

# **NEWLANDS COLLEGE WELLINGTON**

## **To Improve Engagement and Learning Outcomes for Pasifika Students at Newlands College.**

**Debra Mills**

**Deputy Principal**

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### **Acknowledgements**

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## **Purpose**

The intention of this study was to investigate the best practice strategies to improve engagement and learning outcomes for Pasifika students at Newlands College. The findings of this study could then be used to contribute to Newlands College's best practice to improve engagement and achievement outcomes for Pasifika students and could also be transferable to assist other New Zealand schools.

## **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.

## **Findings**

This is divided into three sections:

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

Section B Review of best practice and suggested implementations taken from the articles researched.

Section C Practical implementations for schools.

## SECTION A

### RESEARCH AND READINGS

#### 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.
- Provisions of Pasifika learners with special education needs.
- 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.

## 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.

A self-review checklist on the four aspects above support the summary.

Link – ERO's Frameworks and Indicators for School Reviews – [www.ero.govt.nz/Review-Process/Frameworks-and-Evaluation-Indicators-for-ERO-Reviews](http://www.ero.govt.nz/Review-Process/Frameworks-and-Evaluation-Indicators-for-ERO-Reviews)

## 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.

## 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.

## 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.

## 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.

## 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

The review highlights and clarifies key evidence towards improved learning and achievement outcomes for Pasifika learners and identifies priorities for future research in Pasifika education. Specifically, the report is a critical analysis of the Pasifika education literature since 2001. It is useful for a range of audiences including people who hold a key stakeholder role in Pasifika education, teachers, teacher educators, educational researchers, Pasifika parents and other interested community members.

The five key findings of the research literature are:

- Governance and leadership
- Families and community engagement
- Literacy and numeracy
- Effective teaching
- Transitions

## Promoting Pacific Student Achievement: Schools Progress

Education Review Office

2010

ERO in this report found that schools that succeeded in raising Pacific student achievement generally had close links with parents, families and communities. Where partnerships were strong, parents were engaged in their child's learning and students had a clear learning pathway, a sense of purpose and were motivated.

## Colouring in the White Spaces: Cultural Identity and Learning in School

Ann Milne

2009



In this report, the writer makes a strong case that 'secure self-knowledge and cultural identity might be a prerequisite for self-esteem and self-efficacy. Self-efficacy might lead to higher engagement in learning'.

Schools that work in partnership with their communities can help to establish a strong cultural identity for students as a foundation for their learning.

## 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.

## The Collection and Use of Assessment Information: Good Practice in Secondary Schools

Education Review Office

2007

The findings in this report state that unless teachers are knowledgeable about their students' achievements and interests, they cannot be confident that their teaching is targeting students' needs or helping them to reach their potential.

Assessment data must be used in a planned and thoughtful manner, to develop effective learning programmes, monitor the programmes and their effectiveness, make decisions about the best targets to set and allocate resources to maximise results.

ERO found that Pacific learners generally achieved good results when school leaders made sound use of high quality data.

## A Report to Schools on New Zealand Student Engagement

Ministry of Education

2007

Strong indicators of student engagement are healthy figures for retention and discipline. Students who are engaged in their learning are more likely to want to achieve and students that do achieve are more likely to want to continue to succeed. High levels of student achievement are linked to a positive learning environment with high expectations, high levels of motivation and positive relationships.

## 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 THE ARTICLES RESEARCHED

From the readings, research, visits and conversations had, it is evident that there are five key areas of best practice. The findings have been listed under the following headings:

- Governance and Leadership
- Family and Community Engagement
- Literacy and Numeracy
- Effective Teaching
- Transitions

#### 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.

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.

## 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 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.

## SECTION C

### PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS FOR SCHOOLS

#### Governance and Leadership

If not already, someone in the Senior Management Team has the responsibility for Pasifika student education, achievement and engagement.

Appoint a Dean/Academic Director/Pasifika Liaison Officer.

Groups that exist in your school eg, Heads of Departments, Head of Faculties, Curriculum Committee, Professional Development Committee, discuss ways that Pasifika academic achievement can be improved.

Your schools charter and strategic plan is clear on the expected outcomes for Pasifika students.

If your current Board of Trustees does not have a Pasifika representative, look to the community to co-opt a member to provide a unique and diverse perspective which can assist schools to understand Pasifika children, their parents and communities.

Regular collation and analysis of achievement data for students in Years 9-13 that is presented to the Board of Trustees. Included in this report would be statistics on attendance, retention and discipline.

Appraisal system incorporates accountability for Pasifika students.

#### Families and Communities

Make links with families. Encourage them to be part of the decision making, goal setting and career planning of their students. For example Progress Conference Day, meeting/s with Dean or Form Teacher.

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.

Establish a Home-School Partnership programme. The programme, part of the government's national Literacy and Numeracy Strategy, aims to support, develop, and use the rich resources of diverse people in a school community, believing that when schools and families work together, everyone benefits.

Encourage and utilise the resources and networks of Pasifika leaders and specialists in your community. Eg Multicultural leaders, mentors, liaison officers at tertiary institutions, former students, sporting athletes and coaches and police.

## Literacy and Numeracy

Test students in English competency and proficiency to see if ESOL or literacy support is required.

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 those in lower year levels.

Link students to other tutorial based programmes in your area eg The UCME XL Pacific Outreach programme, launched by the University of Canterbury Pacific Development Team. The after school programme combines Pasifika culture with academic teaching to deliver a programme that aims to excel Pasifika learning and increasing Pacific student's achievement rate.

Ensure that subject choices are carefully made; that they are targeted to suit the aspirations of both the student and families and that students have access to a wide curriculum with the ability to gain NCEA subject and level endorsements.

The Pasifika section of the Careers New Zealand website is a useful tool.

## Effective Teaching

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.

Data that is collected is collated, distributed and made teacher friendly. This data is then used to set appropriate courses, inform teaching practices and design any interventions to teaching programmes.

Provide professional development for guidance personnel – Dean, Form Teacher, Mentor, Coach etc.

Where appropriate, incorporate stories, statistics, and role models from Pacific nations into lessons.

Celebrate the success of Pasifika students in regular school assemblies.

Further acknowledge success or areas of interest in Pasifika student assemblies.

## Transitions

Regular contact with contributing schools to ensure consistency.

Make links with your local tertiary institutions. Attend 'Pasifika' experience days.

Make links with providers of programmes targeted to Pasifika students eg Folau Alofa Trust who provides a programme on strengthening cultural identity and leadership skills.

Encourage and make students and their families aware of numerous scholarships available to students undertaking tertiary study in New Zealand. Eg The Pacific Islands Polynesian Education Foundation (PIPF) scholarships.

## Other Suggestions

Promote and encourage effective leadership and student voice amongst Pasifika students. Provide them with opportunities to lead and give them roles of responsibility. Eg Komitit Pasifika, Prefect, Student Executive, Multicultural Club, Mentoring, Peer Tutor, Coach.

Promote and support or establish a school Multicultural/Polyclub.

Explore successful initiatives that have made a significant difference for Pacific learners – Health Sciences Academy - Otahuhu College, Auckland and the Starpath Project – Massey High School, Auckland.

Incorporate Pacific culture on a daily basis. For example:



- Correct pronunciation of student names
- Verbal greetings in different Pacific languages
- School signage
- Open meetings with Pacific welcomes
- Pacific greetings in newsletters, website etc
- Art work and artefacts
- Library displays

## CONCLUSION

The Ministry of Education, The Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs and the Education Review Office have all developed plans to address the disparity of educational achievement for Pasifika students. The Pasifika Education Plan 2013 – 2017 sets out the Government's strategic direction for improving Pasifika outcomes over the next five years. While there have been improved outcomes in participation, engagement and achievement, targets have been set for better outcomes. Central to the improvements are the development of five key areas – governance and leadership, families and community engagement, literacy and numeracy, effective teaching and transitions.

Successful schools where Pasifika students are experiencing success are committed to improvement, hold high expectations for achievement, use quality data to make decisions, offer a balanced curriculum, and have strong relationships and partnerships with students, teachers, parents and the wider community.

On reflection, the opportunity to read and research the topic of Pasifika engagement and achievement has given me a very in-depth appreciation of the needs of students, family and community. Numerous interventions and initiatives are already in place at Newlands College; however, based on this report, there are findings that could also be discussed and implemented. I look forward to the opportunity of doing so.

## REFERENCES

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