Briefing Note: Pacific Children’s Language Fluency

To: Hon Jenny Salesa

Date: 28 February 2018

Priority: Med

Security Level: In Confidence

METIS No: 1109515

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Messaging seen by Communications team: No

Round robin: No

Purpose

This paper provides you with advice on the effectiveness of Pacific bilingual classes and how the Ministry can:

• support Pacific children and young people who don’t speak English or their home language fluently
• encourage and support Pacific parents to speak their first language to their children
• encourage and support Pacific parents and families to read regularly with their children.

Summary

1. Pacific parents play a pivotal role in the educational success of their children. Programmes and initiatives aimed at Pacific children’s language literacy need to be supported within a whole-of-system approach.

2. There are currently opportunities for the Ministry to support Pacific children who do not speak English or a Pacific language fluently through a number of projects. More could be achieved through broadening the ESOL (English for speakers of other languages) eligibility criteria and reviewing the effectiveness of Pacific bilingual education units.

3. The Ministry will work with the Ministry for Pacific Peoples’ to align the languages work in the education space. The focus on Pacific languages will form part of the Ministry for Pacific Peoples’ broader work-programme on developing a vision for Pacific Peoples’ in Aotearoa New Zealand.

4. A Pacific ethnic and language specific review methodology needs to be developed in collaboration with the Education Review Office if we are to effectively evaluate Pacific bilingual classes.
Recommended Actions

The Ministry of Education recommends that you:

a. indicate if you wish to receive further advice on how ESOL funding and provision can better support Pacific children’s language fluency.

   Yes / No

b. note that the Ministry for Pacific Peoples' focus on Pacific languages will form part of its work-programme on developing a vision for Pacific Peoples' in Aotearoa New Zealand.

   Noted

c. indicate if you wish to discuss with the Education Review Office how a Pacific ethnic and language specific review methodology can be developed to review the effectiveness of Pacific bilingual education units.

   Yes / No

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Deputy Secretary
Education System Policy

Hon Jenny Salesa
Associate Minister of Education

28/2/18

6/3/18
Background

1. Internationally, New Zealand has a very high proportion of monolingual speakers (English). The dominance of English has contributed to changing patterns of language use for Pacific communities in New Zealand, specifically amongst New Zealand-born Pacific, who are increasingly speaking English\(^1\).

2. Pacific parents play an important role in determining the educational outcomes of their children and young people. Evidence shows that when parents know how to support their children with learning, their children are more likely to succeed\(^2\). This is further supported by research which states that parents, families and communities are the strongest out-of-school influence to improving children and young people's achievement\(^3\) [METIS 1103907 refers].

3. Identity, language and culture are important factors in supporting the educational success of Pacific children and young people. The stronger students are in learning their first language, the easier it is to learn another [METIS 1100609 refers].

4. The role that Pacific parents play in the educational success of their child needs to be supported by a whole-of-system approach that focuses on quality teaching, the strongest in-school influence on children and young people's learning.

5. Reviews and development of education system strategies, including the National Education Learning Priorities (NELP), home-based early childhood education, Early Child Education Strategic Plan, Tomorrow's Schools, Learning Support and NCEA provide an opportunity to emphasise the pivotal role that Pacific parents, families and communities play in the educational success of their child.

Supporting Pacific children's language fluency

6. The Ministry currently supports Pacific children who do not speak any language fluently in a number of ways. These include: ESOL (English for speakers of other languages) funding for children and young people in primary and secondary schools, TESSOL (Teaching English in Schools to Speakers of Other Languages) scholarships for teacher professional development and professional development for Pacific Teacher Aides.

7. In 2017, students from Pacific ethnic backgrounds made up approximately 30% of all ESOL funded students. Almost 20% of the Pacific ESOL funded students are New Zealand born children of migrants. This group of Pacific students are more likely to be less fluent in their first language and also less proficient in English. These students are entitled to up to three years of funding and new migrants are entitled to five years.

8. NCEA Level 2 data shows that New Zealand born students of migrants do not perform as well as new migrants who have received their maximum allocation of ESOL funding.

Current Initiatives

9. The Ministry provides Pasifika TESSOL fees scholarships for teachers to undertake postgraduate study so they can better support Pacific children and young people. There are currently 71 teachers throughout New Zealand studying with a Pasifika TESSOL Fees scholarship.

\(^1\) http://pasifika.tki.org.nz/LEAP/Pasifika-in-New-Zealand/Pasifika-languages-in-New-Zealand

\(^2\) https://www.educationaccounts.govt.nz/publications/series/2515/5947.

\(^3\) Framework of Impact on Variance in Outcomes in Schooling (Source: Alton-Lee, A; Collaborating across policy, research and practice: Knowledge building and sustainability development), 2015.
10. The Ministry also funds the Pasifika Teacher Aide Project (PTAP). This gives teacher aides specific strategies to work with Pacific children and young people with limited first language and/or English. This year 15 schools with approximately 60 teacher aides will undertake the professional development.

11. The Oral Language and Literacy Initiative (OLLi) aims to enhance the knowledge, practices, and confidence teachers require to successfully support all children’s oral language and early literacy development underpinned by each early learning service’s curriculum.

12. OLLi has a particular focus on three and four year old children. Implementation will involve specially trained Ministry of Education Speech-Language Therapists working with specific early learning services in eight of the Ministry of Education’s 10 regions across New Zealand. This includes making teaching and learning of oral language visible and deliberate with all children within the service.

13. Evidence suggests that children in low socio-economic areas are more likely to experience delays in the development of their oral language skills, so the initial focus of OLLi will be on low socio-economic communities where there are enough teacher-led early learning services to sustain delivery of the initiative (The New Zealand Deprivation Index was used to identify the areas and services).

14. While this initiative is beginning with teacher-led, English-medium early learning services, the areas in which OLLi will first be offered have higher than average Pasifika and Māori populations. During the delivery of this initiative, we will also work with Pasifika and Māori immersion services me ngā kōhanga reo to establish how best to support children's oral language and early literacy development through strengthening of teacher practices.

Opportunities

15. There are a number of opportunities in this space to better support Pacific children who do not speak any language fluently. These include:

a. **Extending funding** for New Zealand born children of migrant parents for at least the same length of time (up to five years) as new migrants, if not longer.

b. **Increase funding** for the Pasifika Teacher Aide Project. This professional development empowers teachers, teacher aides and students to be proud of their first language and culture. Each year, demand for this professional development exceeds funding availability.

c. **Reactivating Pasifika Dual language resources** and extending it to include older learners. These were produced and piloted in schools in 2014. The outcomes were extremely positive.

d. **Ensuring that specific and explicit teaching of English language structures and functions is included in Initial Teacher Education and ongoing Professional Development.** This will contribute to all teachers having the ability to teach Pacific (and other) students who have limited English proficiency.

e. **Signalling the importance of maintaining and continuing to learn home languages, whilst also striving for excellence in English. Reactivating the Pasifika Dual language reader project would be a good step forward.**

f. **Fund professional development for early learning services to better meet the needs of Pacific learners and families who do not have a strong first language base.**

g. **Address the lack of support for language learning needs of Pacific children and young people who are born in New Zealand and whose parents were also born in New Zealand.**
Zealand. These students are not eligible for ESOL funding but often have limited proficiency in English and their Pacific language.

Supporting Pacific parents to speak their heritage language in the home

16. Supporting Pacific parents to speak their heritage (Pacific) languages in the home to their children needs to be considered within the wider context of a whole-of-government approach towards supporting Pacific languages in New Zealand. Pacific communities have raised concerns over the revitalisation, support and protection of Pacific languages in New Zealand.

17. Data indicates a steady decline in the number of people able to speak te reo Kūkī ‘Āirani, vagahau Niue and gagana Tokelau. The number of speakers of Pacific languages counted in the Census from 2001 to 2013 is shown in Table 1.

18. There has been an increase in the number of people who speak gagana Samoa, lea faka Tonga, vosa vakaViti, and ‘gana Tuvalu. Gagana Samoa is the third most-spoken language in New Zealand, following English and te reo Māori.

19. However, as stated above the number of people speaking languages from the Realm countries (Cook Islands, Niue, and Tokelau) has decreased (see Table 1)⁴.

Table 1. Number of speakers of a Pacific Language 2001 - 2013⁵

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Languages</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Samoan</td>
<td>81,036</td>
<td>85,428</td>
<td>86,403</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cook Islands Māori</td>
<td>9,372</td>
<td>9,702</td>
<td>8,121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tongan</td>
<td>23,046</td>
<td>29,499</td>
<td>31,839</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niuean</td>
<td>5,478</td>
<td>5,481</td>
<td>4,545</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fijian</td>
<td>3,588</td>
<td>4,977</td>
<td>6,273</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tokelauan</td>
<td>2,808</td>
<td>2,796</td>
<td>2,469</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuvalu</td>
<td>1,398</td>
<td>1,872</td>
<td>2,349</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

20. Supporting Pacific parents to speak their heritage language to their child needs to be considered in the wider context of the number of fluent speakers. It is estimated that 62.3 percent of the Pacific population are New Zealand born. This has potential implications for the use of Pacific languages, particularly for Cook Islands Māori, Niue, Tokelau and Tuvalu where the speaking of their language within their communities is declining.

21. Leadership and ownership of the revitalisation, protection and promotion of Pacific languages lies with Pacific communities and the Ministry for Pacific Peoples is well positioned to look at how Pacific community languages can be strengthened within Pacific communities.

22. The Minister for Pacific Peoples’ will be tabling a Cabinet paper on Developing a Vision for Pacific Peoples’ in New Zealand for discussion at a Social Wellbeing Committee (SWC) meeting in March. The main points of the Cabinet paper are:

- The Ministry for Pacific Peoples’ will be engaging with Pacific communities in New Zealand on their aspirations and visions for Pacific Peoples’ in New Zealand, during 2018.
- The Minister for Pacific Peoples’ is intending to bring to Cabinet proposals to consider recognition of specific Pacific languages as official community languages; and

⁵ Iibd
A forum is planned on the Pacific vision for New Zealand, scheduled for the end of 2018.

23. The proposal to consider recognising specific Pacific languages as official community languages could potentially impact teacher capability and have fiscal implications in the compulsory education sector. Retention and revitalisation of Pacific languages cannot be achieved solely within the Learning Languages curriculum area context, through learning one or more of these languages at school [METIS 1107349].

24. The focus on Pacific languages will form part of the Ministry for Pacific Peoples' broader work-programme on developing a vision for Pacific Peoples' in Aotearoa New Zealand. The Ministry will work with the Ministry for Pacific Peoples' to align the languages work in the education space [METIS 1103818 refers].

Supporting Pacific parents to read with their children

25. Reading Together has been identified as a successful programme that supports parents to assist their children with reading⁶. Evidence shows that the programme has also been successful in supporting Pacific parents.

26. Reading Together consists of four workshops run over seven weeks that focus on teaching parents specific skills to support their children with their reading, and stresses collaborative and non-threatening partnerships between parents, teachers and children.

27. Early Reading Together evolved from the implementation of the Reading Together programme. The programme supports parents of young children (5-8 years old) to support their children's language and literacy development. The programme successfully raised children's reading achievement⁷.

28. In 2007, a study was funded by the Ministry's Best Evidence Synthesis programme that explored the implementation of Reading Together by the senior leadership team at St Joseph's Primary School, Otahuhu, Auckland. The research found:

- **significant gains** in children's levels of reading comprehension which were:
  - sustained over time (two years)
  - evident among the siblings in the families who participated
  - over and above those achieved by a highly effective school literacy programme

- parents can make a significant difference to children's reading achievement in partnership with a low decile school that is already providing highly effective literacy education programmes for their (mainly Pacific) children

- **positive shifts** in children's independent reading

- **enhanced relationships** and interactions between teachers and parents (over and above school/home relationships which were already very positive and supportive)⁸.

29. The Reading Together programme would further support your priority to build educationally powerful connections between schools, parents, families and communities.

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⁷ https://www.readingtogether.net.nz/early-reading-together.html
⁸ https://www.readingtogether.net.nz/reading-together-research-evidence.html
The role, cost and effectiveness of Pacific bilingual classes

30. Pacific bilingual classes in New Zealand have been established by schools to value and support the growth of children and young peoples’ first languages and to give them the foundation to better learn and understand through a second language, in this case English. Schools with bilingual classes in New Zealand largely take an additive approach, seeking to foster bilingualism and bi-literacy in a child’s home language and in English.

31. Schools whose Boards of Trustees and communities decide to offer bilingual classes in a Pacific language do not receive extra Vote Education funding for this provision. All costs are covered by the school’s operational funding.

32. Research regarding the effectiveness of bilingual classes finds that non-bilingual programmes are “unequivocally less effective than bilingual programmes for bilingual students.” Non-bilingual programmes atrophy students’ bilingualism and limit education outcomes for bilingual students. Withdrawal ESOL programmes and integrated ESOL programmes, whilst more effective than English submersion, are also generally less effective than bilingual programmes.

33. Whilst bilingual programmes are more effective, the degree of effectiveness varies, depending on the characteristics of the particular programme. The least effective approach to bilingual education is one that seeks to transition children and young people from their first language to the dominant language, such as English. The most effective programmes are maintenance and enrichment programmes that foster bilingualism and bi-literacy.

34. Enhanced literacy and numeracy for Pacific children is linked to well-planned bilingual programmes that enable children to learn across the curriculum in their Pacific language alongside learning English. Despite the evidence-base demonstrating the success of bilingual programmes in New Zealand, the dominant educational experience for Pacific bilingual students is in English medium only or ESOL withdrawal programmes.

35. In their role evaluating and reporting on the quality and effectiveness of education in New Zealand, the Education Review Office reviews the school as a whole and not bilingual classes individually. Whilst Kura, Wharekura and Kōhanga are reviewed under a Māori specific methodology for review, there is no Pacific ethnicity/language specific review methodology in place for the evaluation of Pacific bilingual classes.

36. The Education Review Office (ERO) has made a few detailed comments regarding the effectiveness of Pacific bilingual programmes within English medium schools. In a generalised manner, in Pacific bilingual classes the reviewers observe that:

   a. Students enjoy and are empowered to be confident and capable learners who learn through their cultural identity and strengths.
   b. Students are provided with meaningful opportunities to learn and succeed using their home language.
   c. Students learn to be capable, connected and confident young people who develop the skills to be lifelong learners.

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10 The learner works with the ESOL teacher in another classroom not necessarily their own.
11 ibid.
14 http://www.ero.govt.nz/review-reports/henderson-south-school-03-12-2014/
15 http://www.ero.govt.nz/review-reports/finlayson-park-school-23-03-2/
d. Bilingual programmes offer clear benefits for children who are affirmed in their language, culture and identity.  

17 http://www.ero.govt.nz/review-reports/clendon-park-school-12-11-2015/  
18 http://www.ero.govt.nz/review-reports/henderson-south-school-03-12-2014/  
19 http://www.ero.govt.nz/review-reports/roscommon-school-21-12-2017/  
21 Ibid  

e. Bilingual programmes successfully foster students' confidence in their identity.  

f. Teachers help students to explore concepts that are intrinsic to their language, culture and identity.

37. Of the 12 ERO reports reviewed, only two reports referenced achievement data gathered by the school to measure the effectiveness of bilingual classes. The 2014 report of Henderson South School highlighted school data that showed that Samoan students in the Samoan bilingual unit made greater accelerated progress than Samoan students in the rest of the school. The other reference was in the 2017 review of Roscommon School, which noted that school information showed that accelerated learning for students in Fotu o Nu’u Pule (Samoan bilingual unit) occurred early in their school life.

38. Despite the effectiveness of enrichment bilingual programmes, research has highlighted consistent concerns about bilingual programmes in New Zealand. These include the lack of a coordinated national policy on bilingual/immersion education, particularly the absence of a Pasifika bilingual education plan, the lack of specialist training in bilingual education in Initial Teacher Education and ongoing Professional Learning and Development, and widely held misunderstandings about bilingualism and bilingual education amongst the general public.

39. Whilst research on bilingualism suggests bilingual classes are effective, there is very little up-to-date evidence regarding the effectiveness of Pacific bilingual classes in the New Zealand education system. A Pacific ethnic/language specific review methodology should be developed if we are to effectively evaluate Pacific bilingual classes.

40. Research to inform and build evidence on the learning and other outcomes for Pacific children and young people in bilingual settings is needed to support the development of government policy on Pasifika bilingual programmes and initiatives and also policy practice within bilingual settings.