

Leadership practices supporting Pasifika student success: Otahuhu College Case Study



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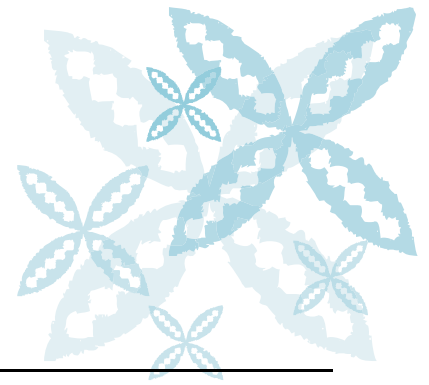
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ISBN: 978-0-478-42248-1
ISBN: 978-0-478-42249-8 (web)
RMR-1038

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Introduction

This report is one in a series of three case study reports with a focus on school leadership practices that support Pasifika student achievement and success. The series also includes three exemplar reports¹: these showcase in more detail one aspect of each case study school's approach to improving achievement outcomes for their Pasifika students².

Otahuhu College has around 950 Pasifika students on its roll — making it a school with one of the largest numbers of Pasifika students in the country. This case study shows how the college's principal and senior leadership team (SLT), over a period of eight or so years, have promoted a culture of learning and achievement based on effective pastoral care programmes, a personalised approach to the needs of students, and a genuine belief in the potential of all students, to raise Pasifika student achievement.

Recognising that Pasifika comprise the majority (82%) of the school roll, the principal, SLT and teaching staff have made a school-wide commitment to improving Pasifika learner outcomes. Initiatives and programmes implemented in the college over the past eight years³ have built a partnership approach between the college, its students and their parents, to achieve educational success. The college's respectful and responsive processes engage Pasifika students and their families, supporting students to reach their full potential.

For the five years leading up to this case study, Otahuhu College achieved National Certificate of Educational Attainment (NCEA) level 2 results above the national average in comparison to all students in other decile 1 schools and ahead of Pasifika students in decile 1 schools throughout New Zealand. The school's latest Education Review Office (ERO) report (2012) identified the following areas of strength at Otahuhu College. The report indicated that the college has:

- an inclusive school environment, with strong social cohesion amongst students and a sense of belonging for all
- high levels of community engagement, including attendance at three-way parent–teacher–student conferences
- a focus on key initiatives to improve students' learning by the senior leadership team
- effective systems for promoting reflective teacher practices and for the academic mentoring of students

¹ All of the case study and exemplar reports in the series are listed at the end of this document (on page 44).

² The Otahuhu College exemplar focuses on its academic mentoring programme.

³ That is, the eight years leading up to the data collection phase for this case study — which took place in September to October 2012, with a small amount of additional follow-up in December the same year.



- a school-wide commitment to further improving student achievement and to preparing students well for future learning and career development
- students who are respectful and willing learners, and whose relationships with teachers are generally positive and affirming
- high student retention to year 13, with low levels of stand-downs and suspensions
- student learning programmes that are focused on interactive, relevant and authentic learning.

Research context

The Ministry of Education has a focus on the Better Public Service target of improving participation and achievement in education at all levels, and for all students, including Pasifika. Within the Pasifika Education Plan 2013–2017 (Ministry of Education, 2012, p.10), for example, one of the stated targets for the schooling sector is that ‘85% of Pasifika 18 year olds ... achieve NCEA Level 2 or equivalent qualifications in 2017’. For this Otahuhu College case study, researchers asked the senior leadership team, the board of trustees, teachers, and Pasifika students and families to share their perspectives on what Otahuhu College was doing to get higher-than-average Pasifika student achievement at NCEA level 2 and strong retention rates at year 13.

With a particular focus on what works to raise Pasifika student achievement, the analysis of the case study information was framed around seven key themes from the Best Evidence Synthesis Iteration commissioned by the Ministry of Education: *School leadership and student outcomes: identifying what works and why* (Robinson, Hohepa & Lloyd, 2009).

The seven themes are:

- setting high standards and expectations for Pasifika student achievement
- strategic resourcing to enhance Pasifika student achievement
- ensuring quality of teaching and the curriculum to enhance Pasifika student achievement
- teacher learning and development to enhance Pasifika student achievement
- ensuring an orderly and supportive environment for Pasifika students
- making powerful connections with Pasifika parents, families and communities to support Pasifika student achievement
- engaging in constructive problem talk to enhance Pasifika student achievement.

The analysis serves, too, to highlight school practices that align with key principles and goals articulated in the Pasifika Education Plan 2013–2017; that is, to work to achieve Pasifika Success that is ...

‘... characterised by demanding, vibrant, dynamic, successful Pasifika learners [who are] secure and confident in their identities, languages and cultures, [and can successfully navigate] through all curriculum areas such as the arts, sciences, technology, social sciences and mathematics.’ (Pasifika Education Plan, Ministry of Education, p.3)

Under schooling, the Pasifika Education Plan advocates that the focus of efforts needs to be ‘on accelerating literacy and numeracy achievement and [students] gaining NCEA Level 2 qualifications as a stepping stone to further education and/or employment’. Related goals within the Pasifika Education Plan of particular relevance to the work in schools represented in the present series of case studies and exemplars include that:

- ‘Pasifika learners excel in literacy and numeracy and make effective study choices that lead to worthwhile qualifications’



- 'Pasifika school leavers are academically and socially equipped to achieve their goals for further education, training and/or employment'
- 'Pasifika parents, families and communities engage with schools in supporting their children's learning'.

Otahuhu College is one of three secondary schools selected by the Ministry of Education to become a case study site for this project, after a comparison of Pasifika learning in schools across the Auckland region. The Auckland region was selected as its schools have the highest proportions of Pasifika learners in New Zealand. The three selected secondary schools were considered to be good examples of schools in which Pasifika student academic performance is higher than average, where retention rates are high, and where Pasifika identities, languages, and cultures are recognised and embraced by the school leadership team and are evident on a daily basis within the school.

Otahuhu College was included in the project because of the very large number of Pasifika students on its roll and because its academic results compared favourably with other schools across the Auckland region. It also provided a different research context to other schools in the study, as a co-educational school.

Otahuhu College is a year 9–15 school located in South Auckland, with a roll of 1,342 students. The decile 1 college caters for more than 15 ethnicities, with the majority of the students representing Pasifika ethnicities, including: Samoan, 32%; Tongan, 19%; Cook Islands Māori, 11%; Niuean, 5%; Indo-Fijian, 11%; and other Pacific, 4%. Other ethnicities in the school include Māori (14%), Pākehā (1%), and Asian (2%).

The principal, who left during the research for this case study (in late 2012) to take up another position, had been at Otahuhu College since 2004. Prior to that, he worked extensively in the South Auckland community as principal at Tuakau College and as deputy principal at Papakura College. Over his eight years at Otahuhu College, he provided strong, positive leadership, driven by his passion and genuine belief in the college and its students.

While Otahuhu College is one of the higher performing schools for Pasifika students in the Auckland region, their NCEA level 2 results are not yet at the latest target level set by the Ministry for Pasifika students by the time they leave school. Thus, Otahuhu College became one of the schools to receive focused taskforce attention in 2013 to support them to accelerate student learning outcomes.

Research method

The case study design and methodology drew on what was learned from the development of the *Rangiātea Case studies and Exemplars* (Ministry of Education, 2011)⁴, a series of five case studies and exemplars illustrating leadership in highly performing schools for Māori students. The present series of case studies and exemplars, like the Rangiātea series, was framed and developed on the basis of sound evidence of effective leadership practice — as presented in Robinson, Hohepa and Lloyd's (2009) report, *School leadership and student outcomes: identifying what works and why*, one of the Best Evidence Syntheses commissioned by the Ministry of Education.

Cognisance of Pasifika research methodologies also formed an important part of the project design and implementation, as did orientation to the Pasifika Education Plan 2013–2017. As well as taking into account key principles within the Pasifika Education Plan, the researchers drew on Pasifika research methodologies and guidelines such as:

- *Teu Le Va — Relationships across research and policy in Pasifika education: A collective approach to knowledge generation & policy development for action towards Pasifika education success* (Airini et al., 2010)
- *Talanoa research methodology: a developing position on Pacific research* (Vaiioleti, 2006)
- The *Guidelines on Pasifika health research* produced by the Health Research Council of New Zealand (2004)
- The Ministry of Education's *Pasifika Education Research Guidelines* (Anae et al., 2001).

These methodologies and guidelines embrace Pasifika values and practices and guided the research team in working with Pasifika peoples at all stages of the project.

Pacific cultural protocols for establishing respectful relations, rapport and trust between participants and researchers were followed during data collection for the case study. An information sheet was also provided for all participants and informed consent obtained prior to any interview taking place.

After a first phase in the data collection process, the researchers developed a summary of the key themes emerging from the interviews for consideration by the Pasifika Unit within the Ministry of Education, which commissioned the series of case studies. The summary helped identify priority areas of interest for further data collection. The second data collection phase focused on: (a) how the school's leaders enable Pasifika student achievement; and (b) identifying a specific initiative or approach developed within the school to drive Pasifika achievement, to become the focus of a separate exemplar report for this school.

⁴ The Rangiātea case study and exemplar reports are available online at <http://www.educationalleaders.govt.nz/Leading-change/Maori-education-success/Rangiataea-case-studies-and-exemplars>



The research team used a range of interview approaches to collect data, including individual, focus groups, and paired discussions. Individual interviews generally ranged from 30–60 minutes, while focus groups took approximately one hour, and were carried out with an emphasis on Pasifika etiquette and values to create a relational environment that allows honest and meaningful dialogue.

In total, 33 people were interviewed, including the senior leadership team, deans, teachers, students, families, pastoral staff and BOT members. A further 14 self-completion student surveys were filled in: these were administered in ways which sought to uphold Pasifika cultural values — by incorporating both the written and spoken word, for example — to draw out the understandings of the young Pasifika participants. In addition, a wide range of monitoring and student achievement data, including variance reporting, curriculum planners, NCEA data and its Ministry of Education SchoolSMART⁵ data, were made available by the college.

Researcher engagement with the school occurred between September 2012 and October 2012 and involved two data collection phases. Some additional feedback was also obtained from the school up to 18 December, 2012.

The research team would like to acknowledge that, as with any project, there were limitations. Contractual arrangements and school availability both served to restrict the timeframe in which the data collection could take place. This was further affected by the heavy involvement of both students and staff in NCEA preparation, and end-of-year activities. Thus, information was collected from the school during two intensive data collection visits and this meant more limited opportunities for interactions with Pasifika students' families. The research team responded to the limited timeframes involved by harnessing the respective and combined strengths of team members to ensure rigour and efficiency in the collection and analysis of information. Strong teamwork was also required to successfully achieve a balance between the need to collect accurate and sufficient historical information on the school's journey to its current place of success for Pasifika, and the need for efficiency in data collection, analysis and project write-up.

In the case of Otahuhu College, access to parents and families was limited due to work and community commitments. However, feedback from the people the team was able to talk with was cohesive and compelling, and clearly demonstrated the parents' and families' respect for the principal and senior leadership team.

⁵ SchoolSMART gives principals, boards of trustees chairpersons, and other authorised trustees access to information about their school. Schools can track their progress over time in relation to other similar schools.

Framework for analysing the case study findings and presenting this report

As discussed earlier under 'Research Context', the information gathered for this case study has been analysed around seven key themes⁶ for effective school leadership, as identified in the research literature. The case study findings are presented in the following pages under these same key themes. The case study findings also illustrate school practices that align with the Pasifika Education Plan 2013–2017.

⁶ These themes are listed on page 6, and also form the headings for each of the main sections in the remainder of this report.



Setting high standards and expectations for Pasifika student achievement

This section discusses the importance of strong leadership, along with a strong values-system and clear goals, for ensuring that everyone maintains high expectations of Pasifika student success and that these expectations and goals are reflected in practice.

Raising Pasifika student achievement is a college priority

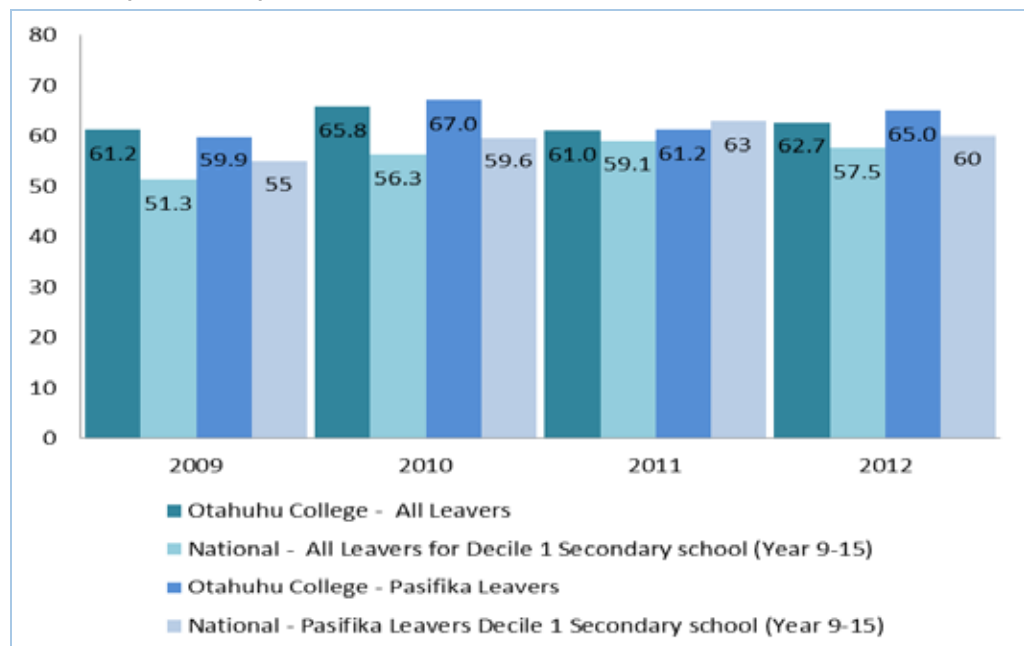
The college's mission and vision statements provide the foundation for all college staff to ...

'... uphold the proud tradition of being an education centre within the South Auckland community' and strive 'to help students develop, to the fullest, their potential in all aspects of intellectual, social, emotional, aesthetic and physical development.'⁷.

This clear vision statement demonstrates commitment to high expectations for success.

Figure 1 shows that by the time they left school, Otahuhu College's Pasifika students attained NCEA level 2 at a similar level to that for the college's school leavers overall. The data in Figure 1 also show that for three out of the four years, NCEA level 2 attainment rates for Pasifika students at Otahuhu College was ahead of those for Pasifika leavers from other decile 1 schools nationally.

Figure 1: Proportion of school leavers who attained NCEA level 2: a comparison of Otahuhu College data with school leaver data for decile 1 schools nationally (2009–2013)



Source: Indicators and Reporting, Ministry of Education, November 2012

Everyone having high expectations of Pasifika students is vital for high achievement

⁷ From the Otahuhu College Prospectus.

Principal and board of trustees leadership in setting high standards and expectations

Academic achievement is valued within Otahuhu College and its importance is conveyed to students and the whole college community through clear aims and a clear code of behaviour. The principal, senior leadership team (SLT), and teachers all take responsibility for student achievement and promote high standards and high expectations for Pasifika and all students to reach their full potential.

The principal reinforces the college aims in his communication with staff, students and families. A commitment to excellence in student achievement, programmes designed to meet the needs of all students, and superior success in individual and team sports, drives the students and teachers to always give 100 percent. The board of trustees (BOT) acknowledges the principal's high expectations and believes that his continual work towards improvement and demanding the very best from teachers and students has improved the overall achievement levels within the college.

The principal has high expectations. ... Because kids are working-class it does not mean that they do not have expectations and I believe the school should support high expectations. [BOT member]

All efforts are made to support students to be the best they can be. Programmes and initiatives are designed to meet the needs of the students and provide students with experiences of success and achievement. Initiatives include:

Programmes are designed to meet student needs

- three-way academic mentoring
- the performing arts academy
- the foundation programme
- the health science academy
- the service academy
- the sports academy.

Although the principal and SLT acknowledge that 'Rome wasn't built in a day' and that embedding change takes time, there is a sense of urgency within the team to gain positive change and improvement for Pasifika learners.

I think it is hard to bring things in too fast. ... [But] I want it [the college's vision and goals for student outcomes] to be locked in so that we move up to the next level; that's the theory anyway. [Principal]



Goal setting for raising Pasifika student achievement

Otahuhu College's vision is for highly achieving, successful, well-rounded students and for Pasifika and all school leavers who are equipped both academically and socially to achieve their goals.

The college has clear goals to achieve its vision for Pasifika learners

The college's long-term goal to enable Pasifika student achievement is communicated in clear, concrete terms in school documentation and on its website. Reference to these college-wide goals and to student achievement data lead to the development of specific student achievement targets, which are discussed with staff and Pasifika (and other) students and families through the college's academic mentoring programme.

Pasifika students are expected to meet high standards in all areas of college life, including attendance, uniform, sports, culture, arts, community service and leadership. Pasifika and all students are encouraged to think about and plan for future career and study pathways, which may include tertiary studies, based on their interests and skills, to help focus their learning and choices at school. Pasifika students who took part in interviews for this project were able to identify their goals and expectations for their futures and talked positively about their prospects after leaving college.

We talk about our work during school time; talk about what we can do to improve and talk about things we have done. We also talk about how our future could be towards the actions we do. [Student]

Appropriate achievement targets are established, based on deep knowledge of student performance

The college's targets for Pasifika are based on information about what Pasifika students currently know and are able to do, and staff work to promote high standards and expectations for all Pasifika students. Heads of department (HODs) set appropriate targets to improve student progress and achievement in NCEA and report on these to the board of trustees.

Student progress is tracked within student cohorts, starting at year 9, using data from tools such as asTTle (Assessment Tools for Teaching and Learning). Course design is focused on what students know and what they need to achieve in order to progress and experience success.

As would be expected, the long-term goal of raising academic achievement amongst Pasifika students is important to Pasifika parents, families and communities. Pasifika families strongly support their children reaching educational heights and going on to university — and many Pasifika families have moved to New Zealand to ensure that their children receive the best education possible. Parents understand their role in supporting the college and the importance of working together so that their children will do well in education.

Parents and families put a high value on education

Us parents, we always support our kids. Whenever the principal told us to come, we always come. ... I know when the parents support their kids, they do very well. [Parent]

The college works hard to build student resilience and dispel negative stereotypes

A focus on positive outcomes and success to build resilience

Pasifika students at Otahuhu College have high expectations for themselves and their futures. They are aware of negative perceptions and portrayal of the South Auckland area generally, including Otahuhu College, and feel this perception — particularly in the media — disadvantages the community. The principal supports the students' desire to dispel these misconceptions about their community, and regularly engages with the media to try to educate them about the positive impact the college has on Pasifika students. The following excerpt from a press report (New Zealand Herald, May 2012), demonstrates the principal's commitment to this community.

Sick of a barrage of outside criticism, the head of a decile 1 South Auckland College invites the Herald to see what they're doing right. Principal Gil Laurensen calls it O-ta-huhu College. Most of his Polynesian students use the old-fashioned O-ta-hu. When they talk to their friends, or teenagers from other schools, it's just 'OC'. However they say it, it comes out with a mix of pride and defensiveness — a feeling of 'us against the world'. Because everyone here knows that South Auckland schools are seen as educational failures and they're pretty fed up about it. "If you come from OC, people are like; 'Oh, that's a prison school' ", says deputy head girl Lorna Tongotongo. "Hey, it's the best prison in the world." The students around her crack up laughing but it's clear they feel the insult too. Head boy Cheran Hawkins says South Auckland schools come across in the media as gangster, which feeds back into the school. [Source: www.nzherald.co.nz/education/news]

Developing positive relationships and connections with families

The principal instils the importance of the senior leadership team, teachers and staff building reciprocal relationships and connections with both students and families as a vital contributor to Pasifika achievement and maintaining high expectations and standards.

The principal has supported initiatives that help develop confidence amongst parents and families to engage with the college's systems and processes. Academic mentoring and a Tongan homework centre are two examples of effective programmes that have helped to establish strong reciprocal relationships with families. The academic mentoring model, as shown in Figure 2, is a school-wide initiative designed to build and support home-school partnerships, student achievement, and teacher, parent, and student relationships.

Building meaningful connections with students and families is fundamental

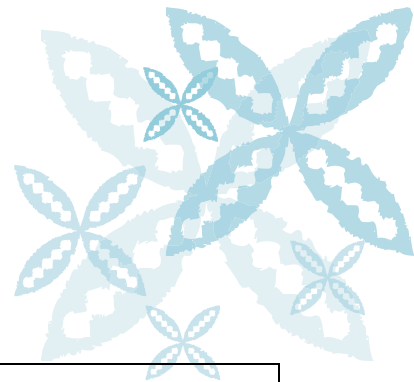
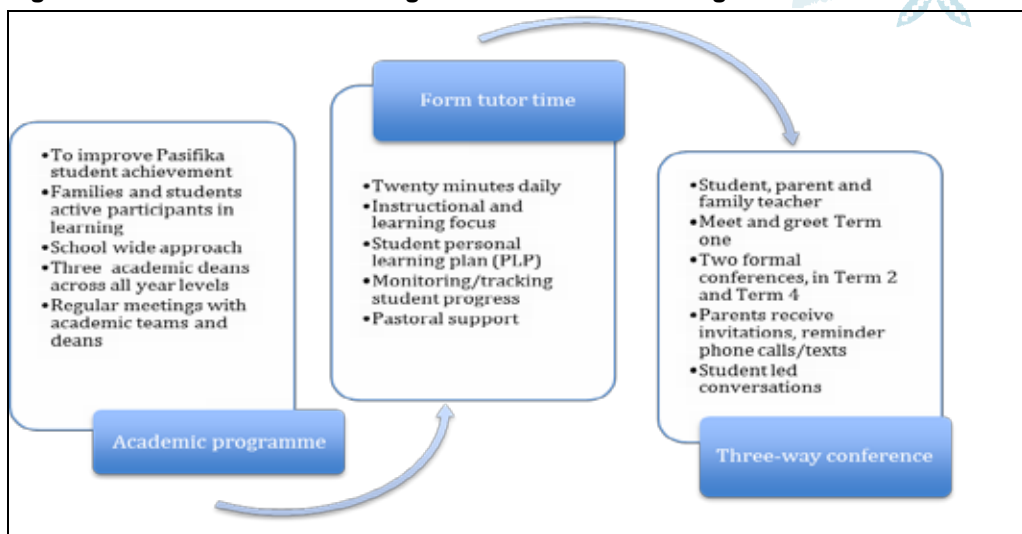


Figure 2: The academic mentoring model at Otahuhu College



A shared vision of student development and achievement

Students are 'at the centre' at Otahuhu College, and all decisions are made with the well-being of students, and particularly Pasifika students, as the priority. Teachers work well beyond paid hours to support and engage students and improve their lives. The overarching philosophy of the college is that it is there to help the students and to do whatever is required to ensure that happens, including being actively involved outside of normal class contact hours.

Student success and well-being is at the heart of all decision-making in the college

I like stats, calculus, accounting and economics, and ... they all have tutorials [outside of class time]. I have tutorials for calc [calculus] on Wednesdays and tutorials for stats and accounting on Thursdays. [Student]

The whole first week of the coming holidays is for tutorials. Our accounting teacher said that we had to come to school throughout the first week and second week of break. It just shows how much they care about our learning, that they are sacrificing their time just to come in for us and they are not getting paid extra to hold these tutorials. [Student]

Students benefit from personalised learning programmes that provide opportunities for academic growth and success

In addition, teachers ensure that Pasifika students at risk of academic failure are given the chance to participate in catch-up classes or after-school homework sessions. The students participate in a personalised programme that supports their academic growth and challenges them to plan goals and work towards them. Learning programmes cater to all needs, including students doing very well who need to be further challenged through extension activities. As appropriate, year 10 students can sit NCEA level 1 and year 13 students can enrol for scholarship examinations..

Students have a wide range of opportunities to achieve a relevant qualification before they leave school

Students at Otahuhu College are provided with every opportunity to equip themselves with a relevant qualification by the time they leave school. The college offers one of the broadest range of subjects in the Auckland region, from art history and classics to automotive mechanics and carpentry. There are opportunities for academic achievers to take up relevant work experience opportunities within the financial, tourism and engineering sectors, and for other students to achieve a National Certificate level 4 qualification in areas such as business, computing and childcare.

College routines, programmes and events that effectively engage Pasifika students

Otahuhu College routines, including timetable planning, work to enhance Pasifika student achievement by recognising the importance of identity, relationships and belonging. Events, such as haka waiata, a school-wide event that occurs in Term 1 each year, are also designed with the key values of identity, relationships, and belonging in mind. For the first three weeks of the school year all students are involved in learning a house haka and waiata. The whole process, including the training, is student-led, with the older students teaching younger students. As well as developing commitment and cooperation among students, the event fosters a healthy competitive culture between the four houses within the college. The preparation and training culminates in a day of competitions and fun activities, which brings the whole school together, ensuring a sense of community quickly develops each year.

As part of the academic mentoring programme, form time, known as 'whānau tutor time' occurs each day for 20 minutes with a whānau teacher. During this time, all students, including Pasifika students, are mentored by their whānau teacher and supported to set academic goals for the year, review progress, and learn skills to support them with their study, communication, and planning, and in making appropriate choices. During whānau time, students complete sections of their Personal Learning Plan booklets (eg, the student writes down their learning goals and steps they may take to achieve them).

Three-way conferences are held with students, parents and the whānau teacher. Conversations are student-driven as they explain their goals and progress. This process — part of the academic mentoring programme — occurs twice a year, once in Term 2 and again in Term 4. There is an initial meet and greet with parents and the whānau teacher in Term 1. Parents are invited to the conferences by personal invitation and receive reminder phone calls, texts and emails. In an attempt to break down significant barriers to participation, the principal has written letters to employers requesting time off for parents to attend. (The separate exemplar report *A Model of Academic Mentoring to Support Pasifika Achievement* — as listed on page 44 — provides more detail about this Otahuhu College programme.)

Culturally appropriate school processes, programmes and events foster Pasifika student achievement and build home-school partnerships



The college celebrates a wide range of Pasifika student successes on a regular basis

Otahuhu College celebrates all types of achievement — for example, end-of-term assemblies highlight students' achievements in academic, sporting and cultural arenas. Four formal award ceremonies occur during the school year and families are invited to share the success of their young people. This regular acknowledgement of student success builds school pride and student motivation to work hard and strive for excellence.

Strategic resourcing to enhance Pasifika student achievement

This section includes discussion of the college's allocation of teaching and pastoral care resourcing to promote Pasifika and all students' achievement. It also discusses ways in which the college identifies, values and uses the knowledge and skills of various groups and individuals to support students and provide them with development opportunities.

Aligning resources with identified students needs

The board of trustees (BOT) and principal at Otahuhu College manage resourcing in a number of ways to meet the needs of the students — and, in particular, the learning and achievement needs of Pasifika students. The BOT works to ensure that teaching and learning resources are available to teachers to support the engagement of all students. Also, in order to meet the goals for Pasifika student achievement, resources are aligned with the teaching strategies identified as important for successful Pasifika student outcomes so that these can be put into practice. Support in place for teachers includes AIMHI⁸ teacher coach support, and teacher appraisal systems. Professional development as part of the AIMHI and Starpath⁹ projects has involved differentiated learning, academic mentoring, and tracking and monitoring of student data.

The role of the board of trustees

The BOT includes four Pasifika representatives, with two Tongan and two Samoan trustees. All BOT members have a clear understanding of their role and how they can best support Otahuhu College students. They understand that the college will not operate at its best if the staff and environment is sub-standard. They are willing to resource programmes if they can see that they will make a difference to student achievement. Regular reporting to the BOT by the principal, SLT and teachers keeps the trustees up-to-date with the everyday progress.

The BOT chairperson attended Otahuhu College and is hugely invested in the college community and surrounding area, as his great grandparents were foundation members of the college when it first opened in 1931. He has institutional and community knowledge that spans over 70 years.

Our philosophy is we want good teachers on board and support from parent involvement. [We] can't do a good job without these things. [BOT member]

Pasifika staff

Pasifika staff are champions of Pasifika students in particular within the college and have a critical role in supporting Pasifika students and families. A total of 49 Pasifika staff members are employed at the college, 30 of whom are employed in teaching and leadership roles, including that of deputy principal (DP), dean, and head of department (HOD).

Resourcing is prioritised to support Pasifika student achievement and build teaching strategies important for successful learning outcomes

The BOT has strong Pasifika representation and members have a clear understanding of how their role can best support the students

⁸ AIMHI (Achievement in Multi-cultural High Schools) is a group of nine decile 1 secondary schools with large Māori and Pasifika student rolls. Established in 1995, research was carried out by Kay Hawk and Jan Hill of Massey University. In 1998 an AIMHI action plan of educational initiatives began; these focused on governance, attendance, relationship building, and quality teaching. <http://www.aimhi.ac.nz/>

⁹ The Starpath project is led by the University of Auckland and aims to increase achievement at NCEA levels 1–3 and participation in degree-level tertiary study, for Māori and Pasifika students and students from low socio-economic backgrounds. <http://www.education.auckland.ac.nz/uc>



Resourcing a holistic approach to Pasifika student success

The principal, BOT and SLT realise that Pasifika student well-being is critical to academic achievement, and resources within the college provide wrap-around services to all students. These include the on-site health and wellness centre that is staffed by a full-time nurse, two part-time nurses, a part-time doctor, college-based Pasifika social workers and a physio-therapist. Students are also able to receive dental treatment at the clinic. The health and wellness centre was developed in response to the ever-increasing health needs of students and to improve attendance, as students do not now have to take time out of school to attend health-related appointments.

Pastoral care programmes include: Affirming Works: Tupu'anga programme¹⁰; Project K¹¹; HEADS assessment;¹² and Travellers¹³. External agencies are an important resource for the college, and effective partnerships have been developed with community health and social service providers, the Police, and Defence forces, and with tertiary institutions. The college's pastoral care support systems also ensure the involvement of parents, families and community, as well as teachers.

Developing and using culturally relevant resources and support

Student support within Otahuhu College is culturally relevant and reflects important Pasifika values of face-to-face contact, inclusiveness, respect, and reciprocity. The expertise of Pasifika parents, families and communities is used in ways that serve the college's priority learning goals. A core group of parents is extremely involved in the college and parents in the group provide regular advice to the principal. This core group actively works towards building more and deeper parental involvement and acts as a conduit between the college and its wider group of Pasifika parents, families and community.

The principal and teachers highly value parental input, as it is believed to link closely with student achievement.

At Otahuhu College, resources have been developed in response to issues raised by parents, including the Tongan homework centre and home-school partnership approaches, such as the NCEA information evenings, and the academic mentoring programme (outlined earlier in this report).

Student health and well-being is also a top priority: the pastoral care resourced by the college and others supports Pasifika student achievement

Providing student support in culturally relevant ways affirms Pasifika identities, languages, and cultures

¹⁰ Affirming Works (AW) is an innovative Pacific organisation which offers an extensive range of youth mentoring and educational services to various communities within the Auckland region. Tupu'anga is a mentoring programme in high schools designed to encourage students to stay at school beyond the compulsory years, provide them with the tools to grow in character, and provide opportunities for them to effectively bridge the move from school to tertiary study or to better workplace environments. Twenty-five of the college's years 11, 12 and 13 Pasifika students are selected to participate in the programme each year.

¹¹ Project K is a two-year programme that targets 12 year 10 students from each participating school. Students are selected so that they can benefit from opportunities to gain self-confidence and personal development skills. The programme involves community activities, outdoor pursuits and mentorship.

¹² HEADS assessment is a screening test undertaken with all year 9s as they enter the college. Students are screened for medical conditions and issues related to: home, education, employment, eating, exercise, activities, drugs, sexuality, suicide, spirituality, and safety.

¹³ Travellers is a 10 week programme for year 9 students. Participants are selected following an assessment which identifies students who have suffered significant change in their lives or trauma. Each week, during school hours, the student spends time with a counsellor.

Through the Gateway programme¹⁴, steps are taken to remove barriers that exist for Pasifika students in gaining future employment, such as not having a driver's licence. In response to this particular need, all year 12 and 13 students are provided with the opportunity to sit their driver's license. At the end of the first term in 2012, 41 Pasifika students had completed their licensing. This initiative is fully funded by the college.

Pasifika students as leaders

Pasifika students are encouraged to take up leadership positions in the college and play an important role as peer mediators, prefects, class captains, health and student councillors. This gives a range of opportunities to strengthen partnerships between teachers and students, between students, and also between students and family and community members.

In the student council we discuss issues that go around in the school, like smoking. There are issues about the bells — we have to locate bells around [the school]. We have to renovate fountains that are not working. We organise the talent quest. We discuss how we have to pay for printing credits. As seniors there is a lot of printing to do. We have financial needs, and we don't have printing credits. [Student]

Resourcing the safety and comfort of Pasifika students and staff

Over the eight years the principal has been at the college there has been a focus on improving buildings and grounds to ensure they are comfortable and safe for students. For example, to stop bullying that was occurring in and around the school toilets, the toilet blocks have been completely refurbished and are now designed to afford students safety as well as privacy.

There has also been a commitment to building a strong staff team, with the introduction of new roles (academic deans and a data manager) and significant investment in recently graduated teachers. Over the eight-year period, 35 first-year teachers have been employed and have developed to become important assets to the college. The principal deliberately advertises for, and recruits, newly graduated teachers with a knowledge and understanding of students and families in the school community, and then provides an induction programme which supports them for two to three years to teacher registration. This helps to build capacity in the local community. Former Otahuhu College students are also brought into the school where possible to provide mentoring to senior students.

A comfortable and safe environment supports Pasifika student engagement

¹⁴ The Gateway programme (through the Tertiary Education Commission) strengthens pathways for students from school to further education and training or employment. Senior secondary students (year 11 to year 13+) in the Gateway programme undertake structured workplace learning across a range of industries and businesses around New Zealand, while continuing to study at school. All state and integrated secondary schools are eligible to apply for Gateway.



Ensuring quality of teaching and the curriculum to enhance Pasifika student achievement

Systematic monitoring, strategic curriculum planning and implementation, and effective teaching strategies underpin Pasifika student success

At Otahuhu College, teaching practices and curriculum are developed within a holistic framework designed to 'wrap around' students, to effectively support Pasifika student achievement. To achieve quality of teaching and curriculum, the principal and SLT, with the support of the teaching staff, implement methodical tracking of student progress as a basis for responding appropriately to student needs.

According to the BOT, Otahuhu College's strategic annual plan and departmental goals are well aligned and focus on improving teaching and learning practices and curriculum implementation. In its 2010 *Managing National Assessment* report for Otahuhu College, the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) stated that the college employs an effective assessment policy based on solid principles. Each department has an assessment plan to guide collection of information needed to monitor progress on priority learning goals and enhance Pasifika learner achievement. Templates for course assessment statements are used, and whānau teachers and HODs analyse data at subject and standard level.

Otahuhu College case study information relating to the theme for this section of the report is further discussed below in two parts: the first part discusses approaches to ensuring curriculum quality (in terms of student characteristics and needs), and the second discusses steps taken to ensure quality teaching. (As would be expected, there is some overlap of content discussed in each part, just as there is overlap of content throughout the report due to the interconnected nature of the different leadership practices that support student achievement and success.)

Part A: Ensuring curriculum quality

Establishing Pasifika students' learning needs to guide curriculum content and delivery

The principal and SLT gauge quality in the Otahuhu College curriculum through systematic tracking and monitoring of Pasifika and all students' progress and achievement, using asTTle, NCEA summary information, and academic mentoring and cohort reporting. The data and information gathered are analysed and used to inform teachers to enable them to plan effectively and teach what is needed for students to achieve. Working in partnership with the University of Auckland Starpath project¹⁵, the college is establishing:

A sophisticated database identifies student needs

- an evidential database that systematically stores and manages real-time student data to build effective decision-making
- a 'traffic light' system of red, orange and green, that teachers use as part of the monitoring process to record how students' achievement is tracking in individual subjects.

¹⁵ Refer footnote 9 earlier (p.18) in this report regarding the Starpath project.

Sound data analysis enables appropriate targets to be set

Consistent testing and data analysis as a basis for setting targets

The principal's and SLT's expectations of teachers and students are aligned with academic targets and progress to ensure timely intervention for students at risk of failure. The establishment and use of these systems is a clear and practical step towards the successful use of evidence and data to support Pasifika achievement.

The college data manager supports HODs and teachers by providing regular datasets based on year-level cohorts, individual classes, and subject results. Student progress is surveyed using Fathom and MUSAC¹⁶, where student information is disaggregated by assessment type, year level, ethnicity, attendance, and results. Teachers also use Fathom to create datasets, graphs, summary statistics and hypotheses, and say it helps them interpret data and look for patterns that might generate new approaches to improve student achievement.

Heads of department and teachers report that targets are established from the outset, when students enter the school in year 9, and all students are tested at regular stages throughout the school year. In year 9, formalised testing across the cohort occurs at two points: the beginning and end of the year.

Personalised programmes to meet student needs

Curriculum delivery is flexible and responsive to Pasifika student needs and aspirations

The principal and SLT aim to ensure that every Pasifika student experiences a challenging, personalised academic programme. Students are given a range of opportunities to succeed. Programmes such as Project K and Affirming Works are delivered to students considered to be at risk of disengaging, providing mentoring and skill development to help build self-confidence. Year 11 students in need of extra academic support can become part of the Foundation Programme, and through this programme they are closely assisted and supported to gain NCEA level 1 in English and mathematics.

Two teachers work closely with students across all subjects, and the college caters for those students who require academic extension by enabling them to sit NCEA level 1 at year 10.

The college has clear plans and a sense of urgency to accelerate learning progress

Pasifika students who enter the school with low levels of achievement are identified early, and plans are made to accelerate their progress. Early assessment of any issues that may have an impact on learning is carried out in year 9. Students identified as being at risk of failing are then provided with a range of appropriate supports — from extra tutorials, support via Travellers¹⁷, HEADS¹⁸ and other pastoral care programmes, through to specialist learning and behavioural support, such as from a resource teacher for learning and behaviour (RTLb).

¹⁶ Fathom, according to the TKI website is 'dynamic data™ software for exploring and modelling data, allowing students to gather, explore, and graphically analyse data in depth; useful for any learning area requiring data interpretation. Teachers and students can use Fathom to create datasets, graphs, summary statistics and hypotheses tests to help them interpret data'. (Ministry of Education)

MUSAC was the current school management system (SMS) within the college in 2012, but was to be replaced by the KAMAR student management system in 2013.

¹⁷ For brief details about Travellers, refer to footnote 13 earlier in this report.

¹⁸ HEADS is explained in footnote 12.



Pasifika identities, languages and cultures in the curriculum and practical relevance

The delivered curriculum is inclusive of and responsive to Pasifika identities, languages, and cultures

Within the college, curriculum delivery in all areas includes content relevant to the identities of Pasifika students. Language papers taught include Samoan (years 9 to 13), Tongan (years 9 to 12), and Cook Islands Māori (years 9 and 10). Celebrations are held for Samoan Independence Day, and Tongan and Samoan language weeks. Staff are encouraged to use Pasifika greetings, and a number of teaching staff are fluent in Tongan, Samoan and Cook Islands Māori languages. Pasifika cultural information and constructs are present in a number of individual subjects, including:

- art — 80% of the work is focused on Pasifika and Māori design and motifs
- history — study of the Mau movement in year 12
- English — use of Pasifika authors and texts
- Performing arts — participation in ASB Polyfest and Haka Waiata.

This is a clear acknowledgement of the importance of creating strength in Pasifika identities, languages and cultures as a foundation to academic and general success for Pasifika.

Pasifika guest speakers — including Warriors rugby league players and television presenters — regularly visit the college as role models, to inspire and motivate the students and promote the ideals of success and achievement.

The curriculum includes content designed to equip Pasifika students to successfully operate within New Zealand society

Pasifika students at Otahuhu College also participate in curriculum studies that equip them with practical knowledge they will require as young adults to thrive in the New Zealand society. Year 10 students, for example, are given an introduction to financial literacy during a 12-week course. This course includes a focus on how cultural expectations play a significant role in the way money is managed. Students also learn basic financial skills and an understanding of the financial pressures they will encounter when they go to university, join the workforce, or travel overseas.

Academic mentoring helps students choose appropriate career pathways and widen their life options

Supporting Pasifika students to succeed

Otahuhu College deans report that the academic mentoring programme the school has introduced supports students to make evidence-based decisions so they can experience future success with viable tertiary or career pathways. From as early as year 9, when students are choosing subjects, they are made aware of how their choices can impact on future job and study opportunities.

[The principal] pulled out a year 13 student's [results from] last year. He was a very talented young man. He's [now] sitting at home. The subjects that he chose were just all disconnected. We want to tighten up on that sort of stuff. [We hope students now] are coming through with more of an expectation of what they should be doing and getting [in terms of credits for future pathways], and then you can have a more of a conversation about learning — a better learning conversation. ... Making all that explicit is really important. [SLT member]

They have a lot of lectures about future careers and how taking a subject can open many doors for you. [Student]

College leadership believes that Pasifika student success is best facilitated when pastoral care and academic support come together

The principal and SLT believe that Pasifika student success occurs when the curriculum delivery is responsive and linked with academic and pastoral support. The college recognises the importance of involving and embracing parents, families and the wider communities, and using their expertise to enhance students' achievement and success. Positive relationships are established outside of the classroom, and the majority of college staff take an interest in students' extra-curricular activities in sports, the arts, and cultural activities.

Development of useful student learning pathways

The principal noted that many students enter year 9 at Otahuhu College with literacy levels that are well below national averages. The college seeks to ensure that students are supported to overcome gaps in literacy by firstly developing an individual learning pathway sheet for each incoming student. The learning pathway sheet identifies the student's strengths, learning goals achieved, and gaps and weaknesses across reading, mathematics and writing. Whānau teachers are then provided with a summary of collated test results and attendance. Students and whānau teachers discuss results, and develop goals and ways forward for improvement. This information is shared with parents during three-way (parent–student–teacher) conference meetings.



Regular reporting of student progress and effective communication with families

Pasifika students receive regular feedback on their progress

Deans provide senior students with regular progress reports using a 'one-screen sheet' that outlines the number of credits they have. This occurs two to three times each term. This system, alongside informal conversations with the principal, SLT members and staff, keeps the students — and their parents — well informed about their current progress and how they are tracking towards achieving NCEA levels 1 to 3.

They love the students like their own children. ... They always encourage kids. They always go and ask kids, 'How many credits have you earned? What [do] you want to improve?' They always encourage them to look at what they are doing. [Parent]

Every two weeks teachers catch up, give us credit summaries, advice on what to do better, and what [credits] we need to gain. [Student]

Pasifika parents and families also receive regular feedback on student academic progress

Pasifika parents and families say they are kept informed of student progress through three-way conferences, student reports and achievement celebrations. Whānau teachers are an excellent first port of call according to parents and provide timely information to families if there are any issues with attendance, missed classes, and lateness. As well as working to ensure that curriculum content and delivery is as relevant, engaging and appropriately challenging for students as possible, the college employs an automatic texting system for absentee students to help maintain high rates of student attendance at school and minimise lost opportunities for students to learn and achieve.

The communication is good — the way they send letters through the kids to the parents. Sometimes the kids never take the letters to the parents [so] they encourage the kids to take the letters to the parents. Sometimes I talk to the deans, the other most important person at this school. If there is any problem with the child they will sort it out. [Parent]

Part B – Ensuring quality of teaching

Strategies to build teacher capability to support Pasifika students

The college schedules regular staff meetings and discussions with a focus on teaching and learning to inform curriculum planning, especially in areas in which raising Pasifika student outcomes are of particular concern. HODs and teaching staff meet weekly, while the SLT meet once every six days and each morning for 20 minutes. Whole-staff briefings occur once a week. Regular meetings and communication ensure that responses to Pasifika learners are timely and appropriate, and that raising Pasifika student outcomes remains a priority.

Discussions about how to do better in raising Pasifika student outcomes are given priority in regular school meetings

Teachers are challenged to 'teach better' through regular monitoring by the HODs and deans as part of the teacher appraisal system. Support is given by HODs, deans and the principal to teachers whose Pasifika students remain disengaged. Early identification and support is provided for teachers who are having difficulty helping Pasifika students to reach important academic and social goals.

Leadership is critical, and the principal and SLT maintain close contact with and oversight of classroom activities. They also maintain an open-door policy, advising and supporting teachers as needed. Appropriate professional development that is relevant and meaningful to the Otahuhu College context supports teachers to manage behaviours and build relationships with students.

All staff take responsibility, it's not a personal issue, it is for the good of everybody... [and] consistent with long-term goals of giving back to the community and the expectation that students will add value to the communities they live in. [SLT member]

The principal and SLT encourage teachers to 'offer less and teach better' so the focus is less on the number of NCEA credits students gain and more on the quality:

"We're aiming for ['Merit' and 'Excellence'] endorsements instead of going for 100 credits in 'Achieved'." [SLT member]

Teachers are supported to inquire into their practice, assess Pasifika learner outcomes, and make evidence-based decisions

Otahuhu College teachers report that in building up their knowledge of strategies to improve student learning outcomes, a number of excellent teaching practices have come about, with the result that they feel well-placed to meet student learning needs. For instance, to achieve gains in student literacy, teachers have found they can use a range of literacy strategies across the curriculum. They have also improved their capacity to administer standardised writing and reading assessment tools, analyse assessment data, and make sound judgements about the quality of Pasifika students' writing and literacy.



School-wide policies and routines have also helped teachers establish areas of focus for learning and building student involvement, including DO NOW, where teachers write simple tasks on the board for students to do as soon as they enter the classroom. The DO NOW routine occurs in each class, and students are familiar with the process and settle into their work quickly. Since being initiated as a school-wide approach, the DO NOW system has supported teachers to manage student behaviour and set clear expectations for classroom behaviour.

Improving teaching and learning through effective relationships with students and parents

The principal, SLT and parents believe that the college's system of whānau teachers is pivotal in assisting Otahuhu College to respond effectively to Pasifika students' learning needs and to parents' need for knowledge and understanding about their children's progress at school.

Whānau teachers have developed strong relationships with students and parents based on mutual respect and understanding. They have effectively involved students and parents in academic conversations that lead to improved subject or option choices and increase student motivation to perform well at school. The whānau teachers are also a conduit for passing on information to other subject teachers, and to families and students. As well, they are able to bridge difficult discussions and deal with issues effectively because of the positive relationships they have set in place.

They involve parents and inform them by having parent meetings and gatherings. In tutor time there is always time where students go through their credits print out and see what needs improving. [Student]

Pasifika teachers with particular expertise in Pasifika language and protocols support other teachers in the college to develop their knowledge and skills, including correct pronunciation of names. Pasifika staff are seen as critical to engaging effectively with Pasifika students, parents, families and communities, and Pasifika students say that the Pasifika teachers are excellent role models for them. When it comes to communicating with parents, fluent Pasifika language-speaking teachers add immeasurable value as they are able to communicate effectively with families where use of the English language would be a barrier to productive communication.

My teacher is actually Samoan. So they [my parents and my teacher] speak in Samoan. [Student]

Effective relationships between teachers and Pasifika students, parents and families improve engagement and lead to better decisions

Pasifika staff play an important part, as role models and champions of success

Families report that Pasifika staff at Otahuhu College are champions and lead the way in supporting Pasifika student achievement; they also proactively respond to student and family concerns and needs — as demonstrated by the Tongan homework centre initiative.

Another initiative that illustrates how Pasifika staff champion Pasifika student success is the once-a-term opportunity one Pasifika teacher provides for students in her class to teach a lesson. The lesson has to be focused on a relevant topic within the subject. Students have responded to this in a positive way and have successfully led classes. Also, the students have worked together, providing one another with the support needed to get through the lesson. Top students take an active role and help less skilled students. Students say they enjoy the challenge and have been observed to be developing as accomplished self-managers.

Strong use of data to drive school-wide targets

Assessment data are used to drive school-wide targets, individual student goals and to improve teaching to enhance Pasifika learner achievement. Each teacher tests students during Term 1 to gain a clear understanding of each student's current achievement level. A teaching and learning plan is then able to be designed and implemented.

Teachers are supported to use data to determine the academic needs of Pasifika learners and guide their planning and delivery of lessons

There are a lot of programmes set out for us, such as tutorials during school and after school as well as holidays. Every two weeks our tutor teachers let us know about how much credits we have so far so they encourage us and advise us on what we need to do in order to achieve our goals. [Student]

The HODs and academic deans advised that they observe teachers and provide timely feedback to help their teaching practice each term. At the end of the term teachers are appraised by their HOD. Discussion centres around what the students have learnt and what teaching improvements might better support learner outcomes in the future.

Teachers who participated in this project feel that this appraisal approach encourages them to evaluate and become self-reflective practitioners.

The principal believes that their teacher appraisal process leads to quality teaching and supports Otahuhu College principles of:

- having a clear understanding of where students are placed in terms of what they know and where they need to be
- ensuring that curriculum, course design and teaching practices are relevant to the needs of students and will provide maximum opportunities for achievement
- teaching less but more effectively, ensuring that goals set for students are achievable and students experience success.



The aim is to place all students in learning programmes that match their learning needs and are relevant to their interests and aspirations

As much as possible, standardised assessment data are aligned with student achievement data; both sets of data are then used as the basis for placing each student in the best programme possible. Multiple opportunities for Pasifika achievement exist, including hybrid classes and multi-level courses to enable students to gain NCEA level 1 and 2 qualifications over a two-year period.

A year 14 class is also being developed within the college in response to students who may need extra time to complete NCEA level 3 credits. Generally, students spend the first two terms completing level 3 credits so that they have enough to ensure direct entry into a tertiary course. The benefits for students of remaining at school for year 14 include starting on their degree programme straight away (in the latter half of the year), without having to complete foundational courses.

The SLT reports that NCEA data are analysed both on a school-wide basis, and within individual subject departments, to assist in developing courses to meet students' learning needs. The school assessment policy guide for staff – *Senior matters: follow this guide 2010* – is an important resource for teachers, clearly setting out rules for further assessment opportunities and giving advice on a range of assessment methods.

A collaborative approach to professional learning and a supportive learning environment for teachers

The principal, SLT and teachers believe the professional learning programme has increased the collective responsibility and commitment of teachers to improving teaching and learning. A cross-curricular approach enables teachers of groups of students to work together and develop common strategies. There is an expectation that teachers will take responsibility and be accountable for learner outcomes. If results are not as expected, an explanation is sought by the dean and referred on to the SLT if required. For serious issues or concerns, teacher coaching expertise is utilised through the AIMHI project.

Staff feel supported and are readily able to access advice and guidance

Teachers report that if they encounter any challenges in working with Pasifika students, they will discuss these with a colleague with relevant expertise. Again, Pasifika staff in the school are critical to this process and provide excellent support for fellow staff, as well as maintaining strong relationships with Pasifika families in the community and local churches.

With its focus on the development of quality teachers, having excellent learning programmes and supportive systems in place, staff feel Otahuhu College is a great place to work.

There has been less staff turnover in the past five years because it is a nice place to be. ... [Approaches like the] academic mentoring system mean teachers are able to deal more effectively with hard cases because they are seeing every parent. [SLT member]

Including student voice to improve teacher practice and encouraging student responsibility for their own learning

Students report being actively involved in the improvement of teaching practices in the college. Student council, class captains, heads of house and prefects participate in meetings and conversations to inform the principal and SLT of any issues. Pasifika students also participate in professional development sessions for staff. Students say that their concerns and ideas are encouraged and listened to and enjoy opportunities for student-led classroom teaching.

Pasifika students in positions of leadership say they are regularly consulted in a number of forums, including student and health councils, and discussions with the principal — to provide guidance and advice from a student perspective.

Pasifika students have an active voice in the school and participate at all levels, including leadership

The principal, SLT and BOT further report that the introduction of the academic mentoring programme described earlier (and in the separate exemplar report for Otahuhu College which complements this case study), has increased student ownership of learning. The principal and SLT believe that academic mentoring in whānau tutor time establishes a learning partnership between students and whānau teachers. Students take responsibility for setting and achieving personal learning goals, understand their actual achievement levels and know what is required to progress. In turn, teachers provide up-to-date information on student progress to students and parents so they are aware of how the student is tracking towards their academic learning goals.



Teacher learning and development to enhance Pasifika student achievement

School-wide professional development

The principal and BOT reflected that over the years professional learning and development within the college has been driven by two main factors: Pasifika student achievement data; and destination data — provided by external research and programmes — for Pasifika students after they leave the college.

In the past, the BOT has supported, with resourcing, the college's participation in AIMHI, and more recently the Starpath project, which provided workshops and advice in teaching practices, coaching, testing and senior management leadership.

The principal promotes a culture of learning and achievement amongst teachers as well as students. Over the past five years the entire focus of the professional development programme at Otahuhu College has been on developing more effective teaching strategies and ways to support teaching practice.

The SLT advised that there is a school-wide professional focus which staff work on for one to two years. Pasifika student achievement patterns are analysed and used to plan professional learning priorities, including building relationships with students and families, formative practices, teaching as inquiry, literacy, numeracy, three-way conferences and academic mentoring.

[Using the data we collect], we review the programme and ask what is happening; we may meet with [the principal] and then get support from the [AIMHI] facilitator of PD. A plan is put in place and then it is reviewed again. [SLT member]

Teachers maintain there is open discussion of Pasifika students' results, and that teachers help each other develop more effective teaching strategies. Teachers lead professional development sessions, sharing success stories. Teachers say there are regular opportunities to discuss why they might need to change their practice in order to enhance Pasifika learner achievement. As mentioned earlier, students also contribute to staff professional learning.

High expectations of teaching staff

All professional learning and development meetings prioritise Pasifika student results. The college has high expectations of teaching staff and the principal openly expects that all teachers will teach for students to achieve. Just as there is a high expectation that students will take ownership of their learning and do their very best to succeed, there is also a high expectation that staff will be responsible and accountable. Teachers need to be willing to improve and change their practice, if required, to enhance Pasifika student achievement.

A culture of whole staff learning and development is fostered to improve Pasifika student outcomes

The principal has high expectations of teachers to achieve successful outcomes for Pasifika students

Decisions to retain or change teaching approaches are based on evidence about the impact of the teaching on students

Decisions to maintain or to change particular teaching approaches are based on evidence about the impact of teaching on students. Teachers are expected to evaluate how their teaching has made a difference and what students have actually learnt. To assess teacher effectiveness, a range of information sources are used including: teacher appraisal, HOD/academic dean walkthroughs and observations, student feedback, and formalised test results.

Professional development leadership

The principal, SLT, and the BOT are willing and able to ask the difficult questions and to lead serious discussions about how to improve teaching and learning for Pasifika learners. The BOT is actively involved and focuses board meetings on achievement, accountability and monitoring progress within the college.

We are engaging with teachers to see what the problems are, what they think. ... Meetings invariably focus on student achievement. [BOT member]

Professional learning and development is an evolving process that changes to meet the needs of students. The principal and SLT maintain a close eye on the correlation between teaching and learning to ensure that teachers are well-equipped. They take an active role in professional development, participating in and leading school-wide learning and development sessions. The principal recognises the importance of leading by example and is involved whenever time allows.

The leadership team and BOT strongly support and lead professional development for Pasifika student success

If the staff are doing PD, I do PD with them. That's the best thing to do — to be a part of it, not an absentee principal. [Principal]

Teachers are committed to improving teaching practices and the school-wide learning focus builds collective responsibility amongst all staff.



Ensuring an orderly and supportive environment for Pasifika students

Creating a safe and positive environment for all

Otahu College has a respectful and positive culture, which is facilitated by the principal, senior leadership team, and the board of trustees. Staff collegiality cultivates a positive learning environment for students and teachers. Staff members report working together and supporting each other, sharing expertise and skill where needed. Staff turnover has decreased over the past five years, and this is attributed to an improved feeling — “a better vibe now” — within the college. As a result of inclusive school routines, open communication, and clear policies and procedures around behavioural management the college is considered to be a safe and supportive environment.

A respectful, positive school culture fosters staff and student well-being

Table 1 shows that over the five year period 2007–2012, stand-down and suspension rates for Otahu College have generally been lower than in other decile 1 schools nationally.

Table 1: Stand-down and suspension data for Otahu College (2007–2012)

Year	Otahu College Age-Standardised rate (per 1000 students)				National Secondary Year 9 - 15 Decile 1 Age-Standardised rate (per 1000 students)			
	Stand-downs		Suspensions		Stand-downs		Suspensions	
	Pasifika	Total	Pasifika	Total	Pasifika	Total	Pasifika	Total
2007	24	25	2	2	41	29	9	6
2008	21	19	3	2	37	28	8	6
2009	22	20	0	1	42	30	9	7
2010	19	19	3	3	42	28	7	6
2011	26	25	4	4	36	26	6	5
2012	23	21	2	1	33	24	4	5

Source: Indicators and Reporting, Ministry of Education, August 2013

The principal, SLT and BOT report that Otahu College uses a range of strategies to create a safe and supportive environment for students and staff. These include:

- a house system which promotes school spirit and fosters a sense of belonging and identity
- celebrating academic, cultural and sporting achievement
- inviting Pasifika guest speakers to promote models of Pasifika success
- providing a health and wellness centre on-site to offer appropriate and timely services — meeting the physical, emotional and mental health needs of students and their families (family members are also able to access the college’s health and wellness centre)

- providing breakfast.

Effective governance is based on positive relationships

Board members feel the board provides effective governance for the college and attribute this to harmonious relationships between the members, and the genuine care for the students that is the basis for all decision-making by the board and within the college.

[The] board is tight, we debate but don't take things personally — don't have conflict within ourselves. We have pupils at the heart. ... We don't have personal agendas. [BOT member]

Fostering a sense of community and belonging

There is a sense of community within the college, a feeling of 'we're all in this together'. The SLT and the principal are visible during interval and lunch times. The principal has established clear boundaries about acceptable behaviour and has zero tolerance for bullying, intimidating behaviour, or fighting.

You've got to be here. Kids have to see you. I'm here virtually every day. I try to do duty at least once, if not twice, a day. I'll get out at interval and walk around the grounds, particularly towards the end of interval and the same at lunch time, and if I am going to have time in my office, I have it at the beginning of lunchtime and then I get out and walk the last 20 minutes. [Principal]

A sense of community promotes a safe and comfortable environment for staff and teachers

Students recognise the commitment of teachers and value their support.

They [teachers] show they care, sacrificing their time, not getting paid extra. ... In other schools once you get to year 11 you have to pay for tutors outside of school. [Student]

Genuine care for Pasifika students

Whānau teachers provide consistent and comforting contact for students, parents and families. As whānau teachers see the student each day and develop strong relationships with students and parents during three-way conferences, they are able to effectively support academic and emotional well-being. At senior level whānau class sizes are smaller, with approximately 15 students per class, so the whānau teacher can spend more time with each student.

Staff relationships with students are based on care and mutual respect and Pasifika parents and families appreciate the positive support provided for their young people

Pasifika parents say that the college is a positive, supportive environment for their children and that it focuses on their children's goals and aspirations for the future.

Teachers know their students. [Parent]

[The] school is loving. It is a fair school where everyone is equal. ... [They] do things for them [the students] to better them. [Parent]



Pasifika students report that the college shows they want them to do well in a number of ways including:

- they provide what we need to succeed in life; they show the way
- they are always giving feedback about my future in all my reports
- they are committed to help us set SMART goals for the future
- they always ask students to interact with others in activities and to learn about things they are interested in.

Providing pastoral care to support Pasifika student success

The principal's and SLT's emphasis on pastoral care, including health services, further supports Pasifika (and all) students to succeed. Programmes are in place to help identify any issues and offer appropriate support. Restorative justice approaches are utilised in the college when a serious incident occurs and where there is a victim and an offender. Otherwise, the expectation is that teachers are responsible and accountable for students' behaviour and will manage any issues in the classroom. The principal is fair and just, and facilitates a system that gives students the chance to right wrongs.

[The principal] has a high sense of justice and believes in giving kids a go. ... He has a high level of tolerance, often giving kids a second and third chance. [SLT member]

Over a three-year period, the deputy principal (DP) has worked closely with a group of Pasifika boys, helping to build their motivation to succeed in all areas of their school life. He has achieved this through involving the boys in rugby. He coaches these boys on a weekly basis and provides mentoring around behaviour on and off the field. As the boys have developed, their success on the rugby field and in the classroom has increased. Relationships with the families have strengthened, and the boys' parents are more involved with the college. In the first year, the DP had to organise transport to ensure that the boys made it to their games. Now the parents attend all games and many practices, transporting their boys to and from the games.

It's about making connections outside of school and building parents who want to be a part of school. ... [We are] able to deal more effectively with hard cases when [we] know the parents. [DP]

Successful mentoring and support for disengaged students includes involving and engaging their parents and families

Cultural and leadership opportunities for Pasifika students

Otahuhu College is culturally responsive. Students enjoy the cultural diversity and the events and learning activities provided by the school that are meaningful and relevant to them. The college provides Pasifika students with opportunities to participate in Samoan, Tongan, Cook Islands Māori or Niuean cultural performance groups.

Pasifika students say they feel safe and supported by the college. They play an active role at college through the prefect system, house leadership roles, peer mediation processes, student and health councils, and haka waiata. Overall relationships between students, including Pasifika students, are positive and there are strong feelings of pride and honour in being at “OC”.

We are a school which should be recognised for our academic achievements, not only looked at [just] from a negative side. The stereotype against our school about violence is only a small amount and quite biased. The great things our school does should also be recognised. [Student]

Otahuhu is a very good school with helpful teachers [and] friendly students to be around. [Student]

Regular school attendance is critical to student success: the college works in partnership with parents and families to achieve this

Monitoring and support for regular school attendance

The principal, SLT, teachers and parents all recognise that regular student attendance is critical to student achievement and use a number of approaches to support attendance of Pasifika (and all) students. Due to their fluency in a range of languages, Pasifika staff in the support team frequently receive phone messages from parents, or they telephone parents themselves to enquire after absent students. An automated text messaging system informs parents if their children are not in school, and whānau teachers provide parents with their own mobile phone numbers and encourage parents to text or phone if their child is unwell, absent or if there are any issues or concerns that need to be discussed.

That's the other thing which is a good thing: every day I get a text message when a teacher see one of my daughters is not in school. They always text me. I always come in and see what happens. That's the other thing I like, they always text. [Parent]



Making powerful connections with Pasifika parents, families and communities to support Pasifika student achievement

Consistent communication

Otahuhu College communicates frequently with parents and families to keep them informed and involved

The principal, SLT and BOT lead a strong commitment to building reciprocal relationships and educationally powerful connections between Otahuhu College and Pasifika parents, families and communities. The college communicates with parents as often as possible to ensure that they are involved in decisions that impact on their child's academic, social and cultural needs. The college sends out a newsletter to families once a month, as well as letters about upcoming events or urgent matters to be addressed. At short notice someone from the college, at times even the principal, phones parents. Parents appreciate this approach.

Newsletters come once a month but when they need [parents to come in for meetings], they always send a letter in the mail. [For example], maybe if the thing [is to] happen next week, they always send the letter this week. Sometimes they ring you or text you. If they need something, urgent ... the principal ring me. That is why this principal is a really good contact with me. [Parent]

Involving Pasifika parents in learning discussions and decision-making

Pasifika parents actively engage in decision-making processes involving their children

The college's systems have been developed by the principal and SLT to actively involve Pasifika parents in decision-making processes that involve their children. They use parent information evenings and three-way conferencing (as part of the academic mentoring programme), and have revisited the approach where parent permission is required on student options forms.

Student learning programmes are discussed with Pasifika parents or families in appropriate ways that increase their understanding of what their child is being taught. Parents speak positively about the three-way conferences and how all involved work together to support the needs and aspirations of the student.

Before, it never happened. I think they [have] put in the three-way programme to make it easier so that the parents can talk to every teacher about how your kids [are doing]. [In the past] there was not enough time for the parents with the teachers. They ask the kids to set goals [about] what they want to do: why you want this programme and what you want to achieve when you finish school. Good thing about the [three-way conference/academic mentoring] programme is that [as] parents [you] can hear what your kids say. [Parent]

Establishing culturally responsive links between school staff and Pasifika families and students to share knowledge and expertise

Pasifika parents' and families' beliefs and ideals are affirmed and their expertise as cultural advisors is used and valued

Parents who participated in this project feel the college is responsive to Pasifika family views about their child's learning needs and that it makes positive connections with students and families. Parents in turn support the college as cultural tutors for ASB Polyfest and sports coaches in rugby, and provide expert advice on cultural matters when requested. Pasifika parent groups also take responsibility for decorating the hall during assemblies for celebrations and special events.

The principal, SLT and teachers are visible in the community and support student involvement in extra-curricular activities, including sports and cultural pursuits. Many Pasifika teachers have strong links with Pasifika parents, families, community and the churches, and are able to communicate effectively with parents in their own language.

Otahuhu is putting out a lot of things to help the students. I can see that. I believe Otahuhu is a good college. They call us to go out camping, attend maths competitions and help the kids with Polyfest. They [teachers] come here in the morning and after school [for extra-curricular activities]. We always come here and support [our young people] and wait for them, bring some food for them and we contribute the money to buy their uniform. We put money in to help them [the staff] support their practice. [Parent]

Otahuhu College staff are visible in the community and support Pasifika students' extra-curricular activities

Sometimes, maybe (every) two or three weeks or once a month, the school calls us parents to come, and they share with us. They always give us chances to come and ask them, 'How is my kids?' and what they want us to do to help them too. [They want us] to encourage our children and [encourage them to think about] what they want to do in the future. That's why I know Otahuhu is the best school. [Parent]

It is about relationships, they have to know you, so you tell them stories about your life, your village. ... They [parents] love the idea of a three-dimensional person. ... [You] genuinely know you're one of them, they want to make connections. [SLT member]

The SLT and teachers work in partnership with Pasifika parents, families and communities to improve their understanding of the achievement levels of their children in relation to national benchmarks and NCEA assessment levels. The college holds information evenings about NCEA and its assessment processes. Students and parents receive a college assessment guide, which provides clear information about NCEA and University Entrance. Contact with whānau teachers also adds to parents' understanding of student goal setting, testing and the review of achievement progress.

Staff have strong links with Pasifika parents and families and welcome their presence at the college



Feedback to and from Pasifika parents

Accurate and timely information is available to Pasifika parents about their children's progress and achievement.

Pasifika parents and families work with teachers to gain a good understanding of NCEA requirements and their children's academic pathways

At Otahuhu College, I know my daughters are doing really well at this school. Every time, they always get awards, since they [came] here, especially in English, science and maths. The teachers, they put a lot of time to help the kids. Some days of the week, they have tutorial early in the morning, 7.30am, before the whole school starts, especially for the kids in health sciences. The students get more chances. Teachers spend more time before school started and after school with the students. [Parent]

Also, in response to an online survey inviting parents to provide feedback about their participation in the college's three-way conferencing process, parents indicated that they understood how well their child was doing, the academic progress their child was making in all subjects, and the support or help they as parents needed to provide for students to improve their achievement results.

Always when I finish work, when I come home, all the kids, they are always doing their assignments. My daughter is sitting there doing her homework [until late]. My husband, he's making a cup of tea, he's helping the kids — helping them with the homework or their assignment. My husband, he never miss going over here [to Otahuhu College] for a meeting or whatever in the school. [Parent]

Pasifika parents as conduit between school and community

Samoan and Tongan parent groups meet regularly. As mentioned earlier, the college consults with a core group of Pasifika parents regarding decisions that impact on Pasifika students. While these parents may not hold formal leadership roles in their communities, they are a significant group who always attend school events and act as important conduits of information to other Pasifika parents and families in the college community.

I'm so proud and happy. The teachers are so happy when we come in. They introduce you with a humble heart. We feel welcome to come in whenever they call us to come. [Parent]

Pasifika parents play an important role in supporting the school, particularly as connectors to the wider Pasifika communities

Relationships between the college and Pasifika families are focused on the educational outcomes of students. To support Pasifika student and parent aspirations, the principal and SLT also work with national and regional organisations, such as the University of Auckland, Counties Manukau District Health Board, and the Pacific Medical Association (PMA).

Engaging in constructive problem talk enhances Pasifika student achievement

Core values and beliefs underpin the Otahuhu College approach

This final theme in the framework for analysing the case study information, as outlined on page 6 of this report, emphasises the importance of strong leadership and a collective willingness and responsibility within the school to: identify and discuss what is not working well; plan for and implement strategies and approaches for successful outcomes for Pasifika students.

Shared vision and beliefs

Values and beliefs that guide leadership in the college include that:

- all staff have a responsibility to care for and support students to make appropriate choices about their futures
- student success requires both academic and pastoral support
- parent involvement is critical to improving student achievement outcomes.

The college believes that Pasifika student success is the collective responsibility of the entire school community

The principal and senior leadership team (SLT) promote and model the values of the college and act with honesty, tolerance and perseverance. The principal expects that the school community — including parents, families and the students themselves — will work together as a family to support the needs and aspirations of all students. As mentioned, staff are passionate about Pasifika student achievement and want all students to have as many opportunities as possible and the best chance to experience success.

The principal and SLT learn alongside teachers about how to improve teaching and learning for Pasifika students, and they lead useful discussions about the needs of students, teacher accountability, and parental input.

Leading by example

The principal leads from the front and has high expectations of staff and students. He has a vast knowledge of the South Auckland communities and is passionate about making a difference in the lives of Otahuhu College students.

When the principal first began at the college he made changes to improve the safety of teachers and students and to improve the school culture, establishing an open-door policy. Although it was a challenge to break through historical practices and a ‘this is how we do it here’ attitude, he has managed to facilitate positive change.

The principal and leadership team lead by example: they are passionate about making a difference in the lives of students

The principal is ready to ‘fight the good fight’, fervently believing in Otahuhu College, and standing by its students and teachers.

The principal does not buy into deficit thinking; he believes in the kids. [Teacher]



Pasifika parents support and value the principal's efforts to grow successful students. They feel that he is a good leader and a positive role model.

The principal is a really good man; supports the kids. I love this man. He's a humble heart to the Pacific students. [Parent]

The principal always encourages Pacific students, 'Please do your homework and please come to school every day'. I always hear that. Every time we come to a meeting, 'Please come to school every day, because if you miss one or two days, they will miss a lot of work.' If you miss this day and you pile up another on top and you never [catch up]... it gets too much. That's how they encourage the Pacific students. [Parent]

The SLT, board of trustees, teachers, parents and students see the principal as firm but fair, and as someone who always considers the ideas of others. Staff are encouraged to present proposals to the principal and SLT when they desire to make change or see the need for resources. If the evidence is sound, management approval is generally given.

The principal is well aware of the determination and commitment to improve Pasifika student achievement amongst college staff, and is extremely grateful for the backing and support from the deputy principal, as well as the expertise within the SLT, acknowledging each of these as key factors in building the success of the college.

**A strong,
distributed
leadership
approach builds a
successful school**

Final comments

This case study has shown how Otahuhu College's principal and senior leadership team (SLT), along with the board of trustees, have promoted a culture of learning and achievement based on a personalised, evidence-based approach to the learning needs of students, effective pastoral care programmes, parental and family involvement, and a genuine belief in the potential of all students, to raise Pasifika student achievement.

Recognising that Pasifika comprise the majority of the school roll, the principal, board of trustees, senior leadership team and teaching staff made a school-wide commitment to improving Pasifika learner outcomes. Initiatives and programmes implemented in the college over eight years have built a partnership approach between the college, its students and their parents to achieve educational success. The college's respectful and responsive processes engage Pasifika students and their families, supporting students to reach their full potential.

Pasifika students reported that the top four things that make them want to attend Otahuhu College are:

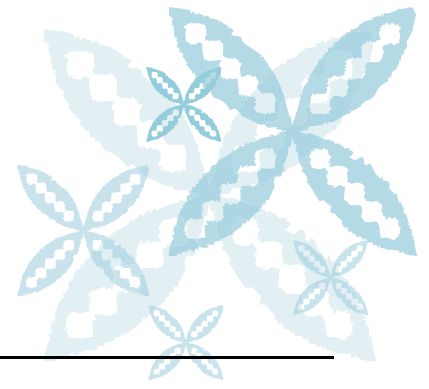
- to be with friends and make life-long relationships
- the encouraging and supportive teachers
- to gain qualifications and go to university:
- to have a great future: *"The fact that I can improve, the fact that I WILL achieve, and the fact that I will have a better future."*

This Otahuhu College case study¹⁹, like the other case studies in the series²⁰, provides evidence of effective leadership practice in each of the seven key areas²¹ identified by Robinson, Hohepa and Lloyd (2009) in their report *School leadership and student outcomes: identifying what works and why*, a Best Evidence Synthesis Iteration undertaken for the Ministry of Education. The Otahuhu College case study also serves to illustrate principles of the Pasifika Education Plan 2013–2017 at work in a school context, supporting and championing Pasifika student achievement and success.

¹⁹ This case study is supported by an exemplar report (see p.44 for details) that examines how Otahuhu College's academic mentoring programme has led to improved Pasifika student outcomes. The mentoring programme includes involving Pasifika parents in conversations about their children's academic progress.

²⁰ All three case study reports in the series on leadership practices supporting Pasifika student success are listed on page 44, along with the three exemplar reports relating to the participating case study schools.

²¹ As indicated early in this report (p.6), these themes are to do with school leaders working to ensure: high standards and expectations for Pasifika student achievement; strategic resource management and allocation; quality teaching and a quality curriculum; opportunities for teachers to learn and develop; an orderly and supportive school environment; strong connections with Pasifika families and communities for student support; constructive ongoing talk to solve problems and reach the goals for successful student outcomes.



Acknowledgements

This case study has developed from the knowledge and expertise of many people both now and from the past. The research team would like to acknowledge those who have been involved in various stages of writing and production.

The first acknowledgement is to Otahuhu College and its community of staff members, board of trustees members, families, and students who participated enthusiastically and candidly in the research. Throughout the process, the principal of Otahuhu College and the senior leadership team worked alongside the research team to share their journey of raising Pasifika achievement. Without their support and willingness to work with the researchers, it would not have been possible to develop this case study.

The research team is grateful for the time and contribution of both students and families who spoke with them and trusted that their experiences within the school would be represented accurately. Students engaged in the research process with maturity and expressed their hopes that their own successful experiences would improve education for Pasifika throughout New Zealand.

We would also like to acknowledge the support of the team from the Ministry of Education — in particular, Dr Lesieli Tongati'o (then Pule Ma'ata Pasifika), Fatulatetele Tolo, Gabrielle-Sisifo Makisi, Jo MacDonald, and Shelley Kennedy.

Research team

Based on the success of the *Rangiātea Case Studies and Exemplars* (Ministry of Education, 2011), Judy Oakden was selected by the Ministry to lead the project with the support of Kellie Spee. Pasifika cultural and research competence was then built into the project through the selection of experienced Pasifika team members — Pale Sauni, Dr Ruth Toumu'a, and Clark Tuagalu — whose input, involvement and presence in all key stages throughout the project provided the Pasifika lens required to ensure the project planning, data collection, analysis, reporting were framed appropriately for Pasifika.

Kellie Spee was the lead researcher for this case study, with support from Dr Ruth Toumu'a, Judy Oakden, Pale Sauni and Clark Tuagalu.

List of case study and exemplar reports in the series

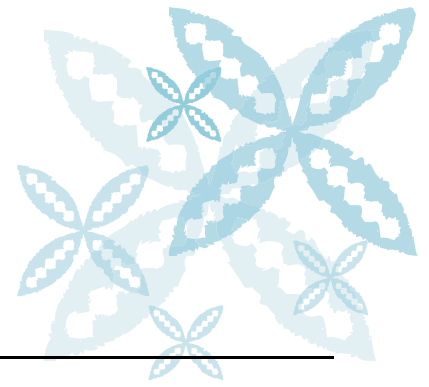
Case Studies

- *Leadership practices supporting Pasifika student success: De La Salle College Case Study* (Spee, K., Oakden, J., Toumu'a, R., Sauni, P., & Tuagalu, C.: 2014)
- *Leadership practices supporting Pasifika student success: McAuley High School Case Study* (Toumu'a, R., Oakden, J. & Sauni, P.: 2014)
- *Leadership practices supporting Pasifika student success: Otahuhu College Case Study* (Spee, K., Toumu'a, R., Oakden, J., Sauni, P., & Tuagalu, C.: 2014)

Exemplars

- *Teacher coaching to upskill teachers and support Pasifika student achievement: An exemplar* [De la Salle College] (Spee, K., Oakden, J., Toumu'a, R., Sauni, P., & Tuagalu, C.: 2014)
- *Evidence-based decision making for Pasifika success in mathematics: An exemplar* [McAuley High school] (Oakden, J., Toumu'a, R., Sauni, P., & Spee, K.: 2014)
- *A model of academic mentoring to support Pasifika achievement: An exemplar* [Otahuhu College] (Spee, K., Oakden, J., Toumu'a, R. & Tuagalu, C.: 2014)

All six reports are published by the Ministry of Education, Wellington, and are available from the Education Counts website at: www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications (under Pasifika). Some hard copies may also be available: to request copies, please email research.info@minedu.govt.nz



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