



# SCHOOLS PLUS: A response

A paper prepared by the  
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COMET



MAKING EDUCATION WORK FOR MANUKAU

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This document has been prepared on behalf of the trustees of the City of Manukau Education Trust (COMET) and does not reflect the views of any other organisation.

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# SCHOOLS PLUS: A RESPONSE

## HE WHAKATAUKI

E kore e taea e te whenu kotahi  
ki te raranga i te whāriki  
kia mōhio tātou kiā tātou.  
Mā te mahi tahi ō ngā whenu,  
mā te mahi tahi ō ngā kairaranga,  
ka oti tēnei whāriki.  
I te otinga  
me titiro tātou ki ngā mea pai ka puta mai.  
Ā tana wā,  
me titiro hoki  
ki ngā raranga i makere  
nā te mea, he kōrero ano kei reira.

The tapestry of understanding  
can not be woven  
by one strand alone.  
Only by the working together of strands  
and the working together of weavers  
will such a tapestry be completed.  
With its completion  
let us look at the good that comes from it  
and, in time  
we should also look  
at those stitches which have been dropped,  
because they also have a message.

## FOREWORD

*E ngā iwi, e ngā reo, e nga kāranga maha o ngā hau e whā,  
tēnei te mihi atu ki a koutou katoa.  
Ko tēnei te mihi ki a koutou mo te tauira o tēnei kaupapa.  
Tenā koutou, tenā koutou, tenā koutou katoa.*

The City of Manukau Education Trust is a not-for-profit charitable trust established by Manukau City Council to address education issues in the city. The Trust has been engaged since 2000 in community dialogue on education matters. The city vision, articulated in *Tomorrow's Manukau: Manukau Apopo*, includes an aspiration for “an Educated and Knowledgeable People”, including the transition from school to work.

Chronic education under-achievement in Manukau is often blamed on parents or school performance. In reality, government systems often get in the way of local innovation and good practice. This response argues that the challenges identified by the Schools Plus Discussion Document can be met most effectively by working together through a whole-of-system approach at the community level.

This document has collated feedback provided by focus groups conducted with young people in Manukau in December 2007; incorporated the views of youth transitions service practitioners working with young school-leavers in partnership with schools; and is built from the experience of the COMET team and trustees and advisors who have long experience in education and community networks in Manukau City and around the country.

The Minister, in his foreword to the Discussion Document, refers to the importance of building on the strengths of the current education system, alignment of services across government, and ensuring strong partnerships among all the parties involved. We believe that this requires local action which can only be achieved when central policy-makers remove barriers to innovation and collaboration; and when system settings from the earliest age deliver effectively to local needs.

Bernardine Vester  
Chief Executive

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This paper is divided into a number of sections that respond to the issues raised and the questions contained in the Schools Plus Discussion Document.

We have not attempted to respond directly to the questions. Instead, this document has been shaped around a series of eleven recommendations that constitute a broad approach to the Schools Plus goal.

Each section makes an over-arching recommendation about policy direction to achieve the Schools Plus goal – that *all* young people should be *actively and willingly engaged* in education, skills or other structured learning, relevant to their needs and abilities, at least until the age of 18. Within each section, further recommendations are made about possible actions or approaches.

Youth are a focus for Manukau. The efforts of this city to effect change need to be supported. We look to central government for partnership actions that are credible and valid in achievement of the common goal.

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## RECOMMENDATIONS SUMMARY

1. **Invite** Local Government Authorities to become Schools Plus Champions
2. **Create** a national support framework for local action through an intermediary
3. **Step up** investment in participation in quality early childhood education in targeted areas
4. **Build** shared ownership of education learning plans and learning achievement
5. **Target efforts** to those communities with high numbers of young people with unrealized potential
6. **Invest** in family learning approaches
7. **Invest** in the capacity of local polytechnics to deliver youth vocational training in partnership with schools
8. **Resource** local partnership-building efforts with businesses and community
9. **Build** a culturally appropriate workforce for Manukau early childhood centres and schools
10. **Become a partner** in a Manukau Education Hub
11. **Amend** legislation to remove barriers to innovation and change

## INVITE LOCAL GOVERNMENT AUTHORITIES TO BECOME SCHOOLS PLUS CHAMPIONS

*“The best councils deliver for their communities by acting as strategic leaders – working with partners to develop a clear common purpose across a community built around a common commitment to ensure all are able to fulfil their potential. No one provider is able to deliver this on their own – securing opportunity for all demands a system wide approach.” –*

Champions of Local Learning, UK  
Local Government Association.

There is a growing international emphasis on the importance of networks in the development of community wellbeing<sup>1</sup>.

The challenges being addressed by Schools Plus fall under a category of cross-cutting policy issues, so-called “wicked issues”<sup>2</sup> that are more likely to be effectively addressed through holistic and more localised approaches rather than central government directives. The international policy thrust is towards local networks, properly resourced and supported by sound governance frameworks, taking ownership of the problem and leading action towards solutions.

In the United Kingdom, local councils are at the heart of delivery of all services for children, with a particular emphasis on including education as an agent for total well-being in the community. The UK Local Government Association has endorsed the

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<sup>1</sup> Putnam, Robert 1993: *Making Democracy Work*. Princeton, New Jersey, Princeton University Press; Cox, A.D.1995: *A Truly Civil Society*. Sydney: ABC Books ; Fukuyama, Francis1995: *Trust: The Social Virtues and the Creation of Prosperity*. London: Hamish Hamilton.

<sup>2</sup> Clarke, Michael, & Stewart, John.1998: *Community Governance, Community Leadership and the New Local Government*. York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation

role of local government as the “champion of local learning”<sup>3</sup>.

In New Zealand, the Local Government Act 2002 has given councils greater responsibility for environmental, economic, cultural and social well-being. Desired Community Outcomes are to be achieved through a tightly-prescribed process, called the “community outcomes process”. This process is designed for system wide input into achievement of community aspirations.

Schools Plus, also, demands a system wide approach. Such an approach requires co-ordination of the many institutional and stakeholder players who form part of the social system, *at both the local and national level*, impacting on education outcomes.

Councils are ideally placed to co-ordinate a system wide approach at the local level.

Local authorities should be invited to become Schools Plus Champions.

Becoming a Schools Plus Champion would involve a local authority in more than ownership of a title. A Schools Plus Champion would take leadership in supporting achievement of the goal at the local level, a form of “community governance”.

Schools Plus Champions would have specific co-ordination, leadership and advocacy functions so that local systems of support for learning are cohesive.

This is a radical concept in the New Zealand setting, and requires some rethinking of the way in which *existing* structures and processes within the education and local government sectors could be used for more effective outcomes for learning for young people.

Education as an agent of well-being features strongly in the Long Term Council Community Plans (LTCCP) of local government.<sup>4</sup>

This kind of “community governance” for education could involve a number of different elements:

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<sup>3</sup> Local Government Association, 2005: *Champions of Local Learning: The strategic role of local government in local learning*. London: Local Government Association, UK

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<sup>4</sup> Reid, Mike, Scott, Claudia, & McNeill, Jeff. (2006). Strategic Planning Under the Local Government Act 2002: Towards Collaboration or Compliance? *Policy Quarterly*, 2 (no 2), 18-25.

- **A LOCAL AND COMMUNITY-OWNED STRATEGIC VISION FOR THE ACHIEVEMENT OF SCHOOLS PLUS GOALS.**

Local authorities already have in place a commitment to elements of community governance of education: for example, through membership of the Mayors Taskforce for Jobs; through the development of a community education plan or similar; through identification of education achievement as a Desired Outcome in the Long Term Council Community Plan.

- **DISTRIBUTED COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP FOR ACTION TOWARDS THE SCHOOLS PLUS GOALS –**

The temptation is to depend on the leadership of school principals to implement action towards the Schools Plus goals. While school principals and their board chairs will be critical to the success of Schools Plus, their leadership is necessarily focused on their schools. A system-wide approach involves more than schools and their leaders. Broad community engagement is structurally available through the mayor and councillors and their Chief Executives.

Why would local mayors want to be involved in Schools Plus? Most will already understand the impact of the problems Schools Plus is being designed to address on the social wellbeing of their community. Building local government understanding of the potential for

Schools Plus to help re-shape *local* economies for the future will enhance the effectiveness of action in achieving the goal.

- **SHARED DATA AND INFORMATION ON SCHOOLING OUTCOMES**

The Schools Plus discussion document provides data which supports a change in policy direction. This data will have added meaning when it is directly related to the local context.

The kind of data that will be important at the local level – benchmarked to national and international data – will include:

- How many young people in schooling in the local authority area;
- Local schooling retention rates
- The proportion and number of Maori students staying in school to age 17;
- The proportion and number of Pasifika students;
- What happens for young people when they leave school;
- Qualifications achievements of school-leavers;
- Schooling achievement progress across all levels of schooling;
- Relevant other data such as patterns of early childhood education participation; adult qualifications in the community; skills pathways

- opportunities; the kind of tertiary education provision in the local area; and so on.
- Data related to local labour markets including stock-takes on the nature of school-business relationships and networks; employer and industry strategic directions; and future skill needs.

Some of this data may be available through the regional polytechnic or other crown tertiary education organisation, currently with responsibility for the “regional facilitation process” for identifying labour market skill demand.

However, bringing data together at the territorial local authority level is surprisingly difficult, and would certainly not be a task that schools would be able to achieve for themselves.

Good community governance requires high quality data, publicly shared and accompanied by debate and openness to the input of others, as the basis for community action.

- **COMMUNITY RESOURCE-SHARING**

In taking a system-wide approach, new assessment is needed of the resources that already exist within communities to address the issues highlighted in the Schools Plus Discussion Document.

Resource questions in relation to learning often come back to the funding of schools. While school funding is certainly an issue, the resourcing of schools needs to be considered in a much broader context.

Resources for learning also include the *financial assets* of a community; the *cultural and knowledge expertise* of local people; and the *social capital* available within the community, that is, the network of relationships and connections that connect schools to the local, national and global community.

#### *FINANCIAL ASSETS*

Examples are available of the powerful effect that community capital can have on community economic aspirations when harnessed to education. Assets to be found in many communities include energy trusts, local government shareholdings in infrastructural companies such as ports and airports, licensing trusts, land, and community trusts distributing assets from community savings banks. These can become not simply a source of income for distribution, but a resource powerful enough to influence the economic development settings of the community. The Southland Community Trust and the Zero Fees Policy; and the West Coast Development Trust and the literacy

initiative are examples of such partnerships.

All government agencies, local authorities, and Council Controlled Organisations are required to spell out in Statements of Intent their objectives for the future. Their Annual Reports are carefully scrutinized. Through a process of negotiation with their communities, organizations that are stewards of community assets must set out their policies for investment and spending and explain how performance in pursuing objectives will be measured.

#### *CULTURAL AND CONTEXT EXPERTISE*

Bringing community leaders who have cultural and linguistic expertise into the decision-making frame for Schools Plus will be critical to its success.

A whole of system approach will require community-level organizations – marae, churches, sporting and arts organizations, for example – to also be engaged in the Schools Plus goal.

While schools are “expert” at dealing with young people, there is a temptation to consider schools as exclusively the places where learning - through the trained teacher workforce – can best take place. There are a large number of organizations

that are specifically targeted to working with youth. In Manukau, much of that expertise is in church-related or ethnically focused organizations. There is a strong cultural dimension to successful youth work practice and creating successful contexts for learning that is often missing in schools.

Context expertise also relates to the world of work. This may be found, for example, in successful school-business partnership projects that shape ‘authentic’ learning opportunities for young people.

The challenge is to connect school-based learning; community-based youth work; skills and work-related training; and families, their whanau and iwi.

An inclusive approach will require incentives for working in partnership.

The most challenging aspect of partnership is liaison and co-ordination. To promote partnership practices, both partners will need to set aside resources. Incentives for doing so could include:

- Providing liaison and facilitation expertise through targeted services available to both the school and the

partners on a power-sharing basis – examples include a school-business partnership facilitator; a youth co-ordinator; a Maori community liaison officer

- Financial incentives, for example through staffing and/or targeted innovations funding pools.

It is our experience that there is a place for both school-based liaison and community-based intermediary work. There are a number of models in the US where the work of intermediary organisations has been highly successful in linking workplaces and schools<sup>5</sup>. These organizations have “context expertise” because they specialize in developing the networks which support the learning programmes of schools.

- **SHARED ACTION**

As already noted, the quality of community networks is important. The organising framework for education conspicuously lacks a connection to community decision-makers. Community leaders and education leaders need

opportunities to spend time together, to actively seek opportunities to work together, and to consciously be inclusive of other stakeholders.

Purposeful action is important if leaders are to find value in collaboration<sup>6</sup>. It is through the actual practice of working together to realize goals that strong networks become established.

- **SECTION CONCLUSION**

The community governance approach described above is based on using the structures and processes already in place in the local government and education sectors.

*All that is required is a new way of thinking about the potential of each sector to more effectively deliver on aspirations for community well-being through education.*

That new way of thinking has to take place at all levels. The capacity of the Ministry of Education to support engagement with local government requires an understanding amongst its officials of local government

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<sup>5</sup> See, for example, [http://www.bridge2employment.com/act\\_sendfile.cfm?fileid=97](http://www.bridge2employment.com/act_sendfile.cfm?fileid=97); and <http://www.newwaystowork.org/initiatives/>

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<sup>6</sup> Timperley, Helen, & Robinson, Viviane, 2002: *Partnership: Focusing the relationship on the task of school improvement*. Wellington, New Zealand Council for Educational Research.

processes for developing a community vision. There appears to be no Ministry process for working with local government. This is a gap that needs to be addressed if it is to meet its strategic goal of supporting “family and community engagement”, or to deliver on the state sector promise to support a whole-of-government approach.

To give effect to the whole-of-system approach involving local government, the following support tasks will be required:

- **Undertake** an analysis of the readiness of territorial local authorities (TLA) to become Schools Plus Champions;
- **Invite** local TLAs to become Schools Plus Champions;
- **Establish** a funding support mechanism for TLAs that opt into becoming Schools Plus Champions;
- **Commission** local analysis of data and information on which actions related to the Schools Plus goal can be based. The task should be collaboratively commissioned and shaped;
- **Provide** local government leadership-building opportunities in relation to the Schools Plus goal – possibly in partnership with the SOLGM or LGNZ; and/or alongside school principals and board chairpersons;
- **Build** awareness of the Schools Plus goal and related initiatives among community decision-makers, including those in stewardship of community financial assets; among Maori community leaders; other ethnic leaders; and in the business community;
- **Provide** incentives for the creation of links with cultural and social leaders;
- From a targeted fund, in each TLA that opts to become a Schools Plus Champion **establish** a school-business relationship unit (elsewhere also called a skills council) to facilitate connections between schools and the workplace;
- **Adopt** a ‘whole-of-system’ approach within each Ministry of Education regional office by establishing a specialist liaison position with particular emphasis on local government interaction;
- **Establish** an intermediary organization – such as a collaboratively funded unit within a crown agency or (better) a stand-alone entity with collaborative ‘shareholders’ – to provide customized tools and facilitated support to employers, schools, workforce entities, community organizations and community collaboratives to develop *local* systems to meet youth potential in every community (see page 13).

## CREATE A NATIONAL SUPPORT FRAMEWORK FOR LOCAL ACTION THROUGH AN INTERMEDIARY ORGANISATION

*To enable each community to develop its own 'change solution' requires a support framework focused on the capacity of local communities to act collaboratively in support of the Schools Plus goal.*

The precedent exists in overseas examples. Intermediaries with a focus on developing youth potential include **New Ways to Work**<sup>7</sup>, whose “All Youth – One System” approach has been adopted by the Sonoma County Office of Education, California, among others in the US; the **Conference Board of Canada**<sup>8</sup> whose work includes identifying and supporting skills development needs to meet local labour markets; or the **National Institute for Work and Learning (NIWL)**, which “works at the nexus of the education and employment systems, promoting their integration to ensure lifelong learning and productivity for all Americans<sup>9</sup>”.

The US Federal School-to-Work Opportunities Act provided five years of venture capital to help communities in their system-building efforts. The NIWL “Work and Learning Information Centre” acted as a hub for synthesizing, communicating and disseminating information that supported local efforts. It became a resource for capacity-building at both the school level and the community level. In addition, it held the database on actions that were being funded by School To Work grants, and also conducted useful case studies of successful school-to-work systems.

A clear distinction needs to be made between ‘generic’ understandings of good practice and ‘local practice solutions’; and the requirement for balanced approaches and shared resources across communities.

All communities will need access to ‘technical’ expertise, high quality tools of engagement and support materials – this requires an organizational framework which does not require each community to “reinvent the wheel”.

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<sup>7</sup> <http://www.newwaystowork.org/>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.conferenceboard.ca>

<sup>9</sup> <http://niwl.aed.org/>

We would recommend further exploration of the role of an “intermediary” contracted to develop specific expertise in the provision of customized tools and facilitated support to schools, employers, workforce entities, community organizations and community collaboratives to develop *local* systems to meet youth potential in every community.

A Schools Plus intermediary would specifically work alongside local government, schools and other stakeholders to broker a shared focus on clear objectives, measurable outcomes, and tailored solutions for local contexts. The intermediary would be capable of building expertise and developing materials that support local action, and would be collaboratively and innovatively funded through contributions from central and local governments, employers, and perhaps even from schools in return for specific capacity-building services.

## STEP UP INVESTMENT IN PARTICIPATION IN QUALITY EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION IN TARGETED AREAS

*Early Childhood Education is not compulsory. Nevertheless, the evidence is overwhelming that sustained participation in quality early childhood education has an impact on schooling success<sup>10</sup>.*

Further, there is also emerging evidence to suggest that non-enrolment (i.e. late first enrolment) or non-attendance of children at school at the age of five years is correlated to disengagement patterns (such as truancy) beginning at ages 8, 9, and 10.

The OECD recognises the importance of early childhood learning, and advises measures to increase participation in quality services among Maori and Pasifika children and in rural communities as a pre-emptive strategy for student disengagement<sup>11</sup>.

Increasing participation – particularly within Maori and Pacific Island communities - requires a community-specific approach.

The investment has greatest value where there is family commitment to the learning outcomes for their children, and family engagement in the institutions that serve their children.

The need for investment is acute in Manukau City, where population growth is outstripping growth in services.

There are 28,000 under 5 year-olds in this city. 12,386 of them are enrolled in early childhood education. While this figure is rising, so is the population in Manukau. Participation rates in Manukau are barely keeping up with population growth.

Participation is a challenge in all parts of the city. The participation challenge has many facets:

- not enough services
- not enough qualified teachers
- variable service quality

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<sup>10</sup> Farquhar, S. (2003). *Quality Teaching Early Foundations: Best Evidence Synthesis*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.  
Wylie, C., Hodgen, E., Ferral, H. & Thompson, J. (2006). *Contributions of early childhood education to age-14 performance: Evidence from the longitudinal Competent Children, Competent Learners study*. Wellington: New Zealand Council for Educational Research.

<sup>11</sup> OECD, 2008: *Jobs for Youth: Des Emplois Pour Les Jeunes New Zealand*. Paris.

- family desire for services that nurture language and culture
- low attendance rates
- varying attitudes to the importance of early childhood education in a non-compulsory environment

This multi-faceted challenge is expressed very differently in different corners of Manukau:

In the eastern suburbs of Howick and Pakuranga participation is generally high - as much as 100% for some groups of 4 year-olds. But there is enormous pressure on places in centres, and waiting lists are so long that some children are well past their 4<sup>th</sup> birthday before they can get in.

In Flat Bush, Manukau's newest suburb, over 1300 children will arrive in the next six years. As of April 2007, there were just 9 licensed services, or around 350 or so places.

In Manurewa there is only one Pasifika early childhood centre in the area, there is an overall shortage of services, and amongst the lowest participation rates in the country.

In Otara, Mangere, and Papatoetoe many services are full. Where there are places, centres may not always 'fit' the language and cultural preference of the family. Parents are also making choices based on quality.

Attendance rates complicate the picture of early childhood participation. Despite enrolment in a service, children in parts of this city may not attend regularly.

Not all communities have participation rates as low as in Manukau or birth rates as high.

*A Step Up in the efforts to improve participation in quality early childhood education is needed in targeted communities where low participation is also correlated to low levels of education achievement and/or low rates of 15-to-19-year-olds in continuing education or skills training.*

*COMET recommends a central government / local government partnership for the urgent development of the capital assets required for the establishment of community-based early childhood education centres.*

Because early childhood education is non-compulsory, those centres must meet the cultural, social and quality aspirations of parents and the community for their children's learning.

Participation in early childhood education is not just an education sector matter: it matters to the overall social, cultural and economic wellbeing of the city, and is critical to the success of Schools Plus.

## TARGET EFFORTS TO THOSE COMMUNITIES WITH LARGE NUMBERS OF YOUTH WITH UNREALISED POTENTIAL

The intention is that ALL young people will be 'tracked, monitored and supported' until they reach 18.

We have identified the following as being among those whose potential is currently not being realised:

- Young people with special needs or disabilities
- Teenage parents – they may be enrolled in a school for young mums, or they may be living at home or in a relationship elsewhere
- Young people who attend alternative education
- Those living away from home or in foster care
- Young people in prison or corrective institutions
- Students home schooled (not correspondence) – there are 4000 of these nationally
- Young people not working, ineligible for social assistance and therefore not known to WINZ.
- Maori and Pasifika students, represented disproportionately in underachievement statistics
- Transient young people who move between New Zealand, Australia, Samoa, Tonga and the Cook Islands. These young people are difficult to track as they leave and re-enter the country
- Children of migrants; international students; students on exchange or other visas – particularly those who do not speak English very well
- Young people who have had attendance issues due to health problems requiring admission to hospital for long periods of time
- Students required to stay at home to look after sick family relatives and children so that their parents can work. These students need to be identified and supported with personalised education plans so these cultural requirements can be taken into account
- Students who 'drop out'
- Students whose families have high mobility – typically, families who do not own their own homes, new migrant families, whanau / families where shared care-giving is a cultural norm.

Locating and tracking of students not attending the formal school system is a challenge. Innovative

and new ways of doing this may be needed. Most important will be the data-sharing protocols of government agencies and those working with young people.

The Youth Transitions Services model piloted by COMET in Manukau (January 2004 – June 2008) offers a model for ensuring young school-leavers are supported as they move from school to work.

Critical design elements of the model have been:

- Close partnership with schools – our brokers have been based inside schools;
- Definition of the client base as “at risk” through having no clearly defined direction or destination after leaving secondary school;
- Individualised case management using the youth development approach – including, for example, interviewing school-leavers *and* their families to assess the young person’s strengths, weaknesses and interests;
- Referral to other external agencies based on assessment of barriers to transition;
- Liaison with education and training providers and employers;
- Flexible placement of school-leavers into training, employment or back into school;
- Monitoring and assessing school-leaver progress over a six month period, taking corrective action as needed.

- Recording all of these actions to provide a database of outcomes.

The Schools Plus initiative could learn from this model.

External organisations contracted to provide services to young people need to have easy access to information from schools, external social service agencies, government departments, employers; and need to connect to the families of the school-leaver.

Locating the service inside schools, but externally managing it through a community agency, has been a successful approach. The reasons include

- **Outcomes focus** on the destination;
- Community and employer **network connections** that schools are not resourced to develop for themselves, and which can be shared across schools;
- Direct **access to student data**;
- **Visibility and credibility** in the school;
- **Consistent data-gathering** across schools about school-leaver destinations;

A key word used in the Schools Plus Discussion Document is ‘ALL’ young people. This inclusive word requires investment in those communities where universal entitlement to education is not

delivering the outcomes required. Clearly, most wards in Manukau would be covered by this targeting mechanism. Creative solutions need to be found.

For example, students required to stay at home to look after sick family relatives and children so that their parents can work need to be identified and supported with personalised education plans so these cultural requirements can be taken into account.

For inclusion of all, cultural, ethnic and financial flexibility is needed for policy settings shaped for the Schools Plus goal.

But most importantly, focus energy and resources to those communities where the potential for success is largely unrealised. The largest of these is Manukau.

## BUILD SHARED OWNERSHIP OF LEARNING PLANS AND LEARNING ACHIEVEMENT

People of all ages are driven by success. Driving learning from what young people can already do is good pedagogy. Therefore, a well-prepared portfolio that follows the young person across institutional divides (from early childhood to school; from primary school to intermediate school or middle school; from there to secondary school) will support successful schooling transitions and help to shape learning from successful achievement and interests, rather than promoting failure.

Key factors that have an impact on students' participation, engagement and achievement in school include the family and the learner's sense of belonging, acceptance, and "ownership" over their learning pathway. This understanding begins very early in a young person's life.

The Discussion Document appears to locate the responsibility for a learning plan within schools (page 9), apparently with a view to using it as an instrument for shaping the learning programme for young people.

This suggests that the primary responsibility for learning rests with the school.

If its purpose is to support learning for those young people who disengage early from school, a learning plan must become more than an instrument for teachers.

It needs to become a dynamic document that responds to the whole context of learning for those young people who respond least to existing learning opportunities.

'Best practice' in the early childhood education sector<sup>12</sup> illustrates how parents and children can share in the planning for learning in both centre and home contexts.

The collaborative mechanism is a portfolio of 'learning stories' which describe the learning that is taking place in the centre for each child and – where parents are engaged in the centre's learning programme – in the home.

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<sup>12</sup> Based on the work of early childhood educators and researchers. See for example: Carr, Margaret, 2001: *Assessment in Early Childhood Education Settings: Learning Stories*. Paul Chapman Publishing, London.

While teachers have responsibility for preparing the stories, parents are invited to contribute to them and to share in discussion about them on a regular basis. As a result, the 'learning stories' help to create a shared understanding of each child's strengths and developmental needs.

Similarly, a school portfolio - the basis of a learning plan - could gather together documents that include (for example)

- Stories from the early childhood and school settings
- The child's voice – his/her interests and perspectives
- The parent voice
- The perspectives of those who have key relationships with the learner
- The academic assessments of teachers and analysis of learning needs
- "Big picture" analysis of data – for example of attendance or other relevant matters that impact on learning
- The future career or work intentions of the learner
- Documents related to the authentic learning experiences that the learner has engaged in, project activities, etc.

These documents can be pictorial or narrative, oral or written, paper tablet or digital.

The portfolio and learning plan should reflect the cultural values of the child's home environment as well as the values of the school. The voices of parents, caregivers, whanau, their peers, teachers and community should be included as a validation of the whole learning environment for each child.

Most of all, the portfolio and learning plan should include the reflections of young people, from the very early years, on their own learning. This is done very effectively in many early childhood education settings, and a growing number of schools.

New technologies provide new opportunities for creating, storing and co-constructing documents of this nature.

Like the Plunket book, a portfolio in this scenario becomes an artefact of value, easily accessible and personally relevant.

The assumption of the learning plan being a "school" document, therefore, needs critical examination.

Certainly, teachers and schools need to be vitally involved in the process. However, a learning plan must involve an approach to parent engagement

from schools that is qualitatively different to the traditional assessment and “parent report” process.

To support this change, resources in the education sector for professional growth need to be reoriented; and placed alongside resources available in the youth work sector, for community liaison, and in social agencies.

Perhaps the development of learning plans can be facilitated by ‘**learning brokers**’; who may be marae-based, school-based, or community-based (possibly as part of a Schools Plus Champion team); and who over time could develop a set of specialist skills that bring families and schools together through the learning of children.

Youth mentors provide an alternative mechanism through which learning portfolios and plans can be developed or maintained.

The development of a system of engagement or re-engagement in learning for young people is complex.

*Collaborative approaches and whole-of-system change are achieved when resources for the development of personalised learning plans are effectively deployed across communities, rather than located in individual schools.*

The employer role in learning plans must be consistent with the role of other influencers on a young person’s learning.

*For best effect, a learning plan should become part of the employment agreement for every young person less than 19 years of age who is employed; and/or the employer voice should be included in learning plans for students participating in Gateway or other community learning programmes.*

For the learning plan to be relevant, both parties need to agree and commit to a plan of action and continuous review. Larger employers will have a professional development / training plan in place for employees. In smaller businesses, the paperwork burden on employers to work on a training plan can be reduced through the support of a learning broker.

The Learning Plan will not be a new document, but an extension of the Learning Plan of each young person, as dynamically developed throughout their learning years. Like a scrap-book, a learning plan can be contributed to and amended by employers.

## INVEST IN WHOLE-OF-FAMILY LEARNING APPROACHES

*Literacy is, at its very heart, a pivotal component of nation building. Fully realized, it enables people to take part in the fullness of the society that they live in. – Te Kawai Ora<sup>13</sup>.*

Extensive research has been commissioned on family learning as a means of transmitting education aspiration, motivation, and success. A Best Evidence Synthesis on what community and family influences make an impact on children’s achievement in New Zealand<sup>14</sup> has shown that, regardless of family’s background or circumstances, they can help their children learn. Families are often an untapped resource for learning.

The most significant community challenge Manukau faces is encouraging ‘non-traditional’ parent or adult learner groups to re-engage in the education mainstream.

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<sup>13</sup> Maori Adult Literacy Working Party, 2001: *Te Kawai Ora: Reading the Word, Reading the World, Being the World*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.

<sup>14</sup> Biddulph, F., Biddulph, J., & Biddulph, C. 2004: *The Complexity of Family and Community Influences on Children’s Achievement*. Best Evidence Synthesis. Wellington: Ministry of Education.

***Intergenerational family learning is a proven<sup>15</sup>, effective mechanism for changing the dynamics of learning within families. It has the potential to be a key circuit-breaker in realizing the potential of Maori, Pacific Island and new migrant families.***

Intergenerational Family Learning empowers adults through adult learning that takes place simultaneously alongside their children in the school or early childhood centre.

Intergenerational Family Learning integrates learning across generations to create shared outcomes for adults and children.

Intergenerational Family Learning is relationship based. At the heart of a quality programme is kinship and shared learning – especially in literacy and numeracy.

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<sup>15</sup> Vester, B., Houlker, R., and Whaanga, M., : 2006: *A Tapestry of Understanding: Intergenerational Family Learning*. Manukau: City of Manukau Education Trust. *Manukau Family Literacy Programme Outcomes Valuation Project*, August 2006: PricewaterhouseCoopers. Desforges, C., & Abouchaar, A., 2003: *The impact of parental involvement, parental support and family education on pupil achievement and adjustment: A literature review*. London: Department for Education and Skills.

Intergenerational Family Learning is also outcomes focused. A quality programme should be able to simultaneously provide evidence of learning for both the adult and the child, and evidence of contribution to personal, family and community well-being as a result of participation.

Intergenerational Family Learning ideally takes place in schools and early childhood settings, with mainstream institutional collaborators who can offer *adults* pathways to new futures.

However, existing policy frameworks provide no incentives or direct pathways for institutions such as early childhood centres, schools or tertiary providers to engage in intergenerational family learning.

Schools and early childhood centres that might offer intergenerational family learning programmes need logistical support and funding to engage in learning for adults.

Tertiary institutions require community partnership, funding and support to engage in learning provision which includes learning outcomes for children and communities.

Community organisations require capital investments and professional expertise to

engage in high-quality learning programmes. The capability for managing complex partnership is important to programme success.

*There is a policy gap for intergenerational family learning.*

This is a significant omission, because family learning programmes grow the community's capacity to meet aspirations for new ways of learning and living.

A key strategy arising from the *Hui Taumata 2005* is to make skill development and lifelong learning a whanau priority, including its accessibility and affordability.

The focus on whanau is significant for the Schools Plus initiative.

Intergenerational family learning is capable of producing **measurable outcomes** for early childhood, school, tertiary and community partners.

*The policy adjustment required is this: both adult education providers, and school and early childhood centres, should be able to access funding focused on delivering*

*intergenerational family learning consistent with the definition above – through establishing new cross-sector collaborations, or building on existing partnerships and relationships.*

Intergenerational family learning encompasses parenting skills, adult literacy support to address population skills levels of economic development purposes, family use of services, family relationships, attainment levels at school for children, attitude or behavior issues, health, democratic participation, and increasing community understanding of the education system and children's learning needs.

While this may seem a heavy burden for one policy purchase, there is consistently strong research evidence that points to the conclusion that intergenerational family learning 'works' to support all of these policy agendas and goals.

This response to the Schools Plus Discussion Document consistently returns to the theme of whole-of-system approaches to the Schools Plus policy goal. Change to existing learning patterns will only be achieved when learning becomes a shared family and community responsibility.

In that context, both the adult and the child in the family must have the opportunity to be successful learners.

Supporting recommendations:

- **Define** intergenerational family learning for policy purposes as “adult learning that takes place simultaneously alongside learning for children in the school or early childhood centre”.
- **Identify outcomes** for intergenerational family learning that encompass educational, social and economic goals.
- **Prioritise** high intensity programmes because these are shown to have long-term impacts.
- **Target** programmes that meet the aspirations of Maori and Pasifika communities in mainstream, immersion or bilingual settings.
- **Focus** on whole-of-community needs, rather than individual needs to maximize the effectiveness of community action.
- **Incentivise** collaborative practice. The funding frameworks should resource tertiary institutions, schools, or early childhood centres so that they can buy co-ordination support; ensure that the outcomes required for each partner are not compromised by the collaboration.

## INVEST IN THE CAPACITY OF LOCAL POLYTECHNICS TO DELIVER YOUTH VOCATIONAL TRAINING IN PARTNERSHIP WITH SCHOOL

The TEC's principle of the 'network' of tertiary education provision is important for local government, because it theoretically provides local authorities with a mechanism to ensure that their particular community needs are to be met.

The 'Regional Facilitation Process' is an awkwardly-named TEC initiative that places responsibility for identification of local skill development needs in the hands of the crown-owned tertiary education providers in each region – largely polytechnics. It is an example of re-orientation of tertiary funding and provision to labour market demand. An approach that encourages the provision of vocational training that is highly tailored to local labour market needs, and to the particular demographics within communities, is to be welcomed.

However, it is unclear how the regional facilitation process is connected to school curriculum development.

Polytechnics constitute a significant community asset in supporting achievement of the School Plus goal.

Tertiary Education Organisations offer a significant resource for meeting community aspirations, and can offer powerful leadership in a community in meeting Community Outcomes.

It is our view that the role of polytechnics in leading and supporting youth vocational training – particularly in communities with high numbers of Maori and Pasifika young people - is under-resourced and under-emphasised by policy settings.

Polytechnics must be offered a real stake in the desired outcome for the Schools Plus policy – and incentives for investment in the relationship-building required for innovative approaches.

It has to be possible for schools and polytechnics to 'jointly' be funded for students for whom they will be responsible. A dual-enrolment mechanism is fundamental to partnership approaches.

## RESOURCE LOCAL PARTNERSHIP-BUILDING EFFORTS WITH BUSINESSES AND COMMUNITY

In February 2002, COMET released the results of a 'stock-take report' prepared by the University of Auckland about the connections between businesses and schools in Manukau<sup>16</sup>. At that time, the most common "link" was in the form of sponsorship.

While sponsorships may be valuable for both parties, a sponsorship does not usually focus on effective learning outcomes for students, or meet the needs for skills in the labour market.

A key question arising from the research was: *How can schools and businesses establish working relationships that contribute to better education outcomes in Manukau?*

Business representatives at a focus group COMET conducted in April 2007 suggested that the labour market shortage has required businesses to think harder about how to connect into their future labour market.

There has been a growing awareness in the business community of social responsibility. And businesses are aware of the growing

interest from schools in connecting with them, perhaps through programmes such as Principal For A Day or the Young Enterprise Scheme.

The Manukau Education Conference, held in May 2007, endorsed the importance of connections between business and schools<sup>17</sup>:

*"Without well skilled, appropriately educated people for employers to hire there will be poor economic development outcomes. Manukau's future skills projections show that there is a need to do things differently to upskill students and meet future needs."*

Challenges identified by participants were the ad hoc nature of existing projects and the need to know and understand what's going on already [in one's community]. Also identified was the need for a long term co-ordinator or liaison between schools and businesses to assist initiatives to grow.

*"We need skills facilitators to foster this process. Schools don't understand industry*

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<sup>16</sup> City of Manukau Education Trust 2002: *Business and Schools in Manukau*. Manukau

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<sup>17</sup> Manukau Education Conference Proceedings Summary, available on [www.comet.org.nz](http://www.comet.org.nz)

*and industry doesn't understand edu-speak. Create win-win situations for school and industry."*

The Schools Plus initiative provides a new purpose for a stock-take of local school-business relationships and further efforts to support relationship development with student achievement outcomes in mind.

### **BUSINESS SOCIAL INVESTMENT**

Business social investment has been the subject of recent analysis and research commissioned by the Tindall Foundation from Auckland University of Technology (AUT)<sup>18</sup>. The report provides a rationale for business social investment in the community.

There are many examples of the way businesses choose to engage with their community, and especially schools. Some local businesses have defined particular themes for their engagement. For example, a business may wish to make its contribution to community through literacy and learning. However, finding suitable projects is often an *ad hoc* process.

The key challenge highlighted by the AUT report is creating a facilitation mechanism so that businesses can more effectively contribute.

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<sup>18</sup> Institute of Public Policy, 2006: *Business Social Investment Activity in New Zealand*. Auckland: AUT.

What the Schools Plus initiative would require is a focused support process to maximise business engagement with schools to achieve the desired goal.

### **FACILITATING THE LINK BETWEEN SCHOOL AND WORK**

The **Gateway Programme**, managed by the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC), offers senior secondary students structured workplace learning across a number of businesses.

The programme allows schools to employ a co-ordinator. According to a TEC evaluation of Gateway Pilots<sup>19</sup> this resource has enhanced the connections between schools and businesses. Evidence for this includes the enlarged scope of schools' employer databases; and more positive working relationships with Industry Training Organisations (ITOs), Modern Apprenticeship co-ordinators and industry assessors.

From an employer perspective, participation in this programme gave them exposure to possible new employees, extra help for particular projects, goodwill and publicity, and youth input into their business. It gave them personal satisfaction to be doing something that 'contributed' to a young person's future.

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<sup>19</sup> Tertiary Education Commission 2003: *Evaluation of the Gateway Pilot*. Final Report. Wellington: Tertiary Education Commission. Accessed from [www.tec.govt.nz](http://www.tec.govt.nz)

The report noted that a key element in the success of the Gateway Programme pilots was the role of the co-ordinator. The presence of this resource can account for the programme's successful acceptance by schools.

However, the co-ordination model generally adopted in Manukau is that co-ordinators are each employed by individual schools, and consequently the task of relationship development with the business community is not shared. Each school co-ordinator must individually develop relationships with businesses, and compete with other schools to place students in workplaces. A context-specific organising framework to support collaboration and connection to wider systems is absent.

The importance of creating relationships is evident in much research about school-business connections.

While there are many projects operating on many different levels that involve businesses and schools, a key element for sustainable, effective and focused action to meet business, community, and education sector goals will be to connect these initiatives so that *together* they achieved desired outcomes.

Feedback from the Manukau Education Conference suggests that learning in schools

needs to be more closely linked to labour market realities. Relationship-building mechanisms need to be valued, and funded, in order to create the necessary links. Indeed, a very clear conclusion was reached by conference participants:

***A dedicated facilitator is needed to support business involvement.***

The E4E (Education for Enterprise) project, being conducted in partnership with the Ministry of Education and New Zealand Trade and Enterprise, points the way to how facilitated connections between business and schools can be focused around curriculum and student achievement.

The importance of a 'facilitator' to support the change process for schools, and to incorporate connections with business and community is critical if authentic learning is to have meaning in the new curriculum.

Evaluative data on the effectiveness of the E4E initiative is currently being gathered by NZCER.

COMET's recommendation is to invite local government to become Schools Plus Champions by creating mechanisms for local school-business engagement, *provided that* resources for facilitators and organising frameworks are established (see also recommendations 1 and 2).

## ***BUILD A QUALITY WORKFORCE TO SUPPORT MANUKAU EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTRES AND SCHOOLS***

Our reply to the question of school system responsiveness to Maori students (questions 3) is to accord priority to the recruitment and retention of teaching and learning support staff who are so secure in their own cultural identity and place in New Zealand society that they are willing and able to explore, understand and validate the culture of others.

Ministry of Education teacher supply data shows that vacancies, as a proportion of all entitlement positions, were greatest in schools in rural areas (population < 1,000), in schools with a higher proportion of Māori students on their roll, and in low decile schools (deciles 1 – 3)<sup>20</sup>. 63% of Manukau schools meet [at least one of] these last two characteristics.

Continuing efforts need to be made to attract and retain staff who do have an understanding of and empathy for the 13,500 Maori students and 23,000 Pasifika students in Manukau schools, particularly but not

exclusively Maori and Pasifika teachers and learning support staff.

New pathways into training and participation in the education labour market – either as teachers or in school support positions – need to be supported in order to attract adults matching the cultural profile of Manukau students, but with few or no academic qualifications, into higher level skills training.

The Manukau Family Literacy Programme provides documented success in developing such a pathway ((see also page 25). The relative invisibility of Maori and Pasifika people in the education labour market can be addressed by similar holistic approaches to learning for families.

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<sup>20</sup> L. Ng, 2008: *Survey of staffing in New Zealand schools at the beginning of the 2008 school year*. Wellington: Ministry of Education

## *BECOME A PARTNER IN A MANUKAU EDUCATION HUB*

The “education infrastructure” of a city includes its early childhood centres, schools, tertiary institutions<sup>3</sup>; support services such as special education services, guidance and careers advisory services, trustee services; professional development support for teachers (often associated with teacher training and research); specialist ICT services for schools; a city’s library and arts network; and the various government agencies that are located in the area with responsibility for various aspects of education policy and operations (such as the Ministry of Education, the Tertiary Education Commission and the Education Review Office)<sup>4</sup>. Together, these deliver on the community’s aspirations.

In Manukau, that aspiration is expressed in a vision for “an educated and knowledgeable people”.

The Manukau City Council has a strategic commitment to the revitalisation of the city centre through the establishment of a campus, including facilities for programme delivery and student housing. The rationale for this establishment has been rehearsed (November 2007 – February 2008) through a public consultation process for the establishment of a campus in partnership with AUT.

A cluster approach has been shown to be highly successful in a business context<sup>21</sup>. While education operates somewhat differently to the business model, the principle that geographic, cultural and institutional closeness provides organisations with special access, closer relationships, better information, powerful incentives to perform better, cross-fertilisation of ideas and relationships and so on offers advantages that are difficult to achieve when they are located apart.

The education infrastructure in this city is fractured. The Manukau City Council’s city centre revitalisation plan offers an opportunity to develop a highly innovative, 21<sup>st</sup> Century approach to education services and needs that could become transformational for the city. A tertiary campus in the city centre area, using land owned by Council and underwritten facilities, could become an education services hub that supports the wider education infrastructure of the city.

Education agencies and services could lease co-located facilities alongside the proposed tertiary campus and close to the central city library. The clustering of these services creates

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<sup>21</sup> Porter et al.

incentives for collaboration, creating an “education powerhouse” in the city centre area, without imposing on their autonomy as organisations. An attractive “Hub of Education Excellence” has the potential to reshape the public perception about the quality of public education services provided by the crown in the city, and to trigger innovative community responses to the challenges of the School Plus goal.

By co-locating the Schooling Improvement Project Office of the Ministry of Education alongside school-owned and managed cluster services (such as the Otara Boards Forum and the Manurewa Enhancement Initiative), education action research teams operating in Manukau, organisations such as COMET, special education services, a teacher resource centre, agencies such as the Tertiary Education Commission and Careers Services, and programme teams - for example, those working with 15 – 19 year olds, those working with Pasifika early childhood centres or Kohanga Reo, the opportunities for collaborative whole-of-system action are greatly enhanced.

COMET recommends government commitment to a local government – central government partnership for collaborative clustering of education services to better provide for local skills needs.

## AMEND LEGISLATION TO REMOVE BARRIERS TO INNOVATION AND CHANGE

The emerging vision for 21<sup>st</sup> century education is for collaboration among education providers, interconnectedness, and responsiveness to community aspirations. Current governance settings – from where vision is driven and implemented – frustrate the challenge provided by the Schools Plus goal.

In a paper on the difficulties of current systems settings in urban contexts<sup>22</sup> we refer to the pressures on urban schooling:

- Maori enjoying education success as Maori
- Pacific migration into Manukau
- Wrap-around social, health and education services
- Connections to health, social development and local government strategies for economic and community development

- Schooling network development in new suburbs and cost of land and buildings
- Schooling improvement projects that create clusters, partnerships, collaborations around new ideas
- New information and communications technologies that redefine “communities of interest” and the ways in which people will work together.

In that paper we argued that 21<sup>st</sup> century schools require greater flexibility in governance if they are to be able to respond to community needs.

The centrality of vision in the constitution of school boards is fundamental. The overall policy position for *Tomorrow's Schools* was to allow each “unit” [school] in the system to be autonomous. However, the settings for autonomy and independent accountability do not always reflect the need for schools to develop new ways of working together, or new ways of responding to cultural or other community aspirations. Vision in the current governance environment is limited to the possibilities offered by the legislation, rather

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<sup>22</sup> City of Manukau Education Trust, 2007: Governance and Complex Urban Campus Schools. Available on [www.comet.org.nz](http://www.comet.org.nz)

than tailored to the potential within communities to arrive at solutions that best deliver to changing needs and aspirations.

As schooling moves away from a 'one size fits all' model, the goals, aspirations, and context of each student must become central to delivery of learning, rather than being driven by the governance frameworks provided by legislated systems settings.

The four categories of school class defined in Section 154 of the Education Act 1989 get in the way of reshaping education to more effectively respond to change.

The argument COMET makes is that greater flexibility is required to enable different kinds of governance constitutions to be created to enable schools to relate to each other and to their community in different ways.

In the future, learning will become more connected to the people and places outside the immediate school environment and harness all the resources of the community. The constitutions of schools must be sufficiently flexible to allow that connectedness to happen at both a learning and a governance level.

***We recommend urgent action for legislative and regulatory change to enable governance structures to more adequately respond to the challenges provided by the urban context for learning.***



This document has been prepared for the City of Manukau Education Trust (COMET), and is based on other documents prepared by the Trust for advocacy purposes. These documents can be found on

[www.comet.org.nz](http://www.comet.org.nz)