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Te Tari Arotake Mātauranga



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The Child – the Heart of the Matter

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NCEA Observational Studies

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Context

The National Certificate for Educational Achievement (NCEA) was introduced as the main school qualification between 2002 and 2004. Several refinements have been made over the years, including new endorsement practices introduced in 2007 for standards and 2010 for courses. 2008 saw the start of work to align NCEA standards with *The New Zealand Curriculum* (NZC); work that saw revised standards introduced progressively from 2011. The intention of NCEA was that it would be an assessment that provided a true picture of students' learning and was recognised overseas for its value.

Educators and the Ministry of Education (the Ministry) had mixed feelings about whether NCEA has been implemented as intended, and had concerns about its impact on teaching and learning in secondary schools.

In 2018, the government initiated a work programme, Education Conversation- Kōrero Mātauranga, to examine the effectiveness of our education system. It was timely that a review of NCEA was included in that programme. The Ministry needed to provide recommendations for changes to NCEA for the government to consider.

To that end, in 2018, the Ministry partnered with the Education Review Office (ERO) to carry out research on the use of NCEA as an assessment and qualification tool and how its use impacted five particular aspects: curriculum design, pedagogy, assessment strategies, resourcing and student wellbeing.¹

The research highlighted triumphs, innovative practices and challenges as they relate to secondary schools and tertiary education organisations (TEOs). ERO generated a report including 12 profiles²; nine of schools, representing different types of schools¹ and three profiles of TEOs. The profiles identified common themes and differences between the types. Vignettes were used to help decision makers gain a better sense of some innovative practices and challenges faced, and how schools and TEOs addressed them. ERO also posed provocations about NCEA use.

The review of NCEA was completed and decisions made published in May 2019. An overview of the changes is available here [NCEA Change Package Overview 2019](#).³

ERO's work¹

ERO developed nine **profiles** of schools and three of tertiary providers who use NCEA. These are all fictitious and do not describe any particular school or provider, but instead they broadly represent different **types** of school and provider.

Each profile was used to illustrate the different experiences and impacts of NCEA on five **aspects** within the types.

These five aspects were:

1. curriculum design
2. pedagogy
3. assessment strategies
4. resourcing, and
5. pastoral care and wellbeing.

Within each aspect ERO identified triumphs, challenges and innovation.

¹ For detail of the process, including development of school types, see Appendix 1.

² See Appendix 2

³ More information is available from <https://conversation.education.govt.nz/conversations/ncea-review/>



Findings

ERO notes that no one of the five aspects plays a more important part than any other. The interplay across the aspects is evident in every school and TEO. Each provider may place their emphasis on a different aspect, depending on their unique circumstances, the challenges they face and the priorities they set. The findings focus on schools and then TEOs.

Courageous leadership makes a difference

Leaders were often the key influence in schools that successfully overcame challenges presented by working with NCEA. These leaders came from across the school types. They addressed the challenges they and their students faced, making sense of the issues underlying the challenges, and worked to find solutions. They included their school community in the process, so the changes were understood before they were implemented. These leaders were focused on achieving the best for their students, enabling their staff to design relevant, culturally responsive, local curricula that met individuals' learning needs and interests.

Courageous leaders allocated resourcing according to priorities. Of note was the allocation of funding according to the programmes catering for students' choice of pathways rather than disproportionately to pathways leading to university.

It is interesting that four of the nine schools visited had a change of principal in the past three years. In each case the principal took a fresh look at the school, identifying where improvements could be made to build on the work of the previous principal. In each school progress was made towards a more student-centred approach.⁴

Common themes from schools⁵


Almost all schools had a focus on student wellbeing. Some successfully mitigated the pressures of the assessment load placed on students. Most, to a greater or lesser extent, provided a responsive curriculum with flexible timetabling. They monitored and mentored students well, providing clear guidance for relevant learning pathways.

The common themes across schools tended to be in the challenges faced. Challenges found in many of the schools included:

- competition between schools for students and funding
 - schools are often judged in 'league tables' based solely on NCEA and University Entrance (UE) results
- variability of practice
 - quality of pedagogy
 - focus on credit acquisition rather than learning

⁴ Harekeke, Nikau, Horoeke and Ngutukākā Colleges.

⁵ See Appendix 3 for how elements featured across the schools.

- 
- siloed learning areas meant lost opportunities for authentic learning contexts and assessment across learning areas
 - assessment
 - parents' poor understanding of NCEA hampered their ability to support and advise their child
 - relentless assessment pressures, sometimes created by students' own and parental expectations
 - validity and integrity of assessment practices
 - student perception of the relative 'worth' of credits, some appear much easier to achieve than others
 - timetabling decisions that seriously compromised students' ongoing learning and attainment of qualifications
 - streaming students according to their ability, restricting their access to the full curriculum and choice of vocational pathways
 - resourcing of the timetable that favoured academic over vocational pathways.

Schools met the challenges in many ways

What follows are examples of how schools overcame some of the challenges presented by their size, location or community pressures. These are followed by examples of schools that have not yet overcome some of the challenges they face with NCEA. Some schools appear in both categories and no school in the sample has overcome all the challenges identified above. A reminder that the schools named are fictitious; their profiles developed from a range of sources.

There is no one way to develop curriculum and pathways

Smaller schools are often seen as less able to offer an extensive curriculum. Resourceful leadership finds ways to extend the range; widening choices and vocational opportunities. Some larger schools were more able to place a priority on providing an extensive range of courses tailored to meeting students' interests and preferred vocational pathways.



The examples below demonstrate innovative solutions are possible:

Providing a curriculum that meets students' needs and interests

Haumata College, with its small roll and isolation, can only offer a limited number of senior classes with a specialist teacher. Online distance learning enables students to access other subjects such as languages.

Teachers support students in their online learning and they transport them to offsite tutorials that build their understanding. They regularly monitor student progress in these subjects or courses.

One teacher has built strong relationships with local industries and employers that are used to strengthen student learning for vocational pathways.

Several schools, including Manuka College, use varying combinations of internal and external standards within a subject. For example, in English, students are offered a choice of a course based on their interest in Heroes and Villains or English in the Pacific. The assessment standards applied in each of these courses are similar so there is no disadvantage to students in the choice they make.

The success of NCEA is the flexibility of courses. We can customise courses for interests and abilities.

Teacher


Nikau College collaborates with neighbouring secondary schools to provide summer schools to widen the range of subjects available to students, such as barista training, Māori travel and tourism, and a services academy. It is also currently trialling an integrated curriculum across Years 9 to 13 in a few courses. This is deliberately planned with the intent to challenge and 'disrupt' the teachers' current pedagogy so they are motivated to improve practice.

Different definitions of success

Some schools measure success as achieving an outcome that benefits each individual student, refusing to buy in to having their effectiveness judged against their NCEA or UE achievement rates compared to those of other schools.

It's all about what works best for the kid. Our school compares itself to itself.

Principal



The following examples illustrate how schools' focus on success for all students can impact the schools' overall NCEA results.

Putting students' needs first can come at a cost to a school

Horoeka and Harekeke Colleges refuse to have their success measured by NCEA passes achieved. Their priority is "*better outcomes for kids*" (Principal). These schools offer students wide curriculum choices that reflect their interests and needs, including a significant number of vocational pathways.

If a suitable opportunity for an apprenticeship or employment arises, they encourage students to take it up, regardless of whether they have completed all their NCEA credits for Level 2. For the student and the school this is success, but it diminishes the schools' NCEA results. In 2017 this approach reduced Horoeka College's anticipated NCEA success rate by 15 percent.

While these are the only secondary schools in their provincial towns, students are still able to access other secondary schools in neighbouring towns and cities should they choose to. However, both schools have healthy rolls and support from their local communities.

Students transferring schools can 'spoil' NCEA results

The '70 day' attendance rule' means students must have attended their new school for a minimum of 70 days before their NCEA results are attributed to that new school. Students who transfer often do so, so they can follow vocational pathways not available at their old school. When they achieve success, their results may be attributed to the previous school if the '70 day' rule applies. This disadvantages schools with a clear focus on accepting transferring students to follow appropriate vocational pathways.

Manuka College leaders feel confident their community values both vocational and academic course achievement. Many parents and students value trades careers. This reflects the community where significant numbers are employed in both trades and professional occupations. The school's focus is to support students to find and follow an appropriate pathway into employment, further education or training. Appropriately, not all students achieve UE, nor do all students stay through to Year 13 and complete Level 3. Some could wrongly interpret the school's NCEA and UE results as not serving their student population well.

Accelerating Māori student achievement

Some school leaders are proactive in raising expectations for Māori students' achievement. They reject deficit thinking with its consequent danger of Māori students being channelled into less challenging pathways and so not being given the opportunity to realise their full potential. They

promote and support initiatives that raise both staff and student aspirations for this group of students.

The college below provides initiatives successful in raising Māori student achievement.

Raising expectations for Māori students

Harekeke College has a mentoring group specifically to support Māori students and guide their pathway choices. It also has a partnership with a university that provides an additional mentoring group, meeting weekly and focused on encouraging students to participate in the sciences. Because of these two initiatives, there has been a significant increase in the number of Māori students taking the sciences at all NCEA levels and succeeding.

Teachers and leaders have high expectations for all students. A Year 12 Māori student told ERO his course included accounting, economics, academic English, maths options and te reo Māori. He had thought to take hospitality '*as a break from the academic subjects*'. However, knowing this student's personal drive to gain excellences, his dean advised him to take food and nutrition instead, suggesting the course would be more satisfying for him. The student followed the advice and is enjoying the course.

Is student workload a problem?

ERO found many different and often opposite views about student workload. Some adults and students alike believe the workload was manageable and students' attitude to the assessments was the problem. Others felt the load was an important motivator for students to keep learning. There were differences in how internal and external assessments were viewed.

Some students, particularly those who follow the university pathway, thrive on academic challenge.

Endorsements are motivating. Without that I would slack off.

Externals are a better way to assess the higher academic students and you need externals for endorsements.

Students

However, many students identified issues.

I want to learn how to write an essay – not rote learn one for an external.

Students

Some students clearly prefer gaining their credits during the year.

Internals and project-based assessments prove that you can apply the learning.

Internals are a plus in as much as you can put in as much time you want to get the grade that you want.

Students



The challenge for schools is to monitor students' programmes to make sure the workload is appropriate and manageable for the individual, and assessments are coordinated between subjects and spread appropriately throughout the year. Most schools grapple with this with varying degrees of success, but they provide support for students who are not coping well with NCEA pressures.

The examples below illustrate the complexity of the issues schools face.

Managing student workload and stress

When school leaders at Kōwhai College tried limiting assessments students attempted in each course they faced resistance from heads of curriculum areas, students and parents. This was not uncommon across the schools in this work.

Counsellors and students presented differing views on the amount of stress NCEA aspirations placed on students.

A student from Horoeke College said

You have to use your time in class wisely and if you do then the workload is manageable.

By contrast the counsellor stated

NCEA is not a stress in itself, but for students who are already stressed it adds another burden.

At Harekeke College the counsellor and pastoral leaders said that while the pressure for some students is relentless, some of the stresses are attributable to students' own expectations for high achievement across a large number of credits; many more than required to attain the certificate.

Staff at Harekeke College also commented they had noted a tendency for boys to manage this pressure by choosing the easiest course. This in turn created issues for boys not achieving at the level of girls and they were worried how it might play out for the boys in the longer term.

In contrast, one girl, who gained 158 credits at Level 1, stated she had not felt any particular pressure in achieving this result.

Support for students can have positive and negative outcomes

Almost all schools visited provided students with strong mentoring and support to meet their learning and wellbeing needs.

Mentoring is the key to learning. It has provided deeper learning relationships between staff and students.
Principal



However, this has presented some challenges in achieving a balance between providing students with the appropriate level of individual support to be successful learners while also developing their independence as self-managing learners.

The perceived needs of students for support often differed between different types of schools. A greater level of support was often provided in lower decile schools to help students better manage pressures they faced in their lives outside of school.

Below are two contrasting approaches and a cautionary note:

Developing self-managing learners within a supportive environment

Haumata College is a small rural school, with many courses taught online, through distance teaching. Students in this environment must manage their own study and this increases their independence as learners. The school considers that students who go on to tertiary education from Haumata College are better prepared to take responsibility for their own progress than students in city or private schools.

This contrasts with the situation at Nikau College where students are very closely monitored and supported to achieve success. Their teachers identify that, as a result, many students have not developed the independence necessary for success at university.

Pastoral leaders at Rātā and Pōhutukawa Colleges identified their students were not well prepared for tertiary education. Students often expect the same assessment practices and opportunities as provided in internally assessed NCEA standards. University assessment practices come as a shock.

At Uni, deadlines are deadlines. A grade is a grade. Teacher

There are limitations to parents and whānau involvement

Many schools commented on a lack of parent understanding of NCEA. This meant parents and whānau could not fully support their teens through NCEA and help them to make appropriate decisions for course and pathway choices. Many students told ERO their parents have little or no input to their NCEA course choices because of this. The students make such decisions themselves with support from the school. Students also stated that generally schools allow them to have the final say on subject choices. Sometimes this can be detrimental to students' success as choices may not lead to higher level study or follow a clear pathway. In some cases, schools advise students to take courses that do not challenge them, so they can be assured of gaining credits for certification. School results will also look good.

The schools below are examples of schools that have addressed this issue and developed meaningful partnerships with parents and whānau.

Successful partnerships with parents and whānau

Manuka College prioritises consulting with parents and keeping them informed about their student's learning.

Parents are part of the decision making. Shutting doors is not an option.

Principal

The school surveyed parents about their aspirations for student learning and achievement, informed by the school focus on providing meaningful pathways for students and reducing the number of credits offered in senior courses.

Parents receive frequent updates about student progress through the student management system, “*regular real-time data sharing*” and five-weekly interviews that review the student's progress towards achieving their credits.

Manuka College has also revised its careers programme and the location of the careers area, using extra board funding. This has resulted in an increase in the number of students and parents visiting this area frequently, with parents and students better informed and able to make useful decisions about pathway choices.

Nikau College, which has high numbers of Pacific and refugee parents, uses a translator at meetings with parents to help effective communication.

Schools struggling to meet the challenges

Pedagogy focused on learning?

Even within schools with courageous leadership, variability may be evident, particularly regarding the quality of pedagogy. Effective pedagogy can lift a student's interest in a particular subject so they are motivated to pursue further knowledge and learning rather than just gain credits. Schools successful in raising the quality of pedagogy have often done this through a whole-school focus on professional learning in this area. This requires a significant commitment of time and often financial resourcing.

It is worth noting that some of the most telling quotes in the examples came from students, who showed themselves to be very perceptive about the impact of NCEA on their learning.

It is the role of the teacher to inspire kids to learn the content, understand and apply it. Some teachers say just learn this to regurgitate.

Student

The example below indicates the challenges even schools with courageous leadership face in dealing with this issue.

Credits or learning?

Students at Harekeke College said they believed school was

more about gaining credits than the learning.

They spoke about being encouraged by teachers to rote learn essays in English, history and te reo Māori for regurgitation during assessments even if they lacked the skill or understanding to write their own essay.

The students were however able to recognise pockets of good practice within their school.

My accounting teacher does a really good job of real learning. He says we are a business not a class, so we learn to make decisions as in a real business.

Another student appreciated her history teacher spending the whole term on the Russian revolution even though only a portion of this learning contributed to credits. Some of her classmates were worried because there was no assessment and wondered

What's the point if we're not going to get credits?

Students contrasted the real learning they had experienced in Years 9 and 10 with the credit focus from Year 11 onwards. They characterised Year 11 as

learning that doesn't stick with you.

Privileging specific success impacts on school funding

Competition for students, and hence funding, is a particular challenge for schools when there are choices of schools in a community. Many parents judge the success of a school by its success in NCEA; in particular, passes gained at each level, endorsements and the number who achieve UE are seen as indicators of school success. Unlike some of the schools in the previous section, most of the schools below allow such community perceptions to influence the curriculum they provide rather than developing a strong partnership with parents to help them understand what real success is for their teenager.

These schools consider ERO and the Ministry both contribute to this unintended consequence with their expectations for 'good results' in NCEA and UE.



The schools below illustrate the impact that accepting community perceptions of success can have on the curriculum provided for students.

Reinforcing community perceptions

School resourcing is based largely on the number of students who are enrolled. Nikau College, Pōhutukawa College and Ngutukākā College told ERO many parents judge a school by the NCEA league tables, and competition between schools for students can have a negative impact on a school’s curriculum. Some parents and students perceive a hierarchy of subjects with those contributing to UE being ranked highest.

Many schools have not yet harnessed the potential of NCEA for designing courses for meaningful pathways. Principal

At Harekeke College students spoken to by ERO referred to non-academic subjects as ‘drop kick’ subjects.

Consequently, some schools continue to provide senior courses for which there is very little demand. At Nikau College only 15 percent of their students go on to university, but the academic subjects receive a much larger share of resourcing than the number of students taking them would justify. This results in larger classes at junior levels and a reduced range of vocational pathways available for the majority of students.

Unethical practices embellish achievement statistics

A further consequence of this competition for students is that

NCEA creates a level of dishonesty both within and between schools. Principal

Some schools adopt practices that are ethically untenable to enhance their NCEA results, or, in particular, the statistics that will appear in the media. These practices actively work against student success as it is perceived in Horoeke and Harekeke Colleges.

One of the examples below provides an example of a college where a new principal was faced with a prior history of unethical assessment practices.

When assessment is not fair, rigorous or reliable

Ngutukākā College is an example of a school that to a greater or lesser extent had ‘worked the system’ so their overall results looked good and gave them an edge when competing for students. Some examples of inappropriate practices included:

- requiring students to sign a contract at the start of the year, acknowledging that if their attendance dropped below 80 percent, they would not be allowed to attempt external NCEA assessments

- persuading senior students not doing well to sign out – ideally after the July roll return
- only entering students expected to pass an Achievement Standard
- teachers offering more than one resubmission and lowering the standard for awarding a pass
- ‘credit farming’, especially at the end of the year, by allowing students to gain sufficient credits to obtain NCEA but with no coherence or associated pathway for those students.

Senior leaders at Pōhutukawa College raised concerns about students newly enrolled from other schools with NCEA endorsements that did not have the understanding required for that level of high achievement. Similarly, they found it hard to understand how a student, previously struggling at achievement level, gained a Level 3 excellence in a standard he took in a summer ‘catch up’ programme in a subject he had never studied before.

A related challenge to providing a rigorous and fair approach to assessment is the lack of staff expertise and experience in some schools, and particularly with moderation in the smaller schools. One school visited sought to address this challenge by sharing moderation with colleagues in other schools. The downside of this was a lack of timeliness in feedback to students.

Mixed views on changes to Level 1 NCEA

Many of the leaders and staff who spoke to ERO had thoughts about the suggested changes to NCEA Level 1. Attitudes towards these proposals were ambivalent. Many acknowledged what they considered to be the current unnecessarily high assessment load for students at this level. They also identified the impact of this in narrowing the curriculum earlier than necessary. On the other hand, many also recognised that, particularly for less able students, early success with appropriately chosen credits, boosted student confidence and paved the way for ongoing success in NCEA.

Some leaders and staff expressed reservations about the proposal that a student research project be part of assessment requirements at Level 1. They wanted more detail as to what it would entail and how it would benefit students’ learning. They cited their current lack of staff expertise to monitor and assess such a project as a potential barrier. A counter viewpoint was that such learning could be far more relevant to students and capitalise on their interests.

In project-based learning you have students who say they can see the purpose of this in the real world.

Principal

Some common themes from TEOs

ERO visited three TEOs and the observations that follow are based on that small sample. Provision of programmes under the Youth Guarantee scheme, including Trades Academies and Dual Pathways, result in clear links between NCEA programmes in schools and students’ learning in the



TEO. The TEOs visited set out to maximise the opportunities NCEA provides for students. A commonality of experience and practice was evident across the TEOs, much more so than across schools.

Leadership matters

The impact of courageous senior leadership in the TEOs was less directly obvious but not necessarily less significant than in schools. The size of the organisations meant senior leaders had greater administrative responsibilities than leaders in schools. Distributive leadership and responsibility for learning was exercised at a variety of levels within the organisations and at campuses across the country.

We come up with a fully developed proposal, which we present to senior management and if they believe it stacks up, we get the go ahead.

Administrator

Programmes meet student needs

Programmes are student-centred and adapted to meet students' needs. Programmes are generally more flexible than those in many schools and have open entry.

Tutors know how you learn and adapt to you.

Student

They often provide termly modules without prerequisites. The chance of a fresh start each term is seen as a motivator for many students.

Students have faster success.

Administrator

Courses are carefully planned to meet students' individual needs and reflect local employment opportunities. Literacy and numeracy are an integral part of most courses. Students can later move to more academic options if appropriate.

Vocational Pathways must be flexible enough for students to have the option of gaining NCEA Level 3.

Administrator

Assessment is an integral part of the learning pathway

These organisations are often catering for students who have become disengaged from school. Tutors state that Mondays can be difficult with the challenge of refocusing students after a heavy weekend.

Tutors provide hands-on activities, in real contexts, that highly engage learners. TEOs' approach to assessment is very different from that in many schools. Assessment does not drive the learning, rather it is a natural part of the learning pathway, not an end in itself.

The qualification is not the goal. The pathway to employment is the goal.

Student

This was particularly evident in Rural Training TEO below.

Assessment an integral part of the learning

At Rural Training, assessment takes place within real contexts and is repeated over and over in work-type situations.

We put the focus on learning skills - not offering 10 easy catch-up credits. Students are so focused on learning that they often aren't aware they are being assessed. They don't do the fence knot just once to be assessed, they build the fence with many knots.

Tutor

A smaller proportion of the assessments involve written tasks but as these are based on practical experience students find them less threatening. They do not experience the same relentless pressure from assessment many students do in secondary schools.

Skills and employment, not credits, are the priority.

Success is any learner who leaves with more skills than they came in with.

Administrator

The TEOs use a variety of assessment tools, including NCEA, National Certificates, and Vocational Pathways Awards. They demonstrate an expertise in the use of Unit Standards and NCEA in Vocational Pathways, and maintain expectations for rigorous assessment practices across all sites. Tutors are held accountable.

TEOs perceive that programme approval from NZQA can be slow and hampers their ability to respond appropriately to students' needs. TEOs believe the development of new Unit Standards following the Targeted Review of Qualifications (TRoQ) has been slow and an additional source of frustration for them.

Meeting the needs of Māori students

Many of the students in these TEOs are Māori. For example, 42 percent of the students attending Rural Training were Māori. All TEOs have a clear focus on enhancing opportunities for Māori students. They demonstrated a clear commitment to providing an environment responsive to their cultural diversity. They acknowledge they are still working towards this goal and are proactive in strengthening their practice. They provide opportunities for staff development in this area. One TEO has developed a Kaitakawaenga⁶ role. The Kaitakawaenga has a strategic responsibility for developing staff cultural awareness across the multiple campuses. This TEO also has a separate position with full responsibility for monitoring and supporting Māori students, particularly in the residential environment.

⁶ The term translates from te reo Māori as a mediator or arbitrator.

Partnerships with hapū and iwi

The Rural Training TEO has developed partnerships with a kura kaupapa Māori and a hapū. The TEO provides students from the kura with six-week, block-course programmes spread throughout the year. Students learn practical skills on their hapū land, related to employment opportunities in that region. The kura supplements the courses with contextual, in-school learning that includes the history of this hapū land and other aspects that provide a Māori context for the practical learning.

At another of its campuses the TEO supported the “the agribusiness succession planning of local iwi”. The TEO saw it had a role in providing young people with the knowledge and expertise required to take over the leadership roles on iwi farms in due course.

Focus on student wellbeing

Student wellbeing is a high priority for all TEOs. Students are provided with a variety of support services, including counselling, and careers advice. One TEO had a careers department advising and helping to place students in employment. All TEOs have aspirations to provide wrap-around support within the constraints of their resourcing. In some cases this included providing lunch for the students.

The focus on student wellbeing is enhanced by a close learning partnership between tutors and students, described as being more ‘an auntie/uncle relationship’ than a student/teacher one.

Tutors are more chilled than teachers were.

Student

This is helped by the small number of students in learning groups.

Relationships with schools are not always helpful

TEOs valued strong partnerships with their contributing secondary schools. They attempt to maintain a close relationship with the schools and keep them informed on students’ progress.

In some cases, these relationships do not support the student as well as they could. Some schools kept students well after they became disengaged and could have benefitted from transferring to the TEO. Some did not provide useful information, including achievement data, about the students.

TEOs believe some schools see TEO programmes as a ‘fill-in’ for students who do not fit into their curriculum. By contrast, the TEOs see the need to select those students who would benefit most from vocational pathway programmes. Parents were sometimes an obstacle if they did not appreciate the place of TEOs in learning and the alternative pathways they offer.



Resourcing complicates provision

The funding and resourcing models for the TEOs are complex. Different issues were raised at different TEOs. One identified having to access its funding via a Trades Academy as challenging as the allocation to them had meant cutting student places, and the transition to Level 3 has become more difficult.

Continual changes in funding without evaluation of effectiveness makes it difficult to build capacity in the administering organisations or determine which model works best for students.

Administrator

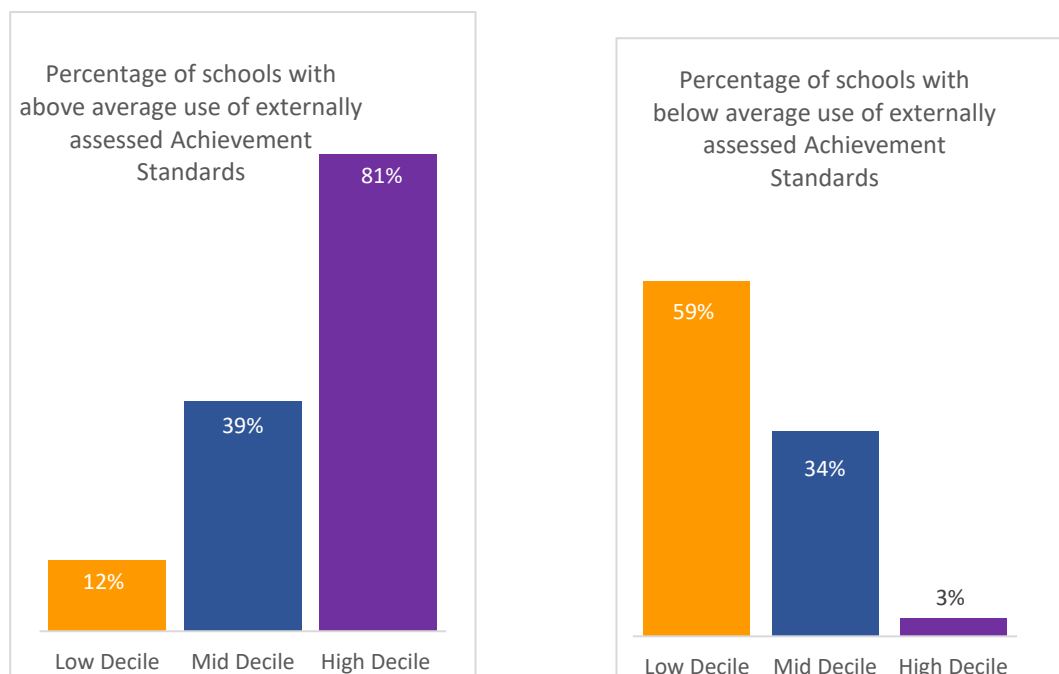
TEOs provided courses for students still at school and described this as 'a loss leader'. The goal was to attract full-time enrolments when the students left school.

Some food for thought – are we doing right by our students?

ERO used data⁷, provided by NZQA to explore patterns of NCEA use across schools with some interesting results.

ERO found that on average (mean) the proportion of Achievement Standards and Unit Standards used in schools is 68 percent and 32 percent respectively. However, across New Zealand secondary schools the mix of Achievement Standards and Unit Standards used varies. High decile schools are far more likely to use Achievement Standards *and* assess them externally than low decile schools.

Figure 1 Differences in the ways schools use Achievement Standards




High decile schools use far more externally assessed Achievement Standards than low decile schools.

Low decile schools use far more Unit Standards than high decile schools and more of their Achievement Standards are internally assessed.

This information prompts several questions:

- Why is there such a difference across schools by decile?
- Are schools making the right choices about NCEA assessments to best demonstrate student success in their learning?
- Do the choices made for students limit their future learning pathways?
- Is it fair to compare the results of each school?

⁷ The data used here refer to NCEA Level 2 and are sourced from the New Zealand Qualifications Authority, valid as at March 2018.



ERO posed some provocations for those involved in education to consider:

- How does the use of NCEA support or compromise best learning practices?
- What is important for students to learn?
- What do we value as success in learning?

Where to from here?

ERO's research shows that NCEA can be an effective tool to support, assess and formally verify student learning.

When this is the case leaders and staff ensure they:

- value learning above credit acquisition
- integrate assessment into learning pathways
- place their students' interests first
- refuse to buy in to league tables as a measure of success
- act to mitigate students' workloads
- provide their students with a suitable range of vocational pathways that lead to further education, training or employment.

The common themes and profiles⁸ provide an opportunity for deeper understanding of the impact of the assessment system on schools and TEOs, and the complexity of challenges experienced by schools and TEOs when using NCEA.

The challenge for the review of NCEA is to find ways to refine NCEA so that secondary schools and TEOs are encouraged to implement it effectively. It should be only one way of demonstrating learners' progress, and should not compromise the learning needed to fulfil our vision for them.

Our vision is for young people:

- *who will be creative, energetic and enterprising;*
- *who will seize the opportunities offered by new knowledge and technologies to secure a sustainable social, cultural, economic and environmental future for our country;*
- *who will work to create an Aotearoa New Zealand in which Māori and Pākehā recognise each other as full Treaty partners, and in which all cultures are valued for the contributions they bring;*
- *who, in their school years, will continue to develop the values knowledge and competencies that will enable them to live full and satisfying lives;*
- *who will be confident, connected, actively involved, and lifelong learners.*

The New Zealand Curriculum (2007)

⁸ See Appendix 2.

Appendix 1: Process followed

An evaluation matrix guided ERO's work

ERO developed a matrix to focus desk-based analysis and onsite observations, organise data collected and inform analysis. The matrix was focused on the impact of NCEA on five aspects determined by the Ministry. These five aspects were:

- *Programme design* refers to the courses and opportunities offered by schools and TEOs to provide coherent and flexible pathways for students, taking them through the senior school and beyond to further education, training or employment.
- *Pedagogy* refers to how teachers make use of strategies and approaches that develop students' knowledge and their expertise as learners. It focuses on learning rather than credit acquisition.
- *Assessment strategies* refer to how the school or TEO selects and administers assessments (Unit Standards or Achievement Standards, internal or external assessment); how they track student progress towards the NCEA qualification; and manage the number and timing of assessments for each student.
- *Resourcing* considers provision of time for teachers to plan, mark and oversee assessments; provision of professional learning for teachers; funding of programmes and assessment opportunities for students inside and outside the school or TEO; and the physical resources. Resourcing is allocated to reflect the needs of all students not just those following the university pathway.
- *Pastoral care and wellbeing* refer to the systems in place to maintain a focus on student learning and progress towards a meaningful pathway, and to mitigate stress and pressure that comes from a number of sources.

ERO identified indicators of good practice against each of these aspects, based on international research and ERO's [School Evaluation Indicators](#).

For each aspects ERO asked the school or TEO:

- What are the challenges/frustrations for a school/TEO of your type in achieving in this area?
- What are the triumphs in this area? Things that have worked really well?
- Any specific innovations you have done or heard other similar schools/TEOs doing?

Matrix for NCEA observational studies

Aspects <i>Principles⁹</i>	Features to consider – what is good practice
Curriculum design <i>Coherence</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The curriculum is responsive, relevant and meets the individual's needs and future career pathway <ul style="list-style-type: none"> good design choice knowledge of learner student centred good future focused advice flexible timetable enables choice Culturally and contextually located, responding to tikanga, promoting Māori success as Māori, authentically integrated
Pedagogy <i>Inclusion and equity</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students and teachers have high expectations for achievement Strong relational pedagogy student:teacher:whānau Teachers use a wide range of teaching strategies to meet differing learning needs Teachers develop students' expertise as learners – Key Competencies Pedagogy which is culturally responsive to Māori – however few <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deliberate design and action
Assessment strategies <i>Coherence Pathways</i> <i>Wellbeing</i> <i>Credibility</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student progress is closely tracked and monitored, and additional learning support is provided as necessary <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attendance Literacy and numeracy Multiple opportunities for success Student and whānau involvement Students understand the timeframe required for success A rigorous and fair approach to assessment results in students, parents and whānau and the community seeing outcomes as valid and reliable <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students are not over assessed Cross-curricular work contributes to a variety of standards Feedback after assessments is both timely and useful Assessment schedules in the school enables distribution of pressure points for learners

⁹ The principles are those underlying the NCEA Review.



Resourcing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Learning areas are appropriately resourced and staffed• Staff are provided with appropriate PLD:<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ effective teaching strategies▪ individual tracking and monitoring▪ developing individual student learning plans▪ Culturally responsive pedagogy (CRP)• Teachers have sufficient time to:<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ monitor and mentor▪ design curriculum, plan, administer, mark and moderate NCEA▪ reflect on the effectiveness of teaching and learning• Resources shared with other schools/TEOs• Strategic resourcing ensures equitable access for Māori students (especially those coming from Kura)
Pastoral care wellbeing <i>Pathways</i> <i>Wellbeing</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Student wellbeing is paramount• Students have coherent learning pathways• Senior and middle leaders in the school/TEO manage teachers' welfare in terms of workload• Teachers draw on the specialist expertise of the guidance counsellor and careers advisor in supporting student achievement• Parents and whānau participate in strong learning partnerships with the students and teachers• Māori and Pacific students are not automatically channeled to practical classes

Individual profiles developed

A profile was constructed for each of the nine school types (Appendix 3). This, to a large extent, was based on the school of that type visited, with consideration given to the findings from the desk-based analysis of other schools of similar type. It proved challenging to provide an accurate composite picture because every school is different with limited similarities between schools within a type.

In the case of the TEOs, each profile represented the findings for the specific TEO visited. The schools and TEOs were given fictitious names to maintain confidentiality. ERO is aware the TEOs may be readily identified and each organisation assured us that would not be a concern to them.

Sampling to development of profiles

Sampling

ERO selected 28 schools reviewed during 2017 who received a three-year return date. ERO also reviewed the files of schools visited as part of ERO's 2018 evaluation '[What drives learning in the senior secondary school](#)'. From both groups of schools, ERO selected 40 schools broadly representative of New Zealand secondary schools, providing a range of types, deciles, sizes and locations.

ERO chose the following categories as representative of different school types and the school profile which exemplifies the category is appended:

- Roll 800, single-sex, low decile, main urban state school – Ngutukākā College
- Roll 1000, private co-educational school, high decile, main urban, offers dual pathways – Pōhutukawa College
- Roll 2400, high decile, main urban, state school – Kōwhai College
- Roll 1400, medium decile, secondary urban, state school – Harekeke College
- Roll 500, medium decile, minor urban, state school – Horoeke College
- Roll <200, medium decile, rural, state school – Haumata College
- Roll 500, low decile, main urban, state, school – Nikau College
- Integrated (Catholic), high decile, main urban – Rātā College
- Roll 1500, high decile, minor urban, state school – Manuka College

Two schools, one with a proportionately higher Māori roll (Ngutukākā College) and one with a proportionately higher Pacific roll (Nikau College) were purposefully included when sampling.

Following the desk-based analysis of information about these 40 schools, ERO selected nine schools for onsite visits. Selection was based on the school characteristics identified above and obtaining a geographical spread across the country.

The TEOs were selected from those offering NCEA and following consultation with the Ministry Regional Principal Advisers: Secondary-Tertiary. Consideration was given to location and type. ERO selected three different private tertiary establishments (PTEs) working with Youth Guarantee and Dual Pathway students as follows:

- major urban, hospitality and building
- rural, primary industry focus
- urban, foundation skills.

ERO notes every school and PTE operates within its own unique context and therefore no school will fit our findings in a category perfectly. ERO acknowledges, for example, not every single sex girls' school will exhibit the same features listed in Ngutukākā College.



Desk-based analysis

ERO carried out a desk-based analysis of the 2017 ERO reports for the original 40 schools against the matrix and good practice indicators. After synthesising the findings against the school types, ERO developed some tentative general assumptions relating to schools, to be tested during the onsite visits of the sample schools. ERO also developed assumptions for the three Tertiary Education Organisations (TEOs) visited.

The synthesis of this desk-based work provided an early indication that the differences within the groups of schools tended to be as great as the differences between the groups themselves despite similarities of size, location and decile.

ERO used these findings together with the indicators of good practice to develop questions for discussion with school leaders and teachers, and to facilitate student voice. ERO also consulted with the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) who provided a breakdown of schools' use of Achievement and Unit Standards.

Onsite visits

While in the schools, ERO spoke with school leaders, teachers with specific relevant responsibilities such as the principal's nominee, senior school deans, careers advisers, guidance counsellors, and groups of students from Years 11 to 13.

In the TEOs, ERO spoke to staff with similar roles to those in schools, including curriculum leaders, tutors, administrators with oversight of assessment practices, and staff responsible for student wellbeing. ERO also spoke to diverse groups of students, including those from Dual Pathway and Youth Guarantee streams.


Synthesis and profile development

Following the onsite phase, ERO synthesised the findings for each school or TEO against the matrix and tested, where possible, the assumptions made prior to the visit. ERO then identified issues common to all schools or TEOs.

Profiles constructed were based on the school of that type visited, with consideration given to the findings from the desk-based analysis of other schools of similar type. It proved challenging to provide an accurate composite picture because every school is different with limited similarities between schools within a type. Nevertheless, ERO captured the overall key challenges, triumphs and innovations shared by schools.

In the case of the TEOs, each profile represented the findings for the specific TEO visited. The schools and TEOs were given fictitious names to maintain confidentiality. ERO is aware the TEOs may be readily identified and each organisation assured us that would not be a concern to them.

The Ministry developed a profile for Māori-medium schools. This is not a part of this report.



ERO engaged in ongoing consultation and discussion with the Ministry during all the above processes.

Assumptions about schools

These assumptions were tested in onsite visits with each school. The findings itemised in the profiles clearly show, where possible, if any assumptions held true.

Programme Design

- Curriculum is credit driven, not focused on pathways
- Alignment of *The New Zealand Curriculum* and NCEA is not strong
- Learning areas are siloed and few develop cross-curricular programmes
- University has imposed a hierarchy of subjects
- UE puts boundaries on student choice
- Validity of expectations and limits on gaining UE
- Accountability pressures influence NCEA choices for students (NZCER)
- If academic potential not known and students not clear of implications of NCEA – pathways can close off too early

Pedagogy

- Strong learning partnerships support learners to find appropriate pathways and to succeed in those
- Teachers have gaps in epistemic thinking
- Teachers teach to the assessment — students are encouraged to rote learn specific phrases required
- Teachers tend to avoid the Unfamiliar Text standard
- Effective implementation of cross-disciplinary planning and project-based learning is not a teacher strength and Professional learning is required
- NCEA is about the assessment not the learning
- Purpose of learning unclear (NZCER)
- Learning *How to learn* is compromised by content coverage (NZCER)

Assessment strategies

- Relationships and support from NZQA are positive
- Assessment is relentless
- External pressures influence assessment strategies
- The flexibility of the curriculum and NCEA is used to address students' potential for success
- Validity and integrity of assessment across schools remains an issue
- Perceived unfairnesses: 'worth' of credits; Unit Standards vs Achievement Standards, internal vs external
- Students, and teachers, work the system to get credits required – credit grabbing, credits not relevant to a clear pathway
- Easier to get excellence if attempting only one paper in external three-hour exam
- Some difficulty tracking students' progress to UE as student management systems do not include UE

- Assessing individuals in collaborative work is a challenge

Resourcing

- Competition for students or for funding plays a significant part in school practices to show themselves in the best possible light
- Limited resourcing for careers personnel limits their focus to Year 12 and 13 students

Pastoral care and wellbeing

- Wellbeing is paramount. Some schools report to their board of trustees about wellbeing outcomes
- Students pace themselves, reducing stress by limiting the number of standards they attempt
- Some students driven to gain as many credits or endorsements as possible — pressures from parents, teachers and themselves
- Parents don't understand NCEA so find it hard to accept students' choices
- Students find it hard to locate information to support their learning from multiple websites when these are not cross linked

Assumptions about TEOs

Programme Design

- courses are practical programmes
- very linear
- no choice for students
- students do not necessarily move onto further training or employment

Pedagogy

- many students have been disengaged learners at school
- less restrictive learning environment
- students are difficult to motivate
- students' motivation impacted significantly by influences outside the TEO
- students experience success for the first time
- most students do not have literacy and numeracy skills

Assessment strategies

- multiple sites make consistent moderation and practice difficult
- assessments paced throughout the course
- assessments less challenging

Resourcing

- well-resourced for staffing and equipment

Pastoral care and wellbeing

- large and more impersonal environments
- limited support services for students.



Appendix 2: Profiles

Medium **Decile****Roll** 1400

= 100 students

**Secondary Urban****Gender**
Co-ed**STATE****INTEGRATED****PRIVATE**

Māori



Pacific



Pākehā

Harekeke College

Harekeke College is located in a large rural town. It is the only school within a radius of 20 kilometres. Competition for students with other schools is not an issue. Like many schools of its type it has a boarding hostel. The demographic profile of this school has stayed the same over time.

PROGRAMME DESIGN

- ★ Students access a broad curriculum with a wide range of academic and vocational pathways
- ★ Student-centred curriculum is not influenced by external expectations and measures of success
- ★ Māori students are able to succeed as Māori and achieve success across the curriculum
- ⚠ Students focus on gathering credits rather than the learning
- ⚠ Boys tend to choose courses with faster, easier credits with fewer of them achieving course endorsements
- ⚠ Learning is mostly within faculties with few cross-curricular opportunities

PEDAGOGY

- ★ Teachers have high expectations for student achievement
- ★ School places a high priority on promoting positive relationships between students and teachers
- ⚠ Some variability in the quality of teaching practice

ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES

- ★ Close monitoring of student progress leads to timely identification of those that need support
- ★ Close liaison with parents, whānau, and teachers is a driver of student success
- ⚠ Teachers' and students' high expectations for high achievement contribute to student stress
- ⚠ External credits are often achieved through rote learning of essays and answers
- ⚙ School ball moved to earlier in the year to ease pressure and distractions in Term 4

RESOURCING

- ⚠ Places available for Gateway have been reduced nationally, limiting options for students who would benefit from this approach
- ⚠ Difficult in a small town to find appropriate personnel to support students who qualify for Special Assessment Conditions (SAC)
- ⚙ Resourcing is not considered to be a constraint on the range of options offered to students

WELLBEING

- ★ Strong pastoral network with an emphasis on collaborative responsibility for promoting student success
- ★ Range of additional specialised mentoring groups support specific groups of students in a variety of ways
- ⚠ Careers team focus on Years 12 and 13
- ⚙ Mentoring group from a nearby university focuses on encouraging Māori students to study science subjects. Number of Māori students taking science has increased significantly

KEY

- ★ Triumphs
- ⚠ Challenges
- ⚙ Innovations
- 🗣 Quote from an adult
- 🗣 Quote from a student

"Most boys want to leave school and work"

"Our school compares itself to itself"

"We are trying to lift the prestige of vocational pathway subjects"

"We strive more in internals rather than externals"

"It's more about the credits than the learning"

"NCEA has brought about a level of dishonesty between schools"

"How will we use it in everyday life?"


Medium **Decile**

Roll 200

= 100 students


Rural

Gender
Co-ed

STATE

INTEGRATED

PRIVATE


Māori



Pacific



Pākehā

Haumata College

This is an isolated rural school an hour's drive from any main centre. The school caters for a changing demographic with an increase in families for whom English is a second language. It has an established tradition of online learning that provides a broad curriculum choice for students.

PROGRAMME DESIGN

- ★ Distance learning broadens availability of relevant programmes and pathways for students
- ★ The timetable is planned around student choice
- ★ Integration of learning across some curriculum areas
- ⚠ School-based subjects: number reduced by size and location
- ⚠ Online learning a challenge for teachers and students
- ⚠ A curriculum that is responsive to Māori is a challenge

PEDAGOGY

- ★ Teachers adapt approaches for multi-level classes
- ★ Students develop skills in managing their own learning
- ⚠ Culturally responsive pedagogy for Māori not strong

ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES

- ★ Students are able to access assessment through industry providers in out-of-school courses and training
- ★ Number of credits offered in subjects has been reduced
- ⚠ Need to share moderation with colleagues in other schools affects timeliness of feedback
- ⚠ Students would like more cross-curricular assessment
- ⚠ Tracking of student credits is not up-to-date

RESOURCING

- ★ The school provides multiple opportunities for students to extend their learning experience outside the school
- ⚠ Isolation funding model is insufficient to provide equitable opportunities for students
- ⚠ Hard to find staff with subject content knowledge and administration expertise
- ⚠ Cost, in time and money, to provide professional learning for teachers. Really expensive to travel
- ⚙ Leadership of Kāhui Ako is shared with other schools of similar type which minimises demands on each school's staffing and expertise

WELLBEING

- ★ Student wellbeing paramount
- ★ Students are well supported to transition out of an isolated community. They are provided with many opportunities to visit larger urban centres, tertiary institutions and industries to increase familiarity with these settings
- ⚠ Teachers know students well but not always as learners
- ⚠ Careers counselling not from a trained specialist

KEY

- ★ Triumphs
- ⚠ Challenges
- ⚙ Innovations
- Quote from an adult
- Quote from a student

“Would be good to combine more standards as everything works together in the world”

“Better at self-managing – better prepared for uni because of this compared to big city schools”

“Don't feel over assessed. Feel like teachers look at what we want to do. You choose the assessment you want to do”

“The curriculum is definitely credit driven”

“Teachers don't space assessment”

“Internals are good for those who don't do pressure well”

“Cross-curricular is a good thing to make more use of how subjects can extend students”



Low Decile



Roll 800

1 person icon = 100 students



Main Urban

Gender
Girl

STATE



INTEGRATED



PRIVATE



Māori



Pacific



Pākehā

Ngutukākā College

Ngutukākā College is located in a provincial main centre. There are several other secondary schools in the area, both girls and co-ed colleges, competing for students.

PROGRAMME DESIGN

- ★ A senior leader has responsibility for using achievement and engagement data to inform improvement to programme design
- ⚠ Getting collaboration between heads of learning for a coherent curriculum
- ⚠ Developing an engaging curriculum for Years 9–11 that strengthens learning in preparation for the senior years
- ⚙ Culturally responsive, integrated courses (for example: Poutama Pounamu, weaving) engage students' interest and teachers then build on that

PEDAGOGY

- ★ Some teachers with high expectations for their students use strategies that support students to develop as learners
- ⚠ Low expectations hinder success, especially for Māori
- ⚠ Keeping teachers up-to-date with best practice to improve student outcomes
- ⚙ Analysis of achievement and engagement data and making it transparent for the whole school community confronts teachers to improve their practice

ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES

- ★ Reducing the number of credits offered to students to reduce student workload
- ★ The school encourages 'harvesting credits' from life, from activities outside of school
- ⚠ Over assessment of students at Level 1, including the use of Unit Standards as a practice for Achievement Standards
- ⚠ Keeping NZQA markbooks current
- ⚠ Most Achievement Standards are brought in, only some are tailored to the local curriculum
- ⚠ Low provision of Special Assessment Conditions (SAC) minimal access to psychological testing

RESOURCING

- ★ Recent appointment of experts in key roles across the school
- ⚠ Teachers' perception that workload reduces their capacity to respond to achievement data
- ⚠ Resourcing support for kura students transitioning to an English-medium secondary school
- ⚠ Finding language teachers, especially for te reo Māori

WELLBEING

- ★ Ako approach enhances monitoring and support for students
- ⚠ Māori students' pathways influenced by deficit thinking of school leaders
- ⚠ Low expectations lead to demotivation of students to learn
- ⚠ 'Relentless focus' on assessment creates anxiety, especially for students who are aiming high
- ⚙ Use of strong Māori role models to promote Māori success as Māori
- ⚙ Strategic focus by board on wellbeing, with measurable outcomes
- ⚙ Increased use of student voice promotes students' sense of influence and belonging to the school community

"Young vibrant staff are moving from Auckland to the provinces"

"It's all about credits. They teach a standard"

"By Level 3 you know how the system works – you can pick which assessments to do"

"The site [NZQA] is pretty confusing"

"Know her story and support her in her learning today so she will be well prepared for her tomorrow"

"Parents don't get it"

KEY

- ★ Triumphs
- ⚠ Challenges
- ⚙ Innovations
- 🗣 Quote from an adult
- 🗣 Quote from a student

Low **Decile****Roll** 500

1 figure = 100 students

**Main Urban****Gender**
Co-ed

Māori



Pacific



Pākehā

Nikau College

Nikau College is located in a city close to a major urban centre. It is not the only secondary school in this area, competing for students with other local colleges and those in the major centre. The proportion of Pacific learners in this school is high. The number of refugee families in the community is increasing.

PROGRAMME DESIGN

- ★ Successful trial of integrated teaching programme - across learning areas and year levels
- ⚠ Providing flexible, responsive curriculum
- ⚠ Credit-driven curriculum
- ⚠ Pressure from external expectations for University Entrance (UE) regardless of students' future pathways
- ⚠ Providing culturally responsive curriculum

PEDAGOGY

- ★ Teachers are highly supportive of students to help them gain credits
- ★ Integrated curriculum with day-long sessions disrupts traditional pedagogy and challenges teachers to develop new ways of teaching
- ⚠ Strong teacher support of students does not help them to become independent learners

ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES

- ★ Students, parents and teachers share in setting annual credit achievement goals, which teachers monitor
- ★ Wide range of opportunities for gaining literacy credits from across subjects
- ★ Students at risk are motivated by early success at Level 1
- ⚠ Variability in how teachers monitor student progress

RESOURCING

- ★ Professional learning provided to increase teachers' capability as learning coaches
- ⚠ Broader range of pathway/subject needs for NCEA increases class sizes at junior level
- ⚙ Collaboration amongst local secondary schools coordinates opportunities for students to gain credits needed to complete NCEA (summer schools to catch up credits at the end of the year)

WELLBEING

- ★ Relationships to support students' pastoral needs are paramount
- ★ Restorative practices embedded in school
- ⚠ Teachers not providing systematic support and guidance to students on choice of appropriate pathways
- ⚠ Apparent tolerance of students' low aspirations for NCEA and UE achievement
- ⚙ School provides translation support to facilitate communication with families

KEY

- ★ Triumphs
- ⚠ Challenges
- ⚙ Innovations
- 🗨 Quote from an adult
- 🗨 Quote from a student

"You get more out of credits gained outside of school. More hands-on life experience"

"Tension between rescuing students and them becoming self-managing"

"Bite-sized chunks means thinking short term"

"I don't see where I'm heading"

"I don't care what I do. I just want a job"

"The uni pathway is given too high a priority"



High Decile



Roll 1000

1 figure = 100 students



Main Urban

Gender
Co-ed
☐ STATE

☐ INTEGRATED

☒ PRIVATE


Māori



Pacific



Pākehā

Pōhutakawa College

Typical of many private schools, Pōhutakawa College has a choice of two qualification pathways. Students have choice across both pathways and some select from both to get the courses they want. Increasingly the college is now emphasising the value of the NCEA qualification to redress past negative perceptions of it held by the school and its community.

PROGRAMME DESIGN

- ★ Ninety percent of students achieve University Entrance (UE) regardless of their chosen qualification pathway
- ★ Flexibility of choice for students within dual qualification pathways
- ⚠ Curriculum is constrained by parental expectations and competition with other schools
- ⚠ Difficult to engage in the curriculum – it's more a series of Achievement Standards

PEDAGOGY

- ★ Increasing the use of NCEA-based courses extends opportunities for student success
- ★ Actively raising profile of NCEA in school community – extends opportunities for student success
- ⚠ Pedagogy driven by assessment not learning
- ⚠ Perception that NCEA Level 1 doesn't prepare students adequately for Level 2 – perception that Cambridge International Examinations (CIE) prepares students very well for NCEA Level 2
- ⚙ Real-time assessment information available for students and parents through portal

ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES

- ★ Students are well informed about advantages of NCEA
- ⚠ Flexibility of NCEA allows students to opt out of external achievement standards – seen as demoralising for teachers
- ⚠ Inconsistency in implementing school policies can undermine the perception of fairness

RESOURCING

- ★ Very good physical resources and high staffing levels
- ★ Timetable is expensive and inefficient but it allows a huge choice of courses
- ★ Accessing high number of special assessment conditions (SAC) applications and additional staffing to manage this
- ⚠ Providing professional learning that focuses on developing the teachers' competence in culturally responsive practices

WELLBEING

- ★ Managing students with more complex learning and behavioural needs as their student demographic changes
- ★ Vertical and horizontal academic mentoring assists students to make course choices
- ⚠ Increased levels of anxiety at senior level, aggravated by pressure of 'clumped' assessments
- ⚠ Workload for staff in NCEA programmes compares unfavourably with that for CIE

KEY

- ★ Triumphs
- ⚠ Challenges
- ⚙ Innovations
- 💬 Quote from an adult
- 💬 Quote from a student

“Real support for teachers is critical – need strong people leading training days”

“We come to school to do internals – not to learn”

“IGCSE in Year 11 then NCEA as it gives you more freedom to choose topics – internal assessment more helpful”

“Cambridge IGCSE is better preparation for NCEA Level 2 than Level 1 – it's more rigorous”

“PLEASE – no internals in Term 4”

“I want to learn the skills to write an essay – not rote learn one”

“Should be some compulsory standards like ‘unfamiliar texts’ to test skills”



High Decile



Roll 700

1 icon = 100 students



Main Urban



Gender
Co-ed

☐ STATE

☒ INTEGRATED

☐ PRIVATE



Māori



Pacific



Pākehā

Rātā College

This Catholic integrated school is located in a main city. As a Catholic school, it provides students with an additional compulsory learning area, Religious Education (RE), which is both NZQA and university approved.

PROGRAMME DESIGN

- ★ Academic and vocational curriculum pathways meet parental expectations
- ★ RE enriches learning the values and principles embodied in the front end of The New Zealand Curriculum
- ⚠ Faith-based/RE integral component of curriculum is compulsory to Year 13 - reduces subject choice
- ⚠ Students limit their learning to the content of the standards they choose to attempt
- ⚠ University has imposed a hierarchy of subjects

PEDAGOGY

- ★ High expectations for student achievement
- ★ Developing positive learning relationships
- ⚠ Providing culturally responsive pedagogy
- ⚠ Teachers teaching to assessment
- ⚠ Theoretical focus in practical subjects has lost the benefit of hands-on learning

ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES

- ★ Students' acquisition of credits is closely monitored and students are supported to achieve
- ★ Students have a clear understanding of the NCEA system and how to make it work for them
- ⚠ Three levels of NCEA are too many
- ⚠ Teachers revert to 'old-school' methods of assessment because of time and consistency concerns
- ⚠ NCEA assessment does not prepare students for university assessment
- ⚠ Flexibility allows students to choose to avoid sitting externals
- ⚠ Hard to provide innovative assessment opportunities given issues of validity and comparability

RESOURCING

- ★ Time allocated to professional development (teaching as inquiry)
- ⚠ Extra time and staffing are needed to provide varied assessment, such as conferencing, videoing
- ⚠ Providing smaller classes at senior level to allow for choice is costly for staffing
- ⚠ Providing support for increasing number of students with extra learning needs is a significant cost
- ⚙ Funding a full-time position for a teacher of Māori, anticipating a growth in student demand

WELLBEING

- ★ Pastoral team is supported by the values/faith-based curriculum
- ★ Expertise of the guidance counsellor and careers advisor to support achievement and wellbeing
- ⚠ Tracking entries to see if there is a trend for Māori and Pacific students to take more unit-standard courses than achievement standard-based courses.
- ⚙ Dean of Māori students to track and support Māori students, and liaise with families
- ⚙ Dean of Pacific students to track and support Pacific students, and liaise with families

"Need to merge and clarify available websites. Look at it from student point of view - credits, exemplars, past papers"

"I like to pick and choose my own course, including co-curriculum"

"Assessment is driving the curriculum"

"Some teachers still teach as they experienced learning"

"Wider (community) understanding of NCEA is a big issue"

"I'd like to be able to put together a whole course of what interests me. I know what I want to do"

KEY

- ★ Triumphs
- ⚠ Challenges
- ⚙ Innovations
- 🗣 Quote from an adult
- 🗣 Quote from a student



Medium **Decile**



Roll 2400
= 100 students



Main Urban



Gender
Co-ed

☒ **STATE**

☐ **INTEGRATED**

☐ **PRIVATE**



Māori



Pacific



Pākehā

Kōwhai College

This is one of the largest schools in the country, set in a major urban area. The school attracts a large number of international students. Co-curricula choice is a significant part of what the school offers.

PROGRAMME DESIGN

- ★ All core subjects offered in all timetable lines – allowing flexibility of choice for students
- ★ Depth and breadth in courses, and in co-curriculum, because teacher expertise caters for students’ strengths and interests
- ⚠ Curriculum is driven by the desire for credits and endorsements
- ⚠ Learning areas work in silos: up to 30 teachers in some departments
- ⚠ Focus on University Entrance (UE) subjects

PEDAGOGY

- ★ Teachers have high expectations for student achievement and use a wide range of teaching strategies to develop students as learners
- ★ The school promotes strong relational pedagogy
- ⚠ Pedagogy for cross-curricular teaching and learning is hard to achieve in a ‘siloed’ school
- ⚙ Project-based learning in technology encourages cross-discipline learning and application
- ⚙ Students work with industry and university

ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES

- ★ All students are tracked and monitored, and provided support about gaining credits
- ★ School has robust assessment procedures
- ★ Significant number of teachers have high levels of expertise in assessment and moderation practices
- ⚠ The focus on course endorsements puts pressure on students to succeed in externals

RESOURCING

- ★ High number of international students
- ★ Learning areas and learning support are well staffed and resourced
- ★ An academic dean has oversight of students’ progress towards UE
- ⚠ Time pressure and work to carry out assessment and moderation have increased
- ⚠ School needs more professional learning and resources to plan inter-disciplinary assessments
- ⚠ Structural changes to improve mentoring require time and professional learning
- ⚙ School created a role in senior management with specific responsibility for Māori student wellbeing and achievement

WELLBEING

- ★ Curriculum pathways for students are coherent
- ★ Teachers and students draw on the expertise of guidance counsellors and careers advisors
- ⚠ Students are stressed by expectations for achievement – pressure from teachers, parents and themselves
- ⚠ Progress and wellbeing of Māori students is identified as of concern

KEY

- ★ Triumphs
- ⚠ Challenges
- ⚙ Innovations
- 💬 Quote from an adult
- 💬 Quote from a student

“Pressure depends on what class you’re in. Everyone in this class should be at excellence – feel like you’re letting that class down if you get a merit”

“Students believe that managing their stress is success”

“Internals are the strength of NCEA – you put in as much effort as you want to – not sat in time pressure”

“We have yet to harness the potential of NCEA for designing courses for meaningful pathways”

“Endorsements are motivating – without them I would slack off”

“It’s the role of the teacher to inspire us to learn, understand and apply the content. Others say just learn this to pass”

Medium **Decile****Roll** 500

= 100 students

**Minor Urban****Gender**
Co-ed**STATE****INTEGRATED****PRIVATE**

Māori



Pacific



Pākehā

Horoeaka College

Horoeaka College is located in a rural town and draws its students from three other small rural towns. It is 30 minutes from a larger town with seven secondary schools. There is competition for students.

PROGRAMME DESIGN

- ★ A broad range of both academic and vocational courses provides coherent pathways throughout Years 11-13
- ★ Curriculum is adaptable with few students having a traditional timetable
- ★ Students are encouraged to choose a broad curriculum to keep their options open
- ⚠ Competition between schools and community expectations influences what subjects the school offers
- ⚠ University Entrance (UE) requirements constrain subjects offered at Level 3
- ⚠ Proposal for increased work experience at Level 1 would place it in competition with seven other secondary schools for access to workplaces
- ⚙ One student's course across Years 11-13 included drama, digital technology, PE, outdoor education, film, maths, science, photography, barista training, events management and work experience. The student's pathway is to tourism and hospitality training

PEDAGOGY

- ★ Culturally responsive teaching has been the focus of professional learning resulting in significant changes in teacher practice
- ⚠ Students identify variability between teachers who teach for learning and those who teach for credits

ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES

- ★ Students' progress in NCEA is tracked, monitored and supported
- ⚠ The 70 day attendance criteria will have a negative impact on school achievement data when students are encouraged to take up opportunities such as apprenticeships

RESOURCING

- ★ School resources the extensive travel requirements of students to attend providers outside the town, sometimes more than an hour distant
- ⚠ Teacher release time to develop more effective teaching practices
- ⚠ Lack of suitable applicants for specialist teaching positions for NCEA courses

WELLBEING

- ★ Academic mentors guide students in their choices/pathways
- ★ The careers advisor acts as a resource person for academic mentors and the dean
- ⚠ NCEA adds a further burden for students who already suffering from anxiety and stress
- ⚠ Student out-of-school employment to raise money for tertiary study or even to help the family budget (some work up to 30 hours a week)

KEY

- ★ Triumphs
- ⚠ Challenges
- ⚙ Innovations
- 🗨 Quote from an adult
- 💬 Quote from a student

"I did what I enjoy and what felt right"

"Even if no one chooses physics the community would expect us to offer it"

"Externals seem pointless"

"You have to use your time in class wisely. If you do, the workload is manageable"

"Everyone is a careers advisor"

"Secondary school is a blip on the horizon to the journey beyond school"

"It's got to be part of their pathway otherwise they don't do it"



High Decile



Roll 1600

1 person icon = 100 students



Minor Urban



Gender
Co-ed



STATE



INTEGRATED



PRIVATE



Māori



Pacific



Pākehā

Manuka College

The college is the only secondary school in a rural town. It is close to a major urban centre. The school responds to the high aspirations of parents and students. As a result it privileges both ‘vocational’ and ‘academic’ pathways equally.

PROGRAMME DESIGN

- ★ Broad choice of subjects/pathways because of school size
- ★ Building towards culturally located and contextual curriculum
- ⚠ Credit weight can affect student decisions about courses; those looking for ‘easy credits’
- ⚠ Universities dictate the hierarchy of subjects and influence student choice
- ⚙ Working with university to actively promote Māori students into STEM subjects
- ⚙ Working with tertiary and trades to provide multiple pathways for students

PEDAGOGY

- ★ Trialling cross-curricular teaching and innovative approaches to develop responsive practice
- ⚠ Challenge to bring about changes in teaching approaches that are required for school’s curriculum

ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES

- ★ Multiple ways to succeed, including ability to achieve different levels of NCEA in different year levels
- ★ Strong focus on course endorsement rather than subject endorsement
- ★ Additional standards are available at the end of the year. These are not ‘catch up’ credits but there if students need them or enjoy the subject. Helps reduce credit count through the year
- ⚠ When students complete course in academies, overseas or with tertiary providers, their overall achievements are not reflected in school data

RESOURCING

- ★ Timetabled longer sessions for mentoring/academic counselling for students
- ★ Board-funded programme assists students who need support for learning
- ★ Senior position supports the progress and wellbeing of Māori students and assists with staff development
- ⚠ Insufficient professional learning for teachers on moderation – Kāhui Ako drives professional learning
- ⚠ Cost to school for teachers to attend moderation workshops (\$120 each teacher)
- ⚠ Impact on teacher workload for internal assessment: planning, marking, reassessing, moderating, reporting
- ⚙ Board-funded Careers Hub supports students’ relevant pathways

WELLBEING

- ★ High level of support for, and communication about, students
- ★ High level of parental involvement
- ★ Teacher workload concerns addressed by senior and middle school leaders
- ⚠ Pressure on students’ mental health – issues related to assessment
- ⚠ Drive (external) for students to achieve University Entrance (UE), even if not their chosen pathway

KEY

- ★ Triumphs
- ⚠ Challenges
- ⚙ Innovations
- 🗨 Quote from an adult
- 🗨 Quote from a student

“Externals: you are reliant on your memory rather than the learning and skills. Don’t think you use exam skills in the real world – only in university”

“All students have the right to a culturally responsive pedagogy”

“Slave away to get 3 credits in Level 3 Physics, and can get 7 credits for working through an employment skill workbook”

“Get rid of Level 1. We want to get to the heart of learning”

“Too much assessment – each individual student faces multiple events. What are we doing to our kids?”

“We’re not over assessed. It’s more about doing projects and activities – doing the work”

Rural Training

This is a private tertiary establishment (PTE) providing courses relevant to students who are interested in primary industries. It caters for both fulltime students and those following a dual pathway. It benefits from leadership with national expertise in vocational pathways and trades academies. It has nine provincial campuses. Their programmes include residential courses.

PROGRAMME DESIGN

- ★ Curriculum provides a wide range of options delivered through a variety of programmes—all focused on employment
- ★ Programmes are flexible, adapted to meet students' needs.
- ★ Multiple entry points
- ★ Students enrolled for a full course—not credit catch up
- ★ Many courses aim to enhance opportunities for Māori students from low decile schools
- ⚠ Some schools see the PTE programmes as merely a fill in for students who don't fit into their school curriculum
- ⚙ The PTE has developed a three-way partnership with a hapu and a kura. This partnership provides learning with a local context that embraces a Māori perspective and takes into account future employment opportunities in the area

PEDAGOGY

- ★ Tutors provide hands-on activities in real contexts that highly engage students
- ★ Students learn in small groups and tutors know them well
- ⚠ PTE acknowledges the challenge to provide an authentic Māori world view and culturally responsive teaching.
- ⚙ Created a kaitiaki position with strategic responsibility for developing staff cultural capability

ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES

- ★ Most assessments are practical, hands-on tasks. They happen in real work situations—a natural part of learning

RESOURCING

- ★ Resourcing allows them to offer the courses that are required
- ★ Tutors are provided with professional learning to develop their teaching
- ⚠ Providing courses for students still at school is not profitable – it's a 'loss leader'

WELLBEING

- ★ PTE maintains a close liaison with the school and informs them of any issues about student welfare
- ★ Tutors work closely with students and have an 'auntie/uncle' relationship with them
- ⚠ Developing a strong partnership with schools to select students who will benefit from the PTE courses
- ⚠ Receiving relevant information from schools about students who enrol

KEY

- ★ Triumphs
- ⚠ Challenges
- ⚙ Innovations
- 👤 Quote from an adult
- 👤 Quote from a student

"Learning is the focus here, not just picking up easy credits"

"Look at the elephant and start at the toenails"

"Tutors are good, helpful, chilled"

"We're preparing students as a part of the iwi succession plan"

"Tutors know how you learn and adapt to you"

"Schools don't value these programmes as much as they value academic programmes"

"They've reduced our hours from 7.30-5.00 to 8.30-3.00. That's not the real world – it's sun-up to sun-down"

"We don't just assess whether they can do a fencing knot – we get them to build the fence with many knots"

"It's not appropriate to judge students' success by their NCEA pass rates. Success is any learner moving to a job, or simply leaving with more skills than they came with."

Big City Training

This is a private tertiary establishment (PTE). Students here are all second chance learners for whom school has not been a good fit. Students spoken to had heard about the opportunities at the PTE through careers staff, advertisements and internet searching. Entry for students is open. This is a customer-focused business with high levels of accountability to its governing body.

PROGRAMME DESIGN

- ★ Pathways for students are coherent and carefully planned, supporting transitions for students and meeting their needs
- ★ NCEA framework used effectively in Youth Guarantee and Dual Pathways
- ★ Literacy and numeracy coverage occurs naturally in most programmes
- ⚠ Targeted Review of Qualifications (TRoQ) and subsequent programme development led to considerable programme redesign
- ⚠ Programme approval from NZQA takes too much time and resource – hampering responsiveness of programme provision
- ⚙ Extensive Networking enables innovation and curriculum responsiveness – working collaboratively with schools, especially in Dual Pathways

PEDAGOGY

- ★ Responsive to cultural diversity
- ★ Regular, comprehensive and effective internal evaluation informs curriculum, pedagogy, resourcing and wellbeing
- ★ Staff appraisal is tied to teaching practice – student input is valued
- ⚠ Lifting tutor capability in pedagogy appropriate for these students
- ⚙ Determined focus to get students to see themselves as successful learners with a future
- ⚙ Deliberate partnership with local iwi allows students to engage with marae and cultural experiences, to give to that community and learn te reo and tikanga Māori

ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES

- ★ Expertise in the use of unit standards and NCEA in Vocational Pathways (VPs)
- ★ Prompt reporting of progress and achievement to schools, parents and students strengthens learning partnerships, and motivates students
- ⚠ Development of appropriate standards has lagged behind TRoQ programme development
- ⚠ Student achievement data from schools is often incomplete

RESOURCING

- ★ Staff with experience and expertise in NCEA operate a stringent quality assurance system
- ★ Systems in place for accountability and internal evaluation for improvement benefit the learner
- ★ High quality facilities and displays of student work impact positively on engagement and motivation
- ⚠ Sourcing staff with current trade expertise, capability as tutors, and who are good role models
- ⚠ Funding models are complex and can impact negatively on students' transition
- ⚠ Having to work with a registered trades academy means the PTE cannot offer as many places as planned at Level 3, especially to meet demand
- ⚙ Focused resourcing to employ dedicated career staff

WELLBEING

- ⚠ Shifting parents' perception that school is where children should be learning; to get them to appreciate alternative pathways
- ⚠ Assuring school boards and parents about the emotional and physical safety of students
- ⚠ Wrap-around support: travel, food, guidance and monitoring
- ⚠ Careers staff help students to find pathways to future training, university, or employment

KEY

⚠ Challenges

★ Triumphs

⚙ Innovations

🗨 Quote from an adult

🗨 Quote from a student

“Dual Pathways Pilot has been great for the students – it meets their needs”

“VPs must still be flexible enough for students to have the option of gaining NCEA L3”

“Here I can get Level 2 in 32 weeks – it takes 5 years at school”

“Level 2 works very well in Vocational Pathways”

“I used to wag school – now I want to get up in the morning”

“I understand NCEA now and can see the point of learning”

Provincial Foundations

This private training establishment (PTE) caters for students for whom school experience has been neither positive nor motivating. Many have had traumatic life experiences, many have been out of education for one year or more, and few have achieved any formal qualifications. For most the transition to the PTE has been neither formal nor smooth. These are real second chance learners, many of whom are still grappling with challenges in their lives.

PROGRAMME DESIGN

- ★ Curriculum is student-centred, strongly focused on a strengths-based approach
- ★ Open entry to programmes and flexible curriculum adapts to learners' needs within framework of foundation skills, Hospitality, Active programmes
- ⚠ Designing a programme to re-engage students is more challenging the longer a student has been alienated from education
- ⚙ Developing new programmes in response to students' identified needs, interests and local employment opportunities
- ⚙ NCEA is only a part of the programmes. Other credentialing includes National Certificates and Vocational Pathways Awards

PEDAGOGY

- ★ Expectations for students are high and real time feedback motivates learners and develops confidence in themselves
- ★ Pedagogy focuses on achievable tasks and providing students with the time and support to achieve them
- ⚠ Employing tutors with work-related skills who have a positive approach to these students
- ⚙ Students build a profile (*My Voice*) from day 1 - which informs a curriculum vitae of their competencies, strengths and achievements

ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES

- ★ Assessment is manageable for students
- ★ *My Voice* builds students' capability around understanding themselves as learners and identifying regular achievable goals
- ★ Assessment based on *My Voice* enables rapid feedback and action taken to address concerns

RESOURCING

- ★ Resources used to design all their own programmes, monitoring and profiling systems
- ★ Relieving tutors of planning and administration tasks so they can focus their attention on the students
- ★ Strong relational partnerships
- ⚠ Meeting the new TEC financial fidelity model and NZQA accountability places additional strain on resources
- ⚠ Transition to Level 3 now not simple with change in funding

WELLBEING

- ★ Carefully planned re-engagement with learning and developing a sense of belonging to community supports students in their path to employment
- ⚠ Overcoming the perception that if a student goes to the PTE the school has failed and the student is a failure
- ⚠ Developing a collective responsibility for students
- ⚠ Helping Māori students become culturally located, working with iwi leaders and local providers

"We're building success from day one"

"At least here we are doing things that will help you in life"

"Education is really important to me now"

"Look at whole funding mechanism to promote more dual pathway opportunities"

"The qualification is not the goal. The pathway to employment is the goal"

"Classes at school were too big, too loud - I feel safe here"

"For us NCEA is the box that slots into our system, in some schools NCEA is the box"

"Way better here - interesting, easier"

"Continual changes in funding without evaluation of effectiveness makes it difficult to build capability in the administering organisations or determine which model works best for students"

KEY

- ★ Triumphs
- ⚠ Challenges
- ⚙ Innovations
- Quote from an adult
- Quote from a student

Appendix 3: Variability across schools

Table 1 illustrates the predominance of different elements across the schools visited and the school files analysed. It is indicative only as not all of the elements of the matrix were identifiable in the 2017 reports.

Table 1: Frequency of elements found in schools

Single-sex, low decile, urban state school	Sample size 10
3/10 had genuinely responsive curriculum 6/10 had effective range of teaching strategies	
Roll 1000+, high decile, urban, state school	Sample size 6
5/6 had genuinely responsive curriculum 2/6 had cross curricular assessment 1/6 required a much wider range of PLD	
Roll 1000+, medium decile, urban, state school	Sample size 4
2/4 had responsive curriculum 3/4 used an appropriate range of teaching strategies 3/4 closely monitored students	
Roll 3-400, medium decile, minor urban, state school	Sample size 4
2/4 had appropriate pedagogy 3/4 had responsive curriculum 2/4 had a detailed focus on student wellbeing 2/4 used resourcing appropriately	
Roll <200, medium decile, rural, state school	Sample size 7
6/7 had responsive curriculum 5/7 had appropriate pedagogy and expectations 5/7 monitored students' progress closely 5/7 provided appropriate PLD 1/7 student wellbeing was not a priority	
Roll 700, low decile, urban state, school	Sample size 6
2/6 students lacked clear pathways 1/6 had some staff with low expectations 1/6 provided staff with appropriate PLD	
Integrated (Catholic), medium decile, main urban	Sample size 3
2/3 had a responsive, relevant curriculum 2/3 closely monitored students 2/3 did not provide appropriate PLD	
Private co-educational school, high decile, main urban, offers dual pathways Sample size 1	

Distribution of some school matrix aspects

This is indicative of a pattern of frequency of elements across schools. It is not intended to be comprehensive description of whether or not all matrix aspects were present in a given school. Not all the elements are represented as Table 2 is based on the strength of evidence available in the files, reports or onsite visits.

Pedagogy is not represented as ERO did not make observations of teaching practice and relied on comments from staff interviewed and students. However, comments to ERO indicated variability of pedagogy within schools, which is in keeping with substantive research findings.

Table 2: Schools with identified strengths in matrix elements

Programme Design	Schools where elements were clearly evident
Curriculum and timetable design meets students' needs	Horoeka; Manuka; Harekeke; Haumata; Pōhutukawa; Kōwhai
Use of achievement and engagement data to inform programme design	Ngutukākā
Creative solutions to a limited curriculum	Haumata
A culturally responsive curriculum	Manuka; Harekeke
Integration of some curriculum areas including literacy and numeracy	Manuka; Haumata; Nikau; Kōwhai
Assessment strategies	
High quality monitoring and mentoring	Horoeka; Manuka; Harekeke; Pōhutukawa; Rātā; Kōwhai
Providing students and parents with timely assessment information	Pōhutukawa
Reducing credits offered to help manage student work load	Haumata; Ngutukākā
Multiple ways to succeed	Manuka; Haumata; Ngutukākā; Nikau
High levels of assessment and moderation expertise	Kōwhai
Resourcing	
Appropriate allocation of resources	Horoeka; Haumata
Targeted PLD	Horoeka; Rātā
Pastoral care and wellbeing	
Schools pay attention to wellbeing	Almost all schools
Community partnerships, including parents and whānau	Manuka; Harekeke; Nikau; Rātā