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CREATING EQUAL LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

THE MANAIKALANI CASE STUDY





The Manaiakalani community – a cluster of schools in New Zealand – has its roots in Tamaki, a suburb of Auckland. Home to the country’s oldest government housing community, the Tāmaki school district is among the lowest socio-economic groups in the country. The Manaiakalani Programme, born out of an education collective with the inspiration to improve learning outcomes for children at a socio-economic disadvantage, has been working to change things.

Funded by the Manaiakalani Education Trust, the Manaiakalani collective of schools are dedicated to providing students with full digital citizenship and helping them realise

their potential through the use of high-quality learning devices and collaborative teaching methods. Since its beginnings, the success of the Manaiakalani Programme has been well-documented, and it has now become an educational model for other like communities across New Zealand Aotearoa.

This paper provides an overview of the Manaiakalani Programme with insights from Manaiakalani convenor, Russell Burt, who is also principal of Point England School in Auckland – one of the schools in the Manaiakalani collective. It also discusses the support that Acer provides as a technology partner, and the significant value this brings to learners in the Manaiakalani community.



MANAIAKALANI: THE HOOK FROM HEAVEN

Manaiakalani is a constellation with particular significance in Polynesian culture. The name translates to the ‘hook from heaven’. Maui the navigator, followed this hook in the sky to make landfall in Aotearoa New Zealand.

“Manaiakalani is the name of our Kahui Ako or cluster of schools,” explains Russell. “This name was gifted to us by our Kaumatua (Maori elder), – Ihaka Samuels and is the name of the star line the great Navigator Maui tikitiki-a-taranga used to navigate from Hawaiiki to Aotearoa. There are 13 schools in this collective.”

As the vast majority of Manaiakalani’s community of learners are of Māori or Pacific Island descent, the name has special import. It honours Maui’s

prodigious voyage and encapsulates the merging of ancient wisdom with modern technology to inspire new generations.

“Maui combined ancient wisdom with Polynesian high-end tech,” highlights Russell in a video produced by the Polynesian Voyaging Society. “I want these kids to know they are incontrovertibly the descendants of the navigators and consequently have immense capability and can do all kinds of extraordinary things.”¹

***With this premise in mind,
the Manaiakalani Programme
was conceived.***



DIGITAL EMPOWERMENT WITH A TRUSTED PROGRAMME

What are the key objectives of the Manaiakalani Programme?

“The Manaiakalani Programme is aimed at transitioning schools safely and effectively from operating on an ‘analogue platform’ to being fully and safely digital with their learners owning and using high quality individual learning devices whilst simultaneously raising achievement outcomes,” says Russell. “The Manaiakalani Programme has a development framework with seven important components that are put in play to achieve these outcomes.”

As a means of supporting schools to implement this programme, the Manaiakalani Education Trust (MET) was formed a decade ago.

“MET was set up in service of the Manaiakalani schools and was initially involved in procurement, provisioning and

financing of devices for learning in this lowest socioeconomic, Māori and Pasifika community,” elaborates Russell. “MET went on to design, build and provision a community wireless mesh for the taura – learners – in our community and to provide in-class professional learning and development for all of the Manaiakalani schools.”

Following the success of the programme, and upon receiving invitations from other suburbs and regions across New Zealand, The Manaiakalani Programme Outreach was launched.

“Manaiakalani Outreach extended the Manaiakalani Programme to 12 other regions and 100 schools,” Russell states. “MET began in 2011 with \$100 and has now extended over \$45 million worth of services to many thousands of school children and their families.”

A TRUE COMMUNITY OF LEARNING



At its heart, Manaiakalani is a community of learning. It relies on the collaboration between educators, students and their families, and the partnering with technology providers such as Acer to achieve improvements in education outcomes.

According to Russell, whānau investment is essential.

“Whānau is the Māori word for family but has much wider connotations than a narrow nuclear European definition. Manaiakalani whānau are given the opportunity to invest in the education of their tamariki (children) by leasing to own their child’s learning device,” he expands. “Typically, they are purchasing a three-year warranted and insured device that has a quality-insured bag at the rate of approximately \$4NZD per week. This investment is important as it gives whānau sovereignty and ownership in their own lives and also means the device is much better looked after.”

Dorothy Burt, Manaiakalani Programme Lead, says the ability to collaborate through using Chromebooks and Google apps for education has been game-changing for Manaiakalani learners. Largely because it enables learners and their whānau to access their learning anywhere, anytime and at their own pace.

“We’re using Chromebooks in our class groups and we love that when the children sign in they’re straight into their Google apps account and they just start learning,” explains Dorothy.

The current learning device of choice at Point England School – a Manaiakalani primary school with 600 students – is the Acer Chromebook C733.

Russell cites three reasons as to why this device is preferred. These include:

- Quality of performance for learning
- Ease of management and maintenance
- Affordability

Cam Anderson, Country Manager of Acer Computer New Zealand, elaborates on the suitability of the Chromebooks, also touching on the fact that the Chrome interface lends itself to the collaborative approach of the Manaiakalani Programme.

“The Chrome platform offers an easy set up process for schools to administer and maintain. The device that Acer supplies – currently the Acer Chromebook C733 – is a robust, reliable and affordable product that is proven in the New Zealand Education marketplace,” he says. “Both students and teaching staff love the simplicity of the Chrome interface when creating and sharing content.”

Moreover, Cam points out that the Acer C733 Chromebook is now the device of choice for all Manaiakalani schools.

“It is the preferred device for MET, the wider outreach cluster schools and many more schools that have looked to replicate the model of success that the Manaiakalani Programme has been able to achieve,” he states.



PARTNERING TO IMPROVE LIVES

A large part of Cam's role as Country Manager of Acer in New Zealand, is in building long-lasting relationships with partners that align with Acer's values and commitment to the education sector. This extends beyond the sale of computing devices.

"Ensuring that all students, no matter what ethnicity, school or decile they may represent have equal digital learning opportunities is the driving force behind Acer's commitment to the Manaiaikalani Programme and MET," he stresses. "Acer has been an integral partner for the MET for the past seven years. During this time, we have provided in excess of 20,000 computing devices into the hands of students within the Trust and associated outreach programmes to aid in digital learning."

Significantly, Cam notes that matching the right devices to suit the Manaiaikalani schools' needs has been critical to the programme's overarching success. "Of course, the right product is essential to the success of the MET's digital learning initiatives, and the Acer devices chosen throughout the years have met and exceeded the daily demands of students of all learning ages throughout the country," he

expands. "With a large device fleet, backend service and support is also just as important – if not more important – than the stand alone device."

Furthermore, Acer has created a bespoke support and service model for MET that is suited to their ongoing growth.

"The service and support model we have implemented, with ongoing reviews and feedback from MET, is a key component in the continual expansion of devices to more and more students in the growing Manaiaikalani community," he says. "The Acer team has the flexibility and systems in place to formulate a support model that adapts and changes to the ongoing needs of the MET."

This support has brought significant value to the greater Manaiaikalani community.

"Manaiaikalani enjoys a warm relationship and partnership with Acer," Russell says. "Acer are able to add considerable value to our learners and community partners through conditions of sale, after-sales service, problem solving at a system level and provision of quality devices at an affordable price."



A GROWING SUCCESS

By creating equal digital opportunities, and empowering students with the tools and sovereignty to learn at their own pace, the Manaiaikalani Programme has affected positive change and results.

“One hundred schools have safely and successfully transitioned into the programme, and many thousands of children and families have been helped into ownership,” enthuses Russell. “Our writing results have accelerated across all member schools at a rate of approximately 1.5 years progress in one calendar year. Meanwhile, our reading and maths results are currently sustaining a 1 year progress rate in the academic year – still an improvement for low socioeconomic schools.”

Furthermore, students that have been in a Manaiaikalani primary school, are entering secondary school with a noticeable academic advantage, says Russell.

“Our tauira enrolling in year 9 from Manaiaikalani primary schools have shown a clear academic advantage as measured by standardised testing in maths, reading and writing.”

To summarise Acer’s contribution to this achievement, Cam reiterates Acer’s commitment to the Manaiaikalani Programme and its continued success.

“We are extremely proud to have helped grow this programme from the initial cluster of 13 schools, to now over 100,” he concludes. “The research, measurements and student success rates that MET collate, prove that this is a system that works, and truly improves the learning outcomes of New Zealand’s most challenged students.”



REFERENCES

1. Manaiakalani: The Hook from Heaven, Hōkūle'a website:
<http://www.hokulea.com/manaiakalani-the-hook-from-heaven/>

www.manaiakalani.org

www.acer.com