Teachers and Teacher Aides
Working Together

A Leaders' Tool for Self-review

Case Study

Contents

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
TE TĀHUHU O TE MĀTAURANGA

Introduction

This case study centres on Kaitorotoro[1] College, a state secondary school that was an early adopter of the self-review tool from the online resource *Teachers and Teacher Aides Working Together*. The case study follows the school's engagement with the tool over about four weeks. It shows how the school used the tool to open up conversations and critical reflection and to identify next steps for action. Because of the brief period, it does not show what happened afterwards, when the school used its findings to take part in professional learning and to make changes to practice.

The case study is organised as follows:

- *Context* – how Kaitorotoro College uses its teacher aides and the purpose of its review
- *Overview of the review process* – how the school went about its review, including decisions about who to consult and the evidence to gather
- *Next steps: A summary of the findings to support an inquiry* – how Kaitorotoro College used its review findings to plan an inquiry into the school's support for teacher aides and teacher aide practice
- *Appendix: Kaitorotoro College's judgments within the tool* – the judgments the school made and the reasoning behind them.

[1] Not its real name, but Kaitorotoro (explorer) is appropriate for a school that was pioneering the use of this tool and exploring new ways to better use its teacher aides.

Context

Kaitorotoro College sits in a semi-rural area on the border of a large city. It's an early beneficiary of the move to modern learning environments, with four whānau houses, each organised around a central hub. Twenty-one percent of the school's 548 students identify as Māori, 72% as Pasifika, and there is a small group of international students.

Teacher aides at Kaitorotoro College

The school employs five teacher aides. Of these, one works full time, three for 12 hours per week, and one for ten hours per week. Two are engaged in initial teacher education. The school also uses funding from the Interim Response Fund to employ temporary teacher aides to work with students who are in crisis.

Kaitorotoro College wants all students to achieve to their full potential. For teacher aides, this can mean working with teachers to help deliver classroom programmes that address students' individual strengths, needs, and interests. Or it can mean supporting students to develop literacy skills, using tools such as Dragon software or the Rapid Reading programme. Teacher aides also help students access external learning opportunities, such as the South Pacific Educational Course or courses offered by Te Aho o Te Kura Pounamu – The Correspondence School. One teacher aide assists at the Homework Centre and another provides one-on-one support to a student with additional learning needs.

Purpose of the review

Lara Bateman is the school's SENCO and Head of Faculty of Personalised Learning. The faculty's name reflects Lara's mission to re-orient the perception of the support she and her team deliver. Instead of simply 'supporting learning' she wants the wider school to recognise that the faculty's goal is to help 'personalise learning'. Along with principal Eva Murray, she wants both teacher aide support and the philosophy of personalised learning to be more fully integrated into the school-wide learning programme. Lara and Eva hoped that the self-review would help them to clarify what was happening and identify the next steps for making better use of the school's valuable teacher aide resource.

Reflection on how it went

Lara says she valued the opportunity to evaluate the school's practice against the international evidence about 'what works'. The self-review made her feel that she and the school are not on their own. The issues faced by Kaitorotoro College are common to many other schools in Aotearoa New Zealand and around the world. The tool, and the research behind it, confirmed many of her and Eva's thoughts about what needed to be done. It also confirmed the value of embedding the school's strategy for improving the effectiveness of its teacher aides within its overall strategy for improving teaching and learning.

Using the tool has opened up conversations about the school's future use of teacher aides. The experience of reflecting together has been empowering for all those who participated, and especially for the teacher aides. Differences in perception have suggested more questions for exploration and more possibilities for next steps.

While Lara and Eva hope that improved systems will free up more time for learning and reflection, they know it will always be important to be strategic in the use of these opportunities. The tool gave them direction about the areas to prioritise. It has taken the school one step closer to achieving its vision of personalised learning for all students.

Overview of the review process at Kaitorotoro College

The school did not work through the entire review process in the four weeks covered by this case study. However, as described below, the review team did work through the first four steps and has given thought to those that will follow.

1. Agreeing on a process and deciding on roles

Lara took responsibility for leading the review, backed by the principal, Eva. An external facilitator helped them plan the review and think through their findings.

Lara and Eva thought carefully about who else to involve, deciding upon:

- two teacher aides with many years' experience at the school
- the school's community liaison office, who is a former teacher aide
- a teacher and pastoral leader, who is very supportive of Lara and the teacher aides
- two students who are funded for teacher aide support
- the parents of one funded student and the grandparents (and caregivers) of another.

2. Gathering evidence

Lara and Eva decided that their priority for this first self-review was to explore the perspectives of different groups within their school community. To enable this, they decided that Lara would work through the self-review tool in separate sessions with the people representing different stakeholders.

Lara has a lot of contact with parents and whānau, through phone, text and face-to-face meetings. She sees both the students and colleagues she interviewed most days. These strong relationships helped her understand what people were saying. It also meant she could augment the rich conversations focused on the tool with more informal day-by-day conversations.

The principal worked though the tool independently. Eva is relatively new to the college and so has worked hard on getting to know the school and how it is perceived. This has included a curriculum review, questionnaires (including for students, parents, and whānau), and meetings with the school's four parent groups. A great deal of this evidence helped inform the judgments she and Lara made while using the tool.

Lara has a very productive relationship with two specialists at the local office of the Ministry of Education. Shortly before she administered the tool, these specialists led a professional development day for the school's teacher aides. The day included discussion about how things had gone during terms 1 and 2. Feedback from this discussion was recorded and added to the evidence used to complete the tool.

The school's charter, a recent Education Review Office report, and the data gathering and analysis that the local Community of Learning | Kāhui Ako used to develop its achievement challenges also added to the picture, particularly with regard to current teaching practice and the school's aspirations for the future. The school's initial use of the Inclusive Practices Tools provided further evidence.

3. Making judgments within the tool

Before commencing the self-review, Lara predicted that she, the teacher aides, teachers and principal would tend to make similar judgments. She felt they all had a good understanding of the current situation and that they would be frank and honest in their ratings.

The recent surveys, combined with her own observations, led Lara to think that the students, parents and whānau would tend to rate current practice somewhat more favourably than the other groups. The surveys had shown that the school enjoys warm relationships with its community, and parents and whānau trust that the school will look after their rangatahi. She wanted them to feel free to express any criticism, and so thought carefully about how to engage with them. This included emphasising the value their frank opinions could add to a review intended to improve the support offered to their rangatahi.

As it turned out, Lara's expectations were correct. Minor variations between her and the teacher aides' judgments tended to relate to teacher aides undervaluing what they bring to the school. In one or two instances, the principal scored items higher than Lara, and the teachers' ratings were closely aligned to her own. Parents, whānau and students tended to rate practice a little more favourably than teachers and teacher aides, though students rated leadership practices a little lower.

Despite minor variations, the overall pattern of results proved remarkably consistent across the different groups. The areas of weakness were around role clarity, planning, and professional learning. Dealing with challenging behaviour tended to be 'front of mind' for both teachers and teacher aides.

Lara reviewed the findings in a series of sessions with the external facilitator and in her twice-weekly meetings with Eva. Rather than just 'average out' the judgments from the different stakeholders, she reviewed all the available evidence, including that from the written documentation. The facilitator prompted her to probe more deeply into what the evidence was showing. She suggested further reading and practical next steps for action.

Lara and Eva concluded that the school needed to focus on the respective roles of teachers and teacher aides and how to support them to work together to improve teaching and learning. Shared expectations around behaviour management would emerge from this focus.

The appendix shows the school's judgments within the tool.

4. Deciding on next steps after using the tool

Overall, the team concluded that for the aim of personalised learning to be achieved:

- Teachers need greater understanding of the role of a teacher aide, to be more deliberate about their use of teacher aides, to share learning intentions and planned activities with teacher aides, and to learn from the productive relationships teacher aides construct with students.
- Teacher aides need to grow in capability and confidence through increased opportunities for professional learning, to reflect on their practice and its impact, and to grow their knowledge and expertise in specific subjects and areas of student need.
- Everyone needs opportunities for collaborative professional learning, streamlined systems for communication, and new ways of evaluating the impact of practice and surfacing student voice.

The following section shows the school's summary of its findings, for use in a planned inquiry into support for teacher aides and teacher aide practice. This includes implementing changes that are quick and easy wins, such as the creation of a briefing document to help relief teachers understand the role of a teacher aide and the additional learning needs of some students. Professional learning will initially be voluntary so that those involved are those who will be open to the learning. Those taking part will start with the module on role clarity from the online site *Teachers and Teacher Aides Working Together.* As they embed their learning from the first module, they will move on to modules addressing the school's other priorities. The learning and the lessons from practical inquiry out of the learning will be shared with the rest of the staff.

Eva will propose that learning and inquiry be integrated, not just across the school, but with others in their Community of Learning | Kāhui Ako. This would help ensure students and their whānau experience greater continuity in their experience of teacher aide support as they transition between schools. It also means schools could spread any costs in employing external facilitators.

5. Planning for a future review

Lara and Eva have captured the results of the self-review in KAMAR. They shared them with teachers and teacher aides in staff meetings and, separately, with the other participants in the self-review process. The findings will contribute to a wider Personalised Learning Review to be conducted in Term 3. They intend repeating the review of the support provided to teacher aides in Term 1 next year. This will give them a sense of the impact of their professional learning and changes in practice and help ensure that this work is integrated into the school's overall drive to improve the learning and well-being of all its students.

Next steps: A summary of the findings to support an inquiry

1. Scanning: What's going on for our students?

What have we noticed from conducting our self-review about how our teacher aide practices are impacting on students?

Students feel very comfortable engaging with the faculty. Students dealing with a range of issues and challenges know they can get support from the teacher aides to address their specific needs. We have students taking up opportunities for extension (e.g., taking level 3 courses in chemistry and te reo Māori), students using Dragon software to better express themselves, and students doing the Rapid Learning programme.

Teacher aides put time into building warm and accepting relationships with students and getting to know them well. They use their knowledge to respond to students' needs, and this is impacting positively on student learning and well-being.

Some students – and teachers – rely too much on teacher aides. We need to work on growing the understanding that this is about personalised learning, something all students need. The presence of a teacher aide can expand the pedagogical repertoire of a teacher (e.g., by creating opportunities for group work and one-on-one interactions with individuals).

Some students prefer to be out of the classroom – we want them to feel part of the classroom community. They need to learn to interact with their peers. This includes being thoughtful about how their behaviour impacts on other people and accepting that there will be consequences if they are not.

Lack of direction means teacher aides can be left 'glued' to a student's side when they would be better used more flexibly, with the teacher using the opportunity to work more with that student.

Some students perceive teacher aides as lacking subject knowledge. They (and some teachers) don't realise that teacher aides work across many subject areas so can't be expected to have the discipline knowledge of a teacher.

How well do we know what is going on for our students? Did our review include a range of perspectives? Are there others we should consider?

We know our students very well. Many choose to interact with the faculty during breaks, as well as in class time. They are very open with us. We also know their families and are in regular communication with them.

We spoke in depth with two students, who we knew would be open about their thoughts and opinions. Their responses were in line with what we had anticipated.

We also got the perspectives of two teachers, two school leaders, and two whānau members.

How do our results complement what we have learned from using other data gathering tools, such as the Inclusive Practices Tools?

We have multiple additional sources of data, all of which provide information that is consistent with what we learned from the self-review tool. They include:

- a report from a professional learning session with Ministry specialists that includes feedback from all five teacher aides
- the questionnaires and surveys our new principal used to get information about student and whānau perceptions on a range of topics
- the thinking and data analysis that went into completing our school charter and contributing to our Community of Learning's decisions about achievement challenges
- our ERO report
- data from the Inclusive Practices Tool.

2. Focusing: What will make the most difference?

Which of the six areas do we most need to explore and make sense of for our context? Which aspects of practice are most important to consider? Are these different for different people in our school?

We scored lowest for 'roles in the classroom' and 'professional development' and next lowest for 'planning by teachers and teacher aides'. While there were minor differences in people's perceptions about specific aspects, the overall pattern was consistent for all groups.

Students and parents rated most aspects higher than the other participants, with the exception of leadership practices, which students scored lower. This reflects the warm personal relationships in the school and the sense of gratitude felt by parents and whānau for the support given to their rangatahi.

One of the aspects that scored a 1 was 'Responsibility for supporting positive behaviour'. It is true that "Teachers set behaviour expectations but don't communicate them to teacher aides, or tend to leave behaviour management of some students to teacher aides." However, while this is what people feel most conscious of, we believe it is a consequence of a lack of role clarity. We need to align people's expectations about the roles and responsibilities of teachers and teacher aides. We need to communicate that the shared purpose is to help improve student learning and well-being.

While our teacher aides are funded to work with specific students and they do this very effectively (as reflected in the scores), we want to keep upskilling them and to ensure that the benefits of teacher aide support go beyond the funded students. For this to happen, teachers need to share in the learning so they understand how they can make effective use of the teacher aide support available in their classrooms.

Teachers tend not to share their planning with teacher aides. Planning tends not to be personalised to the students and does not include specific tasks for teacher aides. We know that when teacher aides are included in planning (as for the IEPs), they make a valuable contribution, both to the plan and its implementation.

Which changes in teacher aide practice would make the most difference for our students?

We want teacher aides to be used to increase the opportunities for personalised learning rather than to simply provide support. We want this approach to be integrated into the whole school programme.

Our teacher aides tend not to know their own value. More opportunities for self-reflection and access to assertiveness training might help build understanding between them and the teachers. In particular, it might help them feel more comfortable to ask for direction when they need it. It could also raise teachers' awareness of the value teacher aides can add to the opportunities for all students to learn – not just those who are funded.

Some of our teacher aides need to give students more space to be independent and take responsibility for their own actions.

What changes in teacher, school leader, and school-wide capability are needed to support teacher aides to be more effective in their roles?

Relationships are critical – positive, open relationships that have no sense of hierarchy, but where each person understands their role. To facilitate this, we need teachers to look at their planning – to think about how they will use teacher aide support and to share that with the teacher aides. We know that when teachers and teacher aides work in partnership, the results for our students are fantastic.

Our school has identified the need for improved pedagogy to improve outcomes for all students. Teachers are learning to embed teaching as inquiry into their practice. This needs to include inquiring into how they can personalise the learning for students and make more effective use of teacher aides to achieve this objective.

Teacher aides feel that there are good systems for supporting them within the faculty and that they have some opportunities for professional development. However, for teacher aides to become more effective, systems and professional development need to be better integrated across the school. For example, we would like to:

- promote greater communication between teachers and teacher aides
- create opportunities for teachers and teacher aides to take part in joint professional learning opportunities and consider the implications for how they work together

- increase the opportunities for teachers and teacher aides to reflect, by themselves and together
- set up procedures for gathering information about teacher aides
- set up an appraisal process that works for teacher aides on different kinds of contracts
- develop a streamlined induction process for temporary teacher aides employed under the Interim Response Fund.

What are the strengths and opportunities we have identified? Where are the barriers? How does this impact on our priorities for action?

Our teacher aides are a diverse group who come from the local community. They are very good at getting to know students and using this knowledge to support learning. Two have undergone primary teacher training and know the theory about why it is important to know the learner.

Some teachers feel pressure to 'get through' the curriculum and meet the demands of NZQA. This can be a barrier to teachers working with teacher aides and students in the way we want them to. It is a focus for change across the school.

Some teachers need support to set appropriate expectations for behaviour and to deal with challenging behaviour.

Time and money are barriers to investing in professional development or providing opportunities for teachers to share planning with teacher aides. Teacher aides typically work across a range of subject areas and levels. They don't have free periods and the majority work part-time. They are not highly paid.

It's difficult to set up appraisal systems for people who are on different kinds of contracts.

Teachers have been encouraged to use KAMAR or email to communicate with teacher aides, but there has been limited uptake.

What additional evidence would help us decide upon our priorities?

If teachers don't wish to use email or KAMAR to communicate with teacher aides, what would they prefer? We could conduct a focus group to surface ideas and then survey the rest of the staff.

3. Developing a hunch: How is our professional practice contributing to our situation?

What factors impact on the ability of teacher aides to give effective support to students? How might we strengthen support for teacher aides and teacher aide practice in our school?

Our biggest problem is that many teachers don't understand the role of a teacher aide and how they can be used to support student learning. Some teachers put little effort into getting to know teacher aides. However, there are teachers who do appreciate what they can contribute and there are signs of greater engagement between teacher aides and teachers in the staffroom. We could use supportive teachers as champions, having them engage in professional learning with the teacher aides and influence others over time.

What assumptions are we making, and how could we check them? How could we test our hunches?

We believe that if teachers provided teacher aides with more information about lesson topics and intended outcomes and provided greater direction about how teacher aides can help, the outcomes for students would improve. We can test this by having teacher–teacher aide pairs select and test one of the strategies suggested in Module 1 of the *Teachers and Teacher Aides Working Together* resource.

Where are our areas of difficulty or challenge? How do we make sure we address them openly and respectfully?

Some teachers do not fully appreciate the value of teacher aides. Some are likely to resist engaging in professional learning regarding their work with teacher aides, believing they 'already know that'. We will clarify the expectations outlined in the teacher aides' job descriptions, and we will share learning from the modules at staff meetings, including learning from our own inquiries.

Some teachers are more focused on getting through the curriculum rather than on a pedagogical approach that includes differentiating for different students and planning for the constructive use of teacher aides. While this is a larger issue for the school and Community of Learning, we can contribute by sharing our learning about the use of teacher aides with the wider community. For example, Eva will report to the wider staff on what is covered in Module 1 and our teacher–teacher aide pairs will report on the outcomes of their inquiries.

4. New learning: How will we learn more about what we need to do?

In light of our focus, what new learning is needed to improve teacher aide practice at our school?

We will start with the module, *Teachers and teacher aides: Who does what?* Depending on the findings of our second review, we will follow up with either *Supporting student learning in the whole class* or *Teacher aide interaction that supports student learning.*

Our teacher aides have had some initial training in the new restraint guidelines. This needs to be rolled out to all staff. We also need to learn together about the implications of Tamariki Ora.

What will enable teacher aides, teachers, and leaders to engage in the learning?

We will connect this learning to the agreed hopes and aspirations of our school community. Our charter emphasises our aspiration to improve teaching and learning, and our last ERO report said that our leaders should ensure our curriculum includes "curriculum delivery, context and format that is flexible, responsive and provides all students with meaningful learning pathways suited to their interests, potential and aspirations."

We want the learning to include both teachers and teacher aides and the activities to be carried out in pairs. We will initially invite participation from teachers who we already regard as 'champions' and who are keen to explore constructive ways to work with teacher aides. We trust the research and in the good intentions of our staff. We believe that when we share the results, others will want to participate.

We will be careful to select a time and place that suits people and feels comfortable and inviting, and we will provide food. We will survey people about what works best. Depending upon feedback, it could be a breakfast session.

Who will lead the learning, and how? When will it take place, and where? Will we work with other schools? Will we work with an external provider? What kinds of observations and practice analysis conversations do we need to plan for as part of the learning?

We believe it would be more effective if Lara were one of the learners and part of the discussion, rather than leading this aspect of the learning. Instead, either Eva or one of the specialists from the Ministry will lead it. If the latter happens, Eva will participate. We will develop an inquiry plan out of the module.

One of the three challenges our Community of Learning | Kāhui Ako has set itself is "How do we improve teacher capability and capacity to meet the needs and aspirations of students who bring a wide range of experiences and strengths to our schools?" Taking a whole-of-Community approach could help us take the more holistic approach to professional learning that our Community intends. For example, we could look at sharing resources to fund an external facilitator for the modules or to train the teacher aides employed under the Interim Response Fund.

How will our leaders engage people in the learning, sustain the momentum, and keep themselves informed about what is happening?

Lara and Eva will continue to meet twice a week. Eva will continue working to integrate the work of the Personalised Learning Faculty with the larger plan for the school and the Community of Learning.

We will share the findings of this review at a meeting of the whole staff. Later we will share what is covered in the professional learning sessions, the learning from inquiry, and the actions that are planned.

Lara and the teacher aides will discuss progress at their fortnightly meetings, which will incorporate more opportunities for reflection.

Our Community of Learning is committed to exploring new approaches to evaluation that support transformational change. In the long term, we wonder whether we could work with the Community to develop an approach to evaluation that helps us to think more about how teacher aides can support learners – in ways that are integrated into the students' learning across the school and over time.

5. Taking action: As a result of our professional learning, what changes do we need to make to strengthen our support for teacher aides and teacher aide practice?

We have not yet engaged in our planned professional learning, but we do have some actions in mind. They are:

- rewrite the teacher aides' job descriptions, making them more explicit so everyone can see what they mean for both teacher and teacher aides
- hold meetings with core subject teachers so teacher aides can understand the intention of planned lessons regarding learning and behaviour and understand the teachers' expectations for the teacher aide and the students
- create more opportunities for teacher aides to self-evaluate and understand the value of their contribution
- create opportunities for teachers and teacher aides to reflect together and set up protocols that focus on what happened for the students
- offer assertiveness training as part of professional learning
- create a one-page document for relievers about the role of teacher aides and the specific needs of the funded students they will work with
- invite teachers and whānau into the room where the faculty is based so they feel comfortable with it, see it as theirs, and feel freer to offer feedback
- institute a 'busy box' for days when teachers are away or Correspondence School materials are late to arrive
- consider having teacher aides develop specialist subject areas
- set up processes to make students' psychological reports and IEPs more functional, so they better inform teaching and learning and the connections between teachers and teacher aides.

6. Checking: Have we made enough of a difference for our students?

We will capture the results of the self-review in KAMAR. We will share them with teachers in a staff meeting, with teacher aides at a faculty meeting, and separately with the other participants. We will repeat the self-review process in Term 1 next year. This will allow time for the impact of the professional learning and changes to practice to start to be seen and mean that we can connect the findings to those from Term 3's Personalised Learning Review.

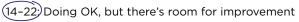# Appendix: Kaitorotoro College's judgments within the tool
Roles in the classroom

	EMERGING		DEVELOPING		CONSOLIDATING
Teacher and teacher aide teamwork	**1** Teachers and teacher aides require support to develop into effective teams.	**(2)**	**3** Good teamwork is evident at times, but it varies according to the expertise of individual teachers and teacher aides.	**4**	**5** Senior leaders and school-wide processes ensure that teachers and teacher aides work effectively as teams, with clear agreement on what they need to do to achieve lesson objectives.
Role clarity	**1** School-wide discussion is needed to bring together disparate views about the respective roles of teachers and teacher aides.	**(2)**	**3** Most teachers and teacher aides have a reasonable understanding of their respective roles, often informed by discussions with their school's learning support coordinator or a senior leader.	**4**	**5** Senior leaders proactively ensure that teachers and teacher aides have a shared understanding of their respective roles and that these are clearly delineated in their job descriptions.
Teacher aides' sense of belonging in the class	**1** Teacher aides are introduced to students with additional needs, but not always to the whole class.	**2**	**(3)** Teachers welcome and introduce teacher aides to all students in the class.	**4**	**5** Teachers always welcome and introduce teacher aides to all students in the class, discuss class culture and protocols with them, and ensure they are included in the classroom community.
Responsibility for the learning of students with additional needs	**1** Teacher aides routinely have a direct, informal teaching role with students with additional needs, regularly serving as the 'primary educator' for these students.	**(2)**	**3** Some teachers work with students with additional needs and take overall responsibility for their learning.	**4**	**5** All students' learning needs are met first and foremost through high-quality teaching by teachers, who spend as much time working with students with additional needs as with others.
Teacher aides' support for teaching	**1** Teacher aides work almost exclusively with students with additional needs.	**2**	**3** Some teacher aides work with a wider range of students and support teaching in a range of situations.	**(4)**	**5** In agreement with teachers, teacher aides work with a range of students and support teaching in a range of situations.
Responsibility for supporting positive behaviour	**(1)** Teachers set behaviour expectations but don't communicate them to teacher aides, or tend to leave behaviour management of some students to teacher aides.	**2**	**3** Teachers set behaviour expectations and sometimes instruct teacher aides on strategies for managing inappropriate behaviour and getting students back on task.	**4**	**5** All teachers set behaviour expectations and agree with teacher aides on strategies for managing inappropriate behaviour and getting students back on task.

Roles in the classroom *(continued)*

Our score: _____14_____   [Guide: 6–13: Definitely needs attention   (14–22:) Doing OK, but there's room for improvement   23–30: A strength in our school]

How are we doing in this area? This score reflects how we're feeling. We're doing okay, but there's lot of room for improvement.

What do our teachers, teacher aides, specialists, and RTLBs say about how we are doing in this area? There are big differences in what happens in classrooms, with many factors impacting on our teacher aides' experiences. These include what's going on with a particular student or in the classroom or school, the time of term, and the level of trust between the teacher and teacher aide.

Teacher aides can readily identify the staff to whom they feel they can speak openly. They perceive that some teachers feel it's their 'right' to have a teacher aide, and this impacts on how the teacher aide is used. Teacher aides tend to have a clearer understanding of their role than teachers, though some teachers are very supportive.

Our teacher aides are aware that teachers are supposed to take the lead in managing student behaviour, with the teacher aide stepping in when needed. However, some teachers don't set clear behaviour expectations yet expect the teacher aide to deal with the challenging behaviour that can result. Teacher aides do not necessarily feel equipped to deal with this behaviour.

Relief staff often don't know what to do with teacher aides.

What are our specific strengths in this area? Teacher aide support for teaching.

Are there particular aspects we need to work on? Responsibility for supporting positive behaviour rates lowest, but we think we should focus on role clarity for teachers and teacher aides. Getting this right will help with all the other aspects.

Relievers often don't understand the role of the teacher aide or what is prompting a student to behave as they do (e.g., the behaviour patterns of a student with ASD).

If we were to improve these aspects, what might we see happening? Everybody would understand that a teacher aide is there to provide 'aid' and not replace the teacher. (That is, what happens in the classroom is ultimately the teacher's responsibility.) We would then see greater consistency in how teachers, teacher aides, and students interact across the school. The Personalised Learning Faculty would be able to focus on teaching and learning rather than behaviour, and it would be better integrated within the school's wider structure and processes.

What specific actions could we take? We will do the module on role clarity. We've already shared the teacher aide job description, but we'll make it more explicit so everyone can see what it means for both teachers and teacher aides. We will also create a one-page document for relievers, briefing them about the role of teacher aides and the reasons why certain students behave as they do.

What barriers might we have to overcome? Some (not all) teachers are focused on getting through the curriculum and this can be reflected in their use of teacher aides – using them to help 'get through' the work rather than taking time to talk openly about the real objectives. Some teachers need help with behaviour management – this is something our school is already working on.

Planning by teachers and teacher aides

	EMERGING		DEVELOPING		CONSOLIDATING
Understanding and use of teacher aides' skills and knowledge	**1** Teachers require opportunities to develop their understanding of teacher aides' skills and knowledge and how they can incorporate this understanding into their day-to-day planning for what teacher aides will do.	**2**	**③** Teachers have some understanding of teacher aides' skills and knowledge; they need support to increase this understanding so they can use teacher aides to their full potential.	**4**	**5** Teachers understand and make full use of teacher aides' skills and knowledge, adding to them by explicitly modelling effective strategies to teacher aides.
Joint planning by teachers and teacher aides	**①** Teachers have not been allocated planning time with teacher aides; communication is hence largely ad hoc and informal, taking place between lesson changeovers or before school.	**2**	**3** Sometimes teachers and teacher aides have allocated time to plan and discuss lessons together.	**4**	**5** Teachers and teacher aides have allocated time to plan and discuss lessons together.
Teacher aides contributing to IEPs and CLPs (collaborative learning plans)	**1** The school has not yet established processes to ensure teacher aides are able to contribute to IEPs and CLPs.	**2**	**3** Some teachers arrange for teacher aides to contribute to IEPs and CLPs, but processes for this are ad hoc and dependent on individual teachers.	**④**	**5** Processes are in place to ensure teacher aides have a voice in IEPs and CLPs, including when they are unable to attend meetings.
Teacher aides' understanding of lesson objectives and activities	**1** Teacher aides often go into lessons 'blind' with little understanding of lesson objectives and activities.	**2**	**③** Teacher aides gain a basic understanding from teachers of objectives and activities before lessons.	**4**	**5** Teacher aides enter lessons with a clear understanding of the concepts and information being taught, intended learning outcomes, success criteria, and the specific learning needs of students they will work with.
Systems for teachers and teacher aides to reflect together	**①** The school has not yet established processes for teachers and teacher aides to discuss how things have gone.	**2**	**3** Some teachers organise regular discussions with teacher aides on how things have gone, but processes for this are ad hoc and dependent on individual teachers.	**4**	**5** Processes are in place to ensure that there is day-to-day communication between teachers and teacher aides on how things have gone and that the results are used in on-going planning.

Planning by teachers and teacher aides *(continued)*

Our score: _____12_____   [Guide: 5–11: Definitely needs attention   (12–28:) Doing OK, but there's room for improvement   19–25: A strength in our school]

How are we doing in this area? The score reflects our sense that we're doing OK, but there's lots of room for improvement. We've tried encouraging teachers to use email and KAMAR to communicate with teacher aides around planning, but with mixed results.

What do our teachers and teacher aides say about how we are doing in this area? Sometimes teacher aides are given lesson plans and objectives, and sometimes they aren't. Teacher aides are left unsure about what to do.

Teachers plan, but more for getting though the content, and not so much for pedagogy and how to personalise the learning to the range of student strengths and needs. Teachers use a lot of handouts, and each subject area has a booklet, but most of these are not differentiated, either. All this means that they haven't thought about how they would use the teacher aides to support teaching and learning.

What are our specific strengths in this area? Lara coordinates the IEPs and involves the teacher aides in the planning, giving them an hour's paid time to read, reflect and contribute. This aspect would be '5' if it were possible to give more time.

Teacher aides have established a system where they set individual goals with students. This provides the teacher aides with direction when supporting these students during lessons. They share this information with each other so there is continuity when students work with different teacher aides.

Are there particular aspects we need to work on? Teacher aides want teachers to provide them with more information about the topic and intended outcomes of the lesson and greater direction about what is required of them. They would like opportunities to reflect on what actually happens and what could be done better.

If we were to improve these aspects, what might we see happening? Teacher aides would have a clear role in each lesson, as communicated by the teacher. They would understand the main objectives of the lesson and how they can provide appropriate support (e.g., providing reader–writer support or support with social interactions or behaviour).

Better systems for joint reflection could result in improved practice for teachers, as well as teacher aides – our teacher aides have a lot of knowledge and insights they can share.

What specific actions could we take? Set up meetings with core subject teachers so teacher aides can understand the intention of planned lessons regarding learning and behaviour and understand the teacher's expectations for the teacher aide and the students.

Create a 'busy box' for days when teachers are away or Correspondence School materials are late to arrive.

Consider having teacher aides develop specialities (e.g., a teacher aide who is good at maths might develop that as a competency).

What barriers might we have to overcome? Teacher aides don't get free periods and most are working in a range of subject areas, so it's hard for them to upskill or to contribute to planning. For example, David works across a wide range of subjects and year levels (including senior maths and English). It would not be possible for him to attend meetings for all these classes. It can be even harder to timetable meetings for teacher aides who are contracted part-time. We can't expect them to make the trip to school twice in a day.

Students' learning and participation

	EMERGING		DEVELOPING		CONSOLIDATING
Expectations of students	**1** Teachers and teacher aides need support to develop appropriate expectations of students with additional needs.	**2**	**3** Some teachers and teacher aides have high expectations of students with additional needs.	**4**	**⑤** Teachers and teacher aides have high expectations of students with additional needs.
How well students can access whole-class teaching and peer interactions	**1** Students with additional needs have few opportunities to engage in learning with the rest of the class and interact with peers.	**2**	**③** Students with additional needs learn and interact with peers almost as much as other students.	**4**	**5** Support for individuals or groups with additional needs is structured so it encourages peer interactions and helps them access general classroom teaching and learning.
Support and opportunities for students to work independently	**1** Teachers and teacher aides need support to understand the value of sometimes stepping back to allow students with additional needs to work independently and to complete their own work.	**②**	**3** Some teachers and teacher aides withhold support at appropriate times to allow students with additional needs to work independently.	**4**	**5** Teachers and teacher aides actively look for opportunities for students with additional needs to attempt parts of tasks independently and to experience a healthy mix of challenge and success.
Respect for student dignity	**1** Further training is needed to help teacher aides provide additional support (e.g., with eating, lifting, moving around the school) in unobtrusive ways that respect each student's privacy and dignity.	**2**	**3** Teacher aides usually provide additional support in unobtrusive ways that respect each student's privacy and dignity.	**④**	**5** Teacher aides always provide additional support in unobtrusive ways that respect each student's privacy and dignity and foster independence.
Supporting social interactions	**1** Few teacher aides understand that supporting students' social interactions is part of their role.	**2**	**③** Some teacher aides understand and use a few strategies for supporting social interactions between students.	**4**	**5** Teacher aides understand and use a range of strategies for supporting social interactions between students.
Knowing students and valuing diversity	**1** A change in school culture is required for teachers and teacher aides to deepen their knowledge of their students and draw on their diverse cultures, languages, and identities in teaching and learning.	**2**	**3** Some teachers and teacher aides know their students well and draw on their diverse cultures, languages, and identities in teaching and learning.	**④**	**5** Teachers and teacher aides actively seek to get to know their students well; they ask students what they know and love to do and what support they require, they talk to families and whānau about students' strengths and interests, and they draw on students' diverse cultures, languages, and identities in teaching and learning.

Students' learning and participation *(continued)*

Our score: ___21___ [Guide: 6–13: Definitely needs attention (14–22): Doing OK, but there's room for improvement 23–30: A strength in our school]

How are we doing in this area? This is definitely a strength of our college.

What do our students, families, and whānau say about how we are doing in this area? Students and whānau almost always speak positively of their relationships with teachers. They say teachers care for them and take an interest in them. This came out of our curriculum review, lots of questionnaires, and Eva's meetings with the four parent cultural groups.

Teacher aides tend to build more equitable relationships with students than teachers. In contrast, teachers can expect others to adjust to their expectations. Some teachers are inclined to rely on the teacher aide's relationship with the funded student, rather than using that to build their own.

Our goal is to keep students in the classroom as much as possible, but some students prefer not to be there. Some teachers seem to use the Personalised Learning Faculty's space as a withdrawal room.

Some teacher aides are inclined to be over-protective (e.g., bowing to pressure to take a student out of the classroom or defending a student who has deliberately behaved in ways that are annoying to others). This kindness can restrict students' opportunities to learn how to interact positively with others.

What are our specific strengths in this area? We have high expectations of students with additional needs. This is true for both teachers and teacher aides, but more so for the latter. Teacher aides take time to get to know their students well. They use their knowledge of the students to build relationships and adapt how they respond to the students, according to the circumstances. They advocate for those kids.

Are there particular aspects we need to work on? We see room for teachers to step out of their comfort zones, aiming to establish positive relationships with students based on a greater knowledge of them as individuals.

Some teacher aides need it reinforced that they are there to help students become more independent in their learning and their interactions with others.

If we were to improve these aspects, what might we see happening? We'd see students participating fully in their classes rather than relying on their teacher aide. Teachers would seek advice from teacher aides about how they could build a closer relationship with students, and they'd think strategically about how they could use the productive relationship between teacher aides and students as a resource for lesson planning.

What specific actions could we take? Empower teacher aides by helping them to understand their own value. Create more opportunities for teacher aides to self-evaluate and identify what they're good at. Offer assertiveness training as part of teacher aides' professional learning.

What barriers might we have to overcome? Teacher aides know students very well, and two of our teacher aides are doing teacher training. However, they don't always recognise how good they are, and this can interfere with their willingness to use what they know to support teaching and learning. Teacher aides do a lot behind the scenes that isn't always appreciated (e.g., developing amazing resources).

Teacher aide expertise and practice

	EMERGING		DEVELOPING		CONSOLIDATING
Teacher aides' scaffolding	**1** Teacher aides tend to focus on task completion and are yet to understand the concept of scaffolding intended learning.	**2**	**(3)** Teacher aides' interactions with students sometimes include appropriate scaffolding to support learning and understanding.	**4**	**5** Teacher aides provide the right amount of scaffolding at the right time, consistently giving less support at first.
Teacher aides' questioning skills	**1** Teacher aides ask mainly closed questions.	**2**	**3** Teacher aides sometimes demonstrate the appropriate use of open-ended questions.	**(4)**	**5** Teacher aides use open-ended questions strategically to ensure students are 'making meaning' for themselves.
Teacher aides' use of wait time	**1** Further training is required for teacher aides to learn about the importance of using 'wait time' effectively to allow students to process and respond to questions.	**2**	**3** Teacher aides sometimes use 'wait time' effectively and are gradually learning to avoid supplying answers or clues too soon.	**(4)**	**5** Teacher aides always use 'wait time' effectively to allow students to think and respond.
Teacher aides' positioning and movement in the classroom	**1** Teacher aides tend to position themselves very near to students with additional learning needs; they need support to understand the importance of moving around the room and being available to all students.	**2**	**(3)** Teacher aides sometimes move around the classroom but generally sit with students with additional needs.	**4**	**5** In agreement with teachers, teacher aides regularly scan and rove around the room, listening in and looking for opportunities to support students' engagement in their learning.
Teacher aides' knowledge and understanding	**1** Support is required for teacher aides to develop their subject knowledge and understanding of teaching strategies.	**2**	**(3)** Teacher aides have some subject knowledge in key areas and basic understandings of important teaching strategies.	**4**	**5** Teacher aides have appropriate subject knowledge and understandings of teaching strategies, which they apply effectively to support student learning.

–

Teacher aide expertise and practice *(continued)*

Our score: ____17____ [Guide: 5–11: Definitely needs attention   12–18: Doing OK, but there's room for improvement   19–25: A strength in our school]

How are we doing in this area? These ratings, especially the one about positioning, depend a great deal on the teacher's approach and willingness to partner with the teacher aide. They also depend on the personality and confidence of the teacher aide. A more confident, experienced teacher aide is more likely to use his or her own judgment about when to move around the classroom than someone who is less confident and has not had clear direction from the teacher.

What do our students, families, whānau, teacher aides, and teachers say about how we are doing in this area? Students say teacher aides don't understand subjects, but teacher aides point out they have to work across a lot of different areas and can't be expected to be knowledgeable in them all.

Teachers say teacher aides tend to focus too much on task completion rather than scaffolding the intended learning, but teacher aides say they are limited by insufficient direction about the intended outcomes, pedagogy and how they can assist. (A teacher recently commented on the improvement in a teacher aide's contribution, not realising that, without direction, it had taken time for the teacher aide to work out what to do.)

What are our specific strengths in this area? One is teacher aides' questioning skills; teacher aides are good at using open questions. This relates to the fact that teacher aides are very good at getting to know students and using their knowledge to support learning.

Are there particular aspects we need to work on? For teacher aides to provide appropriate scaffolding to students, they need greater direction from teachers and greater mutual understanding about roles and responsibilities.

If we were to improve these aspects, what might we see happening? All teachers would be encouraging teacher aides to move more freely around the classroom.

Teachers would have realistic expectations of the support teacher aides can provide and take advantage of that support (e.g., behavioural support and support with social interactions).

Teachers would understand the main overarching goal and objective for the student (e.g., 'to try and minimise temper') and work with the teacher aide and student on achieving the goal.

What specific actions could we take? Consider developing disciplinary expertise (e.g., by employing a teacher aide with maths expertise just in maths).

We will consider working through the two new modules on supporting student learning. (We'll make our decision after we have inquired into the impact of the learning from Module 1.)

What barriers might we have to overcome? We need to address the unrealistic expectation that teacher aides should have disciplinary expertise in a range of subjects at curriculum levels 5 and 6.

School leaders' management of the teacher aide resource

	EMERGING		DEVELOPING		CONSOLIDATING
School leaders' views of teacher aides' roles	**1** School leaders view teacher aides as extra support for students with additional needs; there are few processes and systems supporting their role.	**2**	**③** School leaders view teacher aides as a support for teachers of students with additional needs and establish processes and systems supporting this view of their role.	**4**	**5** School leaders view teacher aides as part of the total school system focused on student achievement and ensure there are processes and systems supporting this view of their role.
Recruitment of teacher aides	**1** Recruitment of teacher aides is ad hoc and unsystematic.	**2**	**3** Recruitment of teacher aides is based on applicants' knowledge, skills, and work experience.	**④**	**5** Recruitment of teacher aides is based on their experience, on their knowledge of students' cultures, on identified student needs, and on the school's vision for inclusion.
Induction of teacher aides	**1** Induction of teacher aides is ad hoc and reliant on the initiative of individual teachers.	**2**	**③** Induction of teacher aides is coordinated by a senior leader and covers the key basic knowledge required for the position.	**4**	**5** There is a documented process for inducting new teacher aides that includes coverage of communication channels, confidentiality protocols, and student health care and learning plans.
Support for school-wide participation of teacher aides	**1** Support is required to ensure teacher aides are informed, active members of the school community with access to administrative support and systems.	**2**	**③** Some teachers ensure the teacher aides they work with are informed, active members of the school community with access to administrative support and systems.	**4**	**5** School leaders ensure teacher aides are informed, active members of the school community who have access to administrative support and systems, receive relevant communications, and participate appropriately in events such as IEP meetings and staff meetings.
Gathering information about teacher aides	**①** School leaders gather little information about how teacher aides are used in the school and the impact of their practice.	**2**	**3** School leaders gather information from staff about how teacher aides are used in the school and the impact of their practice.	**4**	**5** School leaders gather information from a range of people in the school community to understand and monitor how teacher aides are used in the school and the impact of their practice; they use this information to improve the use of teacher aides.
Performance appraisal for teacher aides	**1** There is no performance review process in place for teacher aides.	**2**	**③** Performance appraisals happen for teacher aides, but they are irregular and based on generic competencies.	**4**	**5** Teacher aides participate in regular performance appraisals with a clear focus on supporting student learning and addressing their own professional learning needs.

School leaders' management of the teacher aide resource *(continued)*

Our score: _____17_____ [Guide: 6–13: Definitely needs attention   14–22: Doing OK, but there's room for improvement   23–30: A strength in our school]

How are we doing in this area? It's not as strong as the two areas above, but we're doing OK.

What do our teacher aides, school leaders, and RTLBs say about how we are doing in this area? A lot of good things are happening, but it needs to be more consistent and there needs to be better communication and more productive relationships between teachers and teacher aides. Some teachers are very engaged with the Faculty of Personalised Learning, while others don't seem interested in its work. Teacher aides are getting more comfortable about going to the staffroom and chatting with teachers.

What are our specific strengths in this area? Teacher aides belong to the community and reflect its makeup. We have a rigorous recruitment process and this is reflected in the quality of their practice.

Teacher aides told our local Ministry specialists that there are clear systems in place for their support. These include regular communication and meetings with Lara and the support staff team. This provides teacher aides with regular opportunities to debrief, discuss how the week has been, share any challenges, gain support, and problem solve. The teacher aides said they know who to go to when they need further advice and guidance. They also communicate well amongst themselves, and this in turn benefits the learning and well-being of the students they are supporting.

Are there particular aspects we need to work on? Gathering information about teacher aides is one. The principal has taken time to get to know the teacher aides, but we also need a more formal process that includes all school leaders.

We need to set up more secure systems for supporting teacher aides. This includes setting up a more formalised appraisal process and increasing opportunities for self-reflection. It also includes improving the induction process for temporary teacher aides employed under the Interim Response Fund.

If we were to improve these aspects, what might we see happening? We'd see consistency in how teacher aides are used and open communication between all staff. All teachers would take time to talk to teacher aides and get to know them. Teacher aides would feel they are part of the school. In the long run, we'd have a more holistic and inclusive system that supports everyone to work together in a complementary manner.

We'd also see the creation of a small pool of local people who have been trained in how to support young people in a crisis and can step in when required.

What specific actions could we take? We would like to invite teacher aides to PLD with the rest of the staff, and pay them for their participation.

We could hold an induction day for all teacher aides employed under the Interim Response Fund and brief relief teachers on the role of the temporary teacher aides and the reason for their employment.

What barriers might we have to overcome? One is finding time and funding for the PLD and induction day. Another is the difficulty of creating a regular appraisal system when there is a range of contractual arrangements – some teacher aides have annual contracts and others are employed by the term.

Professional development

	EMERGING		DEVELOPING		CONSOLIDATING
Professional development for teacher aides	**1** Teacher aides have few if any opportunities to participate in professional development.	**2**	**③** Teacher aides receive some professional development, but it is patchy and generic.	**4**	**5** Planned professional development ensures teacher aides are fully equipped to support student learning across the achievement range.
Examining beliefs and assumptions about diversity and disability	**1** Professional development and performance appraisals do not approach beliefs and assumptions about diversity and disability and how these may affect teachers' and teacher aides' ways of working.	**②**	**3** Professional development and performance appraisals sometimes touch on beliefs and assumptions about diversity and disability, but not in ways that impact on ways of working.	**4**	**5** Professional development and performance appraisals support teachers and teacher aides to examine their beliefs and assumptions about diversity and disability and, if necessary, to change their ways of working to promote inclusion.
Ensuring confidentiality, professionalism, and safety	**1** There is little discussion about confidentiality, professionalism, and safety in relation to working with students with additional needs; consequently, teachers and teacher aides rely on their own understandings.	**2**	**③** Teachers and teacher aides discuss confidentiality, professionalism, and safety informally, arriving at reasonably sound shared understandings.	**4**	**5** The school has established policies on confidentiality, professionalism, and safety and provides professional development to ensure teachers and teacher aides gain accurate shared understandings of them.
Professional development for teachers on working with teacher aides	**①** Teachers receive little or no professional development on how to work with teacher aides.	**2**	**3** Teachers receive some professional development on working with teacher aides, but there are no opportunities to collaboratively review its implementation in practice.	**4**	**5** Teachers receive on-going professional development on working with teacher aides, including opportunities to collaboratively examine their effectiveness in doing so.

Professional development *(continued)*

Our score: ___9___ [Guide: (4–9:) Definitely needs attention   10–14: Doing OK, but there's room for improvement   15–20: A strength in our school]

How are we doing in this area? We need to do better in this area.

What do our teacher aides and teachers say about how we are doing in this area? Teacher aides feel they're not well served. They are not included in professional development opportunities with the rest of staff. The rest of the staff do not have a good idea of what teacher aides know and have been learning.

What are our specific strengths in this area? Teacher aides attend regular faculty meetings where they can discuss any issues and how to address them.

We have a positive relationship with the specialist support staff in the local Ministry Office. The recent day's training was productive and we hope to get more opportunities like this.

Depending upon the topic, teacher aides will sometimes attend meetings for local SENCOs and additional teachers.

Are there particular aspects we need to work on? There's the provision of training for specific areas of need (e.g., understanding how to support students who are going through trauma or talking about self-harm or suicide).

If we were to improve these aspects, what might we see happening? We'd see teacher aides and teachers taking part in joint professional learning and the school taking advantage of PLD opportunities around new policies and approaches (e.g., the new policy on physical restraint or Tamariki Ora).

We'd also see teachers recognising and taking greater advantage of the expertise of the teacher aides.

What specific actions could we take? We could instigate whole-school training on the new restraint guidelines, so that all staff have a shared understanding about where challenging behaviour comes from and how to de-escalate and promote prosocial behaviours.

Rotating the leadership of learning is important. It's usually Lara, but perhaps Eva or one of the Ministry's specialists could lead one of the modules.

We could have teacher 'champions' participate in the learning alongside the teachers with a report back to the full staff of what is learned in the modules.

We could also have more sessions with the Ministry staff.

What barriers might we have to overcome? Finding funded time for teacher aides to receive professional development is challenging. So too is persuading teachers that participation in learning around the teacher aide modules will benefit them and their students.