

National Report Summary

ERO publishes evaluation reports on education issues of national importance. This handout is a summary of a recent national report - it captures the key points and highlights findings which you may find useful. The full report is available on our website - www.ero.govt.nz

Improving Guidance and Counselling for Students in Secondary Schools (December 2013)

The Prime Minister's Youth Mental Health Project aims to improve the mental health of young people aged 12 to 19 years. One initiative of this project is a national evaluation of the current provision of guidance and counselling in schools.

The Education Review Office (ERO) evaluated how well 44 schools and five wharekura provided guidance and counselling for students.

How well did schools provide guidance and counselling?

ERO found that in 30 of the 49 schools/wharekura visited, the guidance and counselling provision was serving students well, with 14 of these schools/wharekura doing this very well. In the remaining 19 schools/wharekura, the provision of guidance and counselling did not serve students well. In four of these schools/wharekura ERO was concerned about the lack of guidance and counselling support for students.

In the group of schools/wharekura where students were very well supported, it was the strong ethos of care and shared understanding about the approach to guidance and counselling that underpinned provision. The features of these schools/wharekura included:

- strong leadership
- strategic resourcing of people, time and space
- people with the professional capacity to help students manage their problems or refer them to expert help
- clear expectations around practice

- good relationships and communication both internal and external to the school/wharekura.

What needed to improve?

In some of the schools/wharekura there was:

- a lack of strategic recognition of guidance and counselling through relevant planning, policies and procedures
- a lack of an integrated approach to, and shared understanding about, guidance and counselling
- a lack of professional learning and development and appropriate appraisal
- poor relationships and communications
- little or no self review of their guidance and counselling provision, so school leaders and trustees did not know if their guidance and counselling provision was meeting the needs of their students.

What did students say?

ERO surveyed 671 students at these schools and wharekura. Overall, students were positive about guidance and counselling in their school, and most had someone they could talk to for support. Many said that guidance counsellors were able to help them and provided practical and useful advice and guidance.

More than two-thirds of students said it was socially acceptable at their school to see someone about guidance and counselling, but commented that assurances about confidentiality and privacy, and ease of access made it easier to seek help.

What did ERO recommend to the Ministry of Education?

ERO recommended that the Ministry of Education:

- review the formula used to calculate the Guidance Staffing Entitlement to ensure this funding better aligns with roll size
- consider ways to support schools and wharekura to appropriately use the Guidance Staffing Entitlement to suit their particular approach and school context
- provide guidelines/expectations for schools and wharekura about the provision of guidance and counselling
- provide targeted professional learning and development (PLD) for school leaders and people working in guidance and counselling roles
- encourage schools and wharekura to include goals and approaches related to student wellbeing and/or guidance and counselling in charters, and annual and strategic planning, and to report on these
- ensure schools have appropriate and sufficient access to external agencies and support services to meet the wellbeing needs of students, including the Ministry working with other government departments in the health and social sectors to facilitate this.

Questions schools and wharekura can use for self review

ERO recommended that schools and wharekura review the extent to which they are using their Guidance Staffing FTTE component to provide guidance and counselling that takes account of their students and their school context.

ERO recommended that schools and wharekura review the effectiveness of their provision of guidance and counselling, by asking questions such as:

- What priority, as a school, do we place on promoting the wellbeing of our students?
- What are the key problems facing our students?
- How well have we documented and integrated a shared understanding of our school's approach to guidance and counselling, and student wellbeing?
- How well do we resource, or can we access, the appropriate people and roles, PLD, resources, and programmes to respond to students' needs?
- How well do our internal and external communications and relationships foster a shared understanding about guidance and counselling and place students at the centre?
- How will we know that our guidance and counselling is promoting positive wellbeing outcomes for our students?
- How meaningful are the measures we use to determine the effectiveness of our provision of guidance and counselling, and do they include student and parent/whānau voice and links to teacher appraisal?

FIND OUT MORE

For more ideas and information, you can read the full report online at www.ero.govt.nz/national-reports

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