

24 September 2015

Education Report: Release of Innovations in Partnership Schools | Kura Hourua – First Annual Interim Evaluation Report

Executive summary

1. We are seeking your approval to release the *Innovations in Partnership Schools Kura Hourua – First Annual Interim Evaluation Report* on the Education Counts website on as part of the next information release on Partnership Schools Kura Hourua.
2. The Ministry of Education has contracted Martin Jenkins and Associates (Martin Jenkins) to carry out a formative independent evaluation of the Partnership Schools model. This is designed to provide a cumulative overview of how the model is developing and whether the desired outcomes are being achieved.
3. The evaluation runs over four years (2014-2017), focusing on the nine partnership schools that opened in 2014 and 2015. It has three stages: early operation and implementation; creating the conditions for success; and achievement of intended outcomes. A final report is due in late 2017, with annual interim reports. This report is the first interim evaluation report.
4. Early evidence from evaluation indicates that the flexibility of the model is enabling the Partnership Schools to develop innovative educational provision for students who have been under-served by the education system by:
 - a. using funding flexibly
 - b. appointing governance board members to access specific skills
 - c. splitting their management functions into business and academic leadership.
5. This has flowed through into emergent innovation and good practice in:
 - a. staffing
 - b. student engagement and support
 - c. teaching and learning.
6. The schools' curricula and engagement with community, parents, family, and whānau demonstrate good practice, although signs of innovation were yet to appear.
7. Since the proactive release of the July Cabinet Paper (on monitoring and evaluation, proposed new funding model, operational review, and a further application round) [METIS 938478 refers] we have received a number of Official Information Act (OIA) requests for the evaluation report. We propose to release the report on Education Counts.

Recommendations

We recommend that you:

- a. **note** the main findings from the *Innovations in Partnership Schools Kura Hourua – First Annual Interim Evaluation Report*;
- b. **approve** the release of the report on the Education Counts website as part of the next information release on Partnership Schools Kura Hourua;
- c. **note** that we propose to use a low-key communication approach for the report release.

AGREE / DISAGREE



Lisa Rodgers
Deputy Secretary
Evidence, Data and Knowledge



Graham Stoop
Deputy Secretary
Student Achievement

NOTED / APPROVED



Hon Hekia Parata
Minister of Education

2, 10, 15



David Seymour
Under-Secretary to the Minister of Education

24, 09, 2015

Education Report: Release of Innovations in Partnership Schools I Kura Hourua – First Annual Interim Evaluation Report

Purpose of report

1. This report:
 - a. summarises the main findings from the *Innovations in Partnership Schools I Kura Hourua – First Annual Interim Evaluation Report*;
 - b. seeks your approval to release the report on the Education Counts website as part of the next information release on Partnership Schools Kura Hourua;
 - c. proposes a low-key communications approach for the report release.

Background

2. Partnership Schools I Kura Hourua (Partnership Schools) are a new type of school in the New Zealand education system, focused on improving educational outcomes for those groups of students whom the system has not served well. This includes Māori, Pasifika, students with special education needs and students from low socio-economic backgrounds. The most significant difference between Partnership Schools and state schools is that they have greater freedom and flexibility to innovate and engage with their students in return for stronger accountability for improving educational outcomes.
3. Five Partnership Schools opened in 2014, and a further four schools opened in 2015.
4. The Ministry of Education has contracted Martin Jenkins and Associates to carry out a formative independent evaluation of the Partnership Schools model.
5. This evaluation report is the first annual report from the evaluation which runs over four years (2014-2017), focusing on the nine partnership schools which opened in 2014 and 2015. The evaluation has three stages: early operation and implementation; creating the conditions for success; and achievement of intended outcomes. A final report is due in late 2017.
6. The evaluation is framed to answer four overarching evaluation questions over this time.
 - a. What does the policy look like and to what extent is delivery aligned with design intent?
 - b. To what extent are conditions for successful delivery of the policy in place?
 - c. What outcomes were achieved and were they achieved through the mechanisms that were envisaged?
 - d. What lessons can be drawn from the Partnership School experience and what are the implications of these lessons for improving the design and delivery of the policy?

7. Both the evaluation and the implementation of the policy are in the early stages – this evaluation report provides feedback on only the first year of Round 1 schools' operation. This evaluation report looks at early indications of how policy was enabling Partnership Schools to innovate. It involved only Round 1 schools focusing in depth on three of these five schools. The next stage of the evaluation will include Round 2 schools. We provided a confidential copy of the draft report to the Authorisation Board, seeking feedback.
8. You received a copy of the draft report in May [METIS 931183 refers]. The July Cabinet Paper (on monitoring and evaluation, proposed new funding model, operational review, and further application round) included a summary of the evaluation findings [METIS 938478 refers].

How is the performance of Partnership Schools being monitoring and evaluated?

9. The performance of individual Partnership Schools is monitored by three agencies:
 - a. The Ministry assesses the quarterly and annual reports provided by the Partnership Schools as part of their contract obligations, including information about whether the schools are meeting their agreed targets.
 - b. The Education Review Office (ERO) conducts a Readiness Review before the schools open, a New School Assurance Review 6 months after opening, and an Education Review 18 months after opening, with regular reviews thereafter, the same as state schools.
 - c. The Authorisation Board monitors the Partnership Schools' performance.
10. The Ministry also commissioned the external evaluation to look at how, and to what extent, the greater freedoms in the Partnership Schools model have enabled the schools to develop different and innovative approaches, and what difference this has made to student outcomes.

Measuring and reporting on student progress and achievement

11. Student achievement is at the heart of Partnership School policy and, therefore, drives the reporting framework. As part of the performance management system, sponsors' contracts require them to report on student achievement and student progress.
12. The Ministry and Authorisation Board are seeking a stronger emphasis and a more prescriptive requirement for schools to establish robust baseline data and to measure student achievement progress. Contracts will be changed so that they are more directive about what assessment tools the schools should use and the way that data is to be recorded and reported.

Focus on quantitative analysis in evaluation

13. The Parliamentary Under-Secretary to the Minister of Education (the Under-Secretary) has indicated that he would like see a stronger focus on quantitative analysis in the evaluation approach. There are a number of tools available currently that provide quantitative analysis of student achievement and school performance. You have undertaken to continue to work with the Under-Secretary to develop the application of these tools to Partnership Schools.

14. We have briefed you on suggested approaches to measuring Partnership School progress for 2014, 2015 and 2016 [METIS 943293 refers]. The Ministry has undertaken to:
 - a. work with the Board to refine approaches quarterly monitoring reports provided by the Partnership Schools;
 - b. develop approaches for quantitative analysis of learning outcomes, including qualification achievement, through student case-based comparison between partnership schools and other schools.
15. This analysis will augment the range of performance, monitoring and review information we have. The current scope of the evaluation does not cover comparing Partnership Schools' performance with that of state schools.

Evaluation scope

16. The evaluation focus is on how and to what extent the greater freedoms in the model have enabled the schools to develop different approaches. The evaluation will also look at the lessons to learn from the schools' experience and the implications for improving the design and delivery of the model.
17. This focus means that the evaluation is about how the model works in practice, not the performance of each school or how that compares to state schools. The evaluation design and methodology fits the questions it aims to answer. The evaluation will:
 - a. support decision-making about implementation and support for the schools, to help ensure implementation is efficient and effective;
 - b. describe how the schools operate in practice and look at the factors that contribute to successful outcomes;
 - c. provide an overview of how the model is developing on the ground over time and what outcomes it is achieving;
 - d. help grow knowledge about innovative schooling provision.

Evaluation Working Group

18. When the evaluation contract began, Martin Jenkins and the Ministry established a working group to jointly oversee the smooth running of the evaluation.
19. We have augmented this group with members of the Authorisation Board. The purpose of the revised group is to:
 - a. enable the Ministry and the Authorisation Board to provide Martin Jenkins with advice and information that will support the effective implementation of the evaluation and maximise its utility;
 - b. enable the Martin Jenkins evaluation team and the Ministry to share information about the implementation of the evaluation and emerging findings with the Authorisation Board, as a key evaluation stakeholder;

- c. provide a formal and transparent mechanism for the Authorisation Board to provide input and advice about: the evaluation purpose, objectives, questions, and design; the interpretation of evaluation findings, and emergent findings and drafts of evaluation reports;
 - d. provide a mechanism for the Ministry and Martin Jenkins to direct and manage the evaluation contract with input and advice from the Authorisation Board.
20. The Martin Jenkins evaluation team is directly accountable to the Ministry within the terms of its contract and day-to-day evaluation contract management matters are out of scope. As it is important to preserve the independence of the evaluation, the group is not a decision making body. Its role is not to direct or influence the management, focus, scope, or reporting of the evaluation or the contracted evaluation team.
21. The revised group's first meeting was on 11 September 2015. Members of the Authorisation Board attending were Catherine Isaac, John Shewan, and Terry Bates. The agenda included the Ministry's plans for quantitative analysis of schools' outcomes, and the focus and scope of the second phase of the evaluation.

Key findings

22. The evaluation report describes how the first Partnership Schools that opened in 2014 are translating the policy intent into practice and concentrates on the first overarching evaluation question:

What does the policy look like and to what extent is delivery aligned with design intent?

23. The report's findings are based on qualitative feedback from visits to Round 1 schools (all five were visited during the scoping phase of the evaluation, three were visited to examine innovation); a Literature Scan on innovation in schools; secondary analysis of relevant information (Quarterly and Annual Reports provided by Partnership Schools to the Ministry as part of their contracts, ERO's New School Assurance Review Reports, schools' applications and contracts, and policy papers).
24. The literature scan highlighted how contemporary discussions of innovation in schools are grounded in the perceived need for flexibility in public education, to meet the rapidly changing economic and social needs of a globalised and technology driven society. Despite the large body of literature referring to innovation in education, the concept is poorly defined. Even so, broadly speaking, innovation in schools is understood as something that is intentional, and designed to support changes in practice to create value (i.e., improvements in teaching and learning). In the education context, innovation is about the creative application of good practice solutions in a way that is appropriate in a specific time and place. The report notes that for these schools, while the innovations may not be new per se, their application to this particular student group, or combination with other ideas, may be uncommon, if not unique.
25. The report says that the range and nature of innovations in the schools provides early evidence that they are developing innovative solutions to match local needs, while still meeting high quality standards.

26. The report looks at eight dimensions of innovation: funding models; governance; management; staffing; student engagement and support; pedagogy (teaching and learning); curriculum; and engagement with community, parents, family and whānau. These dimensions are linked and some are necessary precursors for others.
27. The greatest levels of innovation in the first year of operation appeared in governance and management:
 - a. *Governance* provides a key driver for innovation, with the sponsor's vision providing the impetus and mandate for innovation in all other areas. The policy enabled a key innovation in governance for the schools – boards appointed for specific expertise without the need to involve parents.
 - b. *Management* enacts the sponsor's vision by implementing specific innovations across the school/kura. A key innovation in management was the split between administration (CEO) and academic leadership (principal).
28. Innovative practices and examples of best practice were evident in three dimensions, driven by management as follows:
 - a. *Staffing*: skilled staff support and bring innovation – they are experienced (including the small number of unregistered teachers) and bring a strong focus on improving outcomes for priority students; staff share the responsibility for ongoing innovation with sponsors and management and are employed under individual contracts.
 - b. *Student engagement and support*: there is a strong focus on student wellbeing and engagement using a range of best practice approaches and innovations.
 - c. *Pedagogy, teaching and learning*: there were multiple examples of best practice, with approaches well matched to context and student need – while similar examples can be found in state schools, the report notes that these practices are not necessarily widespread across the state sector.
29. Curriculum; and engagement with community, parents, family and whānau showed many examples of good practice, but little real innovation:
 - a. *Curriculum*: while not particularly innovative, schools were tailoring curricula to meet the needs of priority students.
 - b. *Engagement with community, parents/family/whānau* was recognised as extremely important, schools were using a range of best practice approaches.
30. The report concludes that there were clear indications that the three case study schools were innovating in the ways they used funding flexibly, appointing governance boards to access specific skills, and split their management functions into administration and academic leadership. These innovations were supporting emergent innovation in the other dimensions, enabling the schools to develop more innovative educational provision for students who have been under-served by the education system.

31. The evaluation will keep a focus on innovation to see whether and how it grows over time, as Partnership Schools learn how better to respond to students' needs and aspirations. The report notes that whether the schools continue to innovate may also depend on the capability and capacity of sponsors, management and staff to drive innovation forward. However, the accountability framework and how that evolves may be a significant lever for continuous improvement.

Risks and Communications approach

32. Since the proactive release of the July Cabinet Paper (on monitoring and evaluation, proposed new funding model, operational review, and a further application round) [METIS 938478 refers] we have received a number of Official Information Act (OIA) requests for the evaluation report.
33. We propose to release the report on Education Counts before the Ministry's next information release about Partnership Schools | Kura Hourua.
34. We also propose a low-key communications approach. The findings from the evaluation report are in the public domain, summarised in the recently released Cabinet paper. We have prepared a set of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for use if needed (Appendix 1).

Appendix 1: Evaluation: Partnership Schools | Kura Hourua – FAQ

Who is doing the evaluation?

Martin Jenkins and Associates Ltd has been contracted by the Ministry of Education to evaluate the Partnership Schools model. Martin Jenkins was selected using a competitive open tender process.

What is being evaluated?

The Partnership Schools model allows Partnership Schools to have greater flexibility, in return for stronger accountability for improving educational outcomes.

The evaluation's key aim is to look at how and to what extent the greater freedoms in the model have enabled the schools to develop different and innovative approaches, and what difference this has made to student outcomes.

The evaluation is about how the model works in practice, based on the experience of the first nine partnership schools that opened in 2014 and 2015. The evaluation runs over four years (2014-2017).

The evaluation will:

- provide an early indication of how the Partnership Schools model is working and identify opportunities to make improvements to the model
- describe how the schools operate in practice and look at the factors that contribute to successful outcomes
- provide an overview of how the model is developing on the ground over time and what outcomes it is achieving
- help grow our knowledge about diverse schooling provision.

Over the course of the evaluation the focus will progressively shift from early operation and implementation to creating the conditions for success and, finally, the achievement of intended outcomes.

When will evaluation results be published?

The evaluators will report their findings annually to the Ministry. This will occur at the end of each phase and at the end of the evaluation. Reports will be published on the Ministry website. This report is the first Annual Interim Evaluation Report and covers the first phase of the evaluation.

What does the report say?

The evaluation report describes how the first schools that opened in 2014 are translating the policy intent into practice and concentrates on this overarching evaluation question:

- What does the policy look like and to what extent is delivery aligned with design intent?

Early evidence from the evaluation indicates that the flexibility of the model is enabling the Partnership Schools to develop innovative educational provision for students who have been under-served by the education system by:

- using funding flexibly

- appointing governance board members to access specific skills
- splitting their management functions into business and academic leadership.

This has flowed through into emergent innovation and good practice in:

- staffing
- student engagement and support
- teaching and learning.

The schools' curricula and engagement with community, parents, family, and whānau demonstrate good practice.

How does the evaluation complement other monitoring and review activity?

The evaluation complements other monitoring and review information that looks at how the schools are performing:

- The Ministry of Education assesses quarterly and annual reports provided by the Partnership Schools as part of their contracts, including information about whether the schools are meeting their agreed targets.
- The Education Review Office (ERO) conducts a readiness review before the schools open, a New Schools Assurance Review approximately 6 months after opening, and an Education review approximately 18 months after opening, with regular reviews thereafter, the same as state schools.
- The Authorisation Board monitors the Partnership Schools' performance.

All the organisations involved work to avoid duplication and share their information and expertise to ensure that the evaluation and monitoring of Partnership Schools is comprehensive, robust, and effective.

What information is the report based on?

The evaluation team drew on a range of information sources for this report:

- Quarterly and Annual Reports provided by the Round 1 schools to the Ministry as part of their contracts
- ERO's New School Assurance Review Reports
- other relevant documents (eg applications and contracts, and policy papers); school documents – information produced by the school for the public/students, their application and reports to the Ministry.

The evaluation team did case study visits with three of the five schools that opened in 2014 to observe operations and conduct interviews and focus groups with sponsors, school/kura staff and students. For each case, a detailed picture of implementation was built through these visits and a review of key documents relating to the Partnership Schools.