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

Towards equitable outcomes in secondary schools: Good practice (May 2014)

This report presents examples of good practice in student engagement and achievement. The examples come from a sample of secondary schools, rated decile 5 or below with rolls of 200 students or more, who had better outcomes for students than other similar schools.

ERO visited seven of these schools to find out the secret to their success. The schools included single sex and co-educational state schools; an integrated school; schools in urban areas - including South Auckland - and in provincial towns; and schools with very diverse populations, including high numbers of priority learners. Their rolls ranged in size from 430 to 2200 students.

In the sample schools **few students were stood-down or suspended** and students achieved good academic results. In fact, some schools had already **exceeded the Government's target that, by 2017, 85 percent of all 18 year-olds will achieve NCEA Level 2**.

Every school was different, and yet every school had features in common. The report describes these common features and how together they worked to get good results. It also shares case studies about each school to highlight different practices that contributed to their success.

The bottom line for these schools was about achieving the best possible outcomes for students. Students were first and foremost in their thinking.

These schools had a relentless commitment to improvement – **improvement focused on success for each and every student.**

Key areas of good practice:

School Culture

- Schools focused on the students' wellbeing and on building deeply caring relationships.
- A 'can do' attitude pervaded the schools – schools believed that all students can succeed and that teachers can find ways to help that happen.
- Whānau, parents and community were involved in their teenager's learning.
- Responses to problems were solution focused and restorative practices were used.

Students

- Students were confident young adults, helped to take responsibility for themselves and their learning.
- Students were active members of their school community.

Learning

- Carefully selected and adapted professional learning advanced the school's strategic plan.
- School leaders and teachers used extensive, high quality data to identify students' needs and respond appropriately.
- Community links extended opportunities for students' learning.

Leadership

- Senior leaders worked extremely efficiently as a team with high levels of relational trust.
- Principals were knowledgeable and skilful change managers. They were pivotal to the successful development of the school culture and in realising the school vision through its strategic plan.

Self-review questions for schools

School culture

- How well are our vision, expectations and values brought to life in the school? How do we know?
- To what extent does our culture support students' wellbeing and motivation to learn?
- How well do students new to our school learn about our expectations and values?
- How is the students' sense of belonging nurtured? Who really knows each student?
- How are parents involved in discussions and decisions about their teenager's progress?
- How well are students supported to develop a learning pathway through school – to make the right subject choices, set and achieve academic targets, and keep their future options open?
- How do we respond to students having difficulties engaging in their learning – punitively or restoratively?

Students

- What do the statistics (attendance, retention, suspension, stand-down, exclusion and expulsion) tell us about how well students are engaged in learning and the culture we have in our school?
- Who is responsible for tracking and responding to engagement and achievement data about students? Who is the data shared with and how is it used?
- What processes do we have in place to respond quickly to students who are at risk of disengaging or of falling behind?
- How well do our academic, pastoral and administration systems work together to improve outcomes for each and every student?
- To what extent are interactions in the school respectful and focused on learning?

Learning

- How flexible is the curriculum in providing the subject and course choices needed for our students to have meaningful learning pathways?
- To what extent do we provide a wide variety of learning opportunities for students?
- How well do teachers set and realise high expectations with their students?
- To what extent are teachers effective in designing a curriculum that builds on students' prior knowledge and interests, challenges them and meets the needs of their students?
- How do we identify what is working well and what needs to be improved?

Leadership

- How well do our leaders foster our vision and high expectations for success for every student?
- How effectively have we established a cohesive learning community in our school? To what extent do all members of the school community contribute to and support the school vision?
- How effectively does leadership respond to short-term needs, while keeping true to the long-term vision?
- How well are professional learning opportunities selected and tailored to our vision?
- How do we provide staff and students with opportunities to lead in our school community?

(See also: www.ero.govt.nz/Review-Process/Frameworks-and-Evaluation-Indicators-for-ERO-Reviews)

FIND OUT MORE
For more ideas and information, you can read the full report online at www.ero.govt.nz/national-reports

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