

Capital Training Cultural Celebration

A cultural rōpū, (group) for staff has led to approximately a third more Māori and Polynesian learners completing qualifications at Capital Training's alternative education centres.

Capital Training is a small successful alternative education provider in the Wellington region that works with adults and young people from a wide array of cultures, to upskill their foundation knowledge and skills. Popular courses include work preparation, business administration and workplace literacy and numeracy.



The organisation caters to a range of cultures including Māori and Pasifika, Indonesian and Australian learners, as well as refugees from West African nations.

Capital Training's cultural rōpū focus group consists of staff from all of the organisation's centres representing a range of different cultures and ethnic backgrounds. This group works to build up cultural competencies within its staff by organising a range of activities and information packets for employees. The group also ensures that Capital Training observes cultural traditions at staff gatherings and in the workplace.

Capital Training Resource Developer Rodney August says, "Learners connect with traditional Māori learning and social traditions and use educational tools and ideas from the Pacific Islands and beyond. This focus on using cultural educational tools has translated into success with our young people and success for our business. The celebration of cultural diversity guided by the rōpū is observed and followed through at all levels of the organisation."

Management created and is part of the rōpū. Representatives take part in all events and initiatives put forward by the rōpū focus group. Management actively encourages and rewards staff for getting involved as well.

Between 2013 and 2017 Capital Training has seen significant increases in cultural education achievement across the board, with significant increases in both Māori and Pacific Island achievement throughout all levels in its classrooms.

There has been a 21 per cent increase in course completions and a 36 per cent increase in qualification completion among Māori learners between 2013 and 2017. In the Pacific Island learners there has been a 25 per cent increase in course completions and a 37 per cent increase in qualification completion.

"The rōpū has been invaluable in helping to increase our statistics in this area," says Rodney.

"These significant increases in cultural achievement are a direct result of our new focus on cultural forms of education."

The improvements have also led to funding increases.

The rōpū has also had a positive effect on staff as well as business. One of the school's tutors, Vladimir, is a native of Serbia who now works at Capital Training's Lower Hutt centre.

"Vlad often brings traditional Serbian food in to work as a way to connect his culture and teaching methods to the young people in his class. Vlad has used food as a way to engage his learners in his culture. He then uses this connection to help in his teaching," says Rodney.

"I don't feel like I am judged for my Serbian culture," says Vladimir. "I genuinely feel that my co-workers are interested in my culture and have asked many questions about it during my time here. What I have shared has always felt appreciated."

Vlad also had positive feedback about the rōpū as an initiative: "It tends to rouse us and makes us re-examine our surroundings and environment and appreciate that even though there are more things that unite us than separate us, there is always something unique, exciting and interesting about every individual, regardless of their origins. I feel that it celebrates our diversity and still brings us all closer while fostering respect and understanding of each other's values."

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