

A story about ako: Terry and Charlie

Terry and Charlie's story

Terry and her husband immigrated to New Zealand from the United Kingdom about ten years ago. They wanted their children to grow up in a caring community, close to nature.

Terry teaches at the local school. It's a fairly small school, so she's really appreciated the chance to get to know and work with teachers at other local schools, first as part of a cluster of schools and lately, as part of a Community of Learning (CoL). She'd like to get to know the people at the local kura. She's aware that she doesn't know a lot about things Māori ... but she isn't sure how to make the approach.

The CoL uses the Learning Progressions Framework and Progress and Consistency Tool to track the progress and achievement of their students. Through the CoL, and before that the cluster, Terry and her colleagues have experienced professional learning opportunities that have supported them to collect, analyse, and use achievement data to define the learning needs of their students and the challenges they confront. Terry wasn't surprised to find that writing emerged as one of these challenges, especially for boys. She observes this every day in her classroom.

Tonight, it's the parent-teacher evening. Charlie is there with his Mum and Dad. Charlie is happy and outgoing when he's out with his mates, but in class, he doesn't have much to contribute. Most aspects of his writing are below expectations, which Terry finds puzzling given his reading comprehension is pretty good.

Terry: *Charlie, would you like to tell us how you think you're doing in writing?*

Charlie: *Oh, well, okay, I guess.*

Terry: *Well, here's some work you did last week. Our focus was on using rich descriptive language that helps the reader visualise a scene. Do you think that you achieved that?*

Charlie: *Well, no. But writing's hard and I don't like it very much.*

Charlie's Mum: *But Charlie, you're so good at telling stories. You're always telling stories to your brothers and sisters!*

Terry goes off to think about this. If Charlie is keen on storytelling at home, how come it's so boring for him at school? How can she take this strength and build on it in the writing programme?

Connections to the emerging ideas about a system that learns

Collaborative inquiry networks

Collegiality is one of the enduring characteristics of highly effective schools. It's an essential component of a system that learns. Through participation in professional networks, such as the cluster and the COL, Terry and her colleagues extend the opportunity to engage in professional learning and inquiry aimed at supporting progress for all learners.

Build assessment, inquiry, and evaluative capability

The Learning Progressions Framework illustrates the significant steps students take as they develop expertise in reading, writing and mathematics. It underpins the Progress and Consistency Tool, a tool that teachers can use to synthesise their judgments about specific aspects of individual students' progress.

By improving their data literacy, Terry and her colleagues can be more effective in using assessment to inform next steps for learning.

Learning partnerships with parents and whānau

Charlie and his parents meet with Terry to collectively focus on Charlie's progress. While Charlie appears to need more support to participate as an equal in this learning conversation, the information from his mother adds importantly to Terry's understanding of the resources Charlie brings to his learning.

Terry and Charlie's story

It's news time the following Monday. Terry notices that Charlie seems excited.

Terry: *Has anyone got any news you would like to share?"*

Charlie: *I do! My uncle was digging a new drain on Saturday. He found some pounamu. Nanny says it's a mere. She says it may have belonged to one of our tūpuna!*

Terry has never seen Charlie so excited. At lunchtime, she talks to some other teachers. She finds out that Charlie's Nanny is a well-respected kuia – she's the person who everyone goes to for information about local history.

Ideas begin to click into place. Terry pulls out her tattered copy of the New Zealand Curriculum and takes a look at the social sciences learning area. Yes! Obvious connections. But are there more?

At the syndicate meeting, the other teachers are excited, too. What about technology? What about te reo? Somebody belongs to the local historical society – they've been keen to develop some sort of digital record of local history. Could the students contribute? We know Charlie's Nanny holds funds of knowledge. Who else is there in the community who could join in this inquiry? How about the kura? Would they be interested in this as a joint project? Is there a possibility of working with them and the local experts to create a dual language digital history archive?

Another parent-teacher meeting. Another conversation.

Terry: *Charlie, would you like to tell us about your writing?*

Charlie: *Well, this is the storyboard for the video we made with Nanny Reta*

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National Curriculum

Terry turns to the New Zealand Curriculum for guidance. She recognises that it is flexible and open-ended enough to allow her and her colleagues to contextualise critical learning in ways and contexts that suit their students.

Rich local curriculum

Charlie's enthusiasm catalyses and sets the direction for important learning. The programme is enriched by local resources, including the funds of knowledge available from the kuia. The digital history archive is a valuable and lasting contribution to the community. All the participants in this story learn from and with each other as they co-create their local curriculum.

Clarify pathways for ākongā progress

The teachers recognise the opportunity to generate meaningful learning across different parts of the curriculum.