

A group of students in a classroom, wearing dark grey uniforms with bright green accents. They are sitting on the floor, focused on a project. One student is pointing at a document on the floor, while another holds a blue marker. The background shows other students and classroom furniture.

TOKONA
TE RAKI
Māori Future Makers

KŌKIRIHIA

Annual Report 2025

Up until the age of 15, I could barely read or write. My perspective on school was from the bottom classes where, like lots of ‘dumb kids’, I survived by learning to be passive... (Until in the end, I got angry and was expelled.)

For kids like us, the school reports that we handed to our parents from beneath the soggy tomato sandwiches and half-eaten apples in our schoolbags were different from other kids’ reports. They didn’t describe how we thought. Instead, they commented on our helpfulness, our neatness, how hard we tried, or our willingness to do jobs.

In a somewhat bleak way, we were being groomed as the servants of the school system and, because we were hungry to be valued, many of us worked hard at this role. We helped to stack the chairs after class, we cleaned out the paint jars, and we were bin monitors. In an unwitting reflection, of a hierarchical class system we were being prepared for the bottom rung of society, with our horizons set just beyond our noses. Our value was assigned according to how well we ‘helped’ the system run.

Today I think a lot about kids like this and how they experience both formal education and learning worlds outside of school. A few of these people we encounter later in life as recovered and successful adults, but others live their lives as a kind of apology; their injuries run deep, and their dreams are limited because expectations around them were low, their approaches to learning were problematised and eventually they lost sight of their intelligence.

**Welby Ings, Invisible Intelligence –
Why your child may not be failing,
Otago University Press, 2025, Dunedin**

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to our 2025 Kōkirihiā Annual Report. This report provides an opportunity to share not only our progress over the past 12 months but also our learnings and where we are headed in the future.

Despite it being a challenging time for the education sector, our member organisations remain committed to the vision and the strength of the collaboration continues to grow stronger. Our collective has doubled in size with 24 organisations now signed up to being part of the movement to end streaming – a demonstration of collective impact in action – a collaborative approach with a shared vision of the future. This is a sizeable commitment for these organisations, in terms of time and resources. Our thanks to all our members for your ongoing contribution.

Since our last annual report, we have begun to assemble a data bank of schools that are on the journey to shift to flexible grouping practices. Our thanks to Professor Christine Rubie-Davies for getting this underway by writing to all New Zealand principals.

If you are a principal and are receiving our newsletters, that will be why. We are determined to be of service to you.

Streaming is not just a New Zealand issue and over the last 12 months we have been connecting with people across the globe who are leading the way in research and in pushing for fairness and equitable outcomes in education. We have been pleasantly surprised by the international recognition of Kōkirihiā and our work.

Interestingly, while the ever-increasing mountain of research tells a compelling story of the harmful impacts of streaming practices on students, especially Māori and Pacific Island students, most New Zealand schools still stream in some way. There are many and complex reasons why this is the case, not least of all the increasing demands on our teachers resulting from Ministry of Education directives, lack of resources, and a shortfall in professional learning development (PLD).

We are very cognisant that it is not as simple as taking away the structures of streaming such as the top or bottom class or group or the prerequisites. It is about providing workable alternatives that are proven to be successful and building the confidence of teachers to make a shift. Supporting schools to make the change to an inclusive way of teaching and learning requires government commitment to appropriate resourcing.

Ending streaming is just one of many shifts that need to happen if we are to achieve the desired outcomes of raising achievement, creating inclusive learning environments, celebrating diversity, providing Māori with greater control over their education and catering to the needs of all students as identified by the Ministry of Education. There is no magic bullet, no one simple solution.

KŌKIRIHIA TEAM



Kaya Renata-Staples, Piripi Prendergast, Michelle Walker, Adrienne Anderson

KŌKIRIHIA MEMBER ORGANISATIONS

We are a 24-member organisation strong collective firmly committed to removing streaming from our schools.



Implementation team wānanga, March 2025

WHAT WE DID IN 2024-25 — A SNAPSHOT

3

two-day hui held for Kōkirihiā (June 2024, September 2024, March 2025)

1

round of cluster check-ins with member organisations
(5 clusters met over the month of June 2025)

13

individual check-in hui with member organisations(June-Sep 24)

3

Online hui

Created a data base of schools that are on the journey of de streaming
which currently numbers 160

24

member organisations

5

international experts engaged with

Second bi-annual teacher survey conducted by
PPTA, NZEI, UC and AU

School Boards Survey conducted by NZCER and NZSTA

4

presentations at workshops and conferences (PPTA, SPANZ, School/
Ouruhia and 1x Rūnaka)

3

meetings with the school advisory group

4

Newsletters published and distributed to our database

1

feature article in the Hechinger Report

6

School visits

4

engagements with rangatahi

KŌKIRIHIA WEBSITE

A new and improved Kōkirihiā website is due to go live mid- September, a key feature of which will be an expanded toolkit of resources for students, teachers, principals, boards, whānau and iwi. Our intention is for this to be the first port of call for those wanting to build their understanding of streaming, its harms and alternative approaches.

I AM...

a teacher

a principal

whānau

iwi / hapū

a board member

A STUDENT





SUMMARY OF MEMBER ORGANISATION ACTIONS

Here is a summary of some of the key actions taken by our member organisations over the past 12 months:

Surveys

Primary, intermediate and secondary teachers and leaders

(NZEI, PPTA, The University of Auckland, University of Canterbury)

Resources

Virtual reality resource on bias

(Tātai Aho Rau CORE, The University of Auckland)

Development of a website with free mathematics resources

(Massey University)

Iwi/community Development

Development and leadership of a community/whānau/iwi focused approach to ending streaming

(Ngā Tai o te Awa)

Professional Learning Development

Ongoing development of the Unteach Racism programme

(Teaching Council Matatū)

Research/professional development programme with mathematics teachers

(University of Canterbury)

Publications

‘Rapid Review of Grouping Practices for Equitable Outcomes’

(MoE)

‘Poipoia kia puāwai How schools support ākonga Māori and Pacific students to attain University Entrance’

(NZQA, NZCER)

Research paper exploring the thinking of mathematics teachers about streaming

(The University of Otago)

Workshops/Conferences

De-streaming workshops for teachers

(PPTA, NZEI)

Multiple conferences inclusive of de-streaming keynotes or workshops

(NZ School Boards Assoc, SPANZ, PPTA, SPC)



NZEI TE RIU ROA UPDATE

Over the past year it has often felt like we are swimming against a tide of outdated thinking that is driving much of the change we are currently seeing in education. With issues across education – from curriculum change, a return to standardised testing, privatisation and deregulation, to cutting pay parity for ECE teachers – it is important that our response is grounded and coordinated.

NZEI Te Riu Roa sees Te Tiriti o Waitangi as the non-negotiable bedrock of an education system that benefits all ākonga. At the same time and by extension, Te Tiriti is critical to one day achieving a de-streamed Aotearoa.

Over the past year this has often meant putting our capacity into defending aspects of the education system that give effect to Te Tiriti and champion equity, at the same time as working strategically to advance our collective goal of a de-streamed Aotearoa in 2030.

Over the past year NZEI Te Riu Roa has...

Successfully run Te Tiriti webinars, which included content on ending streaming

mobilised around the Treaty Principles Bill and then the Regulatory Standards Bill

called out the stripping away of Te Tiriti from curriculum as well the risks of increased streaming that comes with the removal of key competencies and their replacement with structured literacy and structured maths

challenged the downgrading of Te Tiriti in the Education and Training Act (2020, sect 127)

joined Wai 3310 – the Waitangi Tribunal education services and outcomes kaupapa inquiry

challenged the Government's decision to defund Resource Teachers Māori, which we see as a breach of Te Tiriti, by filing with the High Court for a judicial review

joined with NZPF to convene a national hui on the risks associated with moving toward high stakes standardised testing and raised concerns around the Government's new SMART assessment tool



A key aim of both these approaches is to connect kaiako to support and uplift each other with this mahi and continue to deliver equitable educational outcomes for all tamariki. Key to this is knowing that true systemic change can't wait for policy and that the profession has the power and knowledge to make impactful change now.

Dr Shannon Walsh,
Strategic Researcher, NZEI

We see all of this work as necessary to defend and advance an education system that recognises and uplifts tamariki Māori and supports kaiako to move away from harmful streaming practices. At the same time, we know we won't shift the dial on streaming without further action. We are currently working on integrating Kōkirihiā into our education programme for our network of beginning teachers. This way they are introduced to Kōkirihiā at the start of their careers and union journey. We are also planning workshops for all kaiako to learn about and engage in the kaupapa of Kōkirihiā.



IMPLEMENTATION TEAM ENGAGEMENT

Over the past year, representatives from the member organisations have attended three two-day hui facilitated by the Kōkirhia backbone team. At the March 2025 hui, we welcomed Ngā Tai o te Awa, an iwi rūpū from Whanganui who shared their work with local schools around ending streaming using a community approach. For Ngā Tai o te Awa ending streaming is just one lever in attaining their primary goal of wellbeing.

At the previous hui we had the NZCER research team sharing their whakaaro about how schools can support Māori and Pacific students to attain university entrance. We also had a panel of primary school leaders from Auckland share how they are leading change in their schools.

These two-day hui provide a valuable opportunity for our member organisations to connect, network and explore opportunities for how they can work collaboratively to progress the kaupapa.



A MOVE FROM 1:1 TO CLUSTER HUI

Our original goal of meeting individually with each one of our member organisations – what we referred to as 1:1 hui – has become challenging timewise given the large number of organisations now committed to the kaupapa. With the time efficiency factor in mind and an identified need to find ways to foster greater collaboration across our members, we made the move to create clusters according to their primary role within the education sector. For example, the unions and professional bodies being one cluster, the government agencies another and so on. This has helped to streamline our approach and for the organisations to stay up to date with what others are doing. While there is some refinement needed, long-term we believe this new approach will be more effective in achieving the desired outcomes from these engagements we are seeking.

PROGRESS IN ACTION

Flexible grouping – it works!

Gabriela Isolabella, HOD Mathematics at Sacred Heart College Napier is passionate about teaching mathematics. She believes that for secondary schools, the area to focus on is Years 9 and 10 and placing the most experienced teachers with these classes so the students have a strong foundation going into the senior school.

When Gabriela first arrived in New Zealand and interacted with our education system she was surprised by the prevalence of streaming, its impacts and the use of terms like ‘cabbage class’. Having grown up in Uruguay, where educational reformer José Pedro Varela (1845–1879) post-independence from Spain, created an education system where all citizens, no matter their ethnicity or socio-economic background were provided a free and fair education, she knew there was a better way. With that context Gabriela became an early innovator in flexible grouping practices for maths.

What was the approach you took to making the shift?

Her starting point is the graduate profile; when your student leaves school for the last time, what do you want to see? One thing Gabriela identifies is the student having the ability to work in multi-disciplinary groups. It is so important now to work with people and be able to listen, to negotiate, and to be able to talk in an appropriate way and you are developing these skills whilst you are learning mathematics. Helping others, learning to ask for help, recognising your own strengths and weaknesses and learning to explain are other characteristics she wants to see in her graduates.

Early in the year, Gabriela has her students sit the e-asTTLe test, so they and the teacher know what curriculum level they are at. She also places the students in a broad category based on what she knows about their attitude. For example, enjoys maths and excels, dislikes maths and avoids participating, tries hard but struggles, and has ability but can’t be bothered.

These two data points form the basis of placing the students into groups, but these groups are easily and regularly reconfigured. When students enter the room, it is common for them to ask what groups are we in today? Our goal is to create a learning experience that allows all students to make progress from their current level.

How does she set work for each group?

“It’s easy,” she says. You don’t need to plan five lessons! She uses one page from a textbook to show how she tweaks the task for each group. One group might tackle questions 1-5 and if they handle those, they continue. Another group might start at question 16 and go to 20, and if they get them all correct, they go to the problem on the next page. ‘For another group I might go straight to the problem solving.

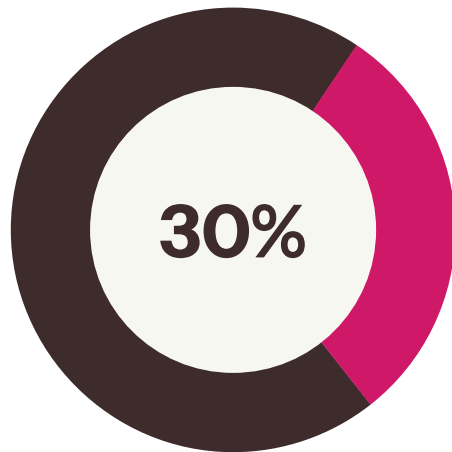
Gabriela also uses something she calls, ‘must, should, and could tasks.’

Must: are basic activities that all students must complete. **Should:** are activities that most students should attempt and **Could:** are extension tasks for students seeking a challenge.

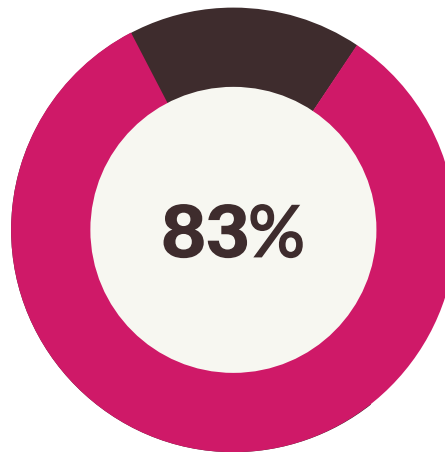
What does success look like?

At the start of each new term, the students sit the e-asTTLe test again and can immediately see if they have improved and by how much. They love being able to do this. It's not about competing with others but working to improve their own mathematics level.

Gabriela tracks their progress. Her Y9 class in 2024, began the year with 30% of students working at Level 4 or above. By the end of the year, 83% were Level 4 or above. Our expectation is that each student will be at level 5 by the end of year 10.



 Y9 Class at the Start of 2024



 Y9 Class at the End of 2024

She is also seeing changes in the students such as increased motivation and improved personal relationships. They learn how to respect each other. 'She might be different from me, but she helps me, and I respect her for that.' I go outside and I see students from different cultures sharing their lunches. Math anxiety has reduced, and a sense of capability has increased.



***“Everyone learns more
when we learn together!”***

SCHOOL ADVISORY GROUP

This rōpū of school leaders meets three times a year with the purpose of keeping us grounded in the realities of schools and providing strategic advice. Their advice has been invaluable, and we are very grateful for their wisdom. Ngā mihi nui ki a koutou.



Catherine Law



Misbah Sadat



Nikki Penny



“People focus on taking away the streaming, but we don’t even think about it. Streaming is like a big wall – that’s all you can see. If you take it away it’s like a blank canvas. You create it. You have a palette of primary colours, but it takes skill to create an artwork. For me, ending streaming was one thing, but it’s what do you put in its place, so that’s what we’ve been invested in – creating a structure, because the streaming part is the structure, and then within that structure, building the curriculum and developing the pedagogy that allows that curriculum to occur.”

Catherine Bentley,
Principal Hastings Girls

BRINGING RANGATAHI ON THE JOURNEY

How we bring rangatahi along on the journey has been a key consideration of Kōkirihiā from the outset – the importance of having their voice in the room and at the decision-making tables – ensuring they are empowered, informed and are aware of their own agency in their education.

With this front of mind, we sought external funding to pilot ways of working with young people. In 2023 we ran a series of three wānanga with rangatahi from local Ōtautahi kura we had working relationships with. In total we had a rōpū of 25 rangatahi (years 11 and 12) from eight schools. Using our AAA framework, the overarching intent was to grow awareness, allow them the freedom to create alternative approaches they believed would work and to encourage them to use their voice to help drive action.

Building on our learnings, we undertook a similar approach in 2024 but this time round, rangatahi signed up to be involved rather than being chosen by their school leadership. We also experimented with digital platforms as a mechanism for connection and building the movement.

There have been many learnings from our engagement with rangatahi, not least of all the realisation of just how big the task is to build momentum and a critical mass of engaged young people motivated to be active in driving equity in education. We have pushed pause for the time being to rethink how we might create more sustainable far-reaching impact with our limited resources.

From those rangatahi we engaged with we do know that young people are empowered when they are given the space to kōrero with their peers and welcome the opportunity to do so with others outside of their own schools. While most were unaware of what streaming is, they were all aware of how it makes them feel.

“Watching the kaupapa grow and educate communities. Seeing kaiako understand our whakaaro and thinking how it will affect their taura.”

“It got me thinking about the different ways I have seen it and how much streaming impacts young people mentally.”

“How powerful it can be when a whole group of people feel comfortable being vulnerable and talking about their feelings and experiences.”

“[I will] bring this into my application as head prefect.”

“When people ask me what Kōkirihiā is, I tell them what it is and why it should stop. People see it on my drink bottle and pen.”



GLOBAL CONNECTIONS

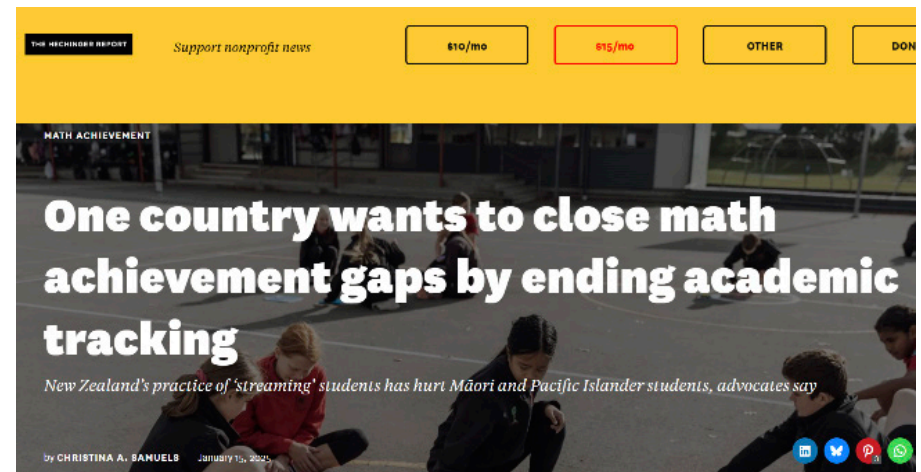
We are constantly meeting interesting people and developing new relationships with those with a shared passion for the kaupapa. What follows is a sample of those we have engaged with and been inspired by.

Christina Samuels from the Hechinger Report (Washington DC)

The Hechinger Report is a New York based nonprofit news outlet focused solely on education and featuring some of the best educational journalism in the USA.

In 2024, one of their journalists, Christina Samuels visited Tokona te Raki while in Aotearoa working on a story linking falling mathematics achievement with tracking (streaming). The story 'One country wants to close math achievement gaps by ending academic tracking,' was published on 15 January 2025. Christina's article is well- worth the read as are other stories on the Hechinger Report.

Christina Samuels (left) with **Manaaki Waretini-Beaumont** (right).



Jason To (Toronto)

Jason To works for the Toronto District School Board. About 10 years ago, as a young mathematics teacher he undertook some research that revealed how certain groups were disproportionately placed in lower streams and he made the decision that he was going to change things in his school. With the support of his principal, he led change in their school so that all year 9 students stayed together. Previously, the standard practice in Ontario schools was for students at the end of year 8 to select one of three pathways ranging from academic to applied to locally developed courses. By ‘ripping the ceiling off’, Jason says he ‘suddenly saw student groups achieving in ways he had never seen before and knew he was really onto something’. Other schools witnessed these changes and made the decision to implement the changes as well.

Ten years later, Jason works for the Toronto District School Board, tasked with supporting math’s teachers across the province with navigating an inclusive environment. He closely monitors this implementation.

“Just because we mash kids into the same room together, it doesn’t mean that it’s magic. There are a lot of things that must happen in classrooms to make this work.”

Jason’s five key takeaways:



1. **It was important for teachers to understand why they were doing it. They went through the data with school leaders to help them have the conversations within their school and feel comfortable.**
2. **There was concern that with de-streaming, we were going to water things down, but it didn’t. Expectations were kept high, so there wasn’t much pushback from parents saying things like ‘my kid’s not learning’.**
3. **Ontario has an equity policy that says it was our responsibility to identify barriers and address them, so this is a government policy. We said, ‘we’re not trying to rock the boat, we are just following the policy. We also have a Human Rights Code and same thing – we’re just following policy.’**
4. **Jason had access to excellent data that provided a picture of each track– how did each track compare in terms of parental income, ethnicity, language, sense of belonging, future educational pathway and achievement. This in turn, made clear the disparities and unfairness in the tracking system.**
5. **Another challenge was the perception that students weren’t doing as well after they stopped streaming in Year 9 and then decided to do the same in Year 10. As a proof point, Jason went to his research department to seek data to compare how students were doing before the pandemic with how they are doing now in a de-streamed system. The data showed pass rates were the same as before, but that now, all students were passing at the highest level of math.**

Others we have connected with and been inspired by include:



Jo Boaler

Jo is Professor of mathematics education at Stanford University and is widely known for her Mindset Maths. We met online with Jo earlier in the year and keep in regular contact. Our intention is to host a webinar for our Kōkirihiā membership to learn more about her and the thinking behind Mindset Maths at some stage soon.



Yvette Solomon and Sue Hough

Both teach at Manchester Met University where Sue is Senior Lecturer and Yvette is Professor focussing on inclusion and identity in mathematics. Sue introduced us to RME (Realistic Maths Education) which provides mixed attainment resources and research to support teachers.



Becky Taylor

Becky is Professor at University College London and is leading the massive Student Grouping Study which compares student achievement in Years 7 and 8 mathematics in mixed attainment schools with students in schools using ability grouping. The first report from this groundbreaking research is due in October.

DATA AND INSIGHTS

If you don't know it's there, how can you change it?

While the OECD data tells us that Aotearoa New Zealand has one of the highest rates of streaming in the developed world (83% in 2018), there is little data available to give us a baseline measurement. This means knowing how many schools stream and in what way, how many schools are moving towards flexible grouping - what are the approaches they are using and what been the impact of the change if any.

Understanding the importance of gathering data to map progress and tell stories of positive change, Kōkirihiā is exploring how best to work with our member organisations to capture the data required to measure our success. The key pieces of work in this space have been the biennial teacher survey led by NZEI and PPTA, the School Boards Association survey and the development of a data base of schools we have been made aware of who are moving to flexible grouping practices.



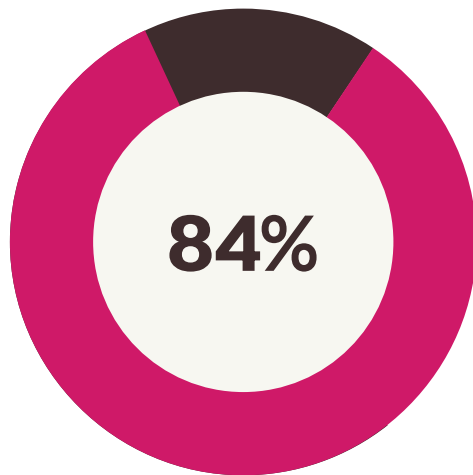
School Board Survey

This survey was developed and conducted by NZCER and covered four key areas including questions on streaming.

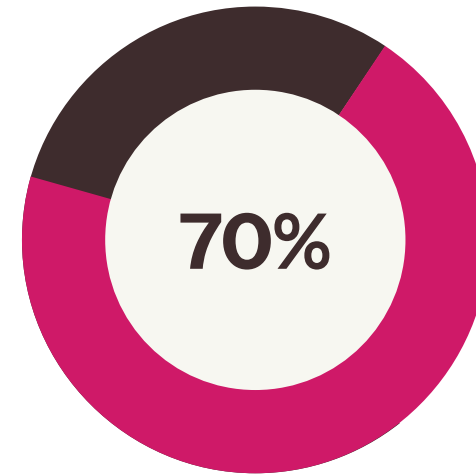
The key findings on streaming were:

2/3

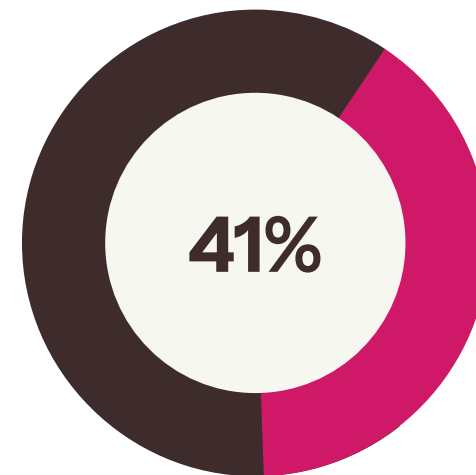
almost two-thirds (67%) were aware of Kōkirihiā, the plan for removing streaming.



most schools did not have ending streaming as a strategic goal (84%).



many board members (70%) had not been part of a board discussion on streaming/ability group practices.



41% of respondents said ending streaming is a priority for their school.

Second National Teacher Survey

In October 2024, NZEI and PPTA sent a survey to teachers and school leaders that included a series of questions about streaming/ability grouping and which replicated a similar survey that was run in 2022. A team led by the University of Canterbury is currently analysing the responses and whilst the analysis is a work in progress, we can offer some emerging insights:

- **Streaming is still very common in primary, intermediate and secondary schools – about two in three schools stream with no substantial change between 2022 and 2024.**
- **Teachers have diverse views about streaming – there is nothing close to consensus around whether de-streaming is achievable or desirable.**
- **Teachers want streaming more than principals do.**
- **Teachers who support streaming do so largely because they believe this is needed for ‘low ability’ students.**
- **Many teachers do not see a connection between streaming and inequity.**
- **School leaders report less streaming than do teachers.**
- **Prerequisites are a common form of streaming in Years 11-13.**

When fully analysed these surveys will provide important baseline information on grouping practices in schools and on teachers’ attitudes to different forms of student grouping. What is already clear is that streaming is far from uniform – it is done in different ways and for different purposes depending on context. It is particularly prevalent in mathematics, and in early primary reading. We will engage carefully with the qualitative data and prior research to develop a stronger understanding of the reasons for the patterns that we are observing in grouping arrangements. The differences in reported streaming and attitudes to streaming between teachers and school leaders also underscores the importance of engaging with teachers to understand the nuances of their pedagogical and grouping decisions. The survey results affirm the importance of our current work to produce tangible and specific case studies of non-streaming practices in diverse school settings and to continue to develop awareness of streaming and its consequences across the education sector.

**David Pomeroy, Senior Lecturer,
University of Canterbury**

LATEST RESEARCH

What are our math teachers thinking?

New research from Otago University is providing an insight into what is happening in secondary mathematics. Lars van Beusekom and Naomi Ingram surveyed secondary math teachers to find out what they are thinking about streaming.

What they discovered:

- 1. Overall, teachers were more focused on what they saw as the benefits of streaming for both the teachers and the students in the higher streams.**
- 2. They also saw benefits for students in lower streamed classes, such as teachers being able to provide instruction at the right level and right pace.**
- 3. Of concern was that the research showed a proportion of teachers had a fixed mindset about their student's ability believing students in lower streams were not capable of learning more complex content and were not capable of being focused or behaving.**
- 4. What was most concerning, 'there was a total lack of mention from these teachers about the implications of streaming on Māori and Pasifika learners.**

LATEST PUBLICATIONS

A RAPID REVIEW/ OF GROUPING PRACTICES FOR EQUITABLE OUTCOMES

This [publication](#) was commissioned by the Ministry of Education and supports teachers to group students flexibly and effectively – and it's a great read!

Co-author, Dr Pam O'Connell says:

“Teachers and leaders should find this helpful as they reconstruct new practices. I think the most valuable contribution that it makes is this set of seven characteristics and I am hoping the seven characteristics can be a blueprint for the ‘how’.

The characteristics also address what needs to support grouping practices such as narratives and structural considerations, and the vignettes bring these characteristics to life. I like the fact that the characteristics are expressed as what tamariki/ rangatahi can do, experience and hear. i.e. they are learner focused. They are also a way to review current practices.”

Streaming Terminology

Some of the terms we use when we talk about streaming are proving to be problematic and the report addresses this. We are so used to talking about ability grouping and mixed ability grouping but, as the report says, ‘the term ‘ability’ supports deficit thinking and negative narratives about marginalised students that accept a static notion of student identity, rely on a comparison group, divide and categorise students and perpetuate the myth that the problem (and therefore the solution) lies with the learner.’

A couple of alternative options being offered are: heterogeneous social grouping and flexible grouping.

You can read more about this on [pages 12-13](#) of the report for a more detailed explanation. This thinking has sparked the need for a much wider conversation around the words we use to speak about streaming/ ability grouping.



POIPOIA KIA PUĀWAI HOW SCHOOLS SUPPORT ĀKONGA MĀORI AND PACIFIC STUDENTS TO ATTAIN UNIVERSITY ENTRANCE

This is another interesting and valuable read for those thinking about how to create the conditions for achievement. This report released in 2024 was commissioned by NZQA with research carried out by NZCER in six schools that are achieving above average rates of Māori and Pacific students gaining University Entrance to identify the key factors in enabling this success.

The report identified five foundational conditions needed for schools to support high UE attainment for ākonga Māori and Pacific students.

They are:

- 1. Establishing and maintaining meaningful staff and student, and school and whānau, relationships**
- 2. Understanding the importance of culture and the need to ensure that the school environment affirms the languages, identities, and cultures of ākonga Māori and Pacific students**
- 3. Holding high expectations for all students**
- 4. Ensuring students are taught by effective teachers**
- 5. Having effective school leaders who prioritise equity**





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