Briefing Note: Communities of Learning I Kāhui Ako 2017 Survey Report

To: Hon Chris Hipkins, Minister of Education

Date: 01 March 2019  Priority: Medium

Security Level: In Confidence  METIS No: 1124493

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Messaging seen by Communications team: Yes  Round Robin: No

Purpose of Report

The purpose of this paper is for you to:

Note the key findings from a survey of Communities of Learning I Kāhui Ako and the Ministry’s response to the findings.

Note that the Education Review Office (ERO) are expected to release in mid-March 2019 their case studies focusing on Kāhui Ako collaboration, and that we have agreed to release our respective reports together.

Agree that this Briefing will be proactively released.

Summary

1. The survey took place in October 2017 and looked at the extent to which anticipated changes were occurring in Communities of Learning I Kāhui Ako (Kāhui Ako). Surveys were sent to all 210 Kāhui Ako. Responses were received from 1,515 people in a variety of roles.

2. The findings suggest that Kāhui Ako is supporting teachers to work together to build teaching expertise, and is successfully building a collaborative culture within and across schools.

3. Issues with the viability of the new career pathways were identified, with a lack of staff cover for release seen as the greatest barrier to progress in Kāhui Ako. The use of evidence to drive actions also appears to be problematic, principally with
sharing and comparing data, including the constraints of working with different Student Management Systems (SMS).

4. After you have had the opportunity to consider the Ministry's report, the survey findings will be released via the Education Counts website in conjunction with the release by the Education Review Office of its case study report.

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1/3/19

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Background

1. Communities of Learning | Kāhui Ako (Kāhui Ako) are designed to enable education leaders and teachers to share expertise and build stronger connections across learners’ actual 0-18 education pathway as part of their day-to-day practice. Kāhui Ako are a core component of the Investing in Educational Success (IES) initiative, first introduced in 2014.

2. Kāhui Ako involve a group of education providers from early learning through to tertiary providers working together and with the wider community. Most Kāhui Ako are formed geographically. The Kāhui Ako investment includes new roles to lead collaborative inquiry and professional learning and development to lift progress and achievement of all children and young people within the community. Each group sets shared goals (achievement challenges) based on the particular needs of its children and young people.

3. The number of Kāhui Ako has been steadily building since the initiative was first introduced. They now include over two thirds of all children and young people in the system. There are now 214 Kāhui Ako involving 612,325 children and young people, 1,760 schools and kura, 529 early learning services, and 11 tertiary providers.

4. Kāhui Ako have two stages of formation; those that have been approved but are yet to identify their shared achievement challenges, and those that are endorsed who can appoint teachers into new ‘across- and within-school’ roles. At the time of the survey 92 out of the then 210 established Kāhui Ako had endorsed achievement challenges.

5. This report describes results from a second survey1 of people within Kāhui Ako which was carried out in October 2017. The survey focused on how effectively Kāhui Ako were developing and the extent to which early implementation outcomes were being achieved. Results provide a national overview of implementation to date from the perspectives of 1,515 people in a variety of roles2.

Key findings

6. Overall, the findings suggest that Kāhui Ako are making a difference to how teachers work with each other and is helping build stronger connections for children and young people across their 0-18 education pathway.

7. The intentions and goals of Kāhui Ako were generally well supported. Almost all respondent groups (at least 85%) rated collaborative inquiry, improving teaching practice, improving student transitions, collaborating with parents, whānau and iwi, improving transitions to school and between schools, and improving student wellbeing and achievement as important to their community. Views were more mixed on providing leadership opportunities, with 94% of Leaders from endorsed Communities rating this as important compared with 64% of those in the approved Kāhui Ako group.

8. Shared ownership of children and young people across the education pathway was evident in more established Kāhui Ako. Kāhui Ako that had been endorsed for longer felt a greater responsibility for both students and teachers in other schools than newer Kāhui Ako. For example, 68% of Leaders and 66% of across-school teachers from endorsed Kāhui Ako said they had taken responsibility for the progress and

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1 The first survey was carried out in October 2016. Findings from the first survey can be found at http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/schooling/181545.

2 Surveys were sent to principals and early learning representatives in approved Kāhui Ako and to Leaders, appointed across- and within-school teachers, principals, Board of Trustee chairs and early learning representatives in endorsed Communities of Learning.
achievement of students across their Kāhui Ako, in contrast to only 19% of respondents from approved Kāhui Ako.

9. Kāhui Ako Leaders, across- and within-school teachers were actively working with others on a regular basis (around 80%). More than half were working across and within schools to improve teaching and learning at least weekly. Along with administration and planning tasks, collaboration most often centred on learning new strategies or approaches, reflecting on teaching practice and coaching or mentoring.

10. Effective relationships were an important enabler. The most common enablers cited were leadership collaboration, trust and communication between members (at least 60%). Across- and within-school teachers were generally positive about the levels of reciprocal relational trust among teachers (85% to 94%). Principals were less positive (63% to 66%).

11. Work to improve teaching practices was widespread. Capability building activity included identifying effective teaching approaches, leading professional development and sharing research on these approaches, and leading inquiry to improve teaching and learning (64% to 72%). Improving culturally responsive practice was the most common focus area: around 75% of across-schools teachers and 55% of within-schools teachers indicated this had been a focus. Estimates of how many teachers had been involved in Kāhui Ako activities indicated the majority of teachers in endorsed Kāhui Ako had participated in Kāhui Ako related activities during 2017.

12. All teachers in across- and within-school positions reported using some kind of data for teacher inquiry in 2017. Both across- and within-school teachers were positive about teachers’ confidence and capability to use data for inquiry. However, examining Kāhui Ako–wide data was problematic. The majority of endorsed Kāhui Ako encountered a number of substantial issues when using student achievement data in 2017. Most notably, all endorsed Kāhui Ako noted different SMS being used by different member schools/kura as an issue.

13. The survey also confirmed that a lack of staff cover for teacher release is an ongoing barrier to implementation. Most people in Kāhui Ako roles thought that these positions provided valid career path opportunities and job satisfaction (over 80%). Yet about half felt a lack of staff cover for release threatened the viability of the new roles.

14. Consultation with the wider community was still under developed. A minority of endorsed Kāhui Ako (25% to 50%), had been regularly working with parents, families and whānau, iwi/hapū/marae, or the local community.

Response and actions related to implementation

15. Findings from the survey are broadly consistent with earlier internal evaluation reports from a synthesis of evidence gathered by the Ministry and the sector. The evidence pointed to a growing collaborative culture within Kāhui Ako and systematic activity underway to build teaching and leadership capability. However, challenges with using and sharing data, the workload of Kāhui Ako Leaders, a shortage of relievers to cover staff release and sufficient engagement with the wider community were showing as vulnerabilities of the model.

16. You have responded to these evaluation recommendations, and to feedback from the sector and the IES Advisory Group, by making improvements to the implementation for Kāhui Ako to address these challenges (METIS 1094116 and 1115752 refer).
These improvements will allow Kāhui Ako to be more collaborative and more responsive to local needs by:

- supporting iwi partnerships with Kāhui Ako to better enable Māori to succeed as Māori;
- better enabling early learning services to collaborate in Kāhui Ako;
- supporting communication, engagement and collaborative work within Kāhui Ako and their communities by better enabling Kāhui Ako Leaders to focus on being leaders of teaching and learning;
- making inquiry time earlier, when a Kāhui Ako Leader has been appointed.

17. The Ministry of Education is continuing to support and improve the implementation of Kāhui Ako by making the above supports available to Kāhui Ako and through the ongoing implementation support it provides. Any substantive change to the Kāhui Ako policy will be pending recommendations from the Review of Tomorrow’s Schools.

Release of the report

18. The Ministry intends to publish the report in mid-March on the Education Counts website in conjunction with the release of ERO’s case study report. We will work with your office ahead of the release to coordinate a response should there be media interest.

Proactive Release

19. We recommend that this Briefing is proactively released as per your expectation that information be released as soon as possible. Any information which may need to be withheld will be done so in line with the provisions of the Official Information Act 1982.