

Leadership practices supporting Pasifika student success: McAuley High School Case Study



Evidence, Data and Knowledge Group
Ministry of Education
PO Box 1666
Wellington 6140
New Zealand

Email: research.info@minedu.govt.nz
Phone: 64-4-463 8000
Fax: 64-4-463 8312

Judy Oakden Consultancy
PO Box 2950
Wellington
New Zealand 6140

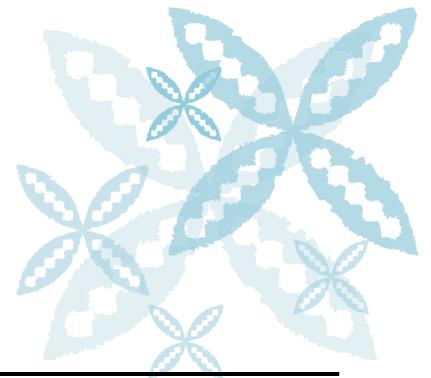
Mob +64 27 479 6070
email: judy.oakden@gmail.com
www.kinnect.co.nz

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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.

McAuley High School is a state-integrated decile 1 secondary school for years 9–13 girls, based in a mainly Pasifika community. The case study explores some of the strategies and approaches McAuley High School's leadership team use to consistently achieve some of the highest levels of Pasifika student achievement in New Zealand. The school uses a wide range of tools and strategies — some specific to Pasifika needs — to track and monitor student achievement, make evidence-based decisions at all levels, help teachers and students to set goals, and help all students, including Pasifika students, to stay on course.

The school's vision is that:

Walking in the footsteps of Catherine McAuley we seek to realise our own potential as a learning community to answer the call of the Gospel by choosing to make a difference in the world, and to aim high, believing everyone can achieve.

In 2012, 91% of Pasifika students in year 12 at McAuley High School attained NCEA level 2.

The Education Review Office's (ERO) 2010 report for McAuley High School stated that students at the school were 'well above national averages and those of schools of a similar decile. Attendance and retention rates are high and students engage well in learning'.

The ERO report further identified (p.2) that key characteristics of the school included:

- a strong culture of respect and inclusiveness
- strong Catholic and Mercy values
- high expectations that students achieve personal excellence
- effective board of trustees (BOT) governance
- effective BOT and staff engagement with the school's communities
- parents' wishes being addressed and rich cultural opportunities available for students
- good use of student achievement information
- well-developed learning support and pastoral support.

¹ All of the case study and exemplar reports in the series are listed at the end of this document (on page 53).

² The McAuley High School exemplar focuses on sound evidence-based practices for Pasifika success in mathematics.



After visiting McAuley High School in 2010, the Education Review office showed confidence by placing it on a delayed review cycle of 4–5 years. It is one of the 10% of schools in the country in this position. A notable feature of the school is students' belief that they can achieve academic success. This was articulated by a member of the board of trustees as follows:

Even maybe ten years ago you might have had one child that believed they could get to a pinnacle of success. ... We now have swung that result right around — and accolades to the teachers — so that 99 believe and maybe one doesn't. You've now got girls believing: 'We're entitled to this success, it's duly ours, and why should we not have it just because we don't attend a decile 10 [school]? ... We all have equal rights.' To me that's the exciting thing in this school!

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’ (Pasifika Education Plan 2013–2017). For this McAuley High School case study, researchers asked the senior leadership team (SLT), the BOT, teachers, and Pasifika students and families, to share their perspective on what McAuley High School is 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'.

McAuley High School 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 students 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 SLT and are evident on a daily basis within the school.

As a Catholic girls' school in a metropolitan community, McAuley High School also provided a different research context to the other two schools in the study.

McAuley High School is a state-integrated secondary school located in Otahuhu, Auckland. The school has 679 students from years 9–13. Pasifika students have a strong presence in the school and make up 88% of the school population. The school roll includes 58% Samoan, 24% Tongan, 6% from other Pacific communities, 4% Māori, 4% Asian, and 4% from other ethnic groups.

The school has a particular focus on its Mercy values and provides strong academic and pastoral care for its students. There are strong links with the local District Health Board, which funds a nurse in the school.

The principal has led the school for the past ten years, and four members of the BOT who appointed her remain as serving members. Board members represent a diverse range of the school's parent communities. Serving on the board are Samoan, Tongan and Māori parents, plus student and teacher representatives. Four members of the BOT are appointed by the Bishop of Auckland and include a former student and three members of religious organisations.

The school also has a strong middle leadership team. Some of its members have worked together for many years under the strong pedagogical leadership of the principal and the senior leadership team.

Research method

The case study design and methodology drew on the learnings from the development of the *Rangiātea Case Studies and Exemplars* (2011)³, a series of five case studies and exemplars illustrating leadership in high-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 & Lloyd's 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 toward Pasifika education success* (Airini et al., 2010)
- *Talanoa research methodology: a developing position on Pacific research* (Vaioleti, 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) identifying 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.

³ *Rangiātea Case Studies and Exemplars* are available online at www.educationalleaders.govt.nz/Leading-change/Maori-education-success/Rangiataea-case-studies-and-exemplars.



Researchers 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 34 people were interviewed, including the senior leadership team, deans, teachers, students, families, pastoral staff and board of trustees members. A further 28 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 and NCEA data and Ministry of Education SchoolSMART⁴ data, were made available by the school.

Researcher engagement with the school mostly occurred between 19 September 2012 and 23 October 2012 and involved two data collection phases. Additional feedback from the school was also obtained up to 8 May 2013.

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 for data collection. 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 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 ensure successful navigation between the need to collect accurate historical information on the school's journey, and the need for efficiency in data collection, analysis and project write-up.

In the case of McAuley High School, access to parents and families was quite limited, due to work and community commitments. However, feedback from parents and family members who did participate in the project clearly demonstrated their respect for the principal and senior leadership team, and for the school as a whole.

⁴ 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 themes⁵ for effective school leadership, as identified in the research literature. The case study findings are presented in the following pages under these same seven themes. The case study findings also illustrate school practices that align with the Pasifika Education Plan 2013–2017.

⁵ 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.

The entire school community now has an absolute belief that Pasifika students can and will succeed

McAuley High School's strategic goals promote high standards and expectations for all Pasifika students. The strategic and long-term goals are driven by the board of trustees, clearly articulated by the principal and the senior leadership team, and well-understood by students and families. What stands out at McAuley High School is both the clarity of the goals and expectations for Pasifika success and the unanimity of agreement about these.

One of the important things is to see the vision together. ... Just thinking about what the mission is, what the vision is, [and] 12 of us [board members] that see it the same way. You haven't got a split anywhere and I think that makes a huge difference when your board is on the same pathway. [BOT member]

It's a partnership, and at the end of the day, the reason why we are all here, it's the students. [BOT member]

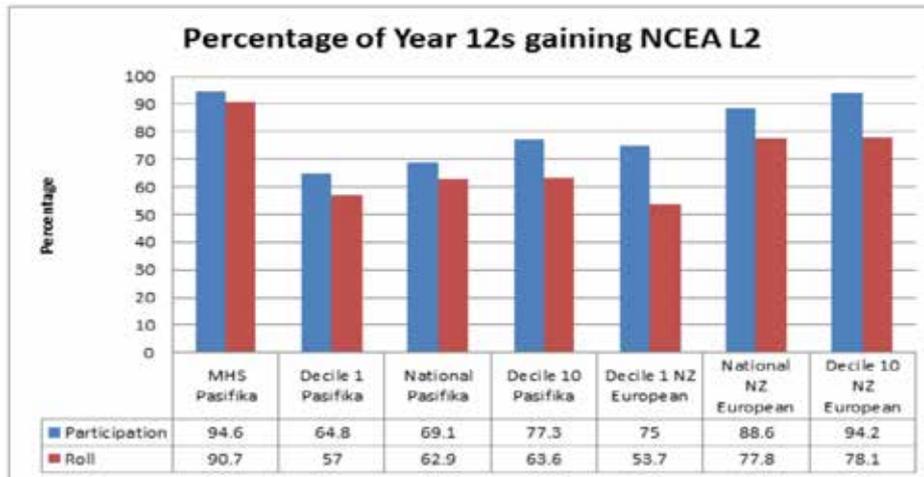
The principal emphasises the 'whole picture' and acknowledges that getting to the point where the students believe they can be successful has involved "a 10-year journey based on knowledge". The senior leadership team uses evidence to identify key high-impact areas to target. Goals are set accordingly and collective school and community effort focuses on these areas. As evidence of positive change starts to emerge, mechanisms are put in place to sustain it, and new evidence-based areas of focus are selected.

To improve Pasifika student achievement, the school sought to understand the barriers, connect to the community, and build staff capacity

For instance, early in the principal's tenure at McAuley High School, the initial goals were to understand the barriers to Pasifika achievement, connect to the community and support staff capacity building. These original goals have been addressed to a high degree.

Figure 1 illustrates the high levels of NCEA level 2 attainment for McAuley High School Pasifika school leavers, which are higher than the national average for Pasifika students.

Figure 1: Year 12 NCEA level 2 attainment data for McAuley High School 2012 compared with a range of other school types



Source: McAuley High School analysis.

The principal reports that the biggest challenges have been raising people’s expectations of Pasifika student potential, organising professional development, and establishing effective ways to address issues commonly associated with low socio-economic environments.

McAuley High School has a strategic plan, which includes professional development and career planning for staff that closely align with the school’s current goals regarding Pasifika achievement.

Our pass rates have continued to improve year on year, however the big push [now] is around the quality of those qualifications — we are aiming for [students to gain] Merit and Excellence. Scholarship was introduced more widely in 2010, and it was great that one of our students gained the Top Scholar award in Samoan last year, our first year of entering students into that examination. [DP Curriculum]

Pasifika families appreciate that the school has high expectations for their young people’s academic achievement, and that is fosters moral and Christian values

The principal stresses that McAuley High School’s approach to achieving Pasifika and Māori success has three major components. These involve long-term, strategic goals that relate to each of the areas of curriculum delivery, pastoral care, and the special character of the school. Pasifika families appreciate the school’s high expectations for their young people’s academic achievement, development of critical thinking skills, and fostering of moral and Christian values.



The role of the board of trustees

The board of trustees (BOT) plays an active role by critiquing the school's progress towards its goals for Pasifika student success, and by selecting areas for future focus to support and progress students' learning and achievement: *"We are reassessing all the time."*

There is strong Pasifika representation on the board of trustees, with members taking an active part in monitoring progress towards goals for Pasifika student success

The senior leadership team has developed school systems and processes to ensure the voices of key stakeholders are heard in decision-making. One effective way that this occurs is through student and teacher representation on the BOT.

Everything that's happening around the school, and through our student council meetings, I transfer [information about] that to our board [of trustees], and there we have parents on the BOT, and we really discuss that — 'How are these students doing?' [BOT student representative]

The board of trustees includes Pasifika members who have strong links and standing within the community. McAuley High School's current board comprises two Samoan parent representatives, one Tongan parent representative, and one Māori parent representative, as well as student and staff representatives, and the principal. In addition, there are four proprietor representatives, including two Sisters of Mercy, a Franciscan Brother, and a former student. Board members clearly demonstrate the value of Pasifika connectedness by making themselves available at community events so that families can talk with them.

The BOT uses student progress and achievement data as a basis for their decision-making and planning for Pasifika success

The BOT members are also skilled in looking at school and student data reflectively and responsively. Several have been on the BOT for more than five years and engage in regular professional development. Informed by the data, they have a sound understanding of what Pasifika students bring to the school, what they are capable of, what goals to set, and how to achieve them.

So we have got to constantly ensure that the school is driving forward: new initiatives, new ideas, to keep it fresh for the students and the staff. [BOT member]

There is a shared belief among members of the board, school leadership, teaching staff and parents that they are on a journey together and that high levels of student achievement are possible. Students and their families receive key information on student progress in useful and accessible formats. One teacher commented that while once parents' highest ambition was for their daughter to work in an office, that has changed so it's *"Now, we're producing scientists; we're producing engineers."*

Goal setting by and with students

Under the guidance of the senior leadership team and other key staff, students also play a part in school goal setting and achievement. Pasifika student leaders at McAuley High School strongly espouse the school's strategic goals and its high expectations for and of Pasifika students. The students actively moderate each other's behaviour and that of younger students through behaviour modelling and frank discussion. Older students instil important values in younger students in ways that they feel complement the efforts of teachers and school leadership.

Pasifika student leaders actively participate in school goal setting, and help instil high expectations for success among younger students

Staff actively support girls to form — and achieve — their own goals, informed by ongoing and personalised assessment, monitoring and tracking. The deputy principal (DP), who focuses on the curriculum, works with the HOD Mathematics to regularly provide performance data for each year's student cohorts to the BOT, principal, senior leadership team and teaching staff. This information is used by staff to set goals with students, and it helps set appropriate expectations for the students' progress and achievement during the year, based on the overall results for the particular cohort.

Positive shifts in student attitudes, morale, and sense of inclusiveness and belonging

Over the past few years the principal, staff and students note that there has been a shift in attitudes at the school about achievement. Where there were previously negative stereotypes, the principal and senior leadership team report that they have observed growth in student pride, both in self and in the school. This was also recently observed by external reviewers, and staff report that there is a sense amongst students that *"We are McAuley girls"*. Students also report a sense of sisterhood and genuine affection among girls of all ages in the school.

We always greet each other, every day, like with a hug ... and at the end of the day we always hug again to say goodbye! [Student]

Students comment that being 'brainy' and succeeding is increasingly socially acceptable, even highly desirable. This shift in the perception of success is significant. There is a positive balance between healthy self-esteem and aspirations, whilst upholding important Pasifika cultural values of humility and respect. Students acknowledge the importance of 'the right attitude to succeed'.

During our time here at McAuley we've always grown up knowing that we can pass. [Student]

We don't look down at being smart. ... It's OK, it's encouraged. [Student]

It's not only academic studies [that are important], it's like, sporting, as well as behaviour, 'cause if you don't have that behaviour, that attitude to achieve, then there's no use. So as older students we target behaviour [with the younger students] 'cause we've been there. ... [We want] to help them get to where we are now. ... It's rewarding for them as well as us. [Year 13 student]

Girls also report that the efforts of all students are acknowledged — that is, there is not only a focus on the celebration of excellence, but also on genuine effort.

You don't have to be the brightest or the smartest. If you are passionate and focused, you can meet the targets. [Student]

Having a school culture of high expectations and clearly expressed school targets are powerful motivators for students. Students confirm that *"the positive approach"* is what keeps them at McAuley High School. Strong and consistent messages are conveyed in the school that success is expected and is well within reach of all students.

There has been a significant shift in attitudes to success: students now see success as socially acceptable

The school's high expectations and belief in its students' ability to succeed empowers and motivates Pasifika students



The school identifies and plans for students who need accelerated learning or have untapped potential

The school acknowledges and plans for students who arrive in need of accelerated learning, and uses appropriate tests to identify learning strengths that might not be apparent from literacy and numeracy tests alone. The school also ensures that its high expectations of success for students with English as a second language (ESOL) is matched with the provision of high levels of support (extra tuition and time) for these students. Heads of department (HODs) report that in year 9, half of the cohort have an additional two hours of literacy development support during each cycle of the 6-day timetable. At year 10, ESOL students have an extra three hours per cycle, and at year 11, an additional 6 hours per cycle. The school is well above the current levels for literacy and numeracy achievement amongst Pasifika reported in the Pasifika Education Plan 2013–2017.

Shared clarity regarding school goals and plans for student achievement and systematic monitoring of student progress

An awareness of the targets in the school's annual plan links with a systematic approach to monitoring student progress. All teachers are aware of their personal responsibilities to enable Pasifika (and other) students to achieve well. Teachers and pastoral care staff speak of caring for the students as if they were their own children.

School leadership, staff and students have a shared understanding of school goals and their own role in achieving them

I feel a very strong sense of accountability to every student in our care, as do the staff as a whole. [DP Curriculum]

We make the parents feel that we are parents too, that we are part of the family — that we treat these kids like our own kids. [Teacher in charge of parent liaison]

The HODs report that they are clear on the school's strategic goals. They have a good two-way process for making sure that goals are appropriate, and work with others to set departmental goals and ensure 'flow through'.

There is a strong commitment to students reaching their potential, both individually and collectively. Literacy and numeracy testing at strategic points gives a clear picture of each cohort's strengths and weaknesses. The school uses carefully selected assessment tools to ensure the best diagnostic ability for the school's context and student body.

Part of the entrance [assessment process] is the MYAT [Middle Years Ability Test] that tests literacy, numeracy and reasoning. It is an important tool for identifying students that may not currently have strong literacy or numeracy skills. We tend to get twice as many stanine 9s in the reasoning section as we do for literacy and numeracy, which shows the potential that is able to be realised in our students. [DP Curriculum]

Students are helped to reach their potential through use of targeted assessment tools that inform both staff and students of progress

Senior deans also confirm the value of access to regular and comprehensive data on student performance. They have access to not only test scores at years 9 and 10 and NCEA achievement to date for years 11–13, but also attendance records, pastoral care entries and all report comments. This provides a comprehensive, longitudinal picture of each student, which can be aggregated or disaggregated in a number of meaningful ways.

The school supports teachers to effectively use student data in a range of ways, including through meetings led by heads of department and deans, and through professional learning groups and targeted, one-on-one sessions.

I don't think it is feasible to ensure that all staff members can produce graphs and statistics in a form that is useful for analysis. The Head of Maths and myself work together to produce appropriate graphs, tables and statistics for professional learning and reporting procedures. The focus for staff is on analysing this data — What does it mean? So what? Now what? — rather than data manipulation. [DP Curriculum]

Staff ensure that students undertaking NCEA level 1, 2 or 3 study have regular access to reports on their own and their cohort's progress, presented in a range of ways. These include lists for students, showing what they 'have' and 'have not' (achieved) and what they 'need to get' for NCEA credits or endorsements. In addition to data and records, deans follow the same cohort throughout years 9 to 13 and report that, as a result:

You know their parents, their interests, and you can really see their growth.

Each department in the school files reports to the BOT, which then uses these reports for a wide range of decision-making processes. The DP Curriculum engages in regular and in-depth analysis of the data, and uses findings to pinpoint areas of strength and weakness. School leadership members then work with relevant staff to adapt their curriculum content and/or delivery.

"Everything we do is analysed and evaluated."

We analyse each particular standard. We look at the design of each standard, and if we have a less than 75% achievement in a particular standard, the teacher has to go back and look at that standard and work out why. It could be, for instance, that they had a student from another school come into the school who didn't have the background, and that pulled their percentage of achievement below 75%. Or it could be that the wrong course was selected. Or it could be that the way the unit was constructed made it unsuitable. We look at the causes, and then we modify. Everything that we do is analysed and evaluated. [Principal]

The availability of individualised data ensures Pasifika students who are at risk of not achieving are identified early and school-wide plans are made to accelerate their progress.

Staff act fast on assessment results to ensure students have the opportunity to succeed

As part of the response to students at risk of underachieving, the chaplain meets with groups during lunch hours and at other times to provide extra pastoral support. Pastoral care is combined with HODs' efforts to increase the amount of small-group and one-to-one teaching and learning for at-risk students, while at the same time taking care to ensure that these students do not feel labelled or streamed.



The deputy principal reports that a group of colleagues run teaching and further assessment opportunities during school holidays. A pleasing increase has occurred in students attending these sessions not just to gain credits, but to improve on an Achieved result in their first attempt, to Merit or Excellence, so they can gain course or subject endorsements.

Staff members who run the holiday-time teaching and assessment sessions, report attendance of up to 80 students a day. In addition to this, the school runs a regular homework centre from Monday to Thursday, with a specific focus twice a week on mathematics. For students at risk, attendance at the homework centre is incorporated into their weekly timetable until they have reached the needed number of credits in numeracy. The school's strong push for the girls to achieve in numeracy and literacy is communicated regularly to parents, with the reminder that without literacy and numeracy students cannot attain NCEA level 1, which they need to progress to higher qualifications.

The school's homework centre provides extra support, including for students at risk

Strategic resourcing to enhance Pasifika student achievement

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

Clearly prioritised resourcing

At McAuley High School, the two clear priority areas for resourcing are curriculum and pastoral care. There is also ready access to teaching and learning resources that will particularly help engage both at-risk and high-performing Pasifika students.

The BOT plays a key role in ensuring the school provides resources in a strategic manner, using well-established, evidence-based systems. The senior leadership team report that the BOT exercises “*very careful financial management*”, ensuring the school is in a good financial position. Ultimately, the BOT priority is curriculum delivery, and after that, attempts are made to meet all other requests.

We spend more on curriculum than other schools. ... Curriculum [delivery] and student needs come first, and because we've got such a wonderful executive officer, we manage our finances really well. [BOT]

The BOT's priority has always been curriculum [delivery] and providing the resources for the students. When it comes to capital expenditure there's a clear process in which staff members identify the need. They present an application and the staff committee examines the requests and makes the recommendations to the principal and ultimately to the board of trustees. [Principal]

Direct links and communication between the board of trustees and teachers also aids mutual understanding around the factors that enhance teaching and learning. Staff presence on the BOT provides valuable insights for both parties. The BOT gains first-hand understanding of the teaching and learning needs of staff. And the teacher representative on the BOT gains powerful insights into the management side of the school operation and how this flows through to resourcing and other key decisions which affect the teaching and learning of Pasifika students.

It's an eye opener, how much work is involved in running a school. [Pasifika teacher/BOT member]

Resourcing from multiple sources

The BOT commends the principal's ability to negotiate with the Ministry of Education and Catholic Church administration for resourcing for the school, from a limited funding pool. In particular, the board respects the way that the principal argues strongly and diplomatically to secure funding for the school, with the students' needs firmly at the core of the process.

Evolution in the types of initiatives that are being approved for funding reflects the school's progress over the past ten years, with new areas of focus ensuring the school continues to

The BOT plays a key role by taking a strategic approach to resourcing to effectively meet Pasifika student needs

School leadership secures needed resources from a number of sources



offer girls an enriching programme of study.

What the principal can see as a benefit for the students, we are then the driving force behind [making it happen]. ... The world's opened up — we now are doing things that five years ago you'd never have dreamt these students would be involved with. [BOT member]

Case example — St Johns programme (to welcome and prepare new year 9 students and support them through their secondary schooling)

An example of an initiative made possible through good management of funding is the St John's programme. Funding for the St John's initiative from the Catholic Caring Foundation was added to funding set aside by the school itself to provide students most likely to benefit with additional forms of largely pastoral support. Under this initiative, the chaplain visits the coming year's intake of year 9 students and makes contact with the families. During this process, any needs are identified, and then responded to once the new year 9 students arrive at the school. The 'St John's group' meets regularly, having shared lunches and generally supporting one another. The students' academic results are compared with students of the same age from another school to gauge effectiveness. Academic results for the first cohort of McAuley High School's St John students, who are now in year 12, show that all the St John's girls passed NCEA level 1, with one achieving Excellence. The principal reports observing significant positive growth amongst their parents too. The St John's group grows in number each year, as each new year 9 cohort arrives at the school.

The school's holistic approach to fostering student well-being and success is supported by a range of resources

Resourcing for a holistic approach to student well-being and success

Health and well-being are key priorities and the school has resourced — in conjunction with the local district health board — a health and guidance centre for all students. The school also has two chaplains, one of whom is of Pasifika descent. The contribution of this chaplain to the school's close work with the families of Pasifika students is highly valued. In addition, nurses employed within the school contribute to the science and religious education classes, dealing with issues such as obesity, sexual health, and healthy relationships. The school also employs social workers, and has those of Pasifika descent on the team where possible.

The principal firmly believes in the *"amazing talents"* amongst Pasifika students at McAuley High School, and in the school's role in harnessing these talents. Specialist teachers are sought to enable the girls to develop and showcase new abilities.

Resourcing home-school partnerships

A deep knowledge of students and their families helps the school target resources effectively to meet student needs

Resources are allocated to support home-school partnerships that serve Pasifika students' learning. Resources to actively mitigate disadvantage faced by students from families struggling financially are also factored in: the principal and BOT work to make funds available to *"students who can't afford uniform and food"* to assist with school-related costs. Checks at regular intervals throughout the year during form time enable form teachers to identify need

and respond to it.

So the teacher would ask, 'Do you have a jacket or do you have a jumper?' And then it goes up to the senior management, and they'll deal with it to find strategies in order to help that student get what she needs. [Student]

The principal identifies, recruits and retains talented staff who understand the philosophy and culture of the school

A deep knowledge of Pasifika student needs comes largely from the Pasifika chaplain being active in the community, and the deans following cohorts from year to year throughout their time at McAuley. This two-pronged approach builds strong and long-standing connections with students and their families.

Sound resource management of personnel

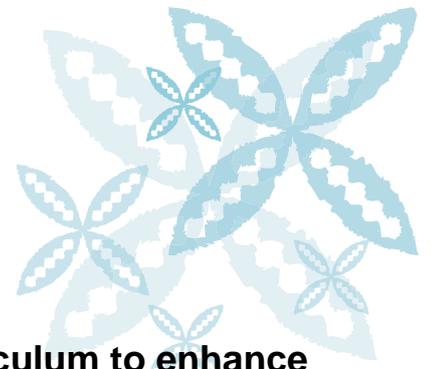
In addition to obtaining funding, the school makes good use of staffing resources. The BOT describe the principal as being particularly skilled in identifying and utilising talent among her staff, student body and community. She plays an active role in staff selection, recruitment, role allocation and the retention of existing staff. The principal also actively promotes McAuley High School as a desirable school for promising new teaching graduates, and places value on bringing in new young staff, training them in 'the McAuley way' and equipping them for promotion.

I think [the principal] is very clever, to be honest. ... One thing [the principal] does exceptionally well is she keeps a constant eye out [for people who will contribute in valuable ways to the school]. Not just [for] teaching staff, but also board members — people that she can see will suit specific roles. And then, yeah, she does approach them. Which I think is great, because if you don't ask, how do you get? [BOT member]

Pasifika parents, families and communities are respected as an important resource and their input is actively sought

We have several ex-students teaching here, and they are fantastic. Absolutely awesome. And a great example to the girls. [Principal]

Furthermore, the expertise of Pasifika parents, families and communities is drawn on in appropriate ways that serve the school's priority learning goals. This is clearly evident in that Pasifika parents, and family and community members become involved in helping students prepare for Polyfest; they also accompany school groups on field trips to the Pacific nations, and respond to requests to provide cultural guidance to the school.



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

McAuley High School case study information relating to the theme for this section of the report is discussed below in two parts: the first 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 close interconnected nature of the different leadership practices that support student achievement and success.)

Part A – Ensuring curriculum quality

At McAuley High School the principal stresses that the curriculum, pastoral care, and the special character of the school, act as a ‘whole package’, forming a positive environment for the girls’ holistic development and success.

Pasifika identities languages and cultures in the curriculum

The senior leadership team places high value on Pasifika identities, languages and cultures and works to ensure that these are reflected in the school’s academic curriculum at all year levels — that is, in curriculum content and delivery across core and other subject areas, and by embedding Pacific languages into the school timetable. Girls rotate through the study of Tongan, Samoan and Te Reo Māori languages and cultures in year 9, with the option to continue Samoan, Te Reo Māori and Tongan language studies up to year 13.

A number of key Pasifika staff with strong bilingual abilities play an important part in fostering Pasifika student success. The school’s Samoan language teacher, for example, teaches the language at all year levels and has recently won the prestigious ASG Education Programs Teaching Award. The Samoan language teacher also plays a pivotal role in the school in liaising with parents and community.

The school employs a number of bilingual teaching assistants as well. These assistants are able to offer students particularly effective support in the classroom because they have awareness and understanding of the Pasifika students’ language needs in both English and their Pacific heritage language.

The school’s delivered curriculum at all year levels firmly reflects and values Pasifika identities, languages and cultures

Case example — Celebration of cultures at McAuley High School

Students spoke very positively about the ways in which their school celebrates their cultures, for example, through acknowledging and featuring language weeks (Samoan, Tongan and Te Reo Māori), during which language, music, dance and culture are showcased.

We have Tongan stuff they organise during the week, so you have, like, a singing bee, but it's the Tongan version. ... [And] there are small games that are from the cultural side ... so [other] girls are introduced to that culture. [Student]

Students also aspire to be selected for participation in Polyfest every second year and the school supports them in this aspiration. Girls speak of how Polyfest enables them to show their culture at school and participate in leadership roles:

The students are actually the leaders of their [cultural] groups.

The school's regular field trips to Pacific nations encourage connection to Samoan and Tongan heritages in particular (representing the majority of Pasifika students in the school) and foster confidence in Pasifika languages, cultures and identities amongst the Pasifika students involved.

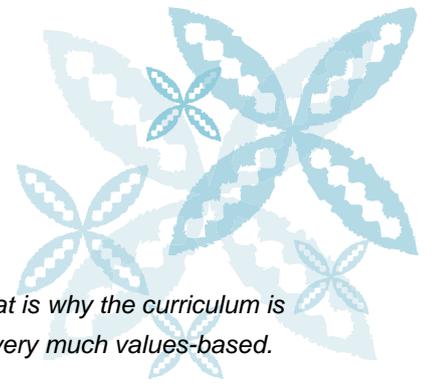
Students further mentioned, for example, the school celebrating the 50th anniversary of Samoa's Independence with a "special assembly". Such events are organised jointly by teachers and student leaders, with input from home communities too.

Values and spirituality in the curriculum

McAuley High School considers that 'values' have a core role in the curriculum and are very important to student success. In light of the school's emphasis on the importance of strong values, a New Zealand-born Pasifika parent who participated in this project reflected that when she was growing up a strong values system was "missing" from her education experience and that it was the poorer for this.

The other Pasifika parents interviewed agreed, considering it important that their children are taught their Pacific language and "the proper values" of their culture. They expressed admiration of the school's commitment to support this. These New Zealand-born and educated parents perceive that current Pasifika students are privileged in their education in a way that they themselves were not: "The kids now, they've got such a balance." For one parent interviewed, there was also a sense of righting wrongs, of undoing the oversights in the education of a previous generation, and strengthening current and future generations to stand proud as bicultural individuals, able to survive in any context in which they may find themselves in life.

Pasifika parents appreciate that sound values underpin curriculum content and delivery within the school



If you look at the curriculum, it [has a lot about values] and that is why the curriculum is working for McAuley. ... The social studies curriculum — it's very much values-based.
[Parent]

Religious education at the school supports discussions of moral and ethical issues

The school is also committed to students' spiritual growth. Religious education is a core subject at every year level, and the school's Catholic special character is felt to contribute to the sense of community.

The chaplain reported that *"In religious education we talk about everything ..."*, observing that religious education classes *"create a safe space for students to discuss all kinds of things, moral issues... what's right, what's wrong"*. The year-by-year syllabus progresses in complexity and touches on issues such as identity, social justice, making choices, and ethical issues.

Career pathway planning

Girls at McAuley are introduced to the concept of career pathways early. Staff are willing and able to work with Pasifika parents and their daughters to work out pathways and subject choices, informed by strong, longitudinal record-keeping on student results. The school facilitates this through a range of careers events and materials and curriculum experiences of interest to the students.

The students are helped and encouraged to think about future careers when they choose course options, so they are well equipped when they leave school

We have our own careers evening now. That was a change, because they used to go in to Auckland, and it was not highly successful as our staff were not involved nor were the parents present. Now we have a careers evening, bringing in all the providers. And we get the parents in as well, so that it's not just the students going to a careers night, it's the parents coming [too]. ... Now at course selection time, each student is individually interviewed as well, to ensure that they have their career in mind, and that they are in the correct course for their career. [Principal]

I think it's excellent, because it's really individually up to the child where they're going. ... Everything is there, it's up to her, and I think the curriculum at the moment is working for us. ... And the foundation has got to be set so that it keeps progressing until you get to the end — it's a two-way street. [Parent]

This approach reflects commitment to the Pasifika Education Plan 2013–2017 goal for Pasifika school leavers to be both academically and socially equipped to fulfil their aspirations, be they in further education, training or employment, or a mix of these.

In the process of raising awareness among Pasifika girls of the importance of keeping in mind career and other aspirations when making decisions about their learning pathways (eg, subject choices), teachers are mindful of Pasifika parents' own aspirations for their children and the role they perceive education plays.

One of my themes for my kids is 'Listen, I want you to do better than us, because we've been struggling'. [Parent]

Course design

The principal and senior leadership team emphasise the importance of informed and robust

course design and evaluation processes for student achievement. The DP Curriculum notes that:

Course design is an area we really focus on.

There is also a strong focus on using achievement standards (rather than unit standards) where possible, as these give students better opportunities to obtain endorsements and University Entrance, and allow them a wider choice of study and career options when they leave school.

The school engages in regular and in-depth analysis of student achievement and other data, and refers to findings to pinpoint areas of curriculum strength and weakness. The balance of internal and external assessment of different course components is also carefully considered in creating courses which are meaningful to students and offer maximum chances for attainment of the necessary credits. The school has chosen, for instance, to offer 30 credits in Samoan language courses, in order for students to fully cover reading, writing and speaking. Performing Arts also has a higher number of credits available.

A careful balance of internal and external credits helps create courses which are meaningful to students and offer maximum chances to attain qualifications and success

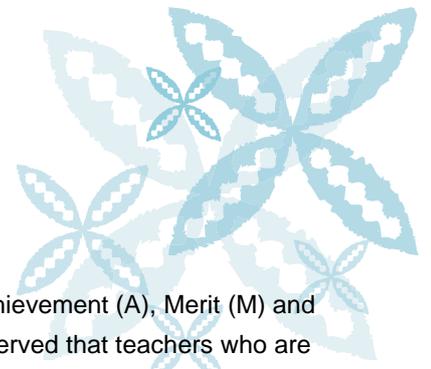
Obtaining 14 credits is a necessary minimum if students are to gain qualifications, including endorsements and University Entrance. The school looks at the percentage of students from each course that meet this minimum. The configuration of credits that will add up to the 14 or more credits needed is also considered when analysing results from different areas.

Some core subjects, like religious education, only have five 6-credit internal standards. This means they need to offer 18 credits as that is the only way students can gain an endorsement. Subjects like maths do have an advantage because their standards have got some 2 credit, 3 credit and 4 credit standards, so there are multiple ways to get to 14 credits. Other subjects like Classics in year 13 has only one internal [standard] worth 6 credits and then there are three externals worth 6 credits each. This does have an impact on results as we know nationally pass rates in externals are significantly lower than internals. ...

We want to try and offer courses where if you get one of the externals, you will gain at least 14 credits, and potentially get an endorsement. ... Now, if you only offer four internal credits, then they have actually got to pass all of their externals to be able to get the 14 credits. We try to take this into account when courses are being reviewed and refined.

[DP Curriculum]

In addition to an emphasis on in-depth reflection on standard and task design, there is also a



focus on ensuring teachers are clear about what constitutes an Achievement (A), Merit (M) and Excellence (E) standard in the courses they teach. It has been observed that teachers who are able to clearly articulate this are better able to have conversations about relational and extended abstract thinking with students.

Robust data analysis and regular monitoring

McAuley High School believes that in-depth analysis of assessment and course evaluation data, and regular and robust monitoring and use of student progress data, ensure that significant changes in the national assessment environment do not negatively affect Pasifika students' educational pathways.

The school's use of data to accelerate student learning is a clear strength. The breakthrough in the use of data can be traced to analysis of historical NCEA data, which revealed that McAuley girls who had achieved a certain proportion of their year's credits by a specific point in the year were always able to attain the remaining percentage by year's end.

Robust data analysis reveals where to best focus effort to achieve improved student outcomes

All students that pass 80% of their credits during the year get their qualification. And if they pass between 60% and 80%, most get it, but some don't. It depends on their courses, and we are now refining these to ensure that this group also gains the qualification. If they are under 60% they don't get the qualification that year. So we use this as a really clear tracking tool throughout the year to identify the ones at risk, and put steps in place to support these girls. [DP Curriculum]

Once discovered, this information was systematically communicated to school staff, and is credited with having instilled a renewed sense of urgency for all students to be given the support to achieve, and inspiring a feeling that raising Pasifika educational success was certainly possible. The school continues to raise Pasifika achievement by using data to identify areas where targeted effort will yield significant outcomes.

Given the complexities of teaching, significant workloads and the huge range of things we could try, we always try to put our efforts into areas where we can make accelerated progress. In the past three years we have gone from 35% to 54% to 74% in UE from really concentrating on course selection at the beginning of the year, designing courses that enable students to get 14 credits and continuous tracking. Those efforts obviously really paid off for the students in that cohort. [DP Curriculum]

An outstanding feature of McAuley High School is its ability to comprehensively monitor each Pasifika student's progress. The school uses KAMAR⁶ and Fathom⁷ software for storage and analysis of student data. Student progress can be easily disaggregated by a range of criteria, such as course, year level, ethnicity, attendance and results, and it is possible to drill into the data to look for patterns that might yield new approaches to supporting student achievement. The principal has tracked achievement levels in the school for the past 10 years.

Strong, effective use of appropriate data software helps the school progress its target of ongoing improvement in levels of achievement for Pasifika students

We really know down to the individual [student how they are going], and this has been very important. ... We have really tried to connect the pastoral [care] and the curriculum [delivery]. So that involves supporting the deans and the form teachers to have really good data and to build their capabilities in this area, and has meant that they can provide that information to form teachers. And that now feeds into the extended form times set up by the AP Pastoral, in which form teachers are having conversations with individual students and the class as a whole around academic success. [DP Curriculum]

⁶ KAMAR is a student management system designed to support schools in New Zealand with recording and monitoring student attendance and achievement data. There are also options that allow parents and students access to relevant data.

⁷ 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)



Part B – Ensuring quality of teaching

Throughout McAuley High School the results of assessment tasks are routinely discussed by teaching teams, and staff use these discussions to inform their curriculum planning. The school provides regular opportunities for teachers to consider ways to teach the curriculum effectively to Pasifika students. A strong culture of reflective practice, inquiry and extensive evidence-based decision-making permeates the school, mirroring the emphasis that the Pasifika Education Plan 2013–2017 puts on quality and effective teaching, accountability and performance.

Teaching as inquiry

The principal and senior leadership team have a strong commitment to teaching as inquiry, driven by the desire to see better academic outcomes for Pasifika students.

The function and importance of ‘teaching as inquiry’ is outlined in the following excerpt:

‘[As] any teaching strategy works differently in different contexts for different students, effective pedagogy requires that teachers inquire into the impact of their teaching on their students.’ (*The New Zealand Curriculum for English-medium Teaching and Learning in Years 1–13*, Ministry of Education, 2007, p.35)

Over the past few years, the school has achieved considerable support from teaching staff for this approach. At McAuley, the process is clearly linked to the Teaching as Inquiry cycle from the The New Zealand Curriculum, with the first term of the year spent determining an inquiry focus, followed by a goal setting process in which each teacher sets an inquiry goal. These goals take a common format — such as, ‘to investigate teaching strategies to develop conceptual understanding of a certain concept that previous years’ data indicates students had trouble with’.

Having set the goal, in Term 2 each teacher completes the ‘teaching as inquiry’ part of the process, including incorporating student voice into their inquiry through use of set questionnaires.

The teaching culture within McAuley High School is driven by a consistent desire to make things better for Pasifika students

Professional learning communities

The senior leadership team provides regular, guided opportunities for staff to learn from each other, and promotes a culture of reflective practice

A core feature of the school's approach to supporting quality teaching is the use of professional learning communities (PLC) within the school. Systematic opportunities for both formal and informal teacher learning and development occur in multiple ways, at multiple levels, across the school. During these sessions, teachers can discuss possible changes in their practice to enhance Pasifika learner achievement.

In 2011, a three-weekly cycle of professional learning was introduced, and each Thursday morning from 8.00am–8.30am all staff are involved in either cross-curricular groups or department-based professional learning. HODs and professional learning group leaders are supported to develop their skills as leaders of effective pedagogy.

Our goal is for all teachers to be leaders of learning: their own and that of their students. So these sessions are not for moderation or administration; they are to discuss teaching and learning. Other meetings after school are held for the other administration-type things, including NCEA marking and moderation. [DP Curriculum]

The teacher appraisal system

As well as the professional learning communities referred to above, McAuley High School has developed several systems to support and continually develop quality teaching, including a robust teacher appraisal system that focuses on improving teaching practice and student outcomes.

A robust teaching appraisal process is delivered in a non-threatening, non-blaming manner

A certain degree of trial and error has been necessary to fine-tune the teaching appraisal process and achieve a robust system but one which is delivered in a non-threatening, non-blaming manner within a school culture driven by the persistent desire to make things better for students. The result has been the development of an observation rubric that is clearly linked to all aspects of the New Zealand Curriculum. The observer is not there to give their opinion on the lesson but to take notes that enable the teacher to reflect on how and what they taught and why. The aim is that this enables a dialogue about the lesson to take place and generate possible areas for improvement. This is a real chance to discuss the mini cycles of inquiry that go on in effective lessons in which the teacher notices, understands and responds to the students' learning needs. [DP Curriculum]

The appraisal system is linked to each staff member's targets and goals for the year and includes self-review, observations, and 'pre and post' student voice questionnaires. The design of these student questionnaires is informed by leading pedagogical theorists in New Zealand. Each teacher then takes key information from their portfolio to their final appraisal meeting with the principal each year.

We are trying to make all appraisal evidence-based; trying to support and challenge all teachers to analyse and discuss their practice and think about future options. [DP Curriculum]



Discussions and appraisals are primarily linked to the registered teacher criteria (New Zealand Teachers Council), in conjunction with the Catholic education standards. These are given as a suggested starting point for discussion; however groups within the school are free to discuss whatever is relevant to them.

Developing student ownership of learning and outcomes

At McAuley High School there is also a strong and explicit drive by the principal and senior leadership team to develop student ownership of the learning process and its outcomes. This is greatly empowering for students, but challenging to achieve — with particular implications for teacher practice.

There is a strong drive throughout the school to develop Pasifika students' ability and confidence to take responsibility for their own learning

It's really important that students are empowered as learners. ... And I think we have seen a real shift in this area as students discuss and reflect on what they can be doing to improve their results. That's a challenging thing at times too as they are pointing out areas of teaching that could be improved. But it is something we need to encourage if we are to meet our vision of 'realising our potential as a learning community'. [DP Curriculum]

So for year 13s, the teachers try to back off a bit ... and give us the chance to really push ourselves, and we have shown it throughout this whole year. Sometimes we muck up but no one's perfect. So, yeah, we learn from our mistakes, and throughout this whole year we've been trying to just get our grades up. [Year 13 student]

Teacher learning and development to enhance Pasifika student achievement

The school ensures integrated professional development opportunities for teachers

While discussion in the previous section focused on systems and approaches in the school for ensuring teaching quality, the discussion for the present theme is more about how the school consults with and includes teachers in decisions about the way forward. It is also about the ways in which teachers take ownership of their professional learning, and contribute to helping the school develop and maintain a whole-school approach to learning how best to meet the needs of the students to ensure their success.

At McAuley High School the strong pedagogical focus from leadership actively promotes collaborative teacher learning and development, coupled with the rigorous use of data. The principal and senior leadership team members all have a well-developed theory of practice to support Pasifika students to achieve educational success, and are skilled at articulating and modelling it.

It is important to note that much progress has been made in the area of identifying and addressing staff attitudes and long-held beliefs about what affects Pasifika student learning. Early in her tenure, the principal reports conducting a survey of staff to see what they thought were barriers to positive outcomes for Pasifika learning. This revealed that staff held numerous beliefs about this, including that a “*whole host of external factors*” — such as habitual lateness, poor nutrition, frequent absence due to family events and travel to the Pacific nations — were to blame. The principal observed that very few staff members at the time attributed poor Pasifika outcomes to teaching and classroom practices. She set about getting teachers to focus on the changes they could make, and this is a continuing school philosophy.

The principal and senior leadership team have worked hard to overcome long-held beliefs used to explain poor outcomes for Pasifika students

The nature of what teaching is has changed for some teachers. That has at times been really challenging — to appreciate that teaching is about reflective practice, it is about enquiring into what we are doing and why, it's not about delivery per se. We are trying to support staff to respond effectively in the moment, noticing what the students do and moving them on from there. So it's about finding ways that allow them to use the inquiry cycle and continue to improve and refine their teaching practice. [DP Curriculum]

Encouraging innovation and improved approaches based on evidence

Important drivers of the school's progress in Pasifika achievement levels have been: genuine staff commitment to Pasifika achievement; a sense of accountability to Pasifika students and their families; and a blame-free and punishment-free environment that encourages innovation based on evidence.

Evidence on what works and what needs improvement is an essential basis for teacher innovation in teaching and learning approaches

You're not considered a bad teacher [if your innovation or initiative does not have the intended outcome] — you're always given a chance to learn. [HOD]

It is not a blame game, though to be honest at times some staff have felt this is the case. It is about reflecting and ongoing improvement and it is my job to keep reinforcing this with teachers. [DP Curriculum]



Open sharing of data showing where improvements need to be made greatly enhances ability to achieve better outcomes for students; however the SLT acknowledges that this process can be challenging for staff initially

The approach is not without its challenges however, as staff react to the ‘de-privatisation’ of data concerning the performance of students in the classes they teach. School leadership acknowledge that there are mixed feelings amongst staff. Some feel exposed by a transparent process that identifies both strengths and areas for continued growth. The move towards such transparency is, however, considered key to continued progress in Pasifika student achievement. The DP Curriculum drives much of the work in this area.

For all standards this year that have a lower than 75% pass rate, the HODs are completing a review process. This [review] form was met positively from probably about half the HODs, some of whom now do it for all their standards, and real suspicion from others. ... It has been quite powerful for many who have engaged in this process and it is great to have those HODs come and discuss their findings with me. HODs use the process to look at the reasons for the results in [a particular] standard and look to determine what factors, including teaching, task design, or other factors are able to be improved upon. So one HOD went back and pulled out all the Not Achieved papers, and broke down what they [the students] could or couldn't do, and what were the reasons they got Not Achieved. To get Achieved, what did they actually need to have done? This again comes back to course design but even more importantly in an NCEA environment is task design. So again, this is a key element with Pasifika learners, [the importance of designing courses] with contexts that they can access. [DP Curriculum]

Recognising and responding to Pasifika diversity

Staff recognise and respond to the diversity among Pasifika

An important part of staff development for Pasifika success at McAuley has been to recognise and respond to diversity amongst the Pasifika student population. For instance, it is acknowledged by staff that even within the school's Samoan group of students (for example), there are those who have newly come from Samoa, those who are New Zealand-born and raised, and those of mixed ethnic heritage. McAuley High School has a good proportion (30%) of staff who are of Pasifika descent, and they assist with developing this understanding amongst fellow staff members. Pasifika students themselves also work to accommodate and celebrate cultural diversity at McAuley.

And because we're from different Pacific backgrounds our leaders show that too. We kind of use our language to communicate to our students so that they understand what we're saying in, like, a more homely kind of environment. [Student]

Teachers help each student understand what they each need to do to improve their learning

Recognition of ethnic diversity is coupled with recognition of the diverse knowledge, skills and preferences Pasifika students may display. Pasifika students at McAuley report that teachers are very approachable in class and will provide additional support at lunchtime and after school. Students maintain that teachers help them understand what they need to do to improve their learning, and provide good feedback and advice.

My teacher doesn't expect us to give the right answer all the time. If we get it wrong we correct our mistakes with the help of our teachers. It's fun and our teacher is always entertaining. My teacher explains different strategies, and we decide which one we work best with. [Student]

Staff commitment to personal growth

The senior leadership team acknowledges the importance of open discussion of Pasifika student results and teachers collaborating to develop more effective teaching strategies. The focus is always on striving to improve and on staff keeping a clear awareness of and orientation towards meeting (and exceeding) the goals of the Pasifika Education Plan 2013–2017.

Many staff members are committed to continual personal growth and development to assist them as teachers of Pasifika students

One challenge for us was to raise the achievement in level 3 NCEA in 2011. In 2012 our level 3 data was well above the national average at 93%. For the first time we achieved above the national average in level 3, which means we are now above national statistics at all three levels of NCEA and considerably above national Pasifika statistics. At the moment if you look at our data for this year we have only got one student in year 13 who hasn't got NCEA level 2. And she will get it by the end of the year. So in other words we're well above the goals of the Pasifika Education Plan. [DP Curriculum]

Staff commitment to continual personal growth and development as teachers of Pasifika students is also evident in the number of staff who have undertaken undergraduate and postgraduate study programmes that focus on Pasifika languages, culture and education, or who are working with Pasifika peoples and communities.

The principal too has dedicated considerable personal time and effort to becoming familiar with Samoan language, culture and social protocols during her tenure at McAuley High School. She has achieved a level of competence that enables her to participate meaningfully in Samoan community events and to engage with parents of Samoan descent who speak English as a second language.

The principal leads by example, calling on Pasifika staff members to provide her with cultural insights towards achieving more effective teaching and learning for Pasifika students

The principal also utilises the Pasifika language and cultural expertise of the school's Pasifika staff in the professional development of her non-Pasifika staff. Staff with particular expertise in Samoan and Tongan languages and cultures help other teachers to develop their cultural knowledge and skills. An assistant principal reports that a senior Samoan staff member regularly talks with fellow staff members, runs professional development sessions and acts as liaison between Pasifika families and non-Pasifika staff. Again, the principal leads by example in this regard, calling on the cultural insights of senior staff members as well as other Pasifika staff members to be her guide in a number of areas.



Ensuring an orderly and supportive environment for Pasifika students

McAuley High School's strong, shared Mercy values base underpins established systems, policies and routines to promote a safe, orderly environment for Pasifika students

As indicated throughout this report, it is evident that a strong, shared and faith-oriented values base underpins everything the school does. The McAuley values and principles guide the leadership team's approach and beliefs about the nature of the environment they and all staff seek to provide for their students and for the school community as a whole, and are reflected in established school policies, systems, and routines

The school is committed to enacting Mercy values on a daily basis through:

- respecting the dignity of persons, not for what they have or what they can offer us in return, but simply because they are a person
- helping to remove barriers that keep people from achieving their full participation in society
- collaborating with others as equals
- demonstrating fairness and modelling justice in all our practices
- celebrating and developing the gifts and talents of each person
- respecting and nourishing our environment
- creating a spirit of hospitality by acknowledging and supporting others.

[From McAuley High School's website]

As well as strong leadership from the principal, board of trustees, senior leadership team, and other staff in the school, senior Pasifika students also take a leadership role. These students have a strong vision themselves for how student leadership should operate and strong beliefs about the sorts of behaviours that will help build a positive, supportive environment within the school.

As leaders we're trying to distribute the role. ... So for deputy or for head girl, you're not the top, top ones, you're kind of like even with all the other [student] leaders. We distribute all the stuff, the duties, responsibilities. ... So [other students] feel like they're not excluded or like they're just given a name [title] but nothing [no duties or responsibilities] with it. ... As leaders we're trying to, like, get everyone involved. [Year 13 student]

Girls are very proud of their school; they like to take responsibility. [Chaplain]

The chaplains also report that McAuley students are made aware of social justice issues and their own responsibility to respond to these issues. The students are encouraged to consider how to give back to their own and other communities. The school taps into Caritas, St Vincent and other Catholic organisations to facilitate placement of girls in these community service roles.

Holistic care and support for students

The principal and senior leadership team believe that the pastoral care environment is a critical factor in creating a positive and affirming school climate and in supporting Pasifika achievement. Consequently, the school employs nurses, a guidance counsellor, a social worker, and an assistant principal who is specifically in charge of pastoral care.

We ensure they [students] believe in themselves, know what their values are [and] live those values. [Chaplain]

Holistic pastoral care is thoroughly integrated with the school's academic focus and aspirations

A key feature of the school is that holistic pastoral care is thoroughly integrated with the school's academic focus and aspirations, and is delivered respectfully and appropriately for Pasifika. The AP Pastoral care liaises closely with the DP Curriculum to ensure that pastoral and academic aspects of school life are combined for maximum impact.

According to senior deans it is particularly effective having the counsellor, nurse and social worker all located in the Health and Guidance Centre, which is a compact and welcoming location on the school campus. Health and pastoral care staff at McAuley High School confirm that about 80% of students who go to see the school counsellors self-refer.

It's such a warm, caring supportive environment in terms of the pastoral care. The girls come to school and they feel safe — just the atmosphere. [Health care staff member]

Health checks for students in Year 9 pick up any hearing, sight or counselling issues

Nursing practice and resourcing at McAuley High School is designed to be proactive rather than reactive. The health and pastoral care team uses opportunistic interviewing for every student who walks through the door and endeavours to empower students to be proactive about their health.

Importantly, there is a commitment to each girl constructing and acting upon her own culturally informed plan for well-being. The school's health team makes the first connection with each new year 9 student, through a screening process for any hearing, sight or counselling-related issues. The team's "non-judgemental, proactive approach" is made clear, and the process provides an opportunity for establishing relationships with the girls to facilitate ongoing support for them.

You can [either] look at more visits to the nurse as being more problems, or [alternatively] that we are addressing the problems. [Health care team member]

With student permission, KAMAR is used to flag to staff students with chronic conditions where safety is of concern (such as epilepsy or diabetes requiring insulin). Health conditions among students that the nurses support include: diabetes, congenital cardiac conditions, rheumatic fever, epilepsy, cerebral palsy, cancer, hydrocephalus, alopecia, asthma, renal impairment, allergies, mental health, hypertension, and hearing and vision loss.



Students can access appropriate medical and counselling support through the school where needed

School nurses have extensive relationships with community services that help them support Pasifika students, including doctors, dentists, optometrists, diabetes specialists, alcohol abuse specialists, asthma specialists and mental health specialists. The nurses support students' access to primary health services to provide early intervention for apparently minor ailments before they develop into more serious conditions. The school is also able to offer on-site dental and asthma services.

[The principal] has put in all these good systems that help the girls. If their physical needs are met, they can learn in the classroom. [Chaplain]

This wrap-around pastoral support enables the school to provide a positive environment in which Pasifika (and other) students' academic learning can be a central focus.

Another important aspect of McAuley High School's holistic approach to care and support for students is knowing about and understanding the cultural values of the home. The school's care for girls' physical and emotional safety reflects not only the special character and values of the school, but reinforces the Polynesian cultural norm of closer supervision of girls compared to boys in this (adolescent) age range, or as a senior Pasifika staff member put it, coincides with the fact that *"girls in Pasifika perspective are much more monitored"*.

Sensitivity to home cultures is an important part of ensuring girls' physical and emotional safety and well-being

A senior Pasifika teacher in charge of liaison with parents reports that Pasifika parents at McAuley High School feel free to inquire not only about their daughters' academic progress but also about their safety. He points to the importance of acknowledging the strong Polynesian cultural base relating to the place of daughters in the family and the responsibility of the family for their protection. In this regard, the school respects the culturally-based decisions of families, particularly in relation to girls attending camp or participating in international trips organised by the school. Senior leadership team members state that the school strives to ensure that families' trust in the school to maintain appropriate cultural values and protocols to keep their daughters safe is well-founded.

We have this base that the family is built on, and we try to enhance this at school.
[Teacher in charge of parent liaison]

This sensitivity to Pasifika cultural aspects directly reflects the Pasifika Education Plan's commitment to upholding a need for uniquely Samoan (fa'a Samoa – the Samoan Way) or Tongan (anga fakatonga – the Tongan way) processes, practices, values and knowledge to be acknowledged and respectfully responded to.

The importance of positive relationships is recognised

An understanding of the impact of positive relationships on student well-being and progress and achievement levels is clearly evident at McAuley High School. Staff and students report that there is a genuine feeling of 'family' in the school.

Once you get here, you just get that connection. ... You are part of our family. It's a really friendly environment. We get along with our teachers as well, and that's what I like about McAuley. [Student]

Here in McAuley, I just think that it's like one big family. You have that feeling [that among] the teachers [its] the whole [family] thing ... and that's what we do every day.

[Parent]

When they [students and parents] come here, it's family too. [Teacher in charge of parent liaison]

The principal reports that the positive relationships that exist within the school community are particularly evident in the way that everyone rallies together at times of personal family tragedies, such as death of a parent. In the case of a student's recent family tragedy the principal reported that *"The parents got together to support the family: took over meals, helped with the funeral and formed the support network round that particular family. Which was absolutely awesome."* This is a clear demonstration of the Pasifika values of love, respect and service that the Pasifika Education Plan 2013–2017 specifically points to as key values for underpinning Pasifika achievement in schools.

There is a high and genuine level of care and mutual respect between staff and students

A high and genuine level of care and mutual respect between staff and students is also apparent at McAuley. The BOT, parents, and students all commented on the dedication of the principal, and teaching and pastoral staff at McAuley.

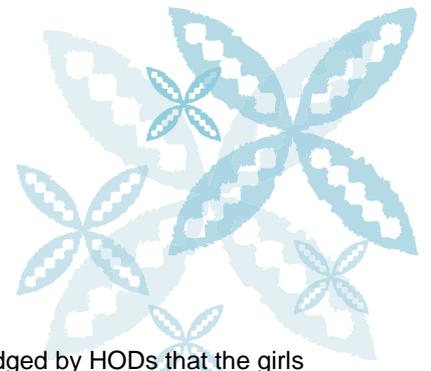
Every girl in the school will have at least one teacher they feel they can go to. [Pasifika teacher]

The staff here are so committed, they work extra hours. The teachers stay. They go the extra mile. [BOT member]

[The school chaplain] has programmes where she visits the families. She does a lot of work within the community and with the parents. She even takes the stand where she goes to individual kid's houses. ... All the teachers are there to teach but at the same time they're always aware of the children, whether a child comes in with puffy eyes, or whether a child comes in not happy. They can pick that up. It goes from one teacher to the next and to the next and then the next thing we know, [the chaplain] is at that person's house. [Pasifika parent]

They [teachers] are always willing to help. ... They want you to ask questions. And if there's not enough time during the period, they'd be like, 'Oh come see me after school if you have time'. They're always willing to have time with you. [Student]

We are here for the girls, no matter what. [Senior dean]



Students report a high regard for their teachers, and it is acknowledged by HODs that the girls expect a lot from their teachers. All involved frequently express a sense of mutual admiration of and gratitude for each other:

- staff, BOT, parents and students are grateful for the principal's leadership
- the principal appreciates the commitment of the BOT and staff and the talent of the students
- the girls express gratitude for their teachers' and principal's commitment
- the teachers value the way in which girls strive for success and apply themselves
- the parents are grateful that the school provides a safe and effective education, and the chance for their girls to attain levels of excellence previously considered out of their reach.

At McAuley High School, these high levels of mutual respect and appreciation, and a corresponding sense of belonging and inclusion, foster and sustain the goodwill and motivation for continued success within the school.

A safe, fair and welcoming environment for students and families

Importantly for Pasifika, McAuley High School is not seen as a daunting environment by families and students. Almost all girls completing the self-completion survey for this case study project reported that they like coming to McAuley High School “a lot”; that it is “awesome” being of Samoan, Tongan, Cook Islands Māori, Niuean, or other Pacific Island identity at this school; and that the school encourages them to feel proud of their culture(s).

Their young people being safe and happy at school matters to Pasifika parents, families and communities

The perception of safety is important for the school's Pasifika parent community. The senior Pasifika teacher in charge of liaison with parents comments that at the end of the day, Pasifika parents will ask “Are these people good? Is my daughter safe here?” This Samoan teacher also affirms that knowing their children are happy as well as safe at school matters to Pasifika parents, and that these are the factors most remembered about the school experience.

Girls believe the school deals with Pasifika students fairly and that the principal and senior teachers, and the staff in general, really want them to do well. The girls also believe that the school makes their families feel welcome and answers family questions respectfully. While there is variation in the extent to which teachers know their families, no students who completed the self-completion survey maintained that teachers did not know their family at all.

Students (and Pasifika staff) report a sense of being looked after in a collective manner by family, church and school.

I believe that it is not only the school that's the reason why we are so good. It is also the support from home and outside of school. For example, in maths I have an extra tutorial on Saturday which really helps me. I believe if it wasn't for our parents we wouldn't do as well. It's a support network that is helping me, especially outside of school. [Student]

The supportive school environment helps Pasifika girls successfully balance the dual roles and expectations of home and school

Pasifika students also acknowledge the challenges of being a young Pasifika woman, balancing the dual roles and expectations of home and school, and how they successfully achieve this balance at McAuley High School.

I come from a traditional cultural background, so my responsibility as a girl at home is to really look after my parents and to cook, clean, and make sure you know to walk and stand as a lady. And sometimes it's hard, but when I come to school I know that each girl goes through what I'm going through, so we have that support. [Year 13 student]

We don't limit ourselves. You don't have to be the smartest or brightest kid to succeed. ... As long as you're passionate and determined and hard-working at times, you can really hit that target, and make your dreams come true — as long as you focus. [Student]

A supportive, safe environment for staff

The school works to ensure that staff work in a safe, supportive and orderly environment

Staff safety is also of high importance to the principal and senior leadership team. Staff work in a safe, supportive and orderly environment. This is evident in a number of ways, from the secure parking area in which staff may safely enter or exit their vehicles at any hour of the day, to the formal and informal expressions of appreciation staff receive from the principal and BOT and other leadership staff on a regular basis.

[A board member] made I don't know how many cupcakes one day and brought them in. Just brought them in to say 'thank you' to the staff! And they really appreciate that. And the board also pays for the staff dinner at the end of the year, and so staff feel valued by the board. [Principal]

Strong systems and stable staffing for a settled environment and high attendance and retention rates

The senior leadership team acknowledges too the key role that strong systems and stable staffing play in creating a safe and orderly environment for Pasifika success. The principal is described as having “*excellent systems*” in place, and there is clear evidence of the existence of well-constructed policy developed and maintained by the senior leadership team. For example, the AP Administration takes Ministry of Education guidelines and international examples of good practice, and translates them into policies and procedural handbooks that suit the school's context and cover all major contingencies. Consequently, a recent crisis was handled smoothly and negative impacts — both immediate and ongoing — were effectively mitigated.

Strong systems and stable staff create a safe and orderly environment for Pasifika success

The high staff retention rates mean that the staff also have a sense of belonging at McAuley High School. There are several staff members who have been at McAuley for more than 20 years. The assistant principal stated that, “*We've got a brilliant team*”, and that staff dedication is “*admirable*”. Students report feeling supported by teachers who are interested in more than just their academic success.



Some teachers make time to come out — like, with sports they'll come and watch. [And] they help out with extra-curricular activities. [Student]

Board of trustees members commented that the way that teachers, students and families are treated by the school's senior leadership team shows the ethos and mission of the school in action. The board itself also works to establish relationships with all members of the school community.

I thought it would be a good idea to sit in on the staff meeting — just to introduce myself, [especially if] there's new teachers, new assistants in there. They need to know who I am, so that there is that relationship. ... I didn't want us to be a board where we were sort of up there, untouchable. We invite them [staff] to talk to us, to come in and express their views. And I just don't think a lot of boards out there probably do that, or offer that. It's sort of, 'We are the Board, you are over there'. [BOT member]

A positive school environment results in high attendance and retention rates for Pasifika students

The school's high student attendance and retention rates are also indicative of the type of environment created for Pasifika at McAuley. Students spoke of knowing students who had tried other schools and not been able to stay there, but when they came to McAuley High School, they stayed because: *"It's easier to fit here."*

Senior deans confirm that the school has an 80–90% attendance rate, reporting also that when Pasifika students are not in class it is most often the case that they are at home (with their parents' knowledge) taking care of family obligations, or out of class but on-site at school. A senior Pasifika staff member attributes high Pasifika student retention in part to student happiness at McAuley High School, and also in part to Pasifika family expectations for their daughters to stay in school until the end of year 13.

Dealing with behavioural issues and conflict in a restorative way

Integral to creating and maintaining an orderly, supportive, safe and welcoming environment and school culture, is effective handling of behavioural difficulties or conflict.

Stand-down and suspension rates are considerably lower than for other schools of a similar decile

The school has few behavioural issues, and stand-down and suspension rates (Table 1) are considerably lower than in other schools of a similar decile. Furthermore, suspensions for the last five years have been consistently lower than the Pasifika Education Plan 2013–2017 target rate for 2017 of 3.6/1000 (Ministry of Education, 2012, p.10).

Table 1: Stand-down and suspension data for McAuley High School (2007–2011)

McAuley High School				
Age-Standardised rate (per 1000 students)				
Year	Stand-downs		Suspensions	
	Pasifika	Total	Pasifika	Total
2007	7	9	2	2
2008	15	14	2	1
2009	14	15	0	0
2010	15	14	1	1
2011	11	9	2	2
2012	17	15	0	0

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

In the case of suspensions, students and staff report that clear and fair processes have been put in place by the senior leadership team, and that these processes are widely understood by everyone in the school.

The parents come in, and [the principal] really talks to them about what they need to work on with their child, what needs to be improved, and the next week when they come back into school they're going back on track. So they're working their way [back] up ... and we have policies that help. [Student]

When behavioural issues do arise, the school uses a restorative approach, underpinned by the Mercy values and the school's special character, which most often quickly and effectively resolves issues. The principal and senior leadership team consistently stress the importance of establishing clear routines and the use of behaviour modification procedures. These have been effectively put in place at McAuley High School to ensure appropriate behaviour in the classrooms and in the school generally.

A restorative approach — 'positive righting of wrongs' — is used to resolve student behavioural issues

Both staff and students reported that problems between teachers and Pasifika students are resolved in a fair and timely way. Senior deans too noted that there is a clear process for dealing with any issues that might escalate, with referrals from teachers to deans, and subsequently, if required, to the assistant principal.



Assistant principals emphasised that the purpose of the restorative approach is to restore and repair relationships between the parties involved in the conflict and that the school's core Mercy values provide an important basis for constructive problem talk with students about their behaviour.

For students displaying unacceptable behaviour, the aim is to enable them to understand the behaviour and how it does not match the school's values system. During discipline hearings students are allowed support people with them, and are enabled to tell their version of the event. The AP Pastoral care observed that *"in the telling of the story they [students] learn a lot"*.

The chaplain also plays a role in talking with girls who have misbehaved about upholding the values of the faith community and the requirement for 'faith in action'. The Pasifika Education Plan 2013–2017 underlines the importance of spirituality in promoting Pasifika learning and well-being and this is an example of this principle in practice.

Celebrating improvements in student behaviour and harnessing positive peer influences

Progress towards more positive behaviours is noted and celebrated with the student

Following an identified behavioural issue with a student, evidence of a positive change in behaviour, no matter how comparatively small, is noted and celebrated. For example, a student who regularly 'wagged' all day received ongoing pastoral support and is now absent for only some individual class periods. The dean acknowledges the significant progress this step represents, and continues to support the student's progress towards fully engaging in school so she can gain qualifications that will enable her to have positive options for the future.

Student leaders willingly take on the responsibility of engaging their younger peers in discussions about behaviour and attitudes.

Pasifika student leaders in the school positively influence younger students' attitudes and behaviour

What we've been doing is setting up assemblies. We make it a funny environment but really it's serious. We can listen and laugh to it, but there's a serious message behind it that they will get. So it's like they hear teachers talking to them every time, but they're like, 'Oh, it's just another teacher talking', but when we talk to them it's like, 'Oh, she's kind of where I am, she's like me but older.' ... So we're trying to target that as leaders. [Year 13 student]

A consistent school-wide approach to student behaviour management enhances Pasifika student well-being and achieve

Effective management of physical safety and other issues

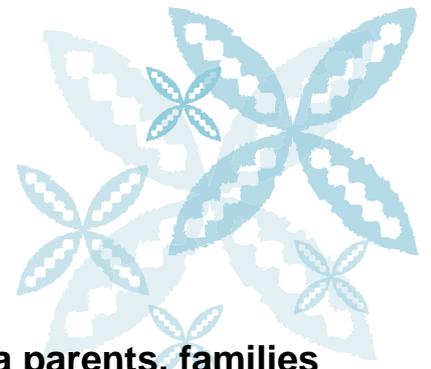
The principal and senior leadership team maintain a clear zero-tolerance approach to physical violence amongst the girls. Incidences of bullying are dealt with as soon as they are identified. Fighting and physical violence are considered deliberate choices on the part of the student, and this is dealt with seriously. Any drug or alcohol issues are managed with rehabilitation.

The fact that the number of disciplinary cases brought to the BOT has steadily decreased over time is felt to be the result of the school, principal, senior leadership team and parents “*working as a team*”. Teaching and pastoral staff acknowledge that sometimes students need “*time out*”. Staff keep an eye out for students with home issues, and communicate with each other and the student to coordinate necessary support.

The principal reports that the presence of a local member of the police force at McAuley High School has also proven effective. A combined initiative with local police and a commercial company sponsor enables the school to share the time of a police officer of Pasifika descent who is also a proactive figure in the school community. The officer is able to deal with matters such as licences and smoking, but is also called in for serious incidents such as violence in the home.

Effective relationships with the police support the school’s safe environment

Occasionally we get a hiccup. We are not perfect. But we don’t have the major fights that were prevalent in South Auckland. We also have our own police officer, Constable [name] — a cop in school. And that’s really awesome because the girls see him in a positive light. He runs sports programmes. He encourages enrolment in the Police Academy. He is just awesome. He knows our families, he knows the girls. And the girls are comfortable. ... They even invite him to the school ball, and he comes dressed in civilian clothes. So he has been accepted. [Principal]



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

The importance of the home and school partnership in promoting and enabling Pasifika academic success is emphasised at McAuley High School.

At the end of the day it's the partnership that's the key thing: the school play their part, you play your part from home. [BOT member]

We have great support from home as well. ... It's really good when you get support from home [and] school and it's all working together. [Student]

Reaching out to the community

Connections between McAuley High School and its Pasifika parents, families and local communities is solid, two-way and focused on facilitating Pasifika student achievement. McAuley seeks to reach out to Pasifika communities and encourages the communities to come into the school, whilst respecting that parents often have time and resourcing limitations. The school's ability to integrate with its community is facilitated by personal connections at all levels.

As part of reaching out, and as a means of responding to community need, McAuley High School offers an Adult Literacy Programme enabling parents to further their skills in literacy. In addition, budgeting, computing and Tai Chi classes are offered during the daytime, four days a week. The principal reports that these classes also serve as positive support groups for the participants, and give parents greater confidence when it comes to supporting their children's learning. The Catholic Foundation funds the programmes, and the school now has over 50 adult learners undertaking study. In the past, the school has also run healthy eating classes and driver's licence classes. This two-way relationship between the school and its community illustrates the holistic approach highlighted in the Pasifika Education Plan 2013–2017 as being important for successfully connecting with communities to enlist their support, which is so vital to Pasifika student well-being and positive learning outcomes.

An important contributor to McAuley High School's reciprocal connection with its community is the principal's visibility in the community, her approachability and the high regard in which she is held by those in local Pasifika communities. The chaplain reports:

I don't think there is a parent here who feels they can't approach the principal.

The principal is very aware of the importance of her frequent presence within different Pasifika communities and was pleased to report that, *"When I go to Polyfest, everyone knows me."* Her commitment to being present and to building her and the school's credibility within Pasifika communities is further evident through her regular attendance (on a rotating basis) at Catholic mass in surrounding district parishes on Sundays and at 'McAuley High School feeder schools' on other days.

McAuley High School makes personal connections and responds to community needs with adult literacy classes and other study options

The school's principal is highly visible in the school's Pasifika communities

The other way that we reach out to the community, is that I visit. We have got 26 feeder parishes or 26 feeder schools, and I visit each one of those parishes, together with senior girls, during the year. And we go to two church services [every] Sunday. It takes me six months to do. That way I get to speak. The priest will allow me five minutes to talk to the parish, and the girls speak as well. I have learnt that the more I hand over to the girls to do, the more successful it is. So we have an opportunity to meet with the parents, talk to the parents. [We] talk about the school and talk about what our aims and our goals are. [Principal]

It is notable that personnel within McAuley wear many hats and have a wealth of experience that spans different yet overlapping areas. For example, some current staff members are also ex-students and leaders in their Pasifika communities, BOT members are also parents, parents are also assistant teachers, teachers are community members, and so forth.

The school is actively connected to the Samoan Catholic community. Several Samoan teachers are part of this community, and they report that the Samoan students are aware of this 'network' and that it acts for their benefit. There is also a good connection to other Catholic schools, such as De La Salle. The Tongan Catholic community has combined its services in the area, and the principal and relevant teachers regularly attend these local congregations and are invited to speak there too.

A senior Pasifika staff member spoke of knowing students' families personally, of students' aware-ness of this relationship, and the higher levels of accountability this then introduces for all involved. It also ensures that students are unable to 'hide' or just be 'another number or face' in the classroom.

They [students] know they are being noticed. They know the school knows [about them] and knows in many different ways. [Teacher in charge of parent liaison]

Empowering communities to support their children's success

The principal, senior leadership team and key liaison staff have worked hard to ensure that home-school partnerships are valued, and report that parents and families are responsive when their input is sought. Pasifika parent leaders and BOT members stress the importance of Pasifika parents playing their part in their daughters' success, and of the need to overcome commonly held beliefs by Pasifika parents that education is solely the domain and responsibility of schools and teachers.

My girls are successful because I am there for them. Any time that the principal or somebody calls I will be here straight away. ... The other key thing is you have to have somebody there at home when they finish school. [Parent]

Pasifika parents at McAuley High School who took part in interviews for this case study also advised that a strong motivating factor for them is the desire to break negative stereotypes about Pasifika young people and the areas they live in, especially as conveyed by the media: "We're getting tired of hearing that South Auckland is like that." They speak with considerable pride of the fact that, in terms of academic performance, McAuley High School is now able to compete with the very same out of zone decile 10 schools that families used to try and "push their daughters to".

Home-school relationships are strengthened through the many roles and responsibilities that staff and board members carry out in the community

Parents and families are responsive when their input is sought



The school talks with parents, families, and communities about supporting their children's learning, and helps by providing essential information

School and parents working together to support Pasifika students' learning

McAuley High School's leadership aims to provide regular and accessible opportunities for Pasifika parents, families and communities to learn what they need to know to support their children — for example, to have NCEA and other important school processes explained to them.

We also explain NCEA to the parents. And it's fairly simply explained, but very positively explained. We are very careful with our language, so that we make quite sure that they understand what we are saying, and it is very visual with PowerPoint images that we put up. So the building blocks are explained. The NCEA evenings are very important. We talk about how they can support their students ... and they take it very seriously. [Principal]

The DP Curriculum reports that during parent consultation evenings, data on overall Pasifika student performance is shared with parents.

One of the big parts of my role is communicating with parents around what our curriculum is, and particularly around things to do with [learning] pathways... I always share data that's both historical and current, and really try to explain what that means. One of the key measures we have been using to tell how students in the senior school are going is a credit percentage ... so I share that information [with parents]. It is translated into Samoan and Tongan [and there is] certainly the open-door policy around any of those conversations [if parents have questions or concerns]. [DP Curriculum]

Assistant principals report that community meetings for specific Pasifika ethnic groups are also held regularly and led by staff with connections to that community. In addition, once a year there is a combined Pasifika family event to increase Pasifika parents' knowledge and their ability to have input into their daughter's education. This also serves to raise Pasifika parents' expectations regarding the outcomes they can expect for their children.

Guidance from Pasifika communities on what works

McAuley High School has strong connections with Pasifika parents and communities. The principal emphasises, however, that there has not always been good uptake by parents of various initiatives introduced by the school; nor has there always been strong home-school connections. This is an area in which the senior leadership team (SLT) realised it would have to put in considerable effort if it was to turn this situation around. The SLT also realised it needed to seek guidance from members of Pasifika communities in order to do this. Amongst other things, the guidance received has resulted in a 95% lift in attendance at parent-teacher meetings.

The first year — I still cringe at the memory — it was still us talking at them. That has totally changed now. We get the students to talk; we get parents to talk; we get old girls [ex students] to talk. And we [school staff] do talk, but we also use visual images on the PowerPoint to express our messages. [Principal]

The school has had to work hard to establish strong home-school connections: seeking guidance from Pasifika communities has been key to achieving successes in this area

“We found out what would bring parents in to the school, what would make them comfortable.”

[One] thing that has worked extremely well for us is that [the principal] has invited the community in, to be a part of our success. And they [community members] are constantly asked for their input. [BOT member]

From the parents we found that the problem was that they were in awe of the school. That they were uncomfortable coming into the school. ... And so in the interview process with the groups of parents, we found out what would bring parents in to school, and what would make them comfortable. And so that's what we did. ... It's an ongoing journey, and it changes all the time. We learn different things each year. Something changes, or we change. It's a constant process of evaluation in the school. We are constantly looking at and evaluating what we are doing. [Principal]

In response to parent feedback, changes were made to the ways in which parents were invited to attend events. There were also changes in the venues that were chosen, room layout, timing, programme agenda, languages used, protocols followed, the involvement of students, and the types of interaction between parents and staff. These changes are indicative of the ongoing commitment to ensuring that the school responds to the identities, needs and preferred modes of communication of its Pasifika communities. The school has also found that utilising successful Pasifika student role models has proven very successful.

We get the girls to talk about how their parents help them to achieve. So high achievers talk about 'How my parents helped me'. And that's really effective. Because it's not us telling them what to do, it's actually giving them an example of what to do. [Principal]

Effective communication channels

The school uses traditional school communication methods as well as Pasifika media to reach parents, families and communities

The school is responsive in the ways it communicates with Pasifika parents, families and community, employing a combination of traditional school communication means and a range of Pasifika media. The school effectively uses Samoan and Tongan radio and local newspapers to get information out to the community — about enrolment, for example. For current students, clear and detailed letters are regularly sent to parents to explain what their daughter has achieved and what else she needs to do to improve to meet academic standards.

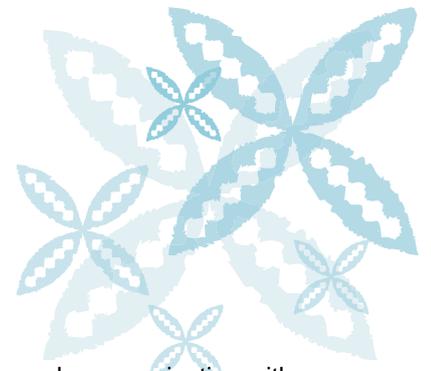
The communication is very good. [Parent BOT member]

There's a lot of communication and interaction between the school and the parents. [Parent]

Another strong contributor to McAuley High School's home-school connections is the presence of bilingual administrative staff within the school who speak Samoan and Tongan, and understand Pasifika social protocols. This expertise is regularly harnessed to maximise the reach and effectiveness of communications both from and to the school.

Bilingual staff who understand Pasifika social protocols help to forge stronger home-school partnerships

We are very fortunate to have many [language] experts on the staff. ... They are more than willing at any time, and we are very grateful. They will translate an update and make sure that the information is available. Far more of our students are now born in New Zealand, or have New Zealand-born parents, so we do all three [English, Samoan and Tongan translations]. [DP Curriculum]



McAuley is also currently working on enhancing its use of e-learning and communication with families through the introduction of a learning management system (Ultraset). It is estimated that about 80–90% of girls have access to computers, but email access at home may vary. The school hopes to be able to use this system to a greater extent in coming years.

Genuine shared commitment to Pasifika success

Parents, families and staff at McAuley are linked by a common commitment to Pasifika student success. As part of its sense of responsibility to its parent body, McAuley High School seeks to provide Pasifika families with opportunities not only to learn more about how to support their child's school learning but to actively seek information from teachers and the school. One example of assisting Pasifika parents to do this has been to send out, prior to parent-teacher meetings, a set of sample questions, as a guide to how and what they might ask teachers about their child's learning.

A further indicator of McAuley High School's strong commitment to a healthy home-school partnership is the involvement of parents in school activities both in and out of the classroom. The senior leadership team ensures there is a wide range of activities for parents to choose from, designed to draw on the parents' different areas of expertise, and in particular to involve the girls' mothers. Trips by the Samoan language classes to Samoa are an example of school events that regularly involve large numbers of mothers, who accompany the students and teachers.

Such partnerships serve to both support Pasifika student identities, languages and cultures and strengthen Pasifika family and community engagement in their children's learning.

It is observed that while this decile 1 parent community might be limited in the financial and academic support they can offer, they are nonetheless wholeheartedly supportive of the school and respond positively when they sense expression of genuine support for their children's success.

Their heart is here for their kids to learn — we try to keep that, their confidence in this school as a good place. [Teacher in charge of parent liaison]

Responding respectfully to community need

The principal, senior leadership team and staff members at McAuley High School are widely held to both promote and model school values. In particular, the principal's commitment to the Mercy values of the school is noted. The principal's desire to understand the community impact of poverty and to fight for the empowerment of the poor is praised. This work often involves the principal engaging tirelessly in potentially difficult discussions with families, funding bodies, and local and national services.

The relationship between the school and parents, families and communities is centred on genuine shared commitment to student success

Student need for care and support is observed and responded to respectfully by the school

The community can see that the school actively behaves according to its Mercy values

The other big barrier of course was, is, and always will be poverty. We heavily subsidise our tuck shop so that they can keep the prices down. ... I also write letters [to request funding support] ... and I get money to enable me to supply uniforms to those who don't have uniform, and jackets to those who walk to school in the rain. ... So when you look at the girls and you see them walking around the school, you will think that we are a high-decile school. [Principal]

[And for higher levels of pastoral care and health support], we worked very hard to get that money. As part of the AIMHI consortium, we really lobbied for nurses in decile 1 schools. And we really lobbied for a social worker in schools. We wrote to Ministers. We have had Ministers of Education here at the school [over the years]. We had the Minister of Social Development here at the schools in South Auckland. All the South Auckland decile 1 schools [now] have nurses and social workers. [Principal]

The principal and senior leadership team note that a positive flow-on effect from this level of responsiveness is that the school enjoys “*amazing parental support*”. By not asking parents to fundraise and by not unintentionally excluding them because of lack of money, the principal believes the school has gained strong and willing support in a number of other valuable ways that aid student learning (but don't involve monetary contributions).

Earning respect and leading by example

The principal has, through deliberate effort, earned the respect of the Samoan and wider Pasifika community. Upon her initial appointment, the principal's commitment to showing her respect for Pasifika prompted her to give her powhiri speech in fluent Samoan. Using a speech written for her by a Samoan matai, the principal recounts practising it repeatedly until she could produce it “*word perfect*” and without notes. She feels that this helped establish a strong basis of credibility amongst the school's Pasifika families from the very outset of her journey in the school.

As a leader, the principal shows both personal and professional respect for staff and expresses this both formally and informally. She is protective of staff, student and parent time and resources, and asserts this through firm negotiation with outside bodies seeking access to the school and its community. The principal is undoubtedly highly regarded by staff, the BOT, students and families. As the school's Pasifika chaplain observes, “[*The principal*] has the vision. ... She may be white but she has a brown heart!”



Engaging in constructive problem talk to enhance Pasifika student achievement

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.

Leadership open to learning

With a strong emphasis on raising Pasifika achievement, the principal and senior leadership team are open to learning from staff about what works and what does not

The openness of the principal and senior leadership team to engaging in constructive problem talk encourages the school to be a learning organisation. The principal and senior leadership team are open to learning from staff about what works and what does not. When the school introduced a professional coach into the school to support teaching quality, for example, the trial phase revealed that teachers felt uncomfortable with the process. Consequently, after listening to the staff, the principal reported that *“We do it differently now. Our professional appraisal system has really changed as well”* — the focus having shifted to teaching as inquiry.

It’s all based on teaching as inquiry [now]. This is the process that we go through: [first] the focusing inquiry that they choose, the teaching inquiry, getting the student voices, and then the learning inquiry and the summary form, and then they move [to take action]. And then I interview every single teacher. [Principal]

The principal and the senior leadership team demonstrate a flexible approach to problem-solving, a commitment to creating and using an evidence base, and an uncompromising belief that Pasifika, and all students, deserve an excellent education.

For decision-making, the principal first seeks high-quality information about the situation, and is exemplary in setting up systems to ensure such information is at hand. The principal in particular acknowledges that the journey towards the levels of achievement and success they now enjoy has been a long one, and that the journey continues, with mistakes being made at times, and areas for growth still remaining within the school.

BOT members report that they are able to engage in rigorous discussions with the principal concerning the management, direction and resourcing of the school. They report that the principal and senior leadership team are unafraid to hear challenging things, and the principal is described as an *“influential leader”* who is well-respected.

She and the staff have taken the school to another level. [BOT member]

Leadership staff welcome guidance from cultural mentors regarding Pasifika students' progress and achievement

The principal and senior leadership team understand the importance of working with cultural guides or mentors to help navigate decision-making and problem-solving pathways to support Pasifika aspirations. Staff and parents report that the principal personally demonstrates the flexibility to respond to culture and context. A BOT member observes that rather than saying, *“Look, well, I am actually European, I am going to do it the way I do it”*, the principal has responded to the diverse Pasifika cultures and says, *“Hey, let’s make it work. And if it means going this way, then let’s do it that way’.”*

Staff members noted too that should Pasifika parents want to express concerns in their own language, they have the opportunity to have a proficiently bilingual staff member present during meetings with either the principal or senior staff. This enables important discussions with parents for whom English is a second language to occur on an equal footing and promotes a more genuine alignment between home and school. Furthermore, it is a tangible demonstration of the Pasifika Education Plan’s placement of Pasifika family and students at the very centre of all activities aimed at raising achievement.



Concluding comments

This case study illustrates how members of a school leadership team, including the principal, board of trustees members, senior leadership team members and staff in distributed leadership roles, can work collaboratively together, as well as with parents, families, and student leaders in the school to support Pasifika student success. High expectations, curriculum content and delivery that is responsive to the characteristics and needs of the students, sound pedagogical practice and use of robust data and analysis, combined with high levels of attention to pastoral care, ensure Pasifika and other students are provided every opportunity to achieve high levels of success.

This case study is supported by an exemplar report⁸, which examines in more detail how McAuley High School has worked to successfully raise Pasifika student achievement in mathematics.

This McAuley High School case study, like the other case studies in the series, provides evidence of effective leadership practice in each of the seven key areas⁹ 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 McAuley High School 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.

⁸ All of the case study and exemplar reports in this series of reports with a focus on school leadership practices that support Pasifika student achievement and success are listed on page 53.

⁹ 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.

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Research team

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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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