

Te Kura Pilot Evaluation Phase Four

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Purpose

In 2014 the Ministry of Education (the Ministry) requested that the Education Review Office (ERO) undertake an evaluation and report on the effectiveness of the Te Aho o Te Kura Pounamu (Te Kura) pilot. It was intended that ERO would provide both formative and summative evaluations of the programme over a period of three years.

The purpose of this ERO review is to evaluate the extent to which the Te Kura pilot has fulfilled its expectation to deliver an alternative programme of learning, sustained over a number of years, which can improve the NCEA achievement of at-risk learners.

Introduction

This pilot was approved by the Ministers of Education and Finance to inform the Ministry of Education's wider policy objectives. Achievement will ultimately be measured through success with NCEA Level 2 achievement. However, baseline academic measures (using tools such as the electronic Assessment Tools for Teaching and Learning (e-asTTle) and Progress and Achievement Tests (PAT)), together with progress through a programme of learning leading towards participation in NCEA, will determine students' progress.

This pilot intended to trial a new approach to educating students who are either unable or unwilling to attend their local school. The pilot aim is to determine whether Te Kura, under optimal conditions, can deliver results for this cohort. The evaluation of the pilot will have implications for the wider review of support for at-risk students, including:

- Te Kura's role in the wider education system
- policies on exclusion and expulsion and the expectations placed on the face-to-face schooling network
- the Government's \$25m investment in alternative education and activity centres.

A policy statement agreed by the Ministry and Te Kura provides context for the selection of students and the reasons for trialling the pilot.¹ The Ministry required reports from Te Kura about the pilot but the purpose and nature of this reporting was not clear.

At present, alienation from mainstream schooling often leads to alienation from the opportunity to achieve NCEA qualifications and to experience success in education. At the same time, there is significant diversity in the population of students who have been alienated from school. Some have been alienated following an isolated incident of poor behaviour; some have had a prolonged history of disengagement from education and have fallen significantly behind their peers; some experience complex life situations that complicate their ability to participate in school (like caring for children, having family obligations or ill health); still others have had historic barriers to engagement, but have reached a point in their life where they are able to return. Students currently alienated from schooling differ in terms of their social circumstances/influences, barriers to engagement, extent of time out of mainstream schooling, extent of positive/negative experiences of schooling (entrenched hostility), learning level, and aspirations for the future life. There is a

¹ Policy document 'Authentic Learning Evaluation Framework' July 2014. Supplied by the Ministry.

concern that, for many of these students, NCEA achievement and re-integration into education would be a realistic option if only there were a sustained, alternative programme of learning built on a strong pedagogical framework and supported by high levels of pastoral support services **to build student resilience**. This pilot arises from this context. It is designed to allow Te Kura to draw 80 students from this wide range of at-risk students already on its roll through the exclusion or psychosocial gateways and to develop an approach to education provision that allows some of these differing cohorts of **students to achieve their potential, to gain NCEA qualifications and experience educational success**.

Te Kura's pilot programme began over Terms 3 and 4, 2014 in six sites: Christchurch, Nelson, Palmerston North, Feilding, Hastings and West Auckland. The programme targeted 80 students in Years 9 to 11 already enrolled at Te Kura. Te Kura was able to select the students they believed most likely to benefit from participation in the pilot. In each region, Te Kura invited students from the exclusion or psychosocial gateway to be interviewed with their whānau. When students have left the pilot (for any reason, including employment, further training) other suitable candidates have filled the places.

Big Picture Learning (BPL)

The pilot's approach to learning is based on the concepts of authentic learning (AL) delivered through the model of BPL, developed in the United States. The vision for AL/BPL places the students, their values, context and needs at the centre of all teaching and learning experiences. Students, together with their families and teachers, are actively involved in creating personalised learning pathways. This approach aims to cater for students' potential, abilities and needs through a tailored and responsive programme. A key element of BPL is building knowledge through practical learning experiences. These include internships, job shadowing and support from locally-based mentors.

The pilot sites

Te Kura established a pilot in each of its four regions. In two regions, the pilot was set up on two sites. Each regional manager selected the site or sites, based on the location of eligible students and the suitability of staff to provide the programme. The community's capacity to provide locally-based mentors, internships and opportunities for work shadowing also contributed to the selection of the pilot sites.

Northern Region

Auckland

The pilot site in Auckland was originally situated in a Waitakere City community hub facility and moved to a community facility in Te Atatu after one year. West Auckland was selected for the pilot due to its high proportion of Pacific and Māori students. The Te Kura learning advisor and the liaison teachers travel out to the site from central Auckland for face-to-face teaching.

Central North Region

Hastings

The pilot site is situated in central Hastings and shares premises with Te Kura learning advisors. This gives students face-to-face access to teachers as well as their online teachers. The regional manager, liaison teacher and other staff have continued to make use of their established relationships with other local agencies, organisations and iwi.

Central South Region

Palmerston North and Feilding

The pilot is situated on two sites, one in the centre of Palmerston North at Te Kura's advisory and the other in Feilding, in a new location. The liaison teachers (one in each site) are developing relationships with other agencies. There are now Te Kura subject teachers for English and Maths available on site. These teachers have organised the programme so they can move between both sites. Other subject teachers come regularly from Wellington. Pilot students can attend any of the Te Kura advisory days for face-to-face support.

Southern Region

Nelson

The pilot site is accommodated in the Te Kura advisory premises in central Nelson. Students have access to subject teachers on site for face-to-face contact, as well as the liaison teacher and online teachers. The pilot continues to enrol students who are under the care of a local marae.

Christchurch

The pilot site shares premises with Te Kura learning advisors, which gives students face-to-face access to teachers as well as their online teachers. A new regional manager, a new pilot teacher, and a new kaiarāhi have been appointed in the last six months. The regional manager, liaison teacher and other staff have made use of their established relationships with other local agencies, organisations and iwi.

Methodology

In its reporting to the Ministry, ERO made evaluative judgments about the pilot programme in response to the question:

To what extent does evidence indicate that Te Kura can successfully deliver an alternative programme of learning, sustained over four years, that improves the NCEA achievement of the targeted at-risk learners?

ERO has provided three reports to the Ministry about implementation of the pilot programme.

Phase 1 March 2015

Phase 2 February 2016

Phase 3 February 2017

The first three phases of this four-phase evaluation were formative. These reports provided information and recommendations to both the Ministry and Te Kura to assist with ongoing developments to improve outcomes for pilot students. Te Kura and the Ministry participated in

discussions at the conclusion of the on-site visits for each phase of the evaluation to consider findings and recommendations.

In the first three evaluation phases, ERO investigated the following:

- *How well is the pilot programme supporting students to engage and succeed in learning?*
- *How well is Te Kura establishing, implementing and monitoring the programme for students in the pilot?*

An evaluative framework that underpinned each phase of the evaluation is included in Appendix 1.

Method - Phase Four

We asked the following questions to provide information for this report:

- *What does Te Kura know about the achievement and learning outcomes of pilot students and how effectively do they use this information to improve student outcomes?*
- *How well can Te Kura show the programme has made a difference to student engagement, wellbeing and achievement?*
- *What successes do whānau and students attribute to the pilot programme?*
- *How well placed is Te Kura to evaluate the outcomes of the programme and sustain the approach?*

Investigative questions and prompts are listed in Appendix 2.

ERO reviewers met with Te Kura senior leaders to collaboratively analyse information gathered by Te Kura. Reviewers visited all pilot sites. During these visits, we talked with pilot staff, regional managers and some representatives of external agencies. We spoke with students about their experience and perceptions of the pilot. We also spoke with parents and whānau about their experience and understanding of their child's wellbeing,² progress and achievement. It is important to note we spoke with students who are currently enrolled in the pilot (with the exception of one student who is now enrolled in tertiary education but returned to the pilot to speak to us), and parents of students currently enrolled. We used this information to make judgements about the overall effectiveness of the pilot programme. The questions and prompts for students and parents are in Appendix 3.

Background to Phase Four

This fourth phase of the evaluation focuses on the outcomes of the pilot. Particular attention is paid to identifying the extent to which any or all elements of BPL contributed to the success of the pilot in improving student achievement. The pilot has yet to run the full trial period, so achievement information as of August/September 2017 is indicative of students' trajectory towards NCEA Level 2 and of the other indicators of success provided by Te Kura.

This report builds on the judgments and recommendations outlined in the previous phases of ERO's ongoing evaluation. The first three reports identified aspects of the pilot that were successful and

² Referenced in *Wellbeing for Young People's Success at Secondary School*, February 2015, Wellington.

areas that needed to improve in order to provide the desired outcomes. Each subsequent report noted Te Kura's response to previous recommendations, recognised progress in implementation of pilot systems and practice, as well as student progress.

Recommendations for improvement that ERO identified in the Phase 3 report, February 2017, related to the need to:

- better monitor implementation of the pilot across all sites to ensure consistency in practice
- improve provision and quality of elements of BPL such as future pathways, internships and Individual Learning Plans (ILPs)
- ensure flexibility of the curriculum to respond to individual needs, strengths and interests
- improve and share teachers' understanding and capability to implement the BPL
- use data better to identify successes and challenges for sustainability of the programme.

For the purposes of this review, ERO references the definition of 'wellbeing' as outlined in ***Wellbeing for Success: Draft Indicators for Student Wellbeing (Draft) 2013***.

A student's level of wellbeing at school is related to their satisfaction with life at school, their engagement with learning and their social-emotional behaviour. It is enhanced when evidence-informed practices are adopted by schools in partnership with families and the community. Optimal student wellbeing is a sustainable state, characterised by predominantly positive feelings and attitudes, positive relationships at school, resilience, self-optimism and a high level of satisfaction with learning experiences.³

Big Picture Learning (BPL)

The pilot's new approach to learning is based on the concepts of authentic learning (AL) delivered through the American-based model of BPL. The vision for AL/BPL places the students, their values, context and needs at the centre of all teaching and learning experiences. Students, together with their families and teachers, are actively involved in creating personalised learning pathways. This approach aims to cater for students' potential, abilities and needs through a tailored and responsive programme. A key element of BPL is building knowledge through practical learning experiences. These include internships, job shadowing and support from locally based mentors.

The 'Building Blocks' of BPL are:

- Advisory
- Goal Setting
- Journaling
- Individual Learning Plans
- Interest Exploration
- Careers Exploration
- Passion Projects
- Informational Interviews
- Job Shadowing
- Internships
- Exhibitions

³ Noble, T., McGrath, H., Roffey, S. and Rowling, L. (2008) C. Canberra: Department of Education Page 30.

The students

An important focus of this evaluation has been the students who enrol in the Te Kura pilot and the extent to which the programme has re-engaged these students in learning. Students spoke to ERO about what the pilot has meant for them. Their stories give context to ERO's findings and evaluation. The stories are representative of the wider group and the issues faced by other individuals.

Student stories⁴

Nikau: Māori Male - Exclusion

Nikau has been in the pilot for over two years. He was referred into the pilot by Youth Cultural Development (YCD) as he was in trouble with the police. Though he was making progress in the pilot programme, getting credits in literacy and numeracy, he told ERO his personal life "*went off the rails.*" He was remanded in a Youth Justice residence and was therefore unable to continue attending the pilot; although he could do 'Pathways' through Te Kura correspondence. When he got out of remand, he re-entered the pilot and made significant progress. Then the teacher that he said he had a great relationship with left, and he did not have the same connection with the next teacher. That teacher did not stay long. He got in more trouble '*doing stupid stuff*' and ended up on Home Detention (HD). As part of his HD conditions, he is allowed to attend the pilot programme and the gym for a fitness programme. When the next new teacher started, he really connected to her and liked her cultural perspective fostering the holistic wellbeing of the pilot students – in particular their sense of belonging and connection. "*She did change the vibe of the place. The room felt so much more homely – food in the fridge, student work on the walls. Like it was our place and we wanted to be there.*" Nikau has the career aspiration of joining the army. The teacher has set him up with a mentor in the defence forces. She has actively worked with his Youth Justice (YJ) Probation Officer to ensure he is well supported in making positive life choices. Together they have organised a youth programme for him of four days of learning and one day with his drugs and alcohol counsellor. This includes YJ agreeing that his HD anklet be removed for the week of the outdoor adventure camp so that "*he can fully participate and feel the successes of the course without the stigma of the conviction.*" He is doing really well academically and hopes to finish NCEA Levels 1 and 2 this year.

Nikau: "*I've started changing my life. Doing everything differently. I was a degenerate – drinking and doing drugs. Now I want to do good. Te Paerangi makes me want to do better. Teacher is like an auntie. She is here to help you. She knows when you are struggling and reminds me of my goals and to keep the goals in the back of my head to keep me on track and push on through. The pilot is so important – especially for kids in my shoes. I could have picked anything. I could have chosen to be a ballerina and they would have supported me and take all the time I need to help me figure out how to achieve it.*"

The kaiārahi worker stated "*100 percent sure Nikau is alive because of being here. He has been in and out of trouble with the law. He is on Home Detention. But we can scaffold a positive future with him. He wants to be in the army and we are supporting him to realise that dream.*"

⁴ Names have been changed.

Rachel: Pākehā Female – Psycho-social

Rachel is a student who enrolled in the first year of the pilot. She was diagnosed with schizophrenia at aged 12 and had been alienated from school since then. She briefly enrolled at the health school but this was not adequate in meeting her needs. She started Te Kura correspondence but this was adding to her isolation from society. She was referred by her Te Kura liaison teacher under the psycho-social gateway. Rachel said she had a great relationship with the first pilot teacher who was *“really motivational and supportive.”* The next teacher was not good at connecting with the students and did not stay long. The next teacher was really good and her mother stated that Rachel *“gained confidence as she felt safe. Most of the kids in the group have their own issues with mental health and so there is no judging. This is the only environment she feels safe in and is blossoming. There is no bullying or dramas. Everyone is tolerant and understanding of other people and what they are going through.”* Rachel has a twin sister in mainstream and the *“social dramas and social media bullying would destroy a student like Rachel”*. She had mild dyslexia before the schizophrenia diagnosis and was falling behind. Years off school due to mental health issues contributed to her being really behind in her schoolwork. Both mother and daughter stated that the pilot teachers take the time to help her understand concepts before they move on to the next thing. This contributes to her positive attitude to learning. Rachel: *“Everyone is nice. You can be yourself. No one gets angry with you if you can’t do the work. They help you get it.”* Her mother feels welcome to be involved and stays for the whole sessions on ‘bad days’ to help her feel more settled and secure. She has had a difficult time with her medication. The teachers and students at the pilot have helped support her through these difficult times. Mum: *“She loves the pilot. She hates missing it. She loves the people and feeling part of a group that accepts her and gets her.”* The teachers have helped extend her passion for fantasy art. She is exploring digital art and avatar design. The teacher has worked with her personally to help her find her niche that can turn into a proper career. Rachel: *“I did my passion project on history, mythology and art. I think the pilot is really good as I am more keen to learn when it stuff I am interested in.”* She has achieved her Level 1 literacy and numeracy and is working on completing both Level 1 and Level 2 by the end of the programme.

When ERO first met her three years ago she was withdrawn, unkempt, and unwilling to communicate. Now she is well groomed, confident and able to speak articulately about her learning and progress.

Mum says: *“This is the only place she’s been confident. She’s found friends and is keen on learning. She wouldn’t be in education at all. This is giving her a future. It stabilises her, gives her confidence and a pattern of learning and working. She’s done courses – First Aid, UCOL, Outdoor Adventure course for four days. That is a big thing for her to be in different environments and this place has given her the confidence to do other things in her life.”*

Rachel told ERO: *“It would be boring at home doing correspondence all by yourself. Here I’ve made friends and my best friend is here too and we help each other. I didn’t have friends before. And here I am not afraid to ask the teachers to help me with my work.”*

Adam: Māori Male - Exclusion

Adam has been in the pilot a year and a half. He had a difficult time in mainstream. He was bullied at school for being overweight and took a “kicking” when he was 10 that really traumatised him. At high school the bullying continued and Adam said *“the teachers did nothing till I lashed out then I got in trouble and got kicked out.”* In the first year of the pilot, he achieved both NCEA Levels 1 and 2. He said it was because of the relationships *“I feel safe, accepted and included by everyone. We’re like a family here.”* Adam said the other aspects that made it successful for him was that there were fewer students, and teachers can get to each student to help them. He also said it is because teachers take the time to find out what you are interested in and build the course around that. He wants to be a computer programmer and had done an ‘information interview’ (one of the BPL building blocks) with a digital technician. He had also done job shadowing at the Tech Lab and a passion project on gaming and gone to the IT Techtorium to learn about programming. His aspiration is to go to university and do a degree in IT and make a career in programming. He is currently working on NCEA Level 3 and getting University Entrance. Another positive aspect to the course is they have been collectively working on health and fitness. He attends the gym regularly and is feeling much more confident in his appearance.

His father is grateful for the changes in his son. He sees that his son has a future and is more confident in himself.

Emma: Pākehā Female – Psycho-social

Emma has been in the pilot a year and a half. She was bullied at intermediate and developed extreme anxiety and depression. When she started high school her mother said they *“couldn’t undo the damage and she would fight not to go to school.”* She described her daughter as completely disengaged by Year 10 and that she used to hide in the cupboard in the tech room at high school as she felt unsafe. She changed schools but that didn’t work and she started to become violent. The Ministry and psychologists became involved as she became suicidal and mum said she was in constant fear - *“is today the day?”* Her mum tried all the alternative education providers but none worked. She felt that *“going in to Future COL classes with students with drugs and alcohol abuse problems was not the right fit.”* Emma enrolled in Te Kura and had the pilot suggested to her. Her mother said, *“it took her a while to feel like she’d found her people and feel safe to come.”* The teacher worked with Emma to find her interests and once they ‘found the key’ was her love of horses then the learning came from that. The pilot teacher *“uses her networks and resources to facilitate a child’s interests and help kids run with it to finding their purpose and direction.”* The pilot teacher set her up with an internship at the Equine Therapy Centre - Stable Hearts. Emma has completed 200 hours of voluntary work there. She is working with mistreated and neglected horses, nurtures them back to health, and then works with children in therapy who find a horse to connect to and work through their own trauma and issues. This work has been hugely therapeutic for Emma: *“reading the environment and energy of the horses is helping me heal. I saw Braveheart (horse) and fell in loveI’ve been working on his confidence. Now he is really calm. He is the best horse he comes to the gate when I call him.”* She said she really enjoys working with the troubled horses and young children. Emma said the work has taught her communication skills as many of the children have ADHD and other issues. Her mother said *“the success is phenomenal. No violence. She is happy in herself and helpful and constructive. The absence of negativity and regimented-ness of school combined with the positive relationships here with her teachers and peers is what makes the difference.”* Emma has done career exploration (building block of BPL) with her teacher and settled on nursing or psychology. Her teacher set her up with a psychologist to do an ‘informational interview’ and for a job shadowing opportunity (both building blocks of BPL). Her mother said *“the*

lights gone on. She knows what she wants to do and is focussed and has purpose. She knows what she is working towards. She would have ended up unemployed on a benefit. This gives purpose and a future as an employed tax-paying citizen."

Emma told us she is working on getting both NCEA Levels 1 and 2 this year, and Level 3 and UE next year as she wants to do a psychology degree. She gave her exhibition (building block of BPL) in front of us and three other adults and three students. She spoke confidently and passionately about her goals, her career aspirations, her interests and her future. She also spoke about her passion project, which involved making a costume and attending the Armageddon Expo with four other students with similar passions on the pilot. Emma told ERO *"it had been pretty bad with anxiety and depression. It was preventing me from doing stuff. Now reflecting on my growth, my journey – I wouldn't have been able to be here, or talk in front of people, or talk about how I love this horse. I would have been so anxious. I would have had a panic attack at the thought of public speaking. The teacher and the pilot have given me the confidence to do all sorts of things I thought I couldn't do. I now have friends and hope and a future."*

Wiremu – Māori Male – Exclusion

These are his own words about his life that he did for his exhibition to friends, family and staff:

My Story

Moving from home to home I was caught in the system.
Thought I knew better, but you thought I would've listened
Stealing cars, breaking laws, multiple offences
Now in the hospital for crashing into fences.
Almost lost my life, I thank God for this blessing
A brighter day, second chance, learn from life's lessons.
Keep doing the same thing, you get the same result
School wasn't for me, and it wasn't my fault
So I would run away, the next day I was sent back
Me amongst all the students, was like a needle in the hay stack.
I didn't plan for these life's setbacks, but I guess it was my fate
Michael Jordan said: I failed time and time again and that's what makes me great.
Working hard to justify my wrongs
But Child Youth and Family keep singing the same old songs.
Yes! I said Child Youth and Family, now known as Oranga Tamariki
Qualified social workers, like Matua, and Tamati.
From home to home, hotel to motel, the marae was always there
Teaching me life principles, love, compassion, care.
Now in education thanks to my teacher
Who takes the time and patience to help me learn.
Now a new mindset saying that 'I can'
Self-identity, this is who I am.
Ko Wiremu taku ingoa
Ko Hikurangi te maunga
Ko Waiapu te awa
Ko Horouta te waka
Ko Ngati Porou te iwi o Ngati Kahungunu
Tena koutou tena koutou tena ra tatou katoa

Findings

Since the Phase Three ERO report, Te Kura has made significant progress in implementing the pilot programme. Te Kura has responded positively to recommendations made by ERO in that report. Te Kura senior and regional managers have improved the quality of their internal evaluation and are making better use of data to monitor aspects of the pilot and to continue to make positive changes to the BPL approach. Information provided by Te Kura about students' learning and social progress show that Te Kura leaders and teachers have made significant progress in implementing the pilot and reporting on the outcomes.

The successes of the pilot recognised in the first three phases of the evaluation relate primarily to the steps taken by staff to build trusting and productive relationships that engaged students in the programme and included whānau and parents in the process. The background and profile of students enrolled in the pilot programme meant that this was a critical component of success. Managers, liaison teachers and advisors recognised building these relationships for learning took time. The pilot has been running for three years, and there are 20 students who have been in the programme for 2+ years. Te Kura can show improved achievement and social outcomes for these students. This initial development of caring relationships, which supported students to feel secure in the pilot, and the more recent, increased focus on implementing all of the elements of BPL to engage and motivate students, have contributed to these outcomes.

In Phase Four, ERO found elements of BPL evident at all sites. There is still variability in the way Te Kura delivers the programme; but a crucial improvement is the extent to which staff have a shared understanding of the BPL philosophy and are implementing the programme accordingly. This shared understanding has had a clear and important impact on the functioning of the pilot programme and on student outcomes.

ERO's findings are reported under the following headings:

- Outcomes for students and analysis of data
- Vision and practice of BPL
- Sustainability and scalability.

Outcomes for students and analysis of data

Systems for gathering and reporting data for achievement, attendance, retention, exit and wellbeing have improved. Te Kura is gathering a variety of information about the learning outcomes of individual students who have been on the pilot. Te Kura is increasingly using this information to monitor the pathways and progress of individuals and to clarify and set high expectations for achievement across the regions. Previously, the practice of reviewing achievement and learning outcomes was variable. Revised systems and clear expectations from leaders and the further attention to how well systems are used have led to more consistency in reporting and the provision of more useful learning and achievement information.

Comparative data

Since ERO's Phase Three report in February 2017, Te Kura has gathered and analysed data to compare pilot students with other Te Kura students also enrolled through the psychosocial gateway.

Te Kura reports that new students starting the pilot in 2016 and the comparison group started from comparable baselines - having very few credits at the start of the 2016 year.

By the end of Term 4, 2016, the proportion of these new students with 40+ credits:

- at Level 1 had increased to 57 percent (pilot: 16 of 28 students) compared to 26 percent of the comparison group
- at Level 2 to 41 percent (pilot: 12 of 29 students) compared to 19 percent in the comparison group.

Pilot students have been more successful than the comparison group in gaining the required literacy and numeracy credits for NCEA Level 1. By the end of 2016, 54 percent of all pilot students achieved the required literacy credits in 2016 and 49 percent achieved the required numeracy credits; compared to 17 percent and 10 percent respectively for the comparison group.

In addition, Te Kura has identified that non-returned rates are lower in the pilot group, with only three percent of students classified as non-returned, compared to 22 percent of students in the comparison group.

Attendance

Each pilot site produces an attendance report at the end of every term. Te Kura leaders use this report to show trends for each site and for individual students. Teachers report students' reasons for non-attendance and for exiting the pilot. They record the steps taken to address any individual concerns identified by changes in students' attendance or their decision to leave the programme.

Attendance data supplied by Te Kura indicates that as of July 2017, 32 percent of students (n28) were attending at a rate of 85 percent and above of their attendance agreements. Of these 10 percent (n9) had 100 percent attendance. Fifty-one percent of pilot students (n44) were attending between 50 and 84 percent of their attendance agreements. Seventeen percent of pilot students (n15) were attending under 50 percent of their agreements.

Achievement information

Te Kura senior leaders and advisors track achievement data (NCEA credits) to monitor the progress of students and modify their learning pathways. Appropriate information is used increasingly to show outcomes for students overall. Te Kura information shows the progress of some groups of students.

For the small number of students enrolled at Years 9 and 10, pilot site staff gather information to show acceleration for individual students using assessments aligned with the Te Kura curriculum. This is not collated and aggregated within or across the pilots.

Further development of ways to compare achievement information across sites and groups of students will increase Te Kura's ability to evaluate programme effectiveness.

Current students two plus years in the pilot

At the time of this review, 20 students have been in the pilot for more than two years. The majority of these are in Years 12, 13, 13+. Eleven are Māori and nine are non-Māori. Eleven are female and nine are male. Nine of these students were enrolled through the psychosocial gateway, eleven through the alienation, exclusion or expulsion gateway.

Of this group, six have achieved NCEA Level 1 and five are on track with 50+ credits. Three students have achieved NCEA Level 2 and three are on track with 50+ credits. None have achieved NCEA Level 3.

Of the students who are below 50 credits, three are fully engaged in completing exhibitions, two are about to start an internship and another has completed two 10-week art courses. One is less engaged, but is encouraged to attend STAR courses and complete exhibitions, although as yet has not done so.

Current students less than two years in the pilot

At the time of this review there were 67 students enrolled on the pilot for less than two years, currently in Years 11, 12 or 13 and working towards NCEA. Very few had any NCEA credits when they enrolled in the pilot. Of these students, 18 have achieved NCEA Level 1 and 16 are on track with 50+ credits. Six have achieved NCEA Level 2 and 12 are on track with 50+ credits. One student has achieved NCEA Level 3 and four students are on track with 50+ credits.

The 10 students who have fewer than 50 credits are new to the pilot: eight are in Year 11 with no credits, with one each in Year 12 and Year 13. These students have pre-pilot credits but no credits achieved while on the programme so far. Another 13 students are enrolled at Years 9 and 10.

Foundation students (2014) who have exited the pilot

At the time of this review, the 80 students who originally joined in 2014 have since left the pilot programme. The majority of withdrawals occurred in the first stages of the pilot and since then the retention rates for early departures have improved dramatically. Of these 80 students, 47 percent left within the first six months of enrolling; and 32 percent were in the pilot for more than one year. However many of those that left the pilot after 31 days went on to further education, training and employment and Te Kura information provided suggests that in most cases this can be attributed to the skills and confidence gained during their time on the pilot.

Of the 80 students leaving the pilot, 61 either remained with Te Kura, moved to other education opportunities or started employment. Of the other 19 students, five moved out of the pilot area, three went to Youth Justice, three left for health reasons, and eight were identified as not engaged in the programme.

Exit data for other students (not foundation students)

Data provided by Te Kura shows that of those who joined the pilot after 2015 and who left before July 2017, 29 students left with NCEA Level 1, five with NCEA Level 2, and three with NCEA Level 3. This was achieved either during or post the pilot.

Of the 174 students who have left the pilot, 103 (71 percent) have continued in education (including 57 students remaining on Te Kura's roll), and 20 have gone into employment. The remaining 51 students exited and did not go on to further education or employment. Of these seven left for health reasons and six moved overseas.

Wellbeing and engagement data

Te Kura reports indicate the pilot programme makes a substantially positive difference to student engagement, wellbeing and achievement. The recently developed systems for gathering information on engagement, wellbeing and achievement are increasingly being used to report on the outcomes of the programme in relation to student wellbeing.

Te Kura is now using a student assessment tool to gauge students' engagement and wellbeing. The tool was adapted from ERO's *Wellbeing for success: Draft evaluation indicators for student wellbeing* (2013). This shows students' progress in the programme. Aggregated data indicates the substantial majority of students have self-assessed as making positive gains in wellbeing categories such as belonging and connection, resilience and feeling included. 76 percent of students recently surveyed reported they feel well supported in their learning and are achieving their learning goals. 90 percent of students enrolled in the first year, still in the pilot, have self-assessed as feeling well supported in their learning and achieving learning goals. Te Kura has recorded detailed explanations about the personal circumstances of the two remaining students and the wrap-around response undertaken to support them further.

Vision and practice of BPL

Since the previous review, there has been a substantial improvement in how Te Kura leaders have shared the vision, understanding and implementation of BPL across sites and among staff. Te Kura leaders have been explicit in setting clear expectations for practice in BPL. Senior leaders are making better use of information about the programme. They have implemented more targeted reporting about student progress, and greater sharing of information about how well the programme is being implemented, or how improvements to the programme have increased teacher knowledge and confidence about BPL.

Regional managers spoke positively to us about the programme and the pleasing impact this approach is having on teacher practice and student outcomes. Greater support for teachers in their practice has led to improved understanding of the philosophy and practice of BPL. Te Kura senior leaders have taken steps to support staff to monitor how they are including required elements of BPL and to gather information about how well each student's learning plan covers these elements. Elements of BPL being trialled are now evident in practice across the pilot.

Curriculum

The pilot curriculum has been both broadened and targeted more to respond to student needs. Pilot teachers and their advisory colleagues increasingly plan appropriate learning pathways, incorporating features of BPL that enhance student learning and progress.

'Building blocks' for BPL

A development since the last ERO review has been the implementation of a process for monitoring individual student progress in covering the 'Building Blocks of Big Picture Learning'. This development has increased teacher capability in understanding and implementing the integral aspects of BPL and made them more explicit in student programmes. *"BPL is finding relevance – job shadowing balanced with credits. This gives the extra motivation, extra reason to achieve. The curriculum falls out of their interests."* - Teacher

Students spoke confidently to us about their experience of different aspects of the 'Building Blocks of BPL' such as internships, job shadowing and career exploration, and the skills and confidence they have gained from these experiences. One student commented on his internship and job shadowing experiences: *"It gave me confidence. It helped me see I could be in the workforce. I made friends [in the pilot] and they gave me the confidence to go for a landscaping apprenticeship. I come to the pilot two days a week and work the other three days."* Another student said the internship *"taught me how to handle equipment and dealing with customers. It was a personal growth for me because I wasn't social. I used to be at home by myself all the time. Te Kura pilot helped me make friends and*

the social part. Then the internship had me talking to people and dealing with customers. I got worker of the week.”

Students also spoke about the value of goal setting and reviewing progress towards their goals. “[My ILP] helps me see where I’ve been, where I am at, where I am going and how I will get there.” All students on the pilot programme use ILPs to track their goals, and discuss and record achievement. This is a more focused and cohesive approach than was identified in the previous review.

Wellbeing

“We want to produce useful citizens with a positive sense of wellbeing. Most of the kids here are on the spectrum – they grow and flourish here. They come from disadvantaged backgrounds – we pick them up and carry them for a while till they can stand themselves. Many have mental health issues – this place works for them.” - Teacher

A significant finding during each phase of this evaluation is the positive impact the programme has had on the emotional wellbeing of the students. Te Kura has recently introduced a measure of student wellbeing that has the potential to compare aspects of the emotional and social progress of individuals and groups of students to show patterns, trends or concerns.

At most sites, pilot staff work extensively with external agencies to provide wrap-around, cohesive care and support for students. The way in which teachers and other adults in the pilot work to build students’ trust, and in many cases, parents’ trust, has been a positive feature of the pilot since it began. The time commitment of staff in this area of the pilot is considerable. Teachers get to know their students and their circumstances very well and are increasingly using these insights to support students to learn and achieve.

An important finding is that parents, in several sites, spoke to us about their fears that their children had previously been suicidal. Each of these parents said that they are no longer preoccupied by that fear.

“The pilot is a huge success - it saved my child’s life.” - Mother

“I trust that her teachers can grab her and hold her tight. I am not worried when I come home from work about what I will find. The teacher is our lifeline.” - Mother

“Sensing that they fit in here. I don’t care about NCEA credits. I just care that my daughter is alive and happy and well and positive about life.” - Mother

“We need to keep them alive and yet we put so much pressure on them as teenagers to be at school when they don’t fit.” - Mother

Several students also told ERO about the emotional support and growth they had experienced on the pilot and that the pilot had helped their confidence and self-esteem, and eased their anxiety and depression.

“In mainstream I couldn’t handle the people. I didn’t like going, I was bullied and no one did anything about it. I had bad anxiety and depression. Coming here was good. It helped my mental health coming here and my anxiety improved. In a place where I can learn.” - Student

“Correspondence and the pilot gives the opportunity for education to delinquents and people with mental and physical illnesses. It’s hard to keep up when you are shadowed by depression. But here you can keep up with the work as you can do it at your own pace with support, and work on NCEA assessments that you are interested in.” - Student

Engagement and belonging

Students [who enrol] feeling utterly adrift and alienated. The pilot makes them feel connected and have hope.” - Kaiārahi

Developing a strong sense of belonging and connectedness is a fundamental aspect of the programme. Relationships between the teachers and students and among students are pivotal in helping students to feel part of a group and included. This is especially important for students who have experienced teasing, bullying, and forms of isolation in their previous schooling. Teachers and, at most sites, older students, take responsibility for welcoming new students and actively promote a culture of care for others amongst the group. We noted the calm, respectful atmosphere at the pilot sites. Students reported they have made friends for the first time in their schooling:

“I feel like I fit in.” - Student

“I found my peeps. I found my tribe – we’re all quirky.” - Student

“Here they don’t force you to be something you’re not. You don’t have to fit into their square if you are a circle or a triangle. Here you get to be an individual.” -Student

“We are like a whānau – we’ve got each other’s backs.” - Student

Responsive pathways for the future

“I love the privilege of seeing kids that wouldn’t be achieving any other way. That they are coming, are engaged and are becoming functioning adults – that inspires me. Pushing them to realise that what you do now determines your future” - Kaiawhina

A substantial number of students have been in the pilot for some time. There is evidence of planning for their future learning and pathways. Teachers provide courses that offer NCEA assessments aligned with individual student interests and/or career pathways. Documentation (ILPs) now shows a clearer focus on developing future pathways for individual students. Students have greater access to work shadowing and work experience. Mentoring by adults in the community remains an area to expand in most pilots, but students reported that their confidence in dealing with others in a workplace had increased.

There is variation between pilots in the pathways followed by students. Some pilots appear to place greater emphasis on identifying careers and future employment for students; others plan more general courses and pathways. It is not clear whether such differences are the result of difference in the profile of pilot students, teacher emphasis or differing focus on BPL elements. Further exploration of these differences will be useful in evaluating the programme, site by site.

Some students have attended external training, such as a course provided by a major retailer. During the previous review, ERO found not all students were able to see or show the relevance of this experience to their own pathways. During this review, we found that students could identify more clearly the skills and personal attributes they had developed during this experience.

“Prison, benefits, drugs and alcohol was their future. How can we change that future?...[and] the statistics for suicide and in the youth justice system. We can scaffold a positive future with them.” - Subject teacher

“Students have the opportunity to have hope and a future and are hooked into something regularly. The progress with achievement can be slow so academic achievement does not reflect that they are actually growing exponentially because they are comfortable and safe.” - Teacher

Teaching and staffing

Since the previous report, greater provision of professional learning and development (PLD) has significantly improved teaching approaches in the pilot, in line with BPL elements. Senior leaders have further clarified expectations about the curriculum delivery needed to address these elements. Key new appointments have supported the sharing of effective practice, and Te Kura have formalised their performance management processes. Professional practice leaders have visited most sites to support and guide practice, reinforcing the implementation of BPL. Teachers have had more opportunities to share practice, including attending PLD days at one particular site. Several staff told ERO that this was valuable PLD in understanding how BPL can operate in a New Zealand context.

“The poster of BPL was just words on the wall. Then I went to Hastings and saw it living and coming to life.” - Teacher

“Hastings was eye-opening. I needed to see it in the context of it working. Then think – how could we do it? What if we....? Seeing and hearing the student exhibitions and knowing their back story was amazing. It made us reflect as a team what they do and what we could do in our place.” - Manager

“It helped me get a better handle on BPL. What it looked like in reality.” - Kaiawhina

A major, positive development since ERO’s Phase Three report has been the appointment, across pilot sites, of several new staff: pilot liaison teachers, a kaiārahi and a regional manager. New staff demonstrate clear understanding of the principles that underpin BPL and commitment to implementing BPL in a New Zealand context, aligned to *Te Whare Tapa Whā*.⁵ Appointing appropriately skilled staff has strengthened the programme along with providing more frequent opportunities for professional sharing with managers and teachers who are already familiar with the requirements of BPL. Regional and senior managers are aware of the importance of employing staff who have the capability to implement BPL. Reviewing and closely aligning job descriptions, PLD and appraisal processes to the expected approach is likely to embed and extend desired professional practice.

⁵ Durie, M. (1994). *Whaiora, Maori Health Development*. Auckland: Oxford University Press.

Sustainability and scalability

In ERO's view, the pilot programme has the potential to be sustained and scaled up. Expectations, procedures and systems to support programme implementation are substantially more robust than previously. There is sufficient evidence from the pilot to date that suggests BPL has been effective in improving the engagement and achievement of these at-risk learners.

More targeted PLD to share understanding of the critical elements of the pilot and to spread good practice has had a positive impact on the quality of curriculum planning and student progress. Better use of information about outcomes for students has led to greater understanding of the importance of all elements of the pilot and greater focus on student progress in learning. Students in two sites told us they were aware of the improvement in their achievement following the appointment of new teachers who guided them to set clear goals and monitor their own learning. ERO found there was evident enthusiasm for the future of BPL in Te Kura amongst regional managers, pilot teachers, and subject advisors who have been involved in the programme. Students and parents expressed their hope that the programme will continue.

Use of data to evaluate the impact of the pilot on different groups of students remains a challenge. To some extent, this is a result of the initial lack of clarity and detail in the agreement between the Ministry and Te Kura about reporting requirements. Pilot teachers and senior leaders collect and analyse information that is increasingly useful in showing how well the pilot has met individual students' needs. Te Kura is gathering information from each pilot site and analysing this to produce pilot-wide aggregated data on attendance, retention and achievement. They are yet to make use of the data to compare sites and evaluate the effectiveness and sustainability of the programme for specific groups of students, but have the capability to do so.

All students fit the criteria of 'alienation and/or psycho-social' gateway. Yet there has been no breakdown of more specific disaggregated data to identify to show if the programme better serves specific groups over others, for example psychosocial rather than Youth Justice, or by gender or ethnicity. It is important to note approximately half of the students enrolled in the pilot over the last three years have been Māori. Achievement data provided does not disaggregate Māori and non-Māori and this is an area for development. Further analysis of aggregated and comparative data to show a outcomes for different groups of students is needed to assure Te Kura leaders of the quality of the programme and where change or improvement is required.

Should the pilot be scaled up the Ministry and Te Kura would need to develop clearer expectations for internal evaluation, monitoring and reporting of outcomes, and for evidence that the reporting is shared and responded to.

Funding

Te Kura has been allocated an additional \$8,000 per student above the current FTE amount. This is a total of \$13,700 per student. Each site uses the funding in different ways. Some pilots are accommodated within Te Kura Advisories; others pay rent at community centres. Some provide transport to and from the pilot. This has a significant positive impact on attendance, retention and pastoral care, particularly in Auckland where most students do not live close to the pilot and are collected and dropped off by pilot staff. This contact contributes to building connections between students, their families and pilot staff. Other pilot sites pay for public transport to support student attendance. All pilots cover costs for transport to outings and other educational opportunities

students would not otherwise access. All students are provided with laptops and, in some cases, wifi access. STAR courses and other short courses are funded by the pilot. Variation in cost and evaluating the effectiveness of the outcomes of fund allocation will have a bearing on how the pilot can be sustained or scaled up.

Conclusion

“We need to de-systemise the students so they feel safe and not judged. We need to de-systemise the parents too [so they] know their child is accepted and supported despite absences or erratic behaviour.” - Team Leader of Te Kura Pilot

The sustainability of this pilot programme is dependent on how well Te Kura can maintain, review and improve the quality of systems and practices of BPL and plan to continue or expand the approach across Te Kura.

In this phase, ERO noted significant development in systems and practice that have led to improved delivery and outcomes. Senior leaders have put in place better guidelines for implementation and reporting on the programme, and on student achievement and progress. Senior leaders in Te Kura are better placed to evaluate improvement in teacher practice.

This improved practice has been well supported by appropriate PLD. Improved understanding of the purpose and greater use of the elements of BPL by teachers have contributed to the pilot's success. A significant development in this phase of the evaluation has been the evident commitment of staff at all levels of Te Kura to the vision and practice of BPL. Managers and teachers articulate the intention to continue and spread this approach to student learning in some form to all senior students in Te Kura. This development may be the result of shared PLD, of new appointments, or the overall direction of Te Kura. It is evident the vision is more widely understood and shared. In ERO's view, this has the potential to underpin sustainability of the pilot approach.

It is important for senior leaders to continue to identify processes and practices that have been established successfully, in terms of the purpose of the pilot, and to use relevant, high-quality data to evaluate and report their impact on student outcomes. Some improvements noted by ERO are relatively recent. Embedding, and planning how to maintain the essence and quality of the approach remains a challenge for Te Kura before the pilot comes to an end in a few months.

This pilot tests whether Te Kura can provide an alternative programme of learning to improve the NCEA achievement of at-risk learners. ERO's findings indicate that Te Kura can have a substantial impact on the achievement and progress of students who have enrolled in the pilot.

The findings from this phase of the evaluation indicate that implementing *all* elements of Te Kura's approach (BPL), in combination, improves students' wellbeing and their achievement in learning. The programme now provides a model of good teaching and learning practice that is student centred, includes family and whānau, and supports the student to be aware of their own goals and progress. It also supports these students to build pathways into the wider community and their adult lives.

The Ministry and Te Kura determined the background and characteristics of students who are enrolled in the pilot. These students are outside the 'mainstream' schooling system. The first ERO

report in 2015 noted the students enrolled in the pilot could not cope with mainstream schooling or mainstream schooling has been unable to cope with them. These students' personal circumstances and the schools' inability to meet their needs have resulted in prior prolonged absence from formal education.

While the scope of this evaluation on Te Kura's pilot does not include broader commentary on mainstream schooling it is important to acknowledge the observations of students, teachers, parents whose experience has led them to an alternative educational pathway. The voices of these groups has been a constant and clear theme throughout the phases of ERO's evaluation and has significant implications for schooling in New Zealand.

Recommendations

ERO recommends that Te Kura:

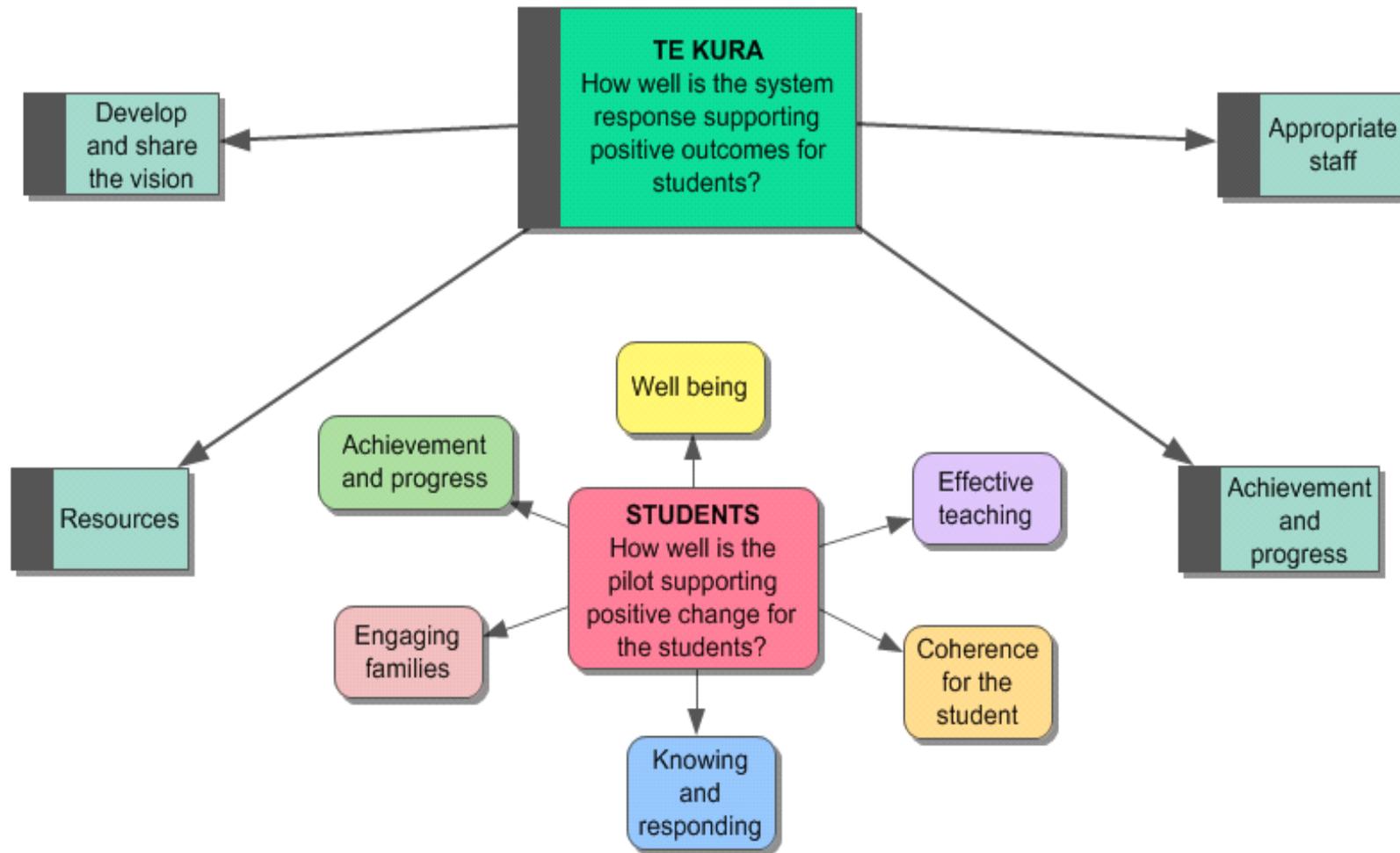
- continue to improve the use of information to evaluate and report on the effectiveness of the programme between sites and for specific groups of students
- review and refine the tools and processes for gathering data and analysing the effectiveness of the programme in developing student wellbeing
- continue to develop the pilot programme model to better align with the New Zealand context
- continue to develop systems that effectively support teachers' professional practice – i.e. job descriptions, appraisals, PLD
- ensure evaluative information based on student outcomes informs effective strategic planning to sustain and scale up programmes, so that Te Kura can continue to support the learning and progress of at-risk learners.

ERO recommends that the Ministry:

- clarify with Te Kura the indicators of successful student outcomes to consider at the completion of the pilot trial
- develop clearer expectations for ongoing evaluation, monitoring and reporting of outcomes, and for evidence that the reporting is shared and responded to
- continue to monitor the development of the programme through required reporting from Te Kura.

Appendix 1

ERO's evaluation framework puts the students at the centre, focusing on actions to support individual students and the approach Te Kura is developing, using and then able to sustain for these students.



Appendix 2

Investigative Questions and Prompts for Phase 4, Te Kura Pilot

Note: The **investigative questions** are the basis of the evaluation and inform the report.

The **prompts** guide reviewers in investigation and discussion to ensure the depth, breadth and consistency of evidence required to evaluate the programme in relation to the investigative questions. The prompts are not a checklist.

ERO will consider other relevant data or matters that may be identified by Te Kura.

Investigative question 1

What does Te Kura know about the achievement and learning outcomes of students who have been in the pilot?

Prompts

- What achievement results can Te Kura show for students in relation to NCEA Level 2, or the trajectory to achieve Level 2, and other national assessments?
- How clearly can Te Kura show that students have made accelerated progress in the programme?
- What information does Te Kura have about student retention, transition and destinations?
- How many of the current students have been in the programme since the outset? What is known about the destination and progress of the students who have left?
- How well do teachers and managers collect and use information about student progress and achievement? How is this used for internal evaluation and improvement? (At **student**: to establish learning needs, to set goals, pathways, monitor progress; **advisory**: to review curriculum provision, adapt programmes, review processes; **and national**: to review programme approaches-overall and at pilot sites, report on outcomes-overall and at pilot sites, provision of pld; **programme levels**)

Investigative question 2

How well can Te Kura show that the programme has made a difference to student engagement, wellbeing and achievement?

Prompts

- How well has the programme improved the engagement and achievement of Māori and Pacific students?
- How does the progress and achievement of these students compare with similar students in other TK programmes?
- How effectively has TK identified success factors and/or necessary attributes for success of the programme?

- How can TK show the value of additional funding (over and above funding for TK students at these year levels)-how has it been used? Re face-to-face support, work shadowing, mentoring etc

Investigative question 3

What are whānau and students telling ERO about the pilot outcomes?

Prompts

- How effectively has TK involved students and whānau in planning and reporting on individual student progress?
- What successes do whānau and students attribute to the pilot programme?

Investigative question 4

How well placed is TK to evaluate the outcomes of the programme?

Prompts

- How well does TK management identify the successes of the programme?
- How effectively has TK built on and spread programme successes?
- What changes has TK made or would make to this or other programmes for at-risk learners, based on learnings from the pilot?

Appendix 3

Students Questions - these questions were used as a guide to prompt responses from students

- What went well in the programme?
- What didn't go so well in the programme
- Thinking about this year (or since you have been in this programme):
 - What is going well?
 - What do you think could be improved?
- What are your goals/what are you going to achieve this year/since you joined the pilot?
- Tell us about the teachers/the mentor and how he/she has helped you?

These questions should allow students to comment on all the 'building blocks' of authentic learning, as appropriate to their experience in the pilot.

- Thinking about last year:
How familiar are you with these: (NB some students may identify without using the terminology)
 - Advisory
 - Goal setting
 - Journaling
 - ILP
 - Interest exploration
 - Careers exploration
 - Passion projects
 - Informational interviews
 - Job shadowing
 - Internships
 - Exhibitions

Parent Questions

From your viewpoint, how has the pilot programme:

- got to know your child and is providing for his/her learning and wellbeing?
- invited you to participate in and contribute to the learning of your child?
- communicated with you about the learning and wellbeing of your child?
- What factors have contributed to the progress your child has made since enrolling in the programme?
- How is the transition to next year/out of the programme going?
- What are you and your son/daughter wanting to achieve this year (or at the end of the programme)?