the challenges of the program was to support students to overcome their own beliefs surrounding school. Nearly every graduate of the program will remain in the area to teach the next generation (waateanews.com, 2025). Whilst this would not be replicable within the UK context, Initial Teacher Education (ITE) providers could consider developing a range of pathways in order to support the diversity of the workplace. These could include paying attention to the broad range of experiences that individuals have accrued throughout their previous working lives.

Focus 5 – Professional development centred on addressing unconscious bias

I was able to connect with the team behind Unteach Racism, and through this discussion it became apparent that school cultures were a critical challenge within enabling progress with the programme. School leaders must ensure that they have open, honest and truth telling spaces. These spaces need to join the voices of those who have experienced racism throughout their lives with listening to others in order to learn from the past and move forwards with a positive impact. Unteach Racism has been designed as a tool for personal reflection, which from feedback they have had from leaders in schools undertaking the program, has led to school-wide change. Leaders in contact with Unteach Racism have said that having an impartial third party who supported them

throughout their school's journey was critical. This allowed for a sounding board for leaders as leadership roles can be quite isolated. This support could be provided by the organisation that develops the program. Whilst at the moment Unteach Racism does not have the facilities for this, it would be something worthwhile to consider in the development of a similar tool in the UK. With the right culture within schools, something similar to Unteach Racism would be beneficial to use as a whole school professional development tool. Staff members would be asked to complete short modules independently, and schools could allow time for this within professional development sessions. After some time for personal reflection, staff members could then be led in a discussion which would support the overall whole school development. This could identify which systems are in place in their settings that may be limiting learners, or enabling racism to perpetuate. It could be developed alongside a tool for assessing where schools sit along the cultural responsiveness continuum, and what measures could be appropriate to help schools move forwards. This approach would help prevent such measures becoming tokenistic, and instead be truly embedded in practice and school culture. Rose-Anne from Unteach Racism also discussed the importance of everyone within the school system being supported in this space, especially those who connect with the community in any way. Therefore, support staff (receptionists, caretakers, kitchen staff etc.) should also be included in these professional learning sessions.

Another way to approach this would be to ensure that all future trainee teachers also receive a similar training in order to identify and address their own biases before starting their careers. It should be noted that identifying and addressing unconscious bias is a process which needs to be continually revisited by professionals. But raising the profile should in turn support teachers to self-manage this going forwards.

Rototuna High Schools have an ongoing partnership with one of the local iwis in order to develop staff capacity. The entire staff team attends a historical tour of the Waikato region. This is part of educating the teaching team about the Māori history of the land which they may not have learnt about previously due to the colonial influences on education in previous generations. As well as being a highly informative professional development experience, it also supports staff to understand and develop the principles of Te Tiriti in action. This in turn supports the further development of the school's localised curriculum.

Another critical aspect of developing a culturally sustaining school is developing staff skills in languages. Protecting languages is essential for humans to have their identities and cultures maintained and preserved (Kaur, 2010). This is particularly pertinent for Wales to reach its objective to have 1 million Welsh speakers by 2050, as well as enabling localised curriculums to reach their full potential. By developing bilingualism within schools a strengthened sense of cynefin may be experienced by learners. In order to make Welsh courses more accessible and

effective for teachers, the structure of a Te Reo Māori course could be used. The course involved a year-long study period with one lesson a week in full immersion of te reo Māori, as well as home practice work and several weekend trips throughout the year, which for this course took place at a marae where participants were also taught about tikanga. The course was funded by the government. There are Welsh language courses available for teachers, but they often require teachers taking a six-month sabbatical. By enabling teachers to work whilst they study there may be a bigger uptake from teachers which in turn builds capacity across the workforce, allowing for higher quality of Welsh teaching by a higher proportion of the workforce. The Principal of Woodstock School attended one of these courses. As a result of this, te reo Māori is a prominent feature of learning both for staff and learners. As a school they have professional learning every fortnight, and at the start of each session the te reo Māori lead introduces a focus phrase for that week. It is a small thing, but by practising with correct pronunciation and all having the same focus, te reo becomes increasingly embedded in school practice. This supports the aim for te reo to be an increasingly living language at the school.

Recommendations and Next Steps

Overall, whilst there is lots of good practice happening in Wales, it is clear that more can always be done in order to achieve the Welsh Government's aims. Inspiration can be taken from practices in Aotearoa where huge change has occurred in as little as three generations. I will summarise here what my priorities would be.

- ❖ Community connection with a sense of ako
 - Rethink how to engage with families
 - Use community power to strengthen school-home connection
 - Centre the family
 - Use of values in order develop a strong sense of community.
- ❖ Embrace the power of a localised curriculum
 - Start with the land, 'where your feet are'
 - Build up layers of understanding
 - Find meaningful connections across Areas of Learning and Experience, not just the cross-curricular responsibilities
 - Embrace the power of the arts for fostering cultural pride
- ❖ Alterations to measures of success
 - What is success? Define it using multiple worldviews from the community
 - Use this information to structure curriculum
- ❖ Improve diversity within staff teams
 - ITE providers need to consider increasing the number of ways to train to be a teacher
 - Validating previous experiences is one way this could be done.
- ❖ Professional development centred on addressing unconscious bias
 - Ensuring a culture of truth telling spaces in schools
 - Development of whole school learning tools to support addressing unconscious bias
 - Include learning around this in ITE
 - Development of a continuum for schools to assess their own position
 - Impartial partners for school leaders
 - Restructuring of Welsh language courses in order to increase uptake.

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Appendix

Fig 1 – Data from Hamilton City Council (2022)

