



Improving Education Outcomes
for Pacific Learners →

May 2012

Foreword

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

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

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

In our daily work we have the privilege of going into early childhood services and schools, giving us a current picture of what is happening throughout the country. We collate and analyse this information so that it can be used to benefit the education sector and, therefore, the children in our education system. ERO's reports contribute sound information for work undertaken to support the Government's policies.

This is ERO's third national evaluation report looking at how primary and secondary schools engage with Pacific learners and work to lift their achievement. Unfortunately the results are in line with earlier reports, again showing that schools need to make significant improvements in the ways they respond to Pacific students. There are widely recognised disparities in the education outcomes for these students, but little evidence of substantial changes in the way schools address these differences. We are sure this report will provide some guidance for school leaders.

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



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Executive Summary

The vision in the New Zealand Government's *Pasifika Education Plan 2009 – 2012* is that “*the education system must work for Pasifika so they gain the knowledge and skills necessary to do well for themselves, their communities, Aotearoa New Zealand, the Pacific region and the world.*”¹

As part of a young, diverse and growing population, Pacific students' progress, engagement and achievement at school, and the conditions that promote their success, are matters of national economic and social importance.

Results from national and international assessments show that the learners most at risk of not achieving in New Zealand schools are Pacific students. Since 2009 the Government has called for a much more active and urgent focus on lifting school performance. Schools have been urged to tailor their programmes to meet the varying needs of the different Pasifika groups, their different identities, languages and cultures, and to recognise the cultural assets these students bring to their learning.

This is ERO's third national evaluation report focusing on how schools engage with Pacific learners and act to improve their achievement outcomes. The report is based on information gathered from 302 schools from a range of deciles, roll sizes and locations across the country. It considers:

- schools' achievement and assessment practices for Pacific students
- schools' awareness and use of the *Pasifika Education Plan* (PEP)
- school initiatives to promote Pacific student engagement in learning
- boards of trustees' knowledge about Pacific students
- schools' work with parents and families.

The findings of this 2012 evaluation are disappointingly consistent with those found by ERO in its 2009 and 2010 national evaluation reports. Although ERO found positive practices in some schools, there were no significant system-wide changes evident in the way schools were responding to Pacific students, despite the widely recognised disparities in education outcomes for these students.

ERO found that school leaders and teachers in most schools in this study were not recognising and actively responding to this achievement disparity. Most of the schools studied did not carefully analyse Pacific learners' assessment results to determine actions they could take to accelerate their progress. Only about a quarter of secondary schools specifically looked into how Pacific students achieved in mathematics and reading, with less than 20 percent investigating Pacific students' writing achievement and progress.

¹ Available at <http://www.minedu.govt.nz/NZEducation/EducationPolicies/PasifikaEducation/PasifikaEducationPlan.aspx>

Approximately half of the primary schools collected high quality information on Pacific student achievement in mathematics and reading. Only a third of primary schools also collated data on Pacific students' writing.

Pacific learners are far from homogeneous. However, as yet, there is little evidence of primary and secondary schools responding to the diversity, identity, language and cultures of Pacific learners, as envisaged in the *Pasifika Education Plan*. While some Pacific students may be born in New Zealand, others may be new arrivals. Hence, although a useful first step, it is not enough for schools to analyse and respond to achievement information of a notional Pacific 'cohort'. Schools must also promote the learning of individual Pacific students, based on evidence they have collected and analysed about these learners' cultural assets, interests, achievement and next steps for learning.

As schools develop their curriculum they should take into account the cultures, interests and potential of all their students, including those from Pacific cultures. Most primary and secondary schools in this evaluation had not drawn upon contexts and themes that were relevant to Pacific learners. Indeed, while references to Pacific students might appear in the overarching statements of a school's curriculum, classroom planning and practice frequently missed opportunities to reflect the culture, knowledge and understanding of these learners. When a school's curriculum fails to connect learners with their wider lives it can limit their opportunities to respond to a particular context or to engage with and understand the material they are expected to learn.

Similarly, schools demonstrated variable levels of engagement with Pacific families. Many schools used the same approaches to engaging with Pacific parents as they used with other parents. ERO found some examples of schools that had taken a more innovative approach, for example involving the use of community leaders and translators to communicate with parents, and to ensure the school was culturally effective in its engagement practices.

This evaluation indicates that a greater commitment is required from boards of trustees and school leaders to recognise the potential of, and any achievement disparities for, their Pacific students. To improve national education outcomes, schools must closely monitor their own performance, and undertake improved planning, curriculum implementation and reporting to better respond to the diverse learning needs and aspirations of all learners.

Next steps

The Government and Pacific communities require a significant improvement in the way schools respond to Pacific students. To make a collective impact nationally ERO recommends that school leaders:

- improve how they analyse and respond to information about Pacific students' presence, achievement and progress
- review the extent to which their school's curriculum responds to the various needs and interests of their Pacific students

- become familiar with the *Pasifika Education Plan* and use the goals to assist with determining school priorities for raising Pacific students' achievement
- build teachers' and boards' knowledge of Pacific students, and determine how best to use this knowledge in learning programmes that reflect Pacific students' voices and aspects of culture, language and identity relevant to their learning
- strengthen links with Pacific parents and communities to facilitate communication, and build mutual understanding about the best ways to support student learning.

Introduction

Pacific student achievement 2009 and 2010

All students have the right to a high quality education regardless of their cultural, linguistic or socio-economic backgrounds. Students with varying identities, language, backgrounds, abilities and talents need to be recognised and affirmed and have their learning needs addressed in an inclusive school environment. (ERO's *Evaluation Indicators for School Reviews 2011: The diversity of students and their education*).²

ERO is committed to building schools' capability to review and improve educational outcomes for all students. Results from international and national assessments,³ indicate that students most at risk of not succeeding are Pacific. In particular, the 2010 NEMP report identifies worsening disparities for Years 4 and 8 Pacific learners in reading (English) and similarly across other curriculum areas. Consequently, ERO has prioritised evaluating schools' performance in improving and accelerating learning for Pacific students.

In 2009 and 2010 ERO published two national reports that evaluated the progress of schools in promoting the achievement, engagement and presence of Pacific students. These reports found that, although some schools were promoting success for Pacific students, not all schools were making a conscious effort to raise the achievement levels of these students. Therefore, overall progress across the education sector was minimal. While some positive trends in achievement were evident, the urgency to accelerate progress had not been a serious consideration for school leaders. Consequently, the state of Pacific student achievement in New Zealand remained a concern.

The 2009 report was a pilot evaluation of 32 schools in the Auckland area. The 2010 report evaluated the performance of 233 schools across the country. In these reports ERO wanted to know what initiatives schools had put in place since their previous review.

The 2010 evaluation found that schools were reducing the number of Pacific students involved in disciplinary actions. Schools were taking action earlier if problems arose and this resulted in more stand-downs but fewer suspensions and exclusions for Pacific students. Despite this positive result for keeping students at school when problems did occur, ERO found that 40 percent of schools either did not monitor, or could not demonstrate, any improvement in Pacific students' attendance.

A minority of schools had initiated programmes aimed explicitly at improving Pacific student engagement and learning outcomes. These included increasing teacher and/or trustees' knowledge of Pacific cultures, setting high achievement expectations, reinforcing effective teaching strategies, and extra provision for English and/or Pacific

² Available at <http://www.ero.govt.nz/Review-Process/Frameworks-and-Evaluation-Indicators-for-ERO-Reviews/Evaluation-Indicators-for-School-Reviews>

³ Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) and National Education Monitoring Project (NEMP)

languages programmes. Initiatives had been developed by schools to integrate elements of Pacific cultures and languages in school and classroom programmes.

Most schools did not know what impact their initiatives were having on Pacific students' achievement. For example, ERO found that more than half the schools did not know whether Pacific students had improved their literacy and numeracy. The challenges in monitoring Pacific student achievement included little use of data before and after an initiative, and the lack of analysis about individual students. Schools were also reluctant to identify underachievement as an issue for the board's attention when there were small numbers of Pacific students on the roll.

Schools that had succeeded in raising Pacific student achievement typically had close links with parents, families and communities. Some of these schools had a Pacific liaison person who assisted with engaging parents in students' learning and in the life of the school. Effective schools also had a variety of ways to create and maintain a climate that was inclusive and welcoming for Pacific students and their families.

The recommendations of the 2010 report were that school leaders:

- improve how they collect, analyse and use Pacific students' achievement information
- improve school processes to enable students to know about their progress and achievement and how to manage their learning
- build teachers' and boards' knowledge of the strengths and needs of Pacific students, and how to use this knowledge to benefit these students
- strengthen links with Pacific parents and communities to facilitate communication and build mutual understanding about the best ways to support their children's learning
- use the contextual flexibility inherent in *The New Zealand Curriculum*⁴ to design and implement teaching and learning programmes that reflect Pacific students' voices and aspects of cultures and languages relevant to their learning.

ERO also recommended that the Ministry of Education:

- work with schools to increase school leaders' and teachers' understanding of the importance of partnership with Pacific communities
- consider ways to increase school leaders' knowledge of how to review and report Pacific students' achievement and progress, particularly when the numbers are small.

ERO's 2012 report is based on information gathered from 302 schools from a range of deciles, roll sizes and locations across the country. Despite findings that are disappointing overall, ERO also aims to highlight what some schools are doing well. The report discusses what steps need to be taken to improve how all schools can support Pacific students to reach their potential. To help schools identify and develop

⁴ Ministry of Education, (2007). *The New Zealand Curriculum for English-medium teaching and learning in years 1-13*. Wellington: Learning Media Limited.

effective practices, this report describes some of the good practices ERO identified as working well for Pacific students and the wider school community.

The Pasifika Education Plan 2009-2012

The *Pasifika Education Plan 2009-2012* (PEP) sets out the Government's objectives for Pacific students across the education system. The plan underlines the diversity of Pacific students and links their success to the way the education system responds to this diversity.

Pasifika is a collective term used to refer to people of Pacific heritage or ancestry who have migrated or been born in Aotearoa New Zealand. Pasifika include recent migrants or first, second and subsequent generations of New Zealand born Pasifika men, women and children of single or mixed heritages. They identify themselves with their indigenous Pacific countries of origin because of family and cultural connections with Samoa, Cook Islands, Tonga, Niue, Tokelau, Fiji, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu and other Pacific countries. Pasifika people are not homogenous and Pasifika does not refer to a single ethnicity, nationality, gender, language or culture.

and

Success in education is about positively harnessing Pasifika diversity and multiple world views within an enabling education system that works for young people, their families and communities.

The *Pasifika Education Plan's* 2011 mid-term report noted that there had been good progress across many of the plan's goals. It also forecast that this progress would continue across most of its goals in 2012. The outcomes for compulsory education and the Ministry of Education's 2012 forecast outcomes for these are set out in the table below. Note that while the NCEA achievement of Pacific students is tracking upwards, there continues to be a gap between Pacific students and the overall average rates of achievement for New Zealand secondary students. The numbers of Pacific teachers and parent involvement on schools' boards are currently below the plan's targets.

Table 1: Progress towards meeting the Pasifika Education Plan target – compulsory education

Position up until May 2011	Ministry Forecast for 2012
86 percent of all 2009 Pasifika school leavers achieved the NCEA level 1 literacy and numeracy requirements.	The target of 93 percent will be met.
66 percent of all 2009 Pasifika school leavers achieved NCEA level 2 or above.	The target of 75 percent will be met.
28 percent of all 2009 Pasifika school leavers achieved a university entrance standard.	The target of 30 percent will be met.
There were 1,368 Pasifika teachers in 2010, an 88 percent increase from 2000.	The target of 1,520 registered Pasifika teachers in 2012 will be met.
Age-standardised suspension rates for Pasifika students increased by 11 percent from 7.2 to 8.0 per 1000 between 2008 and 2009 after previous years of decrease.	The target for a Pasifika age standardised suspension rate of 5.0 per 1,000 students by 2012 will now not be achieved without further intervention.
The age-standardised expulsion rate for Pasifika students in 2009 was 4.7 per 1000 students, a decrease of 8 percent since 2008.	It is unlikely the target of 1 per 1,000 Pasifika student expulsions will be achieved without additional intervention.
In 2009, 30 percent of schools in which Pasifika representation on the school's board of trustees would be expected had such representation.	It is unlikely the target of 100 percent of these schools having such representation will be met without suitable intervention.

Source: Ministry of Education, (2009). *Pasifika Education Plan Monitoring Report: 2009*. Wellington: Ministry of Education. Available at <http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/series/22967/pasifika-education-plan-monitoring-report-2009>

Findings

The findings of this report are presented under the following headings:

- the quality of assessment practices
- the awareness and use of the *Pasifika Education Plan: 2009-2012*
- initiatives to promote Pacific student engagement
- boards' knowledge of Pacific student achievement
- schools and Pacific communities.

Reviewer comments are in italics.

The quality of assessment practices

The assessment of student achievement and progress, examining and using information about what each student knows and can do, is fundamental to effective teaching and learning.

The National Administration Guidelines⁵ outline that each board, through the principal and staff, is required to gather assessment information that is sufficiently comprehensive to enable the progress and achievement of students to be evaluated. Boards are expected to then use the assessment information to identify learners and groups of learners who are not achieving, or who are at risk of not achieving, and, identify aspects of the curriculum which require particular attention. They must also develop and implement teaching and learning strategies to address the needs of students and aspects of the curriculum they have identified.

In evaluating the quality of schools' assessment practices, ERO considered the:

- types of assessment information gathered by schools
- quality of the student assessment information gathered by schools
- use of this assessment information.

ERO found that schools had collected different sorts of achievement information about Pacific learners, and that this information varied in its quality. A quarter of secondary schools analysed how Pacific learners achieved in mathematics and reading. Less than 20 percent investigated Pacific learners' achievement in writing and only six of the 52 secondary schools had high quality assessment information regarding other areas of the curriculum.

Primary school leaders and teachers were more likely to analyse information about the achievement of Pacific learners than those in secondary schools. For primary schools with Pacific students, approximately 50 percent had collated information on Pacific student achievement in mathematics and reading. A third of primary schools had also

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<http://www.minedu.govt.nz/NZEducation/EducationPolicies/Schools/PolicyAndStrategy/PlanningReportingRelevantLegislationNEGSAndNAGS/TheNationalAdministrationGuidelinesNAGs.aspx>

collected data on Pacific students' writing. Only 14 primary schools (eight percent) had assessment information about Pacific learners in other curriculum areas.

ERO found that the likelihood of schools collecting and analysing Pacific learners' assessment data was not affected by the size of their Pacific student cohort. However, some differences were evident in the types of analyses that were undertaken, between schools with large or small groups of Pacific learners. For example, schools with large Pacific cohorts were more likely to examine group patterns across the school. The number of students meant that they could compare the progress of Pacific learners with the rest of the school and identify strategies that could support the achievement of the wider Pacific cohort.

Schools with large cohorts of Pacific students could also examine the achievement of groups within the Pacific cohort. For example, schools could check to see how 'Samoan boys', who were also English as a second-language (ESL) learners, were achieving and identify strategies in response to any issues.

The school has introduced a learning coach programme where the coach is provided with achievement information about their students. At the beginning of the year the learning coach meets with each student and their family/parents to collaboratively develop goals and targets for the student. The goals are both personal and achievement focused.

(Low decile secondary school with high proportion of Pacific students)

Where schools had relatively small Pacific cohorts, effective assessment processes involved responding to the needs of individual students rather than just examining how the test results of a small Pacific cohort compared with other groups at the school. By starting with the individual interests and progress of each Pacific student, school leaders could also identify any development themes.

There are clear guidelines for teachers about assessment and planning and teachers are well supported to use assessment data to set targets for individuals and groups. Students have individual goals which are set and reviewed every few weeks, especially at Years 5 and 6. Students are able to tell how they look at their work to see progress.

(High decile contributing school with low proportion of Pacific students)

The importance of looking at individuals in the analysis of Pacific student achievement is underlined by ERO's findings on the analysis and use of achievement data by secondary schools. Secondary schools were often found to have completed New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) data analyses of Pacific student achievement, without having developed any appropriate plans or strategies to improve learning or teaching. School leaders were, therefore, not breaking down the data sufficiently to look at what supported Pacific learners to achieve or fail. As a result, their response to Pacific student achievement data was typically a generalised strategy or professional development programme that did not support teachers to understand how to respond to the language, culture and identity of individual Pacific learners in the classrooms.

In some of the most effective schools, senior leaders and teachers had established additional strategies to complement their NZQA information by implementing ongoing assessments and monitoring throughout the year. This included providing opportunities for learners to know about how well they were progressing and how to contribute to their own learning and progress.

Teachers analyse data as a whole school and identify next steps for teaching. This enables them to analyse their own class data and use this to set achievement targets, and make resourcing decisions so that their programme planning is responsive to Pacific students' identified learning needs.

(Low decile contributing school with a high proportion of Pacific students)

During the time of this evaluation schools were beginning to work with the National Standards. Leaders and trustees were looking at their achievement data to set targets for 2011. ERO found some examples where schools were using the introduction of the National Standards for teachers to focus on Pacific students' achievement.

Students go through their assessment and set targets in relation to the National Standards. They identify their next steps to achieve their goal of working at or above expected levels. Teachers use cases and research from the Best Evidence Synthesis for the Teaching of Students from Diverse Backgrounds. Teachers share the achievement data with parents of Pacific students. They talk over the child's strengths and their next steps. Teachers also share where the child sits in relation to the National Standards. Students are also shown their assessment data and where they should be at in relation to the National Standards.

(Medium decile full primary school with three percent Pacific students)

Pacific students are achieving at and above National Standards in reading, but below national standards in mathematics. Trustees, teachers, parents and students have used this information to inform professional learning and development in mathematics. Students and parents have used the information to set learning goals with the teacher. Parents have been advised how they can help their children at home.

(Small low decile primary school with 18 percent Pacific students)

Awareness and use of the Pasifika Education Plan (PEP)

As part of the evaluation for this report, ERO asked schools if they were aware of the PEP and how they were using it to promote student achievement and Pacific parent involvement in their children's learning.

ERO found that of schools with Pacific students, very few were aware of and using the plan to inform their approach to improving Pacific student achievement. Of the 52 secondary schools in the sample, only four were aware of the plan and using it well, with another 14 making some use of the plan.

The PEP has been used as a lever for considering the next steps to improve learning. Actions based on the school's goal to involve families more are having a positive impact on decisions about children's next learning steps. The board chairperson is supporting Pacific trustees and community members better by arranging for the translation of key school documents in Pacific languages. It is hoped that this will help trustees and the community better understand what the school trustees, leaders and teachers are trying to do to improve outcomes for Pacific students.
(Low decile full primary school, with almost half of students Pacific)

Seven primary schools were making good use of the plan to inform their focus on Pacific students, while another 41 schools (23 percent) were making some use of the plan. More than half of the schools with Pacific students were not aware of the PEP.

In schools where the PEP was well used, school leaders, teachers, learners and parents had established strong home and school partnerships. Schools used the targets and goals in the plan to determine actions to create a better learning environment for Pacific learners. The plan gave schools a focus for discussing Pacific student achievement with their communities and informed their self review.

The leadership team has discussed the document and this has been used to develop the school's Pasifika action plan which is currently being implemented. The plan has established the target of accelerating Pasifika achievement in literacy and has identified specific targets with strategies for implementation. These include: identification of and support for bilingual and ESOL learners, building on vocabulary, identification of students in assessment, inquiry into the use of student voice and promotion of cultural experiences.
(Low decile contributing school with a high proportion of Pacific students)

In some schools, leaders stated that the *Pasifika Education Plan* was not applicable to them. This was because they either had no Pacific learners enrolled or the Pacific learners attending their school were achieving well, therefore they felt the plan was irrelevant. Such a perspective is potentially alienating for any Pacific learners who may go on to enrol at these schools. School leaders and teachers may not have sufficient knowledge or processes in place for appropriately engaging with students and their families, or for responding to their individual cultures, languages and identities.

Pacific student engagement

Research consistently shows that the more time students spend involved in learning activities, the more they learn and the greater their achievement. The opportunity to respond is positively related to academic achievement. The more opportunities

learners have to respond to a particular content or practise a skill, the better their understanding of the material or skill.⁶

Student engagement is widely accepted as critical to learning. *The New Zealand Curriculum* describes the importance of the school's curriculum having meaning for students, and connecting students with their wider lives. Research identifies that cognitively engaged students would invest in their learning, would seek to go beyond the requirements, and would relish challenge.⁷

Sustaining and embedding positive progress is a collective responsibility. Learners should have the opportunity to know how well they are achieving in all their subjects and understand what they need to do to make progress.

In 2010 ERO found that a minority of schools had initiated programmes aimed at explicitly improving Pacific student engagement and learning outcomes. These programmes included increasing teachers' and/or trustees' knowledge of Pacific cultures, setting high achievement expectations, reinforcing effective teaching strategies, and making extra provision for English and/or Pacific languages programmes. Many initiatives had also been used by schools to integrate elements of Pacific cultures and languages into school and classroom programmes.

Here is a positive example of an initiative for improving achievement for Pacific students.

The collaborative culture in the school is providing opportunities for staff to talk about the significance of achievement data. 'Teaching as inquiry principles' are implemented to enable teachers to reflect on current practice and identify future teaching and learning actions. A teacher has a management unit to lead success for Pacific students to respond to the needs identified in the school's achievement data. The lead teacher also provides advice about engaging students from different Pacific cultures.

(Medium decile full primary school with three percent Pacific students)

The situation in the 2012 evaluation was very similar to that of 2010. Only a small minority of schools effectively included Pacific themes and contexts in their curriculum and/or developed specific initiatives to support Pacific student engagement.

In many cases schools considered that school-wide initiatives would be enough to support Pacific student engagement, for example in numeracy and literacy. This lack of a focus and planning for the Pacific learners who were not achieving well is likely

⁶ Mastropieri, M.A., & Scruggs, T.E. (2010). *The inclusive classroom: Strategies for effective instruction* (4th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

⁷ Trowler, V (2010) *Student Engagement Literature Review*. York: Higher Education Academy. See: <http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/York/documents/ourwork/studentengagement/StudentEngagementLiteratureReview.pdf>

to contribute to the ongoing achievement disparities evident in national and international assessment data.

In some schools, positive initiatives found included the use of Pacific learning contexts, especially in social studies, music and visual arts. A few schools included Pacific languages and culture as separate subjects. Some schools also had staff members with responsibility for Pacific student achievement. These staff were involved in the analysis of Pacific student information and the development of specific strategies for learners who were underachieving. In a few schools such staff members were responsible for helping other teachers to develop their professional skills in supporting Pacific learners. Despite this, most schools did not analyse the effectiveness of these initiatives in terms of their benefits for Pacific learners.

Primary schools often had references to Pacific learners in the overarching statements of their curriculum. However, the use of Pacific contexts and themes was typically missing in classroom planning and practice. Similarly, while ERO often found evidence that Pacific learners had good relationships with their teachers, and that teachers in some schools were focused on meeting the individual needs of these learners, there was little evidence that schools actively developed their school's curriculum to include contexts from the Pacific. For example, at one school a series of lessons about transportation in the past concentrated exclusively on the modes used by Europeans and gave no time to the ways in which Pacific cultures have travelled.

Here is an example of a school where Pacific contexts were clearly evident in class programmes.

Pacific contexts are highlighted in many parts of the school's curriculum and include:

- *a social studies unit on sustainability that has a special focus on Tokelau and migration*
- *drama studies in 'Niu Sila' in the New Zealand literature standard in Year 10.*
- *media studies programmes that provide a wide choice of topics (such as Pacific radio) that Pacific students are able to select according to their interests*
- *the science department encourages and has had success in getting students accepted for university scholarships for Pacific students*
- *art students are encouraged to represent their own Pacific background.*
- *library books about Pacific cultures or themes are labelled with a palm tree sticker for ease of identification.*

(High decile secondary school with four percent Pacific students)

In order to promote the engagement and success of all learners, schools need to go beyond the assessment process and summative data to look closely at ensuring that the school's curriculum provides relevant contexts that can engage learners from different cultures. In particular, including Pacific perspectives in the curriculum provides opportunities for Pacific learners to draw on their own knowledge of the world and to enable success through building on activities and experiences, with which they are familiar or confident.

Boards' knowledge of Pacific student achievement

School leadership is integral to creating a positive learning culture for learners and staff. The vision and goals of a school can be successfully achieved if school leadership has the capacity to influence and drive change. The success of individual and groups of Pacific learners is highly dependent on the expectations school leaders set for the school.

In high achieving schools, successful leaders exert their influence on achievement gains through interpersonal relationships, structuring how teachers do their work, and securing and allocating resources that are aligned to the specific teaching practices they have determined will meet the needs of their students. To secure targeted teaching resources, leaders need to keep the board well informed of the achievement, progress and needs of groups, such as Pacific learners.

Few schools included anything specifically about Pacific students in their charter. In just eight schools a Pacific focus was evident in the charter. In five of these schools, consultation with the Pacific community had been undertaken and had resulted in some goals for, or emphases on, Pacific students.

In the school charter, a section outlines how the school will give priority to improving outcomes for Pacific students. Actions include:

- *programme and practices that foster positive cultural recognition and understanding*
- *fostering consultation opportunities*
- *developing home- school partnerships*
- *analysing and reporting Pacific student achievement information to set specific targets.*

(Medium decile primary school with 25 percent Pacific students)

All parents were consulted as part of the charter development process and results used to inform charter goals. In 2011 consultation was undertaken specifically with Pacific parents to find out what they thought about a range of school issues and ideas. The results have yet to be fed back to families. However, new goals have been developed to further the Pacific perspective in the school's curriculum.

(Medium decile primary school with four percent Pacific students)

ERO found that just under half (45 percent) of schools reported on Pacific student achievement to boards of trustees. Most of these only reported on Pacific student achievement at the beginning and the end of the year. Such practice limits trustees' ability to monitor how well the interventions they resource are accelerating the progress of those learners for whom they were targeted. Only a minority of schools tracked Pacific student achievement through the year, or had set and monitored goals for Pacific student achievement.

ERO found that Pacific students are not a high priority for boards when developing charters and subsequent plans. The low proportion of schools analysing Pacific student achievement and the low number of boards receiving any Pacific achievement

information indicates that most boards are not meeting their obligations to respond to the needs of Pacific students.

Schools and Pacific communities

One of the key messages from the *School Leadership and Student Outcomes BES*⁸ foregrounds how effective leadership requires in-depth knowledge of the core business of teaching and learning. The BES explains that leadership requires detailed knowledge of the importance of effective school-home connections and how to foster them when the educational cultures of school and home are different.

As part of this 2012 evaluation ERO asked schools about the initiatives they have developed to engage with Pacific parents and the communities. A majority of schools did not have specific initiatives in place for engaging Pacific communities. Overall, primary schools tended to engage Pacific parents and community members more than secondary schools. This is consistent with other evidence from ERO which has found that there can be a drop in parent engagement as students go through school.⁹

Effective schools built a collaborative culture of understanding between teachers and school leaders and developed positive relationships and partnerships with parents and the wider school community. They aimed to have learners and their families take a proactive approach to knowing about and tracking the learners' progress.

The initiatives some schools used to engage parents included co-opting Pacific board members and using staff with Pacific community knowledge or language skills to liaise with parents. In one case a school employed a translator so that the senior leadership team could have meaningful conversations about a child's learning. Some schools also emphasised the need to have a variety of ways to communicate with parents through newsletters, report evenings and informal communication (such as through extra-curricular events).

Other initiatives that helped to engage parents and communities included the connections schools made with community leaders. Church leaders, for example, were a way for a few schools to build connections with parents and involve them in school activities and specific aspects of the learning programme.

School leaders and teachers hold the key to successful focused engagement of students in their learning. The ability to stimulate and challenge students' thinking to learn lies with the motivational skills teachers bring to the classroom. Teachers need to know their students well and know strategies to help them. When teachers and leaders work in isolation from the learner's family they are not always able to determine the best actions for the individual student, nor can they help the family support their child to practise the skills or competencies they need to achieve success.

⁸ Robinson, V., Hohepa, M. and Lloyd, C., (2009). *School Leadership and Student Outcomes: Identifying What Works and Why. Best Evidence Synthesis Iteration (BES)*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.

⁹ Education Review Office, (2008) *Partners in Learning: Schools' Engagement with Parents, Whānau and Communities*. Wellington: Education Review Office.

Conclusion

Overall, the data collated and analysed from 302 schools shows minimal progress across all areas investigated by ERO. Schools are not sufficiently focused on improving the performance of Pacific learners. Despite the promulgation of the *Pasifika Education Plan*, large proportions of schools are not carefully examining the achievement of Pacific students, using Pacific contexts in the classroom, responding to the individual needs of Pacific learners, or involving Pacific parents.

While some schools have been proactive in their attempts to improve outcomes for Pacific learners, the wider education community has not yet done enough to accelerate the progress of individual Pacific learners who are not achieving well. The challenge now is for all schools to trial and develop key strategies that contribute to accelerating the achievement of Pacific learners.

Schools that were effective had the following features:

- leadership was focused on improving educational outcomes for Pacific learners
- trustees, leaders and teachers regularly analysed and used assessment information to resource, monitor and improve teaching and learning for these learners
- learners had opportunities to regularly reflect on and monitor their own learning
- the school's curriculum and classroom programmes included highly relevant contexts for Pacific learners that valued their existing knowledge
- a range of ways was used for communicating with parents to improve home and school partnerships.

Understanding the diverse interests and needs of Pacific learners underpins these features. Pacific learners can have very different cultures, language and experience. In responding to Pacific learners, school staff cannot simply create broad strategies or approaches to improve Pacific student achievement. Teachers need to be able to work with individual learners to develop meaningful curricula and specific strategies. Schools can also examine their effectiveness for groups of Pacific students. For example, schools with large numbers of Pacific learners may examine how well the Pacific learners whose first language is or is not English are achieving, or examine the progress and influences on learning of specific groups such as Tongan girls or Samoan boys.

Importantly, schools should go beyond ethnicity to look closer at the specific learning needs of individuals to raise the achievement of Pacific learners overall. Assessment and review processes related to individual and groups of students need to be orchestrated to determine the progress and needs of individual students while also identifying where the greatest impact is required when making resourcing decisions.

More school leaders must focus on trialling and reflecting on different ways to accelerate the success of Pacific learners, to reduce the persisting disparities and ensure all learners have the knowledge and skills necessary to be successful participants in New Zealand's society and economy.

ERO will continue to investigate schools' engagement and success in promoting the achievement of Pacific learners.

Next steps

The Government and Pacific communities require a significant improvement in the way schools respond to Pacific students. To make a collective impact nationally, ERO recommends that school leaders:

- improve how they analyse and respond to information about Pacific students' presence, achievement and progress
- review the extent to which their school's curriculum responds to the various needs and interests of their Pacific students
- become familiar with the *Pasifika Education Plan* and use the goals to assist with determining school priorities for raising Pacific students' achievement
- build teachers' and boards' knowledge of Pacific students, and determine how best to use this knowledge in learning programmes that reflect Pacific students' voices and aspects of culture, language and identity relevant to their learning
- strengthen links with Pacific parents and communities to facilitate communication, and build mutual understanding about the best ways to support student learning.

Appendix 1: Methodology

As part of its regular education reviews ERO collects information on schools' engagement and awareness of Pacific students, and their learning outcomes. ERO gathered information from 302 schools.¹⁰ Seventy-one of these schools had no Pacific students and ERO collected minimal data from these schools. There were 188 schools where Pacific students made up between 1 and 25 percent of the roll. There were 13 schools where Pacific students made up between a quarter and a half of the school roll, and 20 schools where Pacific students constituted over 50 percent of their roll. In two of the schools in this evaluation Pacific students made up more than 90 percent of their roll.

Evaluation framework

The evaluation's overarching evaluation question asked:

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

Six key evaluation questions supported this. Since the last ERO review -

- to what extent has Pacific student presence improved?
- to what extent has Pacific student engagement improved?
- to what extent has the board of trustees' knowledge and understanding of Pacific issues improved?
- to what extent has the school's engagement with its Pacific community improved?
- to what extent has student achievement in literacy and numeracy improved?
- to what extent has the quality of achievement information improved?

Review teams observed class programmes and engaged in meetings with boards of trustees, principals, senior leaders and key staff responsible for Pacific student achievement, pastoral care and community liaison. Reviewers also included formal and informal conversations with parents and students.

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.

Analysis included the identification of a group of high performing schools and a group of schools that were least effective in their provision of Pacific students. ERO's judgements on aspects of the six areas were assigned a numeric value (highest quality level given highest number) and these numbers were added together to give an overall total score. With a possible grade aggregate of 63, 12 schools that scored 50 or more were identified as the most effective, and qualitative data on these schools was examined to develop broader judgements about effective practice.

Schools whose aggregate was 14 or less were identified as the least effective.

¹⁰ Data was collected in late 2010 and early 2011.

Appendix 2: Statistics of schools in the sample for this report

Table 2: School types

School type	Number	Percentage of sample	National percentage ¹¹
Full primary (Year 1-8)	123	41	43
Contributing (Year 1-6)	101	33	31
Intermediate	23	8	5
Special school	1	<1	2
Secondary (Year 7-15)	12	4	4
Composite (Year 1-15)	2	<1	6
Secondary (Year 9-15)	40	13	9
Total	302	100	100

Table 2 shows that school types in this sample are representative of national figures. While intermediate and Year 9-15 secondary schools are slightly over-represented, and composite schools are under-represented, these differences were not statistically significant.¹²

Table 3: Locality

Locality	Number	Percentage of sample	National percentage
Main Urban (30,000+)	185	61	54
Secondary Urban (10,000 – 29,999)	24	8	6
Minor Urban (1000 – 9999)	29	10	12
Rural (0-999)	64	21	28
Total	302	100	100

Table 3 shows that localities of the schools in this sample are representative of national figures. Any differences were not statistically significant.

¹¹ The national percentage of each school type is based on the total population of schools as at 1 July 2011. For this study it excludes teen parent units and The Correspondence School. This also applies to Tables 3 to 5.

¹² The differences between observed and expected values were tested using a Chi square test. The level of statistical significance for all statistical tests in this report was $p < 0.05$.

Table 4: Decile group

Decile group	Number	Percentage of sample	National percentage
Low (1-3)	89	29	31
Medium (4-7)	127	42	39
High (8-10)	86	29	30
Total	302	100	100

Table 4 shows that decile groupings of the schools in this sample are representative of national figures. Any differences were not statistically significant.

Table 5: Roll size group

Roll size	Number	Percentage of sample	National percentage
Very small (0-30 primary, 0-100 secondary)	19	6	11
Small (31-100 primary, 101-400 secondary)	59	19	26
Medium (101-300 primary, 401-800 secondary)	102	34	36
Large (301-500 primary, 801-1500 secondary)	87	29	19
Very large (501+ primary, 1501+ secondary)	35	12	8
Total	302	100	100

Table 5 shows that roll size groupings of the schools in this sample are not representative of national figures. Very small and small schools are under-represented, and large and very large schools are over-represented. These differences were statistically significant.

Table 6: Percentage of Pacific students on the roll

Pacific roll	Number	Percentage of sample	National percentage¹³
0 – 25 percent	271	90	91
26 – 50 percent	11	3	4
51 – 100 percent	20	7	5
Total	302	100	100

Table 6 shows that the schools in this sample are representative of national figures in relation to the percentage of Pacific students on the roll. Any differences were not statistically significant.

¹³ The national percentage of each school type is based on the total population of schools as at 1 November 2011.