



Briefing report

Education Review Office (ERO): ERO Evaluation of Alternative Education: Final Report and Summary

Date	12 June 2023
Security Level	N/A
ERO Priority	Medium
ERO Reference	M23-27
Date requested	ERO initiated
Date due	ERO initiated
Proactive release	Recommended

Addressee	Action sought
Min Tinetti Minister of Education	a) Note the attached near final (pre-designed) report and summary: <i>An Alternative Education? Support for our most disengaged young people.</i>
Min Kelvin Davis Assoc. Minister of Education	b) Note that this report will be published before the end of June 2022.
Min Jo Luxton Assoc. Minister of Education	c) Note that ERO will publish accompanying guides for different audiences and hold a forum to support the publication and impact of the report.
Min Jo Luxton Assoc. Minister of Education	d) Agree to share this briefing and accompanying report and summary with the Minister for the Social Wellbeing Agency, Hon. Carmel Sepuloni.
Min Jo Luxton Assoc. Minister of Education	e) Note that this briefing is recommended for proactive release after the publication of the report.

 Attachments:

- Appendix A:** *An Alternative Education? Support for our most disengaged young people.*
- Appendix B:** *Report summary*
- Appendix C:** *Media release*

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

 Comments:



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Our Ref: M23-27

12 June 2023

Hon Jan Tinetti
Minister of Education

Hon Kelvin Davis
Associate Minister of Education

Hon Jo Luxton
Associate Minister of Education

ERO Evaluation of Alternative Education: Final Report and Summary

Purpose

1. This briefing provides you with a copy of the near final report and accompanying summary on ERO's evaluation of the quality of Alternative Education and provides an update on the publication plan.

Background

2. We have previously provided you with a briefing (M23-18) on the draft key findings from our evaluation of the quality of Alternative Education. We updated you on key findings and recommendations last week (M23-25).
3. This work is a joint project between ERO and the Social Wellbeing Agency.
4. ERO have now completed the Alternative Education report and accompanying summary. A near-final copy of the full evaluation report: *An Alternative Education? Support for our most disengaged young people* and the summary are attached in Appendix A and B.
5. We have now finalised the key findings and recommendations. These are detailed below.

Key findings

6. The key findings from this evaluation are:

Finding 1: Young people in Alternative Education are the most highly disengaged from education. One in 10 have Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), many are exposed to crime, violence and trauma and just under a third have a mental health need. Many are in the Youth Justice system. They are 25 times more likely than other young people to have had a Family Group Conference.

Finding 2: Young people in Alternative Education are disproportionately Māori and male. Sixty-eight percent are Māori, and 63 percent are male. The number of females has increased recently.

Finding 3: Young people are referred to Alternative Education due to behaviour. Over a quarter have been suspended or excluded. They are also referred due to attendance issues and alienation from school. Sometimes they are referred Youth Justice and Oranga Tamariki.

Finding 4: These young people's needs have not been identified and met early enough. They also have significant gaps in their learning, which have not been addressed. Waiting for a place at Alternative Education deepens the disengagement. This indicates that our education system is not currently set up with sufficient or the right range of provision to meet the needs of these young people.

Finding 5: While in Alternative Education these young people attend more, enjoy learning more, feel safer, and have a stronger sense of belonging and improved behaviour. Sixty-seven percent enjoy learning at Alternative Education, and 93 percent feel safe.

Finding 6: When they move out of Alternative Education only around one in four return to school. More than half do not go on to further training or employment. By age 20, almost 70 percent are receiving a benefit.

Finding 7: Alternative Education does not provide good outcomes. These young people have significantly worse outcomes than other young people, worse even than very similarly disengaged young people with high needs. They are very unlikely to achieve an education qualification (less than one in ten achieve NCEA Level 2 or higher). As adults, they are much more likely to be receiving benefits and involved in the criminal justice system.

Finding 8: The current model of Alternative Education is inadequate to meet the level of need of these often highly disengaged young people, leading to worse outcomes than for other young people:

- Teaching is weak and teaching resources are inadequate.
- Facilities are often so run down they act as a barrier to learning.
- Funding is inadequate (lower than funding for other, less disadvantaged, young people).
- Funding limitations make it unviable for many providers, and provider and staff turnover is high.
- Providers are often isolated from other providers and schools so they often lack access to broader education resources (e.g. careers advice, specialist subjects, sports) and professional teaching support.
- Providers cannot always access the broader wrap-around support young people need.
- Accountability for delivery and outcomes is weak.

Finding 9: When young people (exceptionally) do succeed at Alternative Education it is due to the elements of the model that do work:

- Small class sizes.
- Having the same educator throughout the day.
- The flexibility to provide a different education on a site separate from school.
- Having staff with experience, aptitude, and commitment to working with these young people, who act as positive role models.

These elements need to be combined with a model enabling quality education, wrap-around support and a range of pathways.

Finding 10: Alternative Education is potentially a missed opportunity to change these young people's life trajectories. They are often engaged and attending but the current model of provision is failing to provide them with a quality education and may be contributing to poorer outcomes. The long-term costs for both the young person, their family and broader society are very significant.

Recommendations

7. Our recommendations to address the areas of greatest concern and to strengthen education and outcomes for disengaged young people are:

Area 1: Better identify and meet the needs of these young people before they become disengaged and increase the number who are able to stay and succeed in mainstream schooling.

Recommendation 1: The Ministry of Education provide guidance on how to effectively identify young people most at risk of disengagement and support schools to better identify these young people.

Recommendation 2: Having identified young people most at risk of disengagement, the Ministry of Education support schools to act early to enable them to stay and succeed in school, including increasing awareness of:

- The predictive risk factors for being referred to Alternative Education.
- Models of practice and intervention that support young people's continued engagement in education.
- Where and how flexibility can help with inclusion for young people at risk of disengaging.
- How to access support to address issues, including connecting with other services and programmes that provide more intensive support and links to other tools and resources that may help.

Recommendation 3: ERO and the Ministry of Education identify and share with schools best practice in managing challenging behaviours in the classroom to enable more young people to stay in school.

Area 2: Make sure there are a range of effective options (of different type, intensity and duration) available for those young people who are not thriving in the school setting and that there are clear, consistent and rigorous gateways so that young people are matched to provision that best meets their needs.

Recommendation 4: The Ministry of Education examine the range of options available for those young people who are not thriving in the school setting, how well they meet the range of needs and are complementary, and how clear and consistent the criteria for referral are.

Recommendation 5: To support decisions with whānau on which education options are suitable for a young person, the Ministry of Education develop guidance for all schools that includes:

- The range of options for education outside of schooling.
- The types of learners that each of the options are most suitable for.
- How to access each of the options and eligibility requirements.

- What is needed for good transition into different education settings, including having a plan for information to follow the learners.
- The role of all agencies in each of the options.

Area 3: As part of this set of options, reform the 'Alternative Education' model of provision so that there is a new model that is designed to meet both the education and broader needs of the most disengaged young people who need an alternative to mainstream schooling.

Recommendation 6: The Ministry of Education develop a clear national model and set of standards for high quality 'Alternative Education' provision that includes:

- Funding that is sufficient to meet the depth and complexity of needs of this group.
- A funding model that allows for greater oversight and accountability.
- A national model of teaching practice that is based on the evidence of teaching approaches that work for young people who are the most disengaged from learning.
- A requirement for providers to have qualified, registered teachers.
- A requirement for small class sizes and continuity of teacher or tutor.
- Access to the broad range of education expertise and resources across education providers so young people can access education programmes and pathways that match their interests.
- Skilled support workers to provide wrap-around support for the young people and to broker access to specialist support to meet young people's broader needs.
- Kaupapa Māori approaches that enable Māori young people to succeed as Māori.

Recommendation 7: The Ministry of Education to ensure all current and future 'Alternative Education' provision has suitable premises and facilities – in line with the expectations for other learning environments.

Recommendation 8: The Ministry of Education supports teachers in 'Alternative Education' with a lead of professional practice, curriculum resources tailored for young people in 'Alternative Education' and facilitated professional networks.

Recommendation 9: The Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, Oranga Tamariki, Te Puni Kōkiri, Whaikaha | Ministry of Disabled People and Ministry of Social Development to work together to ensure young people in 'Alternative Education' are a priority for the specialist support they need.

Area 4: Put in place the support needed for successful pathways and transitions from 'Alternative Education' into further education, training or employment.

Recommendation 10: The Ministry of Education, Tertiary Education Commission, Whaikaha | Ministry of Disabled People, Ministry of Social Development and Oranga Tamariki review the transition and ongoing support for young people in 'Alternative Education' to ensure young people have a planned and supported pathway, with sufficient pastoral and learning support, to make a successful transition into further learning or work.

Area 5: Strengthen accountability and monitor how well provision is meeting the needs of young people who are in 'Alternative Education'

Recommendation 11: The Ministry of Education actively monitor the quality of provision in 'Alternative Education.'

Recommendation 12: The Ministry of Education report annually on the education experiences and outcomes for young people in 'Alternative Education', including:

- Number of young people referred to 'Alternative Education'.
- Wait times for entry to 'Alternative Education'.
- Number of young people who receive a place and go on to attend 'Alternative Education'.
- Attendance of young people in 'Alternative Education'.
- Achievement of young people in 'Alternative Education'.

Recommendation 13: The Ministry of Education ensure 'Alternative Education' providers and contract-holders collect and report reliable data on young people's enrolment, education outcomes and destinations.

Recommendation 14: The Ministry of Education reports back to the Minister of Education, and Ministers with responsibility for Oranga Tamariki and Youth Justice, on progress made in response to these recommendations by June 2024.

8. Together these recommendations have the potential to significantly improve education experiences and outcomes for disengaged learners. Improving education for these learners can dramatically improve their lives and life course.

The Alternative Education evaluation report will be published at the end of June 2023

9. To enable disengaged young people's whānau to understand the findings, and for schools and Alternative Education providers to learn from the findings, ERO will:
 - a. Publish a summary of the report.
 - b. Publish tailored guides for learners and whānau.
 - c. Publish tailored guides for school leaders, provider leaders and educators.

We intend to hold a forum to ensure we reach and have maximum impact with our key stakeholders

10. We intend to hold a forum about this work. It will be an in-person event for education sector peak bodies, and interested government agencies. The focus of the forum will be on the findings from the evaluation and what needs to be done to enable disengaged learners to thrive in education.
11. We will update your office when we have confirmed a date for this forum.

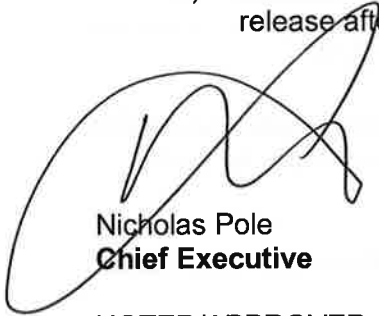
Next Steps

12. A copy of the media release is attached. We will provide Q&A closer to the release.

Recommendations

13. It is recommended that you:

- a) **Note** the attached near final (pre-designed) report and summary: *An Alternative Education? Support for our most disengaged young people.* **Noted**
- b) **Note** that this report on the evaluation on Alternative Education will be published before the end of June 2022. **Noted**
- c) **Note** that ERO will publish accompanying guides for different audiences and hold a forum to support the publication and impact of the report. **Noted**
- d) **Agree** to share this briefing and accompanying report and summary with the Minister for the Social Wellbeing Agency, Hon. Carmel Sepuloni. **Agreed** ~~Disagreed~~
- e) **Note** that this briefing is recommended for proactive release after the publication of the report. **Noted**

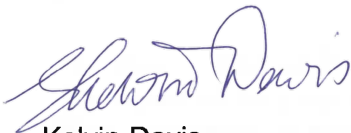


Nicholas Pole
Chief Executive

NOTED/APPROVED



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Minister of Education
17 / 06 / 2023



Kelvin Davis
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25 / 06 / 2023

Jo Luxton
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