

KĀHUI AKO and KAGAN

Advocates of Kagan know how Kagan can support outcomes in any educational context. However for the purpose of this article, we will focus on the more overt and observable areas.

The power of Kāhui Ako is the across sector networking and sharing of information. It creates situations that are vertical versus horizontal. The power of Kagan is that all teachers can be speaking the same specific pedagogical language. So instead of 'inquiry learning' which varies between classrooms let alone schools, Kagan Cooperative Learning has its own very specific language. If a New Entrant teacher uses RallyRobin with her students, and then they move to middle school and beyond, those students know exactly what they will be doing and what is expected of them when using that structure. It would be just the content that changes. The curriculum delivery and classroom set up and management around social and communication skills would be seamless and predictable from Year 1 to Year 13.

So, aside from that part, Kagan also provides structure to how relationships are developed, meetings are conducted so everyone actively participates, and leadership is shared – generally creating a cooperative, safe, professional environment. The below notes are from the MOE document: IES Community of Schools Tips and Starters

<https://assets.education.govt.nz/public/Documents/Ministry/Investing-in-Educational-Success/Communities-of-Schools/IESCommunitiesOfSchoolsTipsAndStarters-web-enabledV3.pdf>

The overt and observable areas where Kagan would help are in **pink**

How do we know that we are collaborating?

There is collaboration when participants:

1. Come together for a purpose.

- They use an inquiry process and relevant data analysis to ascertain the focus (what and why) and, where appropriate, **seek input from ākonga/students** and parents.
- The purpose is agreed and understood so that all key parties can **describe the nature of the achievement challenges and the potential paths forward**.
- They believe and care about their projects and **each brings what resources they can** to the work.
- People know that **they are stronger as a community** than they would be as individual kura/schools.

2. Work to common goals that are achievable and are generally agreed.

- The **development of joint goals** based on evidence from inquiry has meant that people may have had to put aside their individual ideas for the benefit of all.
- The **views of parents and students** have been sought and included, where appropriate, in the common goals.
- **Participants have all been involved** in developing the direction for the achievement of the goals using an inquiry process and are voluntarily working together for these goals.
- All are committed to completing agreed tasks to their conclusion.
- **All are open to accepting advice, support and critique** from other participants.

3. Construct processes of working together by talking, sharing information, experience and expertise.

- Participants are valued and respected for their expertise and contributions and there are opportunities for all to participate.
- Participants know that they will be listened to and expect to be questioned, to give and receive feedback that influences the inquiry and be consulted in different ways.
- Participants are honest in their interactions and support others to make meaning from the discussions and experiences.
- Participants share information and expertise of others in the group and jointly analyse information.
- Participants may need to renegotiate or reconfirm earlier decisions as a result of new evidence through the inquiry process.
- Participants seek ways of effectively expressing their shared thinking to keep everyone at all levels informed.

4. Build relationships so that everyone has a sense of belonging to the group as a valued member.

- Relationships are both friendly and equitable and no one feels left out of the Community of Schools.
- There is mutual respect and support for each person.
- A range of strategies is used to request and listen to the ideas of ākongā/students, their parents and other participants.
- There is an understanding that people work in different ways.
- The group will need to accommodate different ways of working and thinking, which may change over time in light of the new evidence.

5. Share leadership so that participants' strengths are recognised and used.

- People within the group may have different levels of status and power but all have particular expertise to offer. (NB: There may be other people, such as ākongā/students and parents who may not always be within the group, but who have expertise and a unique point of view to offer.)
- New leadership roles and/or responsibilities may emerge in response to new directions or to keep the project on track.
- There is a climate of trust and respect.
- Critique and conflict is managed respectfully and constructively.
- Every member makes the decision to work towards change collectively.

References: Goulet, L., Krentz, C. & Christiansen, H. "Collaboration in education: The Phenomenon and Process of Working Together" in *The Alberta Journal of Educational Research* Vol. XLIX, No. 4, Winter 2003, 325 – 340. Timperley, H., Kasaer, L., & Halbert, J. (2014) "A framework for transforming learning in schools: Innovation and the spiral of inquiry" Centre for Strategic Education Seminar Series 234. www.cse.edu.au.

First steps to building collaboration

Communities of Schools increase collaboration between kura/schools through the sharing of ideas, information and practice.

Some of the steps that can assist with building collaborative practice include:

- Taking time to build relationships/whakawhānaungatanga so that teachers, kura/school leaders and their Boards of Trustees are more likely to want to work together with openness, respect and mutual trust. Personal connections and quality relationships between staff enhance collaboration over time.
- Taking time to actively share and understand more deeply about the uniqueness of each kura/ school within the Community. This could include having Community meetings at different schools, allowing staff at the kura/school to talk about what is special about their school, and to show other people around.
- Ensuring that the focus on student achievement is a clear and unifying feature of discussions. The aim is to promote the focus on our Community of Schools' ākonga/students and their achievement rather than the achievement of individual schools.
- Making sure that all voices are heard.

This could be achieved by processes and events such as:

- Meeting on the Marae with iwi and whānau to discuss the opportunities that could emerge from being part of a Community of Schools.
- Tumuaki/principals talking with own staff about what they would like to gain from a Community of Schools.
- A 'staff only day' to introduce the Community of Schools approach.
- Talking with ākonga/students within each kura/school about the Community of Schools approach.
- An event where combined Boards of Trustees meet and discuss unique features of their schools, and what they want to gain from working as part of a Community of Schools.
- Involving the wider community by gathering information and ideas from businesses, early childhood centres and other groups about what their Community of Schools could achieve for ākonga/students by the time they graduate from secondary school.