

**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 that you may find useful. The full report is available on our website – ero.govt.nz

Provision for Students in Activity Centres



What did ERO do?

Specialist teams of evaluators visited the 14 activity centres to determine how effective they were in promoting positive outcomes for their students, deemed to be at risk of not achieving educational success. These students were mostly referred to the centres because of behavioural issues that jeopardised their learning and the learning of others.

Each activity centre received an individual report (available at ero.govt.nz) and the evidence from these evaluations informs this national report of the overall provision for students in activity centres.

Why did we do it?

On a regular cycle, ERO reviews how effective the activity centres are in achieving their long-term aim to improve the educational success of the at-risk students referred to them. Activity centres are a significant intervention in addressing students' risk of educational failure.

We looked at how well the managing schools met the Memorandum of Understanding signed between them and the Ministry of Education. We looked at the governance, management, professional relationships, pedagogy, and above all what is happening for students in the care of the activity centres. For students we were specifically interested in:

- » their transition into and out of the centre
- » how well they settle to learning
- » appropriateness of the curriculum they experience
- » what difference attending the centre made for them.

What did ERO find?

We found improvements in the overall provision for students since our last review in 2013. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was introduced in 2016. The MoU provides clear expectations for the boards of managing schools and the Ministry and provides a framework for accountability, including expectations of enrolling schools who maintain responsibility for students they refer to the centres.

We found leaders in enrolling schools were careful about selecting and referring the students who could most benefit from attending an activity centre. Information about the students was shared with the centre. Transitions were planned effectively, valuing parent and whānau input and including them in decisions being made. Centres provided welcoming environments, and very positive staff:student relationships meant students settled quickly into the centre and to their learning.



This is family. It's a place of acceptance.

The activity centre hasn't given up on us.

Students

Relationships in almost all of the centres were respectful and productive; difference and diversity were valued.



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For more ideas and information, you can read the full report online at ero.govt.nz/publications

Teachers developed Individual Learning Programmes (ILPs) with the students and these identified appropriate goals to work towards. The ILPs did not always inform personalisation of the curriculum for students and this is an area for improvement. Nevertheless, the curriculum was usually engaging, providing students with authentic learning. Most students made clear progress in their literacy and numeracy, and some older students gained credits in NCEA.

In keeping with student needs, staff in the centres used a variety of strategies to enhance students' social skills, and their sense of belonging and responsibility to the community. They helped students develop cooperation and self-regulation skills, a sense of self worth and confidence as learners. Teachers provided students with feedback regarding their progress to which they responded well.



I am actually doing work.

I look forward to Friday's test where I can see my improvement.

I've changed my choice in words to less swearing like I would when I'm not in school.

Students

Students became more motivated, and better able to learn than when they arrived at the centres. They were keen to reengage with education back at their enrolling schools, albeit with concerns.



I'm not prepared to be a statistic.

We're concerned that the teachers at school won't recognise the changes we have made and just treat us like before.

Students

When the enrolling school kept in touch with their students at the centre the transition back to mainstream usually went well, with teachers at the school noting the difference in the students and understanding how to help them sustain improvements.

ERO identified interesting and effective models of governance across the centres. The best models had strong links between the managing school, their centre and support networks in the community. Several centres had support personnel onsite and some provided transport assistance to students. Strategies like these enhanced students' attendance and commitment to learning.

An area for development for centres was to improve their evaluation of overall effectiveness of the centre, especially in evaluating the long-term outcomes for students. No-one could tell us if time in the activity centre made a difference in the longer term for students. This is a stated aim of the intervention and needs to be explored.

ERO found some areas of concern. Centres reported an increase in the number of students presenting with mental health problems and centres experienced difficulty in accessing timely and appropriate support.

There were inconsistencies across the country in the use of Te Aho o Te Kura Pounamu (The Correspondence School) programmes, and in some instances parties to the MoU fully meeting their obligations. These are outlined in the report and recommendations made to remedy them.

The report includes a vignette of Wellington's Te Ara Activity Centre. This effective activity centre uses a programme to track students' academic, social and emotional wellbeing. A graphic display of the outcomes enables students to easily monitor and discuss their progress with teachers, parents and whānau. They are true partners in their learning.