

National Report Summary

ERO publishes evaluation reports on education issues of national importance. This handout is a summary of a recent national report - it captures the key points and highlights findings which you may find useful. The full report is available on our website - www.ero.govt.nz

Provision for Students in Activity Centres (June 2013)

This report presents the findings of ERO's recent evaluation of Activity Centres. There are 14 Activity Centres in New Zealand. They provide education for up to 20 students at a time in Years 9 to 11 who need time out from mainstream education. The Centres are attached to clusters of secondary schools. One school from each cluster operates as the host school and provides management oversight for the Activity Centre.

ERO found that the performance of the Activity Centres was highly variable. All of the Activity Centres were safe and welcoming and typically had good relationships between staff and students. They were all focussed on improving the educational and social outcomes for students, although they had different levels of success for this.

The variability was mostly evident in the quality of governance and education programmes, and the success of transition processes for students moving to and from the Activity Centre.

At the time of this evaluation, only one of the 14 Centres was using Ministry of Education's *Activity Centre Policy Toolkit*. This toolkit sets out the key responsibilities for Activity Centres, including those of host and enrolling schools. It also sets out clear programme responsibilities and the expectations for how Activity Centres will work with individual students.

Next steps for Activity Centres and their cluster schools

- Develop and implement **strategic planning** that focuses on improving students' social and educational outcomes.
- Include, as part of their planning, targeted **professional development** for Activity Centre staff that is informed by the priorities identified in their individual Centre reports and this report.
- Ensure there are **robust self-review** processes in place to inform ongoing improvement.
- Ensure **high quality management**, reporting and support processes are implemented across the cluster, consistent with the *Activity Centre Policy Toolkit*.
- Ensure that all enrolling schools provide high quality **support to students** in line with the guidelines in the *Activity Centre Policy Toolkit*.

Next steps for the Ministry of Education

- Promote increased awareness and use of the *Activity Centre Policy Toolkit*.
- Support Activity Centre clusters to access tailored professional learning and development at the individual cluster level related to IEPs, assessment, curriculum development, careers education, strategic planning and self review.
- Work with the Ministries of Health and Social Development to establish a coordinated approach to improve the health and wellbeing of students placed in Activity Centres.

The features of highly effective Activity Centres

Two Activity Centres in this evaluation were highly effective across a range of indicators. The effective behaviours of these Centres are highlighted in the report and summarised in the table below.

A key feature was their focus on their role as a transition service – ensuring that students gained skills and knowledge while at the Activity Centre and were successfully supported to return to mainstream education in most cases, or on to further education, training or employment.

The good practice features of these Activity Centres included:

Governance structures that involved cluster schools	At one Activity Centre the management committee was made up of the previous host school, the current host school and the next host school. Schools in this cluster operated as the host school for three years. This meant that each school spent a total of nine years on the management committee.
Good processes to transition students into the Activity Centre	The highly effective Activity Centres received good information about students from their enrolling schools. This served as a basis for individual planning for each student.
High quality planning for students	Plans for individual students were focused on achievement. These plans involved students, their families, staff from a student's enrolling school, and staff from the Activity Centre. The plans included a strong focus on self management and the other key competencies of The New Zealand Curriculum.
Families were included throughout a student's time at the Activity Centre	High quality planning for each student helped to keep families well informed about their child's progress and the processes put in place to support their transition back to education or training.
Students taking responsibility for their learning	Students at the highly effective Activity Centres took increasing responsibility for their learning and confidently discussed their academic and social goals. They also set and monitored their targets for the completion of materials from Te Kura. Students at one Centre took responsibility for structuring their individual learning days, while at the other, students achieved high attendance rates despite some having to travel a considerable distance to the Centre.
High levels of return to education or training	During 2011 one of the Activity Centres had 21 of its 25 students transition to further education. The other had 25 of its 26 students successfully transition back to school or to another education programme.
High levels of student achievement	At one of these Centres, six of the seven Year 11 students gained an average of 61 credits in National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA).
A strong social and academic focus	Activity Centre staff used community resources well and accessed social services on a needs basis for students and their families.

FIND OUT MORE

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Ko te Tamaiti te Pūtake o te Kaupapa
The Child – the Heart of the Matter