



# Briefing report

## **Education Review Office (ERO): Learning in a Covid-19 World: The Impact of Covid-19 on Pacific Learners**

Date	27 April 2022
Security Level	N/A
ERO Priority	Medium
ERO Reference	M22-14
Date requested	ERO initiated
Date due	ERO initiated
Proactive release	Recommended

Addressee	Action sought	Deadline
<b>Min Tinetti</b> <b>Associate</b> <b>Minister of</b> <b>Education</b>	It is recommended that you:  a) <b>Note</b> that ERO intends to release the attached report ( <i>Learning in a Covid-19: The impact of Covid-19 on Pacific Learners</i> ) the week of 9 <sup>th</sup> May.	
<b>Min Aupito</b> <b>William Sio</b> <b>Associate</b> <b>Minister of</b> <b>Education</b>	b) <b>Agree</b> to forward this briefing and the attached report to the Minister for Covid-19 Response Hon Chris Hipkins, and your other education colleague the Hon Kelvin Davis.  c) <b>Note</b> this briefing is recommended for proactive release at the time of publication of this report	



### Attachments:

**Education Review Office (ERO):  
Learning in a Covid-19 World: The  
Impact of Covid-19 on Pacific  
Learners**

Appendix A: Report and Summary  
Appendix B: Draft ERO media release

<b>Minister's Office to complete</b>	
Noted	<input type="checkbox"/>
Seen	<input type="checkbox"/>
Approved	<input type="checkbox"/>
Referred to:	
Date signed by Minister:	



### Comments:



Our Ref: M22-14

27 April 2022

**Hon Jan Tinetti**  
**Associate Minister of Education**

**Hon Aupito William Sio**  
**Associate Minister of Education**

## **Learning in a Covid-19 World: The Impact of Covid-19 on Pacific Learners**

### **Purpose**

1. This briefing provides you with a near final draft of the latest in ERO's series of reports on the impact of Covid-19 on the education learners, attached as Appendix A. We intend to publish the report in the week of 9<sup>th</sup> May 2022.
2. This report looks at the impact of Covid-19 on Pacific learners, sets out good practice for teachers and principals, and makes recommendations for supporting Pacific learners going forward.

### **Background**

3. ERO has been looking at the impact of Covid-19 on schools and students since the first national lockdown in 2020. Our work has shone a light on how students have been impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic, what lessons have been learnt, and the challenges going forward.
4. Pacific learners have been disproportionately impacted by Covid-19. ERO has focused on understanding that impact and how schools can support these learners. This report draws on
  - a. Surveys of:
    - i. 612 Pacific learners in April-May 2020.
    - ii. 457 Pacific learners in August-September 2020.
    - iii. 316 Pacific learners in June-July 2021.
  - b. Talanoa conducted by ERO's Pacific staff with:
    - i. 32 leaders and teachers across 14 schools with high Pacific rolls in November 2021.
    - ii. 41 Pacific learners across 7 schools in November 2021.
    - iii. Leaders from seven schools, where Pacific students are thriving in April 2022.
5. ERO has also been grateful to the support and data provided by the Ministry of Education, the Ministry for Pacific Peoples and NZQA.

## Overall findings

6. Pacific learners have been significantly and disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. Two thirds of Pacific learners live in Auckland where schools have been closed more than three times the number of days than the rest of the country. Pacific communities have experienced higher levels of Covid-19, impacting on their learners. Pacific learners have also faced greater barrier to learning with one in five lacking access to online learning.
7. Schools, families, and communities have been exceptional at supporting Pacific learners. Pacific learners reported feeling supported by the adults in their lives and had people they could talk to if they had wellbeing or learning concerns. They were more likely to say they received extra support from teachers following lockdown and there has also been an increase in Pacific families' engagement with their children's learning.
8. But there are concerns that the disruptions from the Covid-19 pandemic will have longer-term impacts for Pacific learners.
9. ERO has identified concerns around:
  - a. **Achievement** – Pacific learners' achievement declined in 2021 after a rise in 2020. This fall was more pronounced for Pacific learners than the general population and Pacific learners continue to sit below the general population for achievement at NCEA levels 1, 2, 3 and University Entrance. For example, the provisional NZQA data shows that 72% of Pacific learners achieved NCEA Level 2 in 2021, compared to 78% of the general student population. While it is too early to tell if the fall in 2021 is a trend, it is very concerning.
  - b. **Attendance** – after each Covid-19 disruption, Pacific learners have been slower to return to classrooms. Ministry of Education data shows that attendance rates for Pacific learners towards the end of 2021 were below the attendance rates of learners in the general population. At the end of November last year attendance for Pacific students was only 47 percent.
  - c. **Mental health and wellbeing** – Pacific learners told us how the pandemic had continued to impact them in terms of anxiety and being overwhelmed transitioning in and out of lockdowns. Pacific learners are sadly more likely to have family members who have contracted Covid-19, been hospitalised, or died.
  - d. **Pathways out of education** – Some Pacific learners we spoke to were having to choose between their studies and moving into full-time work to support their families. Even increased part-time work can also impact on engagement in education.
  - e. **In schools where teachers and principals may be struggling more** – Pacific learners are concentrated in Auckland, and so are more likely to be enrolled in schools where teachers and principals may be struggling more. For example, principals in Auckland were less likely to indicate their staff's wellbeing had returned to pre-Covid-19 levels. This can impact on learners.

## Recommendations

10. ERO's research shows that although positive practices are working well in some areas and for some learners, the pandemic is having a significant and disproportionate impact on Pacific learners. It's clear that a deliberate response is required. There is a wide

range of work that the Ministry of Education and Ministry for Pacific Peoples have put in place to support Pacific learners and their communities. In our report, ERO recommends three areas of action.

1. **Building on the Action Plan for Pacific Education 2020 - 2030, education agencies need to develop a specific response to reverse the decline in achievement for Pacific learners.** This response needs to:
  - a. Focus on ensuring Pacific learners are not disadvantaged in the long term.
  - b. Prioritise reengaging learners in schooling and address lost time in learning across the curriculum, focusing on the essential areas of literacy and numeracy, particularly for younger learners.
  - c. Make every effort to identify those Pacific learners who are significantly behind and support them to identify gaps in their knowledge and skills, then strengthening their learning.
2. **ERO to work specifically with those schools who are seeing declining achievement of their Pacific learners.** ERO will work with the schools where Pacific student learning, progress and achievement has declined. ERO will support the schools' continuous improvement journey with our evaluation expertise.
3. **All schools to recognise the disproportionate impact of Covid-19 on Pacific learners and take proactive action to offset this impact, drawing on best practice.** Many schools are already doing this. To support schools to raise and maintain Pacific achievement, we held a talanoa with principals and school leaders of schools who have seen an improvement in Pacific achievement during the Covid-19 disruptions to get their ideas on what works. These schools:
  - a. Had a school culture that celebrates Pacific culture and prioritised Pacific learners' achievement.
  - b. Knew their Pacific learners, and supported their learning needs.
  - c. Combined supports for wellbeing with supports for achievement or supports for attendance.
  - d. Supported students to balance their learning with their family commitments.

## Publication

11. This report contains NZQA data that will be released on 4<sup>th</sup> May 2022. ERO intends to publish this report in the following week of the 9<sup>th</sup> May to enable schools to learn from the findings as they respond to Omicron. Teachers and principals have welcomed our Covid-19 reports to date as an opportunity to learn from their peers.
12. ERO is working with the Ministry of Education and Ministry for Pacific Peoples on sharing the report and its findings with Pacific communities and the education sector. We plan to share the report with key groups through:
  - a. An ERO media release on the morning of publication (a draft is at Appendix B).
  - b. Publication of the report and summary on the ERO website.
  - c. Hosting a launch event for the report with those who have participated in the research and interested leaders.
  - d. Sending the report and summary to peak bodies in the English-medium education sector.
  - e. Delivering an online webinar for principals and teachers on the key findings and actions schools can take.
  - f. Delivering an online webinar for Talanoa Ako providers on the key findings.
  - g. Publishing a tailored guide for teachers and principals on the good practice in the report.

13. We will provide your office with a finalised and designed full report and summary and media release prior to the launch.

**Recommendations**

14. It is recommended that you:

a) **Note** that ERO intends to release the attached report (*Learning in a Covid-19 World: The Impact of Covid-19 on Pacific Learners*) the week of the 9<sup>th</sup> May.

**Noted**

b) **Agree** to forward this briefing and the attached report to the Minister for Covid-19 Response Hon Chris Hipkins, and your other education colleague the Hon Kelvin Davis.

**Agreed** disagreed

c) **Note** this briefing is recommended for proactive release at the time of publication of this report.

**Noted**



Ruth Shinoda  
**Acting Chief Executive**

NOTED/APPROVED



Jan Tinetti  
**Associate Minister of Education**

07 / 05 / 2022

NOTED/APPROVED



Hon Aupito William Sio  
**Associate Minister of Education**

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Appendix A: Report and Summary  
Appendix B: Draft ERO media release