

**Education on the East
Coast: Schools and
Kura Kaupapa Māori**

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Introduction

This cluster evaluation highlights improvements in the overall performance of the six kura kaupapa Māori and 12 English-medium schools on the North Island's East Coast.

The Education Review Office (ERO) first reported on schooling on the East Coast in 1997. That report, *Improving Schooling on the East Coast*, noted that the quality of education most of the students received was not high enough. Two further ERO reports in 2001 and 2002 identified steady progress for schools on the East Coast. By the end of 2002 only two schools were not performing well.

Since then, the context of education in the Ngāti Porou region has changed. The 2003/04 Ministry of Education Network Review resulted in school mergers, restructuring and closures. In 2010, an additional kura kaupapa Māori was established catering for students in Years 1 to 15. Various professional learning and development (PLD) initiatives were provided across the region.

This report highlights some significant changes in these schools over the last 14 years. Three of the 18 East Coast schools and kura were judged to have such high quality self review, likely to help sustain ongoing improvement, that ERO indicated their next review would be in four-to-five years. In 12 schools and kura reviews ERO judged that the schools were likely to continue to focus on improving student progress and achievement and so indicated a three year return. ERO will work with the remaining three schools and kura to help them build their self-review capacity, and to improve students' education.

Whānau involvement in governance and management, and in curriculum review and design has increased and contributed to improvements in the schools and kura. Whānau are actively involved in their schools and proud of them. They have supported the implementation of the curriculum by sharing their knowledge and expertise related to the local physical, historical and cultural environment.

School leaders' professional learning and development PLD has also contributed to leaders' and teachers' increased confidence with designing their school's curriculum and introducing related teaching practice. Kura kaupapa Māori cooperated to share strategies, and many English-medium schools participated in cluster PLD. Those working in the clusters or with other schools gained new knowledge, decided on future development plans, mentored colleagues and in some cases introduced new practices in their own school. Continued targeted professional learning support for leaders and teachers is crucial to sustain the improvements highlighted in this evaluation report and to address areas where development is needed.

In many schools teachers collect assessment data that they should use to plan targeted teaching programmes and to share the information with students. Some leaders are already discussing school-wide assessment information with school trustees so they can identify how well their students are achieving the goals outlined in their school's charter. School leaders and teachers now need ongoing opportunities to spread the successful practices across the region, for the benefit of all students.

Background

A revised relationship agreement between Te Rūnanga o Ngāti Porou and the Education Review Office was signed in 2007. The main purpose of this relationship agreement was to consider how ERO reviews might help to:

- improve the quality of learning for students in both English-medium and Māori immersion programmes, and particularly for those who needed more help to achieve well
- increase participation in high quality early childhood education.

The agreement notes that:

“The achievement of students and the continual improvement in school and early childhood services in the Ngāti Porou region on the East Coast of New Zealand is of keen interest to both Te Rūnanga o Ngāti Porou and the Education Review Office (ERO).

It also states that:

In undertaking reviews, ERO’s primary relationship is directly with individual school boards and management committees of early childhood services. In addition, through this agreement with the Rūnanga, ERO can be involved in matters relating to the education of all children on the East Coast. ERO’s intention is to provide external evaluation that will work alongside the internal review that the Rūnanga carries out itself to improve educational outcomes.

A hui involving the Rūnanga and ERO was held in January 2010 to:

- inform the Rūnanga of changed reviewing arrangements as a result of a restructure at ERO and re-drawn geographic boundaries
- establish relationships and dialogue between the Rūnanga and ERO to support successful and useful school reviews
- provide a forum for open discussion about Rūnanga and community concerns, interests and aspirations for children and young people on the East Coast and their schools.

Te Rūnanga o Ngāti Porou was keen for ERO to evaluate the impact of literacy and numeracy professional learning and development (PLD) programmes in which schools/kura on the East Coast had been involved in recent years.

This report is written in two separate sections to reflect the different evaluation frameworks used in kura and schools. Kura kaupapa Māori programmes are reviewed using the *Framework for Review and Evaluation in Te Aho Matua Kura Kaupapa Māori*. While each kura worked with ERO to identify a specific focus for the review, all included aspects of literacy and the school’s curriculum evaluated and reported through the wāhanga of *Te Aho Matua*; Te Ira Tangata, Te Reo, Ngā Iwi, Te Ao and Āhuatanga Ako. In English-medium schools ERO used the *Framework for School Reviews (2010)* and focused on the vision, principles, values, key competencies and learning areas from *The New Zealand Curriculum*. In these schools ERO evaluated

how effectively the school's curriculum promoted student learning – engagement, progress and achievement, particularly in literacy and numeracy.

Kura Kaupapa Māori

Methodology

ERO gathered data for this report from its reviews in kura between 2008 and 2010.

The *Framework for Review and Evaluation in Te Aho Matua Kura Kaupapa Māori*, developed jointly by Te Rūnanga Nui o Ngā Kura Kaupapa Māori (Te Rūnanga Nui) was used to review the six kura kaupapa Māori on the East Coast. The methodology consists of four key elements. Each element is important; each depends on the other; and they link cyclically as the review process progresses.

- **Internal review** – where whānau highlight the academic, physical, emotional and spiritual outcomes for students, and the practices that contribute to these outcomes.
- **Kaupapa approach** – that focuses the review on key priorities for the kura, identified through internal review.
- **Informed conclusions** – where a robust process of information gathering, analysis and synthesis is used to reach provisional findings, to share and discuss with kura whānau, and to identify priorities.
- **Reporting** – where findings are confirmed, key priorities decided, and the review report discussed and written.

The ERO team, kura whānau and Te Rūnanga Nui kaitiaki worked together in most of the kura reviews to conduct the evaluation. There is collective responsibility for all three groups to focus the review process on the implementation of *Te Aho Matua*, particularly on the quality of educational provision and the outcomes for students.

While each kura worked with ERO to identify a specific focus for the review, all included aspects of literacy and the school's curriculum was examined and reported through the six wāhanga of *Te Aho Matua*.

- Te Ira Tangata focuses on the nature of human kind, particularly the child.
- Te Reo focuses on language and how kura kaupapa Māori can advance the language learning of children.
- Ngā Iwi focuses on the people that influence the development of students.
- Te Ao focuses on the world that surrounds students, about which there are fundamental truths that affect their lives.
- Āhukatanga Ako lists the principles of teaching practice that are considered of vital importance in the education of students.¹

One of the six kura kaupapa reviews undertaken by ERO between 2008 and 2010 focused on oral language programmes. In particular te reo o Ngāti Porou was the

¹ Education Review Office and Te Rūnanga Nui o Ngā Kura Kaupapa Māori o Aotearoa, (2008). *A Framework for Review and Evaluation in Te Aho Matua Kura Kaupapa Māori*.

focus of one review and two kura had an evaluation focus that was not explicitly literacy or numeracy. The remaining two kura were the subject of supplementary reviews where terms of reference were derived from areas for improvement identified in their previous review 12 months earlier.

This report is unable to comment on the quality of numeracy programmes throughout kura kaupapa Māori as none of the kura reviews focused specifically on pangarau - mathematics. Notably in one supplementary review, ERO recommended that the whānau consider literacy and numeracy as areas of priority.

The kura kaupapa Māori included in this evaluation are:

- Te Kura Kaupapa Māori o Tapere-nui-a-Whatonga
- Te Kura Kaupapa Māori o Kawakawa mai Tawhiti *
- Te Kura Kaupapa Māori o Mangatuna
- Te Kura Kaupapa Māori o Ngā Taonga Tūturu ki Tokomaru
- Te Kura Kaupapa Māori o Waipiro
- Te Kura Kaupapa Māori o Te Waiū o Ngāti Porou.

* Not included in ERO's 1997 East Coast Report.

Findings

ERO's findings from an analysis of the reviews of the six kura kaupapa Māori on the East Coast are reported in relation to:

- Te Aho Matua framework
 - Te Ira Tangata
 - Te Reo
 - Ngā Iwi
 - Te Ao
 - Āhuetanga Ako.
- Literacy
 - te reo o Ngāti Porou
 - professional learning and development.
- Teaching and learning
 - student achievement
 - use of assessment data
 - curriculum design.
- Capability and sustainability
 - governance and management
 - whānau involvement.

Te Ira Tangata

Well developed, articulate vision statements guided decisions and practice at all levels of the kura kaupapa Māori on the East Coast. Whānau worked with and alongside kura staff to develop the vision and graduate profiles. They were committed to supporting the implementation of the principles and goals. Graduate profiles reflect the aspirations of whānau for their children, were underpinned by the principles of Te Aho Matua and had strong philosophical values and beliefs embedded in them. These documents expressed clear expectations of whānau and students, and focused on positive outcomes for students as descendants of Ngāti Porou. Priority was given to developing strong Ngāti Porou identity and language, including specific qualities of relevant hapū, which were included in guiding documents.

Goal setting, monitoring and reporting occurred at various levels in each kura. Boards and kura leaders were developing appropriate systems to monitor ongoing operations and targets for student achievement. Teachers were beginning to use student data effectively to plan targeted learning programmes. Self review and evaluation practice was still developing and did not provide evidential information about the impact of activities and operations on student outcomes aligned to the school's vision and graduate profile.

Te Reo

Improving the quality of te reo o Ngāti Porou was a priority identified in the strategic plans of most kura. Whānau were committed to recognising te reo o Ngāti Pōrou and its distinct dialectal features to ensure the growth and long-term sustainability of their language. Some kura had a clear directive in place, “kia reo rua tūturu ko te reo o ngā matua tipuna tuatahi”. Kaumātua played a significant role in teaching the language of Ngāti Porou. The kura made use of their knowledge and skills in te reo Māori me ōna tikanga. Teaching and learning programmes in all kura had a strong focus on building the oral language ability of students and whānau.

Ngā Iwi

High whānau engagement and participation were evident in all the kura. In the last three years, all kura had undertaken extensive consultation and collaboration with whānau to develop their local kura curriculum. With a vision for their future aspirations, whānau (inclusive of kura staff) worked collectively to achieve the goals of the graduate profile. They shared a strong sense of identity, belonging and connectedness through whakapapa that is integral to the curriculum. Students were encouraged to become confident learners, founded on sound knowledge of their whānau, hapū and iwi identity.

Te Ao

Understanding the contemporary and traditional views of te ao Māori, the wider world and the physical and natural worlds was effectively embedded into kura programmes. Included in the vision statements and curriculum plans of all kura was a commitment to equipping students with the skills necessary for living in both the Māori and the wider world. Students had many opportunities to interact with their peers from kura in the region. They attended local, regional and national events on the kura kaupapa calendar. Some kura had also planned and undertaken excursions outside New Zealand to expose students to a wider range of cultures and perspectives.

Students in kura kaupapa Māori were actively investigating and exploring the Māori and the wider world. Whānau immersed students in an environment that reflected the Māori world by using local contexts as authentic learning experiences. In a few kura, information communication technologies (ICT) was used as an effective learning tool and to connect students with the wider world. Students had many opportunities to learn about te ao Māori and the wider world.

Local marae were often used as the site for learning from and alongside kaumātua about tikanga Māori. Excursions into the local bush, rivers and beaches allowed students to use the natural environment for learning as well as developing an understanding of their historical, cultural and economic significance.

Students were well supported in understanding their place in the Māori and the wider world. Curriculum information from two of the three wharekura demonstrated a firm commitment by kura boards and whānau to support a wide range of areas for student success. (At the time of this evaluation the third wharekura had yet to be reviewed as a composite school). There were high expectations that students would achieve relevant qualifications. Further study and training at the tertiary level is promoted widely. Planning for career and future pathways for students was in place.

Āhuatanga Ako

Most kura demonstrated sound knowledge of curriculum planning and implementation to meet the individual interests of students. Kura consistently gathered information and used it to determine the learning needs of individuals and groups of students, establish benchmarks for learning and evaluate progress over time.

Professional development throughout the region was beginning to have a positive impact on the quality of teaching practice. Teachers used a range of strategies to teach literacy and numeracy. Programmes provided by teachers were responsive and relevant to the aspirations and interests of students. Teachers were becoming more reflective about their practice.

Professional collaboration has increased across the region. Teachers in kura met regularly to share knowledge and expertise with each other. Leaders and teachers had opportunities to meet regularly and to reflect critically on their individual practice in a supportive and professional environment. Working together has increased teachers' professional knowledge and confidence in their practice.

Literacy

Te reo o Ngāti Porou

While only two kura reviews focused specifically on oral language programmes, ERO reported a significant focus on the acquisition of te reo o Ngāti Porou as a feature of kura programmes across all seven kura. Strategic planning highlighted language learning as a priority for kura whānau whānui, to develop a strong critical mass of competent speakers of te reo o Ngāti Porou in order to build a sustainable future for their language. Local experts, including native speakers, were identified as pertinent resources to promote language development. Kura were the hub of language learning for the community, and a strong commitment was expressed throughout the region to maintaining te reo Māori-only language zones in kura.

Professional learning and development

Kura used internal and external professional learning and development opportunities well. Most have well established relationships with neighbouring kura and professional support for each other was a significant characteristic of these. Language experts from kura whānau gave teachers specific support and helped to monitor the quality of te reo o Ngāti Porou. External facilitators and programmes were used to varying degrees across the region. Where their expertise was sought, teachers benefited from both individual feedback and whole kura programmes of professional learning and development. Some kura reported that teachers' knowledge and practice for the teaching of aspects of literacy and numeracy had improved.

Teaching and learning

Student achievement

Measuring students' success and achievement in kura was focused appropriately on the extent to which students were confident in their culture, identity and language as well as their success in literacy and numeracy, and other areas of the curriculum (*Te Marautanga o Aotearoa*). Using the *Evaluation Indicators for Reviews in Te Aho Matua Kura Kaupapa Māori*, ERO found strong indications that students in kura kaupapa Māori on the East Coast were developing a deep understanding of who they are, where they were from and to whom they were connected. Language acquisition and competence was also strong, but had yet to be systematically evaluated.

Kura participation in regional and national events such as Ngā Manu Kōrero, Kapa Haka competitions and Waka Ama were opportunities for whānau and students to celebrate success and excellence. A few kura programmes included excursions overseas to help students to become cognisant global citizens. Both wharekura reviewed in 2010 demonstrated outstanding results in National Certificates of Educational Achievement (NCEA) te reo Māori and/or te reo Rangatira.

One kura is now focused on raising the number of merit and excellence passes that students achieve across the range of NCEA subjects that they offer. Exit information gathered anecdotally suggests the number of students continuing on to tertiary education increased.

Use of achievement information

While the use of student achievement data for kura-wide targets for literacy and numeracy was unclear, evidence suggested that most kura were beginning to use data appropriately to plan classroom programmes and identify strategies that met the individual needs of students. Achievement data was also used to inform teachers' professional learning and development programmes. In one high performing kura, ERO noted that *assessment information is the key influence in changing teacher practice and learning outcomes for students.*²

² Te Kura Kaupapa o Te Waiū o Ngāti Porou Education Review report, August 2010, p 9.

Capability and sustainability

Governance and management

In 2002, ERO reported that 14 were carrying out their administrative requirements effectively, and sound self review practices were evident in 12 schools. Reviews of the seven kura on the East Coast 2008/10 found that most had effective governance and management. In one kura where ERO had identified areas for improvement the board had plans in place to deal with these. Personnel management was no longer reported as an area of concern for any of the kura.

Whānau involvement

Whānau involvement and commitment to high quality education was high. Kura had consulted widely with whānau to develop their respective curricula. Kaumātua and kuia were highly respected and treasured repositories of local knowledge and wisdom. Kura created a range of opportunities for students to learn from and alongside their kaumatua.

They bring a sense of tradition, authenticity and validity to the hopes, aspirations and dreams for students to be future cultural and linguistic brokers of te reo Māori and tikanga of Ngāti Porou. There is a sense of urgency for the kura to capture and cement the teachings and learnings of the kuia. The wairua, the hā, the mana and mauri of their reo, of their kōrero and stories, is a living treasure to be highly valued and protected by the kura.³

Future direction for kura kaupapa Māori

Use of assessment data to inform planning has improved since 1997. The use of common assessment tools in literacy and numeracy and positive collegial relationships in kura have increased. Kura work with staff from other kura to:

- share their analysed literacy and numeracy data to identify trends and patterns and develop strategies to address common areas of need
- moderate judgements about student work in literacy and numeracy
- meet regularly to discuss plans for literacy and numeracy teaching programmes.

Individual kura have worked hard to develop a local curriculum that reflects the aspirations of whānau and the interests of students. Most have formulated useful graduate profiles that provide vision and direction for the kura. Systematic and comprehensive evidence-based self review that evaluates how well the kura is working towards and/or achieving the aims of their graduate profile is a characteristic in a successful school. For East Coast kura it would help to:

- embed the principles that underpin their goals at all levels of operation

³ Te Kura Kaupapa o Te Waiū o Ngāti Porou Education Review report, August 2010, p 6.

- promote robust discussion about indicators for success as defined by the graduate profile
- identify areas for future development in the kura
- further promote the use of student achievement information as a tool for strategic planning and development.

Schools

Methodology

For the 12 English-medium schools, ERO gathered the data for this cluster evaluation in the context of the major evaluation question for education reviews in 2010.⁴

How effectively does this school's curriculum promote student learning - engagement, progress and achievement?

Nine were primary schools that cater for students from Year 1 to Year 8 and three were composite schools, with students from Year 1 to Year 13.

ERO was interested in each school's current assessment practices and what school leaders and teachers knew about student progress and achievement. In particular ERO asked how schools' current practices enabled:

- teachers to use assessment data to provide focused teaching, particularly the use of data to focus teaching on identified groups of students
- teachers to involve students in setting and understanding their learning goals
- teachers to make judgements about student achievement and rates of progress
- teachers to moderate judgements to ensure consistency and reliability
- school leaders to benchmark achievement information and use it as part of their self review to make resourcing and programme decisions to support student learning, progress and achievement.

ERO also asked specific questions about the nature and impact of support the 12 East Coast schools had received related to development of numeracy and literacy programmes.

All data were collected by ERO review officers in the normal course of their review activities. ERO's *Draft Framework for School Reviews* sets out the process for education reviews.⁵

The 12 schools included in this evaluation were:

- Potaka School
- Waikirikiri School
- Ngata Memorial College
- Makarika School

⁴ See: <http://www.ero.govt.nz/Review-Process/For-Schools-and-Kura-Kaupapa-Māori>

⁵ See: <http://www.ero.govt.nz/Review-Process/For-Schools-and-Kura-Kaupapa-Māori>

- Hatea A Rangi School
- Whangarā School
- Tolaga Bay Area School
- Hiruharama School
- Te Puia Springs School
- Te Waha O Rerekohu Area School
- Mata School
- Tikitiki School.

Findings

ERO's findings about the 12 English-medium East Coast schools are reported in relation to:

- Literacy and numeracy
 - student achievement
 - professional learning and development.
- Teaching and learning
 - curriculum
 - assessment.
- Capability and sustainability
 - leadership
 - self review
 - governance and management
 - relationships with parents and whānau.

Literacy and numeracy

Student achievement

Levels of student achievement in reading, writing and mathematics varied both across and within the schools. Most schools had evidence of the progress of individuals, groups and year levels, and had identified students who needed additional support to address their underachievement. These schools were taking steps to make improvements through setting appropriate charter targets, professional development and improving the collection and use of student achievement information.

In two thirds of schools (8 of the 12) most students were generally progressing well, with some making significant gains as a result of better use of assessment data, improved teaching practice and/or targeted support or interventions.

In five of the nine primary schools, most students were achieving at or above national expectations by the end of Year 8. In these schools, students were often entering school below, or well below, expected levels.

In the three schools with Years 11 to 13 students, the proportion of students gaining NCEA credits varied. In two schools, NCEA results in Levels 1 and 2 compared favourably with national averages. In one they were below for Levels 1 and 2, but

above for Level 3. ERO identified the need for two schools to improve the course options available to students at NCEA Level 3 in order to increase their opportunities for further study and qualifications.

Achievement information for all schools indicated that students were generally achieving better in reading and writing than in mathematics. Several schools were involved in, or planning to be involved in, numeracy PLD in 2010/11.

ERO reported improved achievement as a result of principal or teacher involvement in PLD programmes in five schools. In three of these schools students were regularly told about their progress and achievement and used this information to set goals that helped them to improve even more quickly. In six schools, ERO reported that increasing students' knowledge of their achievement and progress and then using this information to help their learning was an area for development. Increasing students' use of assessment information should be a focus of future professional development programmes.

Professional learning and development

About half the schools have been involved in the Ngāti Pōrou curriculum cluster initiative. This initiative focused on curriculum development and literacy teaching and learning, particularly in Years 1 to 3, supporting gifted and talented students and using information and communication technologies (ICT).

Principals working in the cluster initially had different levels of confidence with developing a new curriculum and introducing related teaching practice. Those working in the cluster together gained new knowledge and decided on future development plans for their schools through sharing in professional discussions and mentoring colleagues. In some instances principals were then able to pass on new practices in their own schools.

In a few instances, teachers also used additional and/or other PLD strategies for focused developments in their individual schools. Some teachers visited other schools to learn, discuss and reflect on new teaching practices. In three schools teachers made extensive use of external PLD providers for school-wide development in mathematics and/or writing. Teacher-led PLD in a small number of schools gave further opportunities for teachers to share best teaching practice across the school.

Examples of good outcomes resulting from cluster and other PLD developments in two schools.

All teachers and principals in the first school belong to a literacy cluster where they share learning about literacy programmes with other local schools. Work in the cluster has motivated teachers to make many changes to existing teaching practices. A local resource teacher and an external PLD provider help with developing the local curriculum and the teaching approaches to use with the school's curriculum. Considerable time is given to strategies to use in literacy and numeracy programmes.

Since 2007 teachers in the second school have been involved in four different professional development clusters to develop their ICT, junior literacy programmes and curriculum. The cluster that they believe has made the greatest impact on their school is the Ngāti Porou Curriculum Project where teachers worked together to develop new strategies and directions for teaching programmes aligned to their new curriculum.

In most schools involvement in cluster activities or school-specific programmes helped improve teaching practice, while in others no changes were evident or were not sustained.

Three schools highlighted some difficulties accessing PLD. Barriers to PLD for these schools were mostly related to:

- geographical isolation
- funding for and/or access to a pool of relievers
- the need to repeat PLD because of changes in principal and teaching staff
- a focus only on PLD for principals that limited access to targeted development for some teacher in the school.

The most positive changes for students and teachers occurred when schools used a combination of cluster and additional targeted PLD programmes. Fostering all schools' involvement in cluster PLD in the future should reduce teachers and leaders feelings of geographic and professional isolation. Cluster developments also have the potential to reduce the need to repeat PLD when teachers move between local schools and to provide mentoring for new principals to develop best practice.

Teaching and Learning

Curriculum development

Ten of the 12 schools had made considerable progress with the development of their curriculum. A significant feature of curriculum development in these schools was the strong connection to local history, te reo and tikanga o Ngāti Porou, aligned with the intent of *The New Zealand Curriculum*. Many boards and leaders had consulted widely in their local community, identifying the aspirations and hopes of parents and whānau for their children. Where schools had undertaken extensive review of their curriculum, the highly collaborative processes used had resulted in an agreed direction and purpose for the school.

Schools with bilingual or immersion units or classes, focused on how they might work with both *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa* and *The New Zealand Curriculum*. Principals and teachers were considering how these curriculum documents applied to their school and community.

Two schools still needed considerable work to develop their own curriculum. One had identified the need to complete documentation that outlined curriculum implementation strategies and programmes. The other was improving the school curriculum to reflect local Māori knowledge.

One school had not yet begun reviewing its curriculum to align with *The New Zealand Curriculum*. A lack of confidence to lead this work, along with issues associated with the quality of teaching and learning, contributed to the slow start with curriculum review and development in the school.

Assessment

A focus on collecting and using assessment information to plan specifically for individual students was a feature of many schools. In most schools, ongoing teacher development was improving capability and confidence in using assessment data. However, only some teachers used assessment tools and formative assessment

confidently for their planning and teaching. In a third of the schools, student achievement information was used well to decide what professional development for teachers would best assist them to use teaching strategies that helped students improve further.

The small numbers of students enrolled in some schools posed challenges for some leaders in terms of how they could moderate teacher judgements about each student's achievement and how they could manage school-wide reporting and review of students' progress and achievement.

ERO found some successful assessment practices which included:

- teachers, developing processes to use assessment information to identify the next teaching steps
- sharing learning intentions for the lesson with students so they could understand what they should focus on
- involving students in setting and reflecting on their own learning goals
- students, using digital portfolios to show their progress and celebrate their learning and progress with whānau
- recording learning intentions for groups of students in group diaries so students could refer to the things they had practised previously and needed to continue to work on
- teachers, developing Individual Education Plans (IEPs) that identified learning programmes and goals for each student.

In 2010, teachers in schools throughout New Zealand were expected to begin using National Standards to identify how well students were achieving compared to national expectations. They were required to report student progress and achievement to parents related to those standards. The majority of East Coast schools with Years 1 to 8 students were preparing to work with the National Standards. One school was judged as being well prepared to work with the standards and one had not yet begun to prepare for them.

Capability and sustainability

Leadership

Effective leadership was evident in most schools. Strong professional leadership helped to improve student achievement. Principals increasingly focused on developing collegial relationships in their schools to encourage sharing and implementation of best teaching practice. In almost half the schools, teachers were highly focused on professional practice. This kind of leadership in most schools was helping to establish a sound foundation for improving the quality of education for students.

In some schools the challenge remains for leaders to sustain the improvements made and to continue to provide and use the relevant PLD that will help teachers to make effective use of student achievement information in their planning and teaching programmes.

Self review

A third of the schools had a strong culture of self review and were using self review to evaluate and improve their performance. In these schools, self review was well led, based on thoroughly analysed student achievement information and was combined with highly reflective practice, where leaders looked carefully into data to decide what worked best for their students. In most of the remaining schools, self review was developing and ERO identified next steps to improve the use of achievement information for self review or to broaden the areas to focus on as part of self review.

Governance

Most schools had sound governance systems, processes and actions. Trustees were highly committed to their roles and responsibilities and aware of these. They represented their communities well and had a clear vision for their schools. All boards were committed to improving student achievement. Half indicated that they were well informed about student achievement and some had used this information to set targets for student progress and achievement.

Community partnerships

In many schools a significant feature was how well the relationships with parents and whānau and the wider community were developing and strengthening. Most schools were supported strongly by their community and had developed a clear sense of identity, including valuing and acknowledging the historical, cultural and physical aspects of the community. Commitment to shared values and desire for their children to be part of the tradition and the future of the school was evident. Whānau valued the longstanding, inter-generational connections with schools and were proud of their school and its achievements.

Future direction for schools

To sustain the improvements made since the 1997 cluster report, schools on the East Coast need to maintain an emphasis on student achievement, in the context for learning that their curriculum now provides. Ongoing provision of relevant PLD, with teachers working together across schools, should increase their capability and confidence in planning appropriate programmes of learning.

Future PLD should also focus on the analysis and interpretation of data by teachers and school leaders to contribute to school self review. Areas where the use of achievement information for self review and development is needed include;

- giving trustees in some schools more school-wide achievement information data to contribute to board review
- making more use of achievement data to target those students who need additional support
- identifying the programmes and strategies that are helping students to improve, and
- identifying the professional development teachers need to help students increase their progress.

Students in all schools would benefit from the sharing by teachers and principals of good assessment practice already found in pockets across the region. In half of the schools teachers need to discuss assessment information with students so they can help set relevant goals and identify their next learning steps. They need to know which goals to focus on that will improve their learning.

Conclusion

Effective professional leadership in most schools and kura is bringing about positive changes for students on the East Coast. Where leadership is highly effective, schools and kura are well placed to sustain improvements. However, sustainability remains important. The issue of principal turnover was first raised in ERO's 1997 report *Improving Schooling on the East Coast*. School leaders have had access to ongoing mentoring and support to assist them to develop and embed positive changes for their students and community. This mentoring and support needs to continue and be taken up by all leaders to sustain and make further improvements in the future.

A feature of many East Coast schools and kura is the work of boards of trustees, leaders, teachers and wider communities in reviewing and designing their local school curriculum. The localised curricula in individual schools and kura reflect local history and Māori ancestry. Students have the opportunity to learn through a curriculum that reflects their identity, culture and language and that takes account of the aspirations whānau have for their success as learners.

This report notes the positive impact of parent and whānau involvement and engagement in the learning of their children and in the governance of schools and kura. Whānau have high expectations for their children and many are actively involved through consultation processes, governance responsibilities and in supporting the day-to-day programme.

This 2011 ERO evaluation notes the improvements in teaching practice that have been brought about by the relevant and useful PLD provided by various initiatives. Some schools have benefited greatly from initiatives such as the East Coast Schools' Curriculum Project. While some schools have used relevant PLD, other schools and kura are missing out on these opportunities.

In order to sustain and build on the improvements in learning and teaching, a coherent approach to target each school's identified teacher development needs is required. Although a few kura and schools are using student achievement information well, others need ongoing support to build confidence with analysing and using assessment data to cater for students' learning needs and identify teachers' requirements for professional development. Combining cluster development, mentoring and PLD for individual schools should provide a mechanism throughout the region and help resolve issues evident in other schools.

Next steps

ERO recommends that school and kura leaders and teachers build their confidence and skills with analysing and using assessment information to:

- cater for students' individual needs
- involve students in using assessment information to set and monitor their own learning goals

- identify teaching practices that maximise students' progress
- report school-wide achievement and progress information to boards and whānau
- identify school-wide development priorities
- determine targeted teacher professional development actions.

ERO also recommends that Te Rūnanga Nui and the Ministry of Education plan, with schools and kura, a strategic professional teaching programme that targets the development needs to be identified for each school. As part of this plan opportunities should continue for leaders and teachers to participate in cluster professional learning to sustain and build improvement through sharing good practice evident in the region, and by leaders mentoring and supporting each other.