

Progress in Pacific Student Achievement

**A pilot evaluation of
Auckland schools**

September 2009

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Overview

The *Pasifika Education Plan 2009-2012*¹ highlights the need to accelerate achievement in early literacy and numeracy, and the attainment of school qualifications through students' presence, engagement and achievement at school. In other words, Pacific students need to be at school in order to be able to learn (presence); they need to be motivated and active participants in their learning (engagement); and they need to achieve at the same rate as other students.

For the last three years, in each school where Pacific students were enrolled, ERO has asked questions about their achievement and the way schools identified and met their learning needs. As part of its education reviews in the Auckland region in late 2008, ERO refocused its evaluation process to investigate what schools knew about Pacific students' presence, engagement and achievement. In addition, ERO asked about initiatives that the schools had developed and implemented since their last education review, and the impact these had on raising achievement outcomes for Pacific students. This report presents the findings of this pilot evaluation in 32 schools in the wider Auckland region.

ERO chose Auckland as the region to pilot this evaluation because two-thirds (66.9 percent) of Pacific peoples live in the Auckland region.² Schools in Auckland, particularly in Manukau City, have the highest concentrations of Pacific students, and the schools tend to be in the lower decile range in a quarter of the pilot schools. In this evaluation, Pacific students comprised more than two thirds of the roll in a quarter of the pilot schools.

Overall, in these schools, Pacific student attendance was not a concern. Although some secondary schools recognised that Pacific students were over-represented among stand downs and suspensions, there was a generally positive trend in aspects of Pacific student attendance. ERO found that student presence was high in almost a third of the schools, and had improved in half. In this evaluation the majority of Pacific students were at school and were there to participate.

Schools had implemented various initiatives to improve or maintain student presence including close monitoring, identifying trends or patterns and intervening early, and developing home-school partnerships. Most schools believed that their initiatives had resulted in improved relationships with parents, improved attendance, fewer disciplinary incidents, but many were yet to establish formal ways of measuring the impact of these initiatives.

Given that Pacific students have good attendance in the majority of schools, it is crucial that school leaders and teachers engage students in relevant and meaningful learning while they are there. ERO found that three-quarters of the schools had either continued to engage their students well or had improved the levels of engagement. These schools had recognised the importance of good quality teaching strategies as

¹ The Ministry of Education's *Pasifika Education Plan 2009-2012* sets out what needs to be done so that the education system 'steps up' for Pasifika students.

² govt.nz/Census/2006CensusHomePage/quickstats-about-a-subject/quickstats-about-culture-and-identity/pacific-peoples.aspx

integral to the engagement process, and had undertaken professional learning and development projects to improve teaching. Although most of these initiatives did not specifically target Pacific student achievement, school leaders believed that the benefits accrued through more focused and evidence-based teaching were of benefit to Pacific students. Formalising review into the outcomes of these initiatives for Pacific students would help to confirm this belief.

In schools with effective student engagement, school leaders had clear expectations for Pacific students. Their prime goal was to reduce achievement disparity and to improve outcomes through good teaching, but the relationship with parents and families was also seen as critical. School leaders sought ways to involve Pacific parents in decisions about their child, to increase their understanding of their child's achievement, and to encourage involvement in school processes and activities.

There is still much to be done to improve the achievement levels and progress of Pacific students. ERO found that about half of the schools in this sample had improved the literacy and numeracy achievement levels of Pacific students since their last review. Some schools had very good assessment data and had used their data analysis to inform teaching. However, it is concerning that about a quarter of schools either had poor quality information about Pacific student achievement or did not collect this data. Similarly, over a third did no analysis of Pacific student achievement and had no targets for Pacific students.

Schools have a critical role in reversing the disproportionate numbers of Pacific students achieving at the lowest levels. If the *Pasifika Education Plan 2009-2012* is to make a positive difference for Pacific students nationally, all schools need to place a strong focus on progress and achievement, and to collect, analyse and use achievement information to improve outcomes.

This report includes vignettes of good practice from schools that have placed a significant emphasis on improving outcomes for Pacific students. There is also a set of self-review questions that schools can use to begin discussions about the extent to which they cater for Pacific students.

Recommendations

ERO recommends that schools:

- monitor, assess and analyse the progress and achievement of Pacific students;
- set appropriate targets to ensure Pacific students achieve in literacy and numeracy;
- develop and maintain partnerships that involve and engage Pacific parents in their children's learning;
- report progress and achievement to parents in ways that clearly state Pacific students' progress and levels of achievement;
- engage in professional development to increase understanding about Pacific peoples and Pacific issues in education; and
- develop teaching practices that are inclusive of and responsive to the learning needs of Pacific students.

Introduction

For the last three years, in each school where Pacific students were enrolled, ERO has asked questions about their achievement and the way schools identified and met their learning needs. The achievement of Pacific students is important to individual schools because evidence gathered in two international studies (PIRLS,³ PISA⁴) shows a significant gap between the highest and lowest achievers and that Pacific students are disproportionately represented in the lowest achieving group.

Critical drivers for the success of all students are their presence at school, their engagement and participation in learning, and their success in achieving good educational outcomes. Being at school, and participating in learning that is both tailored and relevant, are precursors for students' achievement and success, whether they are at primary or secondary school.

This evaluation is a pilot study for an evaluation framework to be used in all schools throughout New Zealand. It was conducted in the wider Auckland region only, and focused on students' presence, achievement and engagement. ERO also investigated the initiatives that schools had put in place in the last three years to improve Pacific student achievement outcomes.

Fifty-three schools were reviewed during the period of this evaluation. They comprised eight secondary, 33 primary, eight intermediate, three special or health camp schools, and one composite school. This range is not a representative sample that reflects the national profile of school types.⁵ Although the differences in comparative group sizes are significant, they are attributable to the regional focus of this evaluation.

Twenty-one schools had small numbers of Pacific students on the roll, and although ERO used the evaluation framework as part of these school reviews the numbers were too small for valid analysis. This report does not include them in the general findings, which therefore cover 32 schools. However, all schools have a responsibility for ensuring that their Pacific students achieve at levels comparable to national expectations and ERO will continue to ask schools about the progress and achievement of their Pacific students.

Strategic Links

The importance of ERO continuing to report on the progress of Pacific students is supported by *National Administration Guideline 1 (i-iv)* that requires every board of trustees, through its principal and staff, to implement teaching and learning programmes giving priority to literacy and numeracy in the first four years of schooling; through a range of assessment practices to gather information to monitor

³ Progress in International Reading Literacy Study conducted under the auspices of the [International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement](http://minedu.govt.nz/goto/pirls) (IEA), <http://minedu.govt.nz/goto/pirls>.

⁴ Programme for International Student Assessment, commissioned by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), http://minedu.govt.nz/data_collections/pisa_research/pisa_2006.

⁵ See Appendix 1 for Frequency Tables.

progress and achievement and to identify and address the needs of students at risk of failure.

This evaluation is also closely linked to the Ministry of Education's *Pasifika Education Plan 2009-2012* which is the latest iteration of an earlier plan for 2008-2010 that was in currency at the time of the field work for this review.

The *Pasifika Education Plan 2009-2012* highlights the need to accelerate achievement in early literacy and numeracy, and the attainment of school qualifications through students' presence, engagement and achievement at school. In other words, Pacific students need to be at school in order to be able to learn (presence); they need to be motivated and active participants in their learning (engagement); and they need to achieve at the same rate as other students.

What did ERO want to know?

The overarching evaluation question ERO asked was:

What does the school know about progress in Pacific student achievement since the last ERO review?

ERO sought answers to this broad question through six investigative questions about the extent to which there had been improvements in:

- Pacific student presence at school;
- Pacific student engagement with learning;
- the board of trustees' knowledge and understanding of Pacific issues;
- the school's engagement with its Pacific community;
- student achievement in literacy and numeracy from Years 1 to 10; and
- the quality of the school's achievement information for Pacific students.

Information from individual school reviews was nationally aggregated to provide the findings for this report. These findings are reported under the following headings.

- Presence
- Engagement
- Achievement

The report includes four vignettes of schools with significant numbers of Pacific students on their rolls that have developed strategies to enhance the progress and achievement of their Pacific students. There are also three vignettes of schools with small Pacific rolls that have made conscious efforts to identify and provide effective programmes for their Pacific students.

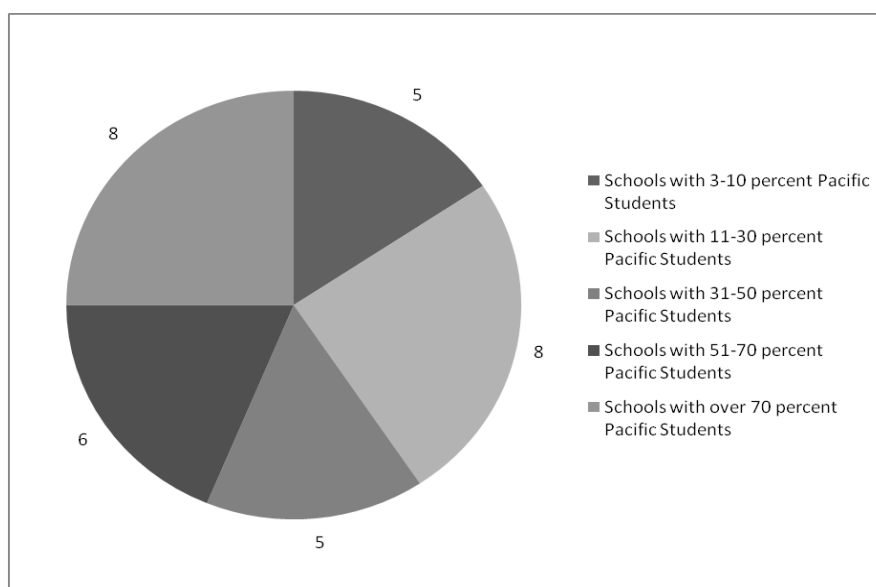
What did the statistics show about the schools?

Roll numbers

In 27 percent of the schools, Pacific students comprised over half of the roll, and in eight of these more than two-thirds of the roll were Pacific students. The largest percentage of Pacific students was 85 percent, in an urban secondary school.

The 21 schools with fewer than three percent Pacific students on their rolls were not included in the general findings.

Fig 1 Percentages of Pacific students in pilot schools



The largest Pacific ethnic groups overall were Samoan and Tongan, although there were significant numbers of Cook Island Māori students in some schools. Tongan students were the largest group in one urban primary (49 percent of the total school roll), while Samoan students comprised 47 percent of students at one urban secondary school.

Niuean, Fijian, Tokelauan, and Tuvaluan, made up the other major ethnic groups in this sample and some students were grouped together and classified by schools as 'other Pacific' rather than being identified by specific ethnicity. One primary school had recently enrolled eight Tuvaluan and 20 Kiribati students whose parents had come to work at a local horticultural facility. This meant that the number of Pacific students had risen from less than one percent to almost five percent in a relatively short period, and points to the importance of school responsiveness in areas where there is a seasonal labour market.

Participation in early childhood education

In this evaluation, primary schools were asked what they knew about Pacific students' prior attendance at an early childhood education service. Staff in most schools were able to give an estimate of how many Pacific students had attended early childhood education. In 13 percent of primary schools all Pacific students had attended a

service, and in over half most or some had early childhood education experience. However in over 20 percent of primary schools in this sample, staff did not know if Pacific students had early childhood education experience.

Pacific staffing

Just over a half of the schools reported that they had at least one Pacific teacher on the staff. Seventeen percent had more than three, and two schools had 17 Pacific teachers. Almost two-thirds of the schools had the same number of Pacific staff as they had at the time of their last ERO review, and just under a third had increased their Pacific staffing.

Of the schools with Pacific teachers, nearly two-thirds had one or more in senior management positions. This figure represented an increase in 13 percent of schools, while most remained unchanged since the last review. Of the sample, 28 Pacific staff held senior management positions. For most schools, this represented one or two Pacific staff in senior management, but two schools had four or five senior managers who were of Pacific ethnicity.

Seventeen percent of the schools had Pacific administration staff, representing an increase in three schools since the last review. More schools had Pacific teacher aides (28 percent), and 15 percent had increased their numbers of support staff.

Thirty percent of the schools had Pacific trustees on the board, and over half of these had increased Pacific representation since the last review. One secondary school had nine Pacific representatives on the board. A third of the schools with more than 20 percent Pacific enrolments, had no Pacific board members.

Findings

Presence

What did schools know or report?

Since the last ERO review, Pacific student presence remained high in almost a third (9) of the schools, and substantially improved in a further two schools. Some improvement was evident in 14 schools. Pacific student presence is not a concerning factor.

Most of these schools collated and analysed attendance information for each ethnic group, and reported trends and patterns to their boards. Over a third (11) said that they had few concerns about Pacific student presence, with attendance rates of 88 to 96 percent cited by three schools. In one of these, Samoan boys had the highest rates of attendance for any group in the school.

Close monitoring enabled schools to identify and respond early to any problems. Two schools, for example, found that lateness was more of an issue than attendance, and were exploring the reasons for this. Three other schools had noted that there was a high representation of Pacific students among stand-downs, suspensions and exclusions. Two of these, however, reported that the numbers were on a downwards trend.

One school had analysed a growing pattern of condoned absences. They expressed a perception that Pacific students stayed home because of weather conditions such as rain. School personnel believed that lack of food in the home sometimes resulted in students' absence from school. Other factors associated with absence included class swimming lessons and financial difficulties.

Transience was identified as an issue for Pacific students in at least six of the schools. One school found that 27 percent of its Pacific students were transient, and another estimated the level at between 30 and 40 percent. Some schools had focused on transient students, analysing available information to gain a better understanding of the problem in order to deal with it more effectively. Seasonal patterns were common. In one school for example, attendance dropped significantly during term four. In another, some Pacific students and their families returned to their island homes during the New Zealand winter. The problem of transience was increasing in some schools and decreasing in others.

Schools that knew about the nature of any issues to do with presence were well placed to respond appropriately. Initiatives taken to improve or contribute to Pacific student presence are described in the next section.

A quarter of the schools did not have systems to monitor Pacific student attendance. They were, therefore, unable to identify either progress or issues. In some cases, individual students' attendance was monitored throughout the school, without any ethnic breakdown of the data. These schools lacked the information necessary to highlight any patterns and trends in Pacific student truancy, transience, stand downs, suspensions or exclusions. The absence of such data meant that principals were not

able to report meaningfully to their boards on Pacific student presence, nor were they in a position to develop strategies to address attendance issues in a way that was appropriate and effective for Pacific students in particular.

Initiatives taken to improve Pacific student presence

Schools adopted a broad range of strategies to improve and contribute to Pacific student presence. Some schools were highly innovative. One intermediate school ran a study/homework programme staffed on a voluntary basis by two Pacific teachers and the school's learning support team. This facility enabled students to use Information and Communications Technology (ICT) for curriculum purposes, as well as one-to-one learning support. Another school developed and implemented a Pasifika Education Plan that targeted students' developing self esteem, maintaining cultural identity and actively involving parents.

The initiative most often put in place since ERO's last review of the school involved closer monitoring of attendance and prompt follow-up with students causing concern. Other common responses included the ongoing development of strong home-school partnerships and the instigation of home visits.

Some schools implemented one or combinations of the following initiatives:

- introducing a school social worker;
- running multicultural days and events (eg Pacific productions);
- establishing and maintaining close relationships with all parents (principal);
- designating a staff member with specific responsibility for Pacific students' wellbeing, progress and/or attendance;
- making referrals to other agencies as appropriate;
- using truancy services as last resort only;
- extending pastoral care provision (eg through the auspices of SENCO,⁶ student support team, pastoral care personnel);
- introducing hearing tests through Enhanced Programme Funding;⁷
- extending the hours for an attendance officer;
- communicating high expectations (eg attendance at external exams);
- introducing Individual Education Plan (IEP) meetings in homes;
- making 'Ready for School' kits for all new students and their families;
- establishing school playgroups, 'kids' café';
- establishing bilingual options/classes;

⁶ Special Education Needs Coordinator – usually the person with a delegated responsibility for working with individuals or groups of students who have moderate learning needs.

⁷ Schools that have a disproportionate number of students with moderate special education needs are eligible to apply for a supplementary grant called the Enhanced Programme Fund.

- offering prizes for attendance;
- minimising perceived barriers (eg no fees, stationery provided, and food where needed);
- communicating regularly with parents via newsletters, email, and mobile phone;
- introducing programmes designed to increase confidence, self respect and self awareness, such as ‘Rock and Water’;
- using restorative justice practices;
- implementing a transition programme for contributing schools;
- encouraging parental involvement in clubs and performance groups;
- offering the school hall for use by church groups;
- establishing community and parent liaison networks;
- developing close liaison with sponsors and churches; and
- setting, communicating and reporting attendance targets.

Schools’ knowledge of the impact of initiatives

A quarter of the schools observed that there was sustained improvement in the quality of relationships with parents. Schools believed that their efforts to welcome parents into the school and maintain strong personalised links with them contributed to improved Pacific student presence. Regular contact between home and school through a range of opportunities for interaction and partnership, was seen as an effective means of maintaining regular attendance. High levels of parental participation and support indicated that such initiatives were effective.

In addition to improved attendance figures, other evidence reported to demonstrate the impact of initiatives included:

- reduced numbers of behaviour incidents requiring formal disciplinary action;
- improvements in Pacific student achievement;
- more comprehensive and detailed information gathering (eg baseline data, analysis of SENCO data by ethnicity); and
- increased teacher awareness of culturally appropriate practice.

A further five schools believed that they had evidence of the impact of initiatives, but the information came mainly from informal and anecdotal sources. Only two of the schools had comprehensive and rigorous self-review processes that enabled them to closely monitor the impact of changes aimed at improving Pacific student presence.

Eight schools had no way of knowing how effective any initiatives were. Lack of baseline data and regular internal review meant that perceived changes and improvements could not be measured and analysed for impact.

Overall, most schools did not systematically evaluate the impact of initiatives that they had implemented to improve or sustain Pacific student presence.

Engagement

ERO found that approximately a quarter of the 32 schools had continued to demonstrate high levels of Pacific student engagement in learning. About half of the schools had improved or substantially improved in this area, but a quarter had shown little or no improvement.

What is meant by student engagement?

The term ‘engagement’ encompasses a web of closely connected factors and processes that combine to produce conditions where students are motivated to learn and achieve. Indicators of student engagement relate to factors associated with high quality teaching and assessment, students’ involvement in their learning, student morale, perceptions about school, participation in decision-making, attitudes and behaviour. The level of absenteeism, truancy, and stand-downs and suspensions may also indicate the degree of engagement.

The close relationship between engagement and outcomes is highlighted by Adrienne Alton-Lee in her *Best Evidence Synthesis, Quality Teaching for Diverse Students*:⁸ ‘quality teaching cannot be defined without reference to outcomes for students’ (p8). Alton-Lee describes ‘caring, inclusive and cohesive learning communities’ (2003, vi), where particular classroom practices contribute to learning environments in which diverse groups of students are more likely to be fully engaged.

ERO’s evaluation indicators⁹ provide a strong framework for identifying effective practices. These include the importance of setting high standards and expectations for learning, having capable and knowledgeable teachers who use a wide range of teaching strategies, implementing effective planning and classroom management, and using appropriate resources to support teaching and learning.

To engage diverse groups such as Pacific students, teachers also need to have sufficient background knowledge, skills and awareness to form positive relationships and make meaningful connections between curriculum content and the life experiences of learners.

In order to report on what schools have done over the last three years to improve Pacific student engagement, ERO used its own and other evaluation indicators as the basis for enquiry. ERO was particularly interested in the progress schools were making in developing and maintaining learning environments that are responsive to students learning processes, and prior experiences. In other words; what were schools and teachers doing to encourage and motivate Pacific students to engage in learning?

ERO was interested in the professional learning and development teachers undertook to improve their teaching of diverse student groups. ERO was also interested in the ways that Pacific students were involved in decision-making and leadership activities at class and school level, how they were supported and mentored as part of their learning, and how effectively their class and school developed a climate for learning that was responsive to their needs.

⁸ Alton-Lee, A. 2003. Ministry of Education

⁹ Education Review Office. *Evaluation Indicators for Education Reviews in Schools*. 2003

Initiatives to improve the quality of teaching

Over two-thirds of schools had developed and implemented initiatives to improve teachers' effectiveness in engaging Pacific students. Most other schools had undertaken some kind of school-wide project focused on areas such as numeracy or writing, but there was no evidence of their having specifically targeted Pacific student engagement.

A wide range of initiatives had been implemented to support improved teaching and learning for Pacific students. These included:

- adopting a Pacific Literacy Strategy;
- incorporating Pacific contexts and perspectives in classrooms and learning programmes;
- increasing the focus on analysis of Pacific student achievement information;
- specifying achievement targets for Pacific students;
- appointing Pacific staff wherever possible and appropriate (teachers, senior managers, teacher aides);
- maximising opportunities to celebrate Pacific cultures and identities;
- developing school-based Pacific Education Plans (PEPs);
- establishing bilingual units;
- using Pacific languages in school and classroom activities;
- using Pacific staff as role models and resource people;
- implementing professional development for staff on Pacific protocols and values;
- having events such as cultural food days and fiasia evenings;
- including support staff in professional development related to Pacific students;
- improving transition links between schools; and
- seeking ways to improve teacher-student relationships through restorative practices.

Evidence for the impact of improved teaching on Pacific student engagement was often limited to generalised and anecdotal information. Approximately a third of schools had no systematic way of evaluating the effectiveness of initiatives they had undertaken. Most of these schools either lacked baseline data or had no specific data about Pacific students.

Impacts on teaching

Using student achievement information

Where schools were measuring the impact of their initiatives, student achievement information was one of the indicators they used. Schools that were involved in numeracy and/or literacy professional development projects had data that tracked Pacific student achievement in these areas. There was also evidence that some schools were analysing Pacific student achievement in areas other than literacy and

numeracy, and using it to set specific targets, plan appropriate teaching programmes, and report the results to their boards.

Improving assessment practices

An important effect on teaching in some schools related to improved assessment practices. Schools stated that more teachers were collating and analysing Pacific student achievement information, and increasingly doing this for each specific Pacific group. One school, for example, was able to report that there had been continuing improvement in literacy levels school-wide, and that identified groups of Pacific students were progressing at similar rates to the overall student population rates.

Involving students

In order to assess the effect of other initiatives they had undertaken, two schools had surveyed students and had gained feedback on student perceptions and attitudes to changes and developments.

The effect of professional learning and development

Most professional learning and development initiatives for teachers aimed to increase their knowledge of, and respect for, Pacific cultural values and practices. By demonstrating a commitment to finding out what learners brought to the classroom, teachers were better able to engage their Pacific students. Many achieved this by integrating aspects of Pacific cultures into the physical and social environment of classrooms and into learning.

One school that had put three teachers through training for TESSOL (Teaching English in Schools for Speakers of Other Languages), reported that these teachers were more aware of the need to build on students' prior knowledge, and were implementing new teaching strategies to actively engage them in their own learning.

As part of its own PEP, one school had organised staff professional development trips to Tonga, Samoa and Pukapuka. Senior managers said that the trips had raised staff awareness of Pacific cultures and their diversity, but ERO is concerned that there had been no formal evaluation of the impact of this costly initiative.

One school in the sample had bilingual classes for Tongan and Samoan students, and Tongan staff were involved in adapting the curriculum for their class. A strong sense of identity and pride was evident in both bilingual classes. In the same school, teachers were regularly sharing research findings with colleagues, and some were conducting their own research into aspects of Pacific education.

In one school, the deputy principal was responsible for encouraging teachers to set high standards, for modelling effective teaching practices, for observing and giving feedback to teachers, and for suggesting appropriate next steps. In another school, Pacific teachers were helping to increase other staff members' knowledge and understanding of Pacific cultures, and teachers were incorporating relevant and meaningful contexts in lessons. These teachers were also reported as engaging and motivating Pacific students to participate in discussions and develop their thinking skills.

Other initiatives to improve the engagement of Pacific students

In addition to initiatives to improve the quality of teaching, many schools had adopted further strategies to involve Pacific students more actively in school life.

Approximately a third of schools had initiated programmes that did not specifically target Pacific students but were designed to benefit all students. The three most common types of initiative were strengthened home-school partnerships, increased student leadership and decision-making opportunities, and enhanced pastoral care provisions.

Schools that had put energy into building relationships with Pacific parents and families believed that closer links with students' homes had contributed to improved engagement. In some cases, the school's involvement in numeracy and/or literacy projects provided opportunities for parents to advance their own knowledge through workshops and to support their children's learning. Taking the time to find out and to understand parents' aspirations for their children was an important element in forming useful partnerships.

Almost a quarter of the schools had focused on encouraging Pacific students to be involved in decision-making and leadership opportunities. Some had provided training for Pacific students to take on positions of responsibility such as becoming a peer mediator or school councillor. At least one school involved its students in selecting school leaders, giving Pacific students an opportunity to gain representation and build a higher profile with their peers. One primary school had instigated student-led assemblies and established leadership roles in a range of extra-curricular areas.

Many schools saw effective pastoral care as an important means of identifying problems early and responding to these in a timely and appropriate manner. Respectful relationships between students and teachers were often identified as a priority for improved Pacific student engagement, and professional development had been provided to help teachers to interact positively and constructively with students.

Several of the schools highlighted the importance of having Pacific teachers and senior leaders, and were actively pursuing this goal. One had appointed a Pacific male as deputy principal, and reported the positive impact of this because he was leading change in the school culture. Another had deliberately given Pacific teachers classes that consisted mainly of Pacific students with the same first language.

ERO recognises the value for Pacific students of having adult role models, and affirms schools' efforts to increase the numbers of Pacific staff members. However, it is essential that all teachers demonstrate the elements of effective classroom practice outlined at the beginning of this section. Although a positive initiative on the part of schools, appointing more Pacific teachers does not in itself improve the quality of teaching or the level of Pacific student engagement, and should be supported by school-wide professional learning to enhance teaching strategies and practices.

Other initiatives that schools have embarked on explicitly to increase Pacific student engagement include the following:

- forming a school cluster aimed at reviewing the pedagogy of bilingual education;
- adopting measures to encourage students to share their learning orally, through articulating their thoughts and ideas with peers and parents. In one school this involved teaching students specific vocabulary and strategies to talk about their learning (eg using success criteria at each level); and
- cultural performance groups and participation in multicultural festivals.

The extent to which these initiatives have contributed to improved Pacific student engagement is not known beyond general perceptions and observations. However, there are apparent gains in four areas. These include:

- Pacific parents having a higher presence in schools;
- Pacific student presence improving in schools;
- more Pacific students becoming involved in leadership positions; and
- Pacific students being involved in fewer behavioural incidents.

Initiatives to improve board of trustees' understanding of Pacific issues in education

Three boards comprised a majority of Pacific members, who had had training in governance and were committed to monitoring and improving Pacific student achievement. These schools had significant Pacific rolls. Four had seconded representatives of particular Pacific groups onto the board, so that the interests and concerns of these groups could be heard at governance level.

Approximately a third of the boards received regular reports from the principal and/or heads of department. These reports contained separate data on the achievement of Pacific students, so the boards were well informed about trends and patterns, and were, therefore, well placed to understand where their priorities must lie for strategic planning. An example of responsive action by one board was their funding of a homework/study centre with learning resources and food (including breakfast) available to students.

Where boards, like this one, had knowledge and understanding of Pacific issues, they were likely to make decisions that responded to identified student needs. Examples of this informed decision-making included:

- reopening a bilingual unit in recognition of the Samoan community's wishes;
- funding resources to support the integration of Pacific languages and protocols school-wide;
- funding extra teaching and support staff to assist with implementing initiatives to improve Pacific student engagement and achievement; and
- increasing staffing allocation for TESSOL training and programmes.

Since the last ERO review, boards' knowledge and understanding of Pacific issues had remained at a high level in five of the schools (16 percent). These factors had

improved or substantially improved in a further 10 schools (31 percent), and improved somewhat in eight schools (25 percent).

Of greatest concern was the finding that over a third of the schools' boards had not improved in their knowledge and awareness of Pacific issues since the last review. It indicates that many boards have yet to fully realise and accept their responsibility for ensuring that Pacific students are effectively engaged and achieving.

Initiatives to improve the schools' engagement of Pacific communities

Over a quarter of the schools were involved in home-school partnership initiatives. Usually these were based on numeracy or literacy projects, and included parent education as well as strategies to reduce any barriers perceived by families and Pacific communities.

Cultural performance events were also valued as an effective way to bring families and other significant community groups into schools. Sometimes these were special occasions, such as fiafia evenings, and sometimes they were part of regular school activities, such as assemblies. Some schools made a point of sending invitations to encourage attendance at school events and fono. Schools believed that this personalised approach contributed to increased participation and engagement.

Another initiative increasingly taken up by schools is three-way conferencing as a way of reporting student progress. Sometimes referred to as 'triadic conferences', these consist of parents, students and teachers sitting down together to discuss strengths and weaknesses, to set realistic individual achievement goals and to identify any issues that may impede progress so that appropriate action may be taken. In some cases, it was the students themselves who led this process, and parents were, therefore, less inclined to experience it as a teacher-driven exercise.

A range of other initiatives found in schools, included:

- conducting parent and community surveys in different Pacific languages;
- promoting an 'open door' policy, so that family members were confident of a warm reception at the school at any time;
- setting up a playgroup in the school grounds;
- sending home regular newsletters in different Pacific languages;
- establishing a parents' room in the school;
- involving families in classroom and cultural programmes;
- offering class and syndicate open evenings;
- producing an A-to-Z booklet about the school;
- encouraging family lunches;
- liaising with Pacific churches in the community; and
- introducing a board of trustees' coffee club for families.

Schools reported that engaging their Pacific community was not an easy task. One intermediate school said that they felt that community interest in and support for the school was growing, but that this had not resulted in any measurable change as yet.

However, those schools that kept various channels of communication open and continually provided opportunities for parents and families to become involved, found that their efforts were having positive effects. When these schools demonstrated an ongoing commitment to engaging Pacific communities and a genuine openness to forming meaningful partnerships with parents, there was a perception that the links were strengthening. A few schools reported increased Pacific parent involvement as part of their children's learning.

ERO found that since the last review, five of the schools had maintained a high level of engagement with their Pacific communities, and two had substantially improved. Almost two-thirds had shown some improvement, and five had not progressed from the time they were last reviewed.

Achievement

ERO's evaluation indicators for student engagement in learning are closely linked to those for achievement. This pilot evaluation considered what the schools have done since the last review to increase Pacific students' presence and engagement in learning, and to involve parents and communities more closely. It was expected that the impact of effective initiatives would be reflected in evidence of improved Pacific student achievement. ERO, therefore, sought data on the achievement of Pacific students from Years 1 to 10 as evidence of the effect of improvement initiatives undertaken.

ERO made judgements related to progress on a five point continuum, ie achievement was *higher, mostly higher, the same, mostly lower, lower* than the last ERO review. An additional category of *don't know* was also included.

English literacy

Overall, ERO found that three of the 32 schools showed higher Pacific student achievement in English literacy than in the previous review. In 13 schools, literacy levels were mostly higher, and in six schools Pacific student literacy achievement remained at the same level. In one school, literacy achievement was mostly lower, and the remaining schools (10) did not have sufficient evidence for the judgement to be made.

Just under 60 percent of the schools had nationally referenced achievement data to show how well Pacific students were progressing in literacy. There was a range in the quality and depth of this information. High quality assessment practices were evident in a few schools that analysed results by year level and gender, as well as by each separate Pacific ethnic group. Four schools were unable to provide any information about Pacific student achievement in literacy.

Most schools reported varied results. Pacific students were often at or above national expectations in one literacy area (reading or writing) or year levels, and below in the other. The responses cited below illustrate how good quality information enabled these schools to identify different trends and patterns:

The school began collecting literacy achievement data from PAT¹⁰ and asTTle¹¹ in 2007, and asTTle writing in 2008. Nineteen percent of Years 7 and 8 Pacific boys are achieving at only level 2. No girls are achieving at level 2 in writing. One Year 8 Samoan boy achieved the highest in an asTTle test of all Year 8 students in writing. In the 2008 Year 8 PAT listening comprehension test, 13 percent of Pacific boys and 8 percent of girls achieved below stanine 4. In the 2008 Year 8 PAT reading vocabulary test, 11 percent of Pacific boys and 6 percent of girls achieved below stanine 4.

[Decile 1 intermediate, 16 percent Pacific]

In Years 7 to 10 the majority of students achieve at or below national expectations in literacy (asTTle). In Level 2 NCEA students achieve above schools of similar decile. In Years 7 and 8 PAT, the majority of students achieve at or below national expectations. Small numbers are just above national expectations. In Level 1 NCEA, literacy has trended upwards, with an improvement over 2005-07. Achievement is similar to national expectations for schools of similar decile.

[Decile 3 Years 7 to 10 integrated secondary, 56 percent Pacific]

Over the last three years, Pacific student achievement has lifted in literacy with increasing numbers of children achieving at, and above, national expectations. Recent asTTle writing data indicates that most Years 4 to 6 Pacific students are achieving above national expectations. Most Pacific students make very good accelerated progress in reading in their first 3 years at school.

[Decile 3 contributing primary, 43 percent Pacific]

STAR (Supplementary Tests for Achievement in Reading) shows that: At Year 7, 62 percent (21 students) achieved at or above average, 15 percent (5 students) above average, 23 percent (6 students) below average. At Year 8, 53 percent (17 students) achieved at expectation, 9 percent (3 students) above average, 37 percent (12 students) below average.

[Decile 8 intermediate, 7 percent Pacific]

Numeracy

Pacific student achievement in numeracy showed similar patterns to those in literacy, with two schools reporting higher levels of achievement than were evident at the time of the previous ERO review. Pacific students in over a third of the schools were mostly higher, and seven were the same. Numeracy levels were mostly lower in one school (not the same school as reported for literacy). Eleven schools did not have data to show how well their Pacific students were achieving in numeracy.

As with literacy, not all schools analysed Pacific student achievement data systematically through an analysis of year level achievement including gender and ethnic breakdowns. In the 14 schools that systematically collated data from nationally-normed assessments, Pacific student numeracy was mostly below expected

¹⁰ Progressive Achievement Tests

¹¹ Assessment Tools for Teaching and Learning

levels for their age group. Two schools reported that approximately half their Pacific students were achieving at or above national norms.

Initiatives to address Pacific student achievement in literacy and numeracy

Most schools were involved in school-wide professional learning and development initiatives, but none of these specifically targeted strategies for working with Pacific students. Only two initiatives had a particular focus on Pacific students, but not on teaching strategies to improve achievement. One initiative was employing bilingual teacher aides to work with students in classrooms, and the other was increasing the stock of library books with a Pacific theme or subject.

Generally, schools lacked longitudinal data needed to measure the effect of literacy and numeracy initiatives. In many, school leaders believed that Pacific students benefited from initiatives to improve teaching and learning as did all other students. As an example of this, schools cited the benefit accruing from professional development in the analysis and use of assessment data, which enabled teachers to develop the skills to respond more appropriately to individual students' learning needs. Integration of effective literacy teaching practices was also believed to have had an impact on the achievement of all students, including Pacific.

However, where these initiatives improved the achievement of all students, the absence of a Pacific focus was unlikely to reduce gaps between Pacific student achievement and that of all students.

Pacific student achievement in literacy and numeracy had remained at a high level in only one school, a decile 10 contributing primary, and had substantially improved in four, all primary or intermediate schools. Some improvement was noted in 19 schools, and none in 8 (a quarter of the schools).

Achievement information

The overall quality of Pacific achievement information collected by schools was good in most schools and high in five (all primary schools). At the other end of the continuum, five schools had poor quality achievement information and three did not collect any specific achievement information about their Pacific students. Therefore a quarter of the schools in the sample did not have sufficient reliable data to inform their planning and teaching decisions to improve Pacific student achievement.

The absence of sufficient achievement information in these schools meant that no meaningful analysis could take place. Although analysis was poor or non-existent in nine schools, seven schools were able to do this to a high level of quality.

Pacific student achievement information was used well to make teaching decisions in seven of the schools. Most used the data to some extent to influence their teaching, but seven others used it either poorly or not at all. Patterns for reporting to the board and school community were similar, most sharing analysed Pacific student achievement information regularly, but about a quarter fulfilling this requirement poorly or not at all.

Setting appropriate targets for Pacific student achievement is a process that depends to large extent on the quality of information collected, and the scope and rigour of

analysis. Fifteen schools, or under half, had set appropriate targets for literacy and numeracy, but as many as 12 (well over a third) had not yet set targets for their students. Without targets, there was no focused strategic planning in these schools to improve Pacific student achievement.

Since the last ERO review the quality of achievement information had remained at a high level in five of the schools, and substantially improved in a further six. Some improvement was found in most schools, but three had shown no improvement over the last three years. These three were low decile primary schools. When converted to student numbers, a total of 452 Pacific students in these schools did not have their progress and achievement adequately monitored.

What happens when schools focus on success for their Pacific students?

The following four schools drawn from this evaluation have rolls where more than half of the students are of Pacific ethnicity. Each school is unique but demonstrates particularly successful approaches that have resulted in improved Pacific student achievement. In these four schools overall:

- parents and communities were actively involved in their children's learning;
- students enjoyed school and wanted to be there;
- the principal focused on high achievement levels for Pacific students and gave visible support;
- senior leaders and teachers had a strong focus on achievement and had a sound understanding of the learning needs of Pacific students. They used effective teaching strategies to engage students; and
- boards were well informed and knowledgeable about their responsibilities related to Pacific student achievement.

School A

School A is a decile 2 full primary school in Manukau City. Pacific students constitute 58 percent of the total roll. Samoan students, at 45 percent of the roll, form the largest ethnic group in the school.

Vitality, energy, positive relationships, active engagement in learning, and high achievement characterise this school.

What do the children think about school?

The children say that they really enjoy being at school. Lessons are fun. Their classrooms are alive with language and are stimulating, creative places for learning. Children are keen to learn and they enjoy talking about their learning with others.

Pacific students have high attendance rates. The principal and staff know all the students well and he establishes personal contact with each family. The principal ensures that staff understand that school is about responding to the children, identifying their needs, and then meeting these.

How well do students achieve?

Student achievement is high. The large majority of children are achieving at, or above, national age-related expectations in reading and mathematics. School data show that children are making good progress in developing their skills in writing.

How do the teachers make this school so successful?

In a nutshell, teachers understand the difference between children being totally engaged in their learning rather than just being on task. They know who the Pacific children are in their classes, and they know about their achievement levels.

All teachers expect that children will achieve well, and they want to motivate and support children to become proactive learners. They undertake training to extend their professional practice and their leadership skills so that, across the school,

teachers plan and implement learning programmes that motivate children to be involved in learning. Lead teachers run internal professional development courses on literacy teaching skills. All teachers are taking a university paper in the teaching of mathematics and they are all engaged in cluster-wide training through the Manurewa Achievement Initiative.

Teacher aides are trained for the roles they undertake and enjoy their work in the classroom so much that several have gone on to become qualified teachers.

The performance appraisal system supports professional development initiatives and provides teachers with useful feedback on their classroom performance. Teachers *want* to know how they can improve their performance and senior leaders have had training on how to give critical feedback aimed at lifting teacher performance.

How important is the principal in all this?

As in any school, the principal's role is critical. In this school the principal has a clear focus on children achieving at a high level and doing so in a happy, safe, and engaging environment. He ensures that all teachers and teacher aides enjoy coherent, well coordinated professional support and guidance. He uses quality assurance systems well to maintain high standards of teacher planning, assessment and programme evaluation.

The principal has established a strong home-school partnership through which parents learn how they can help their children at home, particularly in developing numeracy skills.

If a child has unexplained absences from school, the principal sometimes shows the parent a calendar, with the days away highlighted. This visual prompt is often all that is required. The personal approach works very well.

How does the board know that the school is doing well?

Self-review systems are very rigorous, both at whole school and classroom levels. Teachers, senior managers and the board constantly reflect on how they 'could do it better'. Staff have become skilled in data analysis and make good use of assessment data to analyse learning needs at individual, class, year, and school-wide levels. The board receives achievement information to support the decisions it makes about resourcing learning.

A mutually beneficial relationship

This school has had a six-year, mutually beneficial relationship with a primary school in Savai'i, Samoa. In 2008, 16 children and 10 adults visited their sister school. As a result, all teachers and children in the school, not just those able to travel, learned and understood more about the Samoan culture. This enhanced awareness enriches the relationships between staff, the Samoan children in the school and their families. It should help to extend the cultural horizons and knowledge of all children attending the school. These positive outcomes affirm Pacific children and have a positive flow-on effect on their self confidence and pride in their ability to learn and achieve.

What could the school do better?

Senior leaders could improve reporting to parents so that parents have clear information about their child's progress and achievement, in comparison with national expectations for their age.

Students' engagement in learning would be further enhanced if teachers shared assessment information more with children so that children had a better understanding of their progress in learning and their achievement, and could identify for themselves what they needed to do next to improve their learning.

School B

School B, in East Auckland, is a decile 1 continuing primary school. Pacific students constitute 57 percent of the total roll, with Tongan students forming the largest ethnic group.

Presence

Attendance rates for the Pacific students attending School B are high. The secret of the school's success in ensuring that students come to school is simple. The students are happy to tell anyone who asks that they enjoy school and feel liked and respected by their teachers.

The school has participated in the Pacific Islands School Community Parent Liaison programme that has the aim of providing opportunities to develop effective liaison links with their Pacific families. Participation has enabled Pacific parents to understand more about how they can assist their child to learn at school.

Teachers take a great deal of care about the ways they manage children's early days at school to make sure that they are happy and that school is engaging and fun for them. At enrolment, they collect comprehensive information about children's backgrounds, experiences and earlier learning. They use this information in their teaching so that classroom discussions can be based on topics that the children already know something about. The children enjoy being able to show their teachers that they already know quite a lot.

At all levels of the school, contexts for lessons are chosen because they are familiar to students and can be used to extend their prior knowledge. Children come alive in the classroom when they learn new skills and concepts through teaching based on their personal experiences. They want to be at school and are keen to learn more.

In later years at the school, teachers give Year 6 students specific support to prepare them for intermediate school. They help to ensure that the students know what will be expected of them so that they can get the most out of their new school. When the students are in Year 7, their contributing teachers, with the cooperation of the intermediate school teachers, hold follow-up interviews with the students to ensure that they have settled into their new school and are comfortable there.

Engagement

Parents are fully involved in understanding what their children are doing at school. Naturally, this means that students are much better engaged in learning. There is no way of dodging those awkward questions that Mum asks, like 'what did you learn at school today?'

Parents learn the key strategy of encouraging their children to ask questions at home. Trying out questions on their patient parents gives children the confidence to ask questions at school. It is a sure sign that children are engaged in learning when they are interested enough to ask questions in class.

Students know that teachers expect them to behave well. Teachers' high expectations, together with strategies to engage students in learning, mean that classes are settled and that senior leaders have very few children referred to them for negative behaviour.

Teachers run model classes for the parents so that they know what it feels like to be a child in today's classroom. This enables parents to understand the techniques that teachers use to help their children to learn. Once parents are confident about what it is that teachers and students should do in the classroom, they become 'lead parents' for other groups of parents, so that this knowledge about teaching and learning is passed on systematically throughout the school community.

Children benefit from the positive Pacific role models in the school. Teacher aides, who are bilingual in Tongan and English, work with children to help their classroom learning. Having Pacific adults who are members of the support staff, the teaching staff, the senior leadership team, and the board of trustees, speaks volumes to Pacific students about how their cultures are valued. These successful adults show Pacific students that they too can be successful in their school work and in their future careers.

Information and Communication Technologies are very well used to captivate children's interest and to motivate them to produce and present high standards of work. As students prepare for their imminent promotion to intermediate school they video each other engaging in formal interviews. They use a blog for immediate online communication with the school community. This use of up-to-date technologies gives children pride in their work and a sense of achievement that they can use these sophisticated tools as part of their everyday classroom practice.

Achievement

Student, parent and teacher three-way conferences give students opportunities to talk about their goals and give parents opportunities to talk together with the teacher and their child about the child's achievements. Three-way conferences enable parents to hear first-hand about the next stages in their child's learning and are a very effective way of supporting student achievement.

The teaching of literacy and numeracy skills has been identified as a priority for whole school professional development. Most teachers are working towards qualifications in TESOL, which should provide them with strategies that will be valuable for teaching English language to *all* students, including ESOL students.

Teachers think about how effective their programmes have been in engaging students in learning and in raising their achievement. Senior managers analyse achievement data, which is broken down by ethnic groups, to find areas in which teaching and learning should be improved. Findings from this analysis are used in developing and refining the board's vision for the school and in identifying targets to raise levels of student achievement.

What could the school do better?

- Senior staff could maintain separate data on the attendance of Pacific students, broken down by their ethnic groups, so that they can monitor and follow up on any instances of irregular attendance or unexplained absences.
- Teachers could involve children more in discussions about the purpose of classroom activities. They could use child-friendly language to develop criteria so that children can assess the extent to which they have mastered the learning in which they have been involved.
- The board and senior leaders could develop a fuller understanding of the Ministry of Education's *Pacific Education Plan (PEP)* and incorporate the goals and targets of this plan into their own strategic and annual planning.

School C

Pacific students constitute 82 percent of the roll of 552 students in School C, a decile 1 school in Manukau City.

Support for bi-lingual education

- Having a community playgroup onsite makes it easy for teachers to get information about new entrants' early childhood experiences and learning.
- The school provides five Tongan, two Samoan, and two Māori bilingual classes. These classes foster students' sense of cultural identity and pride.
- A staff member who has been involved in the development of the Tongan national curriculum shares her professional knowledge with other staff so that it can be used in planning high quality Tongan language programmes in the school.
- Skilled teacher aides support children in the use of their home languages.
- Parents are able to use their home languages to talk to teachers about their children's learning at school and at home.
- Teachers use curriculum contexts that are relevant and meaningful to the students in their classes.
- School surveys are translated into Pacific languages so that parents can more readily participate.
- Students share, and show their pride in, their culture and languages through cultural group performances and regional Pacific language speech competitions.

Student achievement

- Student achievement in reading, spelling, and numeracy generally compares well with national age-related expectations and with the achievement of students in similar schools.
- Teachers have high expectations for student achievement. School targets are based on information about levels of success in meeting targets for the previous year.
- Rigorous data analysis enables teachers to set relevant goals at classroom level.

- From Years 4 to 8, the rate of progress for Pacific students accelerates at a greater rate than that of students nationally.
- The principal works continually with staff to identify ways to raise levels of student achievement still further.
- The progress of students who participate in learning support programmes is regularly monitored and evaluated to determine how effective the programmes have been.
- In *Reading Recovery* programmes, students make greater than national average gains.
- Senior leaders analyse the achievement of Pacific students as a group, and also analyse the achievement of the main sub-groups of Pacific students.
- The board is kept informed about the achievement of Pacific students and about any issues that could affect their achievement.

Use of ICT to support student achievement

- All classrooms are equipped with computers and interactive whiteboards. The computer suite is currently being refurbished. Mobile ICT equipment means that the specialist teacher can provide classroom support for students' learning through ICT. The use of ICT is having a positive effect on student engagement.
- Students enjoy using ICT to prepare and present their work. Their sense of satisfaction in learning new skills has made them more interested and engaged in learning.
- Lessons are interactive and individualised, and students can use ICT equipment independently. Lively classroom environments provide rich evidence of students' use of technologies to enhance and present their learning in various areas of the curriculum.
- School-wide professional development in the use of ICT, together with training in the teaching of thinking skills and the use of formative assessment, is helping teachers to make their practice more student centred.
- ICT tools are used to support formative teaching processes, including clarifying the purpose of the lesson and identifying the learning that is expected to take place.

What could the school do better?

- Senior leaders could collate and analyse separate data on the achievement of Pacific students in the bilingual classes so that they could monitor it against the achievement of students in mainstream classes. The information gained should enable teachers to focus their teaching more precisely so that they further improve the achievement of students in the bilingual classes.
- Trustees could undertake training to further improve their understanding of any issues that could impact on the achievement of Pacific students in their school.

School D

School D is a decile 3 Auckland suburban secondary school whose roll is 53 percent Pacific. Most of the Pacific students are Tongan or Samoan.

In relation to Pacific students, what is the most striking feature of this school?

The most striking feature of this school is the home-school partnership. The board has used Ministry of Education funding to develop initiatives to strengthen relationships with the Pacific community and to increase the involvement of Tongan and Samoan parents in the school.

- Senior leaders hold regular meetings with Tongan and Pacific parents. These meetings are facilitated by the parents and are held in their first languages.
- School leaders consult parent leaders to ensure that the information that Pacific parents receive is relevant and helpful to them.
- Two outreach workers attend parent meetings and liaise with senior leaders and staff to ensure that they know about the needs and aspirations of Pacific families for their children's education.
- The board surveys Pacific parents to find out how satisfied they are with the school and to get ideas about how to improve.
- School newsletters, written in Tongan and Samoan, keep Pacific parents informed about the teaching programme and about school events and activities.
- Teachers undertake professional development so that they have a better understanding about what it is that Tongan and Samoan parents want from the school. They become more knowledgeable about the family contexts of Pacific peoples and about the ways in which these affect students' learning. They identify strategies that they can pass on to parents so that parents know how to help their children at home.
- Since the last ERO review, the school has increased its number of Pacific teachers, support staff, and members of the board of trustees. An indirect effect of this is that teachers have higher expectations that Pacific students will be achievers.
- The principal reports regularly to the board on progress in strengthening the home-school partnership.

Is anything innovative happening in the school itself, or is it all just about the parents?

- Senior leaders identified physiological reasons for Year 7 students' low levels of achievement in listening comprehension. All Year 7 students had their hearing and sight tested on entry to the school. Results showed that high numbers of students had significant hearing loss. Medical interventions, targeted teaching strategies, and physical modification of classrooms have helped to increase students' engagement in learning.
- Teachers are participating in the Ministry of Education Pasifika Literacy Initiative. As part of this work, they are tracking and monitoring the achievement of one Year 9 and one Year 10 class with a high number of Pacific students.

- A literacy coordinator works with students in Years 9 and 10 to provide a further focus on raising achievement in literacy.
- Students needing additional support in literacy and numeracy are identified and provided with appropriate help. Some of these students have IEPs so that their achievement can be supported and monitored more precisely. Specific teaching strategies are used to motivate and engage these students in class, and their progress and achievement is monitored by school leaders.
- Senior students who are at risk of not succeeding are given mentoring through *Pacific Pride*, a school-based programme that helps these students to identify their goals and options for their future careers.
- A homework centre, which Tongan and Samoan parents identified was needed, has been established to help Pacific students to develop routines for purposeful study. Teachers, senior students and outreach workers provide junior students with additional help in their work.
- Pacific outreach staff work with the school pastoral care committee so that they can liaise better with Pacific students and their families.

How does all this affect student achievement?

School initiatives, and well-informed parental support, have clearly improved student achievement.

- Although the majority of students in Years 7 to 10 are achieving at levels that are below national age-related expectations, student achievement in literacy and numeracy in NCEA Level 1 has shown a trend of continued improvement over the past three years.
- Level 1 literacy achievement for the school is well above that of schools of similar decile and is consistent with national averages. Level 1 numeracy is significantly higher than both national and decile averages.
- Levels 2 and 3 NCEA results show that students achieve consistently above the averages for students in schools of a similar decile. In 2007, merit and excellence endorsements at Levels 1 to 3 were above the average for students in similar schools.
- The school has a higher rate of retention for students in Year 13 than is evident in schools of comparative size and decile.

What could the school do better?

- Teachers could use more up-to-date tools for assessing the achievement of Pacific students, particularly in Years 7 and 8.
- It would be useful to separate out data on the attendance of Tongan and Samoan students so that senior leaders could identify and track patterns or trends in the attendance of these students and keep their parents closely informed if any concerns arise.
- Senior leaders and heads of department could involve all Years 9 and 10 teachers in the Pasifika Literacy initiative to improve the achievement of all students in these classes.

How important is size?

This report shows that many of the most effective practices were found in schools with large Pacific student percentages. It is reasonable to suggest that where Pacific cultures are predominant in the school community, the board and senior managers are more conscious about giving strategic priority to improving Pacific student achievement, and are probably more likely to draw on human resources to support initiatives based on the integration of language and culture. It is also likely that it is easier to attract and recruit Pacific staff to schools with significant Pacific student roll numbers.

In smaller schools with a Pacific roll of less than 10 percent it is very difficult for school leaders to monitor achievement and progress as a group, but it is very important to monitor individuals, paying particular attention to rates of progress and comparisons with national expectations.

On the other hand, in the largest schools, a roll with less than 10 percent of Pacific students could be a significant group. In this evaluation, for example, in a school with 2400 students, the needs of 60 students (2.5 percent) could go unmonitored if the school does not have the systems to identify how effectively they are learning. These students may be scattered throughout the school, but this should not be a reason to allow them to become invisible, or to only be noticed when they when they truant, misbehave, or fail to achieve.

To illustrate how smaller schools with lower numbers of Pacific students have worked to bring about improvement, three vignettes of effective practice in such schools are presented here.

School E

This decile 10 contributing primary school has 360 students, of whom nine (2.5 percent) are Pacific. Although the school has no Pacific staff or board members Pacific student presence is of a high level and relationships between the school and families are good. Good quality teaching and assessment strategies embrace all students but staff are conscious of small groups such as Pacific students. Giving particular attention to this group has resulted in high levels of Pacific student engagement.

The school has continued to maintain high levels of parental involvement through student productions, the arts and cultural experiences. An initiative that the school undertook recently was to put on a 'Pasifika' production that included a significant parental contribution. There is an ongoing commitment by the school to engage with the school's Pacific community.

Learning programmes are planned and implemented to support effective teaching and learning for Pacific students. Senior leaders use 'on task' observations as a method of targeting and monitoring the engagement of all students. Assessments are undertaken regularly, reported and discussed. Assessment of data shows that Pacific students are making good progress.

In a school with small numbers of Pacific students, knowledge of individual progress and achievement is important. The school identifies those students progressing and achieving as expected but is also careful to identify and intervene where achievement is below expected levels.

Training for the board of trustees has enabled members to understand the importance of monitoring student achievement information. Trustees discuss the principal's reports regarding any findings related to Pacific student achievement. They know that Pacific students are high achievers and that programmes of support are in place for specific learning needs. This level of knowledge is important when making decisions about resourcing students' learning.

School F

This is a decile 8 intermediate school, with 67 Pacific students (7 percent). Although the school has relatively few Pacific students the board employs Pacific teachers and one of these staff members holds a senior leadership role.

Pacific student presence has remained high. Students benefit from good pastoral care and are represented in school leadership roles. The principal proactively recognizes and celebrates diverse cultures.

Two Pacific teachers provide strong positive role models for students. They support staff to better understand Pacific students and their families and they also support students through the board-funded homework/study centre and cultural groups, and working closely with Pacific families to ensure appropriate pathways of learning are maintained through to secondary school.

The study/homework programme is run voluntarily by committed teachers, two of whom are Pacific, and the learning support team. Breakfast is provided and the initiative enables students to use ICT and benefit from one-on-one teacher support. Anecdotal information suggests that it is useful initiative and is resulting in improved student progress and achievement. ERO suggested that it would be timely for school leaders to formally review the effectiveness of their provision.

The school values its Pacific staff as resource people who liaise with students and families. One, who is the sports coordinator, works closely with students who have skills in sport and emphasises to these students the importance of having good academic achievement.

The school specifically targets Pacific student achievement as part of its planning and reporting targets. Literacy and numeracy data separate Pacific student achievement during the analysis process so that teachers have specific information about this group of students. Literacy achievement for Pacific students is following an upwards trend.

School G

This decile 8 contributing primary school has 12 Pacific students (3 percent). The school employs Pacific staff members and student presence and engagement has remained at a high level since the school's previous ERO review.

Pacific students are carefully placed in classes with teachers who celebrate their strengths. Anecdotal evidence indicates that this practice has had a positive impact. One Pacific student has been encouraged to take on a leadership role on the student council.

Since ERO was last at the school the literacy and numeracy achievement of Pacific students is continuing to lift. Assessment practices are sound, with results being analysed, reported and used to implement well targeted teaching programmes. The school now needs to look at setting targets for its Pacific students.

Conclusion

The goals in the *Pasifika Education Plan 2009-2012* emphasise achievement in reading, writing and mathematics as the foundations for educational success for Pacific students. In specifying goals related to achieving this, the plan targets the need to raise achievement levels to nationally comparable levels in these three critical areas that provide access to *The New Zealand Curriculum* and future pathways.

This evaluation found that good quality teaching strategies and strong partnerships with parents and communities were the most influential factors contributing to improved Pacific student engagement and achievement. The roles played by teachers and families were key drivers in Pacific students' success at school. Although each had specific roles, the partnership and engagement between the two was critical. These two factors were present in well performing schools across the spectrum: in large schools and small; schools with high percentages of Pacific students; and those with small numbers.

Pacific students' presence at school is not a concern. They are at school and they are there to participate. The onus for reversing the disproportionate numbers of Pacific students achieving at the lowest levels in literacy and mathematics and leaving school without National Certificate of Educational Achievement Level 2 (or equivalent), therefore, resides with the school and its ability to work with students and their families for improved outcomes.

In schools that demonstrated effective practice, high quality teaching and high levels of engagement went hand in hand. Teachers were adept at inquiring into the impact of their teaching on students' progress and achievement through the use of different assessment and review practices. This enabled them to match units of work and teaching programmes to the needs of their students, and to establish what they needed to do next to progress learning.

Schools that worked with parents to involve them in their children's learning were similarly successful. They sought ways that suited the context of the school and parent communities to share and celebrate students' achievements, to involve parents in helping their child learn at home, to participate in decisions about their child and to encourage involvement in school processes and activities.

The quality of practices in these two areas depended to large extent on the attitudes and directions set by school leaders, particularly the principal. Visible leadership sent crucial messages to both Pacific students and families. ERO found that effective schools in this evaluation had leaders with a clear vision for the increasingly diverse character of New Zealand schools and were committed to celebrating this diversity. Coupled with a strong achievement focus, leaders in these schools worked with their teachers and boards to promote and support positive outcomes for Pacific students.

If the *Pasifika Education Plan 2009-2012* is to make a positive difference for Pacific students nationally, all schools need to:

- know who their Pacific students are;
- know about parental and student expectations;

- place a strong focus on progress and achievement;
- collect and analyse achievement information on Pacific students as a group, and where appropriate, separate ethnicities;
- create an inclusive school environment (physical and social) in which Pacific as part of all cultures are recognised, respected and valued;
- help teachers develop teaching practices that engage students; and
- adopt strategies to engage Pacific parents and communities.

Schools with the strategic frameworks, understandings and teaching practices to improve Pacific student achievement are more likely to succeed in bringing about positive outcomes for students and their families because these are prioritised, planned for and resourced.

Recommendations

ERO recommends that schools:

- monitor, assess and analyse the progress and achievement of Pacific students;
- set appropriate targets for Pacific students to achieve at levels comparable to national expectations in literacy and numeracy;
- develop and maintain partnerships that involve and engage Pacific parents in their children's learning;
- report progress and achievement to parents in ways that clearly state Pacific students' progress levels of achievement;
- engage in professional development to increase understanding about Pacific peoples and Pacific issues in education; and
- develop teaching practices that are inclusive of and responsive to the learning needs of Pacific students.

Questions to ask in your school

What do we know about our Pacific students?

Do we know:

- their ethnicity;
- how to pronounce their names accurately;
- whether students speak or understand one or more languages;
- what early childhood services they have attended;
- if they have siblings or relatives attending the school; and
- about the cultures and expectations of Pacific peoples in general?

What do we know about Pacific students' presence at our school?

Do we have reliable and analysed information about:

- attendance;
- truancy;
- transience; and
- stand down and suspensions?

What do we do with this information to improve outcomes for Pacific students?

Have we considered:

- involving parents and families in home-school liaison programmes;
- initiatives such as *suspension reduction* or attendance programmes;
- the quality of our own school environment as a factor; and
- how do we monitor for continuing improvement?

What do we know about levels of Pacific student engagement at our school?

Have we:

- identified the literacy and numeracy levels of our Pacific students;
- set appropriate learning targets;
- identified students who are not achieving and who are at risk of not achieving;
- implemented teaching and learning strategies to meet the needs of these students; and

- collected information about the progress Pacific students make during the year and over the years at school?

Do we as teachers:

- know about the academic and cultural needs of Pacific students;
- have high expectations for achievement;
- plan programmes that make connections to students' prior experiences;
- create a supportive learning environment;
- involve Pacific students in decisions about their learning; and
- involve Pacific parents in plain language, accurate reporting about their child's learning?

Do we encourage Pacific students to:

- become involved in leadership activities;
- set high personal and learning goals;
- become involved in class and school decision-making;
- engage in discussions about their learning; and
- actively consider their future pathways?

As trustees have we:

- considered training to develop our understanding of Pacific peoples and issues in education;
- received regular reports about the achievement of Pacific students; and
- used information to make resourcing decisions to support Pacific students?

As school leaders have we:

- considered strategies to make links with and consult Pacific parents;
- encouraged Pacific parents to be involved in their child's learning and school activities;
- been responsive to parents' requests and/or concerns about progress and achievement; and
- encouraged Pacific parents' involvement in decision-making at school?

What do we know about Pacific student achievement?

Do we have:

- information about Pacific students' literacy and numeracy levels compared to national expectations;
- systems to collate and analyse assessment information for groups such as Pacific students; and

- ways to use this information at teacher, syndicate and department levels to raise Pacific students' achievement levels?

Appendix 1

Methodology

In Terms 3 and 4 2008, ERO focused on the progress each school being reviewed in the Auckland region had made in Pacific student achievement since the last education review.

To gather evidence for their judgements about schools' progress, reviewers read the section of Pacific student achievement in each school's last ERO report, discussed with boards what they knew about achievement and progress, and asked boards about any action the school has taken on previous ERO recommendations and actions required. They then sought evidence as part of interviews with school leaders, observations in classrooms and by reading school documentation through a series of investigative questions.

Overarching evaluation question

What does the school know about progress in Pacific student achievement since the last review?

Investigative questions

Reviewers also asked, in support of this overarching evaluation question:

Since the last review, to what extent have the following improved:

- Pacific student presence;
- Pacific student engagement;
- board of trustees' knowledge and understanding of Pacific issues;
- the school's engagement with its Pacific community;
- student achievement in literacy and numeracy; and
- the quality of achievement information.

Evidence was triangulated through discussions and interviews with a range of personnel, as well as from observations and relevant documentation.

Based on evidence gathered, reviewers formed overall judgements about the progress made in each of these six areas. They also identified and reported examples of good practice and 'inspirational stories'. Reviewers reported on Pacific student achievement under the headings: *Areas of progress*, *Areas for further improvement* and *Recommendations*.

Appendix 2

Frequencies of total sample

School Type

	Frequency	Percent	National Percent
Full Primary (Years 1-8)	6	11	43
Contributing Primary (Years 1-6)	26	48	31
Intermediate	10	19	5
Special School	3	6	2
Secondary (Years 7-15)	3	6	4
Composite (Years 1-15)	1	2	6
Secondary (Years 9-15)	4	8	9
Total	53	100	100

Locality

	Frequency	Percent	National Percent
Urban	50	94	71
Rural	3	6	29
Total	53	100	100

Roll Size Group

	Frequency	Percent	National Percent
Small (0-150 primary, 0-300 secondary)	5	9	45
Medium (151-300 primary, 301-700 secondary)	14	27	26
Large (301+ primary, 701+ secondary)	34	64	29
Total	53	100	100

Decile Group

	Frequency	Percent	National percent
Low (1-3)	23	44	30
Medium (4-7)	15	28	40
High (8-10)	15	28	30
Total	53	1000	100