

Sabbatical Report (June – August 2017)

Title: Academic Counselling – sustainability and capacity building.

Jeff Smith, Papanui High School, Christchurch.

Acknowledgements:

The sabbatical has provided me with an opportunity to research, reflect and visit a number of educational organisations. It is with great appreciation that I acknowledge and thank the support and contribution of the following:

- Teach NZ/Ministry of Education, who provide the funding for my sabbatical leave.
- Board of Trustees of Papanui High School for their continued support.
- The Senior Leadership Team and in particular Mr Mike Vannoort who was Acting Principal in my absence.
- University of Auckland Centre for Educational Leadership (UACEL) for the opportunity to base myself at their facility, meet and discuss the *Starpath project* and the opportunity to attend workshops. In particular, Colin Donald - General Manager (UACEL) for his personal support regarding visiting the centre and his knowledge and contacts to visit schools.
- A number of Auckland schools and principals who generously gave their time to meet and have open discussions.
- *Southern Regional Education Board – United States of America* for their correspondence, support to attend the conference and opportunities to meet and discuss. In particular Dr Gene Bottoms, Senior Vice President SREB, for his personal correspondence and support to attend the Nashville Conference.
- Nashville Conferences (*31st Annual High Schools that Work – Staff Development Conference* and the *5th Annual College and Career Readiness Standards Networking Conference*) facilitators and presenters for their hospitality, sharing of ideas and resources and open discussion.
- Many other individuals, including the staff, students and the Papanui High School community who have contributed to my thinking either through survey responses,

discussion, sharing of information and research documentation related to the sabbatical topic.

Generally, my intention is to not name organisations and individuals who have contributed to the many conversations, through discussion and presentations. This report reflects my interpretation of these findings and are a personal perspective.

Executive Summary:

For the purposes of this report, the term 'academic counselling' will be used to define the process of academic counselling that takes place at Papanui High School.

Schools may implement many initiatives to support the progress of student learning, however, it is important to note that the quality of teaching and learning remains the most critical factor in student achievement.

The *New Zealand University of Auckland - Starpath project* and the *United States of America – High Schools That Work project* both provide an interesting insight into how two education boards have gone about supporting tertiary study for a greater quality of life and economic support of a nation. Both projects aim to identify strategies to raise the country's economic performance and individual expectations and capacities. On a national level and within schools themselves, it is very apparent that there are discrepancies in achievement for different ethnic groups.

The *Starpath Project for Tertiary Participation and Success*, was established in 2005 as a Partnership for Excellence with the New Zealand Government. This was an evidence-based school-wide intervention project aimed at enabling more students from lower decile schools, especially Māori and Pasifika students, to progress into degree-level study.

The *Starpath (University of Auckland) Targets and talk: Evaluation of an evidence-based academic counselling programme, 2009*; was a key document that supported Papanui High school's motivation to include academic counselling as a process to improve learning outcomes for students.

The *Southern Regional Education Board (SREB), USA* works with states to improve public education at every level. It works directly with universities and public schools to improve capacity, teaching, learning, counselling and school leadership. SREB helps states share scarce resources and best practices.

SREB supports the *High Schools That Work project* and the *HSTW Staff Development Conference*, which focuses on 'Teaching and Learning for a Double Purpose: College and Careers'. This conference provides a platform for participants to share cutting-edge, classroom-tested strategies that prepare students with the skills and knowledge necessary to succeed in school and the 21st-century workplace.

The *Starpath project* and the *Southern Regional Education Boards – High Schools That Work project* provide an opportunity to review two initiatives in two different countries who have similar objectives and a number of parallels. This strong correlation between the two projects can be seen through their critical understanding of the need to improve the academic employability of individuals and to support the economic growth of each respective country. Equally, both projects aimed to support students at the greatest risk of disengagement from learning to stay in the education sector.

A large number of schools throughout New Zealand are involved in some form of 'academic counselling'. This creates a rich resource, supported by many recognised leaders and provides some fresh new approaches to academic counselling. Visiting established schools at varying stages of implementation can give great insight into the longevity of the strategies, impact on resourcing, consistency of approach to counselling and succession planning for counselling growth and expertise, and effective use of student achievement data and its management.

For academic counselling to be successful, it must be embedded into the culture of a school in such a way as that it can ensure the sustainability and capacity building of the programme.

Overall, there is a strong perception that academic counselling is highly valued and helps achievement, and that conference days are a very valuable component. Positive relationships

between staff, students and the school's community provide the platform for on-going success.

It is difficult to quantify the link between achievement and counselling due to limited evidence and the complexity of a range of factors present in the teaching and learning environment. However, what is evident is that strong relationships and engagement are two key components that play a role in the academic counselling process.

Although academic counselling programmes generally appears to be successful, it does not clearly show the work related issues in achieving these results or how the academic process can improve sustainability and build capacity. In reality, academic counselling is supported by a significant amount of goodwill by staff.

The process still relies on the effectiveness of the counsellors understanding of data analysis and the application of this across all the subjects the student takes. Furthermore, applying this to improve learning, support future subject choice and align with possible career pathways.

Time, consistency, knowledge and group size were all variables that provided challenges for schools. It is critical that staff have the ability and confidence to understand the different types of data (quantitative vs qualitative, formative vs summative) which has been made available to them and that it is fit for purpose. Adequate time must be allocated to the academic counsellors and their students to allow the development of relationships. To support this, ratios must be kept at workable numbers. Resourcing is also necessary to ensure that systems and structures are in place to support staff with the extra work-load.

For any real progress to be made, a comprehensive professional development programme needs to be research and provided for all staff. The professional development must be differentiated and D.E.E.P, giving each staff member the opportunity to grow and develop their personal capacity, while ensuring an acceptable minimum standard of knowledge is gained and that the staff member has the confidence and ability to apply it in the practical setting.

Academic counselling can be seen as having benefits for students and their families/whanau in terms of goal setting, monitoring progress and supporting decisions about career pathways. However, there is no direct funding support to do this and as such, this increases the difficulty of making the academic counselling process sustainable and to build school wide capacity. Although some schools are able to build academic counselling into teacher allocation to varying degrees, this still comes as a financial cost to the school and it increases the workload for staff involved.

The concept of *Community of Learners* (CoL) may also provide an opportunity to reassess some of the staffing structural setups. The CoL provides the school with a number of new positions, units and time allocations. These have a focus on teaching and learning, and provide a new pathway for staff to develop and share best practice. It is possible that a parallel pathway could be developed with a more pastoral focus. This pathway could include Deans taking greater responsibility and accountability to support the academic counselling process, as well as be remunerated for this. Equally, the Careers and Pathways department could be expanded to be a driving committee of academic counselling and greater resourcing be channelled that way.

When secondary schools implement academic counselling programmes for Maori students, they must work with staff to make sure they are using culturally-responsive pedagogy. This involves recognising their own cultural positioning and how it impacts on their Maori students.

New Zealand's macro-education policy highlights some interesting questions. The New Zealand Government has set Better Public Service Targets (BPSTs) for 2017, and one of these is that 85 % of 18-year-olds will have achieved NCEA Level 2 or equivalent. To add to the challenge of this, recent changes to University Entrance requirements have led to a drop in success rates nationally.

Schools must be very careful about supporting individual student achievement without intentionally or unintentionally biasing their pathway. The *Starpath evaluation* (2016) expresses concern over pressures to meet the 85% target, and that academically capable Māori and Pasifika students are, and will be, counselled into vocational pathways rather than

attempting more ambitious academic pathways. This in turn can impact on subject choice. *Starpath* found that subject choice is a key enabler or inhibitor of educational success for lower decile (and especially Māori and Pacific) students.

Although there is a range of research literature about academic counselling, there is very limited information particular to the secondary sector that focuses on how to differentiate conversations for individuals and specific year level groups.

Schools will need to become self-sufficient and find constructive ways to support their own progress. This could take the form of a standing committee for academic counselling, which meets regularly, has a 'business as usual' guide and sets goals aligned with the schools strategic plan. Their aim could focus on a collaborative approach to improving academic outcomes for all students through a data driven mentoring programme, which aims to ensure the personalisation of an appropriate learning pathway.

At Papanui High school there is the potential to develop the careers and pathways department into a broader group encompassing staff responsible for academic counselling, literacy and numeracy, data manager, and other related personnel. This group could fulfil the role of supporting the delivery of effective professional development, including data analysis, knowledge of all in-school courses and out-of-school courses, and further work and tertiary requirements. Academic counselling is a tool that can have a very positive impact on supporting student achievement and in particular, the national priority of 85% attainment of Level 2.

It is an important part of our role to assist students in preparing for life beyond school. Academic counselling can make a difference for our students in confidently expressing their goals and aspirations to those who influence their lives and build on this. We want them to be able to make informed decisions. To do this we must ensure that they receive the appropriate information and guidance so they can see the connectedness with what they are doing and why. This will allow them to leave school as confident and capable lifelong learners who can have careers that are fulfilling, rewarding and enjoyable.

Purpose:

The aim of the ten week sabbatical was to draw on current practice, experience and research information, and reflect on this in relation to aligning my thinking in regards to Academic Counselling – sustainability and capacity building.

Information to support this process will be sourced from a survey, research readings, conversations with staff from The University of Auckland – Centre for Educational Leadership (UACEL), school visits and travel to the United States to attend two conferences held by the *Southern Regional Education Board (SREB)*. Two key projects will form part of this investigation; the UACEL supported *Starpath project* and the SREB *High Schools That Work – Teaching and Learning for a Double Purpose: College and Careers project*. The investigation will also include a reflection on what models other schools and organisations are using and how they have built sustainability and capacity into their model.

The ultimate outcome of the sabbatical is to further enhance a collaborative approach to improving academic outcomes for all students at Papanui High School, through a data driven academic counselling programme, which aims to ensure the personalisation of an appropriate learning pathway for each student.

I would then like to present the findings and determine an action plan for Papanui High School.

Methodology:

The key component to sourcing resource material relative to Academic Counselling centred on a survey, research material and Educational Institution visits.

The survey focused on the Papanui High School community and was directly linked to current practice, while providing an opportunity for future focused change. It consisted of predetermined questions with an agreeance component. This was designed to cross reference if the staff, students and community agreed that academic counselling was achieving what the school thought it was setting out to achieve.

A range of research literature was gathered and reviewed with the aim of broadening my understanding of current practice and perspective of where academic counselling sat in the secondary school setting.

I spent time speaking with some key personnel who had significant input to the *Starpath project* and its on-going review. Conversations were cross referenced with two key documents; *Starpath 2009, Targets and Talk: Evaluation of an evidence-based academic counselling programme* and the *Starpath 2016, Evaluative Review*.

Six schools were visited in the greater Auckland area. These school were selected based on their connection to the *Starpath programme*, either through the principals' involvement or the school as a collective. The visits took the format of open discussion reflecting on practice of the visited school and Papanui High School.

The final stage involved correspondence and research documentation from the *Southern Regional Education Board – United States of America*. The *High Schools that Work programme for improved outcomes for students – College and Career Readiness* has had a full review and the new draft was to be presented at the *31st Annual High Schools that Work – Staff Development Conference*. As an outcome of this I travelled to Nashville to attend two conference, the *31st Annual High Schools that Work – Staff Development Conference* and the *5th Annual College and Career Readiness Standards Networking Conference*. During these conferences I attended a number of workshops and presentations, selected primarily based on their connection to academic counselling and/or to career or further study readiness.

Background Information:

Academic counselling is now into its sixth year at Papanui High School – one full cohort (2012) has passed through the Year 9-13 pathway, and much has been learnt along the way. It is now important to reflect on this and address a key question raised, which focuses on sustainability and capacity building for academic counselling. In particular, the Papanui High School model that centres on the form teacher as the academic counsellor.

It is critical that academic counselling is embedded into the culture of Papanui High School in a sustainable way. Progress has been made in terms of academic outcomes, measured by NCEA results over the years. However, during the 1990's and into the 2000's, the school's results were well below national averages. Although the school was seen to be moving forward, greater strategic focus based on personalised learning and increased engagement were two key drivers identified for future success. Since 2011, the schools Strategic Plan has focused on this, supported by innovative curriculum design and delivery. Underpinning this has been the increased use of data management, and the specific identification of at-risk learners.

In 2012, Academic Counselling was introduced school wide, following a trail with Year 13 in 2011. The school wide involvement in academic counselling proved to be a very positive process with staff, students and parents/caregivers. Academic Counselling is used to support goal setting, mentoring and the monitoring of student progress. At risk students are identified and steps put in place to support and/or accelerate their learning. Part of the Academic Counselling programme is the school wide conference day, which was initiated in 2012 and had an attendance rate of 80 percent by the parent/caregiver community. In 2017, the conference had approximately 90 percentage attendance rate.

During this period of time, the school has continued to move forward with its focus on teaching and learning. It has worked hard to consolidate recent initiatives to ensure sustained and continuous improvement, and allowed for the embedding of good school wide practice. Alongside academic counselling, things such as fortnightly Engagement Reports, Real Time Reporting' targeted professional development including Kia eke panuku, positive behaviour for learning, e-learning, collaboration, inquiry, and the parental portal, have all contributed to increased engagement for learning. A number of these initiatives' provide a platform for greater communication and awareness of student achievement for students and families/caregivers. Ensuring that students are able to study from an innovative and wide curriculum, allowing greater range and flexibility in subject choice including the utilization of the secondary/tertiary interface, and at the appropriate level, is critical to providing each student with a pathway that meets their individual needs and ensures the philosophy behind personalised learning is maintained.

NCEA results continue to be very positive, with a continuation of improved outcomes for students. Of significant note is the achievement rate for level 3, moving from 70.2% in 2014 to 81.3% in 2015; and an Excellence achievement rate of 15.8% which is 2.1% above the national average (These results reflect a three year cohort who have achieved the highest percentage outcomes, from level 1 to level 3). The 2015 results showed for the first time, all three NCEA levels achieving above 80% and increasingly, students are experiencing and striving for greater success with Merit and Excellence endorsements. Given we are a school of approximately 1600 students, we are proud of the progress being made.

The above outcomes are evidence of continuous improvement and significant value added for students. When students are engaged, they will make progress and this has been reflected in their achievement. However, the question can be asked, to what extent has the process of academic counselling specifically played in this improvement?

To help understand the role that academic counselling may have played, it is important to understand how it functions within the school. An Academic Counselling committee was established and consists of approximately ten members. The committee follow a 'Business as Usual' process like other standing committees. Their aim is: A collaborative approach to improving academic outcomes for all students through a data driven mentoring programme, which aims to ensure the personalisation of an appropriate learning pathway.

Key tasks of this committee include but are not limited to:

- On-going review and development of timeline for application of academic counselling each year (in consultation with Assessment & Reporting committee)
- Collect student achievement data
- On-going investigation and development of formatting/presentation/analysis of achievement data.
- Facilitation/distribution of data
- Organise Parent Conferencing Day
- Organise and manage the Academic Counselling Interviews.
- Facilitate and support staff Professional Development on how to use KAMAR as a tool to analyse data for counselling conversations with students and parents

- On-going investigation and supported facilitation of careers education for staff
- Identify mentors for 'at risk' students, and support them to 'improve engagement, achievement and retention".
- Coordinate and support teachers who identify 'at risk' students and want to mentor and provide added assistance through the academic counselling process
- Communicate with the community regarding academic counselling using a range of methods including website, school app and community news
- Academic counselling committee liaise with the Careers department to identify viable pathways
- Provide information to support course selection process to ensure students are placed in an appropriate course of learning
- Align key dates with assessment and reporting so academic counselling interviews include conversation about recent student academic progress

The committee also sets key goals each year in line with the schools strategic plan which in turn support the national goals. The aim of this is improved outcomes for all students and in particular, those identified as at risk is a national priority. Academic counselling is a tool that can have a very positive impact on supporting student achievement and in particular 85% attainment of Level 2.

The *Starpath (University of Auckland) Targets and talk: Evaluation of an evidence-based academic counselling programme, 2009*; was a key document that supported the schools motivation to include academic counselling as a process to improve learning outcomes for students. It was established in 2005 as a Partnership for Excellence with the New Zealand Government, was an evidence-based school-wide intervention project aimed at enabling more students from lower decile schools, especially Māori and Pasifika students, to progress into degree-level study. Papanui High School saw academic counselling as a broader opportunity to support all students to improve their learning and understanding of where there learning might take them – further study or employment.

The *Starpath project* has formed part of the research baseline and the three key sustainability risks identified will be cross referenced in relation to the Papanui High school model.

The three risk factors identified were;

1. Resourcing
2. Consistency of approach to counselling
3. Succession planning for student achievement data management.

The outcome from this is to then demonstrate what support the Academic Counselling team can be given to ensure capacity building and succession planning is sustained.

Preamble to the Discussion:

Papanui High School Academic Counselling Community Survey.

The Papanui High School community was provided with an opportunity to reflect on the existing model of Academic Counselling through a survey. The survey was prepared and conducted with staff, students and the community early in Term 2, 2017, following the annual full conference day. Some key indicators in the survey included;

- At risk identification
- How to improve outcomes for priority learners
- What data is used and by whom and why
- The effect of group size
- Careers education of staff
- Consistency of counsellor conferencing
- Workload and manageability

Conclusions and recommendations will be drawn for wider school and community discussion. The school is also embarking on its post-earthquake *Repair and Rebuild programme* and the establishment of our *Community of Learners (CoL)* network called – *Totaranui*. Both of these projects will provide new opportunities for the school and any outcomes in terms of academic counselling will need to be factored into this.

Readings - Research

A number of research articles were included to cross reference a range of perspectives. The aim of this was to seek some evidence based outcomes to support the process of providing clarity to the staff of Papanui High School that academic counselling can be embedded into the school culture in a sustainable way that also ensures capacity building. The

documentation around the *Starpath project* and *Southern Regional Education Board (USA) – High Schools That Work*, provided most of the background reading. This was supported by two articles that had specific reference to one or both of the above documents (sourced from a Masters paper and a previous sabbatical report). Other articles/reports included information relating to: Defining Academic Counselling, comparisons between counselling and mentoring, academic counselling to support Maori achievement, and the place of academic counselling in high schools.

The University of Auckland – Centre for Educational Leadership (UACEL)

The University of Auckland – Centre for Educational Leadership (UACEL) provided the base for my visit to Auckland. During my time here I had the opportunity to speak to staff involved in the *Starpath project*, attend two workshops that would contribute to my broader thinking in relation to academic counselling – sustainability and capacity building, and to visit schools.

Starpath reflection: Targets and Talk - Evaluation of an evidence-based academic counselling programme.

In 2004 the *Starpath Project for Tertiary Participation and Success* (Starpath) established a collaborative relationship with Massey High School (MHS), a mid-decile New Zealand secondary school. Since this time *Starpath* has worked with MHS data from cohorts of students at Massey High School, using this information to identify barriers to educational success for particular groups of students. Early on, the work established the need for detailed and accurate school achievement data in order to carry out analyses linking school initiatives or activities to student achievement, both for individual students and particular groups (Shulruf & Tolley, 2004). Other *Starpath* projects (Madjar, McKinley, Jensen, & van der Merwe, 2009; Shulruf, Keuskamp, & Timperley, 2006; Shulruf, Tolley, & Tumen, 2005; Smith, 2007) have shown that school subject choice or course-taking plays a major role in shaping educational opportunities for students, particularly at the tertiary level. The introduction of the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) and its implementation in schools has become a major focus of *Starpath* and MHS, since it has given schools the ability to expand their subject options presented to students and their parents/caregivers. MHS decided to trial an intervention in 2007 that placed more scrutiny on student achievement

data, individual student NCEA subject choices, and student aspirations and pathways. (McKinley, E., Madjar, I., van der Merwe, A., Smith, S., Sutherland, S. & Yuan, J. (2009) P3)

The Starpath project evolved and expanded over time. The evaluative summary 2016 describes the process as:

The *Starpath Project for Tertiary Participation and Success*, established in 2005 as a Partnership for Excellence with the New Zealand Government, was an evidence-based school-wide intervention project aimed at enabling more students from lower decile schools, especially Māori and Pasifika students, to progress into degree-level study. The *Starpath programme* extended over 11 years (2005-2015) and engaged 39 secondary schools in research and development work across different phases and regions. Findings from this work have provided many valuable insights into the challenges and strategies for school improvement, raising student achievement and progressing educational excellence and equity within Aotearoa New Zealand (Starpath Evaluative Summary 2016, P4).

Workshops

Dr Linda Benikson – Director of UACEL, Articulate the problem and explore structures for a good solution.

Richard Newton and Christine Rubie-Davies - UACEL, LITHE (Leaders Influencing Teachers' High Expectations)

School visits

Six schools in the Auckland region were visited based on their connection to the *Starpath project*, either via the school, principal or both. They were also selected because these schools represent recognised leaders and some fresh new approaches to academic counselling. The focus for discussion centred around each school's particular model for academic counselling and reflecting on their perspective on the effectiveness of sustainability and succession planning for capacity building. Visiting established schools at varying stages of implementation will give me insight into longevity of the strategies, impact on resourcing, consistency of approach to counselling and succession planning for student achievement data management.

The Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) United States of America

The Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) is a non-profit, non-partisan organization headquartered in Atlanta. It has 16 member states and is funded by member appropriations, contracts, grants from foundations, and from local, state and federal agencies. It works with states to improve public education at every level. SREB recognized the link between education and economic vitality. To this day, the organization maintains its focus on critical issues that hold the promise of improving quality of life by advancing public education. The region's track record shows that setting goals and maintaining the commitment to work towards them does make a difference.

SREB helps states focus on what works in both policy and practice. They work side-by-side with policymakers such as state legislators and education agency officials as they implement policies to help students achieve more, prepare students for college and careers, and boost college completion. These sustained partnerships have built a knowledge base we draw on to advise state leaders and provide information they need for sound policies and take effective action.

SREB helps policymakers make informed decisions by providing independent, accurate data and recommendations. They help educators strengthen student learning with professional development, proven practices and curricula. This allows institutions and educators to share scarce resources and best practices, accomplishing more together than they could alone. SREB also works directly with universities and public schools to improve capacity, teaching, learning, counselling and school leadership.

High Schools That Work (HSTW) conference

High Schools That Work (HSTW) is the nation's largest school improvement initiative for high school leaders and teachers. More than 1,200 HSTW sites in 30 states and the District of Columbia currently use the HSTW Goals and Key Practices to raise student achievement and graduation rates. HSTW's annual Staff Development Conference attracts thousands of educators each year for professional development. HSTW publications, case studies, site development guides and other materials help improve high school curriculum and instruction across the nation.

HSTW is nationally recognized for its effectiveness and has led to other SREB school improvement initiatives. Namely, *Making Middle Grades Work*, which helps students make stronger academic transitions into high school, and *Technology Centers That Work*, which helps career and technical education centers improve student readiness for college and careers.

About the Conferences

31st Annual High Schools That Work Staff Development Conference. Teaching and Learning for a Double Purpose: College and Careers

The *HSTW Staff Development Conference* attracts more than 4,000 educators from across the nation. Conference participants include academic teachers, career and technical education teachers, counsellors and school leaders from district, state and national organizations. The conference provides a platform for participants to share cutting-edge, classroom-tested strategies that prepare students with the skills and knowledge needed to succeed in school and the 21st-century workplace. To meet these challenges, the conference has set the following goals:

Conference Goals:

- Learn innovative classroom-tested strategies that prepare students with skills and knowledge needed to succeed in school and the 21st-century workplace.
- Discover how to graduate at least 90 percent of your students with 80 percent ready for advanced training or college.
- Examine the benefits of building career pathways around a college-ready academic core that connects students to postsecondary studies and workplace opportunities.
- Equip students with the foundational literacy and math skills essential for success in further study and the workplace.
- Design a career and academic counselling program that helps students set goals and plan a career pathway program for high school and at least one year of postsecondary study.
- Focus on strategies that help students succeed during key transition periods – middle grades to high school and high school to college or careers.

The Fifth Annual College and Career Readiness Standards Networking Conference

The *College and Career-Readiness Standards Networking Conference* connects teams of teacher, school and district leaders to improve student learning through literacy and advance student achievement in all content areas.

Conference Goals:

- Create content-based literacy assignments that develop independent learners.
- Deepen students' mathematical understanding and reasoning.
- Transform student learning by embedding literacy and mathematics best practices into daily instruction.
- Sustain instructional shifts that advance students' academic gains.
- Promote teacher collaboration and ongoing professional learning.
- Share innovative practices, tools or technologies that personalize and enhance student learning.
- Utilize formative assessment data to re-engage students through rich mathematical tasks and literacy-based assignments.

During both conferences approximately 35 workshops and presentations were attended, as well as private conversations with SREB members and selected principal groups. All of these discussions have contributed to my broader professional development, both as a principal and as a person.

Discussion:

Academic Counselling appears to be a well-considered approach to supporting the academic progress of students and guiding career pathways, in consultation with their families/whanau and school staff. However, in practice, this process is far more challenging.

Webb (2014) poses a summary and a brief comparison to define academic counselling. “Academic counselling, also referred to as academic advisement (Hughes & Karp, 2004) and academic mentoring (Hylan & Postlethwaite, 1998), is the process of supporting students to reach their academic goals (Coll, 2008; Hylan & Postlethwaite, 1998; Imbimbo, Morgan, & Plaza, 2009; McKinley et al., 2009; Younger & Warrington, 2009). Although there are subtle differences in each individual definition of academic counselling they all contain some of the elements of providing a significant adult to monitor the progress of each individual student (Cole, 1992; Imbimbo et al., 2009), setting of academic and other targets (Hylan & Postlethwaite, 1998), career advice (Coll, 2008; McKinley et al., 2009) and involvement of the family in the students education (Imbimbo et al., 2009; McKinley et al., 2009). The term academic advising is used more in the research from the USA, academic mentoring is used in the research from England and academic counselling is used in the research from New Zealand”. For the purposes of this report the term academic counselling will be used to define the process of academic counselling that takes place at Papanui High School.

Smith (2013) further refines the terminology of academic counselling for the New Zealand setting. She states that this is “a response to the concept of student centred lifelong learning developed as part of the implementation of the NZC. In addition it attempts to respond to central government targets for keeping all students in some form of learning until the age of 18 and to make NCEA Level 2 a minimum leaving qualification. It also follows a growing trend for mentoring to be an aspect of career development through all sectors of society”. Academic counselling may have a more limited relationship than the concept of mentoring, and generally has a more specific purpose. In the school setting it is seen as more about advice and guidance. The intention is to align the discussion with the *Starpath* process, and the definition of academic counselling sits within this as does the inter-related components of data utilisation, target setting, tracking and monitoring, and parent-student-teacher conferences.

Papanui High School has been undertaking and evolving the process of academic counselling for seven years now. Although much has been learnt, developed and refined along the way, the school is at a crossroad in determining how to maintain, improve and further develop the sustainability and capacity building for academic counselling. In particular, a model that centres on the form teacher as the academic counsellor. Having a personal driving interest and involvement in academic counselling, I feel a number of things need to be addressed to sustain and build the capacity of this process. They include such things as;

- An 'academic counselling form group mentoring concept', with the goal to make smaller groups (approx. 20) and/or a secondary person to selected form classes to reduce mentoring group size.
- Academic counselling team continuing to drive data analysis and use this to support the identification of strategies to improve 'personalised learning' outcomes.
- Further development student summary NCEA data profile sheets for Years 11-13.
- Confirmation of what is meaningful data provided for mentor to engage with the student, and 'families/Whanau' to support appropriate personalised learning pathways for all students.
- Mentoring strategies reviewed and refined for academic counselling specific year level outcomes and individual student needs.
- Consistency of academic counselling counsellors' delivery and capability.
- On-going Professional Development and the use of best practice to meet school wide and individual mentor needs.
- On-going investigation and supported facilitation of careers education for staff.
- Work with MOE initiative re-identification of 'At Risk' junior students for the purpose of developing a pathway which will lead to improvements in engagement, achievement and retention.
- Improved timeline for application of an annual academic counselling programme.
- Incorporate academic counselling programme for new staff and PLD on how to use KAMAR as a tool to analyse data for counselling conversations with students and parents.

The outcome from this is to then demonstrate what support the academic counselling team can be given to ensure capacity building and succession planning is sustained, and improved

outcomes are ensured for all students. In particular, those identified as at risk are a national priority to be focused on.

Following the 2017 academic counselling conference day, a Papanui High School perception survey took place. 968 responses were recorded (made up of 53% Parent/whanau/caregiver, 40% Students and 7% Staff). This survey was to be used to give some indicative findings and general perspective about, if the criteria the school thought it was covering through academic counselling was actually the case. The findings for the purpose of this report have been re-categorised for ease of use as;

- Very strong agreeance (>80%)
- Strong agreeance (60-80%)
- Agreeance (50-60%)
- Not agreeable (<50%)

Overall there is a very strong perception that academic counselling was helping achievement, that the Conference day is valuable, and that students are on track to achieve the goals/targets they have set (although staff perception was a strong response to students achieving the goals/targets they have set)

The value of goal setting was strongly supported, followed by the support to recognise how many credits they have achieved and can still achieve (from the senior students). This may reflect the importance of attaining NCEA and the priority schools, students and family place on it, not to mention the Ministry of Education's requirements for national goals.

There was a general agreeance that academic counselling helped students think about career pathways, plan for schoolwork/assessments and choose subjects. The slightly lower response rate to this may also reflect the variability of the depths of conversation held, the mentors own experience in academic counselling, emphasis highlighted in the discussions, responsiveness to the conversations, and specific requirements perceived needing support, to suggest a few reasons. This set of outcomes also reflects the need for in-depth professional development and a consistent approach to the interviews, which was highlighted as an area of concern.

The school has had a school history of demonstrating very strong positive relationships amongst staff, students and its community. This has been reinforced by the perception survey, where the results showed a very strong response to the academic counsellor taking a keen interest in how students are doing with their progress at school and the support they get to talk honestly about how their schoolwork is going. The inclusive nature of the process for family/whānau/caregivers was also very strongly valued. There was strong support for academic counselling having an influence over attendance, behaviour and engagement at school.

Areas that received agreeable responses included; quality of school work, motivation to do well at school, and motivation to stay at school and/or plan their next steps for a successful transition into further study or the work force. There are a number of reasons that may have contributed to this result, ranging from high achieving students who potentially feel this type of question doesn't relate them, through to disengaged students feeling school is not their place.

The *Starpath evaluation report (2016)* confirms the value of good quality data and reinforces the findings from the Papanui High School survey. It concluded that, "The use of data to set goals and monitor progress for individual students, and sharing this with parents and caregivers as well as students in carefully designed feedback sessions, had major benefits. Analysis of school-reported data highlighted remarkable improvements in whānau/parent/caregiver attendance at such parent-student-teacher conferences (from around 17% to 80% in many cases). As a result schools have greater opportunities to strengthen their relationships with whānau/parents/caregivers and improve students' results over time. Many students who were interviewed appreciated the chance to talk to an academic mentor about their own goals and aspirations, and believed that this was an important process for encouraging their success. Students also noted that the quality of academic counselling could vary, and that this impacted on their engagement in the process. Māori and Pacific students interviewed, sometimes reported lower teacher and community expectations of them".

An article from *Academic 2: An investment in fostering academic achievement*, states that "Studies have shown that mentored youth are 52 percent more likely to stay in school and

also complete more homework assignments than youth without mentors⁽⁸⁾.” It also reflects on a meta-analysis of 73 independent evaluations of mentoring programs, and showed that mentoring improves outcomes across behavioural, social, emotional, and academic spheres of a young person’s development simultaneously⁽⁹⁾. Mentors provide guidance, support, and encouragement that effectively build the social-emotional, cognitive, and positive identity of a young person. In addition to providing youth with the confidence, resources, and ongoing support they need to achieve their potential, mentors increase the likelihood of the young person developing external and internal assets — structures, relationships, values, skills, and beliefs that promote healthy development and lead to future successes.

Although the survey results are extremely favourable and the process overall is highly valued, it doesn’t clearly show the work related issues in achieving these results or how sustainability and build capacity can be factored into the academic counselling process. The process still relies on the effectiveness of the form teachers understanding of the analysis of data, the application of this across all the subjects the student takes, applying this to improve learning, supporting future subject choices, and alignment with possible career pathways.

It is an important part of our role to assist students to prepare for life beyond school. Academic counselling provides an opportunity to support all students being aspirational and lifelong learners who can adapt to an ever changing world. The *Starpath project* and the *Southern Regional Education Boards – High Schools That Work project* provide an opportunity to review two initiatives in two different countries, who have similar objectives and number of parallels. This strong correlation between the two projects can be seen through their critical understanding of the need to improve the academic employability of individuals and to support the economic growth of their respective countries. Equally, both projects aimed to support those students at the greatest risk of disengagement from learning to stay in the education sector.

The *Starpath Evaluative Summary* (2016), reflects on the *Starpath project* as, “a world-class project to ensure that New Zealanders from all walks of life enter and succeed in advanced tertiary qualifications and high skill employment”. Similarly Dr Gene Bottoms, Senior Vice President, SREB from his conference introduction (2017) states “All students can succeed

when the whole school comes together to create rich, connected learning experiences that help students find a sense of purpose for their studies and their lives.”

The rationale for the *Starpeth project* was outlined in the *June 2005 Starpath Project Charter* that, inter alia, stated: “In the global knowledge economy, prosperity of both individuals and nations rests heavily upon knowledge-rich activities, with a growing demand for highly skilled workers”. SREB through the HSTW project equally reflect on the pool of jobs available to those with only a high school diploma is shrinking. About two out of every three jobs now require some postsecondary education and training. And by 2025, demand for Americans with a credential or degree after high school is expected to exceed supply by as many as 11 million. There is no disputing that young people benefit from connected learning experiences that equip them with the lifelong learning skills needed to secure good jobs and a middle-class life.

This is supported by article from *Academic 2* which looks at *Mentoring: An investment in fostering academic achievement*. It explores the critical need for improved academic outcomes and reflects on statistics that one in five American youth did not finish high school⁽¹⁾. Expectations of graduating were low, even among graduates, 20 percent require remedial courses in college and far too few go on to earn a college degree⁽³⁾. In 2014, the number of disengaged youth (not working or in school) is 5.6 million, which represents 14 percent of the youth in the United States⁽⁴⁾. It is predicted that in the next decade more than half of all new jobs will require some post-secondary education⁽⁶⁾.

Both projects aim to identify strategies to raise the country’s economic performance and individual expectations and capacities. On a national level and within schools themselves it is very apparent that there are discrepancies in achievement for different ethnic groups. This was highlighted by the *Starpeth Project Charter, (2005)* which stated that “In New Zealand, a relatively young population has the potential to give the nation a major competitive advantage, but only if New Zealanders from all backgrounds have the opportunity to realise their educational potential. At present, New Zealand has the second highest rate of educational inequality in the OECD, with Māori, Pasifika and students from low income backgrounds showing high rates of educational under-achievement. At the same time, population balances are rapidly shifting. According to the latest census, for instance by 2050,

57% of all New Zealand children will identify as Māori or Pasifika; while 68% will be non-European. Unless current patterns of educational under-achievement in New Zealand are transformed, our chances of developing and sustaining a high income, high value, knowledge economy are in danger. *Starpath* is aimed at these challenges.” Therefore, a main aim of the *Starpath project* was to identify and minimise or remove barriers that contribute to lower rates of participation and success in degree-level education by Māori, Pasifika, and other students from lower decile schools.

Millar (2014) reinforces that the literature and data show that academic mentoring is an approach which could assist Maori student achievement if certain conditions exist. These conditions are; supporting Maori student academic decision making with data, including whanau in the implementation and running of the programme, addressing any sustainability issues associated with the programme, and being aware of the cultural pedagogy staff require to educate the whole child. Conversely, a challenge identified is that the experience of academic mentoring for Maori students is dependent on the academic mentor. This challenge arises as not all teachers are equipped with equal skills when it comes to academic mentoring.

Millar (2014) identified 5 key conclusions to consider when supporting Maori achievement

- Ongoing conversations between academic mentors and Maori students based on strong relationships and high quality individualised data appears to have a positive impact on Maori students’ educational experience in the two mainstream secondary schools studied.
- For academic mentoring to be successful for Maori students they need to be treated as individuals by academic mentors who are culturally responsive and hold high expectations for them as individuals.
- The lack of support for secondary schools that implement academic mentoring for Maori students makes it difficult for them to provide the professional development and support for teachers who struggle with being an academic mentor.
- Academic mentoring in secondary schools requires high levels of staff commitment and increases staff workloads.
- Ongoing whanau and Maori student consultation is essential for academic mentoring to be successful for Maori students.

This highlights the high levels of staff commitment and the increase in workload required to make academic mentoring successful for Maori students.

Starpath has found that for Māori, Pāsifika and other students in low decile schools to be successful New Zealand needs;

- Teachers who hold and encourage high aspirations for their students.
- Clear NCEA pathways that enable these students to fulfil their aspirations.
- Longitudinal data that tracks and monitors student progress over time.
- To give students the opportunity to articulate their goals and be heard within the educational environment.
- Data tracking and student management systems that are easy for teachers to work with and that capture the relevant data.
- Robust professional learning development that empowers teachers.
- A well aligned educational system where policy, leadership and teaching are working together to improve student outcomes.

It would be fair to say that that this list will equally support the progress of all students.

Just as the *Starpath project* aimed to identify improvement strategies for so did the *Southern Regional Education Boards (SREB) – High Schools That Work project (HSTW)*. For more than 30 years, SREB has partnered with states, districts and schools to identify and implement strategies that empower young people to put what they learn in the classroom to work in the real world. This effort began in 1987 with *High Schools That Work*, SREB's premier school improvement design. HSTW is a proven, comprehensive approach to creating learning environments that empower youth to identify their goals, earn credentials and degrees, and embark on careers. Since 1987, SREB has continuously refined the HSTW design and our related school improvement services. Individually, these services address specific needs and areas. When adopted as part of the HSTW design, they represent a complete, multi-faceted approach to school improvement. Best of all, by putting a strong focus on career pathways, HSTW helps students make the essential connection between college-ready academics and careers – the connection that is needed to engage students fully in their education.

SREB's approach to school improvement helps schools prepare students for college and careers by:

- Aligning instruction with grade-level college and career-readiness standards.
- Connecting classroom learning with real-world problems.
- Using instructional time to meet students' unique needs.
- Empowering teachers to co-plan instruction and assignments within and across disciplines.
- Offering developmentally appropriate career exploration.
- Personalizing learning to reflect students' interests.
- Accelerating credential and degree attainment.

One key difference between the *HSTW project* and the *Starpath project* was that the *HSTW project* had a dual focus, College and/or career readiness, however the *Starpath project* was solely aligned with tertiary study. The *HSTW project* enables schools to be quite direct about where a student's pathway was heading and although it maintains a degree of flexibility to change between college or career, it does have a very early impact on the learner's decision making. Whereas, the *Starpath project* was quite direct about enabling more students to go into University, however, the counselling component of it appears to be equalling supporting students going into careers, particularly through vocational pathways.

Although *Starpath* has acknowledge a number of challenges there is a belief it should continue its work. *Starpath Phase 3* will have four key aims, of which, two will have wider implications to support the process of academic counselling across all schools. These are:

- To support a highly responsive and differentiated process for enhanced data utilisation, and accompanying tools that enable tracking and monitoring of student progress toward aspirational goals of UE achievement and underpin overall school improvement. A key aim will be to improve school leader and teacher capabilities in interpreting and using different data sets to lift expectations and enhance practice and outcomes for individuals and groups of Māori and Pasifika students.
- To develop an enquiry-based evaluation plan from the outset of the project that informs key project outcomes and can robustly and reliably assess the impact of *Phase*

3 on student achievement, whānau/parent/caregiver engagement and school practice, and provide feedback to schools.

The school visits gave some insight as to how academic counselling or variations of it were being managed. The current process at Papanui High School requires periodic adaptations to the time table and the need for staff to have some relief time to meet the requirements for their counselling conversations. Significant effort is made to provide staff and students with data and resource material to support each step of the process. Comparatively, the Papanui High School model is well advanced. Although it is supported by a significant amount of goodwill by staff, it is still critical that steps are put in place to improve the sustainability and capacity of the process.

Not surprisingly, the issues that Papanui High School has identified are relatively consistent at other schools. Time, consistency, knowledge and group size were all variables provided challenges for schools. Some key findings to address this included:

Time

- Academic Counselling on a daily basis using a 20 minute form times as part of teacher allocation.
- Mentoring time being built into day either as an extension to form time or a distinct period (varies form 25 minutes to an hour and is usually traded off from teaching time).
- Designated periods of the year when Academic counselling will occur (one to two week blocks – this may be included as an allocation i.e. 1 period a week for the year, or the teacher may request release time to complete the process).
- Academic counselling days where students remain in a class all day and do self-directed work while the counsellor works with individual students.
- Period 6 concept, students at risk come back at the end of the school day
- Review who does the academic counselling, i.e. change focus to Deans, new job descriptions, increased unit allocation and increased their accountability for achievement within their cohort.

Consistency and Knowledge

- Make professional development a priority and strategically focused.
- Develop specific programmes for example, to support new teachers, less experienced, less engaged, highly engaged to improve consistency of practice and grow in-house capacity.
- Shared best practice.
- Make research available and refine for ease of use.
- Provide relevant data, process and year specific guidelines.
- Have systems to record, transfer and provide access to information.
- Encourage student led 3 way conversations – now part of the process, use portfolios as evidence and to support conversations.
- Develop key lead people, such as Deans or new roles e.g. progress leader.
- Treat time allocation as a significant teaching and learning component just like subject teaching requiring pedagogical focus.

Group size

- Generally found that standard class sizes of 25-30 are too big.
- Variations on horizontal and vertical formations.
- Have more than one counsellor per group.
- Operate different models for the junior and senior school, i.e. junior tutors as form class, less detail expected compared to senior classes. Year 11-13 reset the classes, mixed up. 18-20 students for 3 years.
- Match students to counsellor based on a specific variable i.e. relationship based – strong in Drama.

Conference Days

The Conference day that most schools hold all seem to be highly valued and well attended. The key challenge with these is the amount of time provided for each conference and over how many days/nights, or part of they will take, as well as if this should happen once or twice throughout the year. In most situations, staff were very good at meeting parental needs for

interview times and for having them outside the specified time frame, if that supported attendance. It was also clear that school wide conference was replacing at least one and in some cases all subject teacher/parent interview nights.

The above lists highlight a number of barriers, risk factors and challenges to academic achievement. *Smith (2013)* found a number of issues consistent with this notion. This included the continual up-skilling of teaching staff in the use and interpretation of data, listening and questioning techniques, new ways of communicating and reporting to the school community and the generalities of option and course advice and guidance.

The challenge of consistent understanding and interpretation of achievement data and its use to improve student achievement is a concern. It is critical that staff have the ability and confidence to understand the different types of data (quantitative vs qualitative, formative vs summative) which has been made available to them and that it is fit for purpose.

For any real progress to be made a comprehensive professional development programme needs to be researched and provided for all staff. This professional development must be differentiated and DEEP, giving each staff member the opportunity to growth and develop their personal capacity while ensuring an acceptable minimum standard of knowledge is gained and that the staff member has the confidence and ability to apply it in the practical setting.

The *Starpath Evaluative Summary (2016)* suggested that a professional learning and development (PLD) approach be underpinned by key values, which included;

- A commitment to improving student achievement by effecting change within current teacher and school leader practices and school systems.
- A rigorous approach to data collection and analysis leading to a deeper understanding of the processes involved in the improvement process.
- A collaborative approach in which teachers, school leaders and researchers played an active part in the research and development process.

- Regular and timely feedback in ways that facilitated ongoing evaluation, refinement, and improvement in practices.
- The development of theory to inform others in similar situations wanting to change their current situation or practice.

With this in mind, schools will need to assess their current academic counselling professional development programme and build in any specific requirements as appropriate.

Academic counselling can be seen as having benefits for students and their families/whanau in terms of goal setting, monitoring progress and supporting career pathways decisions. However, there is no direct funding support to do this and as such, this increases the difficulty of making the academic counselling process sustainable and to improve school wide capacity.

Although some schools are able to build academic counselling into teacher allocation to varying degrees, this still comes as a financial cost to the school and it increases the workload for staff involved. Undertaking quality academic counselling meant teachers and school leaders had to prepare in advance, but also undertake many follow-up activities after individual sessions with students and their parents/caregivers. In many cases staff are using their non-contact hours to support the process. *Smith (2013)* reinforces this with her findings, noting there is little evidence so far that the Ministry has given any schools new funding models to cope with these changes. On a structural level, new purpose built schools do have the opportunity to assess their physical spaces and can think about functional change in relation to this. As Papanui High School moves into its rebuild programme, it will at least have the opportunity to explore this aspect as it moves forward.

New Zealand's macro-education policy highlights some interesting questions. The New Zealand Government has set Better Public Service Targets (BPSTs) for 2017, and one of these is that 85% of 18-year-olds will have achieved NCEA Level 2 or equivalent. To add to the challenge of this, recent changes to University Entrance requirements have led to a drop in success rates nationally. The *HSTW project* also set a specific target at 80% and stress how crucial literacy and mathematics is to the learner achieving higher credentials. Research shows that students who complete a college *and* career preparatory curriculum are more

likely to aspire to an advanced credential or an associate or bachelor's degree leading to a financially rewarding job.

The critical point here is about supporting individual student achievement without intentionally or unintentionally biasing their pathway. The *Starpath evaluation* (2016) expresses concern from individual school leaders in some low-decile Phase 2 schools, that there are pressures to meet the 85% target, and that academically capable Māori and Pasifika students are, and will be, counselled into vocational pathways rather than attempting more ambitious academic pathways. This in turn can impact on subject choice and in successive analyses and reports. *Starpath* found that subject choice is a key enabler or inhibitor of educational success for lower decile (and especially Māori and Pacific) students. The *Starpath evaluation* (2016) also found examples where students have claimed the teacher encouraged them to take soft options and limit their progress. Findings from the *Starpath literacy initiative on student achievement* did provide empirical support for the claim that developing literacy instruction was a potentially powerful way of improving student achievement in subject-specific areas.

For a successful, sustainable academic counselling process to succeed, decisions and compromises will need to be made at a full school level and implemented in such a way that individual students can be counselled in a comprehensive and on-going way. The first step, however, may be the need for the school leader to self-reflect and to understand the importance of school ownership of the academic counselling process. The work of Dr Linda Benikson – Director of UACEL shows how valuable it is when faced with a particular problem, that the change process should include a solution focus model. She discusses the importance of Developing Criteria for a good solution and suggests three key steps:

1. Articulate the problem to group (staff), keep it simple, limited to one or two sentences
2. What are the causal factors? What is causing the problem?
3. Develop criteria for a good solution

Once this has been established the development of a strategic direction/plan can be made.

This process was worked through with the staff of Papanui High School. They explored the positives attributes of the school's academic counselling programme and then were asked to identify what they thought was the most significant challenges. Once they were identified, staff were then asked to set criteria for successful solutions to be put in place. Collectively, the two key challenges identified were 'time' and 'knowledge'. Staff then refined the solutions and looked at the implications of the changes that would need to be made. Although this final stage has not been completed yet, this has been a significant step towards improving the sustainability of the school model.

School wide discussion is providing the platform for change. Investment in professional development is essential, as well as finding a mechanism to allocate appropriate time to the process. This may support the arrangement of groups based on a vertical or more predetermined arrangement, as opposed to current form year groups, and thus reducing the size of academic counselling ratios, consequently allowing for greater flexibility and ease of student movement across groups.

Papanui High School moves into its Community of Learners (CoL) formation in 2018. This may well provide an opportunity to reassess some of the staffing structural setups. The CoL provides the school with a number of new positions, units and time allocations. These have a focus on teaching and learning and provide a new pathway for staff to develop and share best practice. It is possible that a parallel pathway could be developed with a more pastoral focus and this pathway could include Deans taking greater responsibility and accountability to support the academic counselling process, as well as be remunerated for this. Equally, the Careers and Pathways department could be expanded to be a driving committee of academic counselling and greater resourcing be channelled that way.

Ensuring decisions are made without bias is critical at all levels in the school system. Bias can easily become a self-fulfilling prophecy where low expectations are based on bias just as high expectations can be. It is important to understand what the formation of expectations is, and what the basis for this is. Students generally accept some differentiation for learning support but not for emotional support. They are also very adept at identifying verbal and non-verbal cues. Non-verbal gestures and voice-tone can easily influence the relationship a students has

with their academic counsellor and this can limit their progress and create disparities in the learner's outcomes. Providing professional knowledge, growth and understanding in this area will enable more open and transparent conversations to take place and ultimately lead to the best options at each point of time being rationalised.

Starpath evaluation (2016), viewed the *Starpath project* as a 'critical friend' in the school improvement process. Participants described *Starpath* as 'a complete package' which enabled senior and middle leaders to focus on improving different aspects of their schools and to understand how the school worked as an integrated, social learning system for both students and teachers. However, they also acknowledged that improvement work required considerable changes in both school organisational structure and culture in order to be successful. Sustainability was perceived to be possible only if the school's senior management team actively owned and supported the process and were willing to interrogate their own practices. It was also important that school leaders and others responsible for implementation of *Starpath* initiatives kept their focus on students' learning and achievement needs.

This sabbatical has given me the opportunity to review and investigate academic counselling, sustainability and succession planning for capacity building. I believe academic counselling is an essential ingredient to the future success on our students and that we should make it part of our school fabric. Although Papanui High School has made significant progress in terms of academic outcomes for its students, it still remains difficult to attribute how much of this is a direct outcome of the academic counselling process. What we do know is that relationships fostered within the school are very strong and this has supported staff, student and community engagement in a number of ways. The leadership of the school and those directly related to ensuring the structural process of academic counselling is supported, remain committed to the task. The finding of this report poses just as many questions as answers. However, this is not unexpected, as it is often the school itself who is ultimately responsible for exploring ways to improve, analysing potential outcomes, and re-establishing the next steps accordingly.

The academic counselling committee will set goals each year to try and improve on sustainability and capacity building of the process. Next year these will include:

- The Academic Counselling process will continue to successfully run at whole school level.
- Improve outcomes for all students, particularly Maori, Pasifika, and students with special needs.
- Accelerate progress of students performing below expectations.
- Develop an appropriate timeline that aligns with the school calendar to formalise the process and ensure its effectiveness.
- Align year level strategic counselling.
- Reduce mentor group sizes to improve efficiency and connectedness.
- Investigate PLD opportunities to improve “staffs” effectiveness in their use and knowledge of data analysis and careers education.

It will be my responsibility to ensure they are supported.

Conclusion

The ten-week sabbatical gave me an opportunity to reflect on current research, speak with people at Auckland University, visit schools and travel to the United States to attend the Southern Regional Education Board conference. I found it was extremely valuable in aligning my thinking with respect to Academic Counselling – sustainability and capacity building. It has possibly posed more questions than answers and this may well be a good thing.

The following conclusions have arisen out of my research and thinking during this sabbatical, and are a personal perspective that may support and contribute to the ongoing process of academic counselling at Papanui High School.

The findings from *Starpath evaluation* support the overall findings in relation to supporting an academic counselling process in school. It identified that teachers and school leaders require more innovative and intensive support to collect and analyse different types of data; including student achievement data, perception data (such as how students, parents/whānau

and teachers feel about school and the degree to which they feel valued and engaged), and systems data (e.g. course enrolments). *Starpath* has also learned that teachers, middle and senior leaders need specific, intensive professional development and learning programmes and sufficient time to learn how to do this work better within their schools.

The *HSTW project* further enhanced my understanding, and the many presentations and workshops I attended gave me a broader perspective, especially regarding the commonality of national objectives and the challenges of implementing and supporting these in the high school setting.

As a leader, the first step is to critically self-reflect, make informed decisions based on shared and collective responses, and ensure all parties have a sense of ownership and/or belonging to the process. It is important that I carefully consider the implications of an academic counselling programme. Staff must not see academic counselling as an add-on. It must be integrated into a school-wide approach which supports culturally responsive pedagogy based on timely, easy-to-access academic data. This process can provide an opportunity to support all learners, and also increase our awareness of those most at risk.

Academic counselling must also be well supported by professional development and this needs to be targeted to improve individual staff's capacity to differentiate their academic counselling conversations, enhancing student achievement. Staff need to be supported by timely and targeted data which is competently shared with learners and their families. Appropriate professional development will underpin this, ensuring staff are confident in; what data to use and how to interpret it, interview and specifically listening and questioning techniques, a clear idea of their purpose and roles in a counselling relationship and how to understand the sometimes complex world of careers advice and guidance. The allocation of adequate time to the academic counselling process is equally essential, as is the counselling group size, which must be a manageable.

Papanui High School is in the process of the *Ministry of Education's Repair and Rebuild programme*, this combined with the establishment of the *Totaranui - Community of Learners (CoL)* provides an opportunity for change. The school may well go through functional change

as an outcome of structural change. This is likely to affect teaching and learning strategies, timetable structures and pastoral structures. It will be important to keep our community informed about this and to show how it will enhance the outcomes for our students.

At Papanui High school there is the potential to develop the careers and pathways department into a broader group encompassing staff responsible for academic counselling, literacy and numeracy, data manager, and other related personnel. This group could fulfil the role of supporting the delivery of effective professional development, including data analysis, knowledge of all in-school courses and out-of-school courses, further work and tertiary requirements. Academic counselling is a tool that can have a very positive impact on supporting student achievement and in particular, the national priority of 85% attainment of Level 2.

It is difficult to quantify the link between achievement and counselling due to limited evidence and the complexity of a range of factors present in the teaching and learning environment. However, what is evident is that strong relations and engagement are a feature of the school, and these two components both play a role in the academic counselling process.

It is an important part of our role to assist students to prepare for life beyond school. Academic counselling can make a difference for our students in confidently expressing their goals and aspirations to those who influence their lives and build on this. We want them to be able to make informed decisions, and to do this we must ensure that they receive the appropriate information and guidance so they can see the connectedness with what they are doing and why. This will allow them to leave school as confident and capable lifelong learners who can have careers that are fulfilling, rewarding and enjoyable.

I look forward to integrating the outcomes of my thinking as we move forward with our programmes at school.

REFERENCES

Bottoms G, Senior Vice President of SREB, January 20, 2017. Accelerating Postsecondary attainment – in High School.

Kiro, C., Hynds, A., Eaton, J., Irving, E., Wilson, A., Bendikson, L., Cockle, V., Broadwith, M., Linley-Richardson, T. & Rangi, M. (2016). Starpath Phase 2. Final Evaluation Report. Auckland, Starpath Project, the University of Auckland.

McKinley, E., Madjar, I., van der Merwe, A., Smith, S., Sutherland, S. & Yuan, J. (2009). *Targets and Talk: Evaluation of an evidence-based academic counselling programme*. Auckland: Starpath Project, The University of Auckland.

Millar, Sheena, (2014) Investigating the perceived benefits and difficulties associated with academic mentoring for Maori students within secondary education in Aotearoa-New Zealand. Unitec Institute of Technology.

Smith, Lindy, (2013) Academic Mentoring as a tool in the raising of student achievement– its key elements, variety of models and implications for teacher practice in New Zealand secondary schools. Papatoetoe High School Auckland.

Smith, Lorraine D. (2014) Academic mentoring and how it can support personalised learning. EdD thesis, University of Nottingham.

Webb, Tom, (2014) The Influence of Academic Counselling. *The University of Auckland*,

www.excellencegateway.org.uk/content/eg4998 Assertive mentoring: An effective method of supporting post-16 students?

www.mentoring.org/images/uploads/Final_Elements_Publication_Fourth.pdf ELEMENTS OF EFFECTIVE PRACTICE FOR MENTORING.

www.mentoring.org/new-site/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Academic-2.pdf

1 U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics. (2013) *Public school graduates and dropouts from the common core of data: School Year 2009-10*. Washington, D.C.: Author. Retrieved from <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2013/2013309.pdf>.

2 National Center for Education Statistics. (2013). *Statistics in brief: First year undergraduate remedial coursetaking: 1999-2000, 2003-04, 2007-08*. Retrieved from <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2013/2013013.pdf>.

4 Measure of America & Opportunity Nation. (2014). 2014 Opportunity Index Trends. Retrieved Dec. 31st, 2014 from: <http://opportunityindex.org/national-trends/>.

6 Carnevale, A.P., Smith, N., & Strohl, J. (2010). *Help wanted: Projections of jobs and education requirements through 2018*. Washington, DC: Center on Education and the Workforce.

8 Herrera, C., Grossman, J.B., Kauh, T.J., Feldman, A.F., McMaken, J., & Jucovy, L.Z. (2007). *Making a difference in schools: The Big Brothers Big Sisters school-based mentoring impact study*. Philadelphia, PA: Public/Private Ventures.

9 DuBois, D.L., Portillo, N., Rhodes, J.E., Silverthorn, N., & Valentine, J.C. (2011). How effective are mentoring programs for youth? A systematic assessment of the evidence. *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, 12(2), 57-91.

www.rackham.umich.edu/downloads/publications/Fmentoring.pdf 2015 The Regents of the University of Michigan.

www.restore.ac.uk/trials-pp/trials%20conference%20powerpoint/Robert%20Coe.ppt

Academic mentoring in schools: a small RCT to evaluate a large policy. Randomised Controlled trials in the Social Sciences: Challenges and Prospects University of York, 13-15 Sept 2006

www.sreb.org/The Southern Regional Education Board.

www.sreb.org/high-schools-work High Schools That Work.