



# An update on the Starpath Project

Presentation to Compass 28<sup>th</sup> September 2015

28<sup>th</sup> September, 2015



Starpath

A University of Auckland Partnership for Excellence



# He waka eke noa

*"A canoe which we are all in"*



Photograph by Stephen Alvarez

Pioneers of the Pacific  
*National Geographic*, March 2008

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## Kaupapa

- Position Starpath within the Equity and Excellence Challenge
- Give a brief description of the background of Starpath and the research and development approach (Phase 2)
- Present some of the preliminary findings
- Identify the next steps (evaluation)





## Brief history of Starpath

- 2001: “Catching the Knowledge Wave” conference
- By 2050, 57% of school leavers will be Māori or Pasifika.
- Almost one in five students leaves school without formal qualifications.
- Māori, Pasifika and other students from low decile schools are under-represented in degree level programmes.
- Disparities in educational achievement pose high risks to the nation’s prosperity and social cohesion.



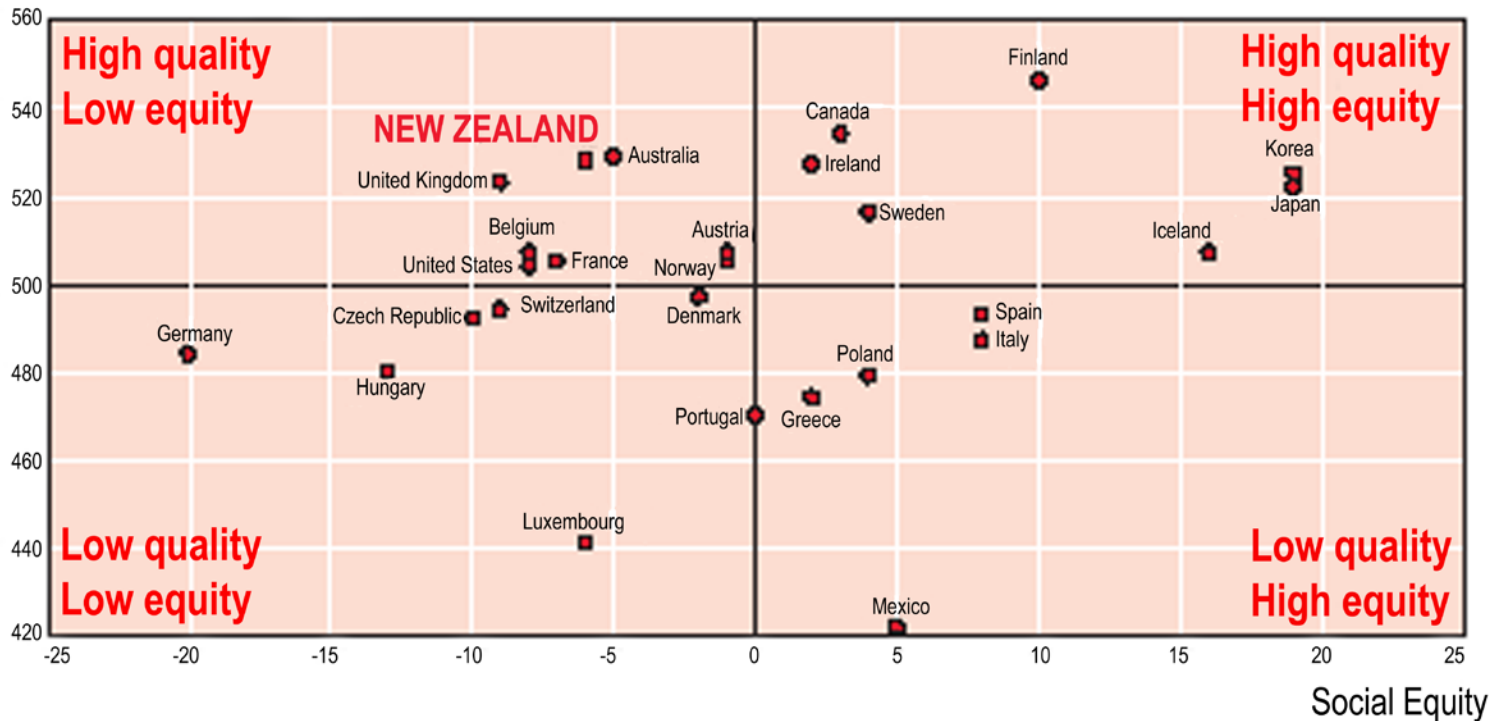
Distinguished  
Professor  
Dame Anne  
Salmond



# The catalyst in 2001

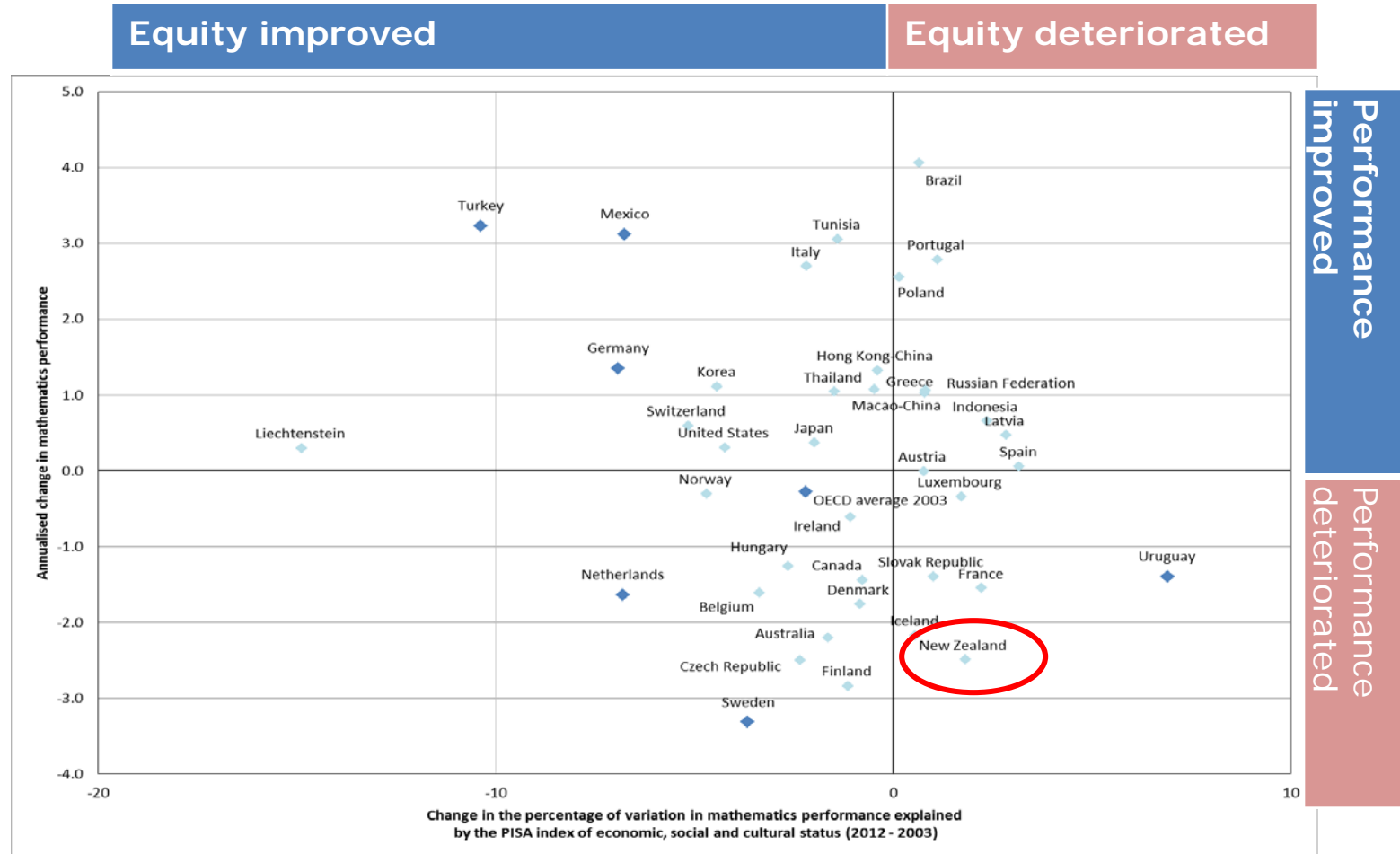
## RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN AVERAGE STUDENT PERFORMANCE AND SOCIAL EQUITY

Mean performance in reading literacy



Source: OECD (2001) Knowledge and skills for life, Appendix B1, Table 2.3a, p.253.

# And it was worse in Maths in 2012



Source: OECD PISA 2012 Figure II.2.12

# Back to the Start

- **2003** Formal proposal made to the Minister of Education to establish Starpath Project
- **2004** Memorandum of Understanding signed with the first partner school
- **2005** *Starpath Project for Tertiary Participation and Success* began its work as a Partnership for Excellence between The University of Auckland and the NZ Government with financial support from
  - the Todd Foundation,
  - the ASB Community Trust (now Foundation North),
  - and other sponsors, and matching government funds, and is administered via the Tertiary Education Commission.

# Phase I: 2005 – 2010 (5 schools)

**Aim:** to research, identify, and minimise or remove barriers that contribute to lower rates of participation and success in degree-level education by Māori, Pasifika, and other students from predominantly low decile schools.

## Research Findings:

Structural and systemic barriers to student achievement:

- Lack of longitudinal achievement data for effective goal setting and tracking of progress;
- Unequal access to relevant NCEA subjects & standards;
- Inadequate understanding of NCEA (parents, students, teachers);
- Lack of evidence-based academic guidance;
- Very low levels of school-family/whanau engagement;
- Failure to achieve NCEA Level 2 literacy standards (for UE);
- Variability in leadership effectiveness;
- Numerous challenges to effective transition to university.

**Outcome:** Design and testing of effectiveness and impact of a new programme of data use, target setting, tracking, academic counselling and family engagement (sustainability & transferability).







# Phase II: 2011 – 2015 (39 Schools)

5 Original schools, plus  
16 new in 2011  
18 new in 2012

8 schools Māori > 50%  
8 schools Pasifika > 50%  
6 schools Māori+Pasifika > 50%  
1 school Asian > 50%

15 north of Auckland  
15 South Auckland  
9 West Auckland

16 schools > 1000 students  
13 schools 500 to 1000 students  
10 schools < 500 students

17 (44%) were decile 1 or 2 (19)  
11 (28%) were decile 3 or 4 (12)  
11 (28%) were decile  $\geq$  5 (8)

# The Intervention

- Strong competition for attention
- Research and development: regular feedback
- 3 year implementation for schools
- Whole school approach
- A systemic intervention
- Responsive to individual school context
- Phased implementation (DUACTS, Literacy, Leadership)
- Professional Development changed between group A and group B
- Mixture of cross cluster workshops, in-school PD and individual meetings
- Where possible located in local area

# Complexities in the last 5 years

- Leadership change
- Multiple interventions
- Transience of students and teachers
- Changing Student Management Systems (SMS)
- Choice of standardised testing
- Government policy change
- Starpath staff change

# Starpath Evaluation Phase 2

Formative & summative purposes

Mixed methods evaluation to:

- monitor school performance, track student achievement (including progression into tertiary education).
- evaluate the **effectiveness** and **impact** of Starpath-led initiatives in participating schools (DUACTS, Literacy & Leadership)

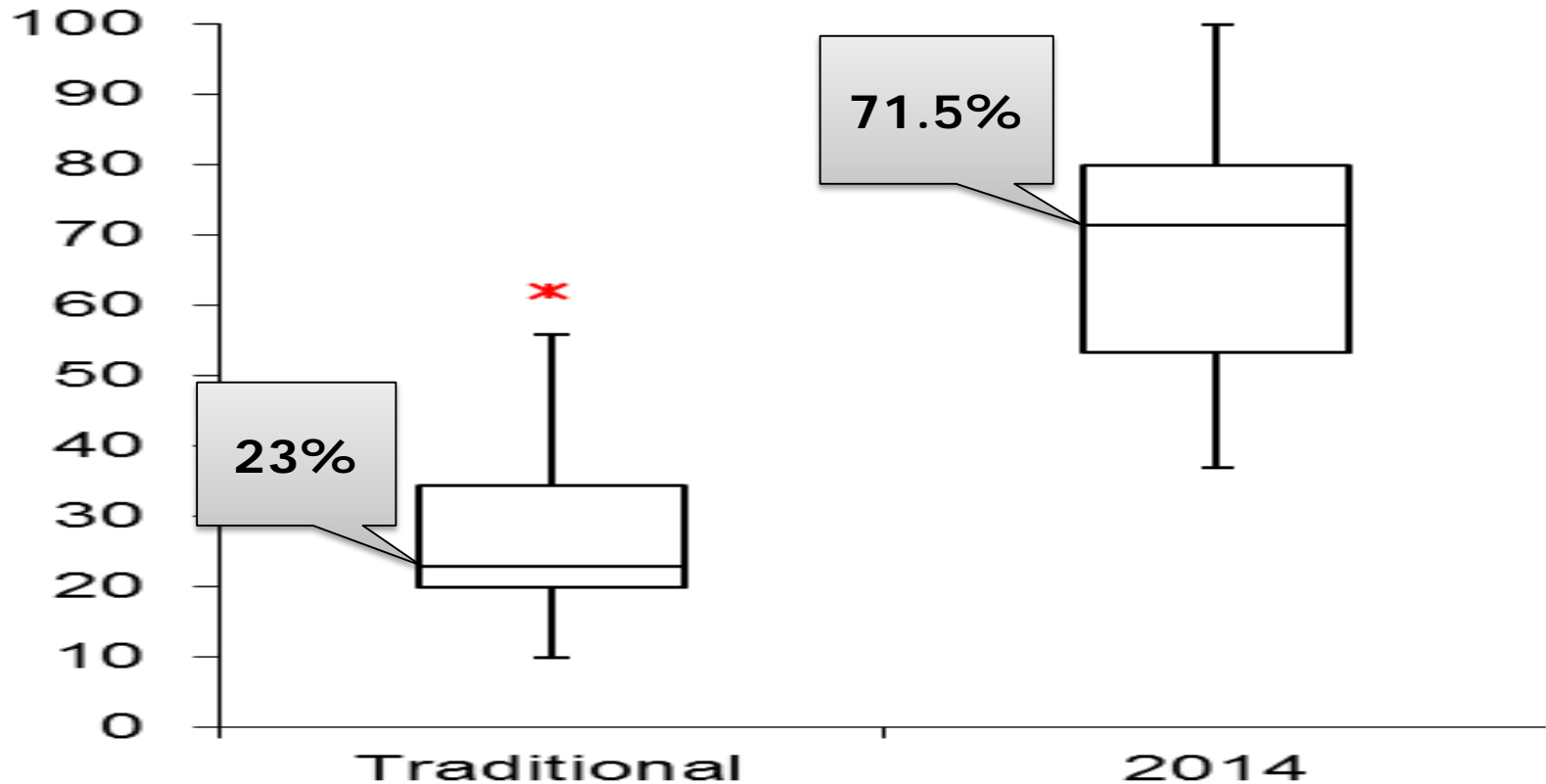
*Quantitative and Qualitative data analysis methods (ongoing)*

# PST/Whānau Engagement

- The Parent-Student-Teachers (**PST**) conferences are an opportunity for in-depth discussion of academic progress with parents and family. All three parties need to work together for the child to achieve their goals and aspirations.
- During the PST conferences parties discuss progress in each subject; goals for the future; and support for learning at school and at home.

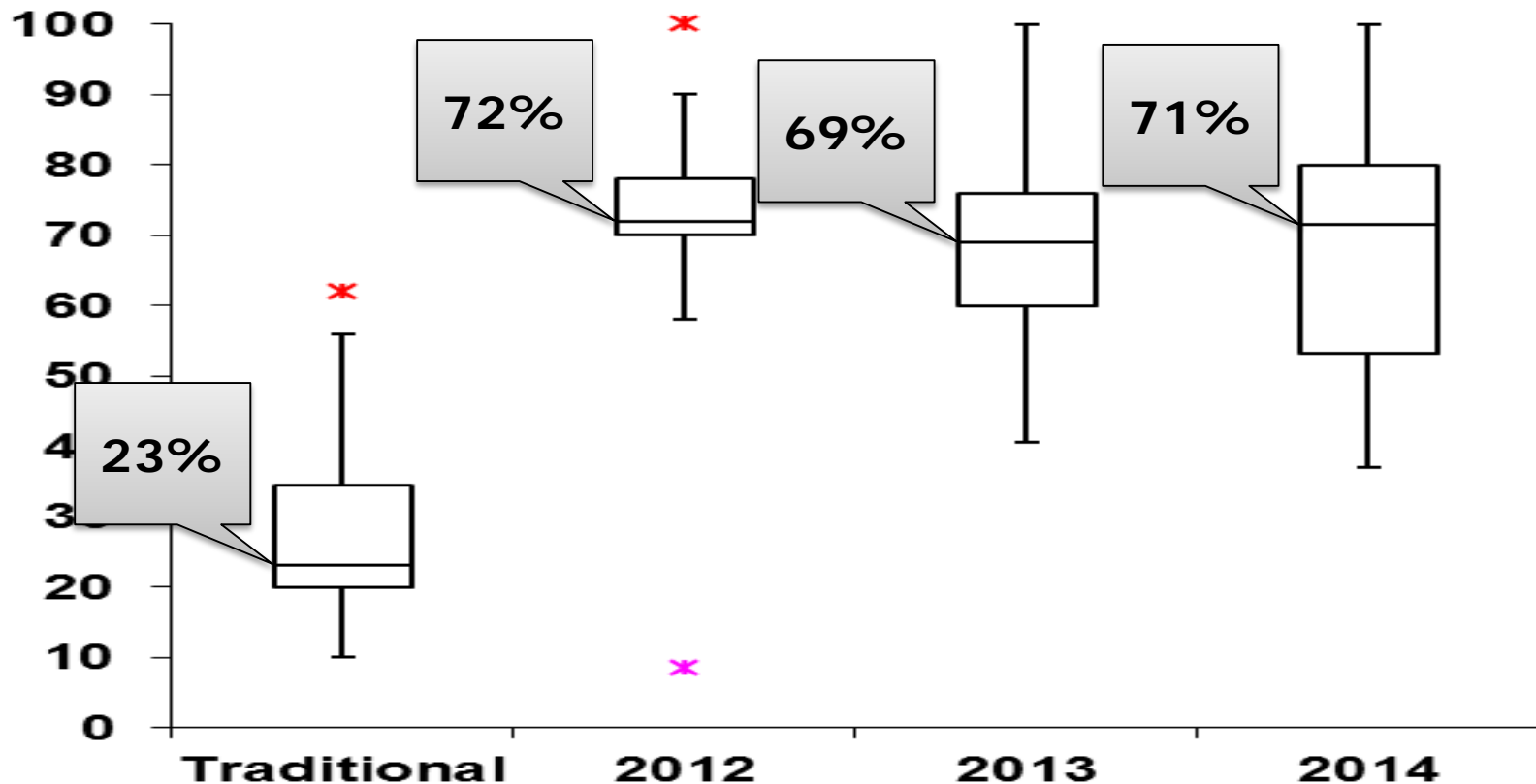


# Traditional vs. 2014 PST Attendance



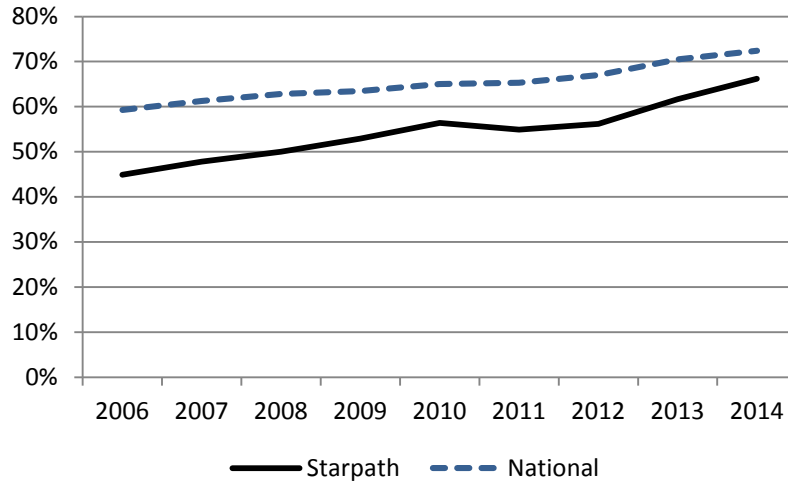


# Traditional vs. 2012-2014 PST Attendance

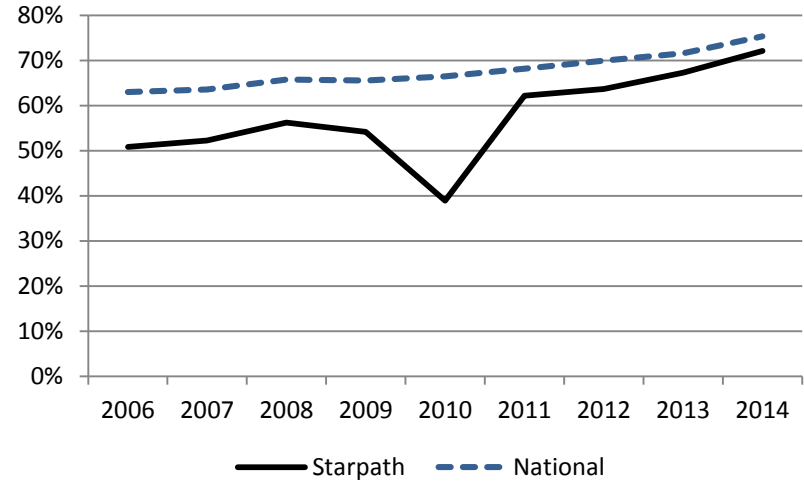




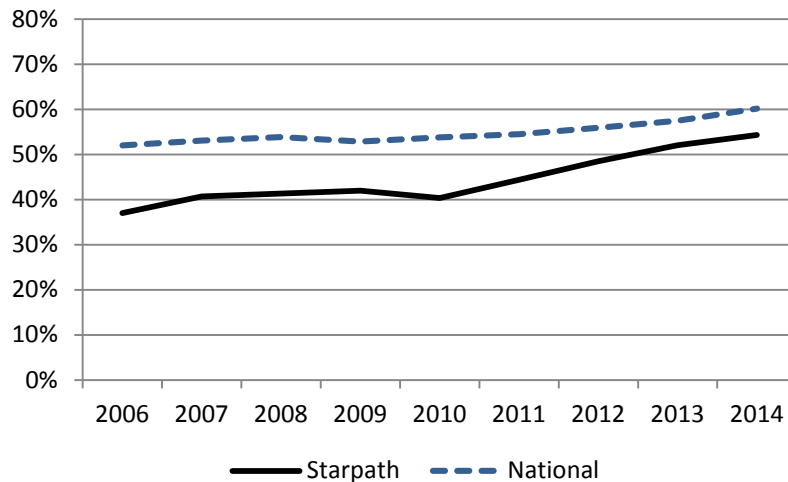
## Level 1 - All Students



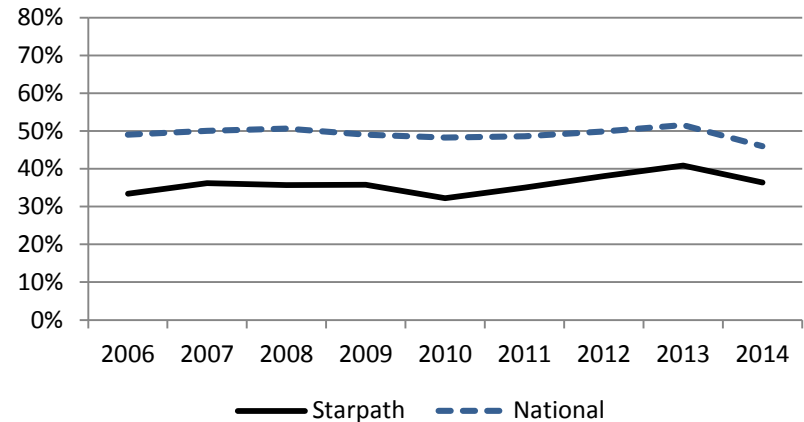
## Level 2 - All Students



## Level 3 - All Students



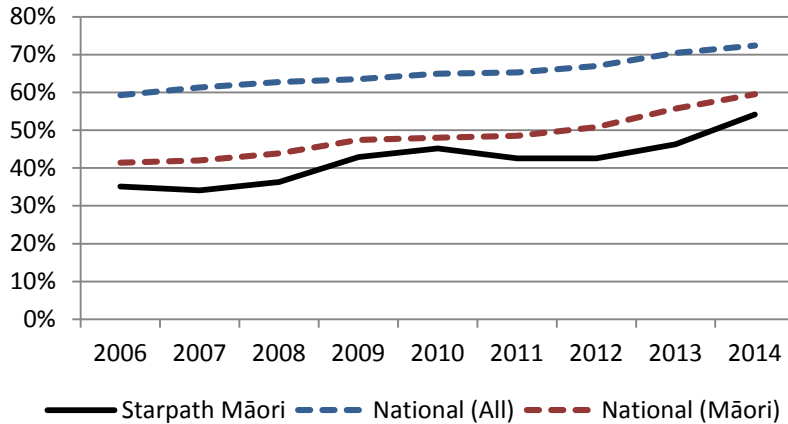
## University Entrance - All Students



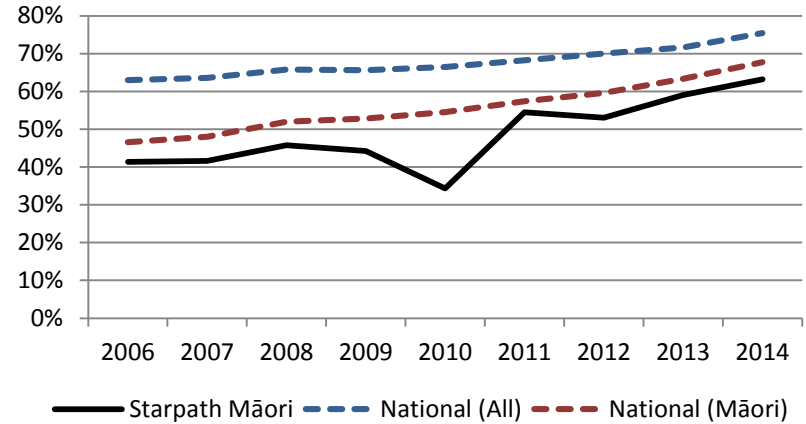




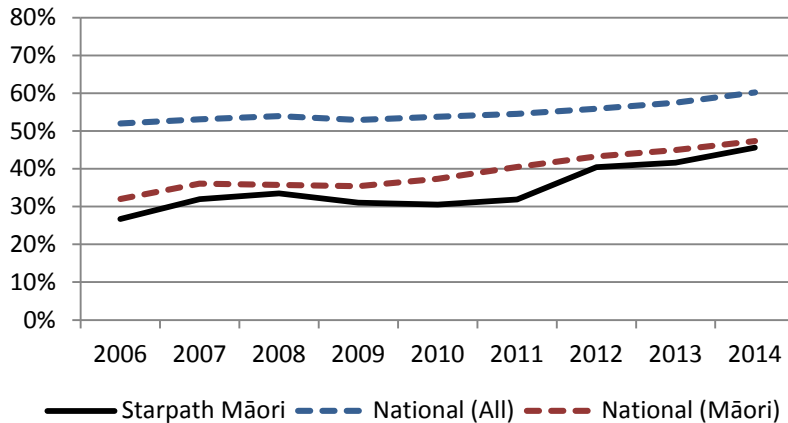
## Level 1 - Māori Students



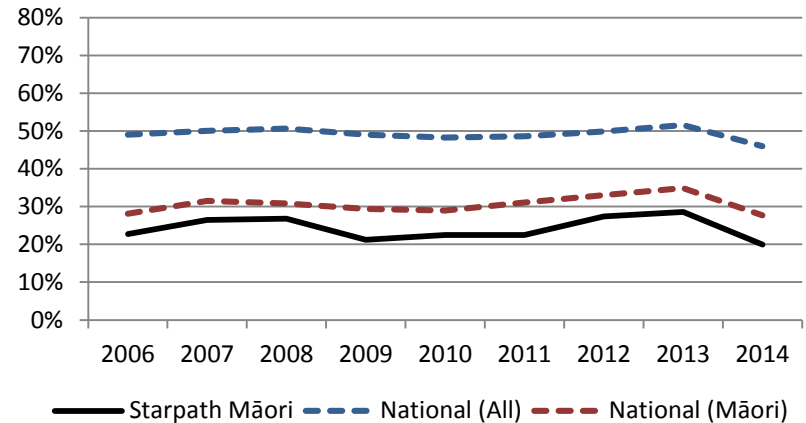
## Level 2 - Māori Students



## Level 3 - Māori Students

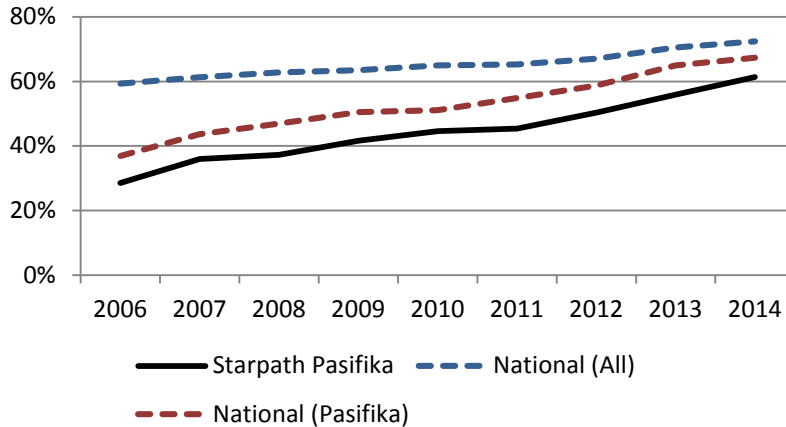


## University Entrance - Māori Students

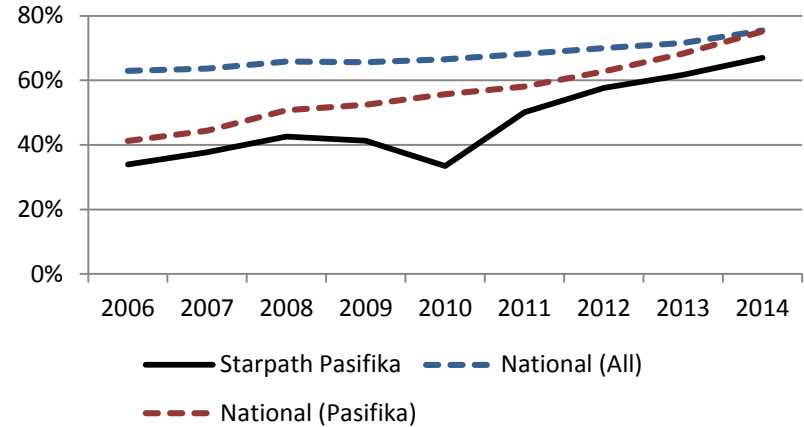




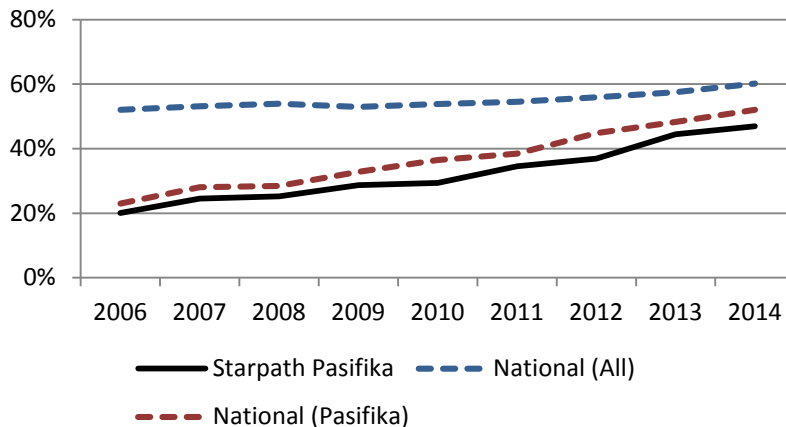
## Level 1 - Pasifika Students



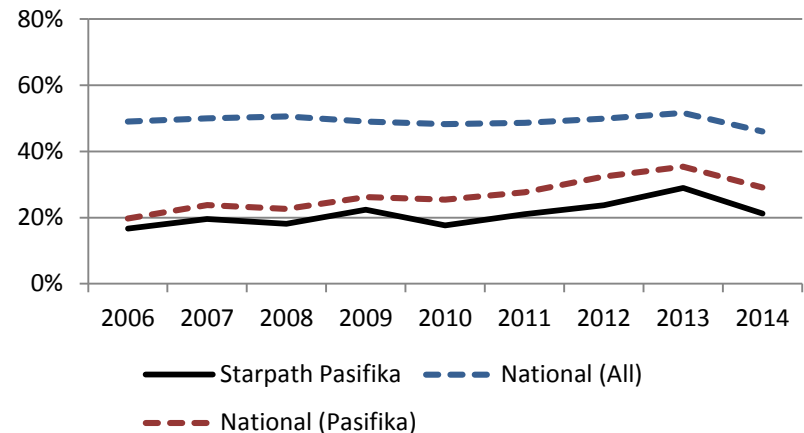
## Level 2 - Pasifika Students



## Level 3 - Pasifika Students



## University Entrance - Pasifika Students





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# 'A measurable difference'

*We have juniors sitting NCEA, so that's a first!*

*84% of our students have already achieved, this is the highest figure ever, ever in literacy!*

*In terms of...specific achievement rates, we've got lots of data which shows that our achievement has been steadily rising. Years 11 and 12 in particular, we had a record achievement in Year 12 last year Level 2, absolute record and there's no doubt that the Year 12 pass rate last year was quite significantly higher than previously and I put that down to the Starpath programme because of the emphasis on the tracking for two years.*

## Mixed perceptions

*I think one of our biggest problems, it's especially at a lower decile school like this, is that if you haven't got...really effective teachers who care and who are... really involved in the strategies and things that are put in place for them, then I honestly believe that a negative teacher has a far greater negative impact on the kids than five positive teachers. I really do, I think it's dangerous, and I think there's nothing there in place that I've ever seen to get rid of teachers. (School Leader)*

*.... Those teacher relationships with the families [are important]. But not every teacher is like that, ... we have a huge amount of extremely good tutor teachers but we also have some who [aren't]... (School Leader)*

# Student Perceptions

Greater variability in responses  
(positive/mixed/negative)

Positive comments were about:

- A clearer academic direction and focus
- Improved communication
- Improved relationships
- Enhanced responsiveness on the part of the teacher



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# Student Perceptions

*“It gives you something to work towards... To guide you in the right direction... Gives you a brighter future.”*

*“If it wasn't for setting goals with our academic mentor I wouldn't, like, have set goals for myself throughout the year. Like, it actually gives us something to work towards.”*

# Student Perceptions

Mixed or negative comments concerned specific challenges, barriers, and stumbling blocks to achievement.

- Students reported variability in relevance and effectiveness in academic counselling and Parent, Student, Teacher conferences.
- Students also reported negative impacts of the 'traffic lighting' system for tracking progress
- Lower academic expectations for Māori and Pasifika students

# Complexities and Challenges

**What works for whom and under what conditions at scale?** (Bryk, et al 2015, p13)

**Variability and sustainability issues**

Understanding this is key to building capacity

Unintended Consequences of Data Utilization?

Ongoing data analysis including HLM, Matched Comparison, Analysis of Tertiary data, Quality of credits...

**The influence of wider policy initiatives (e.g. BPST)?**

**Recent drop in UE results** (Changes to UE requirements)





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Te Whare Wānanga o Tāmaki Makaurau  
NEW ZEALAND

# Future Directions...





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# Questions?

## References:

- Bryk, A.S., Gomez, L. M., Grunow, A. & LeMahieu, P. G. (2015). *Learning to Improve. How America's schools can get better at getting better*. Cambridge MSS: Harvard Education Press.

## Acknowledgements:

- We wish to acknowledge the contributions of the principals, students, teachers and whānau of the thirty nine Starpath schools, in addition the work of all of the Starpath team, past and present.