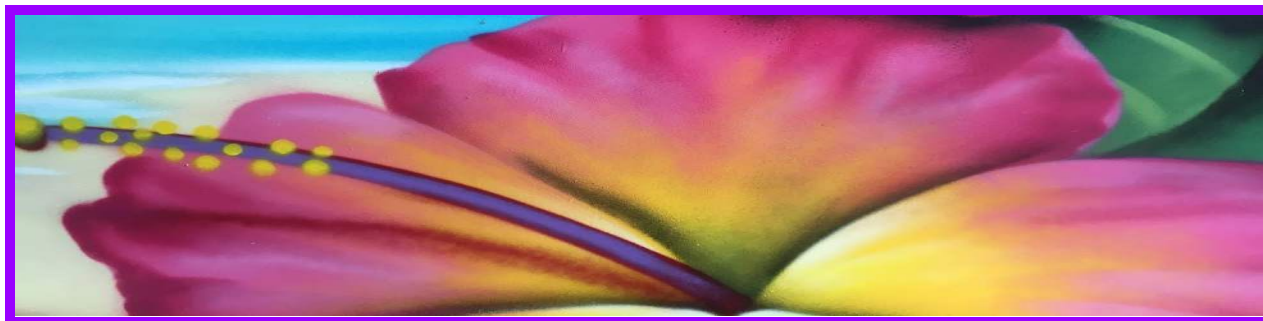




Executive Summary

Debunking popular myths about primary schools located in low socio-economic areas

Various myths have perpetuated misconceptions about the potential of low decile schools and the tamariki and whānau they serve. By challenging these myths, this summary advocates for a paradigm shift in the way we perceive schools and leadership approaches within economically disadvantaged communities.

Some common myths are:

1. Myth: Financially poorer communities lack strong whānau values

Contrary to belief, whānau in low income areas often possess strong whānau values with deep rooted traditions and have supportive whānau connections. There is a reverence for elders and the wisdom of their ancestors. The Maori concept of whānaungatanga is valued (respectful, reciprocal relationships.)

2. Myth: Parents in low socio economic schools can't, won't and don't

Highly effective low decile schools recognise and leverage the talent and engagement of parents and whānau fostering a culture of possibilities rather than deficit. 'Can, will and do' is the language they use to describe their parents and whānau.

3. Myth: Schools in poorer socio-economic areas have disadvantaged, uncared for and unruly tamariki who achieve poorly

An anomaly of highly effective schools in poorer communities is that their tamariki glow with whānau care, are respectful and well behaved. Successful schools in poorer communities maintain high expectations for parents and whānau, who despite facing significant challenges, demonstrate love, commitment, resilience and resourcefulness in providing for their tamariki.

4. Myth: Schools in low socio-economic areas are unable to help themselves

In some instances external support agencies can inadvertently foster dependency by providing aid that disempowers people. Rather than relying on external interventions, successful schools

in poorer communities tap into their own inherent strengths and resources to address challenges and foster improvement.

5. Myth: Schools in low socio-economic areas have low expectations for student success

Achievement is not predetermined by socio-economic status or post code. Schools that excel in poorer communities, set high expectations for staff, tamariki, parents and whānau and have a culture where these high standards are evident in all aspects of school life. They know low expectations hinders progress.

6. Myth: Students in low socio-economic schools are less capable

Another common myth suggests that tamariki lack drive and belief in their own capabilities. Academic brilliance and cultural richness are evident as well as vibrant artistic traditions including music, dance and storytelling. Highly effective schools provide opportunities for tamariki to succeed both culturally and academically, and cultivate a sense of self efficacy, empowering tamariki to reach their full potential.

7. Myth: Schools in low socio-economic areas have poor quality teachers

Contrary to the belief that schools in poorer communities are inherently disadvantaged and employ ineffective teachers, many teachers in these schools are inspirational and aspirational for the tamariki they teach, seeing the potential within each of their tamariki. They are highly dedicated, innovative and passionate about their tamariki being the best they can be in all aspects of school life.

8. Myth: Low socio-economic schools lack academic rigour and resources

Schools in low socio-economic areas are often financially better off than schools located in higher demographic areas where less Government funding is received. Innovative and dedicated teachers are the most valuable resource as they will always enrich the learning experience of their tamariki irrespective of area where they teach. How a school presents itself is not determined by it's location, it is determined by the standards and expectations set by the leaders within the school.

By dispelling these myths, this summary empahsizes the importance of recognising and leveraging strengths within a low decile school. This shift in perception can lead to more equitable educational opportunities and better outcomes for all tamariki, irrespective of their background or where they live.

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