

## NZEI Support Staff Scholarship – 2023 Report

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### **My proposal and its purpose:**

My proposal is titled 'Whaowhia Te Kete Mātauranga - Fill the Basket of Knowledge.' The purpose of my proposal was to fill my professional kete by developing knowledge and understanding of how to be an effective and culturally responsive kaiako in Aotearoa by completing my degree studies at the University of Waikato whilst also literally filling my kete with rich and meaningful resources to carry with me into my teaching practice, to enhance the learning of ngā tamariki.

### **Progress to date:**

I graduated in April 2023 from the University of Waikato. I am currently investigating the possibility of postgraduate/master's level study in 2024, with a focus on inclusive education.

At the end of 2022, I was offered a part-time teaching role at the school in which I had completed my final practicum. I accepted the role as a .4 teacher of a year 6-8 class. Later, I was offered a .6 role as teacher of a year 4-8 class in the school I had currently been employed in as a teacher aide. Working full time, across two schools has had its challenges (especially at assessment and report writing time!) but has also provided me with a number of opportunities for growth and learning.

In terms of my proposal and how the scholarship has supported this, prior to term 4, 2022 my intention was to become a junior teacher after graduation but I had made such great connections with my students and enjoyed teaching at that curriculum level that I accepted these two roles as a senior teacher. I have been able to utilise the many resources I had already purchased as part of my proposal to create inclusive learning environments but needed to extend my resources to support older learners. In this time, I have purchased a range of pukapuka and games that appeal to the interests of older students.

This year to date, I have also engaged in some professional learning and purchased some books around learning disabilities in order to better support my students. Across my 57 students at both schools, I have a number of priority students who present with Autism, Dyslexia, Auditory Processing Disorder, ADHD (2 medicated), hearing loss, severe anxiety and Foetal Alcohol Syndrome. I make it a priority to continue learning about these conditions and how to create a safe space for these students to feel included and valued.

As a teacher, I firmly believe that the students should have agency around the content of their learning and how they learn. This term, at one of my schools, I have based my teaching around WW1, as this is something all students felt strongly connected to. Each one was able to bring a story, or an artifact of a whanau member involved in the war to school. This ignited their interests, and we did a large study on various battles in WW1, the role of war animal, the role of women in WW1, The Māori Contingent, and the impacts of WW1 on our small, rural area. We followed this

up with a trip to the Waiouru Army museum. For the purpose of this topic, and with the support of the scholarship, I purchased a number of books, some artifacts and a kit on WW1 to share with my class to support their understanding of the topic. It was noticed by management and whanau, that the engaging topic led to progress in students' confidence and enthusiasm in both reading and writing on the topic. We are now seeing evidence of progress in both areas as we conduct student assessments.

Without the support of the NZEI Support Staff Scholarship, I would not have been able to supply these resources and experiences for my students to this degree. The scholarship also supported me in completing my degree, as there were costs associated with travelling to the University (200km away) for on-campus weeks, textbooks, practicum resources and graduation. I am very grateful for this level of support.

I continue to learn about how to provide an inclusive environment for all of my students, by providing appropriate resources to support their security in their identity by nurturing their passions, interests, languages, cultures and personalities. I will continue on my learning journey, with student well-being and achievement at the centre of my decision making. I thank NZEI for their role in progressing me to this stage in both my career and life.

Ngaa mihi nui,  
Siobhan McKenna-Murphy