

PUKEKOHE HIGH SCHOOL

*To Research Best Practice for Engaging
Better With Our Pasifika Community and
Advancing Educational Outcomes for
Our Pasifika Students*

Brian McDonald

Assistant Principal

10 Week Sabbatical Terms 2/3 2014

Acknowledgements

- The Pukekohe High School Board of Trustees for supporting my application.
- The Principal of Pukekohe High School, Mr Ian McKinnon, for his support and on-going interest in my sabbatical.
- Ms Sharon Watson, Dean at Pukekohe High School, who filled my position so capably in my absence.
- My senior management colleagues at Pukekohe High School who ensured 'business as usual' during my absence.
- I would also like to acknowledge and thank the following for their help and generosity in making time to speak with me about initiatives in their schools:

Steve Saville, Deputy Principal Alfriston College
Tom Brown, Director of Student Services Aorere College
John Murdoch, Principal Taita College
Mark Robinson, Deputy Principal Naenae College
Kathleen Kaveney, Deputy Principal Aotea College

- The Ministry of Education for supporting and funding the sabbatical.

Purpose

The intention of this study was to research best practice with regard to engaging better with our Pasifika community and also advancing educational outcomes for our Pasifika students.

Methodology

During the sabbatical I read widely, collecting, evaluating and appraising published research, educational literature, reports and examples of best practice which can be used to improve engagement and learning outcomes for Pasifika students.

I also visited a number of schools within the Auckland and Wellington regions to see and discuss with colleagues, good practice with regard to Pasifika engagement and achievement.

Findings

This is divided into three sections:

Section A: A summary of articles and publications read and evaluated

Section B: A summary of best practice as witnessed at various New Zealand schools and gleaned from readings

Section C: Practical implementations and suggestions for Pukekohe High School

SECTION A:

RESEARCH AND READINGS

1. Pasifika Education Plan 2013 – 2017

Ministry of Education

22 November 2012 (launch date)

Outlines the goals, targets and actions for all education sectors and parents, families and communities to improve outcomes for Pasifika learners.

The Pasifika Education Plans vision is to see ‘five out of five Pasifika learners participating, engaging and achieving in education, secure in their identities, languages and cultures and contributing fully to Aotearoa New Zealand’s social, cultural and economic wellbeing’.

The schooling sector has a focus on accelerating literacy and numeracy achievement and gaining NCEA Level 2 qualifications as a stepping stone to further education and/or employment.

The three goals are:

- Pasifika learners excel in literacy and numeracy and make effective study choices that lead to worthwhile qualifications.

- Pasifika school leavers are academically and socially equipped to achieve their goals for further education training and/or employment.

- Pasifika parents, families and communities engage with schools in supporting their children's learning.

The targets include:

- The declining rate of suspensions and expulsions to reduce.
- The number of school leavers with NCEA Level 1 literacy and numeracy qualifications to increase from 80% - 95% in 2017.
- 85% of Pasifika 18 year olds to achieve NCEA Level 2 or equivalent in 2017.
- Increase the number of Pasifika school leavers with University Entrance to achieve at least parity with non-Pasifika school leavers in 2017.
- 80% of schools demonstrate fully inclusive practices by 2014 and the remaining 20% demonstrate some inclusive practices by 2014.

The actions of these targets by the Ministry of Education and Education Partner Agencies will:

- Implement focused programmes and activities in schools with high Pasifika rolls to increase and accelerate Pasifika achievement.
- Up skill educators through Professional Learning and Development in what works for Pasifika learners.
- Provide alternative learning opportunities and pathways that support Pasifika learners to succeed.
- Improve the provision of information to Parents, Families and Communities about qualifications, vocational planning for further education and/or employment.
- Provide Pasifika learners a wider range of educational opportunities to achieve NCEA Level 2 or equivalent at school and foundation tertiary levels.
- Support effective transitions to further education, training and employment.
- Strengthen accountability processes including goals and targets in school charters, ERO will review performance of Pasifika learners and the implementation of the Pacific Education Plan and Pasifika learner achievement.
- Use engagement initiatives such as the Pasifika School Community Liaison Project to engage with parents, families, communities and schools.

- Increase the Pasifika capability of Boards of Trustees utilising new resources.

2. Making Connections for Pacific Learners' Success

Education Review Office
November 2013

The report looks at secondary schools where Pacific learners are achieving at or above the national norms for all students. It gives details of initiatives and good practice and how these work together to get great results.

Nationally, only 66% of Pacific school leavers gain NCEA Level 2 qualifications, in comparison to 80% of Pakeha students. The Ministry of Education, The Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs and The Education Review Office have all developed plans to address this disparity. The Ministry of Education's target is that by 2017, 85% of all school leavers, including Pacific, will have gained at least the NCEA Level 2 qualification.

The Ministry of Pacific Islands Affairs has worked with 25 secondary schools with a high Pacific roll to:

- Strengthen initiatives that are raising Pacific learners' achievement.
- Share good practice.
- Support the implementation of new programmes focused on success for Pacific learners.

In support of the above, ERO conducted an analysis of available data and found that five out of the 25 schools already achieved a high level of success for their Pacific learners and that these schools had a clear vision for success. These included:

- Leadership that focused on improvement with the capacity and vision to align school practices to achieve improvements.

- Review and improvement practices – using high quality achievement data to inform decisions about curriculum, resourcing and effectiveness of initiatives.
- A curriculum that is relevant and tailored to the needs and aspirations of learners and parents.
- Relationships with Pacific families and the community to support learners.

The recommendation of the report is that all school leaders develop a plan to ensure that all Pacific learners can achieve similar successes.

The recommended next steps are:

- Increase board, management and staff understanding of Pacific peoples' cultures, aspirations and needs.
- Develop a curriculum that values Pacific identity and supports improved achievement.
- Enhance the identification, collection and analysis of data relevant to raising achievement levels and monitoring effectiveness of interventions.
- Provide learning opportunities for staff to build professional capacity to tailor learning programmes to individual and group needs.
- Ensure that reporting to the board adequately monitors the achievement of Pacific students throughout the school, and is sufficient to inform decisions about target setting and allocation of resources.
- Establish strong relationships between mentors; students, teachers and parents; and with the community, so that all can work together to create meaningful support networks for students.

In schools where Pacific learners did not have good levels of achievement the factors were not working together coherently or one of more factors were lacking.

3. Improving Education Outcomes for Pacific Learners

Education Review Office
May 2012

This report, the latest of three, prior to the ERO report November 2013, identifies good practice and makes some strong recommendations for improvement. Factors most likely to be evident in schools that were catering well for Pacific learners included:

- Setting targets for achievement of Pacific learners.
- Assisting teachers to engage culturally with Pacific learners.
- Monitoring student achievement.
- Mentoring individual students.
- Establishing partnerships with parents and the community.

The success of the above five factors depended on overall strengths in:

- Leadership where Boards and leaders are well informed and focused on finding ways to get the best possible outcomes for their students.
- Review and improvement processes which use a wide range of high quality data, including attendance data, effectiveness of interventions, target setting and resource allocation.
- Curriculum development that is engaging, effective and responsive to the culture of Pacific learners.
- Relationships with families and the community to support and motivate the learner through mentoring and identifying realistic learning pathways.

4. ERO Pacific Strategy 2013 – 2017

Education Review Office
2012

ERO has developed a Pacific Strategy that focuses on:

- Providing high quality evaluation to build success in the education system
- Providing useful information for parents and communities
- Promoting good practice in schools

This strategy complements the Pasifika Education Plan 2013-2017 and commits to interagency cooperation to support Pacific learners to reach their full potential, secure in their Pacific identity.

ERO has maintained 'Success for Pacific Students' as one of the ongoing national evaluation topics since 2011.

5. Secondary Schools: Pathways to Future Education, Training and Employment

Education Review Office
2013

In this report, ERO found that schools focusing on the individual needs and progress of Pacific students provided organised additional tutoring, and support to set goals and develop their career pathways. Students developed self-awareness and the capacity to make decisions about their learning and future careers. This in turn has shown to increase students' motivation to learn. Schools that offered high quality mentoring and targeted learning support also had high levels of achievement for Pacific learners. Success was also attributed to a partnership with a university provider that involved university students mentoring senior Pacific students.

ERO also identified the Starpath programme (Starpath is a Partnership for Excellence project led by The University of Auckland together with the New Zealand Government. It aims to address New Zealand's comparatively high rate of educational inequality with Maori and Pacific students, and students from low income families) as another strong positive initiative. Involvement in Starpath assisted schools to develop the confidence to mentor students using achievement data to inform the process.

6. Pasifika Education Plan 2009 – 2012

Ministry of Education

Outlines the goals, targets and actions for all education sectors, as well as including a compass for Pasifika success, highlighting the need to ensure Pasifika students and young people are present, engaged and achieving, is a shared responsibility.

7. Te Kotahitanga: The Experiences of Year 9 and 10 Maori Students in Mainstream Classrooms

R Bishop et al
2003

Te Kotahitanga (meaning unity) is a research and professional development programme by the Ministry of Education's Te Tere Auraki professional development team to improve teaching practice and the engagement and achievement of Maori learners in English medium settings. While this programme is a programme focused on improving Maori student achievement, the strategies involved are of direct benefit to Pacific learners. These include student-teacher relationships, raising the expectations for student achievement and the improvement of classroom teaching strategies.

8. TALANOA AKO – PACIFIC EDUCATION TALK

A Ministry of Education periodical published several times throughout the year; each new edition has a range of practical tips, resources and featured stories from around the regions.

SECTION B

REVIEW OF BEST PRACTICE AND SUGGESTED IMPLEMENTATIONS TAKEN FROM OBSERVATIONS, CONVERSATIONS AND THE ARTICLES RESEARCHED

From the readings, research, visits and conversations had, it is obvious that there is no single “Silver Bullet” for improving Pasifika achievement. Rather, through a combination of various initiatives, key personnel and appointments and targeted funding, schools have addressed the issue.

Different combinations of actions in different schools have succeeded in their own ways and, as we know, all schools are different. Some of the key initiatives and actions which have contributed to success are listed below:

- Effective Teaching

Culturally responsive pedagogies are important to support learning; teachers understanding of the key Pasifika culturally appropriate teaching and learning strategies.

Useful data is provided to teachers with information to assist them in their planning and problem-solving. Increased motivation for Pasifika students occurs when teachers show they care about their learning. Mentoring/Academic counselling, including goal setting is related to successful school completion. Teachers, parents and the students work together on academic planning and educational goal setting.

- Transitions

Smooth transitioning from primary/intermediate school to secondary school. Connections made between educators and home and the community.

Careers awareness is important, including subject and qualification pathways.

- Governance and Leadership

Involve where possible, members of the Pasifika community in governance and leadership.

Board of Trustees and the school should incorporate the Ministry of Education's Pasifika Education Plan into their own charters, strategic and annual plans.

A Senior Manager has a designated responsibility for Pasifika education and achievement.

Quality Pasifika teachers are employed and utilized where possible. Regular reports should be provided to Boards of Trustees on Pasifika student achievement and performance, for all year levels. That student achievement data is used as the basis for the next steps and approaches to student support and staff professional development. Academic targets are set, regularly monitored and action taken to improve aspects such as attendance, retention, and disciplinary interventions, in order to support achievement.

- Families and Community Engagement

Partnerships and engagement with Pasifika families and communities are vital to support educational achievements of Pasifika learners.

These include Pasifika clubs and connecting with church organisations.

Identify Pasifika parent aspirations for their children and provide them with the knowledge and understanding regarding qualifications, pathways and career choices.

- Literacy and Numeracy

For students that speak English as their second language, provide English language support.

Subject choice and career planning is essential. Students should have access to a wide curriculum, including a full range of NCEA subjects that will give them an opportunity to gain Merit and Excellence grades.

Study skills sessions and homework clubs have provided Pasifika students with support and are associated with higher achievement.

SECTION C

PRACTICAL IMPLEMENTATION AND SUGGESTIONS FOR PUKEKOHE HIGH SCHOOL

NB-Due to the relatively low numbers of Pasifika students at Pukekohe High School (when compared to some other schools), some or a number of the following suggestions may be impracticable. Nonetheless they are listed here as part of a “Best Scenario Wish List”.

1. Reinforce the role of a member of the LT as having responsibility overall for Pasifika education within the school.
2. Appoint a Pasifika Liaison Officer from within the staff
3. Ensure that faculties have plans for improving Pasifika achievement and that they are “living documents”.
4. The schools charter and strategic plan is clear on the expected outcomes for Pasifika students.
5. Look to appoint a Pasifika representative on the Board of Trustees. Look to the community to co-opt a member to provide a unique and diverse perspective which can assist to understand Pasifika children, their parents and communities.
6. Maximise Pasifika parental attendance at Academic Conferences and make links with Pasifika families to encourage school/home relationships and planning for students’ futures.
7. Hold regular meetings for parents. These meetings could cover a wide range of information from the fundamentals of our education and qualifications system, careers education and pathways, related achievement data, effective study techniques, related attendance data etc. Survey them for their opinions.

8. Encourage and utilise the resources and networks of Pasifika leaders and specialists in our community. eg multicultural leaders, mentors, liaison officers at tertiary institutions, former students, sportsmen and women and other role models.
9. Continue to test students in English competency and proficiency to see if ESOL or literacy support is required.
10. Establish a 'home room', homework club or learning centre to support students to complete work, 'catch up' or improve results. Senior students could be used to assist younger students
11. Incorporated into the schools professional development, a component to look specifically at Pasifika education; teachers understand the culturally appropriate teaching and learning strategies, the data relating to the students, an understanding of the Pasifika Education Plan and the school targets as outlined in the strategic and annual plans.
12. Where appropriate, incorporate stories, statistics and role models from Pacific nations into lessons.
13. Celebrate the success of Pasifika students in regular school assemblies. Further acknowledge success or areas of interest in Pasifika student assemblies.
14. Encourage and make students and their families aware of numerous scholarships available to students undertaking tertiary study in New Zealand.
15. Continue to promote and encourage effective leadership and student voice amongst Pasifika students. Provide them with opportunities to lead and give them roles of responsibility.
16. School signage
17. Correct pronunciation of students' names.
18. Library displays.
19. Meetings with Pasifika welcomes.
20. Verbal greetings in Pasifika languages

CONCLUSION

Many organisations and groups have developed plans to address the disparities in educational achievement for Pasifika students in New Zealand.

Successful secondary schools where Pasifika students are experiencing success use a wide range of practices. Nonetheless, they all are committed to improvement, hold high expectations for achievement, have key staff members in place, use quality data to make decisions, offer a balanced curriculum and have strong relationships with their school communities.

Pukekohe High School already has many of these practices in our organisation-some more firmly entrenched than others- and the introduction of some new practices would undoubtedly impact on our achievement levels for Pasifika students. However, from all of the research and discussion that I have undertaken in the past 10 weeks in different parts of the country, I believe that the key factor in improving Pasifika educational outcomes is one that we have already begun to place great emphasis on. “Knowing your Learner” and regularly monitoring and communicating with students and their families about their progress is the key to success. This is true of all students and equally so of our Pasifika learners.

REFERENCES

Pasifika Education Plan 2013 – 2017. Ministry of Education. 22 November 2012

Making Connections for Pacific Learners' Success. Education Review Office. November 2013

Improving Education Outcomes for Pacific Learners. Education Review Office. May 2012

ERO Pacific Strategy 2013 – 2017. Education Review Office. 2012

Secondary Schools: Pathways to Future Education, Training and Employment. Education Review Office. 2013

Pasifika Education Plan 2009 – 2012. Ministry of Education
An Analysis of Recent Pasifika Education Research Literature to Inform and Improve Outcomes for Pasifika Learners. Authors – Cherie Chu, Ali Glasgow, Fuapepe Rimoni, Mimi Hodis and Luanna H Meyer, Victoria University of Wellington. July 2013

Te Kotahitanga: The Experiences of Year 9 and 10 Maori Students in Mainstream Classrooms. R Bishop et al. 2003

Talanoa Ako – Pacific Education Talk. Ministry of Education and Pasifika Education. Publications. 2011 - 2013