AMPLIFYING EXCELLENCE

PROMOTING TRANSPARENCY, PROFESSIONALISM AND SUPPORT IN SCHOOLS

MARTINE UDAHEMUKA

FOREWORD BY FRANCES VALINTINE

THE NEW ZEALAND INITIATIVE

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2017

The New Zealand Initiative is an independent public policy think tank supported by chief executives of major New Zealand businesses. We believe in evidence-based policy and are committed to developing policies that work for all New Zealanders.

Our mission is to help build a better, stronger New Zealand. We are taking the initiative to promote a prosperous, free and fair society with a competitive, open and dynamic economy. We develop and contribute bold ideas that will have a profound, positive, long-term impact.

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MARTINE UDAHEMUKA

Martine Udahemuka is a Research Fellow at The New Zealand Initiative working on education policy. She is the author of *Signal Loss: What We Know About School Performance* and *Fair and Frank: Global Insights for Managing School Performance*. Martine has also published on migrant and refugee integration in New Zealand. She was a student success advisor and learning consultant at Massey University, and was with the Aid Programme at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

Martine holds a Master of Arts in industrial and organisational psychology with First Class Honours from Massey University.

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FOREWORD

The inequality of student learning and achievement in New Zealand requires bold new thinking and a commitment to ensuring education gains for all.

The equity benefits outlined in Martine Udahemuka's report are thus key to the future of our nation.

The long-standing issues of underachievement, or low academic attainment, are too often linked to well-known factors (e.g. socioeconomic disadvantage). However, addressing the inconsistencies across the system failing the learner is a matter of the highest priority.

Our continued monologic focus on individual academic attainment as the sole measure of 'achievement' also ignores how the education system was built on an efficiency and a 'one size fits all' model with little consideration to cultural values, individual needs, or learning styles.

What does a parent, a teacher or a policymaker really know about a child's learning? As we increasingly question the effectiveness of traditional education models, we risk being caught in suspended animation, unable to agree on new learning approaches designed to fix achievement gaps.

From where I sit, I see decisions about new education models being made by policymakers who are far too removed from students.

Where are the student-led discussions on the true capability of learners to express themselves? Where is the debate on incorporating the insights, knowledge and experience of young New Zealanders who will be most impacted by education reforms?

A strong and relevant education system with a built-in ability to adapt can drive student confidence and support economic growth. Appropriate investment in education and skills are needed to ensure future generations have the capacity to learn the skills to actively and positively participate in New Zealand's future.

If unaddressed, the rising inequality in education will reduce our ability to create a successful future for our youngest students, who will experience the greatest divide between an analogue past and a digital future.

Martine Udahemuka's comprehensive analysis and timely review of our education failings, is a valuable contribution to the ongoing review of our school system.

Her report also makes several recommendations for a robust roadmap for our schools.

Let us use this opportunity to reimagine education and collectively resolve to find new ways to make learning accessible to all our children.

Frances Valintine
Founder, The Mind Lab by Unitec & Tech Futures Lab

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2015, The New Zealand Initiative started a three-part research project to investigate how well the education system was serving primary and secondary school students. Overall, the quality of education is high but there are worrying trends that need urgent reform. Particularly, thousands of students are leaving school unqualified each year while many are languishing in low performing schools, especially those from low socioeconomic status communities. [1]

The first report, *Signal Loss: What We Know About School Performance*, highlighted two concerns.[2] First, national data showed student achievement was improving, but international data showed the opposite. Second, while most state schools served their students well, a minority failed to do so – in some cases for decades despite interventions. Inadequate information means school failure can appear too late, and the documented failure may be just the tip of the underperformance iceberg.

Signal Loss found several policy settings preventing the education system from learning from failure: poor information about school and teacher quality; limited autonomy for school leaders to manage their schools; restricted school choice for parents; and weak incentives for schools to improve (see Appendix A for the report summary).

Based on a research trip, the second report, *Fair and Frank: Global Insights for Managing School Performance*,[3] explained how parts of the United Kingdom and the United States have turned around failing schools, improved the quality of teachers, and transformed the futures of thousands of students (see Appendix B for the report summary).

This final report sets the reform direction based on overseas examples to swiftly identify and address school failure, while recognising and scaling excellence. In forthcoming reports, the Initiative will outline how these recommendations would work in practice.

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1 School deciles indicate to what extent a school draws its students from low socioeconomic communities for funding purposes. Five factors are considered: 1) Household income – percentage of households with income in the lowest 20% nationally; 2) Occupation – percentage of employed parents in the lowest skilled occupational groups; 3) Household crowding – number of people in relation to the number of bedrooms in the household; 4) Educational qualifications – percentage of parents with no tertiary or school qualifications; and 5) Income support – percentage of parents who received a benefit in the previous year. Ministry of Education, "School deciles," Website.

2 Martine Udahemuka, "Signal Loss: What We Know About School Performance" (Wellington: The New Zealand Initiative, 2016).

3 Martine Udahemuka, "Fair and Frank: Global Insights for Managing School Performance" (Wellington: The New Zealand Initiative, 2017).

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The government relies on end-of-year attainment pass rates as headline indicators of school success, while overlooking contextual differences in school cohorts. This leads to erroneous conclusions about which schools over- or underperform relative to schools with similar intakes. NCEA rankings unfairly stigmatise as failures schools with students from low socioeconomic communities, while schools with affluent students sometimes earn undue praise.

  Parents deserve transparent information about the quality of schools, and schools need better comparative data to support their improvement strategies.

RECOMMENDATION 1: The government should implement a fairer measure of school success that considers differences in intake and compares similar schools.

RECOMMENDATION 2: ERO should explicitly report a school's performance relative to schools educating similar cohorts.

- The national teacher appraisal approach is laudable in principle: It focuses on improvement and professional accountability; authorises school leaders to structure appraisals to suit needs; and encourages teachers to provide evidence of their impact on student outcomes. However, this approach does not require teachers to be appraised on their measurable impact on student achievement compared to other teachers teaching similar students. In this manner, as is the case with existing crude indicators of school success, good teachers with challenging cohorts can look ineffective if their students do not meet national achievement targets.

RECOMMENDATION 3: The government should introduce a teacher appraisal framework that better recognises, develops and supports great teachers; explicitly links teacher input to student achievement; and recognises that every class is different.

RECOMMENDATION 4: The government should require persistently poorly performing schools to provide anonymised class information to the Ministry, and in return receive information about their teaching quality.

RECOMMENDATION 5: Schools wanting to promote teachers into Communities of Learning lead roles should demonstrate how these teachers have measurably influenced student outcomes.

New Zealand is well placed to make these changes, at least in the last three years of high school. We have data collated by Statistics New Zealand on student and family characteristics to better measure school performance. But because parents, principals and boards do not know it can be done, nobody demands it.

- True to New Zealand's self-managed school landscape, the government largely lets school boards and principals get on with leading their schools. However, in other respects, school leaders can be hamstrung by bureaucratic restrictions; for example, the Ministry prescribes how school leaders should spend parts of their teaching resource budgets.

RECOMMENDATION 6: Effective leaders should be trusted as true professionals and granted total budget autonomy to lead their schools.

- The government has failed to ensure a responsive and accountable system for too many students. At June 2015, about 8% of schools (185) had failed to meet ERO's performance review benchmarks; one-third were in this category for at least the second time in a row; and 20 had performed poorly for an average of eight years despite statutory interventions. The 20 schools serve thousands of students who may never experience learning in an effective school.

RECOMMENDATION 7: The Ministry, with ERO, should systematically analyse school interventions to determine what has worked for which challenges, and why, to inform future interventions.

RECOMMENDATION 8: The government needs an alternative and collaborative improvement framework to better support persistently low performing schools. This could include facilitating exemplar schools to share their expertise by formally combining several school boards, and encouraging the non-government sector to participate in education provision through school governance.

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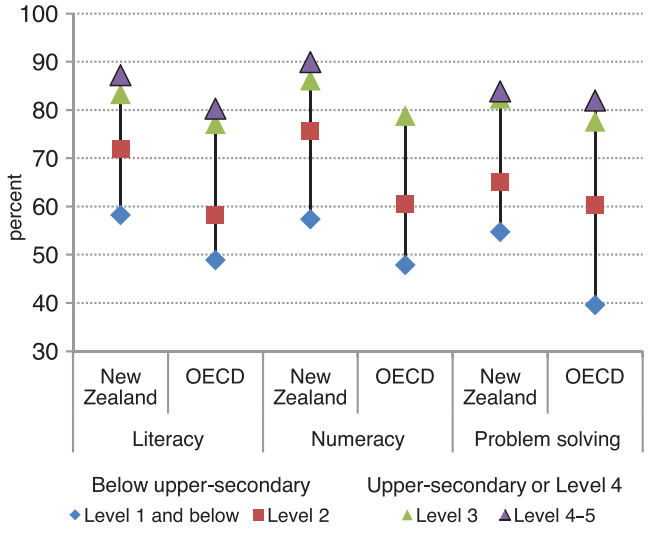
INTRODUCTION
THE STATE OF OUR SCHOOLS

> ... we must tackle long-standing differences between students and schools that are performing well and those that are not and continue to raise the quality of education excellence for all. This is New Zealand's achievement challenge ... .
>
> — Hekia Parata[4]

Most parents want their children to attend good schools; most teachers are keen to teach; and most citizens know education contributes to a cohesive society. We therefore ask much of our schools – for our students.[5]

Figure 1: Employment rates of 25- to 44-year-olds by proficiency (2015)



Source: Survey of Adult Skills, cited in Ministry of Education, "How Does New Zealand's Education System Compare?" OECD's Education at a Glance 2016 (Wellington: Ministry of Education, 2016).

School leavers need to be well equipped to adapt to a fast-paced, rapidly evolving, and globally competitive job market and dramatic technological advances. A high quality school education bestows on our youth a passport to a bright future. Education contributes to a range of individual and social benefits. For example, adults with higher literacy, numeracy and problem-solving skills report better health, higher political efficacy, and more trust in others than adults with lower proficiency.[6]

The reverse is also true: Failure in primary and secondary school can limit the prospects of young adults. It shows in low participation and completion rates in post-school training, and in high levels of unemployment.

Figure 1 illustrates the sizeable gaps in employment by proficiency level: There are almost 30 percentage points fewer employed adults with 'Level 1 and below' literacy[7] than those with 'Level 3.' The difference is just above 30 percentage points for numeracy, and around 25 in problem solving.

A longitudinal New Zealand study found a similar story. David Fergusson, Nicola Swain-Campbell, and L. John Horwood monitored the long-term outcomes of 1,625 Kiwis from birth to age 21. They found that those who left high school without qualifications were more likely to be nicotine dependent, unemployed, and welfare dependent at age 21.[8]

4 Ministry of Education, "Statement of Intent 2014–2018" (Wellington: New Zealand Government, 2014).

5 This report focuses on state and state-integrated schools but the issues raised and the solutions discussed could very well apply to other forms of schooling in New Zealand.

6 OECD, "Skills Matter: Further Results from the Survey of Adult Skills" (Paris: OECD Publishing, 2016).

7 That is below a NCEA 2 or equivalent Year 12 qualification. See Survey of Adult Skills, cited in Ministry of Education, "How Does New Zealand's Education System Compare?" OECD's Education at a Glance 2016 (Wellington: Ministry of Education, 2016).

8 David M. Fergusson, Nicola Swain-Campbell, and L. John Horwood, "Outcomes of Leaving School Without Formal Educational Qualifications," *New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies* 37:1 (2002), 39–55.

PERFORMANCE AT A GLANCE

In New Zealand, the state is the principal provider of compulsory education, with 95% of students attending state or state-integrated schools.[9]

But how good is the state at providing education? Crucially, what reforms is the state prepared to adopt to fix failing schools? These are the questions The New Zealand Initiative seeks to answer in its 'better education' research stream.

New Zealand serves most students well. For decades, Kiwi students have been among the best performers in international rankings;[10] more students are staying in school;[11] and national assessments show more students are leaving school with qualifications.[12]

But there are pockets of underperformance that need attention. There is the decline in international rankings – with Year 5 students performing worse than all other English-speaking countries;[13] the increasing proportion of students struggling with basic test questions and the notable gap between high and low achievers;[14] too many unqualified students; and the persistent poor performance of too many schools.[15]

Between 2009 and 2015, at least 20% of students left school without a Level 2 National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA 2), which is a bridge to further training and employment.[16] More troubling is that students from low socioeconomic status families are likely to perform worse than their peers, and comprise the bulk of those not meeting national targets. In 2015, 35% of Maori and 26% of Pasifika students left school without NCEA 2, compared to 15% of Pakeha/European and only 9% of Asian students. The same year saw a 27-percentage point gap between students leaving with NCEA 2 from deciles 1–2 (65%) and deciles 9–10 (92%).[17] Year after year, international tests show the effect of socioeconomic factors on the performance of New Zealand students is above the OECD average.[18]

The Initiative's report on school performance, *Signal Loss*, also highlighted worrying trends at the school level. In 2015, the Education Review Office (ERO) found about 8% of schools were poor

9 New Zealand Now, "The school system," Website (New Zealand Immigration).

10 Education Counts, "PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) 2015," Website.

11 Education Counts, "Retention of students in senior secondary schools," (Wellington: Ministry of Education, 2016).

12 Ministry of Education, "Annual Report 2016 for the Year Ended 30 June 2016" (Wellington: New Zealand Government, 2016), 7, 10 and 17.

13 TIMSS 2014 results show that performance in maths and science for primary and lower secondary school students remains largely either below or on par with the international centrepoint. Only Year 9 performance in science was above the centrepoint, but both year levels have not significantly improved from the previous decline. Education Counts, "TIMSS (Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study) 2014/15" (Wellington: Ministry of Education, Various).

14 The differences in maths performance between students from affluent families and from disadvantaged families, with the latter performing worse, was one of the highest in the study. Ibid. PISA results from 2015 too showed that Kiwi 15-year-olds have not improved since the previous testing cycle; New Zealand now has more students who can complete only relatively basic maths questions (22%) compared to the 15% when the test first begun in 2003. Education Counts, "PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) 2015,"op. cit.

15 In the Initiative's analysis of ERO's school reviews, we found some schools had remained poor performers despite government intervention, in some cases for decades. See Martine Udahemuka, "Signal Loss: What We Know About School Performance," op. cit.

16 NCEA is the main qualification at secondary school and is obtained through a combination of internal and external assessments. There are three levels to NCEA level and are typically acquired in Years 11, 12, and 13 respectively.

17 Education Counts, "NCEA Level 2 or above numbers (2009–2015)," Website.

18 Education Counts, "PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) 2015," op. cit.

performers, had no internal capacity to make sustained improvements, and needed external intervention. Of these schools, one-third had been in the same predicament in the review immediately prior, and 20 of these had been poor performers for an average of eight years. Seventy-five percent of the persistently poorly performing schools were deciles 1–3.[19]

A similar pattern was evident for the most serious cases of school failure. Where the Education Secretary or the Education Minister (the Minister) have reasonable grounds to believe that the wellbeing and education of students and the operation of schools are at risk, and that other interventions have been ineffective, they can apply statutory intervention at the board level. *Signal Loss* found that in October 2015, there were 67 schools under statutory interventions and 51% of students in these schools were in deciles 1–3.[20]

In his 2014 analysis of secondary schools, Bali Haque[21] concluded: "It is this *equity gap* [that] presents any current or future New Zealand government with its most serious and persistent educational, social and economic problem."[22] [emphasis in original]

Among other factors, a mother's qualification, a parent's employment status, and a student's ethnic background can explain the differences between high and low achieving students. For example, the Ministry of Education (the Ministry) found that out of 7,000 students at risk of poor high school outcomes, 87% had a primary caregiver with below NCEA 1; 84% had parents or caregivers on a benefit; and 63% were Maori.[23] However, a student's individual and family circumstances are not excuses for low expectations.

We should expect schools serving comparable students to perform similarly. Regrettably, Chapter 2 shows sizeable variances between schools teaching students from similar communities, most likely due to differences in the quality of school governance, leadership and teaching. *This* is the gap that should concern New Zealand.

A FAIR GO IS NOT LIMITED BY MONEY, SOCIAL STATUS, OR ETHNICITY

In 2016, the Auditor-General reported substantive differences in how similar schools support Maori students. The most successful small decile 2 school had about 95% of its Maori students leave school with an NCEA 2 compared to the least successful secondary school, with just under 40% (see Figure 2).[24]

The report concluded that better performing schools were more likely to conduct detailed analyses of successful students and discover the 'story behind the data.'

The lower the school decile, the more likely its students are from poorer neighbourhoods. Even so, a school's decile need not reflect its quality of teaching and learning. Indeed, many school leaders and teachers are moving mountains to help students overcome the disadvantages with which they begin school.

One such school is Massey High, a large multicultural school in West Auckland. It teaches about 2,000 students, with 45% identifying as Maori or Pasifika, 39% as European, and 12% as Asian. The school is a decile 4 but its academic achievements belie its decile. The school prides

19 Martine Udahemuka, "Signal Loss: What We Know About School Performance," op. cit.

20 Ibid.

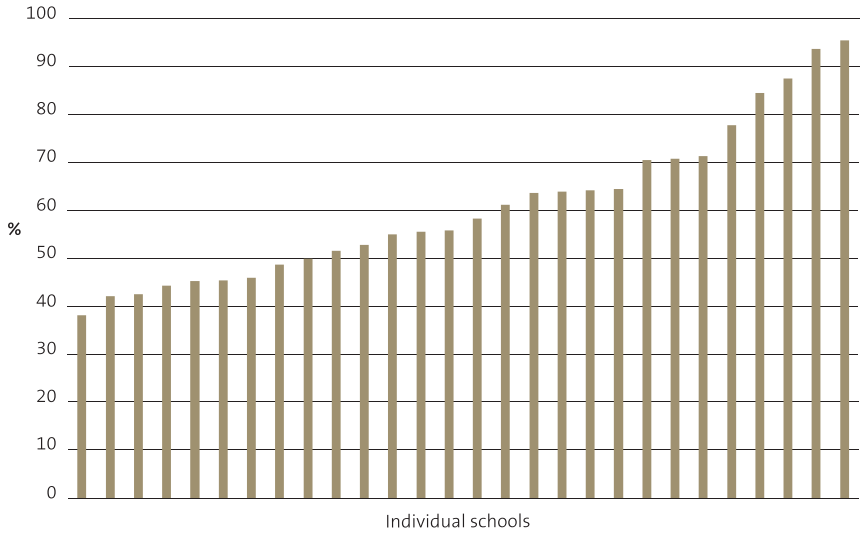
21 Bali Haque is a former principal, teachers' union leader, and executive of the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA).

22 Bali Haque, *Changing Our Secondary Schools* (Wellington: NZCER Press, 2014), 4.

23 Information released by the Ministry of Education under the *Official Information Act 1982* (25 February 2016).

24 Controller and Auditor-General, "Education for Māori: Using Information to Improve Māori Educational Success" (Wellington: New Zealand Government, 2016).

Figure 2: Maori students 'at or above' average NCEA 2 results, decile 2 small secondary (2014)



Source: Controller and Auditor-General, "Education for Maori: Using Information to Improve Maori Educational Success" (Wellington: New Zealand Government, 2016), Figure 9. *Note: Schools with fewer than 30 Maori students were excluded.*

itself as the "evidence hub for other schools country-wide,"[25] and ERO agrees: "The school is viewed by New Zealand's educational sector as a school with a national profile in research-based initiatives that make a difference for learners."[26]

How does Massey do it?

The school's leaders had been concerned about low completion rates in NCEA Level 1. But there was a gap in the Ministry's guidance for schools for setting academic targets. To address this, in 2004 Massey developed the Academic Counselling and Target Setting Intervention to track the outcomes of students at risk of underachievement. Data from each student's performance was used to set academic targets, and students received regular academic counselling sessions with teachers, deans and parents. According to Samantha Smith, an associate principal, who developed the initiative, "The targets were internally generated and based on the achievement data from the actual cohort of students within the school, rather than being based on aspirational educational requirements driven by government without consideration of the school's student population." Students were set challenging goals based on the performance of the top students with the same characteristics. In this way, the programme aimed to shift students' motivation from 'counting credits' to aiming for higher standards.[27]

The intervention programme vastly improved student achievement. In 2004, only 50% of students left school with at least an NCEA Level 1 certificate; by 2015, the figure was an impressive 93%. In fact, it was seen as such a success that the University of Auckland, which supports schools in the Auckland region to improve, asked to partner with Massey High to introduce the programme in other schools.

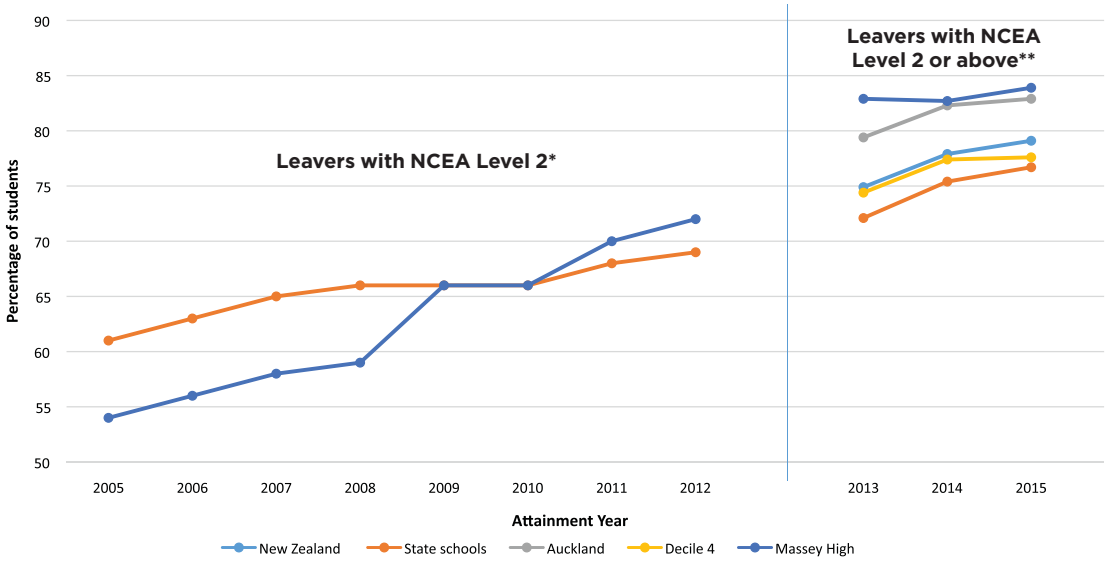
NCEA 2 pass rates rose from 54 in 2005 to 72 in 2015. The national averages were 61 and 69, respectively (see Figure 3). Massey is not only a star within schools of the same decile, but its results are also remarkable compared to other school groups. The school graduates a higher proportion of students with at least an NCEA 2 than the average

25 Massey High School, Auckland, Personal visit (July 2015).

26 Education Review Office, "Massey High School: Report 30/06/2014," Website.

27 Samantha Lynn Smith, "Academic Target Setting: Formative Use of Achievement Data." Ph.D. thesis (Auckland: the University of Auckland, 2009).

Figure 3: Massey High School: NCEA Level 2 results (2005–2015)



Sources: *Data received from Massey High School, May 2017 **Education Counts, "Massey High School, NCEA Level 2," Website.

across decile 4 schools, Auckland schools, state schools, and nationally.[28]

Massey High's journey is a credit to superb leaders and teachers. The current principal, Glen Denham, cites the previous principal's focus on evidence-based practices. Denham also believes in looking beyond one's school gates for solutions. He applies lessons learnt from his previous role turning around London's lowest performing schools and from other New Zealand principals facing similar challenges.[29]

Massey High shows the possibilities of achieving excellent standards even when the odds are against the school community. The Auditor-General's report highlights many other schools that have not let the bigotry of low expectations stand in their way.

Unfortunately, it is unclear which schools are helping students achieve their potential and just how far we are from achieving the Kiwi dream of 'giving everyone a fair go.' This is because headline attainment results do not acknowledge differences in student circumstances. It is thus a challenge to identify early schools and teachers at risk of underperformance to offer them support and to pinpoint effective practice to scale it up.

Chapter 1 briefly describes the context within which schools operate.

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28 Education Counts, "Massey High School, NCEA Level 2," Website.

29 Glen Denham, Massey High School principal, Personal interview (July 2016).

CHAPTER ONE
THE POLITICS AND ECONOMICS OF EDUCATION

> The quality of our schools reflects the quality of our educational policy. What they are able to achieve is not just a matter of desire and effort on the part of teachers and principals. Good policy needs to ensure that our educators have frameworks that allow them to use knowledge well, and connections that ensure they have the capability that is needed.
>
> — Cathy Wylie[30]

The late 1980s saw sweeping reforms of public services in New Zealand. Education was transformed from state controlled to one of community-managed schools.[31]

The consensus was the system was not delivering, particularly for Maori students. Labour Prime Minister David Lange commissioned a report (the Picot report – *Administering for Excellence*) to investigate the factors contributing to poor educational achievement. The report found the sector was over-regulated and heavily bureaucratic, particularly in staffing, property management, and teaching resources. Schools reported time-consuming administrative processes and that hiring staff and performance management needed input from the Department of Education and school inspectors – meaning key decisions could take months.[32]

The government responded to the Picot report with the *Tomorrow's Schools* policy in 1988. The policy aimed to reduce frustrations and increase efficiency by handing over most of the power and responsibility for driving academic standards to parent-led boards and principals. In just over a year, New Zealand had one of the most decentralised school systems in the world.

Some of the goals of *Tomorrow's Schools* were laudable:

- Schools would be accountable to a charter (or performance contract);
- Parents would sit on school boards and have more say in their children's learning;
- Boards and principals would have governance and management autonomy;
- Parents would receive information on school performance;
- School zones would be removed to give parents more choice; and
- The Department of Education would be restructured to have fewer bureaucrats.

Reformers assumed devolution would encourage innovation to suit local needs and, in return, boards would be accountable for learning outcomes. Accountability was supposed to work the way self-regulation works in other sectors – providers either improve or close – and self-managed schools would improve or lose students.

Unfortunately, many of the policy goals were not adopted, upheld or supported. In many respects, the system has reverted to pre-1990 era.

30 Cathy Wylie, "Vital Connections: Why We Need More Than Self-Managing Schools" (Wellington: NZCER, 2012), 15.

31 This chapter in no way aims to cover the breadth of the *Tomorrow's Schools* policy. Instead it provides a brief background of its context, goals, and shortcomings. For a detailed history, see Cathy Wylie's work.

32 Ibid.

TOMORROW'S SCHOOLS TODAY: HALF-WAY REFORMS

The reforms that largely began in 1989 were worthy in principle but poor in execution.

To begin, the school charter remains but resembles a planning and reporting mechanism rather than a contract between schools and the Crown to deliver outcomes, as initially intended. Schools set achievement targets at the start of the academic year and provide reasons for any variance at the end of that year.[33] The Ministry guidelines to school boards for developing charters say, "As boards of trustees you are accountable for the performance of your school". Yet the documents do not outline how the charter process enhances accountability. Indeed, the Initiative's previous work found schools can remain open for many years even if they perform poorly, and there are no alternatives when the government's own interventions have been unsuccessful.[34]

Second, local innovation and management autonomy remain stifled by bureaucratic and legislative rules. For example, collective agreements between the Ministry and unions place restrictions on the decisions school leaders can make about staff hiring, progression and remuneration. Additionally, leaders now face more constraints in budget management compared to the flexibility that had been granted to them in 1991.[35]

Encouragingly, since the reforms, parents have been formally incorporated in the governing of schools through boards. However, while parents receive much better information on individual school performance compared to 30 years ago, it is not enough. Parents' voice can still be limited by the type of information they have on the quality of schools, and the limited options available to them to affect improvements. *Signal Loss* discussed the inaccuracy of publicly available data on school quality from the Ministry and ERO. The former provides school level results on year-end attainment (e.g. how many students achieved NCEA), but does not contextualise school attainment with comparable schools. Consequently, ERO's reviews emphasise the non-contextualised attainment results, which means schools can be misjudged. Finally, for parents unfamiliar with ERO's reporting, its review reports do not always make explicit how a school is performing.[36]

Getting a place in a school of choice for some parents can still be restricted by the Ministry's reintroduction of enrolment zones. And matters may worsen. Instead of developing mechanisms for popular schools to respond to student demand, the *Education (Update) Amendment Act 2017* (the Act) empowers the Ministry to force schools to establish an enrolment zone where schools refuse to or are slow to do so. The Ministry acknowledges that the change will affect parents who want an exemption for their child, but maintains that overriding enrolment schemes will only occur in exceptional circumstances.[37] Enrolment schemes help the Ministry efficiently manage resources such as the use of space in all schools, but the policy inadvertently disadvantages and disempowers parents, especially as there are few alternatives.

Economist Caroline Hoxby says a well-run accountability system is one that provides:

> … information for teachers and principals who need to diagnose their students' progress, information that gives schools incentives to perform, information for parents who need to make choices among schools, and information on the degree to which schools are teaching the material that their constituents (parents, voters, school boards, legislators) want them to teach. In fact, school accountability programs are generally seen as complementary to other types of school reform.[38]

33 Ministry of Education, "Help with developing your planning and reporting documents," Website.

34 Martine Udahemuka, "Signal Loss: What We Know About School Performance," op. cit.

35 Bali Haque, Changing Our Secondary Schools, op. cit.

36 Martine Udahemuka, "Signal Loss: What We Know About School Performance," op. cit.

37 Ministry of Education, "Ed Act Update: Improving the management of enrolment schemes," Website.

38 Caroline M. Hoxby, "The Cost of Accountability," NBER Working Paper No. 8855 (2002).

The New Zealand education system still has a way to go before it can be regarded as the system Hoxby refers to. In its stewardship role, the Ministry needs to be better at collecting, collating and disseminating performance information about the quality of teaching and learning to parents and schools. Inadequate information weakens opportunities for improvement.

The *Tomorrow's Schools* reformers had expected that structural changes would lift achievement, but the changes needed matching capacity development to give the new school boards and principals the skills and knowledge needed to run a school. In the end, devolution led to diminished government support for schools, and opponents blamed the policy for worsening school outcomes.[39] Inexperienced and isolated school boards and principals – usually in low decile communities – were the worst placed to compete and they suffered the most. Once these schools were seen as failures, those parents who could took their children (and the per-student funding) to other schools, making it harder for underperforming schools to teach the remaining students. Hence, the vicious cycle of school decline continued. As outlined in *Signal Loss*, lower decile schools with weak review processes continue to be in the greatest need of timely support.[40]

Cathy Wylie, who has widely published on the outcomes of *Tomorrow's Schools*, cites the lack of central support for school leaders as a key contributor to school failure:

> New Zealand does not have the pressure-support fulcrum in the right position either to keep schools from falling into chronic low performance or to make major gains at a national level. [41]

The Ministry talks of the challenges involved in knowing when to offer support.[42] Several principals interviewed for this series said the Ministry intervenes too late, whereas others said the Ministry is too heavy-handed in telling schools what to do.[43] Perhaps this is another indication of the Ministry's lack of accurate and consistent measures of school performance, and consequently it intervenes too early or too late.

What should have been the greatest strength of the autonomous model has likely been its greatest weakness, at least in execution. The late 1980s reforms did not provide any formal mechanism for schools to form groups and share resources and expertise under a formal network. The result has been a cottage industry, with each school having to survive on its own.

When former Minister Hekia Parata introduced what is now the *Education (Update) Amendment Act 2017*, she recognised this shortcoming and wanted to rectify "... the atomised nature of our schools where it is literally every school for themselves; and the equity-excellence gap between those who do well and those who do not."[44] She also said that despite pockets of outstanding practice, the system and the sector have failed to spread these. The Initiative's research recommends ways to fix this.

39 Sue Watson, David Hughes, and Hugh Lauder, "'Success' and 'Failure' in the Education Marketplace: An Example from New Zealand," *Journal of Educational Change* 4:1 (2003), 1–24.

40 Education Review Office, Personal discussion (2015).

41 Cathy Wylie, "Challenges Around Capability Improvement in a System of Self-Managed Schools in New Zealand" (Wellington: NZCER, 2012), 9.

42 Ministry of Education, Personal interview (August 2015).

43 School principals, Personal meetings (August 2015–March 2016).

44 Office of the Minister of Education, "Update of the Education Act 1989," Cabinet Paper (Wellington: New Zealand Government, nd).

THIS REPORT

OECD research shows almost all high-performing systems using common strategies to drive performance.[45] First, real school autonomy and parental choice are necessary. Letting school leaders rather than bureaucrats manage school resources, and letting parents choose schools, works best. Second, the best performing international education systems understand the value of effective teachers and leaders, so they attract, develop and retain the most talented people. Lastly, performance data must be transparent and easily accessible. This does not mean collecting more data, but better use of existing data to diagnose underperformance early, to communicate the quality of schools, and to evaluate the outcome of interventions.

This series lays the foundation for The New Zealand Initiative's next research programme, guided by lessons learnt internationally, to improve access to a quality education.

The remainder of the report outlines the first steps towards creating a transparent, professional and supportive system that:

- swiftly and accurately assesses school success and identifies schools at risk of underperforming (Chapter 2);
- accurately identifies, recognises and retains great teachers (Chapter 3);
- grants school leaders real autonomy to lead (Chapter 4); and
- is responsive and accountable to students and their parents, and proactively deals with failing schools (Chapter 5).

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45 OECD, "PISA 2012 Results: What Makes Schools Successful?" Vol. IV (Paris: OECD Publishing, 2013).

CHAPTER TWO
A FAIRER MEASURE OF SCHOOL SUCCESS

> Changing what happens in the hearts [and] minds [...] of children – the main charge of any school system – is no simple task. That some do so successfully while others do not is indisputable. So why is it that some school systems consistently perform better and improve faster than others?
>
> — McKinsey and Co.[46]

RECOMMENDATION 1: The government should implement a fairer measure of school success that considers differences in intake and compares similar schools.

RECOMMENDATION 2: ERO should explicitly report a school's performance relative to schools educating similar cohorts.

Academic achievement is one of the many benefits of attending primary and secondary school. This chapter outlines what success looks like against current indicators, discusses the limitations of these measures, and proposes a fairer measure of success.

Indicators of school success are driven by national goals. Under the Better Public Services (BPS) goals set in 2012, the Key Government wanted at least 85% of all 18-year-olds to have an NCEA Level 2 or equivalent by 2017.[47] Having students leave school with at least that qualification then became the focus of secondary schools.[48] Results from 2016 have not been finalised but the Ministry has estimated a 85.2% result based on trends from previous years.[49]

In addition, but not defined as a BPS target, Parata expected 85% of primary students to be 'at' or 'above' National Standards in maths, reading and writing by 2017.[50] Results against this target have not been published yet. Interestingly, in May 2017, the government announced as a BPS goal that at least 80% of Year 8 students should be 'at' or 'above' the National Standards in maths and writing by 2021, but the reason for the lower standard is not clear.[51]

At the end of every academic year, the Ministry publishes individual school outcomes and national results against these targets. But these headline indicators do not reflect a school's effectiveness relative to similar schools.[52]

In his critique of National Standards, where students are judged by how far they are from expected proficiency by year level, John Hattie says, "Using "years" presumes all students of the same age year can perform, can gain, can move towards the same expectation."[53] It is worth adding 'at the same

46 McKinsey and Co. "How the World's Best Performing Systems Come Out on Top" (2007).

47 Ministry of Education, "Better Public Services," Website.

48 Education Counts, "More young people with NCEA Level 2," Website.

49 Ibid.

50 Ministry of Education, "Statement of Intent: 2014–2018," op. cit. 4.

51 State Services Commission, "Better Public Services: Strong Foundation for Work & Life" (2017).

52 "Ambitious for New Zealand: The Ministry of Education Four Year Plan 2016–2020" (Wellington: New Zealand Government, 2016). To be clear, the Ministry's reference to progress (see page 12) relates to changes from year to year. Although this is an important indicator, it does not demonstrate the progress of schools when compared to the progress of similar schools.

53 John Hattie, "National Education Standards for New Zealand: A Research Agenda," Speech to the Symposium on Assessment and Learner Outcomes (Wellington: 2011).

pace' at the end of Hattie's statement, and the same applies to high school. A year's worth of learning for one student can differ considerably from another student with different baseline circumstances.

Parents want information that help them compare schools. A 2012 *New Zealand Herald* poll found 59% respondents approved of the publication of school league tables.[54] But can parents easily tell whether a school with 60% of students leaving without NCEA 2 is necessarily a tragedy?

TRIUMPH OR TRAGEDY?

National Standards judgments, NCEA results, and school deciles are inaccurate but widely used indicators of school performance. Once the Ministry releases school results, national and regional newspapers (including *Stuff* and *Metro*) usually publish them in a league table, including decile numbers. For example, *Metro* published until 2015 secondary schools results in its annual 'Best Schools in Auckland' coverage.[55] This ranking showed private schools and decile 7–10 state schools as having disproportionately fewer school leavers without a qualification compared to decile 1–3 schools. Most real estate agents also mention decile number in their marketing material to entice parents looking for the 'best' school.

It is also possible ERO reviews are unintentionally biased towards schools in the lowest deciles. These schools make up the majority of the poorly performing schools in ERO's books *and* typically have fewer students meeting national targets compared to higher decile schools.

Until early 2016, ERO's reviews reflected how leadership, governance and curriculum management contributed to schools meeting national academic targets.[56] ERO has since changed its focus to understand how schools progress students, starting with how "effectively [primary schools focus] on improvement and accelerated student achievement."[57] The agency says: "Accelerated achievement has been defined as a student making more than one year's learning progress, over the course of a year, on a trajectory that indicates they will be achieving at or above the required standard at the end of Year 8 or sooner."[58]

Language about 'progress' has become commonplace in the Ministry, ERO and schools, but it is too focused on arbitrary national attainment targets.[59] Without a robust measure of expected outcomes, how do we know if the new 80% National Standards BPS target is too low or too high a bar for some schools?

Consider the following by-product of ranking schools against each other on the one-size-fits-all proficiency indicator. A school with a majority of students starting Year 8 three proficiency levels behind in reading breaks its back so its students are one-and-half levels behind a year later. If other schools with students with similar backgrounds manage only half a level of progress, clearly the former school was more effective with these students. Yet, relative to government targets both schools will look unsuccessful. In addition, the crude year-end yardstick may induce schools to put more effort into students closer to national targets at the expense of lower and higher achieving students.[60]

54 Jude Barback, "League Tables: Learning from Experience," *Education Review Series* (2012).

55 Simon Wilson, "The Best Schools in Auckland 2015," *Metro* (4 December 2015).

56 A major source of this information is the Public Achievement Information (PAI), in which the Ministry publishes information about the academic performance of schools.

57 Education Review Office, "2015/16 Annual Report," Website.

58 Ibid.

59 Ministry of Education, "Four Year Plan: 2016–2020," op. cit.

60 Media reports indicate that faced with an 'arbitrary' performance stick, some schools focus on the low-hanging fruit, i.e. students on the cusp of meeting targets, and divert resources to getting those students above the line at the expense of other students. For example, a school admits that to meet government targets: "We're actively targeting individuals that are on the edge, trying to bump them over." Catherine Woulfe, "Every single one," *New Zealand Listener* (28 August 2014). Schools are encouraging students into easier pathways towards a qualification. Kirsty Johnston, "NCEA: The only brown kid in the room," *The New Zealand Herald* (26 September 2016).

The move towards progress is laudable but problematic. Students do not leave their 'home and individual baggage' at the school gate. It is crucial to understand how much progress students can be expected to make in order to judge whether the progress made is enough. It is possible that three months worth of progress in a year is a triumph for schools with students starting miles behind other intakes.

The public outlets (Ministry information, ERO reports, media league tables, and real estate ads) likely misinform rather than inform parents about school quality.

Admirably, in 2016, *Metro* stopped publishing annual league tables, saying: "We didn't produce a giant table in the schools issue of the magazine this year, as we did in previous years. They're hard to read and can be misleading, and they have also sometimes been missing important data."[61]

Parents deserve transparent information about the quality of schools, and school leaders deserve better comparative performance information from the Ministry.

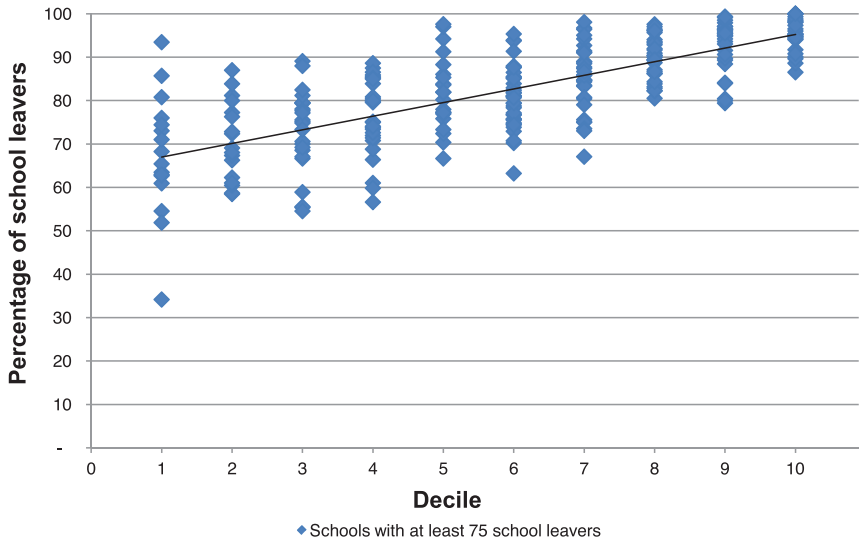
A BETTER YARDSTICK

Measures of school success should show which schools in poorer areas help students achieve their potential, and which in wealthier areas do not push students to potential.

The Auditor-General's 2016 report showed Maori students could experience a vastly different education by switching schools within the same decile. The Ministry's illustration also shows these within-decile differences (Figure 4). Given that schools within the same decile roughly serve students from similar communities, variations in performance likely indicate differences in leadership and teaching quality.

Eric Crampton's 2012 preliminary analysis showed that something other than decile must explain the differences between schools of the same decile. He wanted to check how well a primary school does in maths, reading and writing given its intake and other characteristics. The regressions included several covariates such as decile number, class sizes, ethnicity, co-ed or a boarding school. He found that three factors mattered most: decile (higher deciles typically corresponded with higher pass rates); class size (schools with more students per teacher had higher pass rates); and ethnicity (schools with fewer Maori and Pasifika students

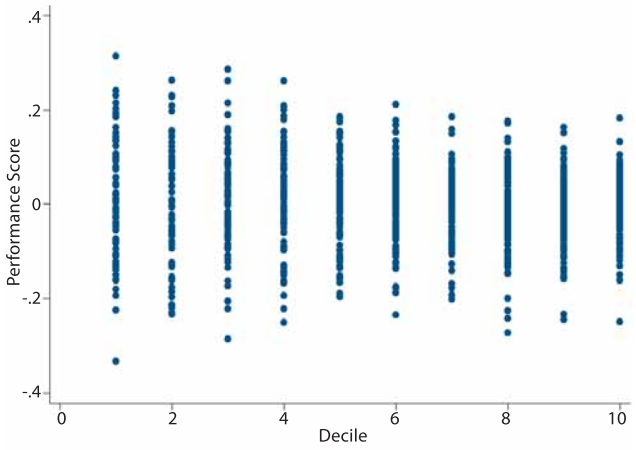
Figure 4: School leavers with NCEA 2 or above, by school decile (2015)



Source: Education Counts, "School leavers with NCEA Level 2 or above," Website.

61 Simon Wilson, "The Best Schools in Auckland 2015," op. cit.

Figure 5: Variance in contextualised school performance (primary schools)



Source: Eric Crampton, "Education regressions," *Offsetting Behaviour*, Blog post (26 September 2012).

had higher pass rates). He then checked whether given these characteristics, schools performed better or worse than expected. The results were revealing (see Figure 5).

> There are decile 1 schools providing pass rates twenty percentage points or more above what we'd expect [and that] there is one decile ten school providing pass rates more than twenty percentage points below what we would expect given its characteristics.[62]

The analysis was done before schools were required to submit results to the Ministry. This could mean that the worst performing schools self-selected out from submitting the information, so variance is likely wider than these preliminary results suggest.

Clearly, contextualised performance provides essential nuance to the landscape of school performance. We propose a contextualised attainment measure to account for differences in school intake.

It is the responsibility of the Ministry, in its stewardship role, to provide accurate, timely and comprehensive comparative information to help schools know how they are doing, and support their improvement strategy. The mechanisms to develop a new measure already exist.

Since 2013, Statistics New Zealand has dramatically improved its ability to link data from government agencies, its own surveys, and other non-government agencies. This information is held in the Integrated Data Infrastructure (IDI) and managed by Statistics New Zealand. It includes NCEA scores; parental income, work history, and education details; criminal records in the family; Child, Youth and Family visits; and other variables that can affect student performance.[63]

IDI is an essential piece in the government's Social Investment Approach to support early and targeted interventions, as well as to better understand how investments in social service help New Zealanders. Finding out how effective schools are at providing education fits this bill, and the Ministry of Education continues to make use of this information to gain insights into the sector. Public sector and independent researchers have taken advantage of the rich dataset to carry out bespoke studies in their fields. There are around 15 projects approved in education, of which more than half are from researchers within the Ministry. The database contains anonymised microdata about people and households, access is granted on a case-by-case basis by Statistics New Zealand. Access to IDI adheres to legislative rules to protect private personal information.[64]

62 Eric Crampton, "Education regressions," *Offsetting Behaviour*, Blog post (26 September 2012).

63 Statistics New Zealand, "Integrated Data Infrastructure," Website.

64 *Statistics Act 1975* and *Privacy Act 1993* require Statistics New Zealand to protect the data. See Statistics New Zealand, "How we keep IDI safe," Website.

Work done in the IDI by the Ministry is a great stride towards better understanding how students from a range of family backgrounds fare in the education system. The Ministry has in fact determined factors or characteristics that likely contribute to student underachievement in a more refined way than the decile system allows (see Box 1).[65]

The analysis was part of the work programme to better target funding; however, the insights can be equally useful to assess school outcomes.

A contextualised measure could be developed in several ways, and a future New Zealand Initiative report will show how to use IDI data to build a measure. In its simplest form, it would require a Ministry data analyst to run statistical analyses to determine the expected outcomes for each school, given the characteristics of students at the beginning of each academic year. At the end of the year, a school's actual outcome would be judged in the context of its expected outcome. This way, a school with 60% of students leaving with NCEA 2 is judged in context – the school has overachieved if the expected rate was 35%; conversely, it has underperformed if the expected rate was 75%. Similarly, if a school was expected to have 98% NCEA 2 graduates, with 40% gaining 'Excellences,' then a 100% graduation outcome with 10% 'Excellences' means the school is not stretching its students to their potential – or is coasting – even if it has exceeded government targets.

Figure 6 illustrates what the current binary 'above' or 'below national targets system looks like. Figure 7 illustrates how a fairer system could look with contextual information.

BOX 1:
RISK FACTORS FOR NOT ACHIEVING NCEA 2

46 This new index was developed using statistical techniques and enables differences in the circumstances of children to be assessed in a fine-grained way. It is made up of a large number of factors, outlined in Table two. These factors are combined in a way that takes account of the interplay between them. The greater predictive power of the index relative to the existing decile mechanism is a result of all these features of the index. The index is also more predictive than the set of four specific factors that was outlined in April 2016.

Table two: Indicators from administrative data ranked in the degree to which they were found to be risk factors for not achieving NCEA Level 2

HIGH MARGINAL CONTRIBUTION	MEDIUM MARGINAL CONTRIBUTION	LOW MARGINAL CONTRIBUTION
1. Proportion of time spent supported by benefits since birth	6. Asian (positive factor)	15. Migrant category/NZ born
2. Child has a CYF notification	7. Youth Justice referral	16. Number of children (mother)
3. Gender	8. Benefit mother unqualified	17. Mother received third tier benefits
4. Mother's age at child's birth	9. Proportion of time spent overseas since birth	18. Most recent benefit male caregiver is not the birth father
5. Father's offending and sentence history	10. Mother's average earned income over the previous 5 years	19. Pacific
	11. Number of addresses in the last 5 years	
	12. Maori	
	13. Country of birth	
	14. Father's average earned income over the previous 5 years	

5 A 'ROC score' is a measure of the accuracy of a set of indicators across a range of cut-off thresholds. The range is from 0.5 to 1.0, with a score of 1.0 meaning perfect accuracy and a score of 0.5 meaning no better than random chance.
6 Long term beneficiary status; Child, Youth and Family finding of abuse or neglect; parental Corrections history, and maternal or primary caregiver educational qualifications.

Source: Office of the Minister of Education, "Review of Education Funding Systems: Update and Next Steps," Cabinet Paper (2016).

Figure 6: Current measure of school performance

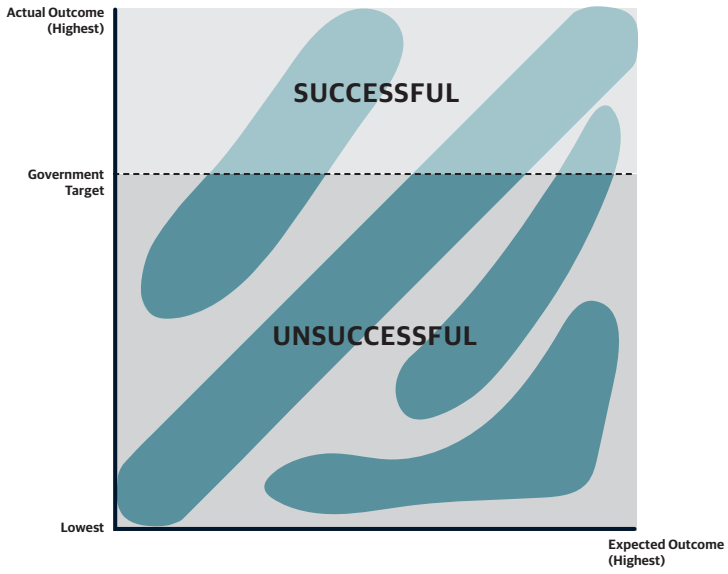
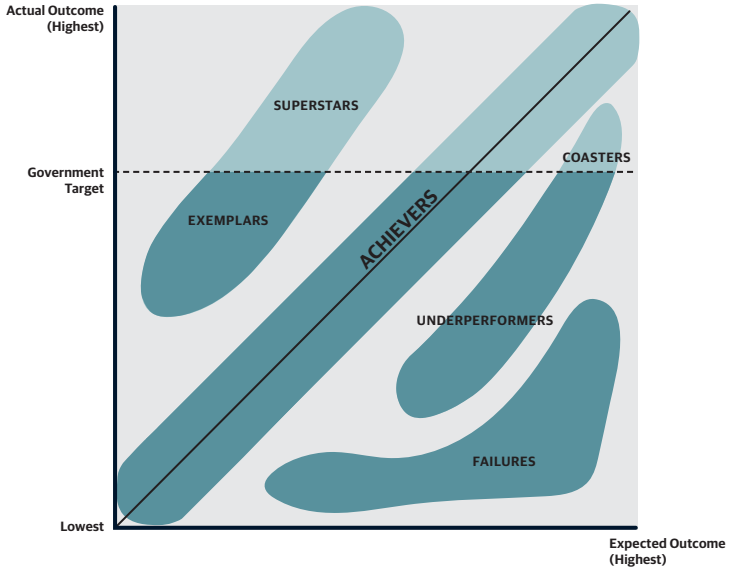


Figure 7: Fairer measure of school performance



65 The factors are based on a predictive model. This means not every child presenting with one or more of these factors will necessarily fail at school, and not every child without these factors will necessarily succeed at school.

The improved measure of success would shift the narrative from schools with the highest attainment rates being necessarily the best, and the ones with lower rates being failures. This would not only redefine what success is, but also help identify earlier struggling schools, including coasting schools. Schools doing a good job, despite low NCEA achievement (e.g the exemplars), would be recognised and encouraged to share their practice with similar profiled schools that are struggling. The improved and transparent measure would empower schools with comparative data, and ineffective boards and principals will need to improve as it will be difficult to hide behind the data.

The improved measure would also support the Ministry's quest to provide better support for schools in difficulty. A key objective for the new provision under the 2017 Act is to:

> … put in place additional interventions to enable faster, more tailored responses when a school is struggling to ensure the achievement of all its children and young people.[66]

Implementing a better measure of school success should be followed by providing better information to parents and schools.

We recommend ERO, as per its role to report on the education of students, adopt a similar reporting approach as England's schools inspector. The Initiative's comparative report on how other jurisdictions manage failing schools, *Fair and Frank,* found that school review reports in England give better information to parents than ERO's reports do (see Figure 8).[67] The New Zealand school reviewer should indicate on the first page of the report where a school sits on

Figure 8: School review reports to parents – England and New Zealand

School report

Ofsted
raising standards
improving lives

St Nicolas' CofE Primary School

Locks Hill, Portslade, Brighton, East Sussex BN41 2LA

Inspection dates	14–15 September 2016
Overall effectiveness	**Good**
Effectiveness of leadership and management	**Good**
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	**Good**
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	**Good**
Outcomes for pupils	**Good**
Early years provision	**Good**
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher provides strong leadership which has steered the ongoing improvements since the previous inspection.
- The school's very strong community and caring ethos underpins all that it does. Parents are highly positive about the headteacher, the staff and the school's work.
- Teaching is good. As a result, all groups of pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics as well as a range of other subjects.
- Teachers plan work which interests pupils. Teachers regularly check the progress that pupils are making. Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and are keen to do well.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is good, largely because they practise the school's values in their daily lives.
- The school's exciting curriculum is broad and balanced and supports pupils' personal development well.
- Staff prioritise the welfare and emotional well-being of pupils. As a result, pupils feel safe and valued.
- Teaching is good in the early years. Children get off to a good start. Staff work well to establish positive relationships with parents, even before children start school.
- The governing body makes a strong contribution to school improvement.

Source: Ofsted, Website.

Aotea College - 11/10/2016

On this page:

Findings
1 Context
2 Learning
3 Curriculum
4 Sustainable Performance
About the School

AOTEA COLLEGE REPORTS
Aotea College - 04/11/2013
Aotea College - 11/10/2016

Findings

NCEA results show ongoing improvements in achievement. Ensuring equity for Māori and Pacific students is a strategic priority. Improving teachers' use of assessment information is an area of focus. The school is well placed to strengthen evaluation practice and continue to build student success.

ERO is likely to carry out the next review in three years.

1 Context

What are the important features of this school that have an impact on student learning?

Aotea College, located in the Porirua City, caters for students in Years 9 to 13. The current roll of 929 includes 30% who identify as Māori, 12% as Samoan and 13% from other Pacific groups.

There have been a number of schoolwide professional development programmes over the past three years. These include Ministry of Education initiatives, Positive Behaviour for Learning (PB4L) and Kia Eke Panuku: Building on Success.

The schools values of and expectations for Manaakitanga, Perseverance, Sauni and Excellence are integral to learning.

Planning is well advanced for the construction of new buildings and facilities over the next 18 to 24 months.

Source: ERO, Website.

66 Ministry of Education, "The Education (Update) Amendment Act 2017," Website.

67 Martine Udahemuka, "Fair and Frank," op. cit. 8, 9.

the fairer measure of performance in Figure 7. Of course, this information is only in relation to academic performance, and ERO should consider a comprehensive scorecard encompassing all the other performance areas it reviews.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

A principal interviewed for *Signal Loss* said she feels her school does a good job with an intake of almost half non-English language students, but "... next to my peers and other schools, my results don't stack up".[68] However, beyond her hunch, she has no accurate data about how her intake fares compared to similar cohorts elsewhere. And, of course, parents cannot tell whether their child would likely thrive in that school versus others.

Excitingly, these insights are more possible with IDI. The Ministry is privy to this information and can better support parents make schooling decisions and schools make teaching decisions – but does not use it in measuring school performance. There is no obvious barrier in the last three years of high school. Other levels would be more challenging as they do not report individual student achievement results to the Ministry.

The government needs to judge school success in the context of relative performance. A measure that takes into account student circumstances is fairer to students and educators.

Chapter 3 proposes a similar framework to recognise, support and retain great teachers.

THE NEW ZEALAND INITIATIVE

68 Primary school principal, Personal interview (August 2015).

CHAPTER THREE
BETTER RECOGNISE GREAT TEACHERS

There is no protection racket occurring in the teaching profession. We want every school and every teacher to be the best possible. It is for this reason that PPTA has advocated, for as long as I have been a member, for policies that enable good practice.

— Jack Boyle[69]

The Post-Primary Teachers' Association (PPTA) president's statement above is sensible. But to enable good practice, it is essential to have a common understanding of what effective teaching practice means. This is the missing piece in New Zealand education.

There is no denying the quality of leaders and teachers is critical to student achievement, and that teachers contribute the most to these outcomes. Family and individual circumstances explain most of the differences in student achievement – but when it comes to the difference schools can make, teachers have the biggest impact.[70]

Teacher unions, policymakers and politicians want initiatives that raise the prestige and quality of teaching. The PPTA says teacher performance and development is an "important element in making our already excellent education system

RECOMMENDATION 3: The government should introduce a teacher appraisal framework that better recognises, develops and supports great teachers; explicitly links teacher input to student achievement; and recognises that every class is different.

RECOMMENDATION 4: The government should require persistently low performing schools to provide anonymised class information to the Ministry, and in return receive information about their teaching quality.

RECOMMENDATION 5: Schools wanting to promote teachers into Communities of Learning lead roles should demonstrate how these teachers have measurably impacted student outcomes.

even better,"[71] and the Ministry's priority under its 2014–18 strategic intentions is to "raise teaching quality and leadership."[72] In its 2016 Future of Work report, Labour said its top priority in education is to "... Create new measures for recruiting, training, and supporting the best teachers,"[73] while National's approach is to "Keep good teachers in the classroom and share expertise across schools with new positions for excellent teachers and principals."[74]

69 Jack Boyle, "Uncovering the truth" Blog post (2 March 2017).

70 For example, John Hattie found that teachers account for about 30% of the variance in student achievement. John Hattie, "Teachers Make a Difference: What is the Research Evidence?" Annual Conference on Building Teacher Quality (Melbourne: Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER), 2003). Robert Marzano concluded a contribution of around 13.34%. Robert J. Marzano, *A New Era of School Reform: Going Where the Research Takes Us* (Aurora, Colorado: Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning, 2000).

71 Post-Primary Teachers' Association, "Quality Teaching for Excellence and Equity: Report from PPTA's Quality Teaching Taskforce" (Wellington: 2012).

72 Ministry of Education, "Statement of Intent: 2014–2018," op. cit.

73 New Zealand Labour Party, "The future of work," Website.

74 New Zealand National Party, "Our 2015 priorities," Website.

These various aspirations are commendable but not enough. The Initiative's previous reports highlighted problem areas about what is known – and unknown – about the quality of New Zealand teachers.[75]

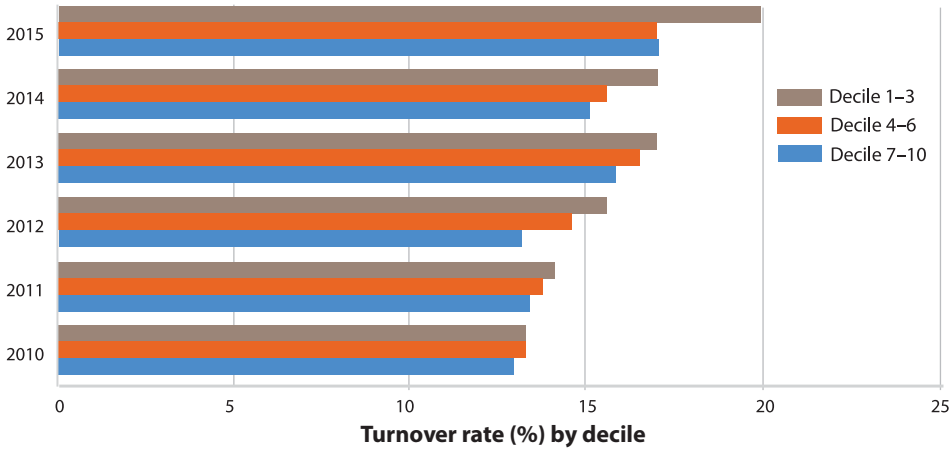
First, there may be a contradiction in judgments of teacher quality and student performance: Sector experts say more than 95% of teachers receive a 'satisfactory' rating every year;[76] yet, every year since 2009, at least 20% of students have left school without completing NCEA Level 2.[77] Encouragingly, the Education Council Aotearoa said these figures are the basis "for much of the discussion on stronger teacher accountability."[78]

While schools are expected to carry out at least one teacher appraisal a year, the quality of these appraisals varies a lot, particularly in relation to how appraisal outcomes link to student outcomes. In 2011, OECD concluded that while New Zealand has well-designed evaluation and assessment frameworks, "policy does not articulate an overall plan, therefore schools could not always see how evaluation and assessment at student, teacher, school, and education system levels are intended to link together and complement each other."[79] In response to these findings, in 2013, ERO reviewed 200 schools and found "... appraisal systems in the majority of schools ... did not contribute sufficiently to improving teacher capability and student outcomes."[80]

A key problem is that the current teacher appraisal framework does not require teachers to demonstrate their impact on achievement. As discussed in Chapter 2, current attainment yardsticks are equally poor measures of teacher quality. There is no national mechanism to measurably isolate a teacher's impact on students' learning from factors outside their control, such as family background or special learning needs.

All the while teacher turnover has increased between 2010 and 2015, and is higher in lower

Figure 9: Teacher turnover, by decile (2010–15)



Source: Based on data received by the author from the Ministry (September 2015).

Note: Turnover is calculated from the change in the number of teachers on permanent contracts from the fourth pay of the tax year and the figure the same time the following year. This means permanent teachers from low decile schools are not moving to higher decile schools permanently.

75 Martine Udahemuka, "Signal Loss: What We Know About School Performance," op. cit. and John Morris and Rose Patterson, "World Class Education: Why New Zealand Must Strengthen Its Teaching Profession" (Wellington: The New Zealand Initiative, 2013).

76 However, the Ministry of Education, the Education Council, and the Post-Primary Teachers' Association could not provide any evidence for this.

77 Education Counts, "School Leaver Qualifications" (Wellington: Ministry of Education, Various).

78 Education Council, Email (8 May 2017).

79 Deborah Nusche, Dany Laveault, John MacBeath, and Paul Santiago, "OECD Reviews of Evaluation and Assessment in Education: New Zealand 2011" (Paris: OECD Publishing, 2012) cited in Education Review Office, "Supporting School Improvement Through Effective Teacher Appraisal" (Wellington: New Zealand Government, 2014).

80 Ibid.

decile schools (see Figure 9) but the Ministry does not systematically analyse whether:

- teachers are going into management or other non-teaching positions within the school;
- teachers are moving from permanent to temporary contracts in the same school or between schools; and/or
- other reasons and trends exist for teacher resignations (e.g. workload, remuneration or development).[81]

How can the government 'raise the status of the profession' if it is not checking whether it is losing its best or worst teachers?

Finally, the framing embedded in collective teacher agreements around pay and progression presumes that qualifications and time served are superior to improving student outcomes. Mandatory teacher appraisals require appraising teaching against two components. The Professional Standards set out in collective agreements are linked with a teacher's progression on the salary scale, and teachers need to satisfactorily meet the registered teacher criteria.[82] Unfortunately, neither component explicitly describes how to measure effective practice in relation to student achievement. There is no aspirational career structure for teachers, since teachers typically progress in a lockstep fashion and the Ministry tells them "[they] will most likely move up one salary step each year until [they] reach a maximum salary step for [their] qualification."[83] Qualifications and teaching experience are important indicators of work ethic, skills and knowledge, but they are no guarantee for competence in the classroom. This means teachers wanting to progress and earn more have had until recent years only one choice: move out of the classroom into management (e.g. as heads of department).[84]

Though the Key Government has shifted the aspirational career narrative to retain exemplar teachers, there remain gaps.

INVESTING IN TEACHERS

The Investing in Educational Success (IES) initiative, introduced in 2014, is the Key Government's flagship policy to lift achievement through incentives for teachers and leaders to share practice.[85] The initiative promotes and financially rewards teachers and principals in leadership roles within and across schools.

Under IES, $359 million was committed to have early learning and tertiary providers, schools and Kura voluntarily join a Community of Learning (CoL) to work on shared educational challenges. IES has established new and aspirational lead teacher roles that enable teachers to work together, share knowledge and experience, and create pathways for career development in a recognised fashion.[86] The PPTA and the New Zealand School Trustees Association have compiled guidelines for appraising teachers for these roles. They include using data in learning outcomes from student achievement, student feedback, classroom observations, personal reflections, peer feedback, evidence teachers create every day in their work, and PLD aligned with teachers' needs.[87]

81 Ministry of Education, Email (October 2015).

82 Education Review Office, "Supporting School Improvement Through Effective Teacher Appraisal," op. cit.

83 Ministry of Education, "Secondary teachers: Pay rises," Website.

84 John Morris and Rose Patterson, "World Class Education: Why New Zealand Must Strengthen Its Teaching Profession," op. cit.

85 New Zealand National Party, "A better education for our children," Website.

86 Ministry of Education, "Ambitious for New Zealand: The Ministry of Education Four Year Plan, op. cit.

87 Post-Primary Teachers' Association and New Zealand School Trustees Association, "Guidelines for appraising Community of School (CoS) leadership and teacher roles," Website.

IES is a step in the right direction, but it has loopholes. For one, while good principals are well placed to know their most effective teachers, effective teachers could be missed by poor principals. Student achievement is understood to mean valued outcomes as set out in the national curriculum – and focused on reaching national targets.[88] Because of this, teachers with students significantly behind their peers – when judged against curriculum and year level expectations – might be overlooked for these new roles, even if the teachers might be helping the students significantly. Second, while the majority of schools are now part of a CoL, the new pathways for teachers are accessible only to teachers in schools that have joined a CoL. Finally, the funding for IES is reserved for about 12% of the teaching workforce.[89] The proportion might sound reasonable, but without a robust measure to unveil how teacher quality is distributed, it is hard to tell if the funded roles are too few or too many.

REDEFINE TEACHER QUALITY

New Zealand needs a teacher appraisal and performance framework that better recognises, supports and retains great teachers, including those with students who struggle to read, write and count at their year level but who make the expected gains from their starting points. In its sector support role, the Ministry should provide data to schools that more accurately shows areas of strength and weakness so teachers can seek necessary support. For example, a teacher may be highly effective with native English speakers but not students with English as a second language. Effective principals may know how good their teachers are, but not necessarily how good they are at the national level.

At the least, in consultation with the sector, the framework needs to:

- recognise the factors teachers have no control over, acknowledge differences between classes, and nationally compare teachers teaching similar students;
- recognise the measurable impact teachers have on student achievement and that it forms part of several other indicators of effective performance; and
- establish a transparent and aspirational career path for all teachers.

Washington, D.C.'s teacher appraisal and performance management system, documented in *Fair and Frank,* provides lessons for our context (see Box 2).[90] Notably, D.C public schools adopted a system in 2009 that, among other performance indicators, included contextualised student achievement as a measure of teacher performance.

This is not to say New Zealand should copy and paste IMPACT; in fact, New Zealand can do a more refined analysis. While IMPACT studies student and classroom differences, IDI enables the inclusion of many more factors that contribute to achievement.

To give individual teachers and school leaders a better national picture of their practice, the Ministry would need to receive class level information from each school to run the analysis. School leaders would only have to tell the Ministry which students share teachers – they need not identify individual teachers.

As part of a supportive performance development system, principals could receive detailed feedback from the Ministry about class level performance to identify and share good practice, support performance improvement, and assign students to teachers best suited to their needs. All the decision-making would be at the school level. Like building a better measure of school success (see Chapter 2), this information would be linked with the student background information already in IDI.

88 New Zealand School Trustees Association, "Community of Learning / Kahui Ako: Recruitment Resources," Website.

89 Cabinet Social Policy Committee, "Investing in Education Success: Design and Implementation," Minute of Decision (2014).

90 Martine Udahemuka, "Fair and Frank," op. cit. Chapter 4.

BOX 2: RAISING THE QUALITY OF TEACHERS IN WASHINGTON, D.C.

Defining, let alone measuring and rewarding, teacher quality is notoriously difficult but Washington, D.C. found a way.

For decades, the District's public school (DCPS) students occupied the last spot on the country's league tables. Parents were increasingly dissatisfied with public schools, leading to the rise of charter schools. By 2007, almost half the public school students had moved to charter schools. If the public school system had not raised standards, they would have likely continued to lose students and teachers in droves.

DCPS leaders focused on raising the quality of teachers as a pillar of school reforms. The first goal was to revamp the archaic appraisal system.

From 2007 to 2009, DCPS leaders, teachers, unions and academics worked on developing a new appraisal tool called IMPACT to give "feedback and support to teachers, differential recognition and compensation, and disciplinary action." Using the tool, which was introduced in 2009 to all DCPS schools, principals assess teachers up to five times a year on the following components:

- **Student progress (or growth)** measures individual value-added. Teachers are appraised on the gains students make given their backgrounds. Differences in class profiles such as the number of economically disadvantaged students in the class are taken into account.
- **Student achievement** measures goals set by the teacher and principal.
- **Classroom practice** measures teacher practice against the framework developed by the District in consultation with teachers that set expectations for good practice.
- **Professional accountability/commitment to school community** measures the level of engagement with other teachers and the school community, including parents.
- **Professionalism** measures against the standards for teacher registration.
- **Student surveys** about their teachers are completed by students once a year.

At the end of each year, teachers are placed in one of five categories: highly effective, effective, developing, minimally effective, and ineffective. Each category represents a unique outcome and teachers progress according to these rankings.

Information from IMPACT provides a basis for decisions previously impossible in DCPS. As in New Zealand, D.C.'s professional development used to be ad hoc and teacher progression was based on seniority rather than explicit contribution to student outcomes. As a result, it was difficult to reward and spread excellence in a way that helped teachers and students.

With IMPACT, the District's leaders can better identify which teachers and students need support. Teachers unable to raise their practice despite support are counselled out of their teaching roles, and better teachers are hired. Not surprisingly, students benefit: New teachers generally provide three months of additional learning in a year in maths.[91]

The system also helps determine the distribution of teacher quality within the District. Initial analyses found more lower-rated teachers in lower socioeconomic schools, leading school leaders to develop strategies to mitigate such risks.

D.C. students are now some of the fastest improving performers in the nation. And teaching is once again the highly valued profession it should be.

Source: Adapted from Martine Udahemuka, "Fair and Frank: Global Insights for Managing School Performance," op. cit.

91 Thomas Dee, Veronica Katz, and James Wyckoff, "Teacher Turnover, Teacher Quality, and Student Achievement in DCPS," NBER Working Paper No. 21922 (2016).

Ministry data analysts could build a predictive model using student and class level factors to determine how students with similar characteristics can be expected to perform. This expected performance would then be compared with year-end performance to establish the impact of teachers. This information is referred to as value-added in educational literature. Of course, like any statistical measure, it will require careful development as the information produced will be only as valid as the validity and reliability of the measure.

These analyses can show teachers who did a great job in lifting the achievement of struggling students, or in helping the most able students reach their potential – all across similar classrooms in the country. Using this information would also show the exemplar and superstar teachers whose students considerably overachieve relative to their expected performance.

Developing the appraisal framework should involve consultation with, and agreement by, teachers and school leaders so all parties are clear about the objectives and decisions that can be based on appraisal information.

There are at least two ways to trial the appraisal framework:

1. High schools that ERO finds failing once, and those coasting or underperforming twice in a row (Figure 7) could be mandated to use the new system.
2. High schools wanting to promote teachers through IES could use the framework.

In Treasury's 2011 advice to the Minister of Finance, advisors noted their scepticism for the role of school competition in improving student outcomes due to the high within-school variance, poor data provision to parents, and the barriers to entry and exit of schools in the New Zealand landscape. But they noted that "Of these limitations, the one concerning poor data is the easiest to overcome".[92] In an Aide Memoire the same year, Treasury recommended that value-added data should be used to measure teacher performance and aggregate value-added data used to improve accountability at the school level.[93] Its advice was adopted – at least as far as agreeing to devise options to appraise teacher impact:

> On 28 September 2011, the Social Policy Committee agreed that the Ministry of Education "develop options for the systemic use of value added data to determine the impact of teacher performance on student outcomes (which could form part of more robust teacher appraisals)" … Value add measurement allows parents to see the effectiveness of schools in improving student achievement (not just their ability to generate raw results). While introducing the use of value add data into the New Zealand schooling system remains a priority for us, we remain cautious about the benefits of making this information public in the form of league tables.[94]

The author has not been able to determine progress on the work of the Social Policy Committee and the Treasury could not comment on its status.[95] In its 2015 advice, the agency said that high-stakes accountability such as league tables based on value-added data could lead to 'compliance, perverse incentives or have a relatively weak link to a focus on improvement'.[96] However, perverse incentives depend on the levers available to schools to 'influence' outcomes rather than the mere creation of a league table.

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92 The Treasury, "Increasing the use of the private sector in schooling," (Wellington: The Treasury, 4 November 2011), 10.

93 The Treasury, "A narrative of schooling", Aide Memoire (Wellington: The Treasury, 26 September 2011), 2.

94 The Treasury, "Increasing the use of the private sector in schooling," op. cit.

95 The Treasury, Email (8 June 2017).

96 The Treasury, "Education Principles to Guide Reform Programme," (Wellington: The Treasury, 23 July 2015), 13.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Raising the quality of teachers is challenging, but most education systems want to recognise and develop excellence and lift the prestige of the profession. It is not enough to invest in sometimes ill-informed professional development or repeat the need to 'recruit, train and retain' good teachers. New Zealand needs to more accurately understand the impact of its teachers on student outcomes.

New Zealand can do so much better for its teachers, and indeed its students. Good teachers risk being overlooked by the current system even if they do a fantastic job. It is not the Ministry's role to manage teachers; however, it is in the schools' (including teachers') interest to know not only how effective teachers are within one school, but also compared to teachers with similar students in other schools.

Imagine if a principal could know that the teacher in room 14 was in the top 10% of teachers, given the students she teaches, and the teacher in room 12 was fantastic with Pasifika students but needs help teaching her Asian students. These differences in performance can only be identified from the Ministry's collation, analysis and provision of data.

Schools teaching the senior years of high school should be encouraged to provide anonymised teacher and student information to the Ministry. The Ministry can in turn analyse and tell schools how their teachers are doing compared to teachers in similar classrooms within and among schools. It should be up to the school leaders to decide how to use that information.

We can do it. We have the data. But because parents, boards or principals do not know it can be done, nobody demands it. Worse still, the fear that performance evaluation would prove to be a blunt tool for blaming teachers for underperforming students, rather than be a critical part of staff feedback and development, makes the sector overly cautious.

The District of Columbia provides an encouraging case study for New Zealand's own challenges. If we are serious about lifting the achievement of all students regardless of background, while also lifting the status of teachers, a teacher appraisal system like that of D.C. would be a decent starting point.

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EDUCATION

CHAPTER FOUR
GIVE SCHOOL LEADERS REAL AUTONOMY

School leaders (boards and principals) are responsible for the learning and teaching in their schools, while adhering to government policies. They also manage complex operations, such as finances, property maintenance, and human resources. Unfortunately, school leaders can be constrained in making decisions by rigid rules set by external parties. To an extent, the Ministry controls how schools manage their budgets, thereby undermining the premise of an autonomous system. This chapter recommends giving school leaders real budget autonomy to manage their teaching resources.

RECOMMENDATION 6: Effective leaders should be trusted as true professionals and granted total budget autonomy to lead their schools.

LIMITED BUDGET AUTONOMY

Schools are funded through an operational grant (cash) and a guaranteed minimum staffing entitlement as teacher salaries paid directly by the Ministry.[97] According to Ministry staff, aside from the Kiwisport activities schools report on, the Ministry's role is to provide funding, not prescribe spending.[98] At first glance, this looks to be the case. For example, schools can use the operational funds to hire more teachers if they surpass their staffing entitlement. Schools can also bank staffing entitlements to use later that year. In addition, up to 10% of unused entitlements can be cashed.

However if a school decides it has all the staff it requires but needs other teaching resources (e.g. laptops), it cannot cash out the balance from the staffing budget beyond the 10%. Any unused staffing funds outside that bracket are lost. Schools can access 'management units,' but the Ministry also ring-fences the funding. For example, instead of giving the schools entitlements in cash, the Ministry allocates several 'units' per year that principals can use to pay extra to specialist teachers or teachers taking on extra duties on a fixed or permanent basis.[99] Schools can use these units only for those specified expenditures. The Ministry thus dictates to an extent how school leaders manage their schools.

Perhaps in recognition of these limitations, in 2016 the Key Government tried to align board responsibility and autonomy, although it was immediately opposed. In its global budget proposal, National said schools should receive a combination of cash and credit funding. The credit component was intended for salaries, but unused credit could be cashed. Salary costs above credit entitlements would be charged to schools. It was assumed that this delivery mechanism would give flexibility for school leaders to choose how they spend the credit to meet their educational achievement challenges. In its proposal, the Ministry said it would have needed to boost financial management capability in schools, and monitor and support schools more to manage their new financial responsibilities.[100]

Unfortunately, but perhaps unsurprisingly, the proposal faced fierce backlash from teachers and unions.[101] Teachers were worried that principals

97 Ministry of Education, "Resourcing," Website.

98 Ministry of Education, Personal meeting (April 2017).

99 TeachNZ, "Teaching in New Zealand," Website (Ministry of Education).

100 Office of the Minister of Education, "Review of Education Funding Systems: Update and Next Steps," op.cit.

101 The New Zealand Education Institute and the Post-Primary Teachers' Association held joint stop-work meetings for up to 60,000 teachers across the country, forcing the government to drop the 'global funding' proposal. See Dan Satherley, "Govt cans school 'global funding' proposal," *Newshub* (18 November 2016).

would make trade-offs between teacher numbers and other needs. The sector was also worried the proposal was a return to the 1991 attempt to bulk fund schools and a Trojan horse aimed at eroding funding.[102]

But if school leaders are trusted professionals, should they not be given complete governing and management autonomy to effect change? Besides, the school landscape today is vastly different to that of the 1990s.

A MISSING LINK IN *TOMORROW'S SCHOOLS*

Between the early 1990s and 2000, one-third of schools from a range of socioeconomic status communities voluntarily signed up to receive their funding in cash. Many schools in the pilot reported positive results, but others struggled to manage their new powers. Unions claimed that bulk funding increased principal workload, and poor financial management resulted in principals arbitrarily deciding to reduce staff numbers. Other principals (typically delegated by boards to manage staff) were wary that firing teachers based on performance could drive a wedge between them and teachers.[103]

Schools teaching about 40% of all students from diverse backgrounds took the option. In 1999, ERO reported that 21% of bulk funded schools had unsatisfactory reviews compared to 32% of centrally funded schools.[104] Unsatisfactory bulk funded schools showed the greatest performance improvement. ERO also found that some schools had had poor financial management before taking up the bulk funded option – and this remained poor under bulk funding.

Perhaps these outcomes were not surprising. Parent-led boards had been in existence for only a couple of years and were still settling into their new roles. Handing out large amounts of funds while dealing with a myriad other changes in the sector understandably put pressure on some boards. Also, the Ministry was figuring out how much hands-on and hands-off support to give schools; as a result, some schools that needed more hand-holding fell through the cracks. In 2000, bulk funding was rolled back and full control for staffing decisions returned to central government due to union boycotting.

This may be why teachers and principals oppose anything that resembles bulk funding.

It is also possible principals viewed the 2016 'global funding' proposal as one giving them more work and responsibility with two possible disadvantages:

- Principals not capable of managing the new responsibility would be shown up as underperforming in this area; and
- Effective principals capable of making necessary financial decisions would have more work and for minimal reward.

But these can be overcome.

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102 Education Review, "Better funding, not bulk funding" (2016).

103 Bali Haque, *Changing Our Secondary Schools*, op. cit.

104 Education Review Office, "Good Practice in Managing the Fully Funded Option" (Wellington: Ministry of Education, 1999), cited in Nick Smith, "ERO report buries myths on bulk funding," Media release (Wellington: New Zealand Government, 4 November 1999).

MOVING FORWARD – ALIGNING RESPONSIBILITY WITH AUTHORITY

It is more than 25 years since the bulk funding pilot. Boards are now a well-established part of the school community, and better placed to manage staffing decisions rather than central government. Boards are also supported by 10 regional centres and the New Zealand School Trustees Association. In addition, the Education Council started the Centre for Leadership Excellence in 2017 to "provide a coherent programme of support for leadership." Until the centre gets up and running, the Ministry has set up coaching and mentoring programmes for school principals at various stages of their career.[105]

The Initiative's comparative international research found that England is ahead of New Zealand in rewarding effective school leaders by affording them greater autonomy. The flexibility to manage their curriculum, school day, and resources has induced schools to maintain or improve their performance. A similar pattern is evident in the United States, where well-run and governed autonomous schools are improving the outcomes of thousands of students.[106] Meanwhile, In New Zealand this level of freedom is currently extended to a few numbered schools. Here, Partnership schools have greater freedoms than mainstream state schools to innovate to suit local needs.[107]

The staffing entitlement makes up about 70% of school funding.[108] Budget autonomy alone does not deliver quality education, but it gives school leaders freedom in how they spend a significant chunk of their budget to affect change.

Greater budget autonomy can be trialled in schools opting-in. Successful mainstream schools could opt to convert into partnership schools at least to take advantage of the financial management freedoms – though union pressure might prevent this.

This could happen in at least two ways. First by schools evaluated by the Ministry and ERO as having effective boards and principals but hamstrung in managing teaching resources in a way that stops them from being more effective for their students. Interested leaders could apply for this flexibility but the quid pro quo would be to revoke the autonomy if the school does not at least maintain its performance. The second is to give *Change Principals*, recruited under the IES programme to turn around struggling schools, the option to receive their teaching resource funding in cash.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

It is intriguing that in a supposedly self-managed and decentralised school system, government manages the most important asset in education: teachers. Officials in remote offices (central government and union headquarters) are making decisions on behalf of leaders accountable for learning outcomes.

Twenty-five years ago, boards and principals were still getting used to their new responsibilities as school managers. Today, as reviewed by ERO, the majority of schools have the internal capacity to lead their schools. Principals with a successful record of school management should be rewarded with more authority to plan their teaching resources to best suit their local needs.

If New Zealand is to stay true to its autonomous education system, we need to take the power from the hands of bureaucrats and teacher representatives, and hand it down to those leading the schools.

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105 Ministry of Education, "Educational Leaders," Website.

106 Merryn Hutchings, Becky Francis, and Philip Kirby, "Chain Effects 2016" (London: The Sutton Trust, 2016) and Center for Research on Education Outcomes, "Charter School Performance in New York City" (Stanford, California: Stanford University, 2013), cited *in* Martine Udahemuka, "Fair and Frank," op. cit.

107 Partnership Schools, "Flexibilities and Freedoms," Website.

108 Office of the Minister of Education, "Review of Education Funding Systems: Update and Next Steps," op.cit.

CHAPTER FIVE
BE RESPONSIVE AND ACCOUNTABLE TO STUDENTS

Embracing failure is a cliché in the business world but is a cliché that makes sense. Allowing people to be open about their own mistakes and tolerant of other's mistakes encourages innovation. Failure provides important feedback to let business owners know when to change course.

The reverse is also true: stigmatising failure can have long-term consequences, even outside the business world. But talk of school failure is almost taboo in New Zealand. A Google search on 'failing schools New Zealand' returns very few results. This is despite one-third of schools not meeting ERO's benchmarks failing to improve by the time ERO returns; and for some schools, failure is entrenched.[109]

Educators and researchers suggest the label of a 'failing' school can lead it to further decline: students leave, teachers and leaders lose morale, and achievement suffers.[110] Underperforming schools need alternative diagnoses and interventions that allow them to swiftly learn from their failure.

Related concerns highlighted in *Signal Loss* are:[111]

- The majority of schools under statutory intervention are in the lowest three deciles.
- Schools under statutory intervention are likely to underperform on more than one aspect of performance and lack the capacity to improve on their own.

RECOMMENDATION 7: The Ministry, with ERO, should systematically analyse school interventions to determine what has worked for which challenges, and why, to inform future interventions.

RECOMMENDATION 8: The government needs an alternative and collaborative improvement framework to better support persistently low performing schools. This could include facilitating exemplar schools to share their expertise by formally combining several school boards, and encouraging the non-government sector to participate in education provision through school governance.

- Unfavourable ERO reviews and plummeting student achievement can initiate discussion and/or intervention, but sometimes this can come too late. Ineffective leaders have weak self-review mechanisms and are least likely to self-identify as needing support.
- Neither ERO nor the Ministry systematically evaluates the outcomes of school interventions to understand what works, what does not, and why.
- When demand exceeds places, the Ministry can "approve any scheme to ensure effective use of all schools in the area" or force schools to create enrolment zones to avoid overcrowding, but provides few alternatives for unhappy parents.[112] Parents who cannot afford to move are forced to remain in a school that does not meet their needs.

109 Martine Udahemuka, "Signal Loss: What We Know About School Performance," op. cit.

110 Cathy Wylie and Linda Mitchell, "Sustaining school development in a decentralised system: Lessons from New Zealand," Paper presented at the International Congress for School Effectiveness and Improvement (Sydney: 5–8 January 2003).

111 Martine Udahemuka, "Signal Loss: What We Know About School Performance," op. cit.

112 Ministry of Education, "Setting up and managing schemes (zones)," Website.

In its 2015 analysis of the status quo, Treasury includes among key challenges of the devolved system: [113]

> Schools often do not face strong competitive pressure because there are often a limited number of schools in their immediate area; parent choice is often constrained by school roll/zoning policy; and there is limited consequence to failure (poor and mediocre schools survive while there are constraints on good schools expanding). Even more importantly, demand for education appears to be relatively non-responsive to quality in terms of achievement (at least above a certain level) with parents often more responsive to crude proxies of quality. This means that there is often no or little incentive for schools to focus their effort on challenging students (either because school rolls can be easily filled with other students or the perceived quality of that school is not impacted by the achievement of those students).
>
> Accountability/governance arrangements have not been effective at driving improvement where it is needed. Not all schools have effective systems to scrutinise and assess their progress against goals. In addition, central government isn't as effective as it could be at performing its 'stewardship' role to monitor and respond to performance issues. The centre only intervenes when schools are 'failing' and interventions have typically focused on finance and property failures rather than achievement.

However, the agency does not propose strengthening competition as a key lever to support learning, but its recommendations include increased consequences for poor performance and greater support for parents' voice.

KNOW WHAT WORKS

An efficient framework for analysing and disseminating information is needed for timely diagnoses. Information needs to flow from the principal up to the board and the Ministry, and from the Ministry back down to the board and principals, and the school community, including parents. Parent-led boards could use this information to voice their concerns. Treasury acknowledges that the 'within school voice' may be more effective than 'between school choice,' so it stresses stronger engagement between parents and schools, and schools' responsiveness to parents.[114] However, fixing the information gap to support parents' voice does not guarantee schools will respond to parental pressure as failing is entrenched in too many schools.[115]

Under Part 7A of the *Education Act 1989,* the Education Secretary or Minister can intervene informally by asking the school to implement an action plan, providing additional funding, or brokering third-party support. If ineffective, the Minister can appoint a temporary statutory manager to take over one or more aspects of the school's operations. At the most serious level, the secretary can appoint a commissioner who assumes all powers of the board. The aim is to intervene no more than necessary but also address risks promptly.[116]

However, *Signal Loss* found that support comes too late for some schools.[117] Of the 67 schools under intervention in 2015, one-third were triggered by an ERO report, one-third from the board, and one-third through the Ministry's other monitoring channels, such as student achievement data or parental complaints. Forty-eight schools with

113 The Treasury, "Education Principles to Guide Reform Programme," op.cit.

114 Ibid.

115 Martine Udahemuka, "Signal Loss: What We Know About School Performance," op. cit.

116 Ministry of Education, "Interventions: Guides for schools," Website.

117 Martine Udahemuka, "Signal Loss: What We Know About School Performance," op. cit. Based on data received from the Ministry (October 2015).

a statutory intervention were not designated as a low performer by ERO. Though the Ministry is required to review an intervention annually, and requires the limited statutory manager (LSM) or commissioner to provide monthly reports, neither the Ministry nor ERO makes use of the decades long data on interventions to systematically understand what works, what does not, and why. This may explain why some schools have not improved in more than 10 years.[118]

- We recommend that these agencies make better use of the data available to them to support the government's intervention efforts.

BETTER SCHOOL LINKS

Where schools do not improve, parents should be free to remove their children from the school. However, the current feedback mechanism is inefficient and parents who want to switch schools have too few options.

Many schools across New Zealand are providing a consistently high quality education. The relatively new CoLs is a fine initiative but has limited implications for system-wide improvements. The spread of excellent practice to help underperforming schools needs to be much more systematic, proactive and, in the more serious cases, formalised than the IES opt-in approach permits. If the government decides to use data in the improved way proposed in this report, the exemplar schools should be incentivised to share what makes them better.

The following are examples of how underperforming schools could be better supported, and mechanisms for excellent practice be shared. These are only illustrative; future Initiative reports will explain how these would work.

- There should be formal mechanisms for successful schools to act as hubs of exemplary practice. Schools in CoLs currently have to show how they use data to identify and improve learning challenges. Having expert leaders and teachers support the rest of the cluster helps. However, schools form geographic rather than performance clusters under this model. We propose linking exemplar schools with similar but underperforming or failing schools. A low performing school that has not improved despite formal support, and with clearly no internal capacity to improve, could benefit from formally combining with a similar but better performing school. The low performing school could be mandated to join a CoL and linked with a school with a similar intake but that has been consistently effective.

It could work in at least two ways:

- **Performance-based schools clusters:** Multiple schools learn from the success of other schools and what makes them consistently successful.
- **School-to-school take-over:** Exemplar or superstar schools take over failing schools; in return, they get discretion and management flexibility to improve student outcomes.

Two recent legislation amendments allow for better support for schools. The *Education Legislation Amendment Act 2016* enables boards to appoint a principal to run more than one school,[119] and the *Education (Update) Amendment Act 2017* enables the Minister to combine boards where at least one school has serious governance issues.[120]

However work needs to be done to design a policy that would give successful school boards the incentive to want to take over other schools.

Lastly, where government has failed to improve schools, it could look to other capable providers.

118 Martine Udahemuka, "Signal Loss: What We Know About School Performance," op. cit.

119 Ministry of Education, "Being a principal of more than one school," Website.

120 Ministry of Education, "Combining school boards of trustees," Website.

Schools in England failing despite support were turned over to non-government sponsors and converted into state-funded but independently run 'academies.' Sponsors there can be charities, universities, philanthropists and they invest money or services-in-kind. In England, sponsors can formally take over the governance of several schools under a charitable trust but risk losing schools if they fail. High calibre operators with a long-term outlook have the most successful take-overs. Networks of schools in England and New York have shown greater and sustained improvements than single schools due to unified ethos, economies of scale and the benefits of inter-school collaboration.[121]

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The approach for intervening in schools facing difficulty is fragmented. In addition, there are currently no clear incentives for the many schools doing excellent work to share their practice. And for many low performing schools the government continues to tweak at the margins and poor performance persists. We recommend three levers for improvement. First, ERO and the Ministry need to systematically evaluate what works so that ineffective solutions are abandoned swiftly, and effective ones are applied when similar challenges arise. Second, strong leaders need to be recognised, given more freedom and appropriate incentives to share their practice. Last, but not least, schools that continue to fail despite interventions need better and innovative support to improve.

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121 See Merryn Hutchings, et al. "Chain Effects 2016," op. cit. and Center for Research on Education Outcomes, "Charter School Performance in New York City," op. cit.

CONCLUSION

The New Zealand Initiative has found inadequacies in how the education system identifies and addresses failure, and in how it measures, rewards and spreads excellence. This final report in the three-part series provides the first steps to deal with the deep-seated issues that hinder the education system from improving.

It is difficult to improve if you do not know where you are going wrong. It is equally challenging to share what you know if you do not know that it is effective. The poor use of student data to understand the quality of teaching and learning in our schools is a barrier to system-wide improvements. Therefore, underlying our recommendations is the better use of data to empower parents, school leaders, teachers and the Ministry to make critical decisions that affect student achievement.

Many schools are doing an excellent job for their students, but because we are so focused on national year-end achievement goals – which disregard learning contexts – we miss opportunities to learn from stellar schools and their teachers. Equally concerning, there may be many celebrated schools that meet national targets, yet fail to stretch their high-ability students.

The Initiative has a long track record of education research and remains committed to future research in this field. More work needs to be done but the report's recommendations are an important step towards better school performance. New Zealand students and the thousands of excellent school leaders and teachers deserve a system that is transparent, professional, supportive and responsive.

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APPENDIX A
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF *SIGNAL LOSS*

> School decline compromises the educational opportunities for students, hinders the careers of teachers and school leaders, disturbs communities, and costs governments millions of dollars … it is critical that interventions [are timely and] are founded on comprehensive data analysis and wise interpretation …
>
> — Kay Hawk[122]

New Zealand's compulsory education sector benefits many students. Most young adults leave school having gained valuable skills that serve them well into adulthood. This is a credit to hard-working students; engaged parents; committed sector leadership; and high-quality school leaders and teachers. Our country and society leverage off the human and social capital drawn from a quality schooling experience.

But 21st century New Zealand is facing particular challenges: an ageing workforce; a growing need for young people with adaptable skills; and an upward demand for better skilled and educated workers. The days when low-skilled school leavers could easily slide into jobs requiring only basic literacy and numeracy skills will increasingly become few and far between. It is thus vital to give students the tools they need to access further training and meaningful employment. The better qualified they are, the easier it is to adapt to changing work conditions. The cost of a poor education, on the other hand, presents ripple effects that go beyond the individual and hurt the growth, productivity and prosperity of the nation.

Thus, a true measure of the quality of an education system should be how it supports all students to reach their potential and gain skills to help them participate meaningfully in the labour market and contribute to citizenry. In New Zealand, a number of key indicators are used to judge how students and schools are doing. These include well-established international tests, national assessments, and independent school reviews.

This is the first report in a series of three examining the state of New Zealand's student and school performance.

At first glance, average primary and secondary student performance in New Zealand is promising:

- The country's top students are on par with the brightest students internationally.
- The proportion of students reaching national benchmarks is increasing year after year.

However, amid the good lies a layer of poor performance:

- Performance in basic literacy and numeracy in international tests is declining.
- In 2014, 1 in 10 students left secondary school without a formal qualification; 1 in 5 left without a National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) Level 2 qualification.
- Though they are improving at a faster pace than the national average, Māori and Pasifika students continue to be over-represented in underachievement statistics.

The Education Review Office (ERO) evaluations also show most schools doing well and many others improving. But at 30 June 2015, 185 schools (8% of all state and state-integrated schools) were in ERO's lowest performance tier. These schools lack the internal capability to manage significant concerns and need intervention.

122 Kay Hawk, "School Decline: Predictors, Process and Intervention," Ph.D. thesis (Auckland: Massey University, 2008), 26, 29.

Persistent poor performance is an issue for many schools:

- 65 of the 185 schools (one-third) already in ERO's lowest performance tier had not significantly improved their performance by their next review, despite intervention;
- 20 of the schools had performed poorly for eight to nine years on average, and some had persistently failed for more than a decade; and
- 67 school boards were under Ministry of Education intervention and more than half (51%) of the students under these boards were in deciles 1–3.

Although the key performance indicators allow observers to know who is and who isn't meeting national targets, and the Ministry knows which are the weakest schools in the country, this report argues this is not sufficient because of the following systemic issues:

- Existing data on students is neither used to adequately determine whether they perform as expected, given their starting points, nor determine the academic quality of schools based on their student intake.
- Current teacher appraisal systems do not accurately differentiate between effective and less effective teachers.
- Teacher turnover is increasing, and it is higher in lower decile schools compared to higher decile schools.
- Ineffective governance, leadership and teaching are prevalent in most poorly performing schools.
- ERO and the Ministry do not formally evaluate interventions in poorly performing schools, teacher turnover trends, or leadership issues to understand what works, what does not and why. Systematic evaluations could help replicate successful interventions in schools facing similar challenges, and adjust or abandon those that do not work.

The introduction of NCEA in 2002 and of National Standards in 2010 has resulted in an abundance of data on students. Furthermore, the push by the Government for evidence-based policy has seen the introduction of a one-stop shop of administrative data, namely, the Integrated Database Infrastructure (IDI) that safely houses longitudinal individual level data. These developments are yet to be optimally used in order to improve the quality signals of the teaching and learning that happens in schools – and ultimately support systematic school improvement efforts.

The demand for information on school performance comes from many people, which is why media agencies continue to produce annual school league tables. But these tables are poor indicators of how effective a school is in educating its students when compared to schools with a similar intake of students.

Thus, there needs to be much better use of the available data on schools and students.

Good information is key to raising standards in any sector. If a business fails to meet customer expectations and does not swiftly find solutions, it will organically lose to competition as customers choose to go elsewhere. But school choice for parents in New Zealand is limited by both restrictions on school enrolments and the substandard quality of publicly available information about schools' relative strengths and weaknesses. This report finds that some schools, whose core business is to educate the country's youth, continue to poorly perform – sometimes for as long as a student's entire schooling career.

This report is the first in a series of three dealing with the definitions, measurement and management of school success and failure. The report presents an overview of performance in primary and secondary schools, including initial observations about the problems associated with the analysis and distribution of information to improve student achievement.

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APPENDIX B
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF *FAIR AND FRANK*

> I'm always on the hunt for what other systems are doing that we might be able to appropriate and incorporate so I come with a very open mind and active listening.[123]
>
> — Hekia Parata

Every child deserves access to an adequate education. This belief was the starting point for The New Zealand Initiative's research on what facilitates or hinders access to a quality schooling experience.

This is the second report in a series of three on school underperformance. The first, *Signal Loss: What We Know About School Performance,* showed that though most students in New Zealand have access to quality schooling, most is not good enough. Thousands of students attend schools where failure has become the status quo (See the Appendix for a summary of the report). The education system requires innovative solutions to systematically deal with the pockets of chronic underperformance in New Zealand.

There also needs to be better measures of the quality of teaching and learning in each school. At the moment, judgments of school performance against national benchmarks do not consider the starting points of students. A school with school-ready students may seem successful for meeting national targets even if its students underperform relative to their capabilities. Conversely, a school with many lower starting-ability students may seem a failure for not meeting national benchmarks even though its students may have progressed substantially. The current system focuses on final attainment rather than progress, so it is harder to identify effective schools and effective teaching.

These challenges are not unique to New Zealand. In a travel journal format, this report documents the strategies implemented in five jurisdictions across England and the United States to *identify* effective schools and *reform* failing schools,[124] and also explore the successes, failures and implications of those strategies.

FINDINGS

England's efforts to transform failing schools: Shaking up the status quo

- Under England's school inspector regime, the process of defining, assessing and managing performance is clear. Schools are held accountable for the outcomes of their students, and performance information for parents clearly indicates the quality of individual schools.
- In 2002, the Academies policy introduced independently run but government-funded academies to replace failing schools. Academies bridge the gap between private and state sectors in managing schools. To inject fresh ideas into the sector, private parties were invited to invest capital and expertise, and manage state schools that had historically underserved students.
- The policy, which politicians of all colours supported with rare accord, has transformed England's schooling landscape. Over a quarter of all state schools are now academies.
- Time, money, expertise and school-to-school collaboration have contributed to notable success for the earliest group of academies, particularly for secondary school students.

123 Hekia Parata, "Bennett to OECD education ministers: We can transform the world," *The Jerusalem Post* (27 September 2016).

124 The terms 'failing,' 'underperforming,' and 'poorly performing' – and their derivatives – are used interchangeably in this report to refer to schools that do not meet the benchmarks set in the jurisdiction.

- The failings of more recent academies have been attributed to a lack of performance oversight, rapid expansion, and fewer high quality sponsors.

New York City charter schools: One Big Apple solution for disadvantaged students

- New York City's charter schools provide a positive alternative for disadvantaged students who had disproportionately failed in traditional public schools. Parents are now demanding more seats in these schools than are available: In 2016, 98% of students applying to oversubscribed charter schools were selected through a lottery.
- Many students in Harlem, one of the city's poorest areas, attend charter schools and their choice has, in general, improved their knowledge– sometimes up to seven months worth of additional maths learning in a year. Charter schools that are part of a network provided, on average, about 10 months worth of extra learning for their students.
- Some highly successful charter schools have delivered on their promise to act as hubs of new ideas so other schools can learn from their successes.

Massachusetts: Where complacency is not an option

- Although a national leader in education rankings, Massachusetts has persistent achievement gaps and failing schools. Leaders believe the quality of their education system cannot exceed the quality of their weakest schools, and are working tirelessly to support failing schools.
- The *Achievement Gap Act* was introduced in 2010 in an effort to close disparities in achievement by improving low-performing schools using innovative turnaround models.
- The school 'restart' model (successful education management organisations taking over failing schools) introduced under a new accountability regime created opportunities for the private sector and the state to work together to improve student outcomes.
- Although restart schools are a new approach to school turnaround and small in scale, they are vastly improving student performance. One such school visited has improved from fewer than 1 in 3 students reaching grade-level proficiency to at least 1 in 2 in just three years.

The District of Columbia: How much teachers matter

- The District of Columbia has gone from the worst performing jurisdiction in education to the fastest improving in America. The public school system has regained the community's trust with unprecedented student roll growth in recent years.
- Reforms focused on improving the quality of teachers, particularly by revising the step-raise performance system that rewards time in the job rather than success in the classroom.
- The IMPACT appraisal system implemented in 2009–10 isolates the impact of teachers from other factors contributing to student achievement outside the classroom.
- Schools are now able to better identify and reward their most effective teachers. Evaluation information also helps tailor professional development. Ineffective teachers, though a small minority of the workforce, have in general been replaced with better performing teachers.
- The District's teaching profession has become highly valued, with quality teachers among the highest paid in the country and more of them choosing D.C. as a place of work.

The Houston opportunity: Implementing lessons from successful schools

- Faced with dire educational outcomes, Houston's leaders turned to other successful schools for inspiration and guidance.
- The political courage in partnering with academics led to a nation first: applying evidence-based practices from successful charter schools in New York to traditional public schools.
- Convinced by the potential benefits for Houston's lowest performing schools, the federal government, philanthropists and local communities made significant investments to implement the practices – the three-year Apollo 20 programme was thus born.
- Improvements were observed in maths in each year of the programme, though it is not clear whether the gains have sustained beyond the three years.

The places visited demonstrate the potential for improving outcomes for students. Politicians had the courage to denounce failing as status quo and pursue radical mechanisms to overcome failure. In New Zealand, we still call 'world-class' an education system that underserves thousands of students and lets poorly performing schools persist for decades. Insights from these five systems for managing school underperformance will inform policy recommendations for New Zealand in the third and final report of the series.

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