



Making Connections for
Pacific Learners' Success
November 2013

Foreword

The Education Review Office (ERO) is an independent government department that reviews the performance of New Zealand's schools and early childhood services, and reports publicly on what it finds.

The whakataukī of ERO demonstrates the importance we place on the educational achievement of our children and young people:

Ko te Tamaiti te Pūtake o te Kaupapa
The Child – the Heart of the Matter

In our daily work we have the privilege of going into early childhood services and schools, giving us a current picture of what is happening throughout the country.

We collate and analyse this information so that it can be used to benefit the education sector and, therefore, the children in our education system. ERO's reports contribute sound information for work undertaken to support the Government's policies.

The Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs has been working with 25 secondary schools with a high Pacific roll to help with achievement and share good practice. Together these schools account for approximately half of all Pacific secondary students in New Zealand. In this report ERO looks the success of these schools in catering for their Pacific students. The focus is on five key factors identified in previous ERO reports and their presence in the five most successful schools in this study.

The five factors were setting targets for achievement of Pacific learners, helping teachers to engage culturally with Pacific learners, monitoring student achievement, mentoring individual students, and establishing partnerships with parents and the community.

Successful delivery in education relies on many people and organisations across the community working together for the benefit of children and young people. We trust the information in ERO's evaluations will help them in their work.

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Overview

The Education Review Office (ERO) has published three national evaluation reports since 2009 exploring aspects of Pacific learner achievement and recommending next steps for improvement.

2012 report

Disappointingly the most recent report¹ stated that: *Although ERO found positive practices in some schools, there were no significant system-wide changes evident in the way schools were responding to Pacific students, despite the widely recognised disparities in education outcomes for these students.*

Concerns remain for the effective provision of education for Pacific learners.

In the 2012 report, ERO identified some of the factors most likely to be evident in schools that were catering well for Pacific learners. These included setting targets for achievement of Pacific learners, helping teachers to engage culturally with Pacific learners, monitoring student achievement, mentoring individual students, and establishing partnerships with parents and the community. The success of these five factors depended on overall strengths in:

- leadership, where school board and leaders are well informed and focused on finding ways to get the best possible outcomes for their students
- review and improvement processes which use a wide range of high quality data, including indicators such as attendance data, to determine effectiveness of interventions and to inform target setting and resource allocation
- curriculum development that is not only responsive to the culture of Pacific learners, but is also engaging and effective
- relationships with Pacific families and the community in order to support and motivate the learner through mentoring and identifying realistic learning pathways.

The Ministry of Education (the Ministry) and the Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs have worked together to develop the 2013-2017 Pasifika Education Plan. This strategic document aims to raise the achievement of all Pacific learners. Although some Pacific students achieve academic success with National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) qualifications, not all do. As a group, their overall results are below the national norms for achievement, notably in NCEA Level 1 literacy and numeracy, and NCEA Level

¹ ERO (2012) *Improving Education Outcomes for Pacific Learners*. Wellington: Education Review Office. Available at www.ero.govt.nz/National-Reports/Improving-Education-Outcomes-for-Pacific-Learners-May-2012

2013 report

In this current report, ERO analysed the most recent ERO review reports and file notes for 25 secondary schools with large Pacific populations. ERO also looked at the associated charter documents, other national evaluation reports,² the Ministry's reporting on Pasifika Education Plan (PEP) progress; and the New Zealand Qualification Authority's (NZQA) data about schools and students' achievement.

This report explores the relationship between the five factors, identified in the 2012 ERO report, and actual achievement levels in the 25 schools. ERO noted other practices which contributed to Pacific learners' success. The report also shares current research about best practice in schools and, specifically, research about improving outcomes for Pacific learners.

Five most successful schools in this study

At five of these schools ERO found that Pacific learners were achieving at or close to the national norms for achievement of National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) Level 1 literacy and numeracy, NCEA Level 2 and University Entrance.

These schools provided high quality programmes, tailored to the needs and aspirations of Pacific learners and their parents. Overall strengths were also identified in these schools' leadership, review and improvement practices, curriculum development, and relationships with Pacific families and the community.

The five schools where Pacific learners achieved well each had a clear vision and the capacity to bring that vision to life. Sound partnerships with the community, together with high quality achievement data, informed decisions about the curriculum. Good self-review processes enabled school leaders to determine what was effective in engaging and improving outcomes for their students and to make refinements as necessary for ongoing improvement. Strength in leadership brought all these aspects together, resulting in the capacity to bring their vision to life.

In many of the schools where Pacific learners did not have good levels of achievement the five factors were not working together coherently or one or more were lacking. Typically in these schools, review and improvement practices needed to be strengthened.

² ERO (2010) *Secondary Schools: Promoting Pacific Student Achievement: Schools' Progress*;

(2012) *Careers Information, Advice Guidance and Education (CIAGE) in Secondary Schools*; and (2013) *Pathways for future education, training and employment*. Wellington: Education Review Office. Available at www.ero.govt.nz/National-Reports

Next steps

ERO recommends that school leaders:

- increase board, management and staff understanding of Pacific peoples' cultures, aspirations and needs
- develop a curriculum that values Pacific identity and supports improved achievement
- enhance the identification, collection and analysis of data relevant to raising achievement levels and monitoring effectiveness of interventions
- provide learning opportunities for staff to build professional capacity in the use of longitudinal data to tailor learning programmes to individual and group needs
- ensure that reporting to the board adequately monitors the achievement of Pacific students throughout the school, and is sufficient to inform decisions about target setting and allocation of resources
- establish strong relationships between mentors and students; students, teachers and parents; and with the community, so that all can work together to create meaningful support networks for students.

ERO recommends that the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs (MPIA) provide ongoing support for leaders in these 25 schools to enhance school processes and systems. School leaders need the professional capacity to identify good practice within the school and to manage change to ensure that such good practice is extended school wide and that all staff respond effectively to Pacific learners.

Introduction

The achievement of Pacific learners is an ongoing focus for the Ministry, ERO and MPIA. Ministry data from 2011 shows that approximately 66 percent of Pacific school leavers achieve NCEA Level 2, whereas the achievement rate for Pākehā students remains significantly higher at approximately 80 percent.

The Ministry has developed two Pasifika Education Plans (PEP) (2009-2012 and 2013-2017) each with specific targets for improving Pacific learner achievement. The Ministry reported progress against these targets in the *Pasifika Education Plan – Monitoring Report 2010*³ and recognised that many of the early targets had been met or would be met by 2012. The new targets set for 2017 aim to raise achievement to the same level as non-Pasifika learners.

This report looks at factors contributing to Pacific learners' success in 25 schools. ERO's approach to this study is outlined in Appendix 1: Methodology. ERO identifies practices that contributed to success for Pacific learners in terms of gaining NCEA Level 1 literacy and numeracy, and NCEA Level 2 and University Entrance. These measures are chosen as they are expressed as targets in the PEP, 2013-2017.⁴

The focus on NCEA Level 2 is of particular significance as it is now seen to be the desired minimum qualification for school leavers giving them opportunities in terms of further education, employment, health outcomes and a better quality of life.⁵ University Entrance, while not a qualification, is included as a useful measure of success and future opportunity.

Targets for Pacific school leavers

Targets identified by the Ministry in the PEP include the following:

- The number of all Pasifika school leavers leaving with NCEA Level 1 literacy and numeracy qualifications increases from 80 percent in 2010 to 95 percent in 2017.

³ Ministry of Education (2010) *Pasifika Education Plan – Monitoring Report 2010*. Wellington: Ministry of Education. Available at www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/series/22967/pasifika-education-plan-monitoring-report-2010

⁴ Ministry of Education (2013) *Pasifika Education Plan 2013-2017*, Wellington: Ministry of Education. Available at www.minedu.govt.nz/NZEducation/EducationPolicies/PasifikaEducation/PasifikaEducationPlan2013

⁵ States Services Commission Available at www.ssc.govt.nz/bps-boosting-skills-employment and www.minedu.govt.nz/theMinistry/BetterPublicServices/More18YearOldsWithNCEALevel2

- Eighty-five percent of all 18-year-old Pasifika students achieve NCEA Level 2 or equivalent qualifications in 2017.⁶
- The number of Pasifika school leavers with University Entrance increases to achieve at least parity with non-Pasifika school leavers in 2017.

⁶ This is the same as the Better Public Services target for all 18-year-olds.

National figures for 2011⁷ related to the last two of these targets are:

- 63 percent of Pasifika students achieved NCEA Level 2 compared to 73 percent of non-Pasifika students
- 29 percent of Pasifika students gained University Entrance compared to 47 percent of non-Pasifika students

National figures for 2011⁸ for NCEA Level 1 literacy and numeracy are:

- 82 percent of Pasifika students attained the qualification compared to 87 percent of all students.

ERO's Pacific strategy and previous reports

ERO has also developed a Pacific Strategy 2013-2017⁹ that focuses on:

- providing high quality evaluation to build success in the education system
- providing useful information for parents and communities
- promoting good practice in schools.

This strategy complements the PEP and commits to interagency cooperation to support Pacific learners to reach their full potential, secure in their Pacific identity.

To sharpen the focus of both schools and ERO on what was happening for this group, ERO included 'Success for Pacific students' as one of the ongoing national evaluation topics since 2011.

ERO has also completed three evaluation reports looking at provision for Pacific learners. The latest, *Improving Education Outcomes for Pacific Learners* published in May 2012,¹⁰ identifies good practice and makes strong recommendations for improvement.

⁷ Ministry of Education, Education Counts website

Available at www.educationcounts.govt.nz/statistics/schooling/school_leavers2 Figures given here are to two significant figures.

⁸ NZQA (2012), *Priority Schools v1-9*. Wellington: New Zealand Qualifications Authority.

⁹ ERO (2012) *ERO Pacific Strategy 2013-2017*. Wellington: Education Review Office.

Available at www.ero.govt.nz/Review-Process/ERO-Pacific-Strategy-2013-2017

¹⁰ ERO (2012) *Improving Education Outcomes for Pacific Learners*. Wellington: Education Review Office. Available at www.ero.govt.nz/National-Reports/Improving-Education-Outcomes-for-Pacific-Learners-May-2012

Five key factors

ERO's previous reports highlight the following as key factors that could contribute to raising outcomes for Pacific learners:

1. Pacific learners are mentored and have access to learning support.
2. Partnerships with parents and communities are promoted to improve the achievement of Pacific learners and ensure sound subject/strategic plans.
3. Teachers receive professional development enabling them to engage culturally with Pacific students.
4. Pacific learners' performance is monitored and there is a focus on improvement.
5. School leaders set specific targets to improve Pacific learner achievement.

Secondary schools with large Pacific rolls

MPIA is working with central and local government agencies, Pacific communities and 25 secondary schools to raise overall achievement of Pacific learners. This is in keeping with its Statement of Intent (2013-2016)¹¹ which prioritises *Improved outcomes for Pacific young people in education, training and employment*, and the PEP target that 85 percent of Pacific leavers will attain NCEA Level 2 or above by 2017.

MPIA initially targeted 20 schools with a high number of Pacific learners and five more schools asked to be included in this initiative. All but one of these 25 schools are in Auckland. Between them, these 25 schools have on their rolls, approximately half of all the Pacific secondary-age students in New Zealand. Details relating to locality, size and type of school are in Appendix 2.

MPIA is working with these schools to develop their capability to respond to Pacific learners by:

- strengthening initiatives that are successful in raising Pacific learners' achievement
- sharing best practice across the schools
- supporting the implementation of new programmes focused on Pacific learners' success.

This ERO report explores the confidence and capability of the 25 secondary schools with large Pacific rolls in relation to the five key factors above, and identifies other features that promote high levels of achievement for Pacific learners. The report aligns ERO findings with current research about best practice in schools that improve outcomes for Pacific learners.

¹¹ Available at www.mpia.govt.nz/statements-of-intent/

Findings

ERO asked the following evaluative questions:

- To what extent is the presence of the five key factors related to positive achievement for Pacific learners?
- What other features are characteristic of those schools that demonstrate success in achieving positive academic outcomes for Pacific learners?

The findings, in response to these questions, are presented under these headings:

- presence of the five key factors previously identified in ERO reports
- other features for success
- successful initiatives for Pacific students.

Presence of the five key factors previously identified in ERO reports

In the five most successful¹² of the 25 schools with large numbers of Pacific students, the key factors were strongly evident.

Pacific learners are mentored and have access to learning support

In the report *Secondary schools: Pathways to future education, training and employment*,¹³ ERO found that schools focusing on the individual needs and progress of Pacific students provided organised additional tutoring, and support to set goals and develop their career pathways. Such interactions help students to develop self-awareness and the capacity to make decisions about their learning and future careers. These in turn have been shown to increase students' motivation to learn.

Schools in this study that offered high quality mentoring and targeted learning support also had high levels of achievement for Pacific learners. Eighteen of the schools had mentoring and support programmes for their Pacific learners. The extent of mentoring varied between schools, from meeting with form teachers to discuss goals and pathways, to working with mentors from the community or external providers.

One co-educational school, where many Pacific students achieved success, had a partnership with a university provider that involved university students mentoring senior Pacific students. These senior students also had opportunities to develop their

¹² ERO determined that a school was successful if its Pacific learners had high levels of achievement, as measured against the targets set by the Ministry, and received a positive ERO review report.

¹³ ERO (2013) *Secondary schools: Pathways to future education, training and employment*. Wellington: Education Review Office. Available at www.ero.govt.nz/National-Reports/Secondary-Schools-Pathways-for-future-education-training-and-employment-July-2013

leadership skills as they went on to mentor Year 8 students from selected schools. Students involved in the Health Science Academy (HSA), operating in three schools, were provided with effective mentoring through the Pasifika Medical Association (PMA) which supported students in their career pathways. More detail about this initiative is provided later in this report.

ERO identified the Starpath¹⁴ programme as another strong positive initiative in 11 of the schools. Involvement in Starpath assisted schools to develop the confidence to mentor students using achievement data to inform the process. This programme is also discussed in more depth later.

When learning support for Pacific learners was specified in individual school's ERO review reports it was clear that a variety of approaches were used. Examples of initiatives in place included:

- Pacific learners supported through a Focused Learning Department¹⁵
- a school¹⁶ with a strong emphasis on teaching literacy and numeracy skills in Years 7-10
- a dedicated Literacy Centre to bolster achievements
- a learning support home-room and the use of teacher aides.

Once again it can be seen that a single approach is rarely sufficient, and that often several strategies are needed to best support learners at particular risk of not achieving success.

ERO identified the provision of targeted learning support as an area for development in the ERO review reports of three of the schools. These schools were also generally those where Pacific students were not achieving well. Little mention was evident in the ERO review reports or these schools' files about extension and enhancement opportunities being offered in schools, either for all students or for Pacific learners. Extension and enhancement opportunities should feature as part of the provision to meet the needs of Pacific learners.

¹⁴ Starpath is a Partnership for Excellence project led by The University of Auckland together with the New Zealand Government. It aims to address New Zealand's comparatively high rate of educational inequality with Māori and Pacific students, and students from low income families.

¹⁵ An individual school's name for their dedicated learning support unit.

¹⁶ ERO determined that general initiatives in schools with a Pacific roll in excess of 55 percent were deemed to be targeting Pacific learners unless stated otherwise.

Partnerships with parents and communities are promoted to improve the achievement of Pacific learners and ensure sound subject/strategic plans.

Research evidence¹⁷ highlights that effective partnerships between schools and parents, whānau and communities can result in better outcomes for students. The better the relationship and engagement, the more positive the impact on students' learning.

ERO also found in its report, *Promoting Pacific Student Achievement Schools*,¹⁸ that the schools that succeeded in raising Pacific student achievement generally had close links with parents, families and communities. Where partnerships were strong, parents were engaged in their child's learning, and students had a clear learning pathway, a sense of purpose and were motivated.

ERO's review reports referred to partnerships with Pacific parents in 20 of the schools in this study. All schools identified that establishing good relationships between school, home and students was important to improve achievement levels for all students. The role that relationships play is clearly seen in this comment from one of the school's ERO review report.

The school's progress and effectiveness are further underpinned by open, strong relationships with students, parents and whānau, the community and educational providers and researchers.

(Co-educational school, mid-decile, less than one-quarter Pacific roll)

The influence of Starpath in schools encouraged academic counselling to occur with Pacific parents. ERO acknowledged that Starpath had a profound effect in terms of strengthening the partnerships that support and motivate the learner as noted in this school's ERO review report.

The academic counselling programme effectively supports transition into learning at secondary school and features:

- *a highly valued parent-teacher meeting attended by 75 percent of parents (including high numbers of Māori and Pacific parents) where students' progress and goals are discussed in depth*
- *academic target setting, based on longitudinal achievement data, to set specific individual targets to motivate students to achieve more highly.*

(Co-educational school, mid-decile, with less than one-quarter Pacific roll)

¹⁷ Biddulph, Fred; Biddulph, Jeanne; and Biddulph, Chriss. (2003) *Best evidence synthesis: the complexity of community and family influences on children's achievement in New Zealand*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.

¹⁸ ERO (2010) *Promoting Pacific Student Achievement Schools*. Wellington: Education Review Office. Available at www.ero.govt.nz/National-Reports/Promoting-Pacific-Student-Achievement-June-2010

Many different forms of community partnerships were referred to in 12 of the schools' ERO review reports. The range included partnerships with the universities, health providers, local churches, Pasifika School Community Parent Liaison, workplaces and board representation. It is clear that where these were part of a purposeful school initiative they contributed to raising achievement.

Not only are the partnerships important in themselves, but good community links also provided school leaders with opportunities to gauge the aspirations of the community for its young people. The importance of asking students and their parents questions to inform decisions about culturally appropriate curriculum cannot be underestimated. The discussion strengthens the parents' relationship with the school and, if a culturally responsive curriculum is developed, this can enhance the relevance and efficacy of learning for students.

Ann Milne, in her report *Colouring in the White Spaces: Cultural Identity and Learning in School*,¹⁹ makes a strong case that 'secure self knowledge and [cultural] identity might be a prerequisite for self esteem and self efficacy. Self efficacy might in turn lead to higher engagement in learning'.

Schools working in partnership with their communities can help establish a strong cultural identity for students as a foundation for their learning.

Teachers receive professional development enabling them to engage culturally with Pacific students

ERO's findings in its 2012 report, *Improving Education Outcomes for Pacific Learners*, emphasised the importance of engaging Pacific students. Schools that include Pacific perspectives in the curriculum provided opportunities for Pacific learners to draw on their own knowledge of the world. This enabled students to succeed by building on activities and experiences with which they were familiar or confident.

Research demonstrates that by directly experiencing the culture of many of their students, teachers can be challenged to examine their existing beliefs and attitudes towards that culture, and to reflect on how those attitudes and beliefs might positively or negatively impact on their effectiveness as teachers.²⁰ The cultural efficacy of teachers is enhanced through such learning. Having professional development that can similarly challenge teachers and then support them to develop appropriate

¹⁹ Ann Milne (2009) *Colouring in the White Spaces: Cultural Identity and Learning in School* Available at www.appa.org.nz

²⁰ Peter Allen, Leali'i Tufulasi Taleni, Jane Robertson (2008) *In order to teach you, I must know you*. University of Canterbury: Pasifika Initiative 2008.

classroom practices would be advantageous to engage culturally with Pacific learners.²¹

Twelve schools in this study had focused professional development that enabled them to engage culturally with Pacific students. One school, with four-fifths of the roll made up of Pacific students, had teacher development to strengthen culturally responsive teaching and learning practices. Three schools had professional development to build teacher capacity in developing contextualised learning programmes and in meeting individual students' needs. Seven schools, including the five schools with most successful student achievement, all identified effective teaching as the focus for their professional development. Effective teaching includes engaging with diverse learners.

Ten of the schools had professional learning related to *Te Kotahitanga*. While this is a programme focused on improving Māori student achievement, the strategies involved are of direct benefit to Pacific learners. This benefit is evident in the following comment from one of the school's ERO review report.

Te Kotahitanga is used as the framework for ongoing school reform to improve student-teacher relationships, raise expectations for student achievement, and improve classroom teaching strategies.

(Low decile, single sex school, with over half Pacific learners who are achieving at or above PEP targets)

ERO found examples of other sound professional development in many schools that could lead to improved outcomes for Pacific learners. Five schools had professional development focused on raising literacy levels (which are recognised as a precursor to success). Three of these schools had literacy and numeracy achievement levels above the national norm for Pacific students, and all five were above or close to the target for NCEA Level 2 achievement.²² Another key area identified for professional development in five of the schools related to using assessment data to inform teaching and learning including 'Teaching as Inquiry'.²³

²¹ Lorraine Spiller, (2012) "How can we teach them when they won't listen?" *How teacher beliefs about Pasifika ways of learning affect student behaviour and achievement*. SET 3 2012.

²² Based on cumulative achievement figures for 2012 NCEA results, by ethnicity. Available at www.nzqa.govt.nz/studying-in-new-zealand/secondary-school-and-ncea/secondary-school-statistics/consolidated-files/files-2012/

²³ Available at <http://nzcurriculum.tki.org.nz/Curriculum-stories/Case-studies/Teachers-as-learners-Inquiry/Teaching-as-inquiry>

The ERO reports for two of the five schools with high success rates demonstrated the strength of a multi-faceted approach to professional learning. This is shown in the following example:

All teachers are involved in professional development designed to promote high standards of teaching. Teachers have increased their knowledge about formative assessment, including the use of student achievement data to inform planning. Targeted professional development for middle managers, and an emphasis on improving techniques for teaching literacy and numeracy, is helping the whole school to address the recommendations of the 2007 ERO report. As a result, teachers are positive about further developing their skills in implementing programmes that meet individual students' needs.

(Successful, low decile, single sex school, with a majority of Pacific learners)

Schools with high achievement levels for their Pacific learners often had a curriculum that reflected the aspirations of their communities, and valued and respected the culture, language and identity of their Pacific learners. These successful schools were then evaluating the impact of the interventions. The development of contextualised learning and/or the provision of language classes or Pacific studies programmes was identified as a positive feature in at least six of the 25 schools.

Pacific students' performance is monitored and there is a focus on improvement

In the report *The Collection and Use of Assessment Information: Good Practice in Secondary Schools*,²⁴ ERO found that, unless teachers are knowledgeable about their students' achievements and interests, they cannot be confident that their teaching is targeting students' needs or helping them to reach their potential.

Effective assessment systems are about far more than monitoring success.

Assessment data collected must be used in a planned and thoughtful manner, enabling school leaders to:

- develop effective learning programmes
- determine if these programmes are achieving the desired results
- make informed decisions about the best achievement targets to set
- allocate resources to maximise results.

²⁴ ERO (2007) *The Collection and Use of Assessment Information: Good Practice in Secondary Schools*. Wellington: Education Review Office.

Available at www.ero.govt.nz/National-Reports/The-Collection-and-Use-of-Assessment-Information-Good-Practice-in-Secondary-Schools-June-2007

In this study, ERO found that Pacific learners generally achieved good results when school leaders made sound use of high quality data.

All but one of the 25 schools specifically stated that Pacific learner achievement was monitored and that, for most, improved outcomes were a focus. Reporting to the board of trustees was frequently confined to achievement in Years 11-13, after external examination results were known. Senior leaders rarely monitored progress during the year, especially for Years 9 and 10.

ERO found the absence of monitoring the progress and achievement of students in Years 9 and 10 to be common in many schools and was not lacking just for Pacific students.²⁵ Without data about Years 9 and 10 achievement it is not possible for school leaders to judge how much difference they are making for students. Monitoring the effectiveness of interventions, especially for priority groups, is necessary to enable staff to fine tune interventions and initiatives as necessary.

All of the 25 schools had collected achievement data. However, it was what they did with that information that made a difference. The use of data was an area for development identified in 11 of the schools' ERO reports. Four other schools had self review as a focus for development which is an aspect that also requires good use of data.

Often schools that were not achieving high levels of success for their Pacific learners were the ones that made poor use of their data. For example, ERO identified that some poorly performing schools in the study were not using data to evaluate the impact of teaching and interventions in Years 9 and 10. Others did not use data to inform specific, measurable targets for achievement in literacy and numeracy.

In contrast, in one of the schools with high achievement for Pacific learners, the board of trustees, through the principal and staff, made good use of student achievement information to set annual targets and so continually lift student achievement.

School management set specific targets to improve Pacific learner achievement

In its report, *Improving Outcomes for Pacific Learners*,²⁶ ERO found that, in the most effective schools, senior leaders used the PEP to provide a focus for discussing student achievement with the school's community and to provide the framework for the school target setting. Leaders also analysed student achievement data for all year

²⁵ ERO (2012) *Literacy and Mathematics in Years 9 and 10: Using Achievement Information to Promote Success*. Wellington: Education Review Office. Available at www.ero.govt.nz/National-Reports/Literacy-and-Mathematics-in-Years-9-and-10-Using-Achievement-Information-to-Promote-Success-July-2012

²⁶ ERO (2012) *Improving Education Outcomes for Pacific Learners*. Wellington: Education Review Office. Available at www.ero.govt.nz/National-Reports/Improving-Education-Outcomes-for-Pacific-Learners-May-2012

levels and used this information to set targets and make resourcing decisions responsive to their Pacific learners' needs. ERO also found that although some schools were promoting success for Pacific students, not all schools were making a 'conscious effort' to raise the achievement levels of these students.

Sixteen of the 25 schools in this study had specific targets for Pacific learners. However, these were of variable quality. The 'conscious effort' and focus on Pacific achievement was evident in the five schools with the highest achievement levels for Pacific learners. These schools took action to improve a range of aspects, including attendance, retention, and disciplinary interventions for Pacific learners, in order to support the achievement of the academic targets.

Few schools referred to the PEP or its targets. Only nine (36 percent) made any reference to the PEP in their charters, target setting or professional learning and development. ERO did not ask questions in each school specifically relating to the PEP, so this figure may be under-reporting schools' familiarity with or use of the document. However, 36 percent is in keeping with the findings in ERO's 2012 report, *Improving Education Outcomes for Pacific Learners*, where approximately 35 percent of the 52 secondary schools sampled were aware of, or using, the PEP to some degree.

Five of the schools had broad targets that referred to Māori and Pacific students together. Māori and Pacific students are disparate groups that should have separately defined targets and actions, tailored to their specific needs and aspirations.

Other features for success

Several other features were noted as affecting the success of Pacific students. These included:

- high levels of literacy and numeracy
- the time taken to achieve NCEA Level 2 and University Entrance
- differences between boys' and girls' achievement
- the impact of the school's decile rating.

High levels of literacy and numeracy

The Ministry stated in its 2008 Annual Report²⁷ that students who develop strong foundations in literacy, numeracy and key competencies are more likely to stay engaged for longer in education and to achieve good qualifications.

All of the five most successful schools in this study had high levels of NCEA Level 1 literacy and numeracy attainment. Twelve of the schools exceeded national rates of

²⁷ Ministry of Education (2008) *Annual report*. Wellington: Ministry of Education. Available at www.minedu.govt.nz/theMinistry/PublicationsAndResources/AnnualReport/AnnualReportArchive/AnnualReport08/AnnualReportSec1/Introduction.aspx

success for both Pacific students and all students. Three schools had improved their achievement rates by between 11 percent and 19 percent over the three years that data was reviewed (2009-2011). The trends for improvement in literacy and numeracy are reflected in the general raising of achievement levels for Pacific students across NCEA Level 1 literacy and numeracy, NCEA Level 2 and University Entrance.

There is increasing research evidence²⁸ that reading is perceived by many boys as a feminine thing to do. This presents a challenge for teachers to develop a learning culture where literate masculinity is fostered, especially as literacy is such an important precursor to achievement. As is demonstrated later, Pacific boys, as a group, are at particular risk of not achieving.

Retention and discipline

Students' educational success is dependent on their presence and engagement.²⁹ Thus healthy figures for retention and discipline can be regarded as strong indicators of student engagement.³⁰ Students who are engaged are more likely to learn and achieve and, in turn, students who achieve well are more likely to want to continue to succeed. This motivation promotes further engagement, and raised self esteem and achievement. Both achievement and engagement are strongly influenced by effective teaching. High levels of student achievement are linked to a positive learning environment with high expectations, high levels of motivation and positive relationships.

The five most successful schools in this study consistently had better rates of retention of students to age 17, and lower stand down and suspension numbers than the national figures. Schools exhibiting better rates of retention and disciplinary statistics also had good outcomes for Pacific students in one or all of the PEP target measures.

In contrast, a school with approximately five times the expected number³¹ of stand downs, double the suspensions and double the expulsions was one of the least

²⁸ Alton-Lee, A., & Praat, A. (2000) *Explaining and addressing gender differences in the New Zealand Compulsory School Sector: A literature review*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.

²⁹ ERO (2011) *Evaluation Indicators for School Reviews*. Wellington: Education Review Office.

Available at www.ero.govt.nz/Review-Process/Frameworks-and-Evaluation-Indicators-for-ERO-Reviews

³⁰ Education Counts: *A Report to Schools on New Zealand Student Engagement 2007*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.

Available at www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/schooling/2303/28883/introduction

³¹ This expected number is calculated by NZQA, based on the proportion of Pacific students in the national figures and that proportion then applied to the target school.

effective schools in terms of Pacific learner achievement. This school also had the poorest retention rate of the group, nearly 20 percent below national figures for Pacific students.

Example A successful, single sex, decile 1 school

The school's ERO report noted that:

Among the school's many outstanding features are the strong three-way student-parent-teacher partnerships that support student learning and achievement. Parents are active partners in their children's education.

Good use is made of information about student achievement and information provided by the community, to develop a school curriculum that acknowledges student talents and parent aspirations. Students are able to achieve in Samoan, Tongan and te reo Māori.

This school had already exceeded the Ministry's 2017 literacy and numeracy targets, together with the other targets for achievement as set out in the PEP. ERO noted that success does not rely on the presence of a single feature, but rather the collective impact of many. This school had:

- the five key factors present
- a board of trustees and teachers with high expectations for students' learning
- an active Polynesian performing group
- strong links with their community
- programmes tailored to suit the students' needs
- high retention levels
- a supportive learning environment
- stand downs, suspensions and exclusion rates well below national rates.

Time taken to achieve NCEA Level 2 and University Entrance

It is evident from NZQA data³² for the schools in this study that more Pacific learners take two years to achieve NCEA Level 2 than non-Pacific learners.

³² Figures calculated from data for Year 13 students'; achievement data sourced from cumulative achievement figures for 2012 NCEA results, by ethnicity. Available at

www.nzqa.govt.nz/studying-in-new-zealand/secondary-school-and-ncea/secondary-school-statistics/consolidated-files/files-2012/ Note: Not all schools had a complete set of data in this file.

Generally, 10 percent fewer Pacific learners than their European counterparts attained NCEA Level 2 in Year 12, gaining this instead in Year 13. Approximately 22 percent of Pacific students gained University Entrance in Year 13, compared with approximately 47 percent of European students. This may be a consequence of the Pacific students still working to gain NCEA Level 2 in Year 13 and so not completing the requirements for University Entrance.

However, this data is for two different year groups of learners, and for accurate trends, schools should review their longitudinal data³³ for each group as they progress through the school. It is also unclear what proportion, if any, of Pacific learners stay on for a Year 14 and so achieve the University Entrance requirements. These are all aspects that individual schools could usefully explore to better understand patterns of achievement for Pacific learners and so inform their choice of interventions or initiatives to improve achievement outcomes for this group.

Differences between boys' and girls' achievement

ERO's findings in this study show that Pacific boys are at particular risk of not achieving relevant qualifications. Pacific girls, in all but four of the co-educational schools, achieved at a rate that was up to 20 percent ahead of the Pacific boys. This gender disparity occurred for all students achieving NCEA Level 2 or above, although the differential between girls and boys was generally less in a school's total student population than in the Pacific student group.

Pacific learners in the 25 schools in this study performed better in single-sex environments. Four of the most successful schools, as determined by NCEA Level 2 and University Entrance results for leavers, were single-sex schools. Three of these were girls' schools.

Some schools may not be adequately promoting academic pathways for Pacific learners. In its July 2013 report,³⁴ ERO found that some schools were using vocational programmes mainly as a way to increase qualifications for Pacific (and Māori) students, particularly for boys. While this is certainly of benefit to many students, very few schools were developing academic courses specifically to increase the numbers of Pacific students who are able to enter university. This is a potential risk and one that schools should take into account when designing their curriculum. Schools need to focus on the quality of credits offered and their relevance to students' interests and aspirations.

³³ Data following a group (cohort) of students' achievement from one year to the next.

³⁴ ERO (2013) *Secondary schools: Pathways for future education, training and employment*. Wellington: Education Review Office. Available at www.ero.govt.nz/National-Reports/Secondary-Schools-Pathways-for-future-education-training-and-employment-July-2013

Impact of the school's decile rating

The five most successful schools in this study were mid to low decile. Pacific learner performance nationally appears to be comparatively unaffected by socio-economic pressures. Three of the five next most successful schools were decile 1 schools. The Ministry has previously identified that a decile rating of between 1-6 has less impact on the performance of Pacific students than for Māori or Pākehā students.³⁵

In decile 1-2 schools, Pacific students achieved considerably better than Māori and at approximately the same level as Pākehā students in the low decile schools. However, 2011 NCEA national data shows that in decile 5-6 schools, the number of Pacific learners achieving success increased by four percent, whereas the number of Māori and Pākehā students achieving success increased by approximately 12 percent.

This is a feature that could be investigated by schools to better understand what influences Pacific learners' achievement levels and so inform strategies to lift their achievement, especially in the mid to high decile schools.

Successful initiatives for Pacific learners

Two initiatives stand out as making a significant difference for Pacific learners - a Health Science Academy and the Starpath project.

Health Science Academy³⁶ - Otahuhu College (Auckland)

The Health Science Academy (HSA) at Otahuhu College has had a positive impact on the achievement of a group of Pacific learners. This academy targets Pacific learners with the specific aim to *'deliver an excellent academic focused programme to prepare Pacific students for tertiary study and entry into health science career pathways.'*³⁷

³⁵ Ministry of Education (2007) *Student engagement 2007 v3*. Wellington: Ministry of Education. Available at

www.educationcounts.govt.nz/indicators/data/education-and-learning-outcomes/3664#2

³⁶ HSA is funded by the Pasifika Medical Association through the Ministry of Health Pacific Provider Workforce Development Fund and supported by ASB Community Trusts and the Todd Foundation. The Counties Manukau District Health Board is also involved with hospital tours and career days.

³⁷ *Otahuhu College Health Science Academy, 2011*

Available at <http://workforceinnovation.hiirc.org.nz/page/31099/report-on-otahuhu-colleges-health-science/?q=health%20science%20academy&highlight=health%20science%20academy§ion=22090>

The substantial improvement in achievement outcomes for the 25 learners who started in the HSA in 2011 can be seen clearly,³⁸ especially when compared to the national trends for the same year group. This table shows the first group of students moving through the academy from NCEA Level 1 in 2011 to Level 2 in 2012.

Health Science Academy result only	Otaguru College Health Science Academy	Decile 1 Pasifika students (National figure)	All Pasifika (National figure)	All students (National figure)
NCEA 2011 L 1	57.7	54.3	61.0	77.3
NCEA 2012 L 2	81.8	64.2	68.1	83.1

Some features of the HSA that contributed to its success in motivating and supporting student achievement included:

- one teacher had overall responsibility for the academy
- teachers were committed to making the academy succeed
- teachers involved in the academy collaborated to develop best practice
- students were selected based on science achievement to date and their interest in a health-related career
- resources, including netbooks for students and medical models, were provided to support learning
- the school timetable was flexible, allowing students to:
 - develop exam and study skills through a targeted workshop
 - take double the regular science course (40 credits in total)
 - work together as a cohort
 - attend a wide range of field trips, including visits to Middlemore Hospital, the Liggins Institute, and The University of Auckland to see the health sector in action and experience tertiary-level laboratory work and lectures
- students were supported to develop a clear understanding of the career pathways available to them in the health sector through:
 - daily mentoring by the HSA teacher and mentoring by Pacific Healthcare Heroes, the mentors provided by the Pasifika Medical Association

³⁸ Otahuru College. *Health Science Academy*. Auckland: Otahuru College. Available at www.otahurucollege.school.nz/curriculum/health_sciences_academy

- parental involvement in information evenings
- field trips which enabled them to talk with health professionals
- academy members had a sense of belonging, being in the same tutor group and having their own uniform.

The HSA is an excellent model of what can be achieved with the commitment from the school, the health sector and community trusts working in partnership. Flexibility in the school's curriculum and timetabling enabled students to learn both on-site and through real connections with the Pacific healthcare community and workplaces.

Although HSA has been resourced by external providers, the features outlined are still applicable to creating successful school-based interventions that fully utilise community partnerships.

Starpath Project – Massey High School (Auckland)

This project is a 'partnership for excellence' programme developed by The University of Auckland and the New Zealand Government and has the explicit aim to improve tertiary participation and success. The project does not specifically target Pacific learners but they are a group identified in *Targets and Talk: Evaluation of an evidence-based academic counselling*³⁹ as having significantly improved outcomes.

Massey High School has been working with the Starpath Project team since 2004 and in response to their findings decided to trial an intervention in 2007. The intervention placed more scrutiny on student achievement data, individual student NCEA subject choices, and student aspirations and pathways. The Academic Counselling and Target Setting programme was instigated and comprised three main focus areas, each informed by the analysis of sound achievement data, both quantitative and qualitative. The three areas of focus were:

³⁹ McKinley, E., Madjar, I., van der Merwe, A., Smith, S., Sutherland, S. & Yuan, J.

(2009) *Targets and Talk: Evaluation of an evidence-based academic counselling programme*. Auckland: Starpath Project, The University of Auckland.

Available at www.education.auckland.ac.nz/uoa/targets-and-talk

- improving parent-student-teacher interviews to allow for an in-depth overview of progress with the student's form teacher
- academic counselling with the dean, at least twice a year to discuss progress, aims and plans
- school-wide target setting and individual target setting for Year 11 students in mathematics and English.

The University of Auckland evaluation identified statistically significant gains across a number of areas. Academic gains were made for Pacific students and boys, relative to the national figures for the whole student body. Feedback from parents, students, deans and teachers confirmed the value of the relationships built up and the resulting increased motivation and commitment from the students.

ERO confirmed that gains made by Pacific learners, particularly the boys, were closely related to the positive relationships described and further enhanced by the introduction of visiting 'rockstars'. These are former pupils returning to tell their success stories, to link successes to curriculum areas, showing the relevance of learning, and providing realistic positive role models for current students.

Recommendations from The University of Auckland evaluation align with ERO's six dimensions of good practice described in *Evaluation Indicators for School Reviews*.⁴⁰ Here, student learning, as defined by engagement, progress and achievement, is shown to be dependent on effective teaching, good leadership and governance of the school, a safe and inclusive school culture, and engaging parents, whānau and communities. Developing professional capacity '*to be able to use data to drive improved academic performance of students and schools...*' lay at the heart of the recommendations made in The University of Auckland report and recognised that '*...schools' staff will need increased levels of skills in the identification, collection, management, analysis and use of data.*'

⁴⁰ ERO (2011) *Evaluation Indicators for School Reviews*. Wellington: Education Review Office, p 7. Available at www.ero.govt.nz/Review-Process/Frameworks-and-Evaluation-Indicators-for-ERO-Reviews/Evaluation-Indicators-for-School-Reviews

Conclusion

ERO's findings make it clear that no feature alone led to improved outcomes for Pacific learners. Rather several features must work together coherently for improvements to be made and sustained. The five key factors and other features noted can be summarised under these broader categories:

- leadership
- review and improvement processes
- responsive curriculum
- relationships.

These are expanded below.

Leadership to enact goals

Successful schools were committed to improvement, and held high expectations for Pacific learner achievement. They were sufficiently flexible in timetabling and resource allocation to enable a range of interventions to be considered and implemented. Success came with the professional capability of leaders and staff to enact their goals.

Review and improvement processes⁴¹ based on evidence

Schools with high quality, longitudinal data about student achievement throughout the school, used this to make resourcing, curriculum and teaching decisions based on sound evidence. The effectiveness of interventions and teaching practices was measured and ongoing planning reflected fine tuning of the interventions.

A responsive curriculum

Successful schools had developed a curriculum that was contextually appropriate and sensitive to the cultural knowledge and strengths of Pacific learners. They took into account the needs and aspirations of students and parents.

Relationships between school and community

Successful schools had powerful partnerships between students, teachers, parents, mentors and the wider community to support students. Leaders ensured that they established an appropriate school curriculum and targeted learning pathways for students.

⁴¹ ERO (2011) *Evaluation Indicators for School Reviews*. Wellington: Education Review Office, p.8. Available at www.ero.govt.nz/Review-Process/Frameworks-and-Evaluation-Indicators-for-ERO-Reviews/Evaluation-Indicators-for-School-Reviews

Features working together

Schools exhibiting these features had high levels of achievement for their Pacific learners. Most commonly the ERO reports for the less successful schools identified deficiencies in the quality of data analysis and use, self review and relationships.

Progress towards meeting the specific needs of Pacific learners seems to be better in these 25 schools than was reported in ERO's *Improving Education Outcomes for Pacific Learners*.⁴² That 2012 report identified that only a "small minority" of schools effectively included Pacific themes and contexts in their curriculum or had specific initiatives to support Pacific student engagement. In contrast, about one-quarter of the schools in this study had contextualised or authentic learning and strategies in place to support Pacific learners.

Nevertheless, there remains considerable cause for concern in the overall provision for Pacific students and their achievement. It is essential that schools develop a deeper understanding of the diverse interests and needs of Pacific learners in order to engage them and achieve the targets for success.

Next steps

ERO recommends that school leaders:

- increase board, management and staff understanding of Pacific peoples' cultures, aspirations and needs
- develop a curriculum that values Pacific identity and supports achievement
- enhance the identification, collection and analysis of data relevant to raising achievement levels and monitoring effectiveness of interventions
- provide learning opportunities for staff to build professional capacity in the use of longitudinal data to tailor learning programmes to individual and group needs
- ensure that reporting to the board adequately monitors the achievement of Pacific students throughout the school, and is sufficient to inform decisions about target setting and allocation of resources
- establish strong relationships between mentors and students; students, teachers and parents; and with the community, so that all can work together to create meaningful support networks for students.

ERO recommends that the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs provide ongoing support for leaders in these 25 schools to enhance school processes and systems. School leaders need the professional capacity to identify good

⁴² ERO (2012) *Improving Education Outcomes for Pacific Learners*. Wellington: Education Review Office. Available at www.ero.govt.nz/National-Reports/Improving-Education-Outcomes-for-Pacific-Learners-May-2012

practice within the school and to manage change to ensure that such good practice is extended school wide and that all staff respond effectively to Pacific learners.

Appendix 1: Methodology

The Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs (MPIA) is working with 25 secondary schools to raise overall achievement of Pacific learners. MPIA initially targeted 20 schools with a high number of Pacific learners and five more schools asked to be included in this initiative. All but one of these 25 schools are in Auckland. Between them, these 25 schools have, on their rolls, approximately half of all the Pacific secondary-age students in New Zealand.

This evaluation was carried out by analysing the 25 schools' most recent ERO review reports and associated file notes (dated from 2009 to 2013), charter documents, ERO's National reports⁴³ and their file notes, the Ministry's reporting on PEP progress, New Zealand Qualifications Authority's (NZQA) data about schools, students' achievement (for years 2009-2012) and reports written by other providers relating to two initiatives in schools.⁴⁴

ERO answered the following evaluative questions:

- To what extent is the presence of the five key factors related to positive achievement for Pacific learners?
- What other features are characteristic of those schools that demonstrate success in achieving positive academic outcomes for Pacific learners?

ERO relied on current research regarding good practice in education, as well as good practice in improving achievement outcomes specifically for Pacific learners.

ERO determined, for this context, that a school was successful if its Pacific learners had high levels of achievement, as measured against the targets set by the Ministry, and received a positive ERO report. These are the five schools cited as examples of good practice in this report. The less successful schools had either low levels of achievement and/or an ERO review report which identified significant areas for improvement.

Challenges in the methodology

The information in the schools' ERO review reports pertinent to this analysis varies in content depending on each school's context. This variation is influenced by the specific design for each review when investigating ERO's major evaluative

⁴³ ERO (2010) *Secondary Schools: Promoting Pacific Student Achievement: Schools' Progress*;

(2012) *Improving outcomes for Pacific Learners*, (2012) *Careers Information, Advice Guidance and Education (CIAGE) in Secondary Schools* and (2013) *Pathways for future education, training and employment*. Wellington: Education Review Office.

⁴⁴ These initiatives are the Health and Science Academy and Starpath.

question,⁴⁵ changes over time in the methodology of reviews, and the particular National Education Topic (NET) being investigated at the time of each school's review.

ERO used achievement data for NCEA Level 1 and 2 for 2009-2012 to determine how successful a school was. ERO did not have data for achievement levels for students in Years 9 and 10 and so the notion of value added (how much difference a school makes overall in raising its students' achievement levels) was not able to be taken into account. For example, a school with relatively low achievement for its Pacific learners may still, in fact, be very successful in its work with these students if, on entry to the school, their literacy and numeracy levels were lower than national expectations for their age. Good self-review processes, using longitudinal data, helps schools to identify the extent of value added and this was done well in successful schools.

ERO's analysis relied on what was included in the ERO review reports relating to Pacific learners. Pacific learners were not always mentioned specifically as a sub-group, therefore the analysis may be under-reporting good practice. To mitigate under-reporting of practices ERO determined that, where schools had a roll in excess of 55 percent Pacific learners, generalised comments made about targets and achievement included Pacific learners.⁴⁶ Where there were fewer than 55 percent Pacific learners, ERO accepted that generalised statements did not necessarily include Pacific learners.

Different agencies and government departments talk about and compare Pacific learners to other groups of learners using different terms. This complicates the comparative analysis of achievement and its discussion. In this report, ERO uses the terms as they are used by the agency/department whose data is being referred to. This means that ERO refers to comparisons between Pasifika or Pacific learners and non-Pasifika, Pākehā, European, total students (in a school context) and sometimes to all students nationally.

⁴⁵ ERO's major evaluative question for Education Reviews: How effectively does this school's curriculum promote student learning - engagement, progress and achievement?

⁴⁶ This applies to ten of the schools with Pacific composition ranging from 57 percent-89 percent, with a mean=77 percent.

Appendix 2: Schools in the MPIA group

Table 1: School decile

Decile group	Number of schools
Low (1-3)	18
Medium (4-7)	7
High (8-10)	0
TOTAL	25

Table 2: School composition by gender

Composition of roll by gender	Number of schools
Single sex: girls	3
Single sex: boys	2
Co-educational	20
TOTAL	25

Table 3: School type

School type	Number of schools
Composite Years 1-15	1
Years 7-15	2
Years 9-15	20
Integrated Years 7-15	1
Integrated Years 9-15	1
TOTAL	25

Table 4: Pacific roll

Pacific learners on roll	Number of schools
201-400	8
401-600	8
601-800	5
801-1000	3
Over 1000	1
TOTAL	25

Table 5: Percentage Pacific roll

Percentage of Pacific learners on roll	Number of schools
t16-35	8
36-55	7
56-75	4
76-95	6

Table 6: Locality

Locality	Number of schools
Central Auckland	4
South Auckland	13
East Auckland	2
West	5

TOTAL	25

Auckland	
Wellington	1
TOTAL	25