Rapaura School Education Review

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1 Context

What are the important features of this school that have an impact on student learning?

Rapaura School recently celebrated 150 years of providing education for students in a semi-rural area near Blenheim. Many families have retained a long association with the school and its traditions.

There has been significant roll growth since the July 2011 ERO review. An enrolment zone has been reinstated to manage student numbers.

The board is responsive to the increasing roll. An extra teaching position was created for 2014 to reduce the teaching load in one class during morning sessions in literacy and numeracy. Additional teacher aide support is provided for students not achieving as well as expected.

Shared expectations and values, outlined in the ‘Rapaura Way’ and ‘Working Together’ guidelines, help to promote positive relationships and communication with the school community.

Students have a key role in leading their own learning and developing independence. This reflects the board’s goals and vision and the wishes of the school’s community.

Parents actively support school programmes and successfully raise funds for extra resources.

The board, principal and staff have maintained and built on the many positive features of the school’s performance identified in the 2011 ERO review.
2 Learning

How well does this school use achievement information to make positive changes to learners’ engagement, progress and achievement?

The school continues to strengthen the use of achievement information to promote students’ engagement, learning and progress.

School-wide achievement information is systematically gathered, analysed and reported. Achievement information about National Standards shows that:

- most students are maintaining good levels of achievement over time.
- Māori students are achieving very well
- achievement is higher in this school than regional and national levels in reading, writing and mathematics.

School leaders and teachers are making increased use of student achievement information to respond more effectively to students’ needs and strengths. Teachers use different ways to lift achievement for individuals and groups of students.

The board, school leaders and teachers set well-considered targets to lift the achievement of students who are not reaching the expected standards for their age. Additional learning support is provided for these learners. This support is well organised and managed. The work of experienced teacher aides is a key factor in the success of these programmes. An inclusive approach ensures that students learn with and alongside their peers. The board is kept well informed about this support and students’ progress.

Student engagement is well supported by having students regularly set goals, understand and monitor their own progress.

Students and parents get detailed and helpful reports on student progress and achievement in a range of ways.

Areas for development and review

Some aspects of assessment and reporting could be improved. This includes:

- making the annual targets more measurable and the actions more clearly focused on what teachers will do differently to raise the achievement of targeted students
- extending assessment and reporting in learning areas other than literacy and
mathematics to students, parents and the board

• simplifying written reports to make them easier for students and parents to understand.
3 Curriculum
How effectively does this school’s curriculum promote and support student learning?

The school’s curriculum provides students with many rich and varied opportunities to succeed in their learning.

Caring and supportive relationships between teachers and students and amongst students create a climate that fosters learning.

Explicit expectations and guidelines exist for all learning areas. Teachers’ planning and practice are consistent with these expectations. Teachers regularly reflect on the way they teach and make changes in the best interests of students.

Other key features of the school’s curriculum include:

- students’ interests, strengths and needs being given priority in teachers’ planning
- student leadership, self management and contribution to school decision making being fostered in range of ways
- a wide range of relevant interactive experiences planned for and with students in and beyond the school
- specialist teachers of music, visual arts, and science extending students’ motivation and engagement.

Areas for development and review

The school’s curriculum does not yet give enough prominence to a bicultural perspective so that all students are made aware of their bicultural heritage.

Teachers inquiring into the effectiveness of New Zealand’s teaching, continues to be an area for ongoing development.

The duplication of teachers’ documentation could be reduced by reviewing the expectations for some practices.

Aspects of gifted and talented education could be improved. The school does not yet have an agreed definition for identifying gifted and talented students; a register to show who these students are, or a policy to determine how these student will have their needs met.

How effectively does the school promote educational success for Māori, as Māori?
The board, principal and staff have taken some positive steps to promote success for Māori students, as Māori.

All students learn te reo Māori weekly from a qualified teacher of Māori (kaiako). Teachers also learn alongside their students. The school includes tikanga Māori in assemblies, special events and celebrations.

Area for development and review

The school’s charter and future planning should more clearly show the board’s commitment to and intentions for promoting Māori students’ identity, language and culture in programmes and the environment.

The board, staff and Māori whānau need to develop a shared understanding about Māori success at this school.
4 Sustainable Performance

How well placed is the school to sustain and improve its performance?

The school is well placed to sustain and improve its performance.

The leadership of the principal and other leaders has contributed strongly to the school’s focus on continual improvement. Leadership capability is actively supported through professional training and shared responsibilities. Well-considered teacher appointments have been made to extend the scope of teaching expertise.

Teachers are supportive of and work with school leaders to achieve the school’s vision and goals.

They make good use of teamwork and sharing with other schools to increase their knowledge. Well-targeted professional learning is also helping to extend teachers’ use of effective practices, particularly in literacy.

The school makes good use of self review to identify what’s going well and where improvements could be made.

Teacher appraisal has been developed further in 2014 to make it more effective in recognising good practice and building teaching capability.

The principal reports progress on the strategic and annual goals comprehensively and on a regular basis to the board.

An interested, highly engaged board, with a range of experience and skills, maintains an appropriate focus on student learning. Suitable resources and systems are in place to support effective governance.

The board has taken advantage of available training and external support to increase its capacity.

Areas for development and review

More regular consultation, in a variety of ways, is needed to gain the views of the learning community (students, parents, staff) about teaching, learning, and wellbeing. This would allow the board to confirm the positive aspects of the school’s performance and respond in a timely manner to any concerns or issues.
The board recognises the value of extending the review process to include an evaluation of its own effectiveness.

Board assurance on legal requirements
Before the review, the board of trustees and principal of the school completed the ERO Board Assurance Statement and Self-Audit Checklists. In these documents they attested that they had taken all reasonable steps to meet their legislative obligations related to:

- board administration
- curriculum
- management of health, safety and welfare
- personnel management
- financial management
- asset management.

During the review, ERO checked the following items because they have a potentially high impact on student achievement:

- emotional safety of students (including prevention of bullying and sexual harassment)
- physical safety of students
- teacher registration
- processes for appointing staff
- stand-downs, suspensions, expulsions and exclusions
- attendance.

Conclusion
The school provides students with many rich and varied opportunities to succeed in their learning. The board, school leaders and staff work well together to build on the school’s considerable strengths and focus on making continued improvements for the benefit of students. A key next step is to strengthen the bicultural content of the curriculum and develop a shared understanding of Māori success with whānau.

ERO is likely to carry out the next review in three years.

Graham Randell
National Manager Review Services
Southern Region

3 September 2014
### School Statistics

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<tr>
<th>Category</th>
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