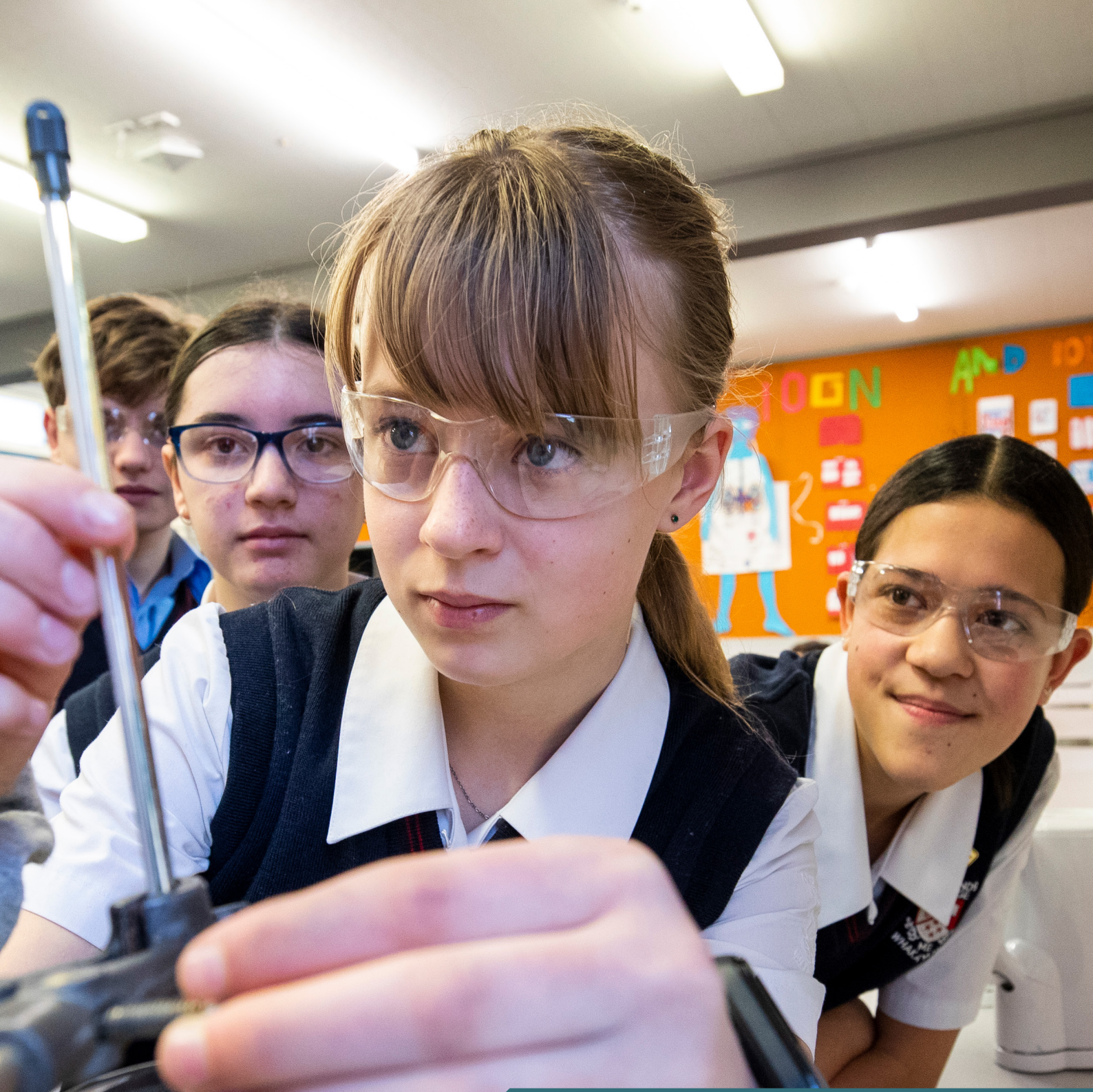

Education Review Office
Te Tari Arotake Mātauranga

Briefing for the Incoming Minister

3 NOVEMBER 2020

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He kupu whakataki
Foreword

Nau mai, haere mai ki tō tūranga hei Minita, hei mana whakahaere hoki mō Te Tari Arotake Mātauranga. Kei konei mātou ki te āwhina, ki te tautoko hoki i a koe i roto i tēnei mahi me tēnei tūranga.

Ko tētahi pūnaha mātauranga tūmatanui kei te taumata o ērā o te ao te tino huarahi e tutuki ai te whakakitenga a te kāwanatanga e mea nei, ko Aotearoa te tino wāhi mō ngā tamariki, mō ngā rangatahi hoki. Ka tautoko Te Tari Arotake Mātauranga i tēnei mā te arotake, mā te tuku pūrongo hoki e pā ana ki ngā mahi a ngā whare kōhungahunga me ngā kura hoki.

Ānō nei, ko mātou hei kanohi, hei taringa mōu i roto i te rāngai mātauranga. I tō tūranga hei Minita, e āhei ana koe ki te tono ki Te Tumu Whakarae ki te whakataki i tētahi arotake, hei arotake i tētahi kaupapa i roto i te rāngai whare kōhungahunga, i te rāngai kura anō hoki. Nā te motuhake o tā mātou noho i ngā tari whakarite kaupapa here, whakarite pūtea, whakarite paerewa hoki i āhei ai mātou ki te whakamōhio atu ki a koe te kounga o ngā mahi kei te rāngai mātauranga me āna ratonga ki Aotearoa whānui.

Ko ā mātou kitenga arotake te tūāpapa e kōkiritia ai ngā kaupapa e angitu ai ā tātou tamariki, hei tangata ngākaunui ki te ako. Ka whakamahia ēnei kōrero me ētahi atu rangahau ki te whakamōhio atu ki a koe ngā nekehanga ā-pūnaha nei, me te whakamōhio atu ki a koe ngā kaupapa me ngā haumi e whai hua ana, e eke ai ngā ākonga katoa.

Ka tuku pūrongo mātou ki a koe e pā ana ki ngā hua o ā mātou mahi, ka hui hoki ki tō taha ki te whakatau i te huarahi e puta ai he pūnaha pakari ake, mana rite ake. Ia te wiki, ka whakamōhio hoki mātou i a koe ko hea ngā whare kōhungahunga me ngā kura me whai āwhina, me whai tautoko.

I roto i ngā tau e toru e heke nei, kua whakaritea e mātou he hōtaka e rerekē ai te āhua o tā mātou mahitahi ki ngā ratonga whare kōhungahunga me ngā kura, e nui ake ai te aro ki te whakapiki i te kounga.

Ko te aronga matua mā Te Tari Arotake i roto i ngā rāngai e rua, ko te titiro ki te hua o ngā mahi tautoko a ngā ratonga ki te āwhina i ngā ākonga Māori me ngā ākonga Pasifika, nō te mea kua roa te wā kāore i tino tika te tautoko a ngā pūnaha i a rātou, ko rātou hoki te hunga ka tino rongo i ngā hua o tērā whiu.

Kei te tino hiahia mātou ki te tautoko i ngā mahi arotake ā-roto puta noa i te rāngai, ā, mō ngā kura ko te kimi huarahi motuhake e āhei ai mātou ki te tino mahitahi ki ngā kura me whai tautoko. Ka huri mātou i ngā mahi arotake ki te tautoko i ngā kura i roto i tētahi pūnaha kia ukiuki te whakapiki i te kounga. Ko te whāinga o tēnei aronga hou, ko te whakapakari me te whakawhānui i ngā āheinga o ngā krua katoa, mā te whakapūmau i te whakapiki ukiuki i te kounga, mā te whakapakari i tā ngā kura torotoro ki ngā whānau kia ū ai ngā kawenga ki a rātou, ā, kia huri mātou hei hoa arotake mō roto i te rāngai mātauranga.

E tautoko mārika ana mātou i te whakaaro kia noho ko te tamaiti te pūtake o te kaupapa. Ko te hiahia o Te Tari Arotake Mātauranga, ko te taurite o ngā hua me te angitutanga mō ngā ākonga katoa, ā, ka kōkiritia tēnei i runga anō i te wairua o tā mātou whakatauākī *ko te tamaiti te pūtake o te kaupapa*.

E whakapono ana mātou, he mōtika te mātauranga kounga mō ia tamaiti, mō ia rangatahi hoki o Aotearoa, ā, e kaikā katoa ana mātou ki te mahitahi ki a koe, e whai hua ai ngā ākonga katoa.

Welcome to your role as Minister with responsibility for the Education Review Office | Te Tari Arotake Mātauranga (ERO). We are here to help, and to support you in your role.

A world class inclusive public education system is critical to achieving the government's vision that New Zealand is the best place in the world for children and young people.

ERO helps the government achieve this by reviewing and reporting on the performance of early learning services, kura and schools.

We are your eyes and ears on the ground. As Minister, you can ask the Chief Review Officer to initiate an investigation into any element of the early childhood and school sectors. Our independence from agencies that set policy, funding and standards enables us to provide assurance to you on the quality of New Zealand's education system and provision.

Our evaluation insights are a catalyst for change so that every child achieves success as a lifelong learner. We use this information and other research to tell you what is happening at a system level, and to advise you on what programmes and investments are making a difference to the learning outcomes of all ākonga.

We will report to you on the findings of our work and meet with you regularly to discuss how best to promote a stronger, more equitable system. We will also keep you informed about those early learning services and schools that need urgent support.

During the coming three years, we have in place a programme to reposition the way we work with early learning services and schools aimed at more strongly contributing to improvement.

A priority for ERO in both sectors is how well entities are supporting educational outcomes for Māori and Pacific learners, those learners who have historically been poorly supported by the system and who are at-risk of poor outcomes.

We want to better support a strong culture of internal evaluation throughout the sector and in the case of state schools adopt a differentiated approach, allowing us to work more intensely with those that require greater support. We are shifting from event-based external reviews to supporting schools in a process of continuous improvement. This new approach aims to strengthen the capability of all state schools through embedding a continuous improvement approach, strengthening schools' own engagement with and accountability to whānau, and shifting our role to that of an evaluation partner with the sector.

We share your commitment to put the learner at the centre. ERO's ambition is equity and excellence in outcomes for all learners, and our approach is driven by our whakataukī *Ko te Tamaiti te Pūtake o te Kaupapa – The Child – the Heart of the Matter*.

We believe that quality education is a right for every New Zealand child and young person, and we look forward to working with you in the interests of all ākonga.

Nicholas Pole
Te Tumu Whakarae mō te Arotake Mātauranga | Chief Executive and Chief Review Officer
Whiringa-ā-rangi 2020 | November 2020

He kupu whakataki
Introduction

This briefing is structured in three parts:

Part 1:
Ngā wero nui kei mua i te aroaro o te rāngai mātauranga
The key challenges facing our education system

This section provides an assessment of areas of concern, system strengths and opportunities for improvement.

Part 2:
Ngā hua o te ao mātauranga i tēnei wā nei
Current education outcomes

A brief overview of the current performance.

Part 3:
Te Tari Arotake Mātauranga (ERO)
About the Education Review Office

This section sets out ERO's role, who we are, how we work, and how we can support you.

PART 1

Ngā wero nui kei mua i te aroaro o te rāngai mātauranga

The key challenges facing our education system

Education is critical to our future success

Quality education that meets the changing needs of all New Zealanders is critical to our future success – economically, socially and culturally. As Minister, you will shape the future of our education system to deliver this.

Higher education levels are linked to higher incomes and better health and wellbeing, and these effects are intergenerational[1]. A better educated society also has higher rates of social engagement, such as participation in volunteering, social activism and political engagement[2]. Education is strongly linked to healthier behaviours, and the attitudes and values that support human rights and equality[3]. Evidence consistently shows that education supports New Zealanders to be more productive and more innovative[4].

Consequently, education is one of the single most important policy contributors to breaking intergenerational cycles of poverty and disenfranchisement. There is a strong evidence base that shows early intervention programmes, such as the Ministry of Education's Incredible Years; effective parent support; quality early childhood education; and schooling with a focus on equity and quality teaching and learning, can make the difference that your government is seeking to achieve for New Zealanders.

From ERO's perspective, there are three key challenges facing our system, described in further detail below:

1. addressing the impacts of Covid-19 on our system
2. acknowledging and better supporting the aspirations of tangata whenua and Māori learners as Treaty Partners, and
3. ensuring our system better responds to growing diversity.

Impacts of Covid-19 on our system

Covid-19 has demonstrated the need for our education systems to be responsive to rapidly changing situations.

The system and the thousands of educators who work in our early learning and school sectors have worked hard to ensure children and young people stay connected to their learning through this disruption. They have innovated, embraced technology and formed stronger partnership with parents and whānau in support of their children's learning.

Potentially, these events have accelerated the use of technology and contributed opportunities for new approaches to teaching and learning. The reliance on technology for remote teaching and learning has also highlighted the digital exclusion of many learners. As a system, we need to explore ways to address these inequities as quickly as possible so all learners can take advantage of these new approaches to teaching and learning. Increasingly these digital tools will be important to future participation in the economy.

Despite the systems response under Covid-19, major concerns remain about the long-term impacts of the disruptions experienced through this year on learner outcomes. ERO is particularly concerned about the extent to which learners have missed critical milestones in their learning, such as establishing strong reading or numeracy foundations and the potential for early disengagement by a number of young people. Of concern is the extent to which these disruptions exacerbate the equity divide between different groups of students, particularly students from poorer communities and boys compared with girls[5].

Covid-19 has also accelerated trends emerging over the past decade in respect of the New Zealand workforce. It has made urgent the need to transition,

reset and rebuild New Zealand's economy. This reset or transformation will rely on a shift to a better educated and skilled population and one which is resilient and adaptable. Education will need to be at the heart of this transformation.

Our education system must acknowledge and better support the aspirations of tangata whenua and Māori learners as Treaty Partners

There have been some positive changes over the past decade, particularly the proportion of Māori staying in school to Year 13 and leaving school with a Level 3 NCEA qualification has increased significantly[6]. And although small in number, we have also seen real success for those Māori learners going through a Māori-medium pathway. Māori learners in Māori-medium education are more likely to achieve NCEA Level 2 (78 percent), than those in English-medium education[7].

However, generally Māori learners have not done well in our system and despite these improvements the gap between Māori and non-Māori remains.

We continue to see one in five (22 percent) Māori learners disengaging early from schooling and leaving school with no qualifications. This is a rate double that for non-Māori, with early Māori leavers accounting for 44 percent of all early leavers[8]. These trends occur early in our system and are progressively compounded through the learning journey.

This failure to support all Māori learners is one of the biggest policy challenges.

Strategies outlined within Ka Hikitia (the Māori Education Strategy) and the changes to the Education Training Act (2020), which requires education agencies (s.9) and education providers to give effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi (s.127), provide a platform for addressing these concerning trends.

Changes introduced by the Act include instilling in each child and young person, an appreciation of the importance of Te Tiriti o Waitangi and te reo Māori including requirements that a school's local curriculum reflect tikanga Māori, mātauranga Māori, and te ao Māori. Schools are also required to take all reasonable steps to make instruction available in tikanga Māori and te reo Māori.

We want to support you in your commitment to have more te reo teachers and continue to integrate te reo Māori into schools.

These shifts will require our system to work more closely with and be guided by iwi, hapu and whānau, that more Māori work within the system and that as a system, practitioners are more culturally aware and responsive to the needs of all Māori learners. Ultimately it will require quality teaching for every learner.

Ensuring our system better responds to growing diversity

As a community we are becoming increasingly culturally diverse and more urban. European people make up a smaller percentage of our population, and Māori, Asian, Pacific, Middle Eastern/Latin American/African groups are growing[9]. People are having fewer children[10] and 87 percent of New Zealanders now live in urban spaces[11].

Seventeen percent of New Zealand's population is Māori, and this proportion has increased since 2006[12]. Around one in five Māori self-report that they speak te reo Māori at least 'fairly well'[13].

Pacific Peoples make up eight percent of New Zealand's population, and approximately one third were born overseas[14]. Approximately 38 percent of Pacific people in New Zealand speak two languages, but the proportion of bilingual Pacific speakers in New Zealand is decreasing[15].

Pacific learners are a growing part of the population and they continue to experience poorer NCEA level 2 and 3 outcomes relative to Pākehā and Asian students.

The education system needs to respond to these changes. More and more of our communities are looking to the education system to reflect who we are as a nation, with our own national heritage and the unique cultural identities, languages and aspirations of our communities.

Key opportunities

Based on ERO's research, evaluations and on-the-ground intelligence, we know many schools and early learning services (ELS) do a good job and most children thrive.

However, ERO remains concerned that not all schools and ELSs are delivering good educational outcomes for all children, and that even in our good ELSs and schools, we are failing to support the needs and outcomes of every learner.

ERO has identified six key opportunities where we can support you to maximise impact and improve outcomes:

1. Improving outcomes for Māori learners
2. Addressing poor performance and driving continuous improvement
3. Focusing on teaching quality
4. Empowering parents and whānau
5. Improving pathways for Pacific learners
6. Building the evidence base.

These opportunities require collective effort across education agencies and beyond to achieve change. At the heart of these is understanding what works, for which learners and in which contexts, and investing in those initiatives that have greatest impact.

Improving outcomes for Māori learners

Implementing Ka Hikitia and ensuring schools use evidence based approaches to improve outcomes for all Māori learners, strengthening Māori Medium pathways, and better supporting "Māori learners to succeed as Māori" are all key to addressing disparities.

Addressing poor performance and driving continuous improvement

In schools, intervening effectively, using tools that will have the greatest impact, when providers are persistently failing to meet the needs of their ākonga. For early years, tackling poor quality provision and raising standards through a greater understanding of what good looks like.

More active support for schools and early learning services, including ensuring that providers understand their current performance and have a roadmap to improvement are viewed by ERO as critical missing elements in the system.

Focusing on teaching quality

Reducing variation in teaching quality (including use of assessment and curriculum) through a greater understanding of the key dimensions of quality teaching, and supporting this through leadership development, professional learning and development (PLD) and the adoption within and across schools of professional learning communities.

A priority area in this regard must be a focus on language and literacy, in particular strategies which ensure that as a system we establish strong reading foundations early, and equally are able to address the needs of students who struggle in the middle school and early secondary years.

To take our system forward, growing and better supporting our leaders (particularly school leaders) will be critical.

This includes strengthening our efforts to support the development of aspiring leaders and strengthening leadership capability. Addressing principal wellbeing and workloads issues are an important element of this.

We also see opportunities for education leaders to provide system-wide leadership whether this is supporting colleagues, contributing to system-wide initiatives and reform or having highly experienced and capable leaders working to turn around the performance of schools who may be struggling.

Empowering parents and whānau

Creating stronger relationships between services, schools, parents, whānau and communities that empower parents and whānau to be more actively involved in their child's education.

We also see a need to ensure that health, family/whānau and social services are available and actively work in partnership with education providers to support ākonga health and wellbeing and address the wider needs of ākonga at risk of poor outcomes.

Improving pathways for Pacific learners

Ensuring there is quality early childhood provisions for Pacific communities, culturally responsive practices that enable Pacific learners to thrive in school and stronger educational pathways that enable Pacific learners to achieve and set them up to succeed in adulthood.

Building the evidence base

Across both early years education and schooling, ERO has found the need for a stronger evidence base about what works, for which learners, in what context. Particularly, we need stronger evidence of what is effective practice in early childhood, and a richer understanding of te ao Māori perspective on evidence and knowledge.

Investing in the New Zealand evidence base on effective education policies, practice, programmes and initiatives, as well as increasing the use of evidence through making it more accessible, relevant and timely is a critical element in building a strong learning system.

Providing clarity around priorities for research and evaluation investment, and greater collaboration between agencies in this effort, will maximise our focus as a system.

ERO's priorities

Our work with the sector has identified a clear need for ERO to evolve its operating model.

We need to more strongly partner with leaders in early learning services and schools if we are to support improvement in outcomes for learners. With your support, we will make this shift through six key changes:

1. A new approach with early childhood services, supported by new indicators of quality
2. A new operating model for how we work with schools
3. Strengthening the evidence base
4. A relentless focus on Māori and Pacific learners
5. Fostering sector leadership capability
6. Intensive work with High Priority Schools.

A new approach with early childhood services, supported by new indicators of quality

We have developed a new indicators framework underpinned by current research about what constitutes quality early learning provision. This provides a clear, common statement of what good quality looks like to support ERO staff and early childhood leaders and teachers. These indicators underpin our focus on evaluation and improvement through our new approach to reviews. The approach is differentiated, dependent on the organisation or service's length of operation, quality and performance history.

In adopting our new approach, we are requiring services to establish, as part of their response to a review, a quality improvement plan. We are also looking to work differently with large corporate providers and governing bodies. Recent changes brought in through the Education and Training Act also allow ERO to take a more active role in the review of home-based early learning services.

A new operating model for how we work with schools

We are putting in place a much more differentiated approach to working with schools, where we are shifting our approach and the intensity of engagement based on our assessment of identified needs.

We will be moving from 'one-off' reviews to an ongoing relationship with schools where we work alongside them, and through evaluation, assist them in identifying areas for improvement and plans to achieve change. At the heart of this transformation will be supporting schools to understand and drive improvement over time.

As part of our work to support school improvement, we will also develop new tools for education services to evaluate how well they are delivering on the National Education and Learning Priorities. These tools will empower education services to track their progress against the government's educational priorities for our children and young people. We will also support education providers to continue to strengthen their focus on improving student wellbeing and engagement, and reducing bullying. We will support education providers to develop policies, resources and programmes that create an inclusive culture free of bullying, racism and violence.

Strengthening the evidence base

Te Ihuwaka (the Education Evaluation Centre) has been established within ERO to provide an increased focus on system-level evaluation. Te Ihuwaka will draw on the insights from our work in schools and services alongside broader research to identify the strengths and weaknesses in our system, effective programmes and innovative practice. It will provide a stronger evidence base to inform the decisions of policy makers and leaders, and most importantly promote quality teaching practices.

Alongside the creation of Te Ihuwaka, ERO is working with a cross-agency group to develop an Education Research, Evaluation and Development Strategy to increase the alignment and impact of government investment.

A relentless focus on Māori and Pacific learners

ERO is committed to honouring the Te Tiriti o Waitangi. ERO is currently developing a new Māori Strategy, *He Taura Here Tangata* that aims to support the aspiration of Ka Hikitia and shift outcomes for Māori learners.

He Taura Here Tangata:

- acknowledges, values and promotes Māori enjoying and achieving education success as Māori
- identifies the role we play as we strive to remove educational disparities that continue to exist for Māori
- focuses internal capability building, so that we know why, what and how our work contributes to outcomes for Māori learners and their whānau
- reflects our ambition that ERO will become a bilingual organisation that understands, promotes and protects Māori language and delivers quality evaluation services.

The Māori-medium education sector has shown great success at providing an education system where tamariki Māori can succeed as Māori. ERO will support Māori-medium education services to be even better by working to strengthen the pathways from kōhanga reo to kura kaupapa or kura reorua. We will also support these education services to build stronger sector-wide networks.

ERO also has a critical role in ensuring that Pacific learners reach their potential. Our Pacific Strategy outlines how we will support improvement to Pacific students' outcomes here in New Zealand and also the contribution we can make to strengthen the education systems of our Pacific regional neighbours.

Fostering sector leadership capability

We are investing in growing leadership across the schooling sector through our Leadership Partners Programme. This programme identifies talented leaders in the sector and invests in building their understanding of evaluation. It also enables us to have a strong dialogue and "real world" test for the work of ERO.

Intensive work with High Priority Schools

We are investing in more intensive support for the schools that need it the most. We have a programme to identify and work with schools which need significant support to improve outcomes. This work includes providing tools for school leaders and teachers to use for in-depth diagnoses leading to improvement. The High Priority Schools manager works with the Ministry of Education to broker the supports each school requires to lift their performance.

We welcome the opportunity to further discuss with you each of the six key changes we are putting in place and look forward to your feedback on these.

How ERO has responded to Covid-19

Closure of schools and ECEs and ongoing social distancing requirements due to Covid-19 has limited ERO's ability to complete many of its scheduled reviews this year.

During the nationwide lockdown, we were very conscious of the huge pressure principals and teachers were under. So, we shifted our focus to ensuring the wellbeing of school leaders through scheduled check-ins and setting up the Home Learning Papa Kainga TV channel. This was a joint initiative between ERO, the Ministry of Education, Te Kura, and TVNZ.

We are ready to respond quickly to support further home learning through Papa Kainga TV as needed in the event of a resurgence of the virus.

We are also currently working to understand the impacts of the disruption to learning caused by Covid-19 and are evaluating the NCEA catchup initiatives.

While we remain at Alert Level 1, our priority is on compliance reviews of ECEs and working with those schools facing significant challenges.

PART 2
Ngā hua o te ao mātauranga i tēnei wā nei
Current education outcomes

There are two key aspects to education outcomes – wellbeing and achievement. They are linked and can reinforce each other. Our recent Covid-19 work has shown that concerns by young people about the disruption to their learning heightened anxiety levels.

Wellbeing

Most New Zealand school students are positive about their learning and themselves as learners. ERO evaluations have found children and young people are encouraged and empowered to be active participants in leading their learning and to develop the skills to support them to be lifelong learners.

Many students experience issues with their mental health and wellbeing

Young people have indicated mental health is the biggest issue facing their generation[16]. In 2019, almost two-thirds of principals identified mental health as one of the top four issues in their schools[17]. Learners are increasingly presenting earlier with these concerns, requiring responses for primary school aged as well as secondary school aged students.

New Zealand has some of the poorest wellbeing outcomes for children in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries. New Zealand students continue to experience high rates of bullying – double the OECD average[18]. While reducing racism has been given increased attention, there is more work to do, with many Māori children expressing concern at the way they are treated at school[19].

Addressing these issues will require concerted effort by multiple agencies, including health and welfare agencies. There are some initiatives (such as Mana Ake in Canterbury) which show real promise in providing a truly integrated learner centric response. ERO will continue to have this as one of its key focus areas.

Student achievement

Student achievement includes both the qualifications students earn through education and more broadly the skills, knowledge and tools for ongoing learning that they develop.

Participation in the early years provides a strong starting point

New Zealand has high participation in early childhood education, with 97 percent of children participating in early childhood education before starting school[20] (an increase from 90 percent in 2000). Participation in high quality early years education has been found to contribute to better education outcomes, particularly for children from more disadvantaged backgrounds[21].

Students are achieving on domestic measures, but falling behind on international measures

We know at Year 4 most students are achieving at or above curriculum level expectations in mathematics, social studies[22] and science[23] but this trend declines at Year 8. At secondary level, an increasing number of students achieve NCEA Level 2 (79 percent) and NCEA Level 3 (54 percent). Thirty-nine percent of school leavers achieve university entrance[24].

However international measures show that:

- New Zealand's primary school students' reading literacy is ranked only 30th out of 47 countries and has recorded a decline since 2001. In the same time period, other countries have been improving[25].
- New Zealand's 15-year-olds' achievement in reading, maths and science is ranked 12th (reading and science) and 27th (maths) but is also on a downward trend (New Zealand students are scoring lower now than previously) whilst other countries improve[26,27].

Addressing concerns in relation to reading literacy should be a major priority for our system.

There is large variation in achievement and continued inequity

New Zealand has some of the largest variation in 15-year olds student achievement in the OECD[28]. For those students, *within* school variation of outcomes is high, and greater than variation *between* schools[29].

Inequity in achievement across ethnicities is apparent from primary school and continues into secondary school. There are lower average achievement rates for Māori students in primary school[30] and as described above at NCEA levels[31]. This gap remains significant with 82 percent of European/Pākehā achieving NCEA Level 2 compared to 65 percent of Māori[32]. There is a similar pattern of inequity for Pacific learners, although the gap is decreasing and is smaller than for Māori students[33].

At the secondary school level, there is a clear link between the socio-economic status of the school/kura the student attended and the percentage of students attaining at least an NCEA level 2 or equivalent[34]. While the gap between year 12 students in low and high decile schools for attainment of NCEA Level 2 is closing, students in low decile schools are more likely to gain qualifications from internal assessment standards and those from high decile are more likely to get credits through external assessment that are important pre-requisite standards for continuing study at a higher level[35].

As a consequence of these trends, ERO places significant emphasis in its work with schools in relation to how they identify and address the needs of those learners who are at risk of poor outcomes.

How services and schools are performing

ERO indicators set out what quality looks like across the settings that matter most for learner outcomes. ERO reviews provide an overview of how schools and services are performing.

Early childhood education

ERO undertook approximately 3,650 ECE reviews over the past three years of which around 80 percent had satisfactory or better performance.

Across all early childhood services, only seven percent were judged as requiring further development.

However, a disproportionate number (more than 20 percent) of early childhood services with 50 percent or more Pacific children enrolled were judged as poor and are either found to be 'not well placed' or require 'further development'[36].

Early childhood education		
	Percentage of services	**Percentage of total roll**
Not well placed[a]	3%	2%
Requires further development	7%	6%
Well placed	78%	77%
Very well placed	13%	15%
Total	4,585	191,704

a The review outcomes are changing as part of ERO's new approach to early childhood education reviews. This table uses the last review outcome for each early learning service, grouping the new review outcomes into the equivalent of the previous review outcomes.

Primary, intermediate and secondary schools

ERO performed about 1,980 school reviews over the past three years of which around 75 percent had satisfactory or better performance.

Schools of greatest concern to ERO are those that tend to be small and located in poorer communities. Approximately 30 percent of schools defined as of concern do not shift from this position within 2 years.

Māori learners are disproportionately represented in schools that are of concern to ERO.

Māori account for approximately 24 percent of school-age population[37] but make up more than half of the children in schools reviewed as 'Needs development' by ERO. Proportionately, Māori are three times more likely to be in a 'Needs development' school as non-Māori.

	Primary and Intermediate				Secondary			
	Sch.	**Roll**	**Average Roll All**	**Average % Māori**	**Sch.**	**Roll**	**Average Roll All**	**Average % Māori**
Needs development/ developing	6%	3%	122	56%	6%	2%	272	68%
Well placed	76%	69%	226	32%	70%	60%	568	38%
Strong	18%	28%	387	19%	24%	38%	1,043	38%
Total	1882	466,688	248	31%	442	294,350	666	37%

Variability within our system

These high-level figures reflect the variability that occurs within our education system. Beneath these figures, ERO's work with schools and its national evaluations indicate strengths and areas of concern in the key dimensions of our education system. Recent analysis of a sample of reviews showed that around half of New Zealand schools struggle in adopting strategies which accelerate and address the needs of learners at risk of poor outcomes and are generally poor in the use of data and evaluating their impacts on learner outcomes.

Key settings influencing these outcomes

Below we set out where ERO has identified strengths and areas of concern in the key settings:

Early Childhood Education	**Schools (English-Medium)**
Leadership and management	Leadership and stewardship
Professional knowledge and capability	Curriculum, assessment and internal evaluation
The learner and their learning	Teaching quality
Evaluation for improvement	Partnerships and connections

Early Childhood Education

Leadership and management

ERO's reviews regularly find service leaders and managers setting clear expectations and working to support outcomes for learners in their services. This includes supporting kaiako[b] with the development and resourcing they needed to promote positive outcomes for learners. However, ERO found that leadership and management can be variable. For some services there are limited opportunities for leadership development, and staff in services that are not part of a larger governing organisation can lack a professional community to support their practice.

Professional knowledge and capability

High-performing services ensure kaiako have access to relevant and timely professional learning and development (PLD) and ensure that high quality practice is consistent across a service. However, ERO has found that kaiako knowledge and expertise is variable both within and across services. This can be a challenge in smaller or standalone services where kaiako struggle to have the opportunity to engage in PLD during normal working hours. ERO remains concerned that provision of high-quality development is variable, and those who need it most may be less able to access it.

The learner and their learning

ERO has also found that kaiako and leaders in most services have developed strong, positive relationships with children, their parents and whānau. They know the children well and want the best for them. However, ERO has identified the need to develop these relationships into deeper *learning-focused partnerships* with parents and whānau, in order to tailor learning for their children. This is particularly important in the context of Māori succeeding as Māori.

b *Te Whāriki: He whāriki mātauranga mō ngā mokopuna o Aotearoa* (the early childhood curriculum) uses the term 'kaiako' to refer to all teachers, educators and other adults who have a responsibility for the care and education of children in an ECE setting. In this briefing, we use 'kaiako' to refer to these adults in an early childhood setting, and 'teacher' to refer to educators in schools.

Evaluation for improvement

ERO has found that services increasingly see internal evaluation as a powerful driver of improvement. High performing services have robust data collection processes, use well analysed data to inform their strategic priorities, and understand the impact of their improvement actions on learner outcomes. However, there remains wide variability in how well services do and how well they use internal evaluation to improve. Many services focus primarily on evaluation processes rather than learner outcomes.

Schools

Leadership and stewardship

Effective school leadership is essential to school success. ERO's reviews consistently find schools are successful where leadership is distributed and leaders set high expectations for their school, teaching and for every learner. This has been even more important recently, with school leaders responding to the wellbeing needs of students as a result of the acute and ongoing impact of Covid-19. Effective Boards of Trustees can play a pivotal role in the performance of schools.

However, ERO has regularly identified challenges for many leaders to set the strategic direction, provide pedagogical leadership and implement actions to improve outcomes for students. The devolved and autonomous nature of schools can make it hard for leaders to learn from each other. It also places a high reliance on Boards of Trustees to effectively support leaders. ERO has observed that not all Boards are able to do this. We see supporting and growing school leadership as a critical area requiring attention for our system as we go forward.

Curriculum, assessment, and internal evaluation

The *New Zealand Curriculum* (NZC) is permissive and flexible and provides opportunities for teachers to tailor learning to students' needs and interests. ERO frequently evaluates schools where this is working well, and a carefully designed responsive local curriculum supports students to learn, achieve and progress across the full breadth and depth of the NZC.

However, we find the quality of local curriculum design and implementation is highly variable across schools. Where this is weaker, ERO has identified curricula which do not provide clear learning progressions or pathways across learning areas or as ākonga progress through year levels. Equally, ERO's work identified only a fifth of primary schools were supporting students to use the Key Competencies to enhance their learning and wellbeing. In the senior years, few schools intentionally taught the Key Competencies, with the school curriculum often being driven by the assessment requirements of NCEA rather than by the NZC.

Assessment is critical to understanding the impact of teaching on learning. Assessment also supports schools in identifying and resourcing interventions for learners who require additional support. While there have been considerable improvements in the use of assessment in primary schools over the past decade, the active use of formative and summative assessments remains an area of concern. Even when we find strong assessment practices, these tend not to focus across all learning areas, and fail to capture school-wide improvement over time or learner progress from year to year[38]. This has the potential to limit the improvement of teaching and learning. *Evaluation for improvement and innovation* is one of the two most frequently reported areas for development across all New Zealand schools.

Our schools and teachers need greater support with resources, guidance and professional development to fully take advantage of the New Zealand Curriculum. A priority in this is strengthening the use of assessment for learning throughout the system and across all learning areas.

Teaching quality

Quality teaching is the single biggest factor in determining learner success.

ERO reviews identify widespread examples of high-quality teaching in schools. Teachers in these schools are committed to working collaboratively, sharing responsibility for all their learners, and tailoring curriculum and pedagogy to individual learner needs, strengths and interests.

However, ERO has found that teaching quality varies between and within schools. Often there is a lack of a clearly understood and evidence-based picture of quality teaching. Whole school PLD is one way in which schools and teachers can improve the quality of their teaching. However, ERO has found that around one-third of schools either do not have a PLD plan or have a PLD plan that is not robust and/or linked with the school's strategic priorities.

Access to effective PLD provision can be a challenge, particularly for small and rural schools. The establishment within and across schools of effective professional learning communities which support teachers to work together in support of their teaching practice and better understand their impact on learners' outcomes is one of the most important changes we would advise for the system.

Partnerships and connections

ERO has found two-thirds of teachers and principals use what parents and whānau know about their child to set goals and support their learning. Schools who do this report considerable benefits for children. A third of leaders specifically cited greater whānau involvement and integration of home and school learning as a success over the lockdown period.

However, partnerships with the community are highly variable, and generally less common than those with parents and whānau, and links with other services are not always made. Tackling issues such as our high truancy rates and early disengagement from schooling will require education providers, health, family and social services to be actively working in partnership.

Networks and partnerships between schools could also be strengthened. For example, many schools and early childhood services participate in learning communities such as Kāhui Ako. However, over a third of teachers who responded to a survey said their Kāhui Ako participation has either not supported, or only somewhat supported their practice[39].

The need to join up better

Finally, there is a consistent theme that all the parts of the education system could be better aligned. ERO has consistently found implementation is a challenge across the system and leaders may need greater support to translate intent into well-planned action and to be focused on the actions and initiatives that will make the biggest difference.

PART 3
Te Tari Arotake Mātauranga (ERO)
About the Education Review Office

ERO's role

ERO's role is to review the performance of schools, kura, wharekura and early learning services and report on the provision of education by those institutions. The Chief Review Officer reports to you and has a mandate to report publicly on the findings of ERO evaluations.

ERO uses this information and other research to tell you what is happening at a system level and to tell you what programmes and investments are working to make a difference for the learning outcomes of all learners. It evaluates education for groups of students (high priority learners), key aspects of provision (for example curriculum) and key issues (for example bullying or learner wellbeing).

ERO also conducts research and evaluations on the performance of the education system. This provides evidence which can be a catalyst for change where needed to enable every child to achieve success as a lifelong learner.

How ERO can support you

ERO can support you through:

- regular reporting to you on schools, kura and early learning services that are at risk of underperforming and providing advice on intervention to address the situation
- reporting to you on schools, kura and early learning services that are doing very well
- providing you with an in-depth picture of system performance and key issues based on our daily work in schools, kura, and services, data and the international evidence base
- evaluating programmes, initiatives and reforms to provide an evidence base for your decisions on next steps, and
- raising early learning, school and kura performance through providing evaluation tools and shining a light on best practice.

Our work programme is informed by your priorities and at any point you can instruct the Chief Review Officer to undertake work to address areas of interest or concern.

How we work with the sector

We work closely with sector stakeholders to deliver on our strategic intent.

The Ministry of Education is a critical partner in our work with the sector and with NZCER in building the knowledge base to support decision making at all levels of the system. We equally work closely with NZQA, the Teaching Council, New Zealand School Trustees Association, unions, and education sector peak bodies. Key Māori medium partners include Te Rūnanga Nui o Ngā Kura Kaupapa Māori o Aotearoa, Ngā Kura a Iwi o Aotearoa, Te Kōhanga Reo.

We recognise that children and young people need to be actively engaged in decision making on issues that affect them. ERO regularly captures the voice of children and young people in our national evaluations through student surveys, focus groups or interviews, and our institutional reviews capture students' perspectives. We also engage with the Ministerial Youth Advisory Group where appropriate, providing an opportunity for New Zealand youth to voice their own experiences and perspectives on education.

Our Early Childhood External Stakeholder Group includes leaders from early childhood organisations across the country. These stakeholder representatives allow us to engage with key people about our initiatives and how we work with services. We also work with them to consider the implications of any changes, and ways to work through those changes.

We have two main advisory groups focusing on our work with schools. These are our Leadership Partners Establishment Board; and our Principal Advisory Group, consisting of a cross-representation of school principals. These groups provide advice and guidance on the way we work with schools. We also work closely with sector peak bodies.

We have also established a Te Reo Māori advisory group which advises us in our work towards the revitalisation of te reo.

We have established relationships with the governing bodies in Māori-Medium Education, through our indigenous evaluation and research group. These relationships support the development and implementation of tailored methodologies reflecting the distinct philosophies and approaches in Māori-Medium Education. These approaches are considered world-leading in indigenous education.

Internationally, we work with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) to support education provision in the Pacific (for example, we are responsible for supporting Pacific Realm countries in support of evaluating and developing their education provision) and collaborate with the OECD and others.

We are members of the Education Sector Governance Group (Chief Executives of education agencies) and the Education Sector Stewardship Forum.

Our people

We have 213 staff. Most of our staff are in our seven regional offices working with schools and services throughout New Zealand. In addition, we have a small national office based in Wellington.

ERO's work is spread across five business units:

1. Review and Improvement Services
2. Te Ihuwaka (Education Evaluation Centre)
3. Te Uepū ā-Motu (Evaluation and Review Māori)
4. Methodology and Professional Practice, and
5. Corporate Services.

Nicolas Pole Chief Executive & Chief Review Officer

Chief Executive and Chief Review Officer

Nicolas Pole is ERO's Chief Executive and Chief Review Officer. He has been in this position for just under four years.

He originally trained as a teacher and has had an extensive career working in a range of Government research, policy and operational roles in education and welfare both in New Zealand and across the Tasman.

During 2011, Mr Pole led the Ministry of Education's response to the Christchurch earthquake, and more recently set up Home Learning TV | Papa Kāinga TV in response to the COVID-19 lockdown.

Jane Lee Deputy Chief Executive

Ruth Shinoda Deputy Chief Executive

Review and Improvement Services

Each year, our review officers undertake external evaluations in approximately 1,200 early learning services and 600 schools. This is equivalent to approximately 12 school and 25 early learning service reviews every week. We are your eyes and ears on the ground and are able to provide you with real time information on how the system is performing. Our review officers are professional evaluators with extensive sector experience.

Review and Improvement Services is led by the Deputy Chief Executive (Review and Improvement), Jane Lee (Kai Tahu, Kati Mamoe, and Waitaha).

Te Ihuwaka Education Evaluation Centre

Te Ihuwaka evaluates the performance of the education system, the effectiveness of programmes and interventions, and shines a light on good practice. Te Ihuwaka draws on research from here and abroad to build a stronger evidence base to better support decision makers at all levels of our system including leaders and teachers.

Te Ihuwaka | Education Evaluation Centre is led by the Deputy Chief Executive (Head of Te Ihuwaka), Ruth Shinoda.

Lynda Te Pura Watson Deputy Chief Executive

Dr Ro Parsons Deputy Chief Executive

Evaluation and Review Māori

Reviews in Māori-medium settings are led by our dedicated Māori immersion review team, Te Uepū ā-Motu. In the case of kura and wharekura, ERO's methodologies reflect the distinctive philosophies and approaches in Te Aho Matua Kura Kaupapa Māori, and Ngā Kura ā Iwi. These approaches have been developed with these respective groups and are considered world-leading in indigenous education.

Evaluation and Review Māori conducts evaluation and research and develops evaluation methodology for Māori medium settings.

Te Uepū ā-Motu is led by the Deputy Chief Executive (Evaluation and Review Māori), Lynda Te Pura Watson (Ngāti Kahungunu, Naga Tahi, Ngai Tūhoe).

Methodology and Professional Practice

ERO's Methodology and Professional Practice team develop the evaluation tools and frameworks for ERO's reviews and the professional development for Review Officers. Professional practice leaders in each region support the learning and development needs to enable our staff to work effectively.

Methodology and Professional Practice is led by the Deputy Chief Executive (Methodology and Professional Practice) Dr Ro Parsons.

Jeremy France Deputy Chief Executive

Corporate Services

The Corporate Services team ensures staff have access to the advice, tools and infrastructure needed to achieve ERO's functions. The team also ensures ERO meets government expectations relating to employment and our activities.

Our Corporate Services team is led by Jeremy France.

Conclusion

ERO looks forward to supporting you through its roles as an independent reviewer of the quality of provision, a source of real time on-the-ground information, and as a provider of in-depth evaluations of system performance and the effectiveness of initiatives.

The changes we are putting in place will enable us to support you more strongly in improving practice in services and schools in order to deliver better outcomes for all New Zealanders.

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