EDUCATION REVIEW OFFICE
TE TARI AROTAKE MATAURANGA

EDUCATIONALLY POWERFUL CONNECTIONS WITH PARENTS AND WHĀNAU

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Foreword

"In New Zealand we have a growing body of research showing the impact of educationally powerful connections and relationships on student outcomes in a range of contexts. This research identifies that establishing educationally powerful connections and relationships with parents, families, whānau and communities provides access to a greater range and depth of resources to support the education endeavour; enhances outcomes for all students, in particular those who have been underserved or who are at risk; and achieves large positive effects in terms of student academic and social outcomes."

School Evaluation Indicators, page 28

In this report, the Education Review Office (ERO) evaluated how well 256 schools worked with parents and whānau to respond to students at risk of underachievement. We looked for examples where schools had specifically worked with parents and whānau to accelerate and support progress and improve achievement.

We know from research that most parents and whānau have friendly relationships with schools but for relationships to positively impact on learners, they must be 'educationally powerful'. The establishment and sustenance of educationally powerful connections is so important that it is one of the six domains in the *School Evaluation Indicators*, and is cross referenced in the leadership domain and the responsive curriculum domain.

This report tells the stories of schools that have developed effective relationships with families and whānau. It includes many examples of Māori and Pacific children – these are the children for whom the system has underperformed and, as for all learners, for whom culture, language and identity is especially important for their connection and engagement with learning and school.

The examples in this report are the result of principals, teachers and boards challenging themselves to do better, changing their mind-sets and often acting outside of their comfort zones so that their students succeeded. There are some very moving quotes in these stories; I encourage you to read the report and let it influence how you engage with parents and whānau.

This report, along with ERO's *School Evaluation Indicators*, and our soon-to-be released *Effective School Evaluation* and *Internal Evaluation: Good Practice* tell you what's important in achieving and accelerating positive student outcomes.

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Executive summary

Parents, families and whānau want their children to feel they belong at school and experience success. They want to be involved in their child's learning – to understand what is expected and to know how they can contribute. This involvement contributes to each child's learning and success and is vital for children at risk of not achieving.

ERO's evaluation

ERO evaluated how well schools worked with parents, families and whānau in their response to students at risk of underachievement. ERO looked for stories about successful working relationships where schools, with parents, had helped students move onto a successful pathway from a less successful one. This evaluation was undertaken in 256 schools reviewed in Terms 3 and 4, 2014.

The findings

Educationally powerful connections are relationships between schools, parents, whānau and communities that improve education outcomes for students. ERO found that such connections involved two-way collaborative working relationships that reflected the concept of *mahi tahi* – working together towards the specific goal of supporting a young person's success. The best examples were learning-centred collaborations between students, their teachers and their parents and whānau that focused on the students' learning and progress. A whānau-like context[1] was established in which parents, teachers and students all understood their rights and responsibilities, commitments and obligations – *whanaungatanga* – to help the students succeed.

Although all schools had some type of relationship with children's parents and whānau, many teachers worked more closely with parents of the students that needed support to catch up with their peers. In some schools, teachers shared resources or strategies that parents and the child could do together at home. In the best instances, teachers and leaders had a two-way learning relationship with parents and whānau where they shared solutions and listened to each other's perspectives. As a result, many students made accelerated progress.

The intent of the relationship is to extend learning opportunities

The 'tipping point' for leaders and teachers creating educationally powerful connections and relationships with parents and whānau was for teachers and leaders to understand that the purpose of these relationships was to **extend learning** across home and school. Students then experienced **multiple and aligned opportunities** to learn and practise. Instead of one-off school-based learning, learning at home was actively promoted by giving students relevant learning opportunities and support. They made sure the same language and resources were used in meaningful **home and school** activities to reinforce key learning. This enabled students to accelerate their progress and achieve success.

Teachers and leaders who understood this intent of the relationship:

> knew about, valued, and built from one learning experience to the next – they removed the separation between home and classroom learning experiences

> developed a shared language about learning and achievement with students and their parents and whānau

> valued students' wellbeing and were genuinely interested in them and their families.

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1   A sense of family connection – a relationship through shared experiences and working together that gives people a sense of belonging.

School characteristics make a difference

Teachers and leaders at schools with successful working relationships with parents and whānau of students at risk of underachievement expected parents to be involved and knew that the school's role was to help parents with this involvement. There was a sense of *manaakitanga* – teachers and leaders recognised their responsibility to care for the wellbeing of parents and whānau when working together. They:

> involved most parents in setting goals and agreeing on next learning steps with their child

> regularly reviewed their working relationship with all parents

> responded quickly and nimbly to information from tracking and monitoring student progress

> persisted in finding ways to involve all parents of students they were focusing on, and ways for students to succeed

> were systematically strengthening and maintaining working relationships with all students and their parents and whānau.

Being systematic in strengthening relationships

When school leaders designed initiatives that focused on particular named students at risk of underachieving, teachers systematically strengthened their working relationships with these students' parents and whānau. These leaders used inquiry frameworks (see Figure 1) to help teachers:

> make time for frequent and regular conversations with parents and whānau to learn more about who each student is in the wider context of school and home, in order to develop holistic and authentic learning goals and contexts

> extend learning by designing and putting in place multiple and aligned learning opportunities

> evaluate the design of these learning opportunities and whether parents and whānau could use them at home

> be persistent and keep using what worked; change and improve what did not work, and transfer what worked to support other students and their parents and whānau.

This is summarised in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Inquiry framework

4 To be persistent, and:
- sustain what worked about the relationships for the students involved.
- change and improve what did not work.
- transfer what worked to more students and their parents, families and whānau.

1 To know who the student is, in the wider context of school and home, in order to develop holistic and authentic learning goals.

Identification of students at risk of underachieving

Refocus on next actions

Identify learning strengths and needs, language, identify and culture, interests and aspirations

School has evidence of impact. Students have been deliberately supported to improve outcomes.

Recognise the impact of the actions that influenced the improved student outcomes

Respond with deliberate actions and innovations to improve student outcomes

3 To evaluate the multiple aligned opportunities to know what worked for whom, when and why.

2 To extend learning by designing and implementing multiple aligned learning opportunities.

Based on The New Zealand Curriculum's Teaching as Inquiry tool.

Improving collaboration as part of the school's approach to underachievement

The examples in this evaluation provide a snapshot of practice. They do not necessarily represent what is happening in a school for all parents and whānau with children at risk of underachieving, rather what was happening for a small group of children. However, the schools with examples of educationally powerful connections and relationships were strengthening their relationships with *all* parents by using what they learnt in their interactions with the parents and whānau of this smaller group of children.

Students would benefit if teachers and leaders explored better ways to involve parents and whānau in designing and implementing their response to potential student underachievement. ERO's *School Evaluation Indicators (trial document)*[2] and supporting resources position activating educationally powerful connections as central to school improvement efforts. ERO and the Ministry of Education have developed a resource, *Effective School Evaluation: How to do and use internal evaluation for improvement*,[3] good practice exemplars, and associated workshops. These tools and resources are intended for use alongside the curriculum to improve outcomes for all learners.

The inquiry framework above, along with the effective practice illustrated in the domains of ERO's *School Evaluation Indicators* could be used to design, implement and monitor responses to potential student underachievement. In some schools, working with parents and whānau needs to shift from the view of 'teachers know best' or 'parents don't have the time' to one of *mahi tahi* – deliberate two-way collaborative relationships focused on providing students with extended learning opportunities and increasing their education success.

Next steps

ERO recommends that when working with individual schools and communities of learners the Ministry of Education and professional learning and development (PLD) providers incorporate the notion of working with parents and whānau of students who are underachieving.

ERO recommends that school leaders:

> focus on named students at risk of underachieving and identify their learning needs and strengths

> design initiatives with parents and whānau of these named students

> evaluate the impact and alignment of the multiple learning opportunities introduced as part of the initiative

> use the Ministry of Education resources available at **http://nzcurriculum.tki.org.nz/ Principles/Community-engagement**

> use the Ministry of Education inclusive practices tool available at **www.wellbeingatschool.org.nz/about-inclusive-practices-tools**

> use ERO's *School Evaluation Indicators*, especially Domain 3: Educationally powerful connections and relationships, to explore what it means to collaborate with parents and whānau in response to student underachievement **www.ero.govt.nz/ Review-Process/Frameworks-and-Evaluation-Indicators-for-ERO-Reviews/ School-Evaluation-Indicators-2015-Trial.**

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2   Education Review Office. (2015). *School Evaluation Indicators: Effective Practice for Improvement and Learner Success.* Retrieved from http://ero.govt.nz/Review-Process/Frameworks-and-Evaluation-Indicators-for-ERO-Reviews/School-Evaluation-Indicators-2015-Trial.

3   Education Review Office. (2015). *Effective School Education: How to do and use internal evaluation for improvement.* Retrieved from www.ero.govt.nz.

Introduction

Each child and young person's parents and whānau are their first and most important teachers. Building educationally powerful connections and relationships between parents, whānau and schools is vital for each child and young person's ongoing learning and success.

Educationally powerful connections and relationships:

> are learning-focused
> support the two-way sharing of expertise in ways that acknowledge, understand and celebrate similarities and differences.

Why are educationally powerful connections and relationships vital?

Particular kinds of school-family connections can have large positive effects on the academic and social outcomes of students, especially those who have been underserved or who are at risk.[4]

These children need extra support to catch up to their peers.

The *Iterative Best Evidence Synthesis* (BES)[5] found successful school-family connections were characterised by:

> families being treated with dignity and respect
> programmes adding to family practices – not undermining them
> structured, specific suggestions rather than general advice
> supportive group opportunities as well as one-to-one contact (especially informal contact).

While emphasising the importance of these relationships, the BES also cautioned it was possible for schools to invest considerable time, energy and resources in engaging with families and communities in ways that have little, or even negative, impacts on student outcomes.

Although high quality teaching is the biggest in-school influence on student learning, most children spend less than half their time in formal education settings. John Hattie's meta-analysis[6] found a child or young person's home environment has a larger effect on their education success than a range of other inputs such as homework, reducing class sizes and small group learning.

The OECD[7] found certain home activities were more strongly related to better student reading outcomes than others. Reading books to children when they are beginning primary school, and talking with young people about topical political or social issues had the largest positive impacts on learning. In another study, the OECD[8] reported on the positive impact of parents creating an environment that promotes early exposure to mathematical knowledge and reasoning. Both reports commented that schools appeared to wait until students struggled with learning before meeting with parents to discuss how they could work together to support success. The reports suggested that inviting parents to work with schools when the child is performing well sends a positive message that the school genuinely values the child and their parents.

4   Robinson, R. Hohepa, M. & Lloyd, C. (2009). *School leadership and student outcomes: Identifying what works and why. Best Evidence Synthesis Iterative [BES].* Retrieved from https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/__data/assets/pdf_file/0015/60180/BES-Leadership-Web-updated-foreword-2015.pdf p45.

5   All resources found www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/series/2515.

6   Hattie, J. (2008). *Visible Learning: A Synthesis of Over 800 Meta-Analyses Relating to Achievement.* NY: Routledge.

7   OECD. (2012). *Let's Read Them a Story! The Parent Factor in Education.* Retrieved from http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264176232-en.

8   Dumont, H., Istance, D., & Benavides F. (2010). *The nature of learning. Using research to inspire practice.* Retrieved from www.oecd.org/edu/ceri/50300814.pdf.

In several previous national reports, ERO has commented on the quality of family-school relationships as schools strive to improve educational outcomes for all students.

For example, ERO found that in schools that were taking strategic and successful actions to support Year Year 1 to 8 students to accelerate progress, parents and whānau tended to be well informed about what their child needed.[9] The child's need was explained in ways that made it clear that teachers and leaders knew they were responsible for student achievement and their accelerated progress, but they also needed help from the parents and whānau. Teachers invited parents and whānau to discuss their child's interests to find contexts that would motivate and engage them. They also worked together to develop home activities. Less effective schools knew it was important to develop these

relationships and often had this as a school goal, but were not specific in their request for parent and whānau support. This meant many actions to develop relationships were superficial.

In a 2014 ERO evaluation, schools with an extensive approach to student wellbeing saw families as inherently capable. These schools informed parents of any concerns about their child and invited them to help develop solutions.[10]

Does the focus of these relationships change over time?

Parental[11] engagement in education takes different forms for different parents and whānau, and at different ages and stages. Education (and learning itself) happens all the time, in formal and informal settings. Parents have different roles at different times, but they are always important.[12]

9   Education Review Office. (2014). *Raising achievement in primary schools.* Retrieved from http://ero.govt.nz/National-Reports/Raising-achievement-in-primary-schools-June-2014.

10   Education Review Office. (2014). *Wellbeing for Young People's Success at Secondary School.* Retrieved from http://ero.govt.nz/National-Reports/Wellbeing-for-Young-People-s-Success-at-Secondary-School-February-2015 and Education Review Office. (2014). *Wellbeing for Children's Success at Primary School.* Retrieved from http://ero.govt.nz/National-Reports/Wellbeing-for-Children-s-Success-at-Primary-School-February-2015.

11   The term 'parents' has been used to mean adults who have ongoing caring roles for children. Whānau means an extended family; in some cases, this group can be very extended and included members who are not biologically related but have caring responsibilities towards each other.

12   *Family Involvement Makes a Difference* is a set of research briefs that examines family involvement in early childhood, elementary [primary] school, and middle and high school settings. Retrieved from www.hfrp.org/publications-resources/publications-series/family-involvement-makes-a-difference.

The Harvard *Family Involvement Makes a Difference* research found while high quality, two-way communication between home and school was important at all school levels, at the secondary level this communication also included a focus on exploring beyond-school options such as the transition from school to further study at a tertiary level. Likewise, while maintaining high expectations by schools and parents was important for all ages, as young people moved from primary to secondary school there was a shift from supporting literacy, helping with homework and managing children's education to a focus on homework management and parents encouraging further education. This changed focus was due to two factors:

1. Young people's development. Although primary-aged children start to spend more time away from their families, generally their families organise their lives. In contrast, adolescents actively seek autonomy and time with their peers and are willing to take more risks as they form their own identity.

2. Changing desired outcomes. A growing body of research,[13,14] indicates that when a young person's learning improves in literacy, numeracy and key competencies, they can learn better in all other areas. Over time, outcome priorities shift to expectations for lifelong learning and developing pathways to further education and qualifications to decrease the likelihood of 'dropping out'.[15]

The Harvard research confirmed the findings from the BES and OECD work, that family involvement in schooling is important for students of all ages and when strengthened, leads to positive educational outcomes.

What is expected?

The importance of parents and teachers working together for student success is embedded in New Zealand's key education policy including:

> *The New Zealand Curriculum* (NZC)[16] principles: Schools are expected to engage with community so that "the curriculum has meaning for students, connects with their wider lives, and engages the support of their families, whānau, and communities".

> ERO's *School Evaluation Indicators: Effective Practice for Improvement and Learner Success (trial document)*: Domain 3: Educationally powerful connections and relationships.[17]

> *Ka Hikitia Accelerating Success 2013-2017:*[18] goals for schools and kura. Schools and kura are expected "to create productive partnerships with parents, whānau, hapū, iwi, communities and businesses that are focused on educational success".

> *Pasifika Education Plan 2013-2017:*[19] Pasifika parents, families and communities need to:
   – engage with schools in supporting their children's learning
   – support and champion their children's learning and achievements
   – be better informed, more knowledgeable and demanding consumers of education services.

13 For example, see Watkins, C. (2010). Learning Performance and Improvement, International Network for School Improvement, *Research Matters* 34, London.

14 Ministry of Education. (2014). *Tertiary Education Strategy 2014 – 2019, Priority 4 Priority 4* – Improving adult literacy and numeracy. Retrieved from www.education.govt.nz/further-education/policies-and-strategies/tertiary-education-strategy/.

15 Dumont, H., Istance, D., & Benavides F. (2010) *The nature of learning. Using research to inspire practice.* Retrieved from www.oecd.org/edu/ceri/50300814.pdf.

16 Ministry of Education. (2013). *The New Zealand Curriculum.* Retrieved from http://nzcurriculum.tki.org.nz/The-New-Zealand-Curriculum.

17 Education Review Office. (2015). *School Evaluation Indicators: Effective Practice for Improvement and Learner Success.* Retrieved from http://ero.govt.nz/Review-Process/Frameworks-and-Evaluation-Indicators-for-ERO-Reviews/School-Evaluation-Indicators-2015-Trial.

18 Ministry of Education. (2015). The Māori Education Strategy: *Ka Hikitia – Accelerating Success 2013–2017.* Retrieved from http://www.education.govt.nz/ministry-of-education/overall-strategies-and-policies/the-maori-education-strategy-ka-hikitia-accelerating-success-20132017/.

School Evaluation Indicators

ERO's *School Evaluation Indicators (trial document)*[20] highlight effective relationships with parents and whānau, in particular indicators from three domains: *Leadership of conditions for equity and excellence; Educationally powerful connections and relationships;* and *Responsive curriculum, effective teaching and opportunity to learn.*

Domain 2: Leadership of conditions for equity and excellence:

> Leadership builds capability and collective capacity in evaluation and inquiry for sustained improvement and innovation.

> Leadership builds relational trust and effective participation and collaboration at every level of the school community.

Domain 3: Educationally powerful connections and relationships:

> Community collaboration and partnerships extend and enrich opportunities for students to become confident, connected, actively involved, lifelong learners.

> Communication supports and strengthens reciprocal, learning centred relationships.

> Student learning at home is actively promoted through the provision of relevant learning opportunities, resources and support.

> Learning centred relationships effectively engage and involve the school community.

Domain 4: Responsive curriculum, effective teaching and opportunity to learn:

> Students learn, achieve and progress in the breadth and depth of *The New Zealand Curriculum* and *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa.*

> Students have effective, sufficient and equitable opportunities to learn.

> Effective assessment for learning develops students' assessment and learning to learn capabilities.
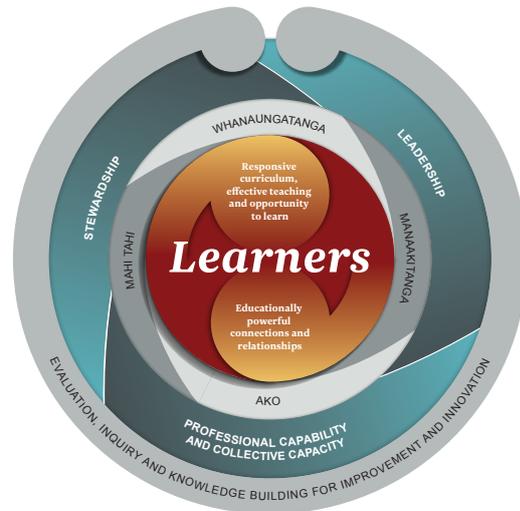
What is the issue?

The New Zealand Council for Education Research (NZCER) found most parents and whānau had friendly relationships with schools but not enough schools had educationally powerful connections and relationships. In their surveys of primary[21] and secondary[22] schools, NZCER found that while many parents were satisfied with their relationship with their child's school, too many felt undervalued and uninformed. NZCER's findings included many parents:

> feeling unwelcome at school or uncomfortable talking with teachers

> uncertain if teachers understood things about their family and culture and had high expectations for their child

> feeling that the school had not provided them with good ideas for helping with their child's learning and information about achieving qualifications

> feeling that the schools had not provided good information about different course options and their connection to tertiary education and employment

> interested in having more communication about their child's progress, how to support their child's learning, and more individual help for students.

19   Ministry of Education. (2015). *Pasifika Education Plan 2013-2017.* Retrieved from http://www.education.govt.nz/ministry-of-education/overall-strategies-and-policies/pasifika-education-plan-2013-2017/.

20   Education Review Office. (2015). *School Evaluation Indicators: Effective Practice for Improvement and Learner Success.* Retrieved from http://ero.govt.nz/Review-Process/Frameworks-and-Evaluation-Indicators-for-ERO-Reviews/School-Evaluation-Indicators-2015-Trial.

21   Wylie, C., and Bonn, L. (2014) *Primary and Intermediate schools in 2013. Main findings from the NZCER national survey.* Retrieved from www.nzcer.org.nz/system/files/NZCER%20Survey%20Report%20Final%20web_0.pdf.

22   Wylie, C. (2013) Secondary schools in 2012. *Main findings from the NZCER national survey.* Retrieved from www.nzcer.org.nz/system/files/Secondary%20Schools%20in%202012-web.pdf.

A recent report by the Office of the Auditor-General (OAG) about relationships between schools and Māori whānau[23] found that nine out of 10 schools believed they had effective relationships with whānau but only six out of 10 whānau believed they had effective relationships with the school. The OAG report suggested that:

Essentially, there is no 'one way' or 'best way' for schools and Māori communities to engage with each other. It is clear, however, that the balance of responsibility resides with the schools and the stance they adopt in communicating with whānau, hapū, and, on occasions, iwi. Although this report does not make a conclusion that improved relations between schools and Māori communities necessarily led to improved learning performances of Māori students, there is sufficient evidence to suggest that, where communicative relations are strained, mutual benefits are less likely to accrue.

Other research[24] found perceived community expectations and perceptions about their own skills and experiences can make it either easier or harder for parents and whānau to get involved with their child's schooling. School leaders and teachers were more likely to deliberately invite parents and whānau into the school learning process if they had explored their assumptions about:

> the nature of a parent's involvement in their child's education

> parents making a useful contribution.

This research also found it was much harder for parents and whānau to get involved if they were asking:

> Is it my role to get involved in my child's education?

> Can I make a useful contribution?

23   Office of the Auditor-General. (2015). *Education for Māori: Relationships between schools and whānau* Presented to the House of Representatives under section 20 of the Public Audit Act 2001. February 2015. Retrieved from www.oag.govt.nz/2015/education-for-maori/docs/education-for-maori.pdf p4.

24   Hoover-Dempsey, K., Walker, J., Sandler, H., Whetsel, D., Green, C. , Wilkins, A., and Closson, K. (2005) Why do parents become involved? Research findings and implications. *The Elementary School Journal* 106:2. pp105-130.

Methodology

In this evaluation, ERO wanted to understand the quality and outcomes of relationships parents and whānau have with schools when the focus is on improving educational outcomes.

In each school, ERO looked at:

How the school was working with parents and whānau to improve the education outcomes for students who were at risk of underachievement.

All schools[25] reviewed in Terms 3 and 4, 2014 were involved in the national evaluation.

The evaluation framework had two parts. The first explored the quality of the school's relationship with most parents. The second was the in-depth investigation associated with students who had been at risk of underachievement and were now experiencing success.

In each school, ERO looked for a group of students whose accelerated progress had been supported by building relationships with parents and whānau. Although previously at risk of underachievement, these students had made more academic progress than was expected for one year, and now experienced achievement equivalent to their peers. We investigated how engagement with the students' parents and whānau had supported their accelerated progress and improved achievement.

ERO was interested in how well parents and whānau, teachers and leaders, and students were deliberately involved in:

> knowing the student's learning strengths and needs, language, identity and culture, interests and aspirations
> the design of the support for students
> actions during and after the support.

The details of ERO's investigation of how the school was working with these parents and whānau are included in *Appendix 2: Evaluation framework and investigative questions*, and shown in Figure 2 overleaf.

Our judgements about the quality of the relationships were based on whether deliberate actions included:

> acknowledging, understanding and celebrating similarities and differences
> adding to family practices – not undermining them
> structured, specific suggestions rather than general advice
> providing supportive group opportunities as well as one-to-one contact (especially informal contact)
> leaders, teachers and parents and whānau knew what worked and why
> school leaders were transferring this learning to other areas of the school.

Figure 2: Evaluation framework for determining the quality of relationship

Why were parents and whānau not deliberately involved in a positive way?
What is the school doing that could be built on to develop relationships that lead to generating shared solutions, actions and outcomes?

Not well informed or no deliberate involvement of parents and whānau

What is the school doing so there is:
• ongoing success for these students
• improved outcomes for other students and their parents and whānau?

Well informed and deliberate involvement of parents and whānau at some stage/s

What triggered working with parents and whānau?
What did parents and whānau want?

Starting place: Students that the school has been deliberately supporting to improve outcomes

Refocus

Identification of learning strength and needs, language, identity and culture, interests and aspirations

How did working relationships contribute to knowing what the valued student outcomes are?

How and what did the school understand about the quality of the contribution the relationships made to the students' success (for whom and when)?

Responding to the impact of the actions that influenced improved students outcomes

Respond with deliberate actions and innovations to improve student outcomes

How did the working relationships contribute to the students' curriculum:
• what was taught, how it was taught, student agency?
• what were the agreed responsibilities of the student, parents/whānau and teachers/leaders?

ERO deliberately sought examples of practice where Māori and Pacific students' progress had accelerated; hence a quarter of all examples included all or mostly Māori students, and an eighth included all or mostly Pacific students. Although not intentional, nearly half of the examples focused on all or mostly boys.

ERO's 2015 report *Inclusive practices for students with special education needs in schools* includes examples of how schools work collaboratively with parents and whānau of students with special education needs.[26]

26   Education Review Office. (2015). *Inclusive practices for students with special education needs in schools.* Retrieved from http://www.ero.govt.nz/National-Reports/Inclusive-practices-for-students-with-special-education-needs-in-schools-March-2015.

Findings

ERO found that schools responded to the risk of underachievement in two ways – by preventing future underachievement and by supporting those not achieving as well as their peers to accelerate progress.

The examples of prevention of future underachievement focused on whole cohorts, such as all of Years 1 to 3 students, or a large group of a particular year, for example Year 10 boys, where similar cohorts had high levels of underachievement. The examples of acceleration involved smaller groups of up to 10 students. In many secondary schools, the example involved only one or two students.

Key findings

ERO found that the most important factors for success with educationally powerful relationships were:

> providing extended learning across home and school

> a whole-school focus on involving parents and whānau

> the focus and complexity of the collaboration changed as students got older

> teachers and leaders involving parents and whānau in designing and implementing a solution to underachievement.

The type of relationship a school had with parents and whānau of students who needed extra support to succeed was influenced by whether there was a whole-school focus on engaging with all parents about their child's learning and educational success. Most schools provided parents and whānau with regular and frequent reports on progress and achievement and most designed a range of activities to involve parents in the life of the school. Schools that had learning-centred relationships with most parents and whānau:

> engaged with parents at the transition to and from the school

> involved most parents along with their child to set goals and next steps

> involved parents to develop curriculum priorities and principles

> regularly reviewed their working relationship with parents and whānau.

Other schools had positive relationships with parents and whānau on a one-to-one basis, but these were not learning-centred relationships. For example, parents were involved in activities such as class barbecues or sport management, but may not have been involved in any sort of goal setting with their child.

In schools with low quality learning-centred relationships with the parents of students at risk of underachievement, teachers and leaders believed they could only reach a certain proportion of parents and that the lack of involvement of hard-to-reach parents was justified. These schools did not seek ways to improve parental involvement. In a few schools, there was a pervasive view from teachers and leaders that 'teachers know best'. These views prevailed despite professional learning and development (PLD) focused on engaging with parents and whānau.

ERO found that the decision about whether to involve parents and whānau as a key component of a school's approach to underachievement was part of a complex series of decisions schools made about improving outcomes for students. The quality and timing of parental involvement was influenced by teachers' and leaders' assumptions about the nature of students' educational experiences, their potential to learn, and the ability and willingness of parents and whānau to support their children. For example, some school staff assumed that secondary students' educational experiences should not involve parents; or that parents should be involved only when there is a behavioural issue and the school has run out of possibilities.

The teachers and leaders at the schools with educationally powerful connections were persistent in finding ways to support student success and to involve parents and whānau of students at risk of underachieving. The following sections focus on some of the good practice we saw in the schools with educationally powerful connections and relationships. These schools had deliberate two-way relationships with parents of students at risk of underachievement.

What does it look like when the response to underachievement includes educationally powerful connections and relationships?

The trigger for developing or improving relationships with parents and whānau was often recognising that what the school had previously been doing was not enough. As one primary school principal said:

> We recognised that working in partnership with parents would be far more effective than one-way homework systems had been in the past.

For many principals, recognising that the school values around respectful learning relationships extended to parents and whānau was also important. They realised that these relationships needed to go beyond communication about achievement and instead work together to support student success.

These schools had strategic goals around parental engagement that were often supported by PLD for staff.[27] The schools provided resources for particular initiatives that focused on named and known students and their parents and whānau. The response was personalised to work best for these students and parents.

These schools involved students at risk of underachieving and their parents and whānau in four key iterative processes. Teachers and leaders were clear about the purpose for each process, as shown in Figure 3.

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27   PLD included Learning and Change Network and Accelerating Learning in Mathematics or Literacy. See http://nzcurriculum.tki.org.nz/System-of-support-incl.-PLD/School-initiated-supports/Accelerating-Learning-in-Literacy-Mathematics. Ministry funded programmes to support parental engagement included Reading Together, Incredible Years and Mutukaroa. See http://nzcurriculum.tki.org.nz/System-of-support-incl.-PLD/School-initiated-supports/Reading-Together, http://nzcurriculum.tki.org.nz/System-of-support-incl.-PLD/School-initiated-supports/PB4L-Incredible-Years-Teacher and http://elearning.tki.org.nz/Beyond-the-classroom/Engaging-with-the-community/The-Mutukaroa-project.

Figure 3: Mahi Tahi – Educationally powerful connections and relationships in response to underachievement

Process	Purpose of the relationship with parents, families and whānau
Identify learning strengths and needs; language, identity and culture; and interests and aspirations.	1. To know who the students is, in the wider context of school and home, in order to develop holistic and authentic learning.
Respond with deliberate actions and innovations that involved parents, families and whānau to improve student outcomes.	2. To extend learning by designing and implementing multiple aligned learning opportunities.
Recognise the impact of the actions that influenced the improved student outcomes.	3. To evaluate the impact and alignment of the multiple opportunities to know what worked for whom, when and why.
Refocus on next actions.	4. To be persistent, and: > sustain what worked about the relationships for the students involved > change and improve what did not work > transfer what worked to more students and their parents, families and whānau.

Extending learning by designing and implementing multiple aligned learning opportunities had the greatest positive effect on students at risk of underachieving. When leaders and teachers understood the importance of aligning deliberate actions and innovations across home and school settings, the other processes were strengthened. For example, school evaluation was more likely to include the consideration of all activities and not just those that happened at school.

The following four sections illustrate these purposes of educationally powerful connections and relationships. We give examples of extended learning that led to accelerated progress and improved achievement, and highlight actions that supported the development of educationally powerful connections and relationships. The sections on Year 9 to 13 students and the use of technology highlight aspects of the four processes in these two contexts.

Know who the student is, in the wider context of school and home, in order to develop holistic and authentic learning goals.

Discussions about achievement and progress supported and strengthened reciprocal learning-focused relationships. These conversations involved the student, parents or whānau and teachers. This did not mean teachers and/or students only told parents where students were at with their learning. Instead, the focus was also on developing shared understanding of student interests, strengths and aspirations. There was shared ownership of the goals that were set.

Teachers and parents could describe conversations about preventing underachievement or accelerating progress. In particular, parents described how useful it was to understand their child's progress and where they needed to be, and to understand the language of curriculum, progression and assessment. School language was now familiar and parents could talk with their child and teachers about progress towards goals.

Knowing someone at the school was doing something to improve things for their child was important. Parents and whānau felt listened to and grateful that their contribution was valued. Teachers at a primary school noticed that:

> *Parents were more ready to share information and support their child at home as a result of the closer relationships formed with teachers – this also led to parents being more confident in what they were doing to support their child and in raising any issues at school.*

Teachers and leaders recognised that the conversations they had with parents and whānau of students they were supporting to succeed represented the 'best' of how they wanted to communicate with all parents. One primary school principal said:

> *The process of teacher-parent conversations aligned well with school values. Teachers learnt the importance of listening to parents in a respectful way and of helping parents discuss children's learning in a non-judgemental way.*

Parents found that, because they had more understanding of what their child was experiencing at school and greater confidence to talk with them about what went on at school, they could engage with their child more about their learning. Many said this improved their relationship with their child.

Teachers also found they had more understanding of what each student was experiencing after listening to parents. Communication with students and their parents and whānau increased, and became more focused on successes rather than only on needs, while working towards the students achieving at the expected curriculum level.

In a few examples, it was apparent that parents had initiated the pathway the school took. These included parents of children with special education needs, as well as communities of Māori and Pacific parents requesting support. Parents were concerned about the support, such as cultural support, the school could provide for their child.

Parents led in the areas they knew best. Because of the relationship with the teachers and leaders, parents then initiated conversations about finding ways to help their children at home with reading, writing and mathematics. The example of practice below illustrates this relationship.

Example of good practice: Parents leading conversations about achievement and progress

This example highlights how parents strengthened the school's understanding of their children's home and cultural context. These Pacific parents' actions reflect the *Pasifika Education Plan* (PEP). They:

> engaged with the schools in supporting their children's learning

> supported and championed their children's learning and achievement

> were better informed, more knowledgeable and demanding consumers of education services.

Example of practice	Key stage
A Tongan teacher analysing National Standards data noticed that Tongan and Samoan students were not progressing and succeeding at the same level as other students. He organised the first Pacific parents' meeting at his home. Parents talked about their wish to work in a meaningful way with their children, which was more than just celebratory events like Fiafia nights.[28]	
The parents set up a homework club at school that respected the Tongan and Samoan cultures and their Catholic faith. The homework club emphasised the importance of language, culture and identity. Each session had a strong focus on cultural learning as well as academic learning: tutors were engaged to teach dances and songs, parents brought books and other resources to share stories or legends, and parents worked with the children to sew their cultural costumes.	A parent-initiated trigger.
Slowly the parents' relationship with the school developed and improved. They approached the principal about their wish to be more involved in their children's learning – they appreciated the suggested steps for their children's learning in the National Standards reports but wanted more frequent suggestions from teachers: *We want a process that will be more meaningful and continuous. We would like a weekly update about how our children are learning.* After one set of three-way conferences with teachers and children, the parents requested that the school organise Tongan and Samoan mathematics information evenings. They wanted the sessions to have a Tongan and Samoan language component.	Communication supported and strengthened reciprocal learning centred relationships.
Hearing the language is important and essential for our families and children.	Adding to family practices.
The principal responded positively to these suggestions and worked with the leaders in the school to make it happen. Learning resource kits to use at home were shared with parents and children at the mathematics information evening. *Now I know how to help my child.*	Structured and specific suggestions.

28   Fiafia – cultural showcase.

Example of practice	Key stage
At the same time, school class space and resources were used to support the homework club. The resources were used by the class teacher in the mathematics teaching, the homework club and at home.	Extended learning by providing multiple and aligned learning opportunities.
Teachers commented on students' improved attendance and confidence with mathematics because of their parents' involvement. These improvements had led to accelerated progress for the students who had been underachieving. Many of these students were now achieving at expected levels as shown by National Standard data. *The students are more focused and engaged in learning. It's great to see them succeeding.*	Having success – accelerated progress and improved achievement.
Other groups of parents were invited to mathematics workshops. Reading workshops have been set up for the Tongan and Samoan parents.	Being persistent – sustaining, changing and transferring.

Extend learning by designing and implementing multiple and aligned learning opportunities

In schools with examples of strong, deliberate educationally powerful connections and relationships, teachers worked with parents and students to design and put in place activities to do and practice at home that supplemented and aligned with at-school learning.

Teachers often held workshops for parents to explain curriculum expectations and the assessment tools the school used to determine students' learning strengths and needs. These workshops also focused on specific strategies that could be used at home. Sometimes teachers helped parents re-think their understanding about reading, writing or mathematics and how people become competent.

I now realise that it was very important to help my daughter to read because she can now read and pronounce the words and we are so happy with this reading programme. Now we make a place and time for reading at home. (Parent of a primary school-aged child)

Sometimes it meant helping parents to access classes for practical skills such as English language or computer skills, for them to support their child at home.

Student learning at home was actively promoted by providing relevant learning opportunities, resources and support. This did not mean parents were expected to be teachers. Instead, they developed knowledge and skills that could be incorporated into home activities, and teachers developed knowledge of home practices and interests that could be incorporated into school activities, making them more relevant and authentic.

The teacher gave us the tools to help our child get to where he should be. (Parent of a primary school-aged child)

We had been focused on improving spelling with little gain. Knowing what goes on out of school gives us some great contexts for writing. Plus the students now have an audience. Improvements have been really noticeable. (Teacher, primary school)

Teachers and leaders were aware of the urgency associated with accelerating progress and understood the advantage of multiple and aligned learning opportunities.

The shorter timeframes for instruction at school can be followed up with more substantial activity time at home and in weekends – parent collaboration. (Principal, primary school)

Alignment of learning happened for students when:

> teachers understood what made the relationships with parents and whānau work
> teachers knew about student strengths, interests, and home activities
> parents understood school language and learning and how they could help
> students experienced worthwhile multiple learning opportunities at home and at school.

Teachers and leaders in these schools also focused on student wellbeing, as they recognised that underachievement led to lower self esteem, and was often associated with a feeling of not belonging and negative social behaviours. They also recognised that some parents had not had positive school experiences or, as parents, had only previously heard from teachers when there were problems with their child.

For some schools, involving whānau and students in sporting or cultural activities such as kapa haka was a deliberate strategy to develop a sense of belonging for whānau and their tamariki (children), and for teachers and leaders to develop a holistic view of each student and their whānau. Improved relationships meant conversations about student learning and goals became two-way.

> *Kapa haka is not a club, it is the student's whakapapa. They put in massive hours. It builds their leadership, it belongs to them. It's the waiata and the history. They can stand on it in the world. The kapa haka group encourages the teachers to believe that they can make a difference, that these students can be successful.*

> *It had taken three years to build this community – we have a long way to go, but we have come a long way. Parents are filled with pride because of their children's success at kapa haka. We now talk about learning goals and we work together to help with reading and mathematics. (Teacher, primary school)[29]*

Deepening relationships based on shared home and school interests resulted in increased parent participation in school activities such as in-class support, out-of-school trips and joining the parent association or board of trustees. Parents engaged in more frequent informal learning focused conversations because of these common experiences with their children and teachers.

29 Kapa haka – Māori cultural group within the performing arts. Whakapapa – genealogy. Waiata – song(s).

Example of good practice: Changing teacher attitudes leading to positive student outcomes

This example highlights the way learning was extended by providing multiple and aligned learning opportunities. The principal used messages in *Ka Hikitia* to help teachers change their attitude to parental involvement. These parents developed a productive partnership with the school that was focused on educational success.

Example of practice	Key stage
Two groups of siblings achieved National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) Level 2 after a long, tumultuous relationship with their school. In their early years at the secondary school they were disengaged, misbehaving and defiant to authority figures. In their later years, they became engaged in classes and motivated to learn. A small change early in their secondary schooling contributed to their later success and achievement of their qualifications.	Having success – achieving worthwhile NCEA Level 2 for future pathways.
The principal, through her engagement with *Ka Hikitia*, realised that the school's attitude was not helping all students succeed. Achieving success at school had not been the purpose of conversations with families. There was much deficit thinking. For example, teachers of these boys said: *The boys' parents aren't doing what they should to help them.*	Exploring assumptions about the role of parents, families and whānau to be involved in their child's learning.
The principal, through the school's kaiawhina,[30] invited the boys' parents to meet with her. The kaiawhina helped the parents express their disappointment and frustration with constantly hearing negative things about their boys. *We avoid talking with teachers as they are not on our boys' side.* The parents explained how they felt helpless and alone in trying to support their sons. A single dad shared how important it was to him that his son had a life different to his own. The parents explained: *We want the school to see the good in our boys, and recognise and build on their mana as young Māori men.*	Trigger for change.
The principal talked with other school leaders – the deputy principals, deans and kaiawhina – they empathised with the parents and the boys and realised they needed to show the boys and their parents that they cared. They needed to find a way to help the boys succeed.	Leaders understood it was their role to help parents be involved in their child's school learning.

30   Kaiawhina – assistant.

Example of practice	Key stage
Further discussions between the parents, kaiawhina and school leaders led to an education plan for the boys that built on their strengths and aspirations and would lead to the boys achieving NCEA Level 2. The school leaders explained why NCEA Level 2 was so important for all future pathways.	Parents understood more about the school system and what counts as excellence.
This plan was reviewed and modified as people kept talking to each other and to the boys. The conversations focused on all the positives. They celebrated the smallest successes. These successes were shared with other teachers of the boys.	Responding quickly to student progress information.
The parents thought that if the boys identified with their Māori language and culture, they would be better placed to approach their other learning. Together they devised programmes for the boys based on te reo and tikanga Māori. The boys were able to participate in Māori performing arts classes, a carving class and te reo Māori classes. They were encouraged to be involved in the school kapa haka group.	Extended learning by providing multiple and aligned learning opportunities.
The parents shared that they did not feel able to help their children at home as much as they needed. The kaiawhina and a deputy principal supported the parents to learn the same positive behaviour strategies and ways of communicating with their sons that the school was using.	Structured and specific suggestions.
The parents also became involved in kapa haka as this was something they knew and were confident in. Over time the parents began participating in more aspects of school life, and coming into the school to speak with their children's teachers. Through their increased participation, they connected with other whānau in their community, which provided additional support for them and their sons.	Adding to family practices.

Example of practice	Key stage
At the same time the principal was supporting all teachers to look at themselves as part of a wider community. They worked towards a shared goal of improving relations with all families. All teachers participated in PLD about *Te Kotahitanga*,[31] to develop a shared understanding of a desired school culture. Teachers were expected to get to know students and their families and involve them in school activities.	Systematically strengthening and maintaining working relationships with parents, families and whānau.
A parent said: *We realised the school was with us once they really listened to us. They helped us with our boys as well as helping our boys.* The dean said: *We had wanted these boys to succeed but hadn't realised the harm we were causing by focusing on the issues all the time. Focusing on the problems we were having with the boys had not been helpful in improving things for the boys. Working together made a difference for everyone.*	Mahi tahi; two-way collaborative working relationships focused on learning and success.

Evaluate the impact and alignment of multiple opportunities to know what worked for whom, when and why

This evaluation highlights the need for improved recognition of the influence of both school and home activities on accelerating progress.

ERO found that many schools only evaluated the impact of school activities and most used *Teaching as Inquiry*[32] as their evaluation framework. If teachers and leaders did not understand the value of aligning home and school learning, the *Teaching as Inquiry* prompt "What happened as a result of the teaching, and what are the implications for future teaching?" did not guide teachers to review the contribution of others, such as parents. Although teachers and leaders said that parent engagement and strong relationships with parents were critical, parents' actions were not evaluated to know whether or how they had helped improve achievement. Nor did parents contribute to the schools' evaluation.

In a few schools, the focus was wholly on improving home activities, for example in schools that had introduced *Reading Together* (a Ministry of Education programme that fully involves parents). However, these schools had not reviewed the impact of school activities and how well they aligned with home ones. We recommend that schools include evaluation of the alignment of home and school contributions to student learning, as part of their inquiry frameworks.

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31   Ministry of Education. (2015). *Te Kotahitanga.* Retrieved from http://tekotahitanga.tki.org.nz/.

32   Ministry of Education. (2007). *The New Zealand Curriculum.* Retrieved from http://nzcurriculum.tki.org.nz/ p35. It is worth noting that the inquiry prompt in *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa* is about how teachers, whānau and iwi supported ākonga learning. See www.tmoa.tki.org.nz/Te-Marautanga-o-Aotearoa.

Only a few schools recognised the contribution of all opportunities to student success. Teachers and leaders at these schools formally and informally evaluated the alignment of home and school learning opportunities and influence of both on student outcomes. Together with parents and whānau they monitored the impact of home activities. They also reviewed their own actions in supporting families. These evaluations often led to ongoing refinements in the way teachers worked with the parents and whānau of students they were supporting to succeed.

Example of practice: Ongoing evaluation of impact and alignment of activities to support students to be fluent readers

The example of practice below shows how one school systematically reviewed the response to underachievement to improve both the home and school learning experiences for Year 10 students at risk of underachieving. Formal evaluations were linked to a school-wide inquiry about either responding to underachievement or engaging with parents and whānau. Leaders ensured the whole school could learn from the findings and that teachers and leaders stayed focused on relationships with parents and whānau of the students most at risk of underachieving.[33]

The teachers designed a programme with parental support that provided Year 10 students with multiple and aligned opportunities to read and reflect on their reading behaviours. Parents' feedback ensured home and school learning aligned and that home learning built on family activities rather than trying to copy school activities.

Example of practice	Key stage
The school was involved with a Ministry-funded initiative, a reading fitness programme,[34] to accelerate literacy learning and improve outcomes for Years 9 and 10 students. The initiative expected schools to involve parents. The Head of Department English said: *Whatever we do needs to be replicable without the support and the resource.*	Trigger for change.

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33 ERO identified further examples of how schools increased parent and whānau engagement in their child's learning, in particular Manurewa High School, in their 2015 report *Internal Evaluation: Good practice.*

34 Based on a programme developed by Heemi MacDonald Kamo High School that was presented at the New Zealand Association for the Teaching of English (NZATE) 2014 and found on English Online. See http://deliver.tki.org.nz/static/1809.html and https://drive.google.com/folderview?id=0B_ZgiJcgKoc1VGpJd0YwVDJSd3c&usp=sharing.

Example of practice	Key stage
A group of eight Year 10 students was chosen. After talking with the students and reviewing their work, the teachers designed a multi-layered supplementary response that ensured students had many opportunities to learn. This response had four key ideas: > To be successful readers and writers of curriculum/academic texts, students need to read a lot and be aware of their reading behaviours. They need support to understand that reading is not hard. > Learning logs[35] support students to set goals, understand how they learn, how they are going, and where to next. Students need to be taught to think this way. > Students need strategies to 'attack text'. Not all students are fluent users of effective strategies. Some students need more time to make sense of texts. > Reading is closely linked to writing.	Extended learning by providing multiple and aligned learning opportunities.
The students knew why they had been selected, where they needed to get to, and where they were now. *We have to be at a good Level 5 [of the curriculum] if we want to be prepared for NCEA.* They knew the supplementary support was an opportunity to learn, to put in extra work and maybe break some habits. They felt the teachers were on their side and they appreciated the extra support the teachers gave them. The students and the teachers were motivated to accelerate progress.	Student ownership.
The teachers knew they needed to get parents involved in helping the students become readers. A letter sent to parents invited them to support their child in the initiative: *We would like your son/daughter to be part of this project. We have selected students who already have basic reading and vocabulary skills, but who could use an extra lift to prepare them for the literacy demands in all subjects next year. We have also selected students who we think would make good use of this opportunity.*	

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35   Based on earlier work in school as described in www.educationcounts.govt.nz/__data/assets/pdf_file/0010/109738/BES-Exemplar-5-web.pdf.

Example of practice	Key stage
A significant adult for each student accepted the invitation to a meeting where they were given more information about the pilot, such as why the school was focusing on increasing students' reading and building their confidence to use a range of reading strategies. The teachers described the reading fitness programme they wanted parents to support as coaches. Students would record how much they read, how hard it was, and how much effort they put into it. Any type of reading would count to help students develop a habit of reading. There was also a focus on developing vocabulary. Each family discussed what their child was reading at the moment and how they could support their child to increase their reading. They also discussed the reading habits of others at home. Parents were provided with guidelines about being a reading coach. *It was a great meeting: we were given clear information and tools to use.* *The teachers gave the students a clear message that we were all there to help them and that there was a partnership between home and school.* The teachers and parents agreed on their first actions, how they would communicate and that after five weeks they would review how things were going.	Structured and specific suggestions.
A short online survey was used for this review. Parents commented that they could actively promote reading at home by reading themselves and discussing what their children were reading, but that they did not enjoy the focus on vocabulary. They also said they would like to know more about the reading required in all curriculum areas. In response the teachers removed the emphasis on vocabulary in home activities and increased this focus in school activities. Curriculum teachers were asked to link any required reading to the fitness programme by talking with the students about what they were doing.	Ongoing formal and informal evaluation of the impact and alignment of the multiple learning opportunities.

Example of practice	Key stage
The ongoing communication between parents and teachers through the student log books, emails, phone calls, and surveys meant parents knew teachers valued their input. At the end of the year, the teachers formally evaluated the impact of the programme. The evaluation included talking with parents and students. All students had accelerated progress and were now achieving at Level 5 of the curriculum and had plans for their holiday reading. Their increased enjoyment of reading and comprehension of what they read was due to both the home and school activities. *R is reading more at home now without us prompting, and doing well at school. We have good relationships with the teachers and feel confident the school will keep us informed next year.* One student said: *I got excellence for my writing. I had to take a photo and send it to my Mum. I asked Miss whether she had marked our class easier but she showed me that the same criteria were used for all classes, so I got the same as the A stream class.*	Regular and frequent communication.
Through the evaluation, the teachers realised that they did not have enough buy-in from teachers of other curriculum areas. They also realised they needed to review the texts they selected for formal study in Years 9 and 10 English as they now knew more about the reading habits of students at risk of underachieving. A refined reading fitness programme was developed for the next year. These findings were presented to the parents, teachers and to the board as well as to teachers in other schools. The principal said: *We used to focus on remediation programmes. Thinking about acceleration puts a different spin on it. It's not about fixing something; it's about being ready for something. That means involving students, teachers and parents.*	Being persistent – sustaining, changing and transferring.

Be persistent – sustaining, changing and transferring

Following either formal evaluations or informal reviews, teachers and leaders better understood the contributions of parents and whānau, and fine-tuned decisions about what to do next. They strengthened and maintained aspects of the educationally powerful connections and relationships by:

> sustaining what worked for particular students

> changing and improving what did not work.

Teachers and leaders identified the parents and whānau they had not successfully engaged with and, with a sense of urgency, persisted in finding ways to collaborate with them. The example of practice below illustrates this persistence.[36]

Example of practice: Persisting after many unsuccessful interventions

This example of practice highlights ongoing improvements to the relationships in response to a formal evaluation. Teachers realised that persisting to find ways to work with parents benefits the whole family. Parents were no longer frustrated with the teachers' support for their children and felt their contribution was valued.

Example of practice	Key stage
After evaluating the impact of a number of interventions the leaders realised they needed to do something different for a small group of boys in Years 4 to 6. These students had been involved in a number of interventions which had not been successful at accelerating their progress. In all of these interventions, parents had been informed about what was going on but had not been involved.	Persistence and a trigger for involving parents in a different way.
The leaders thought that parental involvement might make the difference. The deputy principal was tasked with developing a programme that involved parents and the school to ensure the boys experienced success. She knew that many of the parents were not comfortable with coming into the school setting, so she organised a room at the local library to meet.	Persistence to involve all parents of the students the school was focusing on.
At the meeting the parents expressed deep sadness, frustration and feelings of hopelessness around their sons' years of not achieving. The parents felt like they'd run out of ideas, and did not know what to do next. After years of failure, the boys did not see themselves as learners and they had low self-esteem. Their relationships with other students were also affected by this lack of confidence.	Trigger for change.

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36   Schools may like to use the tools for surveying particular groups of parents and whānau available at www.wellbeingatschool.org.nz/.

Example of practice	Key stage
Together, the boys, their parents and the deputy principal developed a plan to accelerate the boys' reading and build their confidence. This included a daily withdrawal group run by the deputy principal, changes to how the boys did tasks in class, and games and activities to support reading and spelling for the boys to do with their parents at home.	Extended learning by providing multiple and aligned learning opportunities.
Workshops were held to help parents understand the curriculum and National Standards. At these workshops parents were introduced to spelling games and ways they could help their child with their reading.	Structured and specific suggestions.
The parents, teachers and the deputy principal closely monitored the boys' attitudes and engagement in activities, and shared this information with each other, so they could respond if they needed to. They focused on celebrating every little achievement or success, in an attempt to replace the feelings of frustration and failure the boys and their families had grown used to. As they and their sons started to see progress, their motivation increased. Soon parents asked for more ideas and resources to extend their home learning. The boys became much more enthusiastic about school and learning in general, not just the areas they'd been working on specifically.	Frequent and regular conversations.

Example of practice	Key stage
After four months, the boys had all experienced accelerated progress in reading and the school applied what they learnt from this intervention to a wider group of students, while still supporting the boys to succeed. A student said: *I don't feel that if I ask for help now everyone will be well ahead of me and laugh.* A parent said: *Now I know how I can help my son. We've had fun with these games.* The deputy principal said: *I hadn't really thought about how wide an impact students' underachievement could have on a family. I just had to find a way of getting everyone on board. We are trying to engage with more families before they get to this stage of frustration with us. We've identified another group of younger students at risk of underachieving that we'll now work closely with their parents.*	Being persistent – sustaining, changing and transferring.

The focus and complexity of collaboration changes over time

As young people got older, teachers had to explore their assumptions of when, how, and why to involve parents and whānau. This was because of the changing emphasis in valued outcomes and the increasing desire for independence. The complexity of the educationally powerful connections and relationships looked different for children in their early years compared to those nearer the end of school. The relationship focus changed, as did the number of people involved.

In the early school years, parents worked with teachers to understand and support their child's foundational learning such as literacy and mathematics, and positive social behaviour. The relationship was generally between the classroom teacher and the parents or whānau. In the later school years, parents worked with teachers to understand and support their child's management of learning tasks, aspirations and pathways to further qualifications, and improvement in social competence. More adults were involved, although generally there was one 'go to' person for the student and their parents as the relationship spanned school years. These relationships often included adults working in the community.

Collaborative, learning-centred relationships with parents and whānau of Years 9 to 13 students were more complicated than those for primary-aged children. There was tension between supporting a young person's increasing desire for independence while successfully navigating a pathway that matched their aspirations. What was apparent about these successful relationships was:

> students owned the response – they wanted things to improve

> a group of adults, beyond the parents and teachers, was involved

> a personalised programme/pathway was designed for each student

> teachers persisted in finding ways to support student success

> school leaders were actively involved in supporting teachers and/or students.

These relationships led to students experiencing improved wellbeing as well as improved academic achievement.

The culture of schools that had productive relationships with parents of children in Years 9 to 13 who were at risk of underachieving had:

> a school-wide focus on relationships (often supported by PLD such as Te Kotahitanga, PB4L[37] and restorative practices[38])

> high expectations for student capability signalled through regular academic and pastoral care guidance

> support for parents to understand the school's way of working

> support for parents to understand the purpose of NCEA.

Many schools involved parents in responses to issues beyond their adolescent's achievement. ERO found examples of this related to students with a history of underachievement, low self-esteem and disengagement. Risky behaviour and low attendance triggered the school to involve parents. In many cases, the school had a crisis situation (for example, regarding negative student behaviour) and parental involvement was part of the last resort response.

Building parents' confidence in the school was fundamental to the success of these initiatives. In some cases, the school may have prevented the crisis if they had started communicating with parents in a way that supported and strengthened a reciprocal learning-centred relationship earlier. More productive responses occurred when parents were involved earlier in the school's preventative strategies. In these examples, teachers and leaders showed that they were interested in the students and their families at an early stage (Years 9 and 10). They showed they would do all they could to ensure the students succeeded.

Example of practice: Students working with adults to improve their cultural knowledge and engagement in learning

The example of practice below illustrates adults working with young people to prevent underachievement.

An iwi-based leadership programme supported Year 10 students to improve their education outcomes. The example of practice illustrates the partnership between the iwi and school and different roles adults (including parents) played in this focus on identity, language and culture. Students, with the help of adults, led a number of initiatives that helped them become more confident in their learning and prevent underachievement. The students invited their parents and whānau to be involved in these activities. The parents' confidence in the school improved as their young people experienced a culturally responsive curriculum and increased academic success.

37   Ministry of Education. (2015). *Positive Behaviour for Learning*. Retrieved from http://pb4l.tki.org.nz/.

38   Ministry of Education. (2015). *PB4L Restorative Practice*. Retrieved from http://pb4l.tki.org.nz/PB4L-Restorative-Practice.

Example of practice	Key stage
After discussions with the principal about 'unleashing' the leadership potential of Māori students, two kaimahi[39] from the local Māori health provider developed the Te Aitanga a Rēhia (leadership) programme for the school. The overall intention of the programme was for rangatahi[40] to develop tools to empower their learning and enhance their academic achievement by creating a new generation of leaders, "Our rangatira mo āpōpō." The school's focus was to prevent underachievement. The principal saw how this project could support the work teachers were doing in the classroom.	Persisting to find ways for student success.
Most of the group of Year 10 students, some with considerable leadership potential, were chosen to participate as they were at risk of underachieving. With the support of the school leaders, the programme facilitators worked with the students to collectively set goals of what they wanted to achieve. The students created a Facebook page to tell others who they were, what they were about and to share their activities with the school, their parents and wider community. A student explained: *We set our goals and developed our action plan which we set out to achieve as a whānau.* The students initiated the involvement of their whānau. They invited whānau to a dinner they organised where they shared the initiative's purpose and their aspirations. Each student also shared their research about their whakapapa at the dinner.	Student ownership.
Students' whānau were kept informed through phone calls, texts, whānau meetings with the programme facilitators and through the Facebook page and website developed by students.	Communication supporting and strengthening the learning-centred relationship

39   Kaimahi – worker(s).
40   Rangatahi – young people.

Example of practice	Key stage
By undertaking their whakapapa research there was increased pride in culture, and greater knowledge of te reo and tikanga Māori. This increased the students' ability to plan and implement cultural events, and increased their participation in learning and in wider-school activities. For each event they invited adults to work with them. For example, they worked with iwi leaders and whānau to organise a ki-o-rahi[41] tournament for all the high schools in the local district. They planned a whānau day with school leaders and parents to celebrate the end of school year, the students' successes and achievements as a group, and to plan for the future. They worked with the art teachers to design and print t-shirts for their group to create a sense of unity and whānau.	A large number of people from school and the community working together.

41   Ki-o-rahi – is the twentieth century 'umbrella' term for ancient forms of Maori ball play on fields with central *tupu* and boundary *pou.*

Example of practice	Key stage
Students said their growing interest and confidence in their culture, language and identity rekindled the interest and use of te reo in their homes and by their whānau. One student said: *I shared my mihi with mum and with nan over the phone. I've started teaching the younger ones at home.* Parents talked about: *Letting our kids know that we are behind them, supporting them.* For some whānau this has extended to getting involved in the school's strategic plan for Māori students. Students' attendance increased by 10 to 20 percent. All students except one averaged over 90 percent attendance. The students said that belonging to the group enhanced their engagement in learning: *I concentrate better, I am trying harder, I feel better about myself, and we are developing our leadership skills that we can use in the future.* Students spoke about themselves been valued as Māori. *Makes us feel like we have a place in the school.* Parents spoke of their increased confidence in the school: *We know the teachers are on our side now. They want the same things for our boys as we do.* A teacher of one student reported: *I've seen a vast improvement in his attitude; he's shown good focus and determination and achieved a good result. His confidence has increased.* The principal said that the school would normally see a drop in achievement during the junior years but it was not the case for this group. By the end of the year, all the students had accelerated progress and only four students were achieving below level 4 in English and mathematics. All the students achieved the school's junior Diploma of Learning and the goals they set as a group.	Extended learning by providing multiple and aligned learning opportunities.
The whānau partnership benefited all those involved. It resulted in the creation of a whānau support group, establishment of an adult literacy class, financial assistance for resources and activities, and support for the programme facilitators to get their teacher registration.	Adding to family practices.

Example of practice	Key stage
The school is committed to setting up a new group in the next school year and a tuakana-teina relationship[42] between these new students and the older ones. They are also exploring the possibility for senior students to earn credits in culturally relevant areas such as tikanga Māori and Māori performing arts standards. The programme has extended to include students from other schools within the district.	Being persistent – sustaining, changing and transferring.

A focus on the use of technology

Many schools used technology as the bridge between home and school to enhance partnership processes. The technology was used for two purposes – communication and learning opportunities. The way schools used this technology to engage with parents and whānau reflected:

> whether they were building a one-way or two-way relationship

> their understanding of the three principles of modern learning.

These three principles of modern learning are:[43]

> Agency: The power to act. Informed, enabled empowered learners. A sense of ownership.

> Ubiquity: Any time, any place, any pace, any device. Home, school, community, lifelong learning.

> Connectedness: Having a sense of being part of something that is bigger than one's self. Shared purpose.

Schools developing productive connections with parents and whānau of students at risk of underachieving used technology that invited conversations or sharing of views (such as student blogs, Facebook pages and Google docs). The use of this type of technology reflects the principles of modern learning. In the best examples, teachers helped parents provide feedback to their child through workshops where the technology was also discussed. Students enjoyed sharing their work and achievement with parents, and parents enjoyed seeing the work and commenting on their child's successes.

Technology was also used for learning to enable multiple educationally powerful connections – students with their teachers and parents and whānau, and with other students. In the best situations, teachers helped parents understand how to use particular tools and how they could support their child.

42   Tuakana teina – to foster relationships and interactions between older and younger children.

43   Future-focused learning in connected communities. See Appendix two: Digital pedagogy www.education.govt.nz/assets/Documents/Ministry/Initiatives/FutureFocusedLearning30May2014.pdf.

All our community meetings have e-learning on the agenda. We are listening to what the parents' thoughts are, and we're saying where we are in our journey. Some parents did not think devices would help their child's learning, yet we were asking them to trust us. One of the things that we've instigated this year, which came out of the trial in our mobile classrooms, was what we're calling Techie Meetings. These meetings happen on the first Tuesday of a month before school, and at 5 o'clock. So parents can choose to come to those, and they're run by the mobile device teachers, and they just go with one app to show or one tool of what they are using in the classroom or they answer parents' questions. (Principal, primary school)

Loved the parent tech classes. I don't think I would have been able to go through this e-learning journey without the guidance of the school, so it's been really beneficial for me as a parent to be able to come to the classes and learn more about what my daughter is learning about and what I need to learn about. I bring my iPad and fiddle with it so I'm learning too. (Parent)

The following example of practice illustrates a school using technology for learning and supporting parents of children at risk of underachieving to communicate with their children using the same technology.

Example of practice: Using technology to engage with parents and change the learning focus to what mattered for the students

Students, parents and teachers worked together to use technology to improve writing. Parents became better informed and more knowledgeable about their child's education and negotiated with teachers what their child's learning could look like and how they would contribute.

Example of practice	Key stage
Two assistant principals (APs) worked with a group of Year 8 boys achieving below or well below the National Standard for writing. These APs were new to the school. Both had been involved in PLD with a focus on working with parents at their previous schools. They knew this involvement made a difference for student success, therefore they invited the parents of these students to participate in their child's learning.	Trigger for engaging with parents, families and whānau.
At the initial meeting with each child and their parents or whānau, the APs used an example of writing work that was 'at' the National Standard, and a sample of their child's work to explore. They talked through what was good, and what needed to happen for their child's work to reach the standard. One parent said: *This made it really clear about what was expected.*	Parents understood more about the school system and what counts as excellence.

Example of practice	Key stage
All the boys discussed their lack of enthusiasm for writing. But most parents' responses were that the boys regularly wrote lengthy messages to their friends, with great enthusiasm, it was only when it came to class writing that they did the bare minimum. The boys explained that their friends were not bothered by spelling, punctuation or grammar as long as they could understand the message. They were disheartened when their writing was covered with corrections, and had no motivation to write when there wasn't a good reason to.	Sharing of information.
After hearing a similar story each time, the APs set up a workshop with the parents and they agreed that they would let the surface features of the boys' writing take a back seat, while concentrating on building the boys' confidence in writing. The boys' interest in computers and the internet would be used as tools to improve the boys' writing. The parents developed some clear expectations around how and when the boys should use the computer for learning, and when it could be used for entertainment.	Extended learning by providing multiple and aligned learning opportunities.
One AP set up a group blog for the students to post on and asked the boys to identify key people who could be the audience and help with their learning. For one boy, this was a dad who hadn't been at the initial meetings. The family and teachers supported the dad to be an active participant in his son's learning. *I hadn't known how to help my boy or even that he'd want my help until we started doing these workshops.*	Adding to family practices.
The APs ran further workshops for parents about commenting and giving feedback to their child about their writing. Parents were asked to comment on the message of the writing, rather than technical aspects of it, like spelling or grammar. One AP supported the parents with tips such as: *Use words that your child has used in their writing.* A parent said: *I now have more to talk about with my boy. They're good conversations.*	Supportive group activities as well as one-to-one contact. Structured and specific suggestions.

Example of practice	Key stage
The APs worked closely with the parents of two students. One parent did not read or write, and the parents of another child were not English speakers. The school provided a translator and other resources to ensure there were no barriers to these parents' participation in their children's school learning. As the boys' enthusiasm for writing grew, the APs introduced the boys to editing skills. The boys were able to edit their own work, and any corrections on it would be their own. Parents helped teachers extend a school task – writing – to contexts that were important at home. The boys now have a purpose for writing. They write about things important to them and their families. Parents talked about sharing this writing with others in the family. The students have all made accelerated progress, and are much more motivated in their learning.	Leaders understood it was their role to help parents be involved in their child's school learning.

Transferring success from working with parents of students with special education needs

In this evaluation, ERO did not specifically focus on working relationships with parents of children with special education needs. However, leaders in some schools transferred learning from successfully working with parents of children with special education needs to other areas of the school. For example, one school used such collaboration as a model for developing guidelines for teachers when working with all parents. Another used the individual education plan that described outcomes, actions and the future monitoring and discussion points about how things were going as a model for all students they were supporting with extra teaching actions. ERO would like to see all students at risk of underachievement, and their parents and whānau, benefiting from such collaborative and targeted working relationships,[44] and to have well articulated plans for their accelerated learning.

44   Schools may like to refer to the Ministry of Education publication *Collaboration for Success: Individual Education Plans,* in particular section 8 – Collaboration – the heart of the matter. Available at http://seonline.tki.org.nz/IEP/IEP-guidelines and the Inclusive Practices tool available at www.wellbeingatschool.org.nz/about-inclusive-practices-tools.

What are some of the barriers to educationally powerful connections and relationships with parents, families and whānau of students at risk of underachieving?

In the schools where leaders and teachers didn't do anything extra with parents and whānau of students at risk of underachieving, ERO found that the main barriers were:

> leaders not understanding the purpose and benefits of involving parents and whānau in reciprocal learning relationships

> the quality of the communication between school and home

> teachers focusing only on the quality and impact of school-based learning opportunities

> PLD not changing school practices to develop improved connections.

These schools often had relationships that were only one-way. Schools communicated information clearly and supported parents to develop strategies to help their child but they did not really listen to parents and develop school activities that reflected home.

Communication was through school portals, texts and emails. The communication could be written and read anytime but was often very short-hand and often did not require a response. It was not invitational. Schools did not know whether particular parents had read the information on school portals, or whether the information in texts and emails had been useful. Using technology alone to communicate had not contributed to a reciprocal learning-centred relationship in these schools.

Although *The New Zealand Curriculum Teaching as Inquiry* framework was used extensively to guide teaching decisions in schools, teachers and leaders did not think to identify the contribution others could make to students' learning.

Teachers therefore, with all good intent, focused on the learning opportunities they provided for students at risk of underachieving and on developing relationships with parents as discrete activities. There was no coherence between the two actions and therefore no deliberate alignment between home and school learning opportunities for students.

There were two other barriers to schools developing educationally powerful connections and relationships with parents and whānau:

> Schools' assessment for learning was not embedded in school practice, so setting next learning steps with students and their parents was superficial.

> Individual teachers had learning-centred relationships with parents and whānau, but engaging with parents was not a school-wide imperative. These schools did not appear to value:

  – engaging with all groups of parents

  – ensuring consistency of teacher practice when engaging with parents.

In some schools the PLD teachers were participating in did not address these issues. There was not enough focus on building educationally powerful connections and the opportunity these reciprocal relationships provided to extend learning for students at risk of underachievement. For example:

> school-based PLD focused mainly on teaching strategies and data analysis

> external PLD focused on supporting parents to develop home strategies and activities, without a strong focus on ways to connect the contributions of parents and whānau to learning at school.

Students at risk of underachievement would benefit if teachers and leaders in schools explored their beliefs and practices about developing two-way partnerships with parents and whānau when acceleration of progress is essential for student success.

Conclusion

ERO found that educationally powerful connections and relationships between teachers, leaders, parents and whānau are components of an effective response to underachievement. The stories of successful relationships illustrate evaluation indicators from three domains of the *School Evaluation Indicators (trial document)*[45]: *Leadership of conditions for equity and excellence; Educationally powerful connections and relationships;* and *Responsive curriculum, effective teaching and opportunity to learn.*

The outcomes of educationally powerful connections and relationships – illustrating the School Evaluation Indicators	
Community collaboration and partnerships extend and enrich opportunities for students to become confident, connected, actively involved, lifelong learners. Communication supports and strengthens reciprocal, learning centred relationships.	In each of the examples the students had accelerated their learning and were now experiencing equivalent achievement to their peers. Teachers and leaders in these schools learned to listen to parents. Once they started to listen they realised they were wrong in thinking some parents and whānau did not want to help their children do well at school. Teachers and parents demonstrated willingness to listen to new ideas, and to work beyond their experience and/or cultural comfort zone to understand and resolve educational problems. Parents found these working relationships with teachers hugely satisfying, as they knew: > responsibility for their child's outcomes was shared > their contribution was valued and made a difference > more about the school system, what counts as excellence, and ways they could help their child at home with their learning. Teachers also found these working relationships with parents hugely satisfying. Through *ako* – parents and teachers as teachers and learners – teachers learnt to listen and they learnt to see the student's aspirations and fears as the parents saw them. Many changed their practices significantly because of what parents shared. Students were active participants in the relationships. They appreciated that adults were working together to help them as they experienced multiple and aligned learning experiences. They felt valued and that they belonged at school. Students and parents reported increased levels of quality interactions at home about school and future education.

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45   Education Review Office. (2015). *School Evaluation Indicators: Effective Practice for Improvement and Learner Success.* Retrieved from http://ero.govt.nz/Review-Process/Frameworks-and-Evaluation-Indicators-for-ERO-Reviews/School-Evaluation-Indicators-2015-Trial.

The value of extended learning

Student learning at home is actively promoted through the provision of relevant learning opportunities, resources and support.

Students have effective, sufficient and equitable opportunities to learn.

The connections between home and school enabled students to value learning in all contexts and understand that learning is a lifelong experience and not limited to school. These experiences led to students succeeding and starting to see themselves differently. They were becoming confident, connected, actively involved lifelong learners.

> *[It] makes us feel like we have a place in the school. We belong to a group and we make things happen. (Secondary student)*

> *I've really enjoyed it – I've taught Mum all these new games. It's fun and I haven't been struggling in maths anymore and I can get my work completed. I can do heaps more things with my maths now. (Primary student)*

Not all of these schools were transferring what they could have learnt from these relationships to the parents and whānau of all students at risk of underachieving; rather the focus remained on the original small group of students. This was because teachers and leaders were not explicitly aware of the value of extending learning from the classroom to multiple sites, especially to home. More importantly, they were not explicitly aware of the value of more adults, including parents, using similar language, strategies and activities to help each child succeed. For students at risk of underachievement, the more opportunities they had to learn and practise this new learning, the more likely they would accelerate progress and succeed.

The value of leadership

Leadership builds relational trust and effective participation and collaboration at every level of the school community.

Leadership builds capability and collective capacity in evaluation and inquiry for sustained improvement and innovation.

Learning centred relationships effectively engage and involve the school community.

Leaders at schools with the best qualities of educationally powerful connections and relationships were supporting a whole-school focus on improving relationships with parents and whānau. Through initiatives that focused on particular students at risk of underachieving they helped teachers to:

> make time for frequent and regular conversations with parents and whānau

> design and implement multiple and aligned learning opportunities

> review the impact and alignment of these opportunities and review how they supported parents and whānau with their actions

> be persistent and sustain what worked, change and improve what did not work, and transfer what worked to support other students and their parents and whānau.

These leaders were developing the conditions necessary for all teachers to have collaborative working relationships centred on learning with parents and whānau of children at risk of underachieving. This enabled them to realise key education policy goals[46] for parents and teachers to work together. However, ERO found that some leaders were unaware of individual teachers' good work in developing learning-centred relationships with parents and whānau of children at risk of underachieving.

46 *The New Zealand Curriculum, Ka Hikitia Accelerating Success and Pasifika Education Plan.*

Strengthening school inquiry processes to support collaboration and partnership

Many schools were using the *Teaching as Inquiry* framework[47] as a tool to guide individual and school-wide teaching and learning decisions and reviews of the impact of these decisions. However, the framework did not necessarily influence teachers to design or review solutions that included collaborations with other adults and the extended learning opportunities these collaborations could provide students. Instead, this influence came from school leaders.

Students would benefit from leaders explicitly linking the *Teaching as Inquiry* framework, along with the effective practice illustrated in the domains of ERO's *School Evaluation Indicators (trial document)*,[48] to their school's goals to engage in learning-centred relationships with all parents and whānau, and to accelerate progress

of some named and known students. Leaders may find the Best Evidence Synthesis' *Inquiry and knowledge-building cycle for educational improvement*[49] with its prompt 'How can we activate educationally powerful connections for all our students', along with ERO's *School Evaluation Indicators,* a useful framework of what effective practice looks like for a school-wide focus on underachievement.

As a result of this evaluation, ERO has made recommendations to the Ministry of Education and to school leaders about how they might increase educationally powerful connections with parents and whānau to accelerate progress for students at risk of underachieving. See *Next Steps* in this report to read these recommendations, as well as the discussion questions for schools on the next page.

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47 From *The New Zealand Curriculum* and *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa*. Retrieved from http://nzcurriculum.tki.org.nz/.

48 Education Review Office. (2015). *School Evaluation Indicators: Effective Practice for Improvement and Learner Success.* Retrieved from http://ero.govt.nz/Review-Process/Frameworks-and-Evaluation-Indicators-for-ERO-Reviews/School-Evaluation-Indicators-2015-Trial.

49 See the *BES/Hei Kete Raukura A3 Overview* www.educationcounts.govt.nz/topics/bes/resources/bess-and-cases.

Starters for school discussions

ERO has linked key judgements from the findings of this report with ERO's *School Evaluation Indicators (trial document)*.[50] Each indicator has the follow-on question "How do we know?" ERO recommends that schools inquire about how the following apply to students at risk of underachieving:

Domain 3: Educationally powerful connections and relationships

What evidence do we have that:

> a range of appropriate and effective communication strategies are used to communicate with, and engage, parents and whānau

> students, parents and whānau, and teachers have shared understandings about curriculum goals and the processes of teaching and learning, and engage in productive learning conversations

> students, parents and whānau, and teachers work together to identify student strengths and learning needs, set goals and plan responsive learning strategies and activities

> students, parents and whānau, and teachers understand the full range of pathways, programmes, options and support that is available, and participate in informed decision making at critical transition points

> parents and whānau receive information and participate in individual and group learning opportunities that enable them to support and promote their child's learning

> any homework is carefully designed to promote purposeful interactions between parents and children, and teachers provide timely, descriptive oral or written feedback

> teachers and parents and whānau engage in joint activities and interventions to improve learning and/or behaviour

> the school proactively identifies and draws on community resources and expertise to improve learning opportunities and capacity to improve student achievement and wellbeing.

Domain 4: Responsive curriculum, effective teaching and opportunity to learn

What evidence do we have that:

> students, teachers, parents and whānau set high, challenging and appropriate expectations for learning

> curriculum design, planning and enactment responds to student and whānau aspirations within the local context and draws on, and adds to, the funds of knowledge of students, parents and whānau

> learning opportunities respond to students' identified strengths, needs and prior learning

> students have sufficient, related opportunities to revisit and apply learning through a variety of purposeful activities, deliberate practices and review over time

> students with special needs and abilities participate in learning opportunities that provide appropriate challenge and support

> explicit instruction in learning strategies (such as goal setting, self monitoring and deliberate practice) strengthens learner ability to take control of their learning, develop meta-cognitive skills, self regulate and develop self efficacy

> students receive timely, specific, descriptive feedback related to important feedback questions: *Where am I going? How am I going? Where to next? How will I know when I've got there?*

> teachers and students participate in ongoing, reciprocal communication with parents and whānau enabling them to actively participate in, and contribute to, the learning journey.

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50   Education Review Office. (2015). *School Evaluation Indicators: Effective Practice for Improvement and Learner Success.* Retrieved from http://ero.govt.nz/Review-Process/Frameworks-and-Evaluation-Indicators-for-ERO-Reviews/School-Evaluation-Indicators-2015-Trial.

Appendix 1: Sample of schools

The school type, location, roll size and decile of the 256 schools in this evaluation are shown in Tables 1 to 4 below. The sample is representative of national figures for school type and decile. The sample is not representative of national figures for school location or roll size. Rural schools are under-represented and schools in minor urban areas are over-represented. Very small and small schools were under-represented, and large and very large schools were over-represented.[51]

Table 1: School type

School type	Number of schools in sample	Percentage of schools in sample	National percentage of schools[52]
Contributing (Years 1-6)	93	36	33
Full Primary (Years 1-8)	104	41	43
Intermediate (Years 7 and 8)	16	6	5
Restricted Composite (Years 7-10)	1	<1	<1
Special School (Years 1-15)	1	<1	1
Composite (Years 1-15)	12	5	4
Secondary (Years 7-15)	10	4	4
Secondary (Years 9-15)	18	7	10
Secondary (Years 11-15)	1	<1	<1
Total	256	100[53]	100

Table 2: Location of schools

Locality and population size	Number of schools in sample	Percentage of schools in sample	National percentage of primary schools
Main urban (30,000+)	142	55	54
Secondary urban (10,000-29,999)	15	6	6
Minor urban (1000-9999)	45	18	12
Rural (1-999)	54	21	28
Total	256	100	100

51   The differences in observed and expected values in Tables 1 to 4 were tested using a Chi square test. The level of statistical significance was $p<0.05$.

52   The national percentage of each school type is based on the total population of schools as at 3 March 2015.

53   Some totals do not add up to 100 due to rounding.

Table 3: Roll size

Roll size group[54]	Number of schools in sample	Percentage of schools in sample	National percentage of schools
Very small	12	5	11
Small	54	21	25
Medium	103	40	40
Large	64	25	19
Very Large	23	9	5
Total	256	100	100

Table 4: Decile

Decile	Number of schools in sample	Percentage of schools in sample	National percentage of schools
Low (1-3)	73	29	29
Medium (4-7)	103	40	41
High (8-10)	80	31	30
Total	256	100	100

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54   School roll size groups differ by school type. For primary schools: Very Small (1-30); Small (31-100); Medium (101-300); Large (301-500); Very Large (501 or more). For all other school types: Very Small (1-100); Small (101-400); Medium (401-800); Large (801-1500); Very Large (1501 or more).

Appendix 2: Evaluation framework and investigative questions

The evaluation framework had two parts. The first explored the quality of the school's relationship with most parents. The second was the in-depth investigation associated with students who had been at risk of poor educational outcomes and were now experiencing success.

1. Yes/no decision about the school's relationship with most parents.

> Most parents and whānau, and students involved in goal setting, agreed actions.
> Most parents and whānau, and students receive regular and frequent reports on student progress.
> Particular activities are designed to involve particular parents and whānau, and students.
> School has processes to engage with all parents and whānau during the transition to and from the school.
> Curriculum priorities and principles have been developed with community/iwi.
> School leaders regularly review working relationship with parents and whānau.

2. The example of practice evaluation and investigation

> Evidence of students' success was used to make an initial judgement about the quality and outcome of the relationship between the school and parents and whānau of a group of students at risk of underachievement.
> Students' improved achievement was shown by shifts in academic trajectories based on standardised assessment tool data, National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) credits or National Standard levels.
> Students' improved wellbeing was reflected in improved self esteem, attendance, participation and engagement.

The judgements about the quality of the relationships were based on whether:

> deliberate actions included:
>   – acknowledging, understanding and celebrating similarities and differences
>   – adding to family practices – not undermining them
>   – structured, specific suggestions rather than general advice
>   – providing supportive group opportunities as well as one-to-one contact (especially informal contact)
> leaders, teachers and parents and whānau knew what worked and why

> school leaders were transferring this learning to other areas of the school.