

Infinity Learning Maps case study

A student scripts a new story about his learning

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<http://infinitylearn.org/>

Introduction

Te Awhitu used an early version of Learning Maps when schools were using the mapping exercises to agree on strategic change priorities for clusters of schools to shift from past to future-focused teaching and learning (Annan & Carpenter, 2015, <http://bit.ly/2jwXweA>). Te Awhitu's teacher Clare Currie also supported him to use his mapping information to improve his own learning situation. Te Awhitu's actions convinced us that it was possible to design a fully personalised set of mapping exercises to enable every child to cross the bridge from past to future-focused learning.



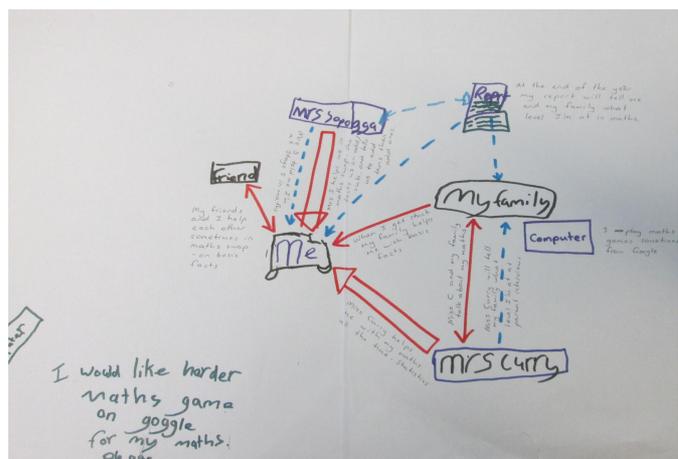
Who is Te Awhitu?

Te Awhitu, a 9-year-old indigenous Māori, was attending an elementary school by the name of Rata Street School in Wellington, NZ, at the time he engaged with the Learning Maps. He was in a Year 5/6 class and his teacher stated that he was a priority learner as he was performing below National Standards in reading and writing and well below National Standards in mathematics. Yet this story scripts a young boy who proved himself to be cognitively capable of talking about and improving the way he was going about his learning. The main purpose of sharing Te Awhitu's case study is to show how negative stories of children's learning capabilities can be re-scripted to positive stories so all children feel they are confident and capable learners. Furthermore, this case shows how teachers and parents can support their children to become actively involved in the re-scripting process.

Te Awhitu's First Learning Map, Feb 2014

Te Awhitu's actions

Te Awhitu drew his first Learning Map in mathematics. He talked with his friends about his map and also looked at their maps. They noticed that all the arrows were going into them. They also noticed that they were going through the motions of lots of mathematics activities that were not challenging them to learn how to solve problems and strategize. Te Awhitu noted on his first map that he wanted harder activities in mathematics to push his thinking skills.



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Impact of Te Awhitu's actions

Te Awhitu's engagement with Learning Maps and new types of supports from his teacher and family impacted positively on his learning in at least three ways.

The first positive impact was a significant shift towards National Standards in reading, writing and mathematics – see the table below. The shifts from red (Well Below) to orange (Below) to green (At) show that by the end of Year 6, he is At National Standards in reading, writing and mathematics.

Te Awhitu's National Standard data, 2012-2015.

Te Awhitu	Year 4 End 2012	Year 5 End 2013	Year 6 End 2014
Writing	Data: 2B overall OTJ: Below NS	Data: 2A overall OTJ: Below NS	Data: 3P overall OTJ: At NS
Maths	Data: 1A overall OTJ: Well below NS	Data: 3B overall OTJ: At NS	Data: 3P overall OTJ: At NS
Reading	Data: 2B overall OTJ: Below NS	Data: 2A overall OTJ: Below NS	Data: 3A overall OTJ: At NS

The second positive impact was the confidence that Te Awhitu gained in being able to articulate his learning situation. Te Awhitu was able to talk with ease about his learning situation and compare his two learning maps. View Te Awhitu's video at <http://infinitylearn.org/infinity-maps-2/>.

The third positive impact was the closer learning relationship that Te Awhitu created with his father. Te Awhitu started to bounce ideas around about his learning with this father. His father responded with useful ideas and became more interested in Te Awhitu's learning. The newfound father-son learning relationship was made possible by Te Awhitu's teacher, Miss Currie, re-positioning him from a back-stage passive learner to a foreground change agent of his own learning. The teacher, in this case, successfully manufactured that re-positioning via sufficient structure and support. It was unlikely that Te Awhitu would have re-positioned himself if he had been left to his own devices.

Concluding comment

Te Awhitu was fortunate to have teachers and school leaders who had an eye for good ideas. They were also able to provide the right level of scaffold for Te Awhitu, not too much and not too little. Through an analysis of the Learning Maps, Miss Currie and her students identified a common theme: *'all the arrows are going into us,'* that is the students and the teachers acknowledged the learning was passive. Miss Currie and the other teachers in the school went about changing their teaching practice to position their students as active learners. At that point, it was up to Te Awhitu to use his agency and take greater responsibility for his own learning. To his credit, he stepped up and created some significant changes in the way he was learning and living. His confidence and energy levels

surpassed expectations. Te Awhitu's video became a landmark occasion in that it represented a re-scripting of a 'priority learner' into a 'cognitively capable learner'. Te Awhitu articulated for himself what that meant and thousands of people around the world have enjoyed hearing his story.

Acknowledgement

The authors of this case study would like to thank Te Awhitu, his teacher Clare Currie and Te Awhitu's Dad for exploring Infinity Learning Maps in such a proactive way. We would also like to thank the principal of Rata Street School, Dave Appleyard, and Glenda Stewart, senior manager and governors for investing in support to Te Awhitu and other students to improve their learning situations. That investment paid off, partly because the leaders agreed on change priorities that were relevant to the children's learning and living situations. Another reason for the sound investment was because it gave Te Awhitu an opportunity to step up and take more responsibility for his learning. We take our hats off to schools that manufacture opportunities for students like Te Awhitu to do that. We also acknowledge the New Zealand Government and Ministry of Education for funding and supporting the broader Learning and Change Networks strategy.

References

Annan, J., & Carpenter, R. (2015). Learning and change networks. *Kairaranga, Volume 16, Issue 2*. Retrieved from <http://bit.ly/2jwXweA>