



Responding to the Covid-19 crisis: Supporting Auckland NCEA students

SUMMARY



Auckland NCEA support package: Te Kura programmes

The ongoing coronavirus pandemic has had a profound impact on all aspects of life around the world. In Aotearoa New Zealand, significant disruption to schooling occurred in 2020 due to national and local lockdowns, school closures, and from the ongoing uncertainty caused by Covid-19. Auckland NCEA students were particularly impacted and extra support was provided to them.

In 2020, there was a concern that students in Auckland were struggling to cope due to experiencing two Covid-19 lockdowns. There was a risk that the disruption to NCEA students' learning could make it harder for them to transition into further education or employment if they did not achieve the necessary University Entrance and NCEA accreditations.

Additional support for Auckland NCEA students

Towards the end of 2020, extra support was made available to Auckland NCEA students from Te Aho o Te Kura Pounamu (formerly known as The Correspondence School).

The three programmes were:

- **TK400:** for disengaged students and students at risk of disengaging from education. Students had access to online resources through the Te Kura website portal, as well as access to face-to-face teaching at several pop-up sites in community venues. Te Kura also recruited people from the community to fill the role of kaiāwhina, or mentors for the students.
- **Targeted Dual Tuition:** for students still enrolled at school but at risk of disengaging or who need additional in-school support.

Students had online access to Te Kura teachers and the relevant material to study their target subject. Students continued to attend classes at their usual school but had time reserved to undertake learning through Te Kura. Schools provided a venue (such as a classroom) for students, and staff to supervise them.

- **Summer School:** to support students to achieve up to 10 additional credits to gain NCEA accreditation or University Entrance. Students were required to carry out their learning online during the school summer break.

What did ERO do and why?

ERO undertook an evaluation of the three programmes to learn how effective the programmes were to inform future responses. We asked three questions.

1. Who did the programmes reach?
2. What was their impact on student wellbeing, engagement, and attainment?
3. What are the lessons for future responses?

Part 1: What did we learn about the programmes?

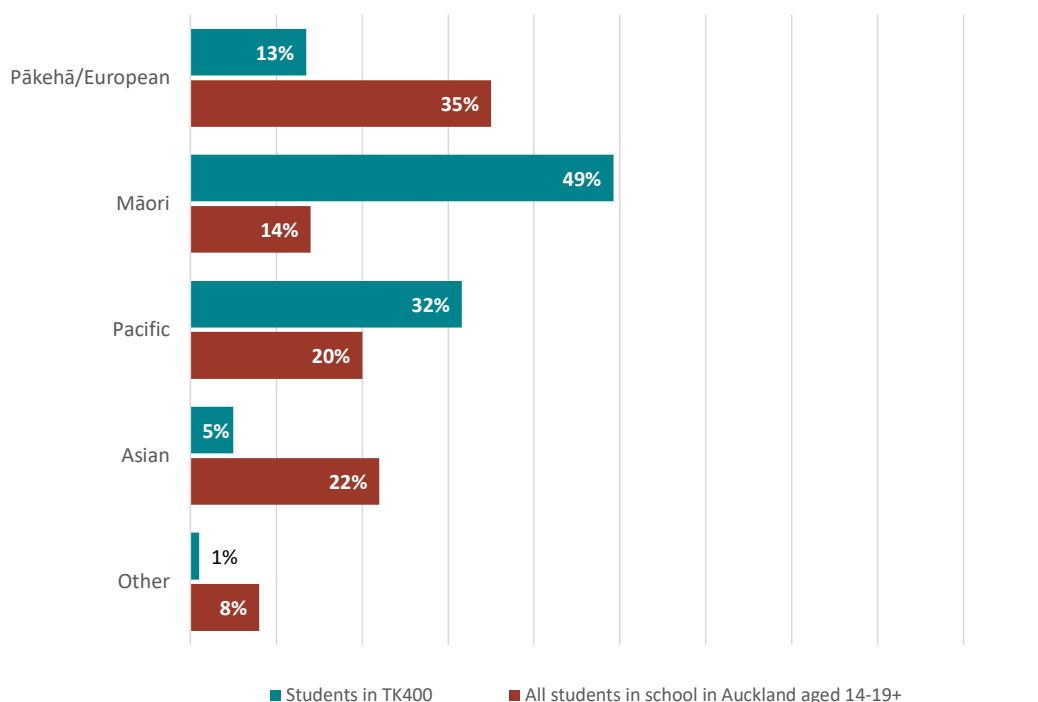
Our evaluation looked at the impact of the programmes on student wellbeing, engagement, and attainment, and whether they reached the students most at-risk of disengaging from education or from not achieving their NCEA goals.

TK400

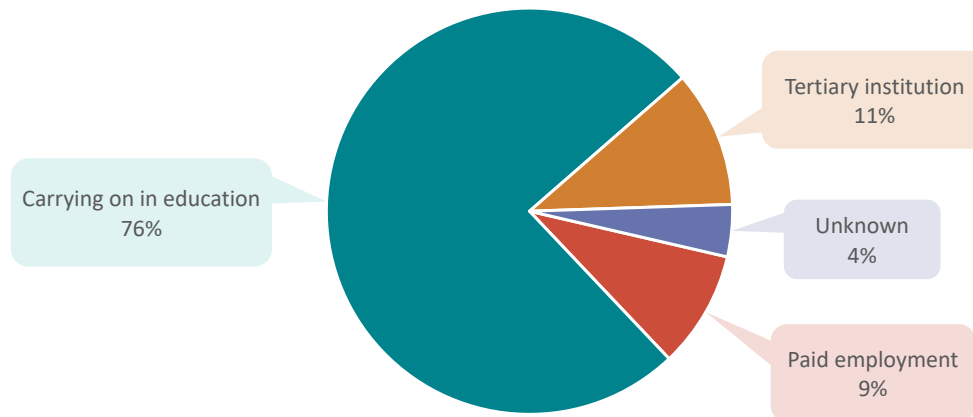
The TK400 programme was successful in reaching at-risk students. A total of 193 students enrolled in TK400. Nearly three-quarters of students who enrolled in TK400 identified as Māori (49 percent) or Pacific (32 percent).

Nearly half of the students in the TK400 programme were from the 20 percent most deprived communities in New Zealand.

Student enrolments in Te Kura 400



Students moved on to education or employment after TK400



Wellbeing was a significant focus of the TK400 programme and one of the key outcomes for the students enrolled. The main impacts on student wellbeing were that:

- Parents and whānau told us that the TK400 programme was having a positive effect on their child's wellbeing.
- The wellbeing of students in the TK400 programme was positive. Two-thirds (67 percent) of students that chose to complete the wellbeing survey said that they were feeling confident they can learn and get better over time.
- Te Kura staff told us that they observed an increase in students' confidence in learning as they progressed in the programme.

TK400 was highly successful at engaging students and supporting them to achieve their education goals.

- Almost all (96 percent) of the TK400 students had a transition plan to continue their education or move into employment when the programme finished.
- Three-quarters of students returned to school or decided to continue their education with Te Kura.
- One in 10 students (11 percent) enrolled in a tertiary institution and another 10 percent found a job.

Targeted Dual Tuition

The Targeted Dual Tuition programme reached very few at-risk students. In total 44 students enrolled in the Targeted Dual Tuition programme. Over half of students who took part identified as Pacific and just under a quarter identified as Māori. Pacific students were over-represented in the programme (52 percent), compared to all Auckland students aged 14 years or older, where Pacific students make up only 20 percent. This demonstrates the programme was reaching its target audience, but in very small numbers. The small numbers meant there was insufficient data to judge the impact on student wellbeing and attainment.

Summer School

Enrolment in Summer School by Auckland students increased during November 2020, well before the term ended and final NCEA results were in. A total of 695 Auckland students enrolled in Summer School. More students were enrolling towards the end of Term 4 2020 compared to previous years. This indicates that students may have dealt with the uncertainty caused by the Covid-19 pandemic by making sure they could access additional support, should they need it. This may have reduced their anxiety.

Nearly all students who chose to attempt NCEA credits in Summer School were successful. Summer School students told us that the main purpose for enrolling in Summer School was to obtain sufficient credits to get University Entrance. More than 90 percent of standards submitted by students in Summer School received a result of achieved or higher.

Part 2: What did we learn about responding to a crisis?

2.1: What works in reaching at-risk students?

“It [Covid-19] has scared my family. It has affected my (NCEA) level 2. My family has not allowed me to go back to school.”

STUDENT

Despite the challenges of reaching at-risk students following the Covid-19 lockdowns last year, we found that a number of activities had helped to reach students. We also uncovered some lessons for how to improve the targeting of at-risk students in the future. These key lessons were:

- It is important to get students enrolled as quickly as possible and allow enough time to contact students and schools.
- Introducing additional support towards the end of the school year may make it harder for schools and students to participate.
- Face-to-face meetings with students and school leaders help to reach students most in need.
- Targeting specific schools helps to reach students with the most need.
- Schools can be supported to reach their own students with their own responses.
- Existing relationships between the provider and a school helps with enrolling students and encourages schools to participate.

2.2: What works in supporting wellbeing?

“It’s been nice meeting and making new friends...”

STUDENT

An important part of engaging students in learning is their wellbeing. Students who enjoy their learning environment, who feel like they belong and are listened to, are more likely to stay engaged in their learning and put in more effort. This is especially important for students who have stopped attending school and are struggling to re-engage in their learning. We found three key lessons to support student wellbeing:

- Face-to-face meetings, at a time and location that suits students, help students connect with teachers and peers.
- Small groups can make students comfortable.
- Availability of a back-up plan, like Summer School, can help reduce anxiety.

2.3: What works in supporting attainment?

“I felt so supported by my subject teachers; They were really encouraging and made it really easy for me to study and complete my exams at school.”

STUDENT

Achieving NCEA opens pathways to tertiary study and to employment. The disruption caused by Covid-19 meant that not all students were well placed to progress. The key lessons were:

- That it is important to foster student wellbeing and engagement to support attainment in NCEA.
- Teachers need to understand their students’ learning needs, and tailor their teaching to them.

2.4: What supports the implementation of urgent response programmes?

In undertaking the evaluation, we learnt some lessons about how to successfully deliver response programmes for students. We found that the key things to consider were:

- Make sure schools are not too busy when you roll out a programme, such as gearing up for exams.
- Programmes that require partnership with schools can take time to become established.
- Be aware of how the programmes will interact with other supports being provided to students.
- Don't overload schools with too much information.
- Keep communication clear and simple.
- Established relationships lead to better results.

Part 3: Recommendations

The evaluation looked at how successful these programmes were in supporting NCEA students, and whether the government should consider repeating the programmes in the event of future disruptions. It also looked for changes that could be made to the package that might better support students.

From the evaluation, ERO has developed the following recommendations for government.

3.1: To prepare for future disruptions for NCEA students

- Maintain targeted programmes which can be quickly scaled up when needed.
- Establish relationships now with schools who may need additional support following a crisis or have students who may need the support.

3.2: In response to future disruptions for NCEA students

- Put in place (or scale up) targeted programmes for learners who are at risk or who have disengaged from school.
- Make sure there are back-up options, like Summer School.
- Make sure schools can support students in school as well as providing options for students to be supported outside their school.
- Only deploy programmes that require schools to partner with external providers when the benefits to the school and its students are clear.

Conclusion

The evaluation shows that it was possible to quickly respond and support students whose learning was disrupted due to the Covid-19. It was also possible to target the support at students who had disengaged from education or needed some additional help to achieve their NCEA goals. The experience of these Auckland students can help inform how other students could be supported following a disruption to their education and learning.

If you want to find out more about our evaluation on responding to the Covid-19 crisis, you can read our report:

- *Responding to the Covid-19 crisis: Supporting Auckland NCEA students*

We appreciate the work of all those who supported this evaluation, particularly the students, whānau and kaimahi who shared with us. Their experiences and insights are at the heart of what we have learnt. You can find the full report on ERO's website www.ero.govt.nz.



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