

# RANGIĀTEA KAKAPO\* COLLEGE EXEMPLAR

The Rangiātea project consists of case studies and exemplars from five secondary schools, each of them on a journey towards realising Māori student potential. The case studies look at the strategies used by the school leadership team and report on the key factors that contributed to lifting Māori student achievement. The exemplars step through how a particular programme has been used successfully in each school.

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\* This school chose to remain unnamed and is called Kakapo College for the purposes of this report.

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# BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS—AN IMPORTANT FACTOR IN YOUNG MĀORI MEN’S SUCCESS IN ENGLISH

## Introduction

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1. Picture a school where English is one of the favourite subjects of Māori male students, who see it as relevant, exciting and a topic they can succeed in, and, as a result, their success rates are improving and their drop-out rate is low. Kakapo College is well on the way to achieving this goal. This exemplar tells how this school built relationships and modified the curriculum to include the interests of boys, and particularly Māori boys. English is now a highly regarded course at Kakapo College, where 18 out of 19 male students in the English Foundation Year 11 class plan to continue with English to Year 13:

*Change requires a leap of faith—you are not going to see results quickly, especially with allowing extra time for students to come at it their own way. Time can pass where there isn't necessarily anything to show for it. It's about having the confidence that they will keep going and they will get there in the end. Eventually you see the results. For people who may be more traditionally, 'I'm the teacher, we do things my way,' this is a different approach and involves a very different way of engaging with the students.*

[English teacher]

## What was the challenge?

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2. In 2006, as part of the annual planning and review undertaken at a departmental level, it was evident that some male students, and particularly Māori boys, were not achieving well. A close look at achievement data, classroom observations and feedback from Māori staff who knew the students well, as well as feedback from students themselves and other teachers, confirmed this finding.
3. The school has strong links with local whānau and a longstanding commitment to provide a sound education for its community. The Kakapo College principal, senior management team, board of trustees (BOT) and teaching staff all genuinely wanted to find a way to provide an English curriculum that was relevant and exciting and would support boys, and particularly Māori boys, to stay in English and succeed in it throughout their schooling.

## The solution

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4. The principal, senior management team and BOT supported an English department initiative to try to address needs of a range of students, including Māori boys. Over a number of years, the school has offered an increasing number of streams of English to meet student needs.
5. At the heart of the initiative was a decision to offer courses specially designed to be of high interest and appeal to either boys or girls. These include: Foundation English and English through Film, which tend to appeal to boys, and English Literature and English through Contemporary Issues, which appeal to girls. This exemplar focuses on Foundation English and English through Film, with a particular focus on how the courses meet the needs of Māori boys.

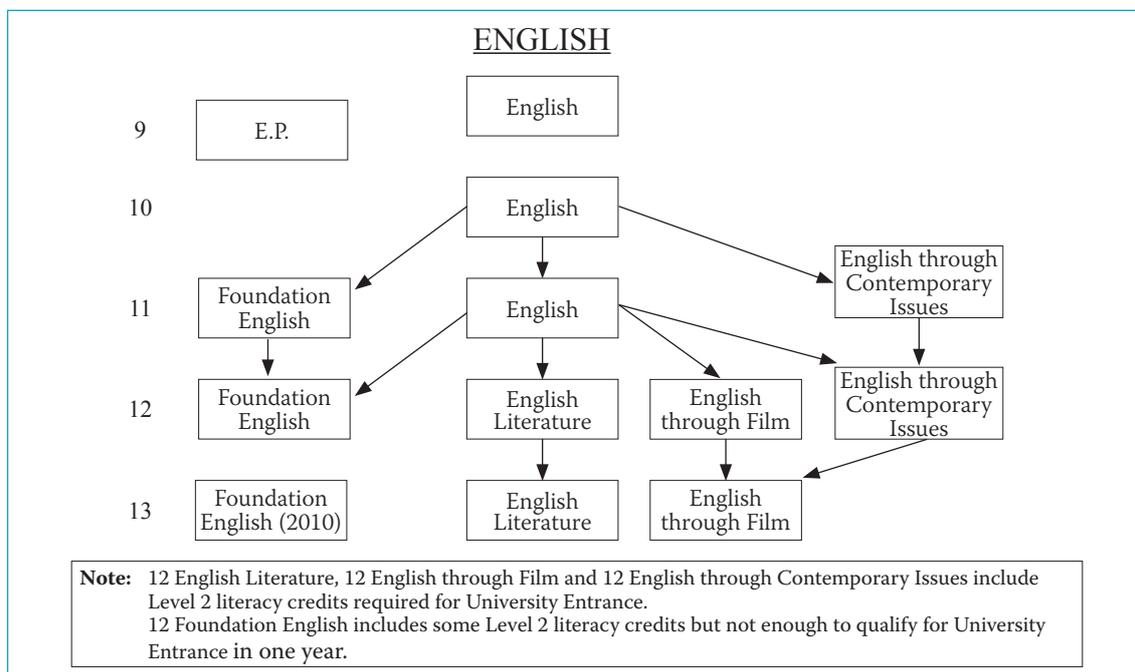
## A leadership approach to curriculum design and delivery

6. The head of department believes that much of the school's success in English comes down to the department's philosophy of knowing students and their aspirations (particularly Māori students), tracking student progress, providing relevant work and being flexible—whilst holding high expectations and communicating these expectations to all students:

*We have talked about the importance of knowing students and doing the research into how they've done in the past, goals for them, an awareness of the whole student rather than what you just see in the classroom, an awareness of their sport, cultural life outside of the school. We talked about (in terms of professional development) different styles of learning and being flexible to students who may not have that linear approach to learning, giving more time to students to allow thinking time, [acknowledging] not all students are linguistic or linear learners. Certainly, for students in the foundation course, the pace is slower. [Head of English]*

7. Over time, the leadership team has supported the development of several streams of English to meet the needs of diverse groups of students and to include particular issues facing students, both girls and boys.
8. The English courses currently on offer are detailed in Figure 1.

**FIGURE 1** English courses offered at Kakapo College



9. In Years 9 and 10, four different themes are presented each year. One option is an enhanced programme for Year 9 students. It caters for students who are achieving at stanine 3 level (that is, according to a statistical distribution of test results, they are in the third of nine standardised segments or “stanines”) and who would really benefit from a smaller class, and more directed teaching. The Year 9 curriculum is taught but with more time allowed for students to complete the course of work.
10. In Years 11 and 12, the English streams are organised on the basis of potential pathways of interest to boys and girls separately, although courses are open to all students regardless of gender. The Year 11 Foundation English class is for students who find English very challenging, and who need help to fulfil the literacy requirements for National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) Level 1. The main area of study involves reading a range of texts for pleasure and close analysis of texts that explore issues facing New Zealand boys, science fiction, action and sport. In addition, writing, speaking and listening skills are developed.
11. The Year 11 English through Contemporary Issues has a similar focus to the Foundation English class with respect to literacy and involves the exploration of issues facing New Zealand girls, relationships and the media. The Year 12 English through Film involves the exploration of issues facing New Zealand boys, through relationships in film. The Year 12 English Literature offers a more traditional English learning experience.

## The evolution of differentiated courses in English

12. Up until 2002, Kakapo College was part of the internal assessment trial for School Certificate, and had long used ABA assessment (Achievement Based Assessment) as part of its Sixth Form Certificate programme. As a result of these commitments, the school had a long history of experimentation and creativity around assessment.

13. The English department also started using the unit standards format as soon as it became available, and began to trial dual assessment from 1997 onwards. Despite the early overassessment involved with the initial standards, the English department persevered until it became clear that unit standards would be replaced with achievement standards as part of the shift to NCEA. At that point, the English department started to work with the draft achievement standards.
14. While the English department was preparing for the introduction of NCEA in 2002, it also wanted to address the learning needs of a predominantly male group of students who were not achieving in English. The department decided to develop a course that would be entirely internally assessed, using both unit and achievement standards. The primary factor that drove the department to offer a variety of courses was a desire to get students engaged with English. The new courses were therefore designed to cater to the interests of the students in the class. The department also decided to place only boys in this class, to ensure that girls did not end up marginalised as a result of the course materials being used. This development proved successful—some students achieved the full 15 credits offered and nearly all students gained NCEA literacy.
15. The following year the philosophy of targeted course design was extended to Level 2 English. Four separate courses were designed to meet the needs of Year 12 students.
16. The Literature course offered just achievement standards and external assessment, and the English department worked hard not to introduce compulsory streaming at Year 12. The courses were not labelled achievement and unit standards or 2A, 2B and 2C. Instead, courses were called Literature, English through Film, English through Contemporary Issues and Foundation.
17. English through Film was designed with the general interests of boys in mind, and Contemporary Issues with the general interests of girls, but there was a clear policy allowing students to choose the course they believed to be most suitable or interesting to them. Generally, most chose an appropriate class, although a large number of boys, who were clearly very capable, gravitated to English through Film due to the content offered. English through Film was mainly taken by boys, while Contemporary Issues was mainly taken by girls.
18. After a few years, Contemporary Issues became a multilevel class, comprising Level 1 and Level 2 students. This change was made to meet the needs of a small number of girls who the English department believed would struggle with the Level 1 mainstream English class, but who they believed would not fit the Level 1 Foundation class. The first year, this class was one-third Māori, one-third Pasifika and one-third other ethnicities. Placing two levels together raised the profile for Māori and Pasifika girls and their needs and interests became more visible.
19. The success of the English through Film class led to a growing demand for a Level 3 English through Film class. Initially, those students who had been successful at Level 2 were channelled back into Level 3 Literature, but the students did not enjoy the transition to a more traditional programme. Although a number of boys were successful in Level 3 Literature, the course evaluations revealed dissatisfaction with the course content. In 2007, a Level 3 English through Film programme was offered. Again, the emphasis was on internal assessment with popular culture texts forming the base of the course.

## Recent initiatives—finding ways to work with students

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20. More recently, one of the English teachers attended a professional development course that focused on Pasifika achievement. Course presenters promoted building relationships between teachers and students, and allowing more time for tasks and allowing students to approach tasks in their own way. This motivated him to try a different approach with Māori students at Kakapo College:

*I learnt that it's really important for students to feel like they know you before they are prepared to put anything out there in terms of work; that often they approach tasks in a very different way. What I might consider from a Pākehā perspective to be logical isn't so for people from other cultures and that [my way of] thinking of doing the right thing (by making them follow along in a particular way) can actually be doing more harm than good. I came back from that [course] and decided to take that risk and allow the extra time and space so that they could work out a way of coming at things in a different way, with my support, but not telling them how to go about thinking about things. It's been really good!*  
[English teacher]

21. Staff in the English department choose material they believe is relevant to students. For example, English through Film included in its curriculum films like *Boys in the Hood*, *Sione's Wedding* and *Whale Rider*. Teachers from the English department sought help from Māori staff to use te reo Māori and Māori concepts appropriately when teaching some topics. For example, teachers had lengthy conversations with Māori staff about terms such as “rangatira” and its meaning in particular contexts.

22. Another key to the success of the English through Film course is that the school effectively communicated to the Māori boys that the course was designed to be relevant, useful and interesting for them:

*What's important is making it really clear from the outset that the programme is for them; it has been designed in response to their needs, especially at Year 11, when we want to dispel the idea that they've been put in the dumb class, and reframing that as something very, very positive. Some of them take a while to be convinced of that.* [English teacher]

23. Teachers observed that Māori boys were attracted to the American gangster image, so they used the film *Boys in the Hood* as an opportunity to get students discussing being a man, different role models and different ways of being a man, and the responsibilities men might have:

*At the start of this year, we did a film study of Boys in the Hood. They're quite into that American gangster thing. It's a really good story for demonstrating what's wrong with that but really nice to look at the strong messages with the father and his rules for the son when he's raising them. We talk quite a lot about what it means to be a man. It's a good text for exploring that because the macho style—guns, knives etc.—they have a strong appreciation for the fact that that is really wrong and they might talk it up at times. They get quite awed by that idea because, in terms of role models, as a country we provide a really limited range of role models. And it's quite tough for them at this age trying to figure out—they don't really get a chance to reflect on the different ways of being a man, what that could be, what the different responsibilities might be and [we] give them a chance to express that.* [English teacher]

24. *Sione's Wedding* was another film that stimulated great discussion. The teacher used the film to explore the roles of men and women, and discuss what strong healthy relationships might look like in a way that was relevant to them. It helped that the teacher himself was male:

*In my Year 12 Foundation class last year, I got a little bit concerned because there were a lot of fairly negative comments about women that had been coming up. So we spent some time looking at how women should be treated, looking at not just wives and girlfriends, but grandmothers and mothers, sisters and daughters. Again, they might say some things that are a bit off at times, but talking about it seriously, they had a really strong appreciation ... and they responded really well with the opportunity to talk about those issues. Especially with boys, if they can see that there is that relevance to them, to their own life, they're a lot more engaged.* [Teacher]

25. *Whale Rider* provided an opportunity to examine traditional and modern roles, and the teacher was able to get students to think about how roles divide along generational as well as cultural and gender lines. The teacher used this text to help students reflect and think critically about relating with others:

*You look at them and think, they'll be out there in the big, wide world in six month's time, so what's something that they can reflect on now that might make that journey easier for them and for the people around them? So it's about looking at texts that allow us to explore those ideas.* [Teacher]

26. Once students understood the English through Film course really was developed for them and saw clear evidence of its relevance to them, they became engaged with the topic, the teacher and their peers:

*By the end of Year 11, they're really keen and they say, 'We're not going to have to go into one of those other English classes are we?' They appreciate the fact that it is for them and is centred around their needs and helping them. They understand the distinctions between the different English classes. A lot of the class at the end of last year said that they wanted to keep doing English in Year 13, and that says to them that they have something for them that can help them.* [English teacher]

## How the curriculum was implemented

27. There are a number of aspects to the implementation of the curriculum to support Māori boys' achievement. This included investing in building and maintaining strong teacher–student relationships, ensuring each student had a clear direction and focus, developing and monitoring teaching and learning practices as well as having a positive approach to collegial support.

### Investing in building and maintaining strong teacher–student relationships

28. While the films selected had clear appeal for Māori boys, the way the teachers work skilfully with students to bring out their potential is also important. Teachers are responsive and flexible to the needs of students and in particular make time to build relationships and develop a genuine understanding of students. The following example—the story of Tane—shows how the teacher's approach supports student success.

#### Tane's' story

*It was my third year of teaching Tane and he never really produced any work in that time. He was given a task to do—to write a piece based on a person he knew well.*

*He sat there for a long time and I would sit with him and ask him, 'Who do you think you might do?' We would talk about possibilities over a long period.*

*Then one day he just went out of class into the computer lab and came back with this whole thing written—perfect, a gorgeous story about his grandfather. He had been sitting there drawing and thinking about it for a while.*

*It made me think about in the past where I would have considered that what he was doing (drawing) was not legitimate, and perhaps at times it wasn't, but it possibly was and I wasn't recognising that. I think he's the kind of boy who has learnt that time always runs out before he's had the opportunity to finish things.*

*I think he got to the point where he realised I was going to wait until it happened—and then after two and a half years, it was great, he gave me something ... I gave him some feedback and then after that he seemed to make some really good progress. He was a lot more open.*

*So it took a really long time to get to that point where he felt OK about doing it, or felt that it was reasonable to attempt and he was OK about sharing a personal story with me. After that, I think he had a sense of it being worth starting because he would probably be able to finish it and there will be enough time. [Teacher]*

29. The principal, BOT, senior managers, the head of English and staff are all clear that the relationship between teacher and student is critical and needs time to become established. Thus, the school has structured its timetable so some students have the same English teacher over several years, enabling relational trust to be established:

*The biggest thing is the relationship with the students. That's what I put the most time into, as it's pretty apparent that without that you can't really make much progress at all, and sometimes that takes a really long time and you need to be really patient with that. If it takes a long time for students to respond—that's OK. Still have high expectations but be mindful of not taking any measures that might be harmful for the relationship and still be very supportive. That's worked really well. Eventually once you get a little trust and they have some learning experiences where they have achieved a little success, the whole learning experience becomes more positive. [English teacher]*

30. Relational trust is built in a number of ways:

- **A long-term relationship is important:** This initiative was started several years ago and therefore the English teacher has had up to three years to build a relationship with students. Having this length of time has enabled a level of trust to be built and a sound knowledge of the interests, capabilities and learning styles of each of the boys. Having the same English teacher on a consistent basis over several years has been a key factor in the success of this initiative:

*It's about the relationship building that you do with them and ensuring that students have a consistent teacher, as opposed to a number of relievers—who they don't respond to as well, because they do not have a relationship with them. It's being with that one teacher all the time. That long-term teaching of those boys for that year made a huge difference. If it wasn't for that, those boys wouldn't have gone through that Level 1 literacy. [Student support worker]*

- **A two-way sharing of personal information:** An important aspect of relationship building with Māori students is gathering information from the boys about who they are, where they are from, what their interests are and what it is they want to achieve for the year. In return, in some instances boys expect that the teacher will give some personal information of themselves. Teachers may therefore need to be open to the notion that it is beneficial to the relationship that there is some sharing of personal information on the part of the teacher:

*Students often have a lot of questions about you as a teacher—about where you are from; your personal life. Sometimes teachers find that rude but they must realise that it is a two-way thing. It is important for students to be able to locate you within their own context and important for them to have an understanding about who you are and where you are from. [English teacher]*

- **Regularly recognising Māori student success:** Finding areas to acknowledge and celebrate success is important. English teachers actively seek opportunities to recognise Māori student success. Māori staff are invited into classes where Māori students are doing well so students can share their success with them. Recently, for example, Māori staff, along with the class form teacher, were invited to watch a performance of *Romeo and Juliet*.
- **Offering highly valued opportunities for contact with external Māori:** The English department invites well-known Māori writers (particularly Māori male writers) into the school to run workshops. They also make links into the community so students have the opportunity to interview sports stars and local leaders. The aim is to broaden students' perspectives and opportunities.

## Ensuring each student has a clear direction and focus

31. The English department has found that often the boys have high expectations of themselves and want to succeed but do not necessarily know how to make things happen to reach their potential. The teacher of English through Film works hard to obtain a good understanding of each student's personal information, including their aspirations and goals for when they leave school.
32. He observed that sometimes boys just don't know what direction they might go in. The English teacher (with the support of his department) believes it is essential to get the guidance counsellor and other key people involved to help students, particularly Māori boys, work out their interests and identify possible future directions. Along with classroom teachers, the school is able to draw on the knowledge and expertise of the Māori dean (who is also the guidance counsellor) and student support worker (who is also Māori), to support Māori boys to identify possible career paths.
33. The English teacher also gets students to set goals for the class. While it takes time to establish all students' goals for the class, the teacher believes the process makes for a more purposeful and settled class longer term. The teacher also aims to ensure that all students have a shared understanding of the aims of the course and its relevance to them. A key learning in the English department is that it is important to ensure the student voice drives and determines the direction of the class and that students understand their classmates' needs and requirements for support.

## Developing and monitoring teaching and learning practices

34. The English department is committed to making English exciting for all students and tracks and evolves their courses in a responsive way to support student achievement. To support the required flexibility, there is a positive approach to collegial support. Teachers within the department collaborate on all unit plans and in decision making on courses. Teachers also involve students in choosing texts and in determining time frames for coursework:

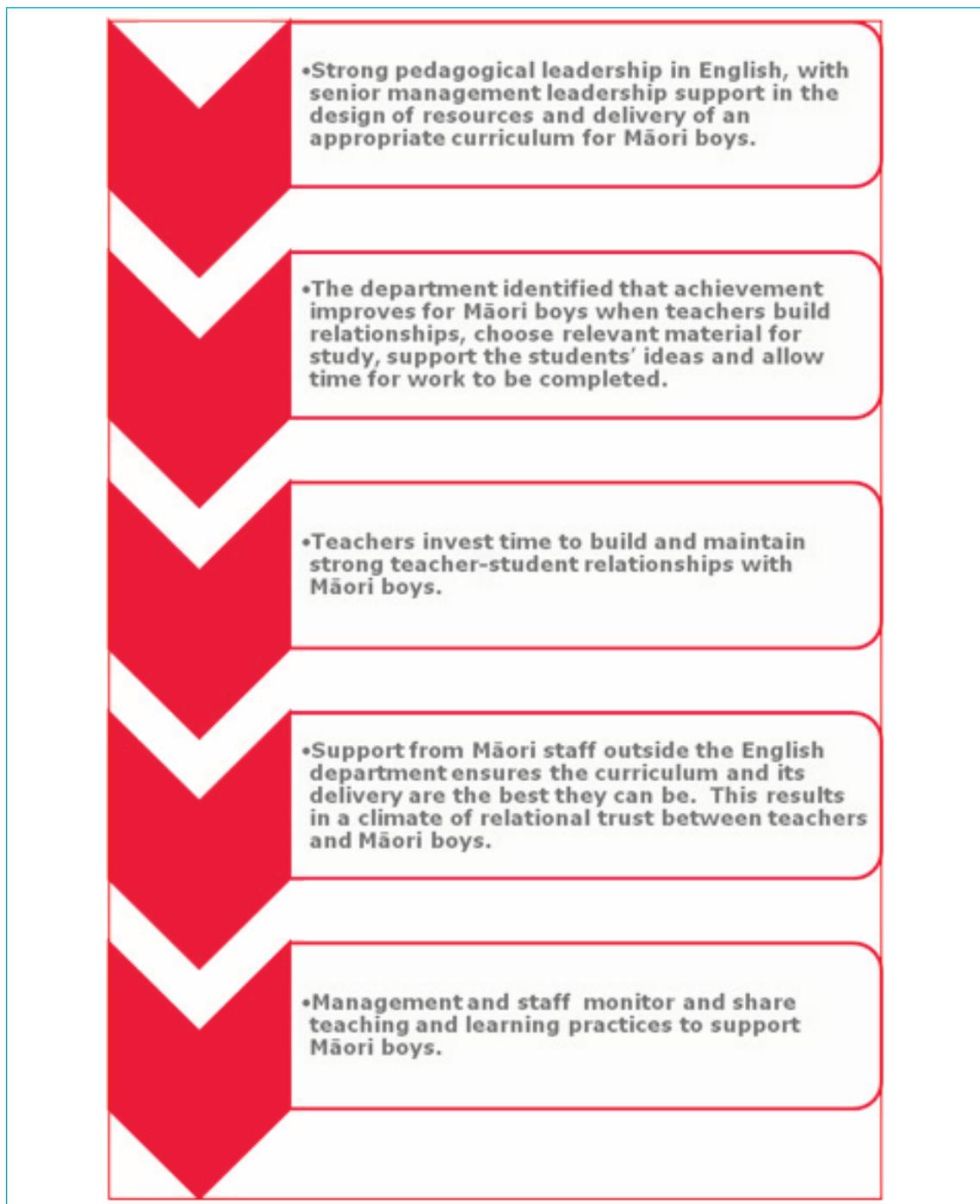
*There is a lot of collaborative learning amongst staff in the English department. In meetings we are constantly encouraged to be reflecting on our practice. [English teacher]*

35. Māori staff views on individual Māori students are highly valued by the department and often there are discussions about the progress of students to ensure teachers use suitable approaches that are likely to work with particular students. The focus is on teachers being responsive and flexible:

*We talk a lot about individual students, but it's the deficit thinking that I am conscious of overturning. I say that whoever comes into the class, there are some you can't change, but how we respond to them and relate to them can bring about positive learning.* [Head of English]

36. The student support worker also plays an important role—liaising with whānau, checking on students' progress and providing support for teachers in working effectively with specific students. The student support worker is often invited to come into classes to observe the behaviour of particular students, check in with them and also give feedback to teachers on other relevant matters. The student support role has been in place for more than 15 years and was set up particularly to support Māori students in mainstream schools.

**FIGURE 2** Key components underpinning the English initiative



## Building effective relationships with Māori boys in English

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37. The principal has clearly driven an approach where staff take a holistic approach to all students, particularly Māori students. She encourages teachers to take an active interest in students' extra-curricular activities:

*[I] went to watch students playing sport. That relationship outside of class strengthens in-class relationships.* [Head of English]

38. There is a general belief within Kakapo College that when teachers have a holistic awareness and understanding of students, including their goals, aspirations and interests—such as their sporting and cultural life outside of the school—there are much broader possibilities for building good relationships with them. It is also useful if teachers have an understanding of how students have done academically in the past, so they can be responsive in their teaching approaches to Māori boys:

*It is really important to make the effort to see them doing things that they feel passionate about—kapa haka, sports, drama, making the effort to give up time to go and see them. [It] signals you care and [are] making the effort to do that and you are aware of them beyond the classroom. They find that great—and they respond to that—it's really, really, worth it.* [English teacher]

*We liaise a lot with the dean of those students and with other teachers and we have quite a lot of dialogue about those students and how they are doing and share concerns. It's not only what happens in the classroom; we are aware of the importance for those other points of contact. Sometimes if a student is going through a bad patch, talk to them, check out the reasons for that, then together develop strategies to ... adopt to help them through. And, where necessary, calling home—communication about where we think they are going really well. Sometimes these conversations happen on the sideline of the league game—that feeds back to the kids through their parents. This is another important step—they know that you do occasionally talk to their parents.* [English teacher]

39. Professional development opportunities (such as a professional learning afternoon devoted to the Treaty or courses on working effectively with students) have helped raise awareness amongst staff of the range of approaches they might take with Māori boys. In departmental meetings, the head of department tries to allow time for staff to reflect on teaching strategies that have worked well in class:

*Professional development has included looking at and talking about different styles of learning, being flexible with students who may not have a linear approach to learning, giving more time to students, allowing thinking time and going at a pace that suits the student. Anecdotally, what is known is that if students feel that the work they are doing is valuable and meaningful, they will continue to take English in senior years.* [English teacher]

40. Getting buy-in from the rest of the department has been beneficial to supporting Māori boys. There are some teachers who feel less confident in the strategies they use with Māori boys and less certain of suitable ways to respond to Māori boys. Generally, there is a willingness to do what they can, and teachers find discussion with colleagues helps:

*We have those quarterly meetings where all of the Year 10 teachers from a particular form class will get together and talk about students and the strategies that work. There is a real drive to have them focused on pedagogy. That formal opportunity to talk about students is great and it acts as a springboard.* [Head of English]

## Securing Māori boys' engagement in English

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41. From the principal down, it is acknowledged that building Māori boys' achievement in English is an ongoing challenge. The principal consistently promotes her beliefs around the importance of relationship building with the students:

*All kids like to know you know them on a personal level ... [We] reinforce the idea that we have to keep on trying to build positive relationships and you can never do enough.* [Principal]

42. There are several aspects of developing relational trust, and it is not always easy to build relationships with students. Some students are a challenge, but teachers look for ways to engage in conversation:

*I had a tricky student where building a relationship was a challenge. I had to check the softball results so that I could start a conversation every day. I knew that was the way in to that boy. [Principal]*

43. Firstly, the school helped students to identify goals that are relevant and useful for them. This sometimes required the support of staff from outside the English department, including the Māori dean and student support worker, other teachers and whānau.

44. Secondly, the choice of material that harnesses Māori boys' interest in the classroom was vital. The English department worked collaboratively on this aspect, to locate relevant and appropriate texts, with the support of Māori staff. This ensured Māori content was present in the English curriculum. One important focus for the English department was on planning particular courses such as the Foundation course and the English through Film course that are appropriate for boys, and particularly Māori boys, that make the English course accessible and valuable to them. It also helped them achieve their NCEA credits when the topics were relevant and interesting:

*One of the successes for Māori students is the way we have a very thematic theme to our teaching. How it has been useful for Māori students is the choice within that, so when they are doing assessments they've been able to choose their particular topic within that wider theme. We have used particular texts that are Māori and relatable to them. [English teacher]*

45. An example of making the course accessible to students is the Made in Aotearoa unit called "Our Voices":

*We look at literature relevant to New Zealand and also on issues unique to New Zealand. It's our responsibility to teach New Zealand literature but making the writing really relevant to students. Five students—for formal writing assessment—wrote a piece that Matariki should be a national holiday, so it's not just studying Māori writers, it's exploring Māori issues too. [Head of English]*

46. Furthermore, it is important in working with students, to support their initial tentative efforts so they start producing more work. The school found a change in teaching approach, supported by professional development for teachers, was beneficial for students. A reflective, collaborative learning practice within the English department supported this change. Teachers found that once they knew their students (and their students knew them) students started producing work and teachers could start building a positive cycle of feedback:

*It feeds into that relationship building as well, and once you have some work that you can give feedback on it becomes a really positive step. [English teacher]*

*Just not letting a student fall between the cracks and if there is something that needs to be repaired then having a crack at it. He is a student who responds well to positive feedback. He felt I was down on him but it's because I have such high expectations. There was a week of it not working, and then it paid huge dividends.*

*Another class ... which is now Year 11, was going off the rails a little bit. We spent time talking with the Māori dean. Rather than going straight to detentions, [there was] talk about restoring the relationship, which had broken down. I was anxious about not having a head to head. We had a mediation meeting with the Māori dean which went really well. [Head of English]*

47. One tension for teachers is deciding when to push students for more work and when to support any efforts—rather than be reactive about a lack of progress. In addition, where progress did not occur it was important to attend to any relational issues that might be holding a student back:

*[I am thinking of a] student who is strongly rooted in their culture who did OK last year in Level 1. He was not reaching his potential, [so] at the beginning of the year we had a conversation about how he did last year and expectations for this year. We did a Level 2 reading log and worked on a step up from some stuff he might have done in junior English, [using the book] Bulibasha—developing that further. That worked pretty well. He's got an excellent sense of humour, he loves writing (like tagging) all over his stuff, he thinks while he's doing that stuff. It's about picking your battles and really communicating you've got faith they can do really well, giving them some options and keeping track to making sure they are meeting those expectations. [Head of English]*

*Having said that, I have a boy at the moment who I have had for a year and a half and is still very reluctant, and doesn't do very much and really pushes things at times. I just kind of figure there's no point being really reactive about that, hopefully we can continue to build on the relationship and get to the point where he, too, will kind of contribute something. [English teacher]*

48. Once students are engaged, teachers support and encourage them to do good work that will earn them NCEA credits and help them to extend their horizons. At times this requires the teacher to use judgement of when to push students out of their comfort zone to do things (like giving speeches) that they might not have done before:

*I'll use the relationship as a starting point for the discussion, telling them about how much progress they have made and how well we have got on and how much respect I have for their learning and how that's reciprocal. But [I'll say] how I have been disappointed in what's been happening in the last couple of periods, so why has that been happening? So it is something that I refer to when just talking one on one with them. [English teacher]*

*It helps with motivation too. If they say, 'I don't think I can do this,' I can say, 'Is there anything that I've asked you to do, that with my help and you doing it that we haven't been able to do?' And I remind them of times like when we did our creative writing last year and wrote our essay, and so these things get referred to in that way. [English teacher]*

*We don't necessarily refer to the boys specifically about the value of building relationships between teacher and pupil, although sometimes if they are playing up a bit, we draw on that relationship. [English teacher]*

49. The school is working toward implementing a more formal professional learning system. The senior management team is currently considering this system:

*It is hoped that one of the focuses for that will be engagement, motivation and having success with Māori and Pasifika students as well, so we hope to have more formal learning situations for staff to share their learnings. [English teacher]*

50. Teachers appreciate support from the senior leadership team, who agreed that for students who find English more difficult, the department can adjust staffing so some classes are smaller and students' needs can be met:

*It's a significantly smaller class and allows much more time with each student to build the relationship. This is one of the conditions that allows the relationship to build and flourish. [English teacher]*

51. The role of the head of department is to lead, encourage and challenge teachers to critique and review their teaching practices. In addition, the head of department guides teachers to encourage students in their achievement. The teachers are required to provide regular feedback on under- and over-performance and this contributes to acknowledging student success. This is an ongoing and regular process (not just something that occurs at the end of the year):

*As part of a school-wide process we have feedback at the end of the year, but I encourage a lot more of that throughout the year. This end-of-year one is linked to appraisal, but I think end-of-module or end-of-unit feedback is really important, particularly with more of a focus on teaching and learning. [Head of English]*

*[There is also] reflection throughout the course not just as an end-of-the-year tick box particularly as that's one of our departmental goals, to encourage self-regulation and reflection. [Head of English]*

52. The whole of the English department has been involved in the initiative, as well as drawing on the expertise of other Māori staff within the school, and the principal and senior management team have been supportive of developments and provided resourcing:

*We tend to have a lot of conversations about what's working and what isn't, just as a matter of course. Some of these things get discussed informally quite often. When we do the review each year, Māori achievement is an aspect we look at. [English teacher]*

**TABLE 1** Summary of the key approaches taken to secure student engagement and achievement in English

**Summary**

- Get to know students and build relationships with them.
- Plan courses that are particularly relevant to key groups (for example, English through Film for young Māori men).
- Draw on the expertise of Māori staff, whānau and the kaumātua where possible to ensure topics are relevant and taught authentically.
- Encourage all work and increase quality standards as students' confidence grows.
- Ensure the initiative has strong support and leadership from the senior management team to support pedagogical learning and resource allocation and timetabling.
- Strong leadership from the head of English is important.
- Design a programme of professional development to support the initiative.
- Monitor and be responsive to change as it occurs.

## Observed change as students start to engage

53. Change often starts with initial steps that evolve into wider developments. For example, the English through Film initiative has led to improved relationships between some teachers and Māori boys, and some students have changed in their willingness to engage—be this in setting goals or being open to scaffolding learning:

*Along with working out where they want to go, [they need] really good scaffolding so that they have a lot of support as they go about tasks—having something that will be challenging for them but [where they] will find success. Sometimes they are reluctant but if you can help them, encourage, praise ... you can see that they are feeling more confident and feeling better about themselves [then] the time it takes them to start work reduces. [English teacher]*

54. Some Māori boys are now attending class more regularly and are more willing to seek help from their teachers. As students have grown in confidence, they have also grown in their ability to speak up in class:

*He's got that way of making that connection with those boys 'cause some of the boys, especially when you get a mixed bunch of boys like that—they've got different āhua, and they are very wary of who they want to work in with. But with him, he's got that way where he gets that little thing out of them or that little bit extra out of them. Last year when I saw that English class, I was quite amazed because there were some boys in there who would never stand up and do a speech, never in the world they would ever get up. [Māori teacher]*

55. As Māori boys experience success, their desire and motivation to engage more fully increases, and they are more likely to work hard to achieve more success:

*I think it's the fact that they're experiencing success. In the Year 11 Foundation programme last year, which is all boys, the Māori students outshone the Pākehā boys on that course. I think it's because of the conditions that allow them to experience success and because of that they're keen to hang around and to participate and are motivated to do further work and study. [English teacher]*

56. There is acknowledgement that allowing students extra time is vital to securing engagement from Māori boys:

*The conditions are the extra time, more time with the teacher, [these are] the conditions where a really good relationship can develop. [English teacher]*

*Sometimes at the start of the process they are unsure, not prepared to give it a go. Once you see they start things on their own—sign of trust, OK if I can do this—it's worth starting. It can take a long time to get beyond the reluctance. It's a fear of them not wanting to do it. Once you see them taking an initiative, that is a sign that they are feeling comfortable with the learning environment and feel OK. Early indicators are also their attendance—if they are coming to class regularly it shows they feel comfortable. [English teacher]*

*It took him a month ... and when they wrote it was fantastic—he had to talk them through.* [Principal]

57. Also, once trust is built, teachers can draw on past success to motivate Māori boys to undertake more challenging tasks:

*There's a fine line between having plenty of time and maybe having periods of being unmotivated and not working, and that's one of those things you have to manage.* [English teacher]

## What progress looks like

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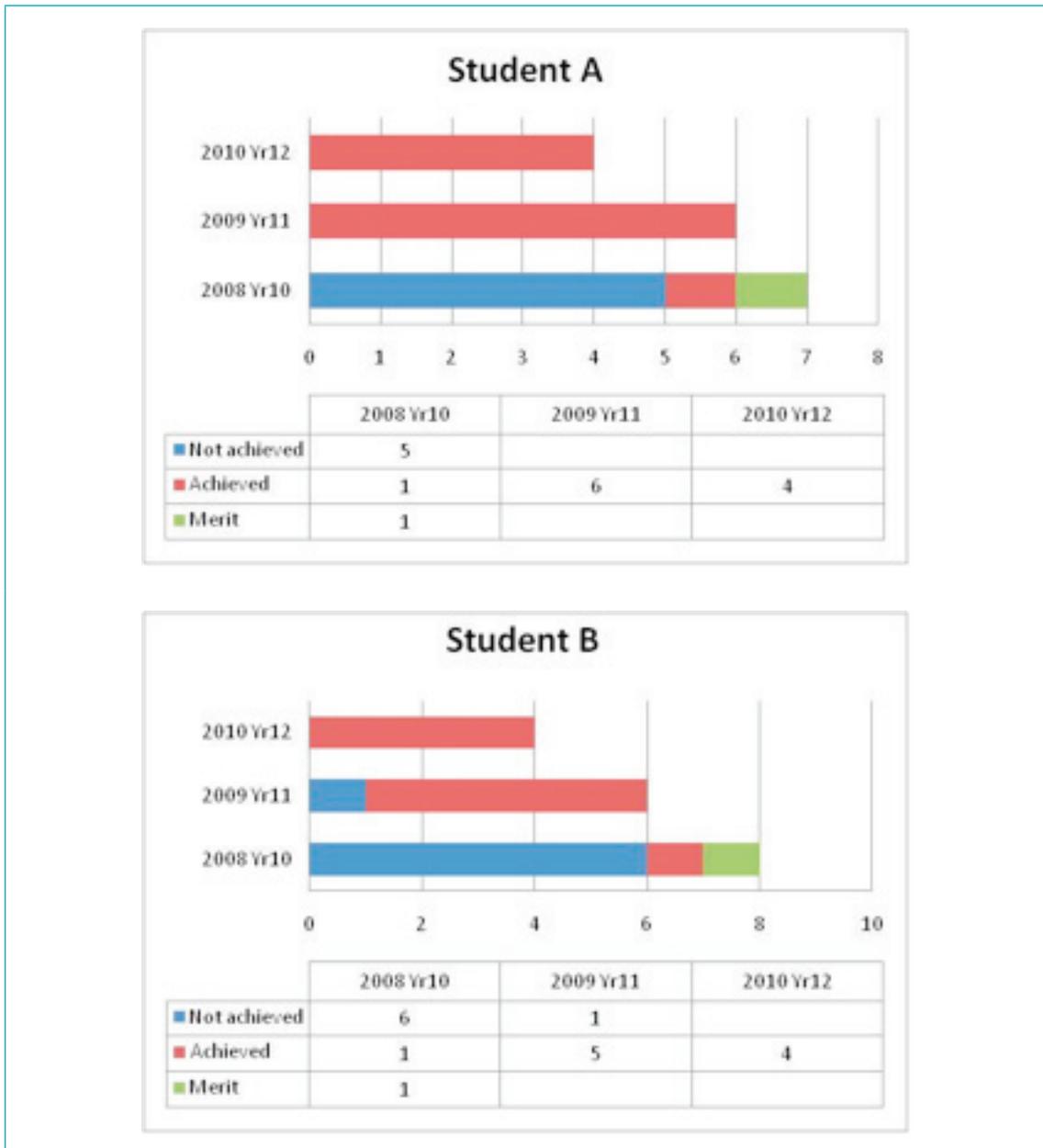
58. The first step towards progress was to identify student interests and work with them. The department found it beneficial to work closely with the Māori dean and the student support worker, as they often had good relationships with Māori boys in the school:

*Check in with students regarding their goals. Often they are also in touch with the Māori dean and the student support worker who assist and support them. There was one example of where a Māori student invited the Māori dean and the student support worker along to watch him doing his speech. The student felt comfortable to invite them into the class. Teachers are open to these practices.* [English teacher]

*By focusing on student goals, teachers harnessed young Māori males' interest and developed a course of study that met the curriculum guidelines in a manner that was relevant to their goals.* [Principal]

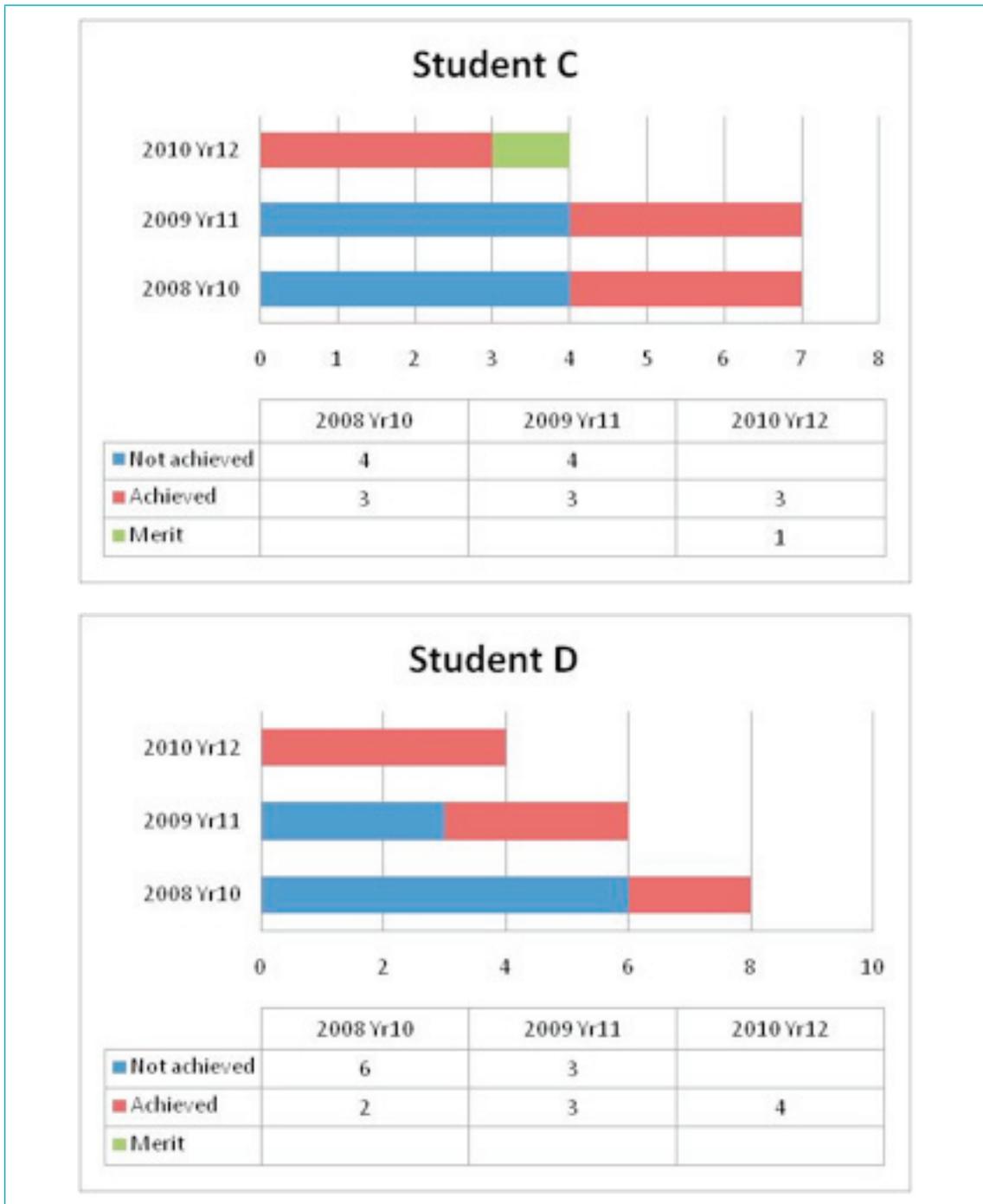
59. The English department used a range of feedback to assess whether the Foundation English course and the English through Film course were supporting progress for Māori boys. NCEA achievement was just one of the indicators that signalled success.
60. Figures 3 and 4 show the increased achievement for a selection of Māori students who joined the English through Film classes. It shows that levels of achievement outstripped nonachievement. In most instances, the students moved to a pattern of achievement and students continued to study English into Year 12, when the course was optional.

**FIGURE 3** Results for Māori students A and B taking English through Film who started with the course in Year 11



61. Both students A and B became involved with the English programme in Year 11. We can see from the graphs that both had greater levels of achievement (red and green bars show standards achieved) after they engaged with the programme. The blue bars show the courses enrolled for but not achieved.

**FIGURE 4** Results for Māori students C and D taking English through Film who started with the course in Year 12



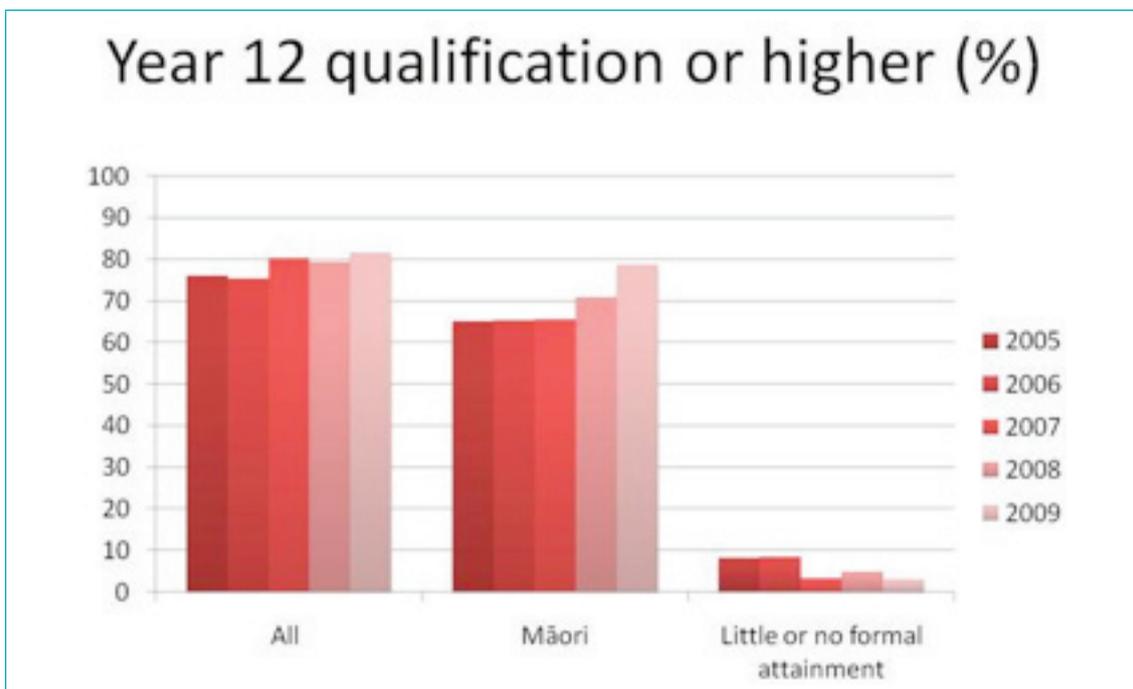
62. Students C and D started taking the English through Film programme in Year 12. Both students achieved one more standard and at a higher level, than they previously achieved.

63. Another key measure the school focuses on is student retention—and the course is retaining the majority of its students:

*For the students I had last year and this year we have offered them a chance to be together and continue. Eighteen out of 19 students have chosen to do that. It's Year 13 and the fact that they are keen to do it—that willingness to learn, they don't want to ditch it, it signals it's worth their while. [English teacher]*

64. While not specifically results for English, Figure 5 shows that more Māori students are gaining Year 12 qualifications.

**FIGURE 5** School leavers from Kakapo College with a Year 12 qualification or higher



Source: Ministry of Education School SMART website data

65. However, a key indicator of engagement that is evident well before NCEA results is behaviour change—the students appear more interested in the subject, and they participate more in class:

*What I have seen of how their skills have improved and seeing how their interest in the subjects has improved. When I look at their Year 10 results, they weren't having success and the fact that they are now is a really positive sign. [English teacher]*

66. Feedback from students at the end of the year also helps inform the future courses. Māori boys commented in the evaluation that the English through Film course built relational trust (which supported their achievement) and was structured with enough time for them to complete activities. Regarding the structure of courses and allowing enough time for activities, comments made included:

*We get enough time to get things done. I can do this, but I need a lot more time and before this in Year 9 and Year 10, I couldn't get things finished on time, so I just kind of stopped doing it. [Student feedback as reported by English teacher]*

*At the end of the year, students are asked to evaluate the course. Feedback indicates they appreciate the additional time provided to complete tasks. This appears to make a big difference to their ability to write and express themselves. [English teacher]*

## Concluding comments

67. By building strong relationships with Māori boys, including specific Māori content in the curriculum and supporting these students' engagement so they could access the curriculum, the school has noticed some significant changes for the students. More Māori boys are continuing to take English into Years 12 and 13. The principal, head of the English department, the Māori dean, the student support worker and teachers from the English department have all noticed an improvement in students' participation in the English Foundation and English through Film classes:

*Students having talking time ... their own thinking time, talking with classmates to really strengthen their own opinion and then having confidence to feed in to it. [Head of English]*

68. With stronger relationships, the use of Māori-specific content is possible in ways that might not have been feasible before. Topical cultural issues are embraced and explored, and students have opportunities to explore issues and develop their views within the English curriculum:

*We are doing some persuasive writing—editorial writing—there will be something on the foreshore and seabed for example—so that it is relevant and that there is a range of stuff for different interests. Student choice and buy-in is important and also having an acknowledgement of their culture and issues of relevance to them.* [Head of English]

*What is good for Māori is good for all.* [Head of English]

## Acknowledgements

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69. This exemplar has developed from the knowledge and expertise of many people, whom the research team would like to acknowledge.

70. Firstly, we would like to acknowledge the school—in particular, the research team would like to offer a special thank you to the students and whānau who shared their personal experiences of involvement with the English programme at Kakapo College and their journeys of growth and development. As a research team, we would like to thank them for sharing intimate details with openness and faith.

71. We would also like to acknowledge the honesty and genuine dialogue of senior management and teaching staff, their ability to talk freely about involvement with the English programme and the personal learnings and changes that have occurred in their teaching practice.

72. Sincere acknowledgement is also due to the principal who was enthusiastic and supportive throughout the development of the exemplar, always receptive to requests, constantly shared about the school and willingly provided additional data where needed.

73. Secondly, staff from the Ministry of Education made an important contribution to this exemplar. We would like to acknowledge the support of the Professional Leadership Team, Group Māori and the Best Evidence Synthesis team within the Ministry of Education; as well as those working on the He Kākano project who provided ongoing guidance and overall vision for Rangiatea—the case study and exemplar. Their timely communications and willingness to participate in meaningful dialogue with the research team helped to draw out the most cogent learnings and enhance the final production of this exemplar. In particular, we acknowledge the support of Darren Gammie, Cheree Shortland-Nuku and Linda Stockham, along with Rawiri Gibson, Cathy Diggins and Ro Parsons.

74. The research team included Kataraina Pipi, Kellie Spee and Nan Wehipeihana. At their invitation, Judy Oakden led the team and had overall responsibility for the project.

### (Footnote)

1 This is a fictitious name.



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