

# **Educational Equity in New Zealand: Successes, Challenges and Opportunities**

Prepared by  
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- Victoria University of Wellington School of Government

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*He aha te mea nui o te ao.*

What is the most important thing in the world?

*He tangata, he tangata, he tangata.*

It is the people, it is the people, it is the people.

- Māori whakataukāki

Kei aku nui, kei aku rahi. Mokori anō kia rere a mihi ki te kāhui tāngata i taunaki mai ai i te manu kai mātauranga nei kia whakatutuki i ngā whāinga o tēnei tuinga roa.

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Finally, I want to thank the phenomenal educators, school leaders and students who spent time with me during my research. My visits to New Zealand's schools fuelled the time spent on this report. Because of you, I know that with the right support, New Zealand is positioned to make great strides towards educational equity. Thank you for your wisdom, your candour, your manaakitanga, your good humour, and for sharing your energy and passion with me.

Sarah Bolton  
Wellington, August 2017

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In this paper, I seek to answer five key questions related to educational equity in New Zealand:

- Why should educational equity be a national priority for New Zealand?
- What is the historical context for educational equity in New Zealand?
- How are New Zealand learners faring?
- What are the challenges and opportunities in New Zealand's education system? and
- What can the New Zealand government do to reduce educational inequity?

I also include a chapter on the structure of New Zealand's education system to provide context for those less familiar with the system.

An equitable education system is one where all students, regardless of their ethnicity, socioeconomic status or abilities, can succeed. Educational equity is a pressing social challenge in New Zealand, as it is in many countries around the world. All children and young people deserve access to a high-quality education that prepares them for success later in life, no matter their ethnicity, where they live or how much money their parents make. Unfortunately, this vision is not yet reality in New Zealand. While the country's education system performs well overall, large equity gaps still remain for Māori, Pasifika and low-socioeconomic status students.

The urgency to ensure the country's education system works for all learners is increasing as New Zealand sees its demographics shift. Current population projections show that Māori and Pasifika children will make up the majority of primary school students by 2040. At the same time, more and more jobs in New Zealand require tertiary qualifications, meaning that the education system needs to be preparing more learners to enter and succeed in tertiary education. Additionally, because of the history of colonisation in New Zealand, a moral imperative exists to better support and engage with Māori communities under the Treaty of Waitangi. This extends to providing an education system that allows Māori students to succeed 'as Māori.'

New Zealand is providing a high-quality education for the majority of its students. On international assessments, the country consistently performs above the average. However, the results for Māori and Pasifika students fall among the lowest-performing Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries. There are also gaps in the National Certificate of Educational Attainment (NCEA) levels attained by Māori and Pasifika learners, as well as a lower rate of these students meeting National Standards.

New Zealand's current education system has inherent opportunities and challenges that can both help and hinder efforts to address inequities. It is a system built on a high level of trust in education professionals at the local level. This allows maximum flexibility for school leaders and educators to design a curriculum and services to truly meet the needs of their local communities. In an ideal situation, this work would be done in close collaboration with whānau, hāpu and iwi. This autonomy empowers teachers to make pedagogical decisions based on their student's needs. However, such an autonomous system can lack real accountability, and can also lead to increased levels of isolation, competition between schools and a lack of resources. And while New Zealand has clearly-articulated national expectations and goals for priority learner groups, these visions are not always borne out in practice, and can be undermined by teachers' unconscious bias and lower expectations for Māori and Pasifika students.

Based on a synthesis of around 100 interviews and 20 school visits, my paper includes a set of recommendations for the New Zealand government. These recommendations represent steps the government could take to reduce educational inequities in its primary and secondary education system. The recommendations are:

#### ***Practices in schools***

- Encourage schools to move away from within-class ability grouping towards more evidence-based practices; and
- Increase the capability and capacity of schools to use data to inform practice and decision making.

#### ***How resources are allocated***

- Use potential upcoming changes in school funding to increase equity and encourage schools to align their spending with what research shows works; and
- Ensure that resources provided for and through Kāhui Ako are being targeted to the schools and students most in need of support.

#### ***Design of education systems***

- Increase equity in the NCEA system by removing the cost of NCEA for some families and further investigating how to improve NCEA pathways for all students;
- Provide consistent, targeted support for implementation of *Ka Hikitia* and the *Pasifika Education Plan*, and evaluate these efforts to inform future investments; and
- Reduce school segregation by managing school choice.



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## PREFACE

Throughout this report, I will use the phrase ‘priority learners’ to refer to students who, as the Education Review Office summarises, ‘are groups of students who have been identified as historically not experiencing success in the New Zealand schooling system.’<sup>1</sup> This term includes Māori, Pasifika, low-socioeconomic status (low-SES) students and students with special learning needs.

Māori are the indigenous people of New Zealand – the tangata whenua. Māori live throughout New Zealand and are affiliated with an iwi, or tribe. Iwi are comprised of hāpu, or sub-tribes. Hāpu are comprised of whānau, or families.

The Ministry of Education uses the term ‘Pasifika’ to refer ‘to those peoples who have migrated from Pacific nations and territories. It also refers to the New Zealand-based (and born) population, who identify as Pasifika, via ancestry or descent.’<sup>2</sup> This term does not refer to a single culture, ethnicity or heritage. It includes a diverse population who may identify themselves with Samoa, the Cook Islands, Tonga, Niue, Fiji, Tokelau or other Pacific islands. I will use the term ‘Pasifika’ throughout my report as it is the term commonly used by the Ministry of Education. I will use the term ‘Pacific Peoples’ when referring to people residing in the Pacific Islands.

As Statistics New Zealand notes, ‘there is a lack of agreement of what term best describes the largest ethnic group in New Zealand. For example, some people prefer ‘Pākehā’ and others prefer ‘New Zealand European.’<sup>3</sup> I will use the term ‘Pākehā’ throughout my report, in reference to New Zealanders of European background.

Due to time constraints, I had to limit the scope of my paper within the topic of educational equity. Although New Zealand’s early childhood education and tertiary education systems certainly have their own accomplishments and challenges with equity, I focused my research only on primary and secondary education. I did not delve into the gap that exists between Asian students, who have high levels of performance and who are a growing population in New Zealand, and their peers. I also did not include issues of equity for students with special learning needs, which is an area worthy of further study. And finally, I did not focus on gender inequities in the New Zealand school system.

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<sup>1</sup> Education Review Office (2012)

<sup>2</sup> Airini and others (2010)

<sup>3</sup> Statistics New Zealand (2001)

When I arrived in New Zealand, I assumed that I would be focusing my research on the gaps between low-SES students and their peers. This is because in United States education policy, the major national focus is on providing assistance to students who live in poverty, not to specific ethnic groups. However, when I arrived in New Zealand, I found that there was much more of a focus on the success of Māori and Pasifika students specifically. Because of that, my paper also primarily focuses on Māori and Pasifika learners, instead of students from low-SES backgrounds.<sup>4</sup> My paper also has more content related to Māori learners than Pasifika learners. This is not borne out of a lack of interest, but because there is simply more academic research and policy focus on Māori.

I have by no means touched on every issue related to educational equity for Māori, Pasifika and low-SES learners. Because of the limited time available to me, I had to make decisions to focus on some factors and issues and not others. Areas I would have liked to delve into further include initial teacher preparation, diversity in the teaching workforce, teacher shortages and teacher turnover, particularly in rural and low-SES communities, the role of school boards and involvement of families in schools.

A glossary of te reo Māori words used can be found in Appendix A.

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<sup>4</sup> See page 19 for information on linkages between Māori and Pasifika ethnicity and poverty.

## INTRODUCTION

Educational equity is a pressing civil rights issue in New Zealand, as it is in many countries around the world. All children and young people deserve access to a high-quality education that prepares them for success later in life, no matter their ethnicity, where they live or how much money their parents make. Unfortunately, this vision is not yet reality in New Zealand. While the country's education system performs well overall, large equity gaps still remain for Māori, Pasifika and low-SES students.

In this paper, I seek to answer five key questions related to educational equity in New Zealand:

- Why should educational equity be a national priority for New Zealand?
- What is the historical context for educational equity in New Zealand?
- How are New Zealand learners faring?
- What are the challenges and opportunities in New Zealand's education system? and
- What can the New Zealand government do to reduce educational inequity?

This is a key moment in time for New Zealand's government to look closely at its efforts to address educational inequity. There are many changes happening in education policy in New Zealand, including a recent update to the Education Act,<sup>5</sup> an organisation of schools into Communities of Learning/Kāhui Ako,<sup>6</sup> and a significant update to the nation's school funding system.<sup>7</sup> With a national election in September 2017, a new government will be in place later this year. Additionally, a number of key Ministry of Education documents outlining the government's plans for Māori and Pasifika students expire in 2017, including *Ka Hikitia: Accelerating Success 2013-2017* and the *Pasifika Education Plan 2013-2017*.<sup>8</sup> All of these events create an atmosphere that is ripe for a review of the education system's outcomes for priority learners.

I believe that the will to tackle this challenge in New Zealand is building, and an increasing number of key voices are speaking up about the need to ensure all children in New Zealand are receiving a high-quality education. New Zealand is one of many countries confronting this problem. The World Bank, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) are all focusing significant attention and resources on closing education equity gaps.<sup>9,10,11</sup> Developed countries around the world, including the United States, are increasingly focused on this issue, with the understanding that systemic inequities cannot be allowed to persist in countries where equality is a closely held, if aspirational, value.

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<sup>5</sup> Ministry of Education (2017), *Ed Act Update – the Education (Update) Amendment Act of 2017*

<sup>6</sup> See page 38 for more information on Kāhui Ako.

<sup>7</sup> See page 35 for more information the school funding review.

<sup>8</sup> See page 43 for more information on *Ka Hikitia* and the *Pasifika Education Plan*.

<sup>9</sup> World Bank (2011)

<sup>10</sup> OECD (2012)

<sup>11</sup> UNESCO (2015)

It will not be easy to reduce educational inequities in New Zealand's school system. The issue is multifactorial and in part stems from wider societal issues, and it is politically thorny. To truly tackle inequity, every decision made, from the national government and at the school level, needs to be weighed with an eye to improving equity of opportunities and outcomes. Sustained changes leading to educational equity could take quite some time, although there should be no lack of urgency.

There are no easy answers to fixing inequities in the world's education systems, which makes policymaking on the issue a challenge. However, I feel optimistic that New Zealand is well-positioned to tackle the issue. New Zealand is a very socially progressive country.<sup>12</sup> This means that the political and social conditions in New Zealand should make the changes needed to address inequities easier than in less-progressive countries. Additionally, the system is a manageable size compared to the education systems in many developed nations and the education system is not as complex as many others. This means that effective interventions could be scaled up more quickly than in larger, more complicated, multi-levelled systems. Finally, New Zealand has many resources, both human and fiscal, to apply to the challenge.

To inform my research, I conducted about 100 semi-structured interviews, the majority of which were in person. These interviews were with stakeholders across the education system, including individuals working for the Ministry of Education national office, Ministry of Education regional offices, Education Review Office, Education Council, Treasury, Ministry for Vulnerable Children/Oranga Tamariki, Parliament, academia, membership organisations, professional learning and development (PLD) providers, unions, not-for-profit organisations, researchers, and think tanks, as well as with school principals and other school leaders, school board members, teachers and students.

This paper also leans on what I learned in the 20 primary and secondary schools I visited while in New Zealand. These schools were located in South Auckland (five schools), Tai Tokerau (four schools), Wellington (two schools) and Canterbury (nine schools). I chose a broad representative sample of schools to visit, including:

- State schools, state-integrated schools, designated character schools and partnership schools;
- Schools in deciles one to eight;
- Primary, middle, intermediate, secondary and composite schools;
- Co-educational schools, boys' schools and girls' schools;
- Schools with a variety of ethnic diversity, including schools where almost all students were of one ethnicity;
- English-medium schools, Māori-medium schools and schools with Māori-immersion units; and
- Schools in urban, suburban and rural areas on both the North and South Island.

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<sup>12</sup> Porter, M. and Stern, S. with Green, M. (2017)

My hope is that this paper will add to the urgency to tackle educational inequities in New Zealand. I approached the included recommendations from a pragmatic perspective. The recommendations provide concrete steps that can be taken, given the current political and social climate, to further close equity gaps. Indeed, even if they were all carried out, there would still be ongoing work to do to continue to build an education system that is truly designed to rectify inequities, uphold the Treaty of Waitangi, and provide every student in New Zealand with a world-class education.

## **1 WHY SHOULD EDUCATIONAL EQUITY BE A NATIONAL PRIORITY FOR NEW ZEALAND?**

As in the United States and many other countries, educational equity in New Zealand is a pressing social issue. Solving it is important from both a moral and an economic perspective. New Zealand has long possessed a national identity based on the values of equality and a level playing field for its citizens. Leslie Lipson, an American political science professor at Victoria University in Wellington said that ‘in New Zealand, if any sculptured allegory were to be placed at the approaches of Auckland or Wellington harbor, it would assuredly be a statue of Equality.’<sup>13</sup>

An equitable education system is one where all students, regardless of their ethnicity, socioeconomic status or abilities, can succeed. Educational equity is comprised of multiple factors, including:

1. The ‘achievement gap’: the educational attainment gaps seen between different student groups. In New Zealand, and in this report, the primary focus in terms of achievement gaps has been on students from high socio-economic backgrounds and students from low socio-economic backgrounds, and the academic attainment gaps seen between Pākehā and their non-Pākehā peers, particularly Māori and Pasifika students; and
2. The ‘opportunity gap’: inequities in access to resources or education and social opportunities that can lead to achievement gaps.

As population demographics shift, closing equity gaps is going to be increasingly important in New Zealand. Currently, Māori and Pasifika students comprise more than a third of the student population in New Zealand, and those groups are projected to increase at a faster rate than the country’s overall population.<sup>14</sup> As Figure 1 shows, the share of New Zealand’s population identifying as European is projected to shrink over the next two decades. Current population projections show that Māori and Pasifika children will make up the majority of primary school students by 2040.<sup>15</sup> From both economic and moral perspectives, this trend makes the need to design an education system that works for non-Pākehā students even more urgent and important.

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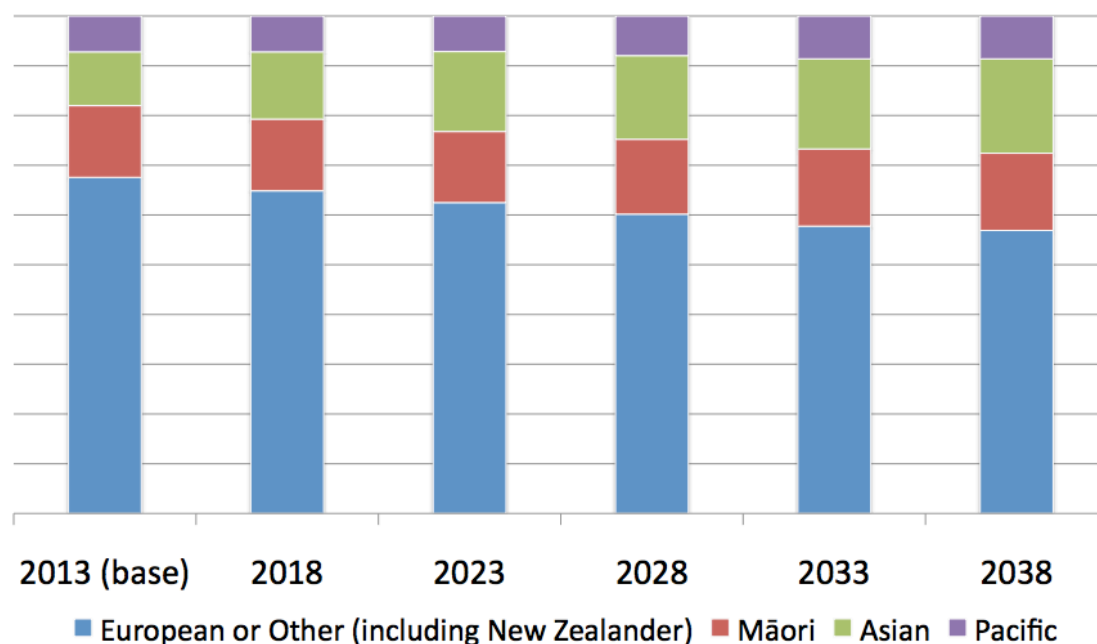
<sup>13</sup> Lipson, L. (2011)

<sup>14</sup> Statistics New Zealand (2017)

<sup>15</sup> Alton-Lee, A. (2003)



**Figure 1: Ethnic share of New Zealand population, median projection, 2013 (base)-2038**



<sup>16</sup> Adapted from: Statistics New Zealand (2017), *National Ethnic Population Projections: 2013 (base)-2038(update)*, 18 May 2017, press release. Retrieved 20 July from [http://www.stats.govt.nz/browse\\_for\\_stats/population/estimates\\_and\\_projections/NationalEthnicPopulationProjections\\_MR2013-2038.aspx](http://www.stats.govt.nz/browse_for_stats/population/estimates_and_projections/NationalEthnicPopulationProjections_MR2013-2038.aspx)

Achievement gaps often can stem from inequality of opportunity, where students from minority or low socio-economic backgrounds do not have access to an education that is on par with their peers. If pervasive opportunity gaps exist, they can create a system wherein less-advantaged students experience severe difficulty in obtaining an education that fully prepares them for tertiary education and the workplace. Additionally, systemic educational inequality has very real impacts on communities and national economies, since many citizens are left unprepared to fully participate in the workforce and civic life.

Because of the history of colonisation in New Zealand, the government articulates that a moral imperative exists to better support and engage with Māori communities under the Treaty of Waitangi (see page 16). This extends to providing an education that allows Māori students to excel. As outlined in *Ka Hikitia – Accelerating Education Success 2013-2017*, the government believes that ‘ensuring Māori students enjoy and achieve education success as Māori is a joint responsibility of the Crown (represented by the Ministry of Education and other education sector agencies/departments) and iwi, hapū and whānau.’<sup>17</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Statistics New Zealand (2017)

<sup>17</sup> Ministry of Education (2013)

Further, improving education for all students in New Zealand will have positive fiscal effects for the government. An analysis by the New Zealand Treasury suggests that if student achievement in New Zealand was increased to be among the top OECD countries, GDP would be 3-15 per cent higher by 2070.<sup>18</sup> The share of jobs in New Zealand requiring higher levels of education is increasing. At the same time, as Māori and Pasifika populations continue to grow,<sup>19</sup> they will represent an even greater percentage of the workforce. Table 1 below, drawn from the OECD's 2017 Economic Survey of New Zealand, illustrates this trend. Unless the equity gap in New Zealand closes, the country will be increasingly unable to fill job vacancies with its own citizens.

**Table 1: Share of New Zealand jobs requiring high, medium and low levels of education in 1991 and the percentage point change in share of employment from 1991-2011**

	Average share employment in 1991	Percentage point change in employment share from 1991 to 2011
High level of education	35.4	9.5
Middle level of education	48.6	-7.1
Low level of education	16	-2.5

<sup>20</sup> Adapted from: OECD (2017), *OECD Economic Surveys New Zealand*. Retrieved 17 June 2017 from <http://www.oecd.org/newzealand/economic-survey-new-zealand.htm>

Increasing educational attainment reduces the chances of involvement in the criminal justice system, which has positive social and fiscal implications.<sup>21</sup> About 65 per cent of prisoners in the New Zealand corrections system do not have National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) Level 1<sup>22</sup> literacy and numeracy competency.<sup>23</sup> New Zealand now incarcerates approximately 10,000 prisoners,<sup>24</sup> and in 2011 the average prisoner was costing the government \$90,936 per year.<sup>25</sup> Although this data is not released regularly, it is likely that costs have increased over the past six years. About 62 per cent of the prison population is Māori (50.8 per cent) or Pasifika (11.4 per cent). This is a stunning statistic when compared with the fact that only 15 per cent of New Zealand's population identified as Māori in 2013, and seven per cent as Pasifika.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> New Zealand Treasury (2013)

<sup>19</sup> Statistics New Zealand (2017)

<sup>20</sup> OECD (2017)

<sup>21</sup> Lochner, L., and Enrico, M. (2003)

<sup>22</sup> See page 13 for a description of NCEA.

<sup>23</sup> Department of Corrections (2017)

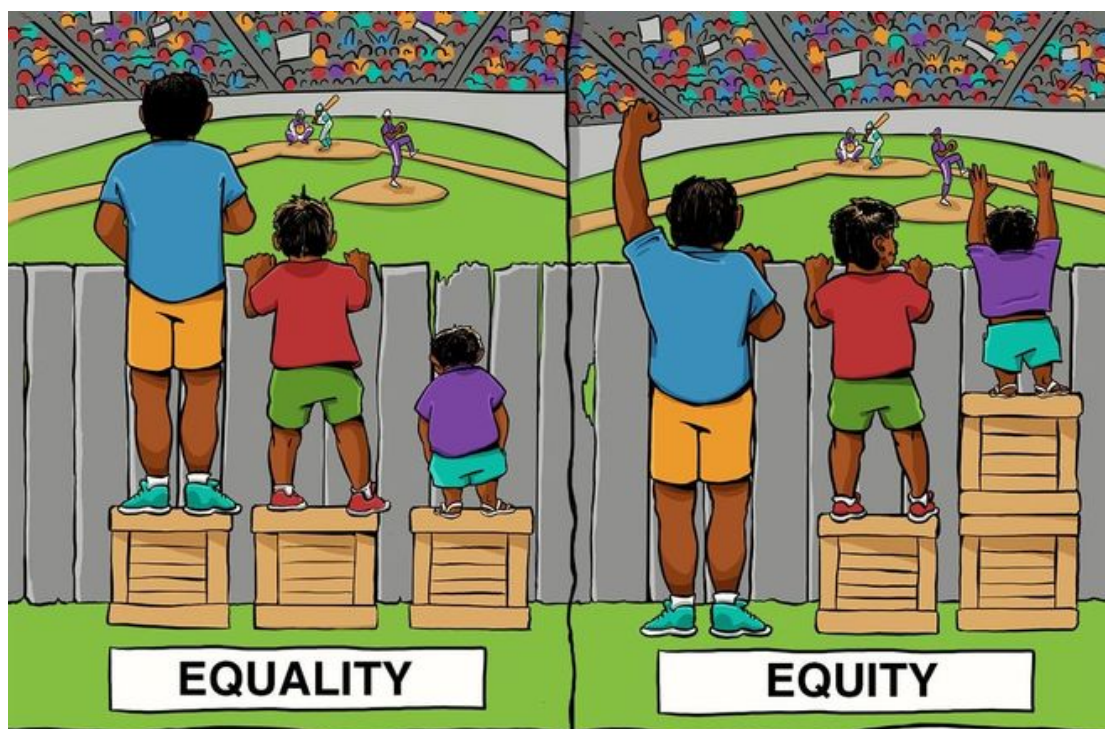
<sup>24</sup> Department of Corrections (2016)

<sup>25</sup> The Howard League (2015)

<sup>26</sup> Statistics New Zealand (2015)

It is important to note that providing an equal education to all students is not necessarily the same as providing an equitable education. Because some students have barriers to education brought on by historical inequities, they may need more or different services than students who have historical or social advantages. An equitable education system would lead to equality of outcomes. This concept is illustrated in Figure 2 below. In the box on the left, the individuals are being provided with equal resources and opportunities. In the box on the right, the individuals are being provided with equitable resources and opportunities.

**Figure 2: Illustrating the difference between equality and equity**



<sup>27</sup> Source: Interaction Institute for Social Change (2016), *Illustrating Equality vs. Equity*. Retrieved 4 May 2017 from <http://interactioninstitute.org/illustrating-equality-vs-equity/>

In New Zealand, some groups argue that policies and programmes based on ethnicity are unfair because they are unequal.<sup>28</sup> However, the reality is that it is unfair *not* to target supports towards groups of people who have historically been disenfranchised by the social system. As former Minister of Education Anne Tolley wrote in 2009, ‘it is the right of every learner to be successful and the education system must deliver on this entitlement.’<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Interaction Institute for Social Change (2016)

<sup>28</sup> Martin, M. (2016)

<sup>29</sup> Ministry of Education (2009)

## 2 HOW IS NEW ZEALAND'S EDUCATION SYSTEM STRUCTURED?

An understanding of New Zealand's current education system must start with an understanding of the major policy changes enacted almost three decades ago. In 1989, New Zealand's education system underwent a sea change with the Tomorrow's Schools policies, which led to the current education system structure. Tomorrow's Schools drastically shifted financial resources and decision-making to individual schools and school boards. The system is now based on a high level of trust in education professionals, under the assumption that local teachers and communities are best positioned to help their own students achieve.

Under Tomorrow's Schools, the Ministry of Education replaced the larger Department of Education, which the 1988 Picot Report had called 'inefficient and unresponsive.'<sup>30</sup> Regional education boards were scrapped. Elected school boards of trustees were tasked with drafting school charters.<sup>31</sup> A recently-enacted policy change will replace school charters with four-year strategic plans and yearly implementation plans.

In the wake of Tomorrow's Schools, New Zealand's primary and secondary education system manages to be both somewhat centralised and highly autonomous. With a stated purpose to 'lift aspiration, raise educational achievement for every New Zealander,'<sup>32</sup> the Ministry of Education (the Ministry) is considered to be the 'steward' of the country's education system.<sup>33</sup> Generally, this means that the Ministry provides funding, supportive service and advice to schools, while schools hold most decision-making authority. The Ministry has a more hands-on role in the management of school facilities, most of which are owned by the government.

In addition to its primary office in Wellington, the Ministry utilises a system of ten regional offices to provide support and advice to schools. The majority of Ministry staff work out of the regional offices. The role of the regional offices has increased in recent years, and likely will continue to increase as the Ministry rolls out school- and community-based policies like Kāhui Ako.<sup>34</sup>

Schools are led by a principal and governance oversight is provided by a board of trustees. Boards are comprised of elected parent representatives, elected staff members and, in secondary schools, an elected student representative. Elections are held every three years.

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<sup>30</sup> Ministry for Culture and Heritage (n.d.)

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ministry of Education (n.d.), *Our purpose, vision and behaviours*

<sup>33</sup> New Zealand Government (2016)

<sup>34</sup> See page 38 for more information about Kāhui Ako.

Schooling is compulsory in New Zealand between the ages of six and 16, although most Kiwi children start at age five and continue through age 17.<sup>35</sup> Schooling is broken up into 13 year levels, with primary education from Year 1 to Year 8 (age 5- about 12 years old), and secondary education from Year 9 to Year 13 (about 13 to 17 years old).<sup>36</sup>

New Zealand's education system encourages competition and supports a variety of types of schools, including:

- State schools, which make up the majority of schools in New Zealand. State schools are owned and funded by the state;
- State-integrated schools, which were private schools in the past but now receive state funding for school operation costs on the same basis as state schools. State-integrated schools retain and are responsible for their own property;<sup>37</sup>
- Māori-medium schools, which are a type of state school that provide instruction in te reo Māori for 51-100 per cent of the school time. Māori-medium schools utilise a specialised curriculum called Te Marautanga o Aotearoa, and incorporate a Māori worldview throughout the students' education. In some areas, a full Māori-medium educational continuum is available for students, beginning in early childhood education at te kōhanga reo through to tertiary education at wānanga;
- Partnership schools, which are similar in concept to American charter schools; and
- Private schools, which have lower levels of accountability to the state, can utilise their own curriculum and receive a small amount of government funding but are primarily run through fees.

While New Zealand schools retain a large amount of autonomy, they operate within National Guidelines which include a National Curriculum. New Zealand also has National Standards specified for reading, writing and mathematics. All state and state-integrated schools must implement the National Curriculum, which includes specific subject areas, such as English, Mathematics and Statistics and Science, as well as 'key competencies' such as thinking, managing self and participating and contributing. The National Standards outline what students should know and be able to do in mathematics, reading and writing at age-related levels. Despite these nationalised standards and curriculum, there is a general sense that the National Curriculum is not prescriptive and schools still retain a great deal of autonomy in designing the specifics of the school-based curriculum for their students.

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<sup>35</sup> Ministry of Education (n.d.), *Education in New Zealand*

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> State-integrated schools were established by the Private Schools Conditional Integration Act in 1975 when the Catholic schools system was on the verge of financial crisis.

NCEA is the secondary school qualification system. NCEA can be achieved at three levels, with one being the lowest and three being the highest. NCEA Level 3 qualification would show that a student is academically prepared to continue study of that subject at the tertiary level. NCEA Level 2 would indicate that a student has achieved the minimum level of education necessary to give them reasonable future education and employment opportunities. The New Zealand government recently set a target, which was met, of 85 per cent of 18-year-olds achieving NCEA Level 2 or an equivalent qualification by 2017.<sup>38</sup> NCEA is administered by the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA), which provides quality assurance for the assessments.

The Tomorrow's Schools reforms also led to the establishment of a new government department, the Education Review Office (ERO). ERO provides a mechanism for independent review and accountability reporting in the New Zealand education system. In collaboration with schools, the organisation evaluates individual school performance and provides recommendations for improvement when necessary. ERO reports to the Minister of Education, but has statutory autonomy from the Ministry of Education, and its evaluation reports provide review of education policies.

ERO utilises a framework called the School Evaluation Indicators to encourage school self-review, as well as to carry out ERO-led school reviews, which occur about every two to five years depending on school performance. These indicators and examples of best practice are focused on student improvement and provide frameworks around management and governance, equity and excellence, creating relationships, pedagogy, cultural responsiveness, professional learning and evaluation.<sup>39</sup> ERO is highly focused on outcomes for Māori and Pasifika learners, and also plays a role in addressing underperforming schools. Schools that are underperforming will receive more frequent ERO reviews than those with strong outcomes for all of their students. Additionally, ERO will recommend specific actions and interventions to address concerns found in schools, and follow up on those recommendations in subsequent reviews.

The Education Council of Aotearoa also plays an important role in New Zealand's education system. The organisation, funded through teacher fees, serves as the professional organisation for the country's approximately 50,000 educators.<sup>40</sup> The Council seeks to raise the status of the teaching profession and support best practices for teaching, and also sets teaching standards and supervises registration of new teachers. Starting January 2018, the Education Council will also be responsible for administering the government's new PLD programme.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> State Services Commission (2013)

<sup>39</sup> Education Review Office (2016)

<sup>40</sup> Ministry of Education (n.d.), *Teaching Staff*

<sup>41</sup> See page 46 for information on the new PLD programme.

### 3 WHAT IS THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT FOR EDUCATIONAL EQUITY IN NEW ZEALAND?

It is important to examine the history of colonisation in New Zealand and in the Pacific Islands in order to fully understand its lasting impacts on inequity in the country's education system. Māori journalist Nadine Millar wrote that: 'Education has long been used as a way of normalising one set of ideas and values over another. It is colonisation by stealth. A battle for our hearts and minds, using words and ideas as weapons.'<sup>42</sup> Both Māori in New Zealand and Pacific Peoples in the islands endured systemic attacks via education on their languages and cultures, as well as lack of opportunities within the European education system, the effects of which still endure today.

#### Māori

New Zealand was uninhabited until the 13th century, when early Polynesian settlers discovered the islands. While the groups who settled the land are now collectively referred to as Māori, they are made up of tribal groupings known as iwi and did not identify themselves as a wider group until after Europeans arrived.<sup>43</sup>

Before European arrival, informal education played a significant role in Māori communities. Jones *et al.* explain that:

Prior to the arrival of Pākehā people in Aotearoa, Māori had a sophisticated and functional system of education. This system consisted of a powerful knowledge base, a complex oral tradition and a dynamic ability to respond to new challenges and changing needs. The traditional system of education, while complex and diverse, was also fully integrated in that skills, teaching and learning were rationalised and sanctioned through a highly intricate knowledge base. The linking of skills, rationale and knowledge was often mediated through the use of specific rituals.<sup>44</sup>

However, as missionaries began to arrive in New Zealand, they saw education of Māori as key to spreading religion to tangata whenua.<sup>45</sup> The first mission school for Māori was set up in 1816, state funding of mission schools began in 1847 and the Native Schools system was initiated by Parliament in 1867.<sup>46</sup> Early education efforts, undertaken by missionaries, were focused on teaching Māori to read and write in their native language and Māori were eager participants.<sup>47</sup> Literacy rates increased quickly, with about half of Māori adults reading te reo Māori and a third writing it by the late 1850s.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Millar, N. (2017)

<sup>43</sup> Howe, K. R. (2005)

<sup>44</sup> Jones, A. and others (1995)

<sup>45</sup> Calman, R. (2012)

<sup>46</sup> Simon, Judith (1998)

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Simon, J. (1998)

However, the expansion of the government's Native Schools system into villages around the country decreased focus on the Māori language, as English was expected to be the language of instruction. James Pope, the first Organizing Inspector of Native Schools, clearly stated that the goals of the Native Schools system were to 'bring an untutored but intelligent and high-spirited people into line with our civilisation and by placing in Māori settlements European school buildings and European families to serve as teachers, especially as exemplars of a new and more desirable mode of life.'<sup>49</sup>

European settlers and missionaries utilised the Native Schools system as a tool of colonisation, using both encouragement and force within the system to 'civilise' Māori and discourage tikanga and matauranga Māori, including the speaking of te reo Māori. For the Native Schools system's first 60 years, the Department of Education enforced a focus on a British education that did not value te ao Māori. This included discouraging traditional Māori cultural activities such as poi and haka.<sup>50</sup> It also meant that teachers were banned from speaking to their students in te reo Māori. A 1930 Department of Education instruction booklet for teachers demanded: 'Do not speak to your pupils in Māori, and do not permit them to speak in Māori to you, or to one another, if you can help it. The less they hear of Māori the better it will be for their English. Do not... give orders in Māori, or attempt explanations.'<sup>51</sup> While the Department of Education did not give instructions to teachers to physically discipline children who spoke Māori in school, there are many accounts of children who were 'strapped' or caned for the offence.<sup>52</sup>

It was not until the 1930s that a new policy of 'cultural adaptation' came into play and te ao Māori was, to some extent, allowed back into classrooms and the curriculum of the Native Schools system.<sup>53</sup> While the curriculum was still focused on the English language and encouraging a Pākehā way of life, waiata and the making of traditional crafts, such as flax weaving and wood carving, began to be incorporated back into schools.<sup>54</sup>

In 1962 a report by the Commission on Education called Māori education 'an area of concern' and recommended that 'every endeavour be made to complete the transfer of Māori schools to board control within a period of approximately 10 years.'<sup>55</sup> This transfer to board control occurred in 1969, ending the Native Schools System.<sup>56</sup>

After World War II, due to economic shifts, the Māori population began to move away from rural to urban areas. This led to a population of urbanised Māori who were products of an inferior education system separated from their traditional homes and ways of life.<sup>57</sup> It is no surprise then that the inequities already inherent in the New Zealand social structure further solidified during this period.

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<sup>49</sup> *Appendix to the Journals of the House of Representatives* (1900)

<sup>50</sup> Simon, Judith (1998)

<sup>51</sup> Williams, D. (2001)

<sup>52</sup> Simon, Judith (1998)

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Commission on Education in New Zealand (1962)

<sup>56</sup> Barrington, J. (2008)

<sup>57</sup> Meredith, P. (2015)



The Treaty of Waitangi, signed in 1840, serves as New Zealand's founding document, and was an agreement between the British Crown and Māori iwi. Following the signing of the Treaty, New Zealand became part of the British Empire, and those who lived in the country, including Māori, became subjects of the Crown. However, a shared understanding of the intent of the Treaty was lacking, as the text of the English and Māori versions of the document did not communicate the same meaning.

Beginning in the 1970s, seeking redress under the Treaty and coinciding with the broader international indigenous rights movement, Māori increased lobbying and advocating for cultural and language revitalisation. As a part of this effort, Māori leaders came together to establish kōhanga reo, or 'language nests.' Kōhanga reo were created in response to concern about the decline in use of te reo Māori. The first kōhanga reo opened in 1982, and the idea spread quickly. As these kōhanga reo students began to enter primary school, primary-level kura kaupapa were opened to continue education in te reo Māori. Eventually, in recognition of Treaty rights, the government began to provide funding for kōhanga reo and kura kaupapa.<sup>58</sup>

These schools provide what is now known as Māori-medium education. In 2016, 18,444 New Zealand students, or 2.3 per cent of the student population, were enrolled in Māori-medium schools.<sup>59</sup> In the same year, 20.5 per cent of students in English-medium schools (where 50 per cent or less of the curriculum is presented in te reo Māori) were either learning te reo Māori as a curriculum subject, or had a portion of the curriculum presented in te reo Māori.<sup>60</sup>

## **Pasifika**

New Zealand's Pasifika population primarily has its roots in the booming economy of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. This immigration was driven by demand for labour in New Zealand, as well as population pressures in the islands.<sup>61</sup> As Figure 3 illustrates, New Zealand's Pasifika population increased 30-fold in as many years, from around 2,200 in 1945 to around 65,700 in 1976. The majority of New Zealand's Pasifika people living in New Zealand were born here, although this is a more recent trend.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Orange, C. (1987)

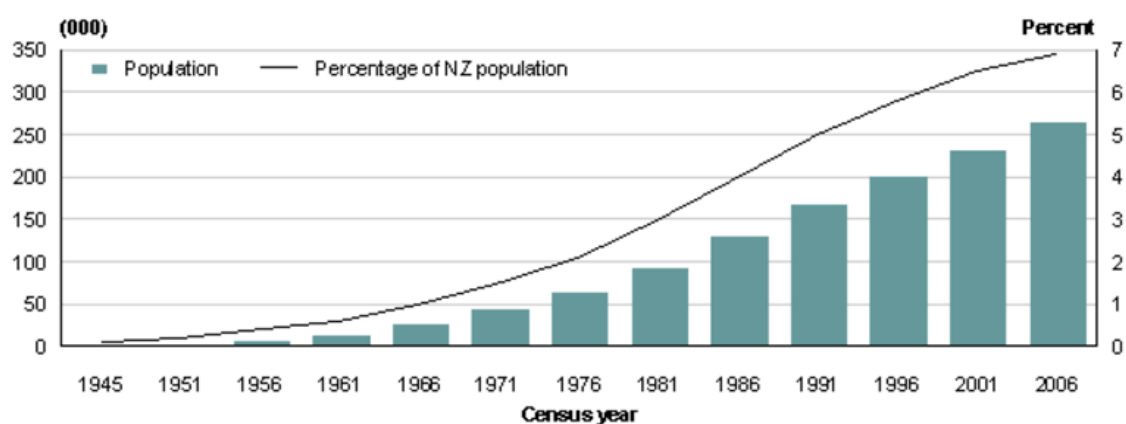
<sup>59</sup> Ministry of Education (2017), *Māori Language in Education*

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Mara, D., Foliaki, L., and Coxon, E. (2000)

<sup>62</sup> Statistics New Zealand and Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs (2010)

**Figure 3: Growth of Pasifika population in New Zealand, 1945-2006 Censuses**



<sup>63</sup> Source: Statistics New Zealand and Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs (2010), *Demographics of New Zealand's Pacific Population: Population Growth*. Retrieved 20 July 2017 from [http://www.stats.govt.nz/browse\\_for\\_stats/people\\_and\\_communities/pacific\\_peoples/pacific-progress-demography/population-growth.aspx#](http://www.stats.govt.nz/browse_for_stats/people_and_communities/pacific_peoples/pacific-progress-demography/population-growth.aspx#)

Because of the history of New Zealand colonisation in the Pacific Islands, the links between New Zealand and the education of Pasifika people go back much further. Prior to the arrival of Europeans in the Pacific, education primarily occurred within the extended family, and learning occurred through ‘observing, listening, memorizing and practical application.’<sup>64</sup> Missionaries played a significant role in initial European-style education in the Pacific Islands, starting in the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>65</sup> As with Māori, this education often entailed attacking the use of native language in schools.<sup>66</sup> Secondary education was not common in the colonised islands, because ‘there were real fears that education of Islanders to a higher level might breed dissatisfaction, cultivate desires for employment or rights that were unattainable, or foment trouble.’<sup>67</sup>

Teaching indigenous populations to read was key to the missionaries’ goal of conversion to Christianity, and they were highly successful in increasing literacy. By the end of the nineteenth century, literacy rates in the islands were near 100 per cent.<sup>68</sup> Throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a limited number of students from the Pacific region attended some of the most pre-eminent Native Schools in New Zealand, some through scholarships offered by the New Zealand government,<sup>69</sup> but the majority of Pacific children were not receiving high levels of education during this time.

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<sup>63</sup> Statistics New Zealand and Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs (2010)

<sup>64</sup> Mara, D., Foliaki, L., and Coxon, E. (2000)

<sup>65</sup> Māhina-Tuai, K. (2012)

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Mara, D., Foliaki, L., and Coxon, E. (2000)

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

After World War II, education in the Pacific began to shift back to self-governance with the formation of the United Nations and its accompanying emphasis on decolonisation. With this shift, primary school education was improved, access to secondary schools expanded and native languages were once again the language of instruction.<sup>70</sup>

However, the quality of and access to education in the Pacific remained relatively low, which meant that many Pacific Peoples arriving in New Zealand in the postwar era lacked the skills and resources that would allow them to fully thrive in their new country. As Kolokesa Māhina-Tuai puts it in the book *Tangata O Le Moana: New Zealand and the People of the Pacific*, ‘New Zealand’s educational neglect would soon come home to roost.’<sup>71</sup>

In the 1970s, there was an increasing focus on improving the education of Pasifika in New Zealand. The Pacific Islands Polynesian Education Foundation was created by Parliament, and the Pacific Islands Education Resource Centre was started, all with the understanding that targeted support was needed for Pasifika children and young people.<sup>72</sup> Both of these entities have evolved over the past decades to meet current needs and still exist today.<sup>73</sup>

For almost 150 years, education for Māori and Pacific Peoples was designed to serve European populations. From their initial involvement with European-style education during colonisation, these children and young people were provided with educations that were sub-par. These educational experiences also did not take into account cultural differences between Pākehā and Māori and Pacific Peoples.

Generations of Māori and Pacific Peoples were forced into an education system that was not designed for the benefit of indigenous people. If education is the cornerstone of a just society, Māori and Pasifika communities were not built on solid foundations.

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<sup>70</sup> Mara, D., Foliaki, L., and Coxon, E. (2000)

<sup>71</sup> Māhina-Tuai, K. (2012)

<sup>72</sup> Mara, D., Foliaki, L., and Coxon, E. (2000)

<sup>73</sup> The Pacific Islands Education Resource Centre is now known as the Pasifika Education Centre.

## 4 HOW ARE NEW ZEALAND LEARNERS FARING?

### Demographics of New Zealand learners

New Zealand has 2,529 schools enrolling approximately 788,000 students.<sup>74</sup> In the 2013 census, 74 per cent of New Zealanders identified as European, 15 per cent as Māori, 12 per cent as Asian, and seven per cent as Pasifika.<sup>75,76</sup>

28 per cent of New Zealand children are living in households with low incomes, defined as an income less than 60 per cent of the median contemporary income. Eight per cent of New Zealand children are living in low-income households *and* are experiencing material hardship.<sup>77</sup> According to a survey of young people conducted by the University of Auckland, 12 per cent of New Zealand youth report that their family always or often worries about having enough money or food.<sup>78</sup> Māori and Pasifika in New Zealand have lower personal incomes than Pākehā in New Zealand.<sup>79</sup> 58 per cent of Māori and 59 per cent of Pasifika have incomes in the lower two income quintiles, compared to just 34 per cent of Pākehā. And over a third of Māori and Pasifika households have incomes in the bottom income quintile.<sup>80</sup>

Research shows that systemic disadvantages for children living in poverty lead to lower educational outcomes. Poverty is linked with high rates of mobility, wherein students move and change schools multiple times in one school year.<sup>81</sup> A recent report showed that Māori students in Porirua, for example, have four times the national rate of school mobility. School mobility can be very detrimental to a student's education. While 82 per cent of students who had not moved during a school year achieve NCEA Level 2, only 25 per cent of years 9 to 11 students who moved school twice or more achieved the same level.<sup>82</sup>

Māori and Pasifika students in New Zealand are also more likely to have low school attendance rates. Chronic absenteeism, defined as missing at least ten per cent of the school year for any reason, is shown to have negative correlation with school success.<sup>83,84</sup> In 2016, Pākehā students had a 70.5 per cent rate of regular school attendance, compared with 54.7 per cent for Māori students and 57.2 per cent for Pasifika students. School mobility and low school attendance rates can compound systemic and social inequities and lead to less opportunity for learning, making closing education gaps more challenging.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Ministry of Education (n.d.) *School Rolls*

<sup>75</sup> Statistics New Zealand (2015)

<sup>76</sup> Individuals could choose to identify with more than one ethnic group.

<sup>77</sup> Children's Commissioner (2016)

<sup>78</sup> Clark, T. C. and others (2013)

<sup>79</sup> Statistics New Zealand (2014)

<sup>80</sup> Perry, B. (2016)

<sup>81</sup> Smith, J., Fien, H., and Paine, S. (2008)

<sup>82</sup> Porirua City Council (2017)

<sup>83</sup> US Department of Education (2016)

<sup>84</sup> Balfanz, R. and Byrnes, V. (2012)

<sup>85</sup> Ministry of Education (2017), *Attendance in New Zealand Schools 2016*

## PISA

The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) is an international survey administered by the OECD. It evaluates education systems based on an assessment of 15-year-olds in reading, mathematics and science. New Zealand has participated in the PISA since its inception in 2000.

Overall, New Zealand students perform well on PISA assessments, with the most recent PISA test occurring in 2015. In all three tested subjects, New Zealand performed above the OECD average. In science, the country ranked between 5<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> out of all OECD countries. In reading, the country ranked between 7<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> out of OECD countries. In mathematics, the country ranked between 14<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> out of OECD countries.<sup>86</sup> While New Zealand students' 2015 scores actually decreased slightly since the previous PISA test, the decline was not statistically significant. The country's rankings improved (from a range of 10<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> among OECD countries to a range of 5<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup>) due to score declines in other countries.

As illustrated in Figure 4, PISA shows that New Zealand is a country with above-average educational outcomes but low equity. There is a significant difference between New Zealand's best -and lowest-performing students on PISA. The groups of students who the Ministry of Education has identified as 'priority learners,' including Māori, Pasifika and low socio-economic students, do not enjoy the same level of academic success as their peers. While Pākehā and Asian students scored above the OECD average in all three subjects, their Māori and Pasifika peers scored below the OECD average in all three.<sup>87</sup> As compared to other OECD countries, there is also a larger gap between the bottom ten per cent and the top ten per cent of New Zealand students.<sup>88</sup>

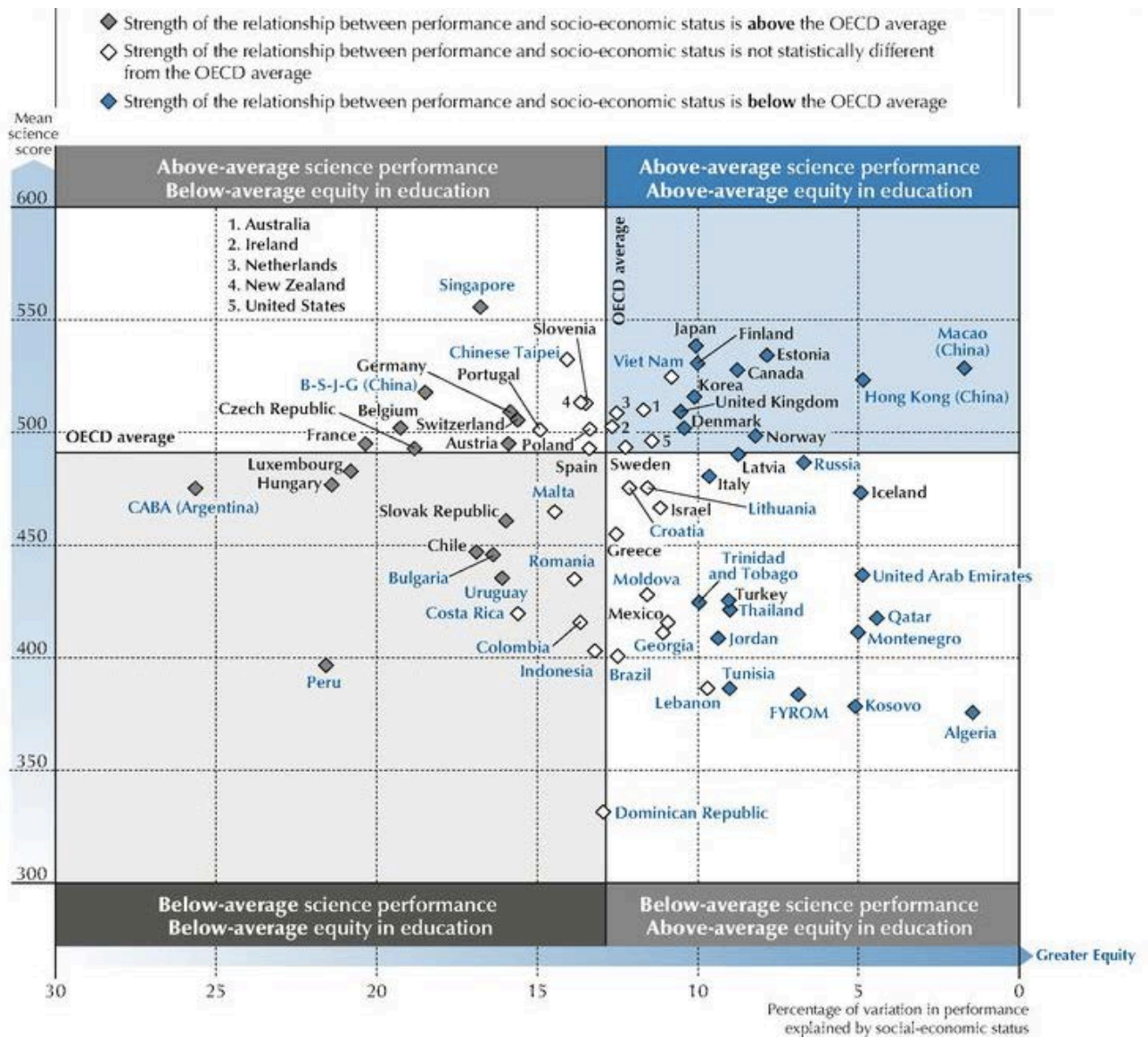
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<sup>86</sup> Due to sampling error, the PISA score differences in performance between countries with similar mean scores can often be indistinguishable, so the OECD reports a range of ranks.

<sup>87</sup> May, S., Flockton, J. and Kirkham, S. (2016)

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

**Figure 4: Mean performance in science and strength of the socio-economic gradient**

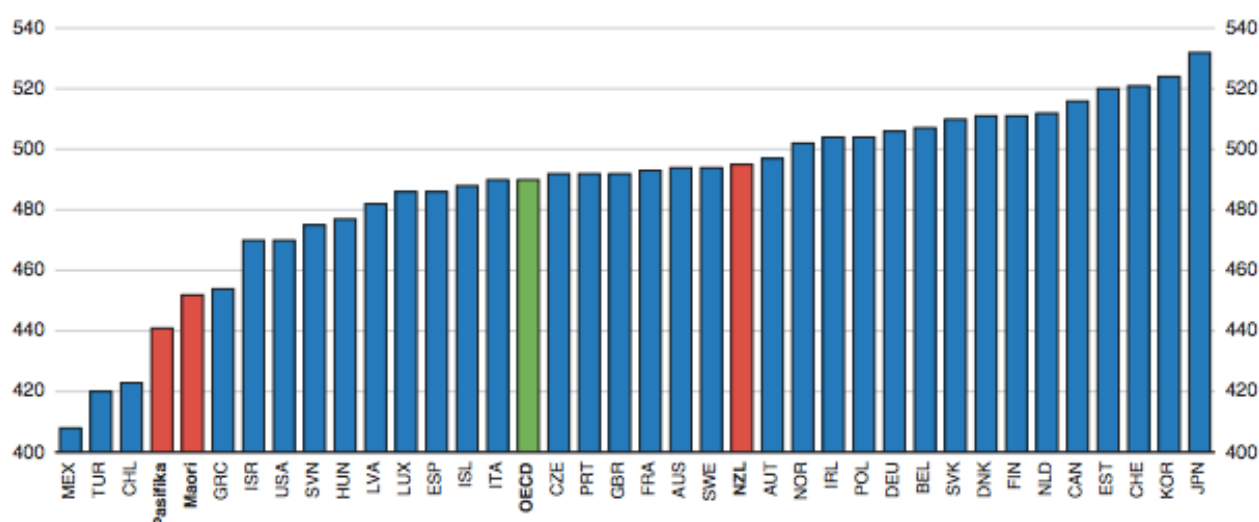


<sup>89</sup> Source: OECD (2016), *PISA 2015 Results (Volume 1): Excellence and Equity in Education*, PISA OECD Publishing, Paris. Retrieved 19 July 2017 from [http://www.keepeek.com/Digital-Asset-Management/oced/education/pisa-2015-results-volume-i\\_9789264266490-en#page3](http://www.keepeek.com/Digital-Asset-Management/oced/education/pisa-2015-results-volume-i_9789264266490-en#page3)

Figure 5 shows the results of the 2015 PISA mathematics assessment. While New Zealand students overall are performing above the OECD average, Māori and Pasifika students' scores are far below the average and near the level of the lowest-performing OECD countries.

<sup>89</sup> OECD (2016)

**Figure 5: PISA performance in mathematics (2015)**



<sup>90</sup> Source: OECD (2017), *OECD Economic Surveys New Zealand*. Retrieved 17 June 2017 from <http://www.oecd.org/newzealand/economic-survey-new-zealand.htm>

In New Zealand, as compared to other OECD countries, socio-economic status is more closely correlated to academic achievement, meaning that a student from a lower socio-economic status in New Zealand is more likely to have lower academic outcomes compared to many other OECD countries.<sup>91</sup>

## NCEA

NCEA achievement rates are predictive of whether a student is successful after leaving school. Six years after leaving school, about 90 per cent of those with school leaver qualifications at Level 3 or higher are either in education, employment or living overseas, while only about 60 per cent of those with no school qualifications have made one of these successful transitions.<sup>92</sup>

Recently-released 2016 NCEA results show an upward trend for Māori and Pasifika Year 12 students. In 2008, only 51.6 per cent of Māori Year 12 students were achieving NCEA Level 2. The 2016 results show that 74.9 per cent of Year 12 Māori students are now achieving Level 2. Pasifika Year 12 students saw an even larger increase, from 50.5 per cent to 79.5 per cent of students.<sup>93</sup> Year 12 European students saw a ten per cent increase, and Asian students 13 per cent.<sup>94</sup> This increase is aligned with the government’s stated goal to increase the proportion of students achieving NCEA Level 2 or an equivalent qualification to 85 per cent by 2017.<sup>95</sup> Figure 6 shows 2015 school leavers achieving NCEA Level 3 or its equivalent. While the trend is positive for all student populations, significant gaps remain between ethnic groups.

<sup>90</sup> OECD (2017)

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

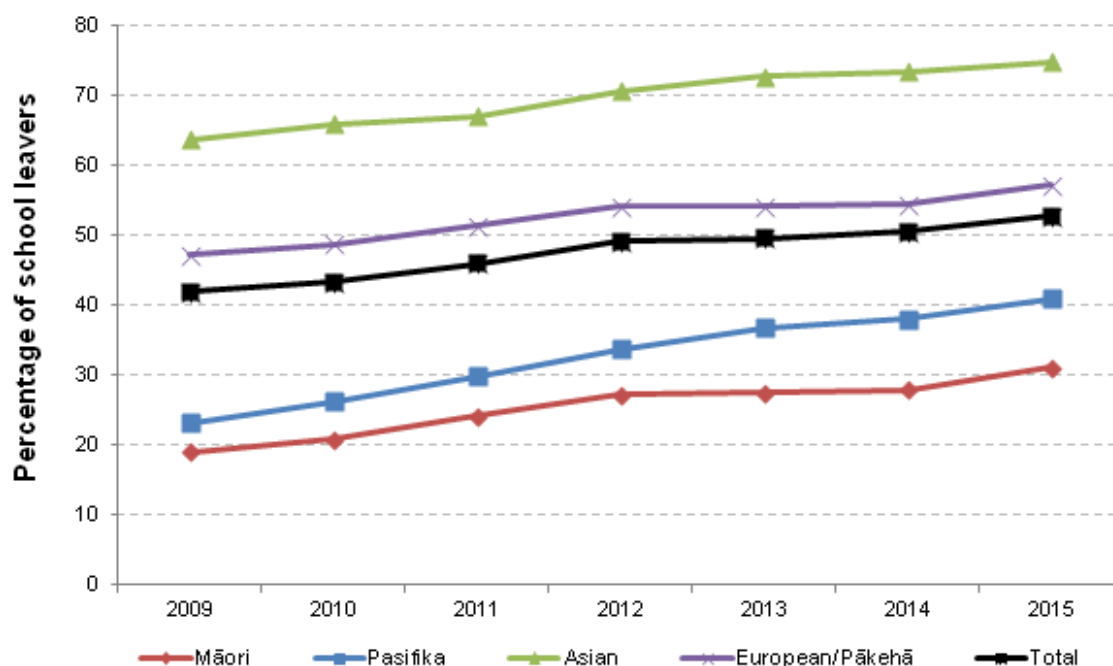
<sup>92</sup> Unpublished analysis by the New Zealand Treasury

<sup>93</sup> New Zealand Qualifications Authority (n.d.), *Secondary Statistics Consolidated Data Files for 2016*

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> State Services Commission (2013)

**Figure 6: Percentage of school leavers with NCEA Level 3 or equivalent in 2015 by ethnic group (2009 to 2015)**



<sup>96</sup> Source: Ministry of Education (n.d.), *School leavers with NCEA level 3 or above*, Education Counts. Retrieved 18 July 2017 from <http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/statistics/indicators/main/education-and-learning-outcomes/1891>

University entrance rates for Year 13 students also show disparities. 57.8 per cent of European students and 66.5 per cent of Asian students achieve university entrance, compared to only 31.4 per cent of Māori and 30.7 per cent of Pasifika students.<sup>97</sup> Fergusson and Woodward found about New Zealand students that ‘able children from professional or managerial family backgrounds are about 1.5 times more likely to enter university than are children of similar ability from low-SES families.’<sup>98</sup>

## National Standards

There are also disparities in the percentage of students meeting or exceeding National Standards, as evidenced by Figure 7. In 2015, 84.3 per cent of Pākehā students were at or above National Standards in reading, compared to 68.8 per cent of Māori students and 66 per cent of Pasifika students. In the same year, 65.4 per cent of Māori and 63.3 per cent of Pasifika students met or exceeded standards in mathematics, while 80.7 per cent of Pākehā students met or exceeded standards. 77.4 per cent of Pākehā students were at or above standards in writing, while just 61.6 per cent of Māori and 60.6 per cent of Pasifika students were.<sup>99</sup>

<sup>96</sup> Ministry of Education (n.d.), *School leavers with NCEA level 3 or above*

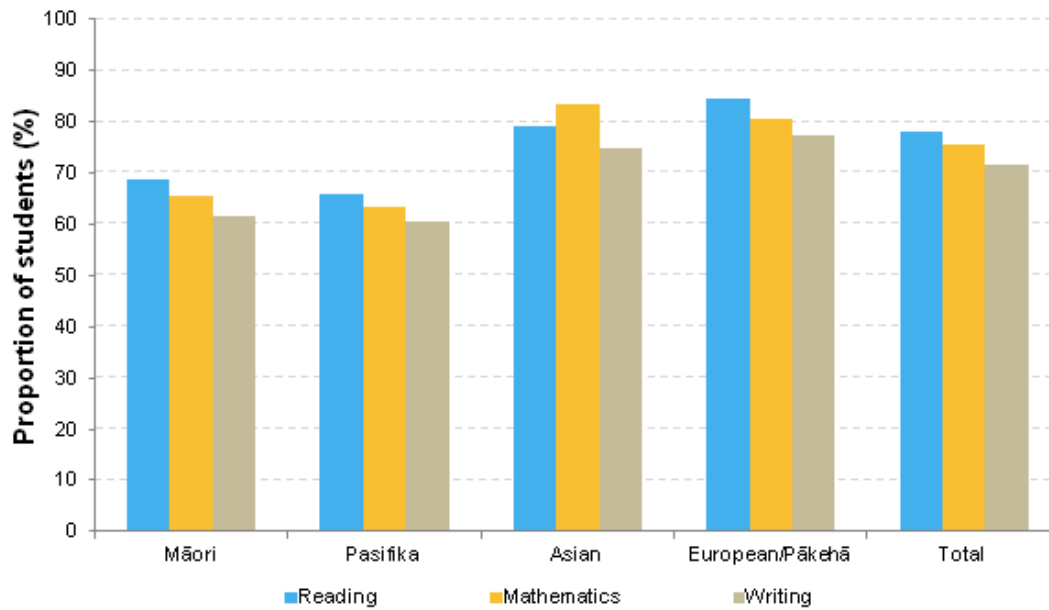
<sup>97</sup> New Zealand Qualifications Authority (n.d.), *Secondary Statistics Consolidated Data Files for 2016*

<sup>98</sup> Fergusson, D. M. and Woodward, L. J. (2000)

<sup>99</sup> Ministry of Education (n.d.), *National Standards: 2015 Achievement Information*



**Figure 7: Proportion of students achieving ‘At’ or ‘Above’ the National Standards by ethnic group and subject (2015)**



<sup>100</sup> Source: Ministry of Education (n.d.) *National Standards: 2015 Achievement Information*, Education Counts. Retrieved 16 July 2017 from [https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/statistics/schooling/national-standards/National\\_Standards](https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/statistics/schooling/national-standards/National_Standards)

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

## 5 WHAT ARE THE OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES IN NEW ZEALAND'S EDUCATION SYSTEM?

New Zealand's primary and secondary education system currently possesses both opportunities and challenges for closing equity gaps. Some major strengths and weaknesses of the existing system are outlined below. By building on the successes and opportunities in the system and taking explicit steps to overcome the challenges and mitigate existing risks, New Zealand can put itself on the path to achieving higher levels of educational equity for all students.

### Opportunities

Overall, New Zealanders can feel confident that their public education system is providing a high-quality education for most of its students, as evidenced by the country's consistent success in reading, mathematics and science on the PISA and the percentage of students meeting national education standards.<sup>101,102</sup> Some of the strengths of the New Zealand education system that will allow it to tackle the issue of education equity, include:

- High rates of early childhood education participation;
- Clearly articulated national expectations and goals for priority learner groups;
- Local decision-making authority and opportunities for collaboration;
- Manageable size to better target supports; and
- Comparatively high levels of funding.

#### *Early childhood education participation*

New Zealand's focus on early childhood education bodes well for efforts to close achievement gaps. In 2015, 96.5 per cent of four-year olds were enrolled in early childhood education at some point,<sup>103</sup> and participation rates are on an upward trajectory. The participation of priority learner groups in early childhood education is quite high as well, at 91.2 per cent for Pāsifika children and 94 per cent for Māori children. Māori and Pasifika participation rates are increasing at a quicker rate than that of their Pākehā peers. The bicultural early childhood education curriculum, Te Whāriki, focuses on children's language, culture and identity and building lifelong learners. Involvement in high-quality, culturally competent early childhood education experiences provides a solid foundation for priority learner groups entering primary school, and is an important step towards reducing inequities.<sup>104</sup> With enrolment levels high, there is an increasing focus in New Zealand to lift the quality and duration of early learning experiences, particularly for priority learners.

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<sup>101</sup> Ministry of Education (2016), *PISA 2015 New Zealand Headline Results*

<sup>102</sup> Ministry of Education (n.d.), *National Standards: 2015 Achievement Information*

<sup>103</sup> Ministry of Education (2015)

<sup>104</sup> Center on the Developing Child (2007)

### *Clearly articulated national expectations and goals for priority learner groups*

New Zealand has a National Curriculum and National Standards, which are important components to maintaining consistent expectations for all learners. Another strength of the New Zealand education system is a clearly articulated set of goals for priority learner groups. The existence of *Ka Hikitia* and the *Pasifika Education Plan* show that the government is focused on the success of Māori and Pasifika students. Additionally, based on my interviews, there is widespread commitment to and interest in the success of these student groups.

### *Local decision-making authority and opportunities for collaboration*

The New Zealand school system's autonomy can provide flexibility for school leaders and educators to build their local curriculum to truly meet the needs of their local communities. This means that school culture and curriculum can be built in collaboration with whānau, hāpu and iwi, and parent and student input can be meaningfully incorporated into decision-making. Autonomy in the classroom means that teachers have the power to make pedagogical decisions based on their individual students' needs. Ideally, locally-elected school boards provide accountability, and ensure that school leaders and teachers are appropriately responding to the needs of the community. Additionally, there is research to show that in countries where schools have greater levels of autonomy, student performance tends to be higher.<sup>105</sup>

### *Manageable size to better target supports*

The size of the New Zealand education system is a strength in efforts to close equity gaps. There are a relatively small number of schools to support, as compared to many other developed nations. Theoretically, as shown by the 'numbers, names and needs' work (see page 34), the Ministry of Education and other relevant agencies could actually know the names and needs of all at-risk students in the system, to ensure supports are appropriately targeted. Additionally, there is clearly an increasing focus in schools across New Zealand on the use of data to understand patterns of student achievement and under-achievement and to target students who are most in need of support, which is an encouraging trend.

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<sup>105</sup> OECD (2011)

### *Comparatively high levels of funding*

Finally, New Zealand's expenditures on education are higher than the OECD average, with New Zealand spending 7.3 per cent of GDP on education, compared to the OECD average of 6.3 per cent.<sup>106</sup> Primary and secondary expenditures are also increasing over time, while enrolment has held fairly steady, leading to higher per-pupil expenditures.<sup>107</sup> It should be noted that on a per-student funding basis, New Zealand is below the OECD average.<sup>108</sup> In my conversations with school leaders, the need for increased school funding was not an often-cited concern.<sup>109</sup>

### **Challenges**

While there are many strengths in the New Zealand education system, there are some systematic challenges that could undermine efforts to address educational inequities. These include:

- Unintended consequences of Tomorrow's Schools reforms;
- Low expectations for priority learner groups; and
- Autonomy leading to isolation and decreased accountability.

### *Unintended consequences of Tomorrow's Schools reforms*

The competition between schools generated by Tomorrow's Schools has, in some ways, proved to be detrimental for priority learners. The reforms have increased the tendency for schools to market themselves to their potential parent community and have led to increased ethnic school segregation.<sup>110</sup> Schools that are popular with parents tend to end up with enrolment schemes to limit their roll while other schools have a declining and increasingly homogeneous roll. Additionally, one study on the effects of the reforms showed Pākehā parents are more likely to get their child into their first choice school than Māori parents.<sup>111</sup> Schools with high percentages of low-SES students and Māori students saw the least gains from Tomorrow's Schools, and faced issues such as lack of resources, increased costs and declining enrolments.<sup>112</sup>

In a report entitled 'Ten years on: How schools view educational reform,' Dr Cathy Wylie of the New Zealand Council for Educational Research states:

The reforms were intended to improve the learning outcomes for children from low-income homes, and Māori children. These children are still under-performing others, on average, and the schools which serve them have gained least, often losing students.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> OECD (2013), *Education Policy Outlook: New Zealand*

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> OECD (2013), *Annual expenditure per student by educational institutions for all services, by level of education (2010): In equivalent USD converted using PPPs, based on full-time equivalents*

<sup>109</sup> In my conversations with school leaders in the United States, school funding is often the first concern mentioned. This was not the case in my conversations with New Zealand school leaders.

<sup>110</sup> Wylie, C. (1999)

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> Wylie, C. (n.d.)

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

Although Tomorrow's Schools was designed to increase parent involvement, high-poverty schools and schools with a high enrolment of Māori students saw a lower level of parental and community support.<sup>114</sup> This would make sense in light of US research that shows 'working class' parents tend to defer to teachers as experts in education, although this does not stem from a lack of interest or concern. In contrast, 'middle class' parents are more involved and see themselves as having a shared responsibility, alongside the teacher, in the education of their children.<sup>115</sup>

### *Lower expectations for priority learner groups*

In New Zealand, as in many other countries, some teachers hold an unconscious bias against priority learner groups that can lead to lower expectations for these populations. One study showed results indicating 'that priority learners received systematically lower teacher judgments than other students... even when their standardised achievement was the same.'<sup>116</sup> Another study showed that teachers had lower expectations for their Māori students due to an assumption that the students had poor familial support, criminal tendencies and broken families.<sup>117</sup> The same study found that teachers believed that while Pasifika parents were more supportive of their children's education than Māori parents, Pasifika parents lacked the skills to help their children with schoolwork and did not value the connection between education and employment. Research conducted by Bishop *et al.* related to the Te Kōtahitanga PLD programme<sup>118</sup> also showed that some teachers held low expectations for Māori students.<sup>119, 120</sup>

In 2008, former Cabinet Minister John Tamihere wrote the following, and the reasoning could easily be applied to the education of Pasifika students as well:

As Kiwis we like to think we have a laidback attitude and a sense of fair play. Unfortunately, this is a sham when it comes to Māori and education. Every Māori leader and Māori parent needs to ditch the comfort zone and start thumping the school desk. Demand to know why 53 per cent of Māori boys and 44 per cent of Year 11 Māori pupils cannot pass basic literacy and numeracy tests... Blaming parents, dysfunctional communities or poverty is all too easy and maintains the status quo. Academics around the world call it the deficit theory. Cultural deprivation and difference have been the reason for everything from behaviour problems to poor literacy. Research shows that teachers with low expectations and negative attitudes translate into poor teaching. When teachers are confronted by their stereotypes about Māori children's abilities and taught how to lift their expectations, Māori students' social and academic outcomes improve greatly.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> Wylie, C. (1999)

<sup>115</sup> Lareau, A. (2000)

<sup>116</sup> Meissel, K., Meyer, F., Yao, E., and Rubie-Davies, C. (2017)

<sup>117</sup> Turner, H., Rubie-Davies, C., and Webber, M. (2014)

<sup>118</sup> For more information on Te Kōtahitanga see page 45 and Appendix C.

<sup>119</sup> Bishop, R., Berryman, M., Cavanagh, T., and Teddy, L. (2007)

<sup>120</sup> Bishop, R., Berryman, M., Tiakiwai, S., and Richardson, C. (2003)

<sup>121</sup> Tamihere, J. (2008)

Research shows that a student's teacher has the largest impact on their academic achievement.<sup>122,123</sup> This means that if a teacher has low expectations for his or her student, the negative impacts on the student's education could be significant. In New Zealand, as in the United States and elsewhere, teachers are feeling increasing pressure to help their students perform. The New Zealand education system relies heavily on an individual teacher's judgments of his or her students. The NCEA system is a good example of this. If teachers are feeling pressured to get their students to reach a certain target, say NCEA Level 2, it could mean that teachers may push their harder-to-teach students to less academic paths. Usage of ability grouping can also negatively affect priority learners when unconscious bias is present, pushing them into lower-level work, setting a low bar for success, and separating them from their peers who could be having a positive effect on their performance.

#### *Autonomy leading to isolation and decreased accountability*

While high levels of autonomy can mean that school leaders and teachers have maximum flexibility to make decisions based on the needs of their students, it can also leave schools unsupported and ill-equipped to deal with the challenges of educating students with a variety of needs. As I learned in my interviews, school leaders within a highly autonomous system can feel isolated. And in the event a school does not have a skilled leader, there are less guardrails in place to ensure a school is still operating successfully.

The OECD found that highly autonomous school systems work best when paired with high levels of accountability, such as public posting of achievement data.<sup>124</sup> School boards provide accountability in the New Zealand school system, but based on my interviews, can lack the skills and training needed to successfully govern a school, particularly in more disadvantaged areas.

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<sup>122</sup> Alton-Lee, A. (2003)

<sup>123</sup> Nye B., Konstantopolous, S. and Hedges, L. (2004)

<sup>124</sup> OECD (2011)

## 6 WHAT CAN THE NEW ZEALAND GOVERNMENT DO TO REDUCE EDUCATIONAL INEQUITY?

This chapter provides recommendations for actions the New Zealand government can take to reduce educational inequity. These recommendations are the result of 20 school visits and about 100 interviews with individuals across the education system. They reflect the concerns and themes that I heard during my conversations with stakeholders across New Zealand and build on the strengths and successes already inherent in the system. The recommendations are aligned with available evidence, and can be accomplished within the bounds of the current political system and social climate. Given that my prior professional experience lies at the national government level in the United States, and that efforts to decrease inequities should be systemic across the entire education system, I primarily focused my recommendations on what changes could occur at the national government level in New Zealand.

With all that in mind, the seven recommendations I include in this report are a mix of ideas that range from changes to existing systems to ways the Ministry can influence school practices. Some would require new money to implement, while others would cost relatively little. The OECD determined that the three key policy areas affecting educational equity are practices in schools, how resources are allocated and the design of education systems.<sup>125</sup> I have grouped the recommendations below according to this framework.

### *Practices in schools*

- Encourage schools to move away from within-class ability grouping towards more evidence-based practices; and
- Increase the capability and capacity of schools to use data to inform practice and decision making.

### *How resources are allocated*

- Use potential upcoming changes in school funding to increase equity and encourage schools to align their spending with what research shows works; and
- Ensure that resources provided for and through Kāhui Ako are being targeted to the schools and students most in need of support.

### *Design of education systems*

- Increase equity in the NCEA system by removing the cost of NCEA for some families and further investigating how to improve NCEA pathways for all students;
- Provide consistent, targeted support for implementation of *Ka Hikitia* and the *Pasifika Education Plan*, and evaluate these efforts to inform future investments; and
- Reduce school segregation by managing school choice.

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<sup>125</sup> OECD (2008)

My hope is that these recommendations provide concrete examples of changes that could make New Zealand's education system one that provides equitable opportunities for all students.

## **Recommendations related to practices in schools**

### **Limit ability grouping**

*Recommendation: Encourage schools to move away from within-class ability grouping towards more evidence-based practices.*

The vast majority of domestic and international research shows that early tracking and ability grouping is detrimental to priority learners,<sup>126,127,128,129</sup> although there are outliers that show some positive effects for students on reading achievement.<sup>130</sup> Ability grouping, which mainly occurs in primary school, is when students are separated by ability into different groups to receive different instruction, but remain in the same classroom with the same teacher. Tracking, which primarily occurs in secondary school, is when students are separated into different classes by ability level and receive different instruction from different teachers.

New Zealand schools do not appear to shy away from ability grouping of students, despite a great deal of research panning the practice. As of 2013, New Zealand had the highest incidence rate of ability grouping in the OECD.<sup>131</sup> In fact, the OECD posited in a 2017 economic report that one reason for New Zealand's PISA decline in the early 2000s could be the country's high rate of ability grouping.<sup>132</sup>

Ability grouping harms students who are assigned to lower tracks, without increasing achievement of the whole student population.<sup>133</sup> Research shows that students from low-SES backgrounds are more likely to be placed in lower-ability groups,<sup>134</sup> and if a student is placed in a low-ability group early in their schooling, they are unlikely to move into higher ability groups by secondary school.<sup>135</sup> As Dr Christine Rubie-Davies states, 'the major problem with ability grouping is that it results in differential opportunity to learn and therefore differential learning. Students learn what they are given the opportunity to learn.'<sup>136</sup> In this way, ability grouping can become a self-fulfilling prophecy. Johnston and Wildy focus on the potential impacts of low teacher expectations driven by ability grouping, saying that 'when teachers adjust their demands for various students, students adopt ideas about themselves to fit the teachers' ideas about them.'<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> Hanushek, E., and Woessmann, L. (2005)

<sup>127</sup> Johnston, O. and Wildy, H. (2016)

<sup>128</sup> Henry, L. (2015)

<sup>129</sup> Hornby, G. and Witte, C. (2014)

<sup>130</sup> Puzio, K. and Colby, G. (2010)

<sup>131</sup> OECD (2013), *OECD Economic Surveys: New Zealand 2013*

<sup>132</sup> OECD (2017)

<sup>133</sup> OECD (2012)

<sup>134</sup> Kutnick, P. and others (2006)

<sup>135</sup> Good, T. L. (1987)

<sup>136</sup> Rubie-Davies, C. (2014)

<sup>137</sup> Johnston, O. and Wildy, H. (2016)



Ability grouping has a long history in the New Zealand school system. As such, it is unlikely to change without a concerted effort by government, researchers and other education stakeholders. As Anthony and Hunter state, ‘movement away from wholesale ability grouping will be short-lived without targeted professional inquiry and learning, leadership and policy initiatives, and research development.’<sup>138</sup> Butler and Weir posit that when providing PLD for teachers on the negative effects of ability grouping, it is important to discuss with them the ethical contexts of the practice,<sup>139</sup> to ensure teachers understand the potential social consequences of ability grouping.

At a minimum, ability grouping in classrooms should be based on research- and evidence-based practices. This means providing students with challenging and high-quality curriculum, regardless of ability level. This is shown to increase attainment for all students, including priority learner groups.<sup>140</sup> And if ability grouping does occur, it is important for teachers to frequently reassess groupings to ensure that students are not remaining in groups that are not challenging for them.<sup>141</sup>

The use of mixed ability or flexible groups are a way for teachers to continue grouping of students in a way that does not further exacerbate inequities.<sup>142,143</sup> Mixed ability grouping can include pairing of higher- and lower-achieving students or allowing students to self-select their work. Using these techniques, teachers can still select and work with groups of students who might need more support with their learning, without risking the student groupings becoming entrenched.

The Ministry of Education currently influences pedagogy in schools in a number of ways. Those who interact with schools through Sector Enablement and Support, regional Ministry offices, and others should be alert to this issue and seek to connect schools with best practices and resources to move away from ability grouping. To the extent Kāhui Ako have identified achievement targets for priority learner groups, this could be another avenue to begin to address the over-reliance of ability grouping in New Zealand schools. The Ministry of Education and the Education Council should also ensure adequate PLD opportunities and guidance are available for teachers to move away from entrenched ability grouping practices.

It can be challenging for teachers to individualise student learning, so one reason teachers lean on ability grouping is that it appears to provide a simpler way to personalise learning. The use of technology in classrooms is one way to ease this burden. Technology can better enable teachers to provide real-time feedback and adjust the pacing of teaching based on how students are doing. As the Ministry examines ways to increase digital technology use in the classroom,<sup>144</sup> consideration could be given as to how to use these tools to reduce ability grouping.<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> Anthony, G. and Hunter, R. (2017)

<sup>139</sup> Butler, P. and Weir, K. (2013)

<sup>140</sup> Burris, C., Heubert, J., and Levin, H. (2006)

<sup>141</sup> Slavin, R. (1986)

<sup>142</sup> Kutnick, P., Hodgkinson, S. Sebba, J., Humphreys, S., Galton, M., Steward, S., Blatchford, P. and Baines, E. (2006)

<sup>143</sup> Hallam, S., & Parsons, S. (2013)

<sup>144</sup> New Zealand Government (2017), Digital curriculum changes connect young people to the future

<sup>145</sup> The usual caveats around technology in classrooms apply here. Technology is not an answer in and of itself. In using technology to personalise student learning, as with non-technology pedagogy,

## **Increase use of data to target students in need of support**

*Recommendation: Increase the capability and capacity of schools to use data to inform practice and decision-making.*

Research shows that school intervention models based on the use of data, including providing PLD opportunities to teachers regarding data use, are effective in improving teaching and student learning.<sup>146,147</sup> Knowing more about how their students are doing allows teachers to target student learning and adjust pedagogy to address student needs. Both *Ka Hikitia* and the *Pasifika Education Plan* pinpoint the need to utilise student data in targeting supports and resources, and it is clear that there is a positive trend in New Zealand towards the use of student data to accelerate learning, particularly focused on the needs of priority learners. Additionally, ERO's School Evaluation Indicators emphasise the importance of teachers making data-informed pedagogy decisions, as well as focus on the need for school boards to access and analyse school data to inform decisionmaking.<sup>148</sup>

A common phrase used in the New Zealand education sector to describe this type of work is 'numbers, names and needs.' This means that a school is familiar with the data about their students on an individual level (numbers), they know who the students are who are in need of additional support (names), and they know enough about those students both academically and personally to identify interventions for them (needs). Several schools I visited had students' names, photos and academic achievement information posted in their staff rooms or other locations not visible to children, and would regularly meet to discuss the needs of specific students.

However, despite the increasing focus on data use in the New Zealand education system, there is still room for growth. In a 2016 Auditor General report on using data to improve outcomes for Māori students stated: 'When individual schools and agencies make good use of what they know about a student, it makes a difference to that student's success. However, there is a lot of room for the educational sector to improve how it collects, shares, and uses information.'<sup>149</sup> Starkey *et al.*, in a study of New Zealand schools, found that the 'nature of data use in schools and data management is not even, nor is there much compatibility across the sector.'<sup>150</sup>

Two Ministry of Education initiatives aimed at improving data use for student learning are the 'numbers, names and needs' work and the Progress and Consistency Tool. Kāhui Ako also provide an opportunity for capacity-building around improved use of student data.

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teachers need to ensure they are providing challenging work at an appropriate level for students, and are providing regular feedback. Additionally, teachers will often need access to professional learning and development to properly implement new digital tools.

<sup>146</sup> McNaughton, S., Lai, M. K., and Hsiao, S. (2012)

<sup>147</sup> Poortman, C. and Schildkamp, K. (2016)

<sup>148</sup> Education Review Office (2016)

<sup>149</sup> Controller and Auditor General (2016)

<sup>150</sup> Starkey, L., Tallon, R. and Eppel, E. (2016)

### *Numbers, Names and Needs*

The Ministry's first cohort-based intervention approach is known internally as At Risk of Not Achieving, or AroNA. Externally, it is more well-known as 'numbers, names and needs.' 'Numbers, names and needs' asked schools to focus on students in the cohort of Māori and Pasifika students who were born between 1 January 1999 and 31 December 1999 who were 'at risk of not achieving' NCEA Level 2. This work was tied to the government's Better Public Service target of 85 per cent of 18 year old students achieving NCEA Level 2 or higher in 2017.<sup>151</sup>

To determine which students were at risk of not achieving, the Ministry analysed a range of data and information, including student data, based on a number of 'visible risk factors' known to be linked to decreased academic achievement, such as transience, enrolment in alternative education and involvement in the justice system.

After providing this analysis to schools, the Ministry of Education regional office staff handling 'numbers, names and needs' would work with school leaders to identify a final list of 'focus students' to target for support, based on the MoE analysis and the school's knowledge of their students and student needs. Additional supports provided to identified students include mentoring, facilitation of connections to iwi, academic support, and access to holiday/summer schools where additional credits could be earned.

An ERO report backed the 'numbers, names and needs' model of identifying a small number of students in need of support, saying, 'some of the most successful schools... set targets for fewer students than the less successful schools. They had a clear understanding of who the students were that they needed to target actions to accelerate progress for and were able to monitor their actions to determine if they resulted in positive actions for them.'<sup>152</sup> The same report also found that targeting specific students for additional support does not have to come at the expense of excellence school-wide. ERO found that the most successful schools both targeted students and focused on the quality of teaching for all students.<sup>153</sup>

The 'numbers, names and needs' work shows a great deal of promise, and is aligned to research. Now that the initial pilot is coming to an end, the programme is transitioning from a team of specially-hired 'numbers, names and needs'-focused experts to the Ministry's Sector Enablement and Support Team. There could be a tendency to reduce the focus on 'numbers, names and needs' now that the government's Better Public Service Target was met. However, the government should continue to strongly support the continuation of the 'numbers, names and needs' work, and roll the programme down to the next cohort of students. It would also be beneficial to have academic research take place regarding the success of the programme, what interventions worked for students and to identify potential improvements. Additionally, further investigation is needed into how the strategy could be applied at the primary school level.

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<sup>151</sup> State Services Commission (2013)

<sup>152</sup> Education Review Office (2015)

<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

### *Progress and Consistency Tool*

The Progress and Consistency Tool (PaCT) is an online tool that supports teachers and student learning. It was developed by the Ministry of Education and is available free of charge to New Zealand schools. The aim of PaCT is to ‘support teachers to make dependable judgements about their students’ achievement and progress towards National Standards.’<sup>154</sup> Additionally, PaCT helps teachers to better understand where students are in their learning of reading, mathematics and writing, and creates reports to allow teachers, school leaders and families to monitor student progress.

The use of PaCT should allow teachers to adapt their teaching to improve student learning. PaCT reports show individual student and class progress over time, as well as distribution of achievement within the class.<sup>155</sup> Another positive aspect of PaCT is that a student’s data will transfer from school to school with them. For low-SES students with a high rate of transience, this can help the receiving school more quickly understand where a student is in their learning, and more quickly begin helping that student progress. PaCT should also lead to more consistent expectations and teacher judgements of students, regardless of student ethnicity.

The Ministry of Education is to be commended for providing schools with this valuable tool. The Ministry should use all levers available, including Kāhui Ako, to encourage schools to adopt PaCT so that more teachers across New Zealand will utilise individual student data to guide their pedagogy and identify students in need of additional support.

## **Recommendations related to how resources are allocated**

### **Use funding changes as a lever for equity and improvement**

*Recommendation: Use potential upcoming changes in school funding to increase equity and encourage schools to align their spending with what research shows works.*

The Ministry of Education is currently undertaking an Education Funding System Review to determine whether changes should be made to the existing funding scheme. The Ministry is to be commended on its goal to better target funding to schools where it is needed most to support priority learner groups.

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<sup>154</sup> Ministry of Education (n.d.), *What Is the PaCT?*

<sup>155</sup> Ministry of Education (n.d.), *Using the PaCT: Reports*

New Zealand's current education funding system comprises both funding for staffing as well as an operations grant. Staffing makes up about 70 per cent of school funding, and is primarily based on student roll and student-to-teacher ratios for each year level. A school's operations grant size is based on a number of factors, one of which is a school's 'decile.'<sup>156</sup> A school's decile, with one being 'high risk' and ten being 'low risk,' is determined by census information on:

- Caregivers who receive income support benefits;
- Caregivers who are in low skill-level occupations;
- Household crowding;
- Households in the lowest quintile of household income; and
- Caregivers with no schooling or tertiary qualifications.<sup>157</sup>

One driver of the 'funding review' is to remove the stigma associated with the decile system. Currently, it is not uncommon to hear 'low decile' or 'decile one' be used to describe a school where students are lower-achieving academically. This is an unfair characterisation since the user of the phrase is automatically equating low-socioeconomic status to low academic achievement. While trying to remove this stigma is a laudable goal, parents, the media and those selling real estate will inevitably find a new way to categorise schools.

However, the underlying intent of the policy change is of utmost importance. As the current decile system acknowledges, schools with low proportions of students at risk of not achieving simply don't need as much funding as those with high proportions of these students to see the same levels of success. The proposed scheme is based on research that examined which already-available data factors are predictive of academic under-achievement, in order to better target funding while avoiding the need to collect additional information from families. The indicators that showed a high predictiveness for underachievement include factors including:

- Proportion of time spent supported by benefits since birth;
- Whether the child has an Ministry for Vulnerable Children/Oranga Tamariki notification;<sup>158</sup>
- Mother's age at child's birth; and
- Father's offending and sentence history.<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> Ministry of Education (2016), *Review of Education Funding Systems: Update and Next Steps*

<sup>157</sup> Ministry of Education (2016), *Funding to support children and young people most at risk of educational under-achievement: Review of Funding Systems*

<sup>158</sup> Ministry for Vulnerable Children/Oranga Tamariki notifications include reports of concern of child abuse or neglect and police family violence referrals.

<sup>159</sup> Ministry of Education (2016), *Review of Education Funding Systems: Update and Next Steps*

In trying to create a more equitable funding system, the Ministry should also attempt to address inequities driven by parent donations to schools. In 2015, schools collected \$136 million through parent donations and fundraising.<sup>160</sup> In 2014, the recommended school donation for Epsom Girls, a prestigious Auckland secondary school, was \$765,<sup>161</sup> and at Palmerston North Boys High School, the recommended donation was \$330.<sup>162</sup> Data shows that higher-decile schools bring in more locally-raised funds than lower decile schools.<sup>163</sup> This is due in large part to disparities in requested parental donations. For instance, in 2014, decile one schools received donations equivalent to \$55.59 per student, while decile ten schools received \$323.78 on average.<sup>164</sup>

While it is a fair point that lower-decile schools are receiving more in government funding than their higher-decile counterparts, government funding is finite, while requested parent donations can continue to increase to meet needs. Additionally, government funding for schools with high percentages of at-risk and low-SES students should not seek to simply match the amount of funding reached by higher decile schools. This is another instance where equity does not mean equality. As the funding review is considered, the Ministry should ensure that funding is being dispersed in a way that acknowledges that schools with high percentages of at-risk and low-SES students need significantly more funding, regardless of source, to be able to provide their students with the support needed to succeed.

If changes to the education funding system are made, they would go into place in 2020. This major change in the school funding system should also be used as a pivot point to encourage schools to examine what they are using funding for, not just how much they are receiving. While research shows that ensuring adequate funding for schools with high populations of at-risk students is highly important and likely to lead to improved educational outcomes,<sup>165,166</sup> it is also crucial to ensure that strategies being funded are based on research and best practices that are linked to increased student outcomes. School boards and parents should be examining and asking questions about how funding is being used. The Ministry of Education should be providing information and best practices to schools on how funding can be used most effectively, based on evidence and research, like that provided by New Zealand's Best Evidence Synthesis.<sup>167</sup>

In a November 2016 cabinet paper, then-Education Minister Hekia Parata wrote that 'funding arrangements are a key system lever and it is important that these arrangements support other changes that we are making to raise achievement.'<sup>168</sup> This is the right approach. More equitably funding schools is important, and better targeting currently-funded strategies to the students who need them most is important, but pairing the two together will undoubtedly see the best outcomes to increase equity for priority learners in New Zealand.

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<sup>160</sup> Deloitte (2016)

<sup>161</sup> *New Zealand Herald* (2016)

<sup>162</sup> Walters, L. (2016)

<sup>163</sup> Deloitte (2016)

<sup>164</sup> Fyers, A. and Kenny, K. (2016)

<sup>165</sup> Lafortune, J., Rothstein, J., and Schanzenbach, D. (2016)

<sup>166</sup> Jackson, K., Johnson, R., and Persico, C. (2015)

<sup>167</sup> Ministry of Education (n.d.), *BES (Iterative Best Evidence Synthesis) Programme*

<sup>168</sup> Ministry of Education (2016), *Review of Education Funding Systems: Update and Next Steps*

## Utilise Kāhui Ako to focus on inequities

*Recommendation: Ensure that resources provided for and through Kāhui Ako are being targeted to the schools and students most in need of support.*

As previously discussed, the Tomorrow's Schools reforms led to a system of competition between schools and relative isolation of individual schools. These changes were particularly detrimental for the priority learner groups. Communities of Learning/Kāhui Ako stand to be the most significant policy change in New Zealand since Tomorrow's Schools. In fact, they are a tick in the pendulum swing away from the goals of Tomorrow's Schools. Instead of driving competition amongst schools, Kāhui Ako are designed to foster collaboration amongst schools through joint goal-setting, data-sharing and actions.

Kāhui Ako<sup>169</sup> are comprised of a group of schools in a region that provide a pipeline for students, based on enrolment data. Early learning providers and tertiary providers are invited to participate in Kāhui Ako alongside primary and secondary schools. As of June 2017, there were 197 Kāhui Ako, made up of 1,630 schools, and serving 551,000 of New Zealand's approximately 788,000 students.<sup>170</sup> Kāhui Ako take a number of steps to get started, including fully examining data about their students' achievement and setting 'achievement challenges' as shared goals. The group then develops plans to meet those goals. Kāhui Ako also select one principal to lead the group, as well as teachers who provide leadership both across and within schools.

The promise of Kāhui Ako is that they can increase capacity for best practices in schools, which should lead to increased achievement for priority learner groups. Specifically, Kāhui Ako will focus on:

- Improving teaching practices;
- Using evidence to guide decision-making;
- Creating relationships with whānau, hāpu and iwi, businesses, and the community; and
- Developing intentional pathways between schools, ideally with early learning and tertiary providers as well.

Kāhui Ako should be centring their work not just around increasing overall academic outcomes, but on providing all students with equitable opportunities to learn. Many Kāhui Ako have set achievement challenge goals for their priority learner populations, which is positive.

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<sup>169</sup> Kāhui Ako are part of a package of government initiatives called 'Investing in Success.' Also included in Investing in Success are the Teacher-Led Innovation Fund, to support development of practices that improve student learning outcomes, and the Principal Recruitment Allowance, to attract highly-effective principals to high-needs schools.

<sup>170</sup> Ministry of Education (2017), *About Communities of Learning/Kāhui Ako*

Funding and resources are currently provided to schools through Kāhui Ako on top of regular school funding, and it is likely that the Ministry will funnel additional resources through Kāhui Ako in the future that are currently provided directly to schools. There are two ways in which these resources can be best used to increase educational equity: through a focus on providing additional resources to Kāhui Ako with the highest numbers and proportions of priority learners, and on providing additional resources to the schools within Kāhui Ako with the highest numbers and proportions of priority learners.

As the Ministry provides resources to Kāhui Ako, resources should be prioritised to be targeted at Kāhui Ako who have the largest equity gaps, and large numbers and concentrations of priority learners. Between schools in a Kāhui Ako, leaders will have to take care to ensure that additional resources are thoughtfully targeted towards the schools where the largest amount or concentration of students are struggling, instead of dividing the resources evenly. It will also be important for the original intent of Kāhui Ako to be kept at the forefront of Ministerial decisions regarding future roles for and funding of Kāhui Ako, so that they do not become simply a vehicle for rationing scarce resources.

## **Recommendations related to design of education systems**

### **Increase and investigate equity in NCEA**

*Recommendation: Increase equity in the NCEA system by removing the cost of NCEA for some families and further investigating how to improve NCEA pathways for all students.*

The NCEA system has many strengths. It provides a flexible path through secondary education that accommodates a variety of post-secondary aspirations, and it allows schools to meet the needs of their students, families and communities. Graham *et al.* found that ‘overwhelmingly, NCEA was preferred over norm-referenced assessments, which were perceived to be confrontational and alienating rather than supportive.’<sup>171</sup> At the same time, given the importance of NCEA in the New Zealand education system and for learners, it’s important that the New Zealand government look closely at whether NCEA is providing equitable opportunities for all learners.

As evidenced by Figure 8, NCEA achievement rates are quite predictive of whether a student enters tertiary education or training, such as an apprenticeship, after secondary school. In 2015, 73.8 per cent of school leavers with NCEA Level 3 or above subsequently enrolled in tertiary education, while just 21.6 per cent of school leavers with NCEA Level 1 enrolled in tertiary. Tertiary education qualifications can mean more professional opportunities and greater opportunities for more income. For example, in 2011, New Zealanders with no qualifications were found to have just two-thirds of the earning power of individuals with a bachelor’s degree or higher.<sup>172</sup>

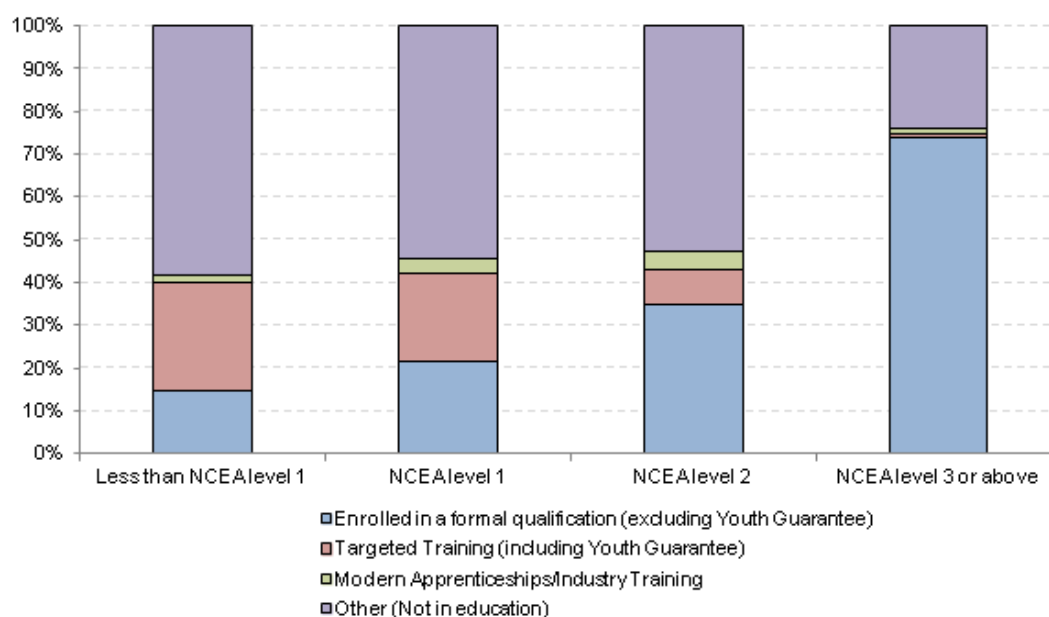
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<sup>171</sup> Graham, J., Meyer, L. H., McKenzie, L., McClure, J., and Weir, K. (2010)

<sup>172</sup> OECD (2013), *Education at a Glance 2013*



**Figure 8: Proportion of school leavers progressing directly to tertiary education by highest school qualification and institution type (2015)**



<sup>173</sup> Source: Ministry of Education (n.d.) *School Leaver Destinations*, Education Counts. Retrieved 13 June 2017 from [http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/statistics/indicators/main/education-and-learning-outcomes/school\\_leavers\\_entering\\_tertiary\\_education](http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/statistics/indicators/main/education-and-learning-outcomes/school_leavers_entering_tertiary_education)

It is key that the government and schools focus on ensuring priority learners have the best chance possible to succeed on NCEA. True equity in the secondary school context would mean that all students had the educational preparation needed to move on to tertiary education, if they so chose. To be clear, tertiary education may not be the right choice for all students, but the pathway should be available to all.

While the flexibility of the New Zealand system has many benefits, one potential drawback is that it can allow higher-needs students to be pushed toward vocational courses that allow for easier credit accrual. While vocational pathways should be available, students should opt into vocational pathways because they seek a career that requires vocational training, not because educators have dismissed the possibility of their achievement of University Entrance.

<sup>173</sup> Ministry of Education (n.d.), *School Leaver Destinations*

### *Reduce cost of NCEA for families*

NCEA credits can only be accrued if families pay for examination fees. Although the New Zealand education system is supposed to be free for children from ages five to 19,<sup>174</sup> many suggested parental donations and fees actually apply, including NCEA fees. Fees could discourage families from having their students sit for NCEA examinations, which can exacerbate inequities already present in the system. If parents do not pay NCEA fees, students who have passed their exams will not receive their credits. In fact, there are currently 21,180 students who have not received their owed NCEA credits over the past ten years due to unpaid fees.<sup>175</sup>

At present, the cost to a student of examinations for all NCEA standards is \$76.70.<sup>176</sup> Each New Zealand Scholarship<sup>177</sup> subject costs an additional \$30. For families living in poverty, and particularly for low-income families with multiple children, these costs could be prohibitive. Although government assistance is currently available for families on income-based assistance, this funding is only available upon application and doesn't cover the full cost of the fees.

As suggested by the Child Poverty Action Group in its 2014 report entitled '*Our children, our choice: priorities for policy*,' the government could fully subsidise the cost of NCEA and scholarship examination fees for schools with high percentages of low-SES students.<sup>178</sup> This would mean that, for example, in deciles one to three secondary schools, all students in the school would be eligible to sit for any NCEA examinations with no cost to their families. This would remove both the barrier of cost, as well as the need for parents to fill out an application for subsidy. By subsidising these costs for low-SES families, the New Zealand government could remove one more barrier to success in secondary school for all learners.

### *Further investigate how to improve NCEA pathways for students*

Throughout my interviews, a theme that emerged was concern over whether NCEA was equitably serving all learners in New Zealand. A barrier to secondary school achievement for priority learners is the complexity and relative lack of safeguards within the NCEA system. Although NCEA provides laudable flexibility for learners and their families to design a secondary education track that is tailored to each individual student, it also seems to be a net that far too many students could fall through.

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<sup>174</sup> Ministry of Education (n.d.), *Education in New Zealand*

<sup>175</sup> New Zealand Parliament (2017), Catherine Delahunty to the Minister of Education, Written Question

<sup>176</sup> New Zealand Qualifications Authority (n.d.), *Secondary Education Fees*

<sup>177</sup> Top-level recognition available in Year 13.

<sup>178</sup> Dale, M., O'Brien, M., and John, S. (2014)

‘Vocational Pathways’ provide a path to ensuring fewer students are finding dead ends in the NCEA system by providing a pathway of courses that are aligned with skills needed for industry.<sup>179</sup> However, there is an overall risk in the NCEA system that students will end up with a patchwork of credits that do not lead them to tertiary education or a career. These ‘destandardised’ pathways may prove least beneficial for young people who do not have the benefit of strong, informed parental guidance. The destandardised pathways also run the risk of allowing the student to accumulate non-linear, unrelated credits, which allow them to achieve NCEA Level 2, but with no clear future pathway to employment or tertiary education and training opportunities. These potential pitfalls could be exacerbated by the lower expectations many teachers in New Zealand have for their Māori and Pasifika students (see page 28).

Two academics, Michael Johnston from Victoria University of Wellington and James Cote from the University of Western Ontario, suggest that recent significant increases in NCEA pass rates are due to grade inflation in response to the government’s Better Public Service target of 85 per cent of 18 year old students achieving NCEA Level 2 or higher in 2017.<sup>180,181</sup> They point to the decrease in PISA scores occurring at the same time as the increase in NCEA attainment as an indicator of this phenomenon. While many would debate the veracity of these claims, it will be important to monitor these trends over time to determine whether further action should be taken to address any possible issues.

The NCEA system is complex and puts a great deal of decision-making into the hands of parents and students. Research shows that ‘choice overload’ can lead to regretting decisions down the line, particularly when there is no clear ‘best’ option presented.<sup>182</sup> It is also worth considering what the default option is for students in the absence of well-informed decision-making. Great care needs to be taken to ensure that parents and students are properly supported to understand their options under NCEA. Learners and their families should be provided with a very clear understanding of how their curricular choices will affect their ability to enrol in university, job training or apprenticeship programmes down the road. By helping to ensure that learners and their parents truly understand their NCEA-related decisions, it will make good on the promise of flexibility in the system, instead of allowing gaping holes that less-resourced students can fall through.

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<sup>179</sup> New Zealand Qualifications Authority (n.d.), *Vocational Pathways Profile and Award*

<sup>180</sup> Johnston, M. (2015)

<sup>181</sup> Downes, S. (2015)

<sup>182</sup> Chernev, A., Bockenholt, U., and Goodman, J. (2015)

New Zealand's education system would benefit from further research and investigation into potential weaknesses in the NCEA system. The Auditor General, ERO, or another appropriate entity could provide further insight into questions such as:

- How commonly are students accruing credits under NCEA that put them on the path to tertiary education and careers?;
- When students are not accruing NCEA credits that align with tertiary education and careers, what are the barriers to success for these students?;
- Is there systematic 'grade inflation' or 'credit farming' occurring in the NCEA system?; and
- What types of information do students and families need to make NCEA-related decisions that are in the best interests of learners, particularly priority learners?

Having answers to the questions above from an unbiased source would allow the Ministry, NZQA and other stakeholders to have a shared understanding of any issues with the NCEA system, and to design necessary steps to include safeguards in it to ensure that all New Zealand learners have the opportunity to succeed.

### **Ensure language, culture and identity are truly integrated into schools**

*Recommendation: Provide consistent, targeted support for implementation of Ka Hikitia and the Pasifika Education Plan, and evaluate these efforts to inform future investments.*

Research indicates that students who experience culturally-affirming education achieve at a higher level.<sup>183,184</sup> It is clear that many schools in New Zealand are moving in a positive direction in terms of incorporating students' language, culture and identity. Appendix 2 provides examples of ways schools I visited were incorporating language, culture and identity for their students. However, given the significant gaps in academic outcomes for Māori and Pasifika students in New Zealand, there is room for improvement.

Several government documents exist that lay out a vision and goals for two of the country's priority learner groups. These documents demonstrate a level of commitment to this critical step toward educational equity. As outlined by *Ka Hikitia – Accelerating Success 2013-2017 (Ka Hikitia)*, the *Pasifika Education Plan 2013-17 (Pasifika Education Plan)*, the inclusion of Māori and Pasifika language, culture and identity in schools is a key focus of the government, and in the case of Māori, an obligation under the Treaty of Waitangi.

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<sup>183</sup> Alton-Lee, A. (2003)

<sup>184</sup> Tuafuti, P., and McCaffery, J. (2005)

*Ka Hikitia* is the government's strategy for the education of Māori students, and it is in its second version. The first version was *Ka Hikitia – Managing for Success 2008-2012*. *Ka Hikitia* is based on research that shows Māori students have more academic success when their language, culture and identity are reflected in the learning environment. That means that a truly equitable education for Māori students would include an intentional reflection of te ao Māori in all schools.

The *Pasifika Education Plan* is the government's strategy for the education of Pasifika students. A prior version covered 2009-2012. Like *Ka Hikitia*, the plan spans early learning, schooling and tertiary education. Compared to *Ka Hikitia*, the *Pasifika Education Plan* is a bit more concrete, providing a number of specific steps that government and schools should take to improve educational outcomes for Pasifika learners.

In 2006, Sir Mason Durie outlined his vision for what Māori education should look like in 2026. His focus was on the need to move beyond surface-level inclusion of language, culture and identity in schools. His thoughts could be applied to Pasifika students as well:

Obvious cultural markers such as kapa haka and formal powhiri will increasingly be underlined by more fundamental cultural concepts that revolve around Māori perspectives relating to space, time, relationships, and in contrast to psychological theories of development, ecological orientations that are more in accord with Māori world views. Māori models and frameworks will find a stronger place in both theory and practice.

By 2026 New Zealand's education system will stand to benefit from indigenous knowledge. Apart from being exposed to conventional educational methods, often derived from scientific bodies of knowledge, students will also be able to engage in other forums where learning outcomes will depend on active involvement in indigenous worlds and experiential learning modes. The two styles of learning may create confusion for some students but there is also the prospect of an integrated pedagogy where indigenous knowledge interfaces with science and conventional education theory.<sup>185</sup>

This assets-based approach allows the language, culture and identity of Māori and Pasifika students to strengthen education for learners instead of being a barrier due to historical and systemic disadvantages. This is the vision embodied in *Ka Hikitia* and the *Pasifika Education Plan*. However, a 2013 Auditor General's report on the implementation of *Ka Hikitia* found that 'there were hopes that *Ka Hikitia* would lead to the sort of transformational change that education experts, and particularly Māori education experts, have been awaiting for decades. Although there has been progress, this transformation has not yet happened.'<sup>186</sup>

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<sup>185</sup> Durie, M. (2006)

<sup>186</sup> Controller and Auditor General (2013)

Based on my interviews, it was clear that in many schools around New Zealand, responsibility for a focus on Māori education often falls to one or two Māori teachers in the school. This person will often take on the role, either formally or informally, of organising the kapa haka team, interacting with parents of Māori students, and explaining te ao Māori to the rest of the school staff. This approach does not represent a systemic inclusion of Māori language, culture and identity in a school, as it does not provide an expectation that all adults in a school will have an understanding and an expectation of ‘Māori succeeding as Māori.’ A similar dynamic often occurs for Pasifika teachers and students.

A series of iterative government efforts have existed over the past 15 years to increase cultural responsiveness in schools, to varying effects. Among others, these programmes include:

- Te Kōtahitanga (2001-2012), a highly-successful, intensive programme for secondary school teachers to improve Māori student learning and achievement;
- He Kākano (2009-2012), a programme built on Te Kōtahitanga research that sought to prepare school leaders to build Māori educational success in their schools, which saw mixed results;
- Kia Eke Panuku: Building on Success, which built on both Te Kōtahitanga and He Kākano as well as several other government initiatives. Kia Eke Panuku focused on supporting Māori students to pursue their potential through strategic change leadership teams;
- Tātaiako (currently in use), a cultural competency framework for teachers of Māori learners; and
- Tapasā (currently in development), a cultural competency framework for teachers of Pasifika learners.

More detailed descriptions of these programmes can be found in Appendix C.

In many of the schools I visited, school leaders noted that teachers who recently left pre-service programmes were much better prepared to provide a culturally-responsive education for their students. However, many of them felt challenged to provide the PLD necessary to meet the bar set by the government’s plans for Māori and Pasifika learners. This was particularly acute in schools with high teacher turnover because even if one cohort of teachers receives PLD on providing a culturally-responsive education, many of those teachers will move on to be replaced with a new set of teachers who will again need the same PLD.

If the government is dedicated to seeing the results outlined in *Ka Hikitia* and the *Pasifika Education Plan*, most schools will need additional assistance to get there. While the school leaders I spoke with support these plans and their aims, words on paper are not enough to enact the major changes that will be needed across the New Zealand school system to fully see students’ language, culture and identity reflected in their schools. While some current and past government programmes have been shown to be successful in making real the goals of these plans (see Appendix C), there are concerns on the ground and among stakeholders that government investments in PLD related to language, culture and identity have not been sustained.

The 2013 Auditor General report on the implementation of *Ka Hikitia* recommended that ‘the Ministry should consider what activities work best and prioritise these.’<sup>187</sup> An evaluation of He Kākano recommended that ‘key needs are continued support to enhance culturally-responsive leadership and pedagogies so that Māori students are not under-served by the New Zealand educational system. Given the extent of these needs, intervention efforts to build schools’ cultural capabilities should be a priority.’<sup>188</sup>

It appears that the Ministry is moving away from providing funding for PLD programmes specifically intended to foster cultural responsiveness in schools.<sup>189</sup> Instead, a new PLD programme has been rolled out, to be administered by the Education Council, with the hope that it will embed cultural responsiveness within all PLD provided in schools. The criteria for accreditation as a provider under the new PLD programme includes the ability to provide ‘culturally appropriate’ support.<sup>190</sup> This is a rational approach as it is an attempt to systematise what the country has learned over the past 15 years regarding what works for Māori and Pasifika learners.

However, there is a risk that PLD providers will not have a strong enough knowledge base to weave cultural responsiveness into their programmes, and that school leaders may not select PLD programmes that address school issues regarding the incorporation of their students’ language, culture and identity. To carry out the recommendations laid out by the Auditor General and the He Kākano reviewers, the Ministry and the Education Council will need to ensure that they are carefully reviewing the new PLD programme, as well as Tātaiako and Tapasā, to determine whether these efforts are making progress towards the goals outlined in *Ka Hikitia* and the *Pasifika Education Plan*. This would include ensuring that frameworks such as Tātaiako and Tapasā are being integrated into teacher practice. The Ministry may also want to consider pairing its roll-out of Tapasā with PLD opportunities for school leaders and educators to understand the new framework and how best to incorporate it in their classrooms.

One concern when implementing and evaluating policy is the tendency in governments around the world to bounce from funding one programme to funding another too quickly without analysing results or providing time for positive results to manifest. When government programmes are not sustained, it can lead to a situation where positive gains are not sustained either. This seems to have been the case with PLD programmes that could go a long way to supporting the outcomes envisioned in *Ka Hikitia* and the *Pasifika Education Plan*.

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<sup>187</sup> Ibid.

<sup>188</sup> Hynds, A., Meyer, L., Penetito, W., Averil, R., Hindle, R., Taiwhati, M., and Hodis, F., with Faircloth, S. (2013)

<sup>189</sup> See Appendix C for examples.

<sup>190</sup> Ministry of Education (n.d.), *Accreditation Framework and Principles*

For example, Te Kōtahitanga was shown to be an effective programme. During its final phase, the achievement of Māori students in schools implementing the programme improved at about three times the rate of those in comparison schools.<sup>191</sup> It was commonly mentioned in my interviews that funding for Te Kōtahitanga was not continued due to its cost. However, a social investment approach would keep in mind other costs to government that come into play when a student is not able to succeed academically. If students aren't able to achieve NCEA qualifications that put them on the path to tertiary education or a career, or if they drop out of school, the cost to government could be much higher in the form of housing supports, benefits or, at the far end of the spectrum, involvement in the judicial system and incarceration. These types of costs are likely to be much higher per individual than the per-student cost of a PLD program.

### *Mana Whenua Education Facilitators*

One successful model of helping schools reflect students' language, culture and identity already taking place in New Zealand is the Mana Whenua Education Facilitators programme in Canterbury. This programme, funded by the Greater Christchurch Education Renewal Programme, is a partnership between the Ministry of Education and Mātauraka Mahaanui, the advisory board set up by Te Rāunanga o Ngāi Tahu (the Treaty partner) to guide education renewal in Canterbury and represent mana whenua interests. It provides school leaders the opportunity to voluntarily collaborate with a facilitator to assist the school in:

- Including cultural narratives in curriculum;
- Goal-setting with a focus on Māori learners;
- Strengthening relationships and collaboration with mana whenua; and
- Developing culturally-responsive assessment.

The facilitators also work closely with Kāhui Ako to build regional capacity to raise student achievement, accelerate Māori language provision and enhance Māori learner outcomes across Canterbury.

The Mana Whenua Education Facilitators programme is culturally responsive and based on the values of well-being, focused on taha wairua, taha hinengaro, taha whatumanawa and taha tinana. It empowers mana whenua to help determine what schools should look like. It is a successful programme already underway in Canterbury that could be expanded to other parts of the country where it could be beneficial. It should be noted that iwi vary greatly in their size and capacity, so adequate funding would need to be provided from the government to begin and sustain the expansion of the programme.

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<sup>191</sup> Alton-Lee, A. (2015)



One major benefit of expanding the Mana Whenua Education Facilitators model is that it could provide a more consistent method for schools to continually improve their incorporation of language, culture and identity. Iwi are stable entities that will exist regardless of which political party is in power or who a school principal is. This model could pair well with the new PLD programme as the facilitators could help guide school leaders' decision-making on PLD procurement choices that could drive improvements for Māori students.

## Decrease school segregation

*Recommendation: Reduce school segregation by managing school choice.*

Parental choice provided under the Tomorrow's Schools reforms appears to have led to more segregation<sup>192</sup> of schools along ethnic lines.<sup>193</sup> While middle- and upper-income parents elect their children into higher-decile schools, lower-SES schools suffer from a lack of financial support from parents and communities. Although it is more subtle, low-SES schools and schools with high percentages of Māori and Pasifika students lack the same level of access to what University of Waikato Professor Martin Thrupp refers to as 'networks of power and information (the 'old school tie').'<sup>194</sup>

Allan Vester, the principal of Edgewater College, a decile two school in South Auckland, said that 'There's been a drift apart of the schools, and so low-decile schools are increasingly Māori and Pasifika, and I think that's bad for society... because the society that kids go out into once they leave school is actually a very multicultural and mixed society, and I think it is actually healthy and helpful to have kids educated in that setting as well.'<sup>195</sup>

In 2016, only 24 per cent of Pākehā children went to decile one to five schools, a drastic drop from 40 per cent in 2000.<sup>196</sup> Although one would expect more Māori and Pasifika students in low-decile schools since Māori and Pasifika are more highly represented in low-SES communities, this type of data trend still indicates an increasing segregation in the New Zealand school system.

Higher-income parents utilise school choice more than their lower-income peers, because they tend to have more information and social capital. Parents with lower levels of education may have a harder time gauging information about school choices available to their students. We know that higher-income parents tend to shy away from schools with significant numbers of low-income students, and they prefer to send their children to schools whose student populations match their own family.<sup>197</sup> All of this can lead to more segregated schools, and when schools are more segregated, issues of inequality are exacerbated.

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<sup>192</sup> In the United States, segregation originally referred to the forced separation of people along ethnic lines. However, the word is now commonly-used in American policy circles to discuss the issue of still continuing ethnic and socio-economic separation, including in education.

<sup>193</sup> Wylie, C. (1999)

<sup>194</sup> Thrupp, M. (2006)

<sup>195</sup> Gerritsen, J. (2017)

<sup>196</sup> Radio New Zealand (2017)

<sup>197</sup> Schneider, M. and Buckley, J. (2002)

Dr Cathy Wylie writes in *Inequality: A New Zealand Crisis*:

When housing costs lead to socially segregated communities, schools situated in low-income areas have difficulty drawing on a full range of knowledge, skills, networks, and opportunities to support their students, in and out of classrooms. In turn, that makes it harder for these schools to improve their students' educational achievement levels; thus students' opportunities and their ability to contribute later to social and economic well-being are limited.<sup>198</sup>

As Wylie suggests, one solution to increase income and ethnic diversity in New Zealand schools could be to set aside a certain percentage (she proposes 20 per cent) of places in all schools for low-SES students.<sup>199</sup> This is a no- or low-cost option that would ensure that priority learners have a seat at the table (or in this case, at the desk) at any school in New Zealand. Although it would increase costs associated with such an initiative, it would be beneficial for this type of scheme to include funding for student transportation, since cost of transportation can be a barrier for low-SES students to access schools outside their neighbourhood.

The OECD introduces other options for reducing school segregation in its report *Equity and Quality in Education: Supporting Disadvantaged Students and Schools*. Their suggestions include 'controlled-choice schemes,' where the school choice system is designed to distribute students across a system in a more diverse manner and discourage segregation. The OECD report also includes the idea of incentivising schools to recruit and retain a more diverse student body through increased per-student funding for low-SES students.<sup>200</sup> Other options to increase diversity in high-decile schools include ensuring low-SES parents have sufficient information about their schooling options, and ensuring barriers, such as transportation and high suggested parental donations, are removed.

As schools in the US have become more segregated in recent years, decreasing segregation has increasingly become a focus of US education policy. New Zealand policymakers and stakeholders may want to examine school demographic trends and enrolment schemes in New Zealand to determine whether a goal of decreasing school segregation could improve education for more priority learners.

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<sup>198</sup> Wylie, C. (2013)

<sup>199</sup> Ibid.

<sup>200</sup> OECD (2012)



## CONCLUSION

There is no doubt that now is the time for New Zealand to significantly increase its efforts to reduce educational inequities. In just 23 years, Māori and Pasifika children will represent the majority of students in primary schools in New Zealand. At the same time, the country needs an increasing number of individuals with tertiary credentials to fill labor market needs. If no progress is made to reduce inequities in the education system, New Zealand could find itself with an increasing number of young people not prepared to enter the evolving job market. This would mean a greater number of individuals unemployed, relying on social services and unable to fulfill their full potential.

Tackling educational inequity is an incredibly challenging, politically difficult and oftentimes messy endeavour. However, it is also phenomenally urgent, economically necessary and a moral imperative. Fortunately, New Zealand has a high-quality, high-capacity education system that provides a strong foundation upon which to build. In recent years, New Zealand has taken some important steps forward to build an education system that works for all, including examining a new funding system and moving towards more between-school collaboration. As a new government forms this spring and decisions are made regarding potential updated versions of *Kā Hikitia* and the *Pasifika Education Plan*, this momentum for change should be carried forward with an increasing focus on reducing inequity.

Rectifying educational inequities in New Zealand will take time and long-term investments. Consistent policy and funding support is key, and government should resist bouncing around from policy solution to policy solution every few years. Instead, each existing and potential system design decision, policy, programme and funding opportunity should be carefully examined to determine whether it will help or hinder efforts to close education equity gaps.

Improved educational equity holds great potentiality for positive societal change. Increased levels of education can break cycles of intergenerational poverty, rectify income inequalities, increase civic engagement and reduce involvement in the criminal justice system. Importantly for New Zealand, decreased educational inequity would also mean progress towards more fully realising the promise of the Treaty of Waitangi.

Nelson Mandela said that ‘education is the most powerful weapon we can use to change the world.’ That power is greatest when *all* children and young people, no matter their ethnicity, where they live or how much money their parents make, have access to a high-quality education that meets their unique needs.

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## APPENDIX A – GLOSSARY OF TE REO MĀORI TERMS

*ako* – to learn, study, instruct

*Aotearoa* – New Zealand

*hapū* – section of a large kinship group and the primary political unit in traditional Māori society. It consists of a number of *whānau* sharing descent from a common ancestor, usually being named after the ancestor, but sometimes from an important event in the group's history

*hui* – gathering, meeting

*iwi* – extended Māori kinship group, tribe, nation, people, nationality, race - often refers to a large group of people descended from a common ancestor and associated with a distinct territory

*kapa haka* – Māori cultural group that performs the haka, a posture dance with actions and rhythmically shouted words

*karakia* – to pray, to recite ritual chants

*kaumātua* – elder, person of status within the whānau

*kohanga reo* – Māori-language preschool

*kuia* – female elder

*kura kaupapa* – primary school operating under Māori custom and using Māori as the medium of instruction

*mana* – prestige, authority, control, power, influence, status, spiritual power, charisma

*manaakitanga* - hospitality, kindness, generosity, support

*mana whenua* – power associated with the possession and occupation of tribal land

*marae* – hub of a Māori community, usually a building or series of buildings surrounding a courtyard, utilised for meetings, celebrations, and funerals

*matauranga* – knowledge, wisdom, understanding, skill

*Pākehā* – New Zealand European/white

*powhiri* – welcome ceremony on a marae

*pūrākau* – story, legend

*taha hinengaro* – psychological health

*taha tinana* – physical health

*taha wairua* – spiritual health

*taha whatumanawa* – emotional health

*tangata* - person

*te ao Māori* – Māori world view and values

*te reo Māori* – the Māori language

*tikanga* – the customary system of Māori values and practices that have developed over time and are deeply embedded in the social context

*waiata* – song, singing

*wānanga* – to meet and discuss; a tertiary institution that caters for Māori learning needs

*whakataukāki* – significant saying, formulaic saying, aphorism

*whakawhanaunga* – to have a relationship

*whānau* – extended family, family group, a familiar term of address to a number of people - the primary economic unit of traditional Māori society. In the modern context the term is sometimes used to include friends who may not have any kinship ties to other members

*whanaungatanga* - relationship

*whenua* – land

## **APPENDIX B - OBSERVATIONS OF SUCCESSFUL INCORPORATION OF LANGUAGE, CULTURE AND IDENTITY**

Many of the schools I visited during my research had gone to painstaking lengths to ensure that students' language, culture and identity were present and valued throughout the school day and beyond. These are the types of activities that could be increased in schools across New Zealand with consistent funding for PLD programmes aligned to *Ka Hikitia* and the *Pasifika Education Plan*. It was clear, based on my discussions with students, that they knew their identity was respected and valued, and this was having positive outcomes for their ability to thrive, academically and personally. Some of the practices I observed included:

- Allowing students to lead tikanga, powhiri, hui, waiata and karakia on a regular basis;
- Providing language classes for students in te reo Māori, Samoan, Tongan, Tokelauan and other languages reflected in the school population;
- Place-based curriculum centred around the local Māori whakatauaāki and tikanga;
- Regular visits to marae, or the location of a marae and/or fale on the school campus;
- Inclusion of whānau, kaumātua, and kuia in the school day, with an emphasis on inter-generational learning;
- Close relationships with the mana whenua of the school, as well as other local iwi, hāpu, whānau, kaumātua and kuia, who help inform curriculum and culture in the school;
- Frequent use of te reo Māori between teachers and students;
- The provision of te reo Māori courses for teachers to strengthen their reo;
- Consistent inclusion of te ao Māori in curriculum presented to students across a range of subject areas;
- (Re)design of school logos and (re)naming of schools in collaboration with students, whānau, hāpu and iwi in a way that honors the mana whenua, students' tīpuna and/or local pūrākau;
- Creating meaningful student-teacher and teacher-whānau whakawhanaunga;
- The real-world connection of classroom material with students' culture;
- Use of language and culture of students visibly present in the school and classrooms on signage, posters, and art;
- Ensuring proper pronunciation of student and whānau names; and
- Allowing students to work collaboratively in ways that support interdependence.

## APPENDIX C: PROGRAMMES TO SUPPORT CULTURALLY-RESPONSIVE SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AND TEACHING

### Te Kōtahitanga

Te Kōtahitanga was a successful research and professional development programme designed to support secondary school ‘teachers to improve Māori students’ learning and achievement, enabling teachers to create a culturally responsive context for learning which is responsive to evidence of student performance and understandings.’<sup>201</sup> The programme also focused on supporting school leaders to enable the type of changes needed for teachers to successfully carry out this goal. As Table 2 shows, during the final phase<sup>202</sup> of the programme, the achievement of Māori students in schools implementing it improved at about three times the rate of those in comparison schools.<sup>203</sup>

**Table 2: The impact of Te Kōtahitanga Phase 5 on NCEA achievement**

	Achievement as %		Difference as %
	2009	2012	
<b>NCEA level 1</b>			
Te Kotahitanga Phase 5	41.6	52.4	10.8
Comparison group	42.1	46.1	4.0
<b>NCEA level 2</b>			
Te Kotahitanga Phase 5	44.9	59.6	14.7
Comparison group	44.1	48.9	4.8
<b>NCEA level 3</b>			
Te Kotahitanga Phase 5	32.3	42.3	10.0
Comparison group	30.0	33.4	3.4
<b>University Entrance</b>			
Te Kotahitanga Phase 5	22.9	26.0	3.1
Comparison group	21.2	23.9	2.7

<sup>204</sup> Source: Alton-Lee, A. (2015), *Ka Hikitia: A Demonstration Report, Effectiveness of Te Kōtahitanga Phase 5 2010-2012*, Education Counts, Ministry of Education. Retrieved 20 May 2017 from [http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0016/151351/BES-Ka-Hikitia-Report-FINAL-240615.pdf](http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/__data/assets/pdf_file/0016/151351/BES-Ka-Hikitia-Report-FINAL-240615.pdf)

<sup>201</sup> Ministry of Education (n.d.), *About Te Kōtahitanga*

<sup>202</sup> Te Kōtahitanga had five phases spanning the years it was funded.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid.

<sup>204</sup> Alton-Lee, A. (2015)

Te Kōtahitanga received government funding from 2001 to 2012. Research done on the programme clearly showed its success in improving and increasing:

- Quality of classroom teaching;
- Academic outcomes for Māori and non-Māori students;
- Teachers' valuation of Māori students' language, culture and identity;
- Use of collaborative learning and group work;
- Assessment practices;
- Māori students' feeling that they could succeed 'as Māori';
- Positive student-teacher relationships;
- Positive whānau feelings about school; and
- Student attendance and engagement.<sup>205,206,207,208,209</sup>

By 2012, 27 per cent of Māori secondary or composite school students were in schools that had been a part of Te Kōtahitanga.<sup>210</sup> Te Kōtahitanga proved successful not only for Māori students, but for all ethnicities of students, as evidenced by Table 3. It was commonly mentioned during my interviews that Te Kōtahitanga was not continued or expanded due to the cost of the programme.

**Table 3: Success in NCEA level 1, 2005-2006 (comparing students from Te Kōtahitanga schools with those from non-Te Kōtahitanga schools and the national cohort)**

Ethnicity	Te Kōtahitanga Schools							National Cohort (decile weighted) <sup>2</sup>
	Year 11 Students on roll (number)		Year 11 Students Gaining NCEA Level 1					
			Number		Percent		Increase (percentage points)	
	2005	2006	2005	2006	2005	2006	2005-06	
NZ Māori	973	952	312	461	32.1	48.4	16.4	8.9
European	1210	1302	756	899	62.5	69	6.6	4.1
Pacific Island	292	282	69	110	23.6	39	15.4	6.1
Other	263	231	181	175	68.8	75.8	6.9	8.1

<sup>211</sup> Source: Ministry of Education (n.d.), *Te Kōtahitanga Results and Findings*, Te Kete Ipurangi. Retrieved 21 June 2017 from <http://teKōtahitanga.tki.org.nz/About/Results-and-Findings>

<sup>205</sup> Meyer, L. and others (2010)

<sup>206</sup> Bishop, R., Berryman, M., Cavanagh, T., and Teddy, L. (2007)

<sup>207</sup> Bishop, R., Berryman, M., Powell, A., and Teddy, L. (2007)

<sup>208</sup> Bishop, R. and others (2011)

<sup>209</sup> Meyer, L. and others (2010)

<sup>210</sup> Alton-Lee, A. (2015)

<sup>211</sup> Ministry of Education (n.d.), *Te Kōtahitanga Results and Findings*

## He Kākano

Launched in 2009 to build off the Te Kōtahitanga programme, He Kākano provided professional development for 83 school leaders over three years, with the goal of improving the cultural responsiveness of school leaders and teachers. The programme aimed to support ‘school leaders to become relational and pedagogical leaders with the capability that will enable schools and teachers to build educational success for and with Māori learners.’<sup>212</sup> This was a lower-cost programme since services are being provided to principals, who were then turning around and passing information along to their faculty. There are those in the field who believe that, since He Kākano was not provided directly to teachers, who have the most constant contact with students, the programme was ‘watered down,’ leading to doubts about its efficacy. However, the school leaders who I spoke with in schools that implemented He Kākano were pleased with it, and credited it with significant changes in their schools. Like Te Kōtahitanga, funding for He Kākano was not sustained over time, and the programme only served a one-time cohort of 83 schools out of 167 schools who applied.<sup>213</sup> There was clearly an unmet need for this type of programme.

Research on He Kākano shows it had mixed success. An evaluation of the programme showed that it increased awareness of culturally-responsive pedagogy and school leadership. However, the evaluation also found mixed results and contradictions in the data, including finding ‘lack of impact and variability of school leader engagement’<sup>214</sup> and classroom practice ‘not consistent with pedagogies known to be effective for Māori.’<sup>215</sup>

## Tātaiako

Tātaiako: Cultural Competencies for Teachers of Māori Learners was released in 2011. It is a voluntary framework designed to strengthen ‘teachers’ relationships and engagement with Māori learners and with their whānau and iwi.<sup>216</sup> The principles of *Ka Hikitia* form the basis of Tātaiako. The competencies laid out in the framework are:

- Wānanga – participating with in ‘robust dialogue’ to improve Māori learner success;
- Whanaungatanga – engaging in respectful relationships with the Māori community, including students, whānau, hapū, and iwi;
- Manaakitanga – showing respect towards te ao Māori;
- Tangata Whenuatanga – supporting Māori learners to succeed as Māori through effective language and cultural practices; and
- Ako – focusing on learning both of educators and of Māori students.<sup>217</sup>

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<sup>212</sup> Ministry of Education (n.d.), *He Kākano*

<sup>213</sup> Ministry of Education (n.d.), *He Kākano In-School Activities*

<sup>214</sup> Hynds, A. and others (2013)

<sup>215</sup> Averill, R. and others (2015)

<sup>216</sup> Education Council (2011)

<sup>217</sup> Ibid.



## Tapasā

Tapasā is a recently-released draft framework intended to ‘support teachers and leaders to strengthen their understanding, skills and knowledge when teaching Pasifika learners.’<sup>218</sup> The framework is currently out for consultation. The finalised version of Tapasā is expected to be completed in 2017. The turu, or competencies, laid out in the framework are:

- Demonstrating awareness of Pasifika languages, cultures and identities;
- Cultivating relationships and behaviours that lead to wellbeing for Pasifika learners; and
- Utilising pedagogies that are effective for Pasifika learners.<sup>219</sup>

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<sup>218</sup> Ministry of Education (2017), *Tapasā – cultural competencies framework consultation*

<sup>219</sup> Ibid.