



Starp

A University of Auckland Partnership for Excellence



THE UNIVERSITY
OF AUCKLAND

NEW ZEALAND

Te Whare Wānanga o Tāmaki Makaurau

Starp

The Starpath Project For Tertiary Participation and Success | Issue 8 | July 2014 | www.starp.auckland.ac.nz

Onehunga's team spirit pays off



Onehunga High School 2014 Head Girl Susana Vunipola.

Onehunga High School is one of the latest Auckland secondary schools to introduce Starpath school-wide.

This follows an overwhelmingly positive trial with Year 11 students in 2013.

What made the trial unique is the school's group approach to raising achievement.

Starp is usually managed by a single staff member taking on the role of Achievement Manager (usually a Deputy Principal).

At Onehunga, the Student Achievement Manager is supported by a group of staff who help to oversee the initiative.

This team holds regular Starpath forums to discuss strategies, share ideas and talk about what is working well.

Associate Principal Tom Webb said with a roll of around 1200 students, this approach was a better fit to ensure all students benefitted from the initiative.

Starp uses a combination of evidence-based strategies to raise student achievement in NCEA. These include establishing a database of student achievement, tracking students against this data, goal setting, academic counselling, and involving parents.

During Onehunga's trial year a lead group was made up of representatives of senior management, deans, HODs and Year 11

form tutors. As well as this a second group of Year 11 form tutors, who were also academic counsellors, met regularly to discuss what was going well and what improvements were needed.

"Our systems were set up by these two groups and were continuously reviewed as we went through our first year of Starpath," Tom said.

"We learnt a great deal during this first year of implementation and made many changes to our initial systems. The input from the form tutors was critical to this learning."

Every child in the school now has a Starpath Tutor Teacher assigned to them who provides academic counselling and keeps them on track toward their academic goals.

The Year 11 staff who acted as Starpath tutors and academic counsellors have been critical in allowing this initiative to expand to other years.

With a solid database now in place the school has been able to set targets for NCEA this year – 55 percent of Year 11 to achieve NCEA Level 1; 60 percent of Year 12 to achieve NCEA Level 2; and 55 percent of Year 13 to achieve NCEA Level 3.

"At its heart, Starpath is about relationships. Our involvement in the programme has strengthened student-teacher and teacher-teacher relationships and has allowed us to place a greater emphasis on student achievement in all our conversations," Tom said.

From the Chair



Professor Raewyn Dalziel, Chair, Starpath Project

When Starpath was first chosen by the Government as a Partnership for Excellence, it gained funding for five years.

During this time

University of Auckland researchers would monitor and track students in five pilot schools and attempt to identify the barriers which made it difficult for students with potential to proceed to degree study. On the basis of these studies, they would devise strategies to break down the barriers and improve the outcomes for students. If the work showed promise, the University was able to make a case for funding a second phase in which Starpath strategies would be applied in a larger number of schools.

We are now in the last 18 months of phase two and the thinking is about how the University can continue to engage in this work. There have been impressive gains in student achievement, but the work is certainly not complete. We aim at the schools we work in to match or better national averages for NCEA passes. Some Starpath schools already achieve at this level. Others have some way to go. We believe that they will get there with hard work and continued support.

That's why we will be seeking ways to build on the gains of the last few years and to continue the University's commitment to equity and excellence.

We have moved

You can now find us on the ground floor of the Team Solutions Building
Epsom Campus, Gate 1
(near Kohia Teachers' Centre)



Building Teams to Ensure Sustainability

Tips and advice

As the Starpath Project starts to wind down it is critical that schools are able to sustain all aspects of the DUACTS programme and to do so within their own resources. The following suggestions might be helpful as you review your progress to date and plan for the future.

Senior Leaders need to work as a team

The most successful examples of DUACTS implementation have occurred when all senior leaders have taken some role in the process. Although there are good examples of well executed implementation brought about by the drive of one person, the evidence indicates greater benefits when the work is shared, when all senior staff know what is going on and have a clear appreciation of each other's contribution, and when they are supportive of each other's role in the programme as a whole.

Each leader needs to work with a team

A very effective way of implementing parts of the DUACTS programme has been through the development of implementation teams. There are great examples of schools that have used this approach for the introduction of academic counselling or PST conferencing. A senior leader with a small group of staff from across the

school is able to test ideas, share tasks, and discuss feedback, and in this way build a positive experience for staff, students and parents.

Key people need a "buddy"

Some of our schools have appointed a support "buddy" for staff members doing a vital task. A good example is the role of Student Achievement Manager (SAM). This is a task that requires a good understanding of data and a reasonably high level of skill in manipulation of data sets. Starpath has provided plenty of support for staff taking on this role. In some schools the SAM has, for positive reasons, moved on. The most successful transition has occurred in schools where at least one other person has been working alongside the SAM and was able to step in or provide support to the new person taking on the role. Without the buddy system the schools are reliant on Starpath staff to start the training process again – something that will not be possible in the long term.

Sustainability is critical, and using a team approach at all levels of the programme can ensure that the programme and its benefits will continue into the future.

Farewell to Starpath Director

After seven and a half years as Director of the Starpath Partnership for Excellence, Professor Elizabeth McKinley will be leaving the University of Auckland in September to take up a Chair in Education in the Graduate School of Education at the University of Melbourne.

Liz has been an outstanding contributor to the work of the Faculty and the University. Through her leadership of the Starpath Project, she has become a highly respected commentator on the research evidence relating to inequalities in educational achievement and how we might address these.

The experience that Liz has gained in her Starpath role, which has included engagement with the Tertiary Education Commission, the Ministry of Education, and secondary schools

throughout Auckland and Northland, has provided a platform for an effective contribution to public policy and a major impact on issues of educational equality.

The University is sorry to see Liz go, but she takes up her new role, which will see her applying some of the findings from her Starpath experience in Australia, with our best wishes.

We are seeking a new leader for Starpath and expect to have an appropriate person in place by early September. Liz will continue to lead Starpath until she finishes at Auckland.

Professor Graeme Aitken
Dean of Education
University of Auckland

Implementation update



Joy Eaton,
Deputy Director

Term 1 seemed such a long haul and yet Term 2 is speeding along at a breakneck pace.

During Term 1 the Starpath qualitative team completed the

individual school reports for the Group A evaluations. This was a substantial piece of work as data from 46 individual interviews and 67 focus groups involving 249 students and 147 staff was processed, analysed and written into data rich documents for schools. Schools were very appreciative of the feedback. But no rest for the team as they quickly swung into observation visits for Academic Counselling sessions and Parent-Student-Teacher conferences. The focus for this work has been interviews with Year 9 and 10 students.

The quantitative team has just completed their first round of school visits for the year. As usual they have been discussing the tracking of student progress and it is pleasing to see that schools are developing strong processes for this task. A few schools are still seeking support in the management of their data, mostly due to a change of staff, so we are offering individualised training where required. In the school visits Starpath staff have been able to discuss the 2013 results analysis and the Year 9 and 10 baseline data report.

Professional development continues to be a major feature of our relationships with schools. Group B schools have almost finished the Literacy and Leadership Development series. This has included participation in an important effective leadership survey as well as observation of literacy strategies in senior classes. There have also been well supported literacy workshops for teachers of Year 9 and 10 classes. These will finish with subject specific workshops in August. In response to requests we held workshops to help schools reflect on their AC/PST practices and we continue to offer tailored PD to meet individual school's needs.

In Term 3 our focus will shift to the evaluation of the Group B implementation and we look forward to repeating this valuable process with the remaining schools.

Evaluation guides Starpath in right direction

An independent evaluation of the Starpath Project carried out last year provides some positive encouragement and ways to improve.

Last year we engaged Professor Luanna Meyer, Victoria University of Wellington, to carry out an independent evaluation of Stage 2 of the Starpath Project. Professor Meyer spent two weeks in Auckland during September – one week in the office and another week visiting five Group A schools (3 in Auckland and 2 in Northland) interviewing key personnel.

Professor Meyer noted a number of commendations in her report. These included:

- The quality and timeliness of advice, technical assistance and direct support provided to schools;
- The implementation of models of best practice that have high integrity, functionality and adaptability to meet local school contexts and needs;
- Success in communicating to schools a rationale for focusing on achieving at the highest level while supporting high expectations and aspirations for all students;
- The high quality literacy and leadership PLD offered through the Woolf Fisher Research Centre (WFRC) and UoA Centre for Educational Leadership (UACEL) collaborations; and
- Starpath's documentation and systems for record keeping, and feedback to schools that is comprehensive, systematic, helpful and timely in providing up-to-date information that can be used to monitor progress against goals.

She also had some recommendations and, as a result, Starpath has committed to making some changes. These include:

- The curriculum/standards alignment has thrown up a new challenge to tracking and monitoring of students' progress, particularly in subject areas that work on portfolio assessments where credits are not gained until very late in the year. We are working hard to encourage schools to develop a process where students receive timely feedback on their performance each term.



- It was suggested the three components of Starpath could have a closer alignment, which we plan to address through improved planning in the delivery of the PLD and being more explicit about our expectations.
- We have been encouraged to identify precise, fit-for-purpose measures of staff, school and/or student outcomes and provide short and medium term feedback to schools.
- We were encouraged to collect an inventory of well-proven practices associated with school policy that enhance student outcomes. These will be identified in the evaluation report and "toolkit" of ideas and resources that will be placed in the public domain over the next 18 months.
- Finally, the work of tracking students with UE from Starpath schools into tertiary study was encouraged. The transition of students into degree level study brings into focus how universities respond to these students.

Finally, we wish to thank the five schools who took part in the evaluation. Professor Meyer enjoyed her meetings with the schools and was very impressed with the work being carried out. The Starpath Project team appreciate the support and the time and effort required to meet with Professor Meyer.

Building on Success update

The Building on Success Project is aimed at raising the achievement of Māori students. The title "Building on Success" comes from both the success of research and development projects over the last decade, including the Starpath Project, and the strengths and successes of the schools. The project is being delivered through a partnership between The University of Auckland, the University of Waikato and Te Whare Wānanga o Awanuiārangī. Teams of facilitators and other staff have now been employed and are located in each of the three institutions.

Building on Success is now well underway with 51 schools in total having come onto the project

nationwide in the first intake. The University of Auckland is responsible for the Ministry of Education's Northern Region (Auckland and Northland). There are 11 schools in our first intake, of which 8 are current Starpath Project schools. One of the other three schools is Te Aho o te Kura Pounamu or The Correspondence School, a very unique school that has more than 400 staff in Wellington and other offices around the country. Ten more schools in the Northern Region will join the Building on Success whānau in Term 3.

Last term the project held several wānanga around the country where hapū/iwi were invited to speak about the aspirations they have for

their tamariki. Thirty hapū/iwi turned up. The project has a particular focus on supporting school leaders and teachers to engage with their Māori communities (whānau, hapū and iwi) early in the process to enable schools to benefit from the funds of cultural knowledge and expertise that have continued to be marginalised and under-utilised by many schools.

At this time the Building on Success project is developing action plans informed by the knowledge gained from this series of wānanga. The end goal is to create evidence-based, high quality, integrated and tailored professional learning programmes for schools.

Years 9 and 10 extension

Starpath is well underway extending its strategies to younger students in Years 9 and 10.



Most Starpath schools are now working with Starpath strategies school-wide and have been keen to take up the support offered in the Year 9 and 10 extension contract. Action plans have been written for these schools and there has been a workshop about data use in core group meetings. Each school has received feedback about their baseline data

The contract with the Ministry of Education was particularly clear about the need for support in junior literacy and numeracy. Dr Aaron Wilson has started a series of workshops with a session on Year 9 and 10 literacy strategies and will, in August, complete the series with specific workshops in English, mathematics, science and social science. There will be a final wrap up session in late Term 3. Arrangements have also been made with Team Solutions facilitators to offer mathematics teachers workshops on statistical literacy. This will occur in Term 3 with a follow up at the start of Term 4.

Junior students have also been the focus of our visits to schools this year. Our Academic Counselling and Parent-Student-Teacher Conference observations have mostly concentrated on Year 9 and 10 student interviews and we are able to feedback rich information to school management about the quality of these conversations. In our tracking and monitoring meetings there has been valuable discussion with Student Achievement Managers about the ways assessment data is used to track junior student progress. There will be further meetings during the year where the discussion will be about mid-year assessment points and how that evidence informs department and classroom direction.

This is a short one-year contract but thanks to all the schools participating. This work will add to the knowledge base relating to issues of Year 9 and 10 progress.

Starpath staff news

Starpath has had a number of staff changes this year. We have said farewell to Elizabeth Clarke and Karen Bonnici.

Elizabeth had been the Starpath Project Manager for seven years and was the person at the end of the phone who so capably managed travel, accommodation, venue bookings, publications, contracts, purchasing and all the other myriad of detail that is needed to keep our project running smoothly. At the start of the year Elizabeth decided that she needed to continue her studies and has taken up degree study in the Hawke's Bay. We wish her well.

Karen has been one of the faces of Starpath in your school and at workshops. Her work has been invaluable as schools push hard to embed Starpath strategies. When she joined Starpath she had just completed her training for Real Estate and, after two years with us, she decided she should try her hand in the property business. We wish her all the best in that industry.

As people have left others have joined us. We welcome Tania Linley-Richardson, Megan Jeffries and Kezia Kelly.


Tania has joined the team to take the role of Professional Development Facilitator. Her recent work has been as HOD English at Sancta Maria College and she has previously worked as an English facilitator with Team Solutions. She has the major role of providing support for schools in the project, and will lead workshops as well as take staff PD sessions and visit schools for data discussions.

We also welcome Project Coordinator Megan Jeffries who joins us from the Office of the Prime Minister's Science Advisory Committee where she was Communications and Administration Officer. Megan will coordinate operations for both the Starpath and Building on Success projects, with a particular focus on supporting the new Building on Success project and its team, whilst ensuring all administrative functions are met for both projects.

Working closely with Megan is Administrator for the Starpath project Kezia Kelly, a recent University of Auckland graduate with a BA in English and BSc in Psychology. As the Building on Success project gradually develops in size, Kezia will take on more responsibilities across both projects. A warm welcome to Kezia as well.

Finally, we have just announced the departure of Starpath Director, Professor Elizabeth McKinley, who will be leaving in September to take up a Chair in Education at the University of Melbourne. We will miss her a great deal and wish her the best in her new role. A farewell to Liz from the Dean of Education is included on Page 2 of this newsletter.

INGENIO et LABORE



By natural ability and hard work

Scholarships WORK WONDERS

through research

You can make a real difference for your students through school-based research and development methods.


Apply now for a Woolf Fisher Lead Teacher Masters Scholarship and start your Masters degree in 2015 with supervision and support from the Woolf Fisher Research Centre.



Scholarships are available to full-time Auckland and Northland primary and secondary school teachers to undertake a one year research masters degree at the University of Auckland.

Funding of up to \$70,000 for teacher release in 2015.

Apply now.

For more information and to apply visit:
www.education.auckland.ac.nz/en/about/research/wfrc.html







The Starpath Project for Tertiary Participation and Success, is a partnership between The University of Auckland and the New Zealand Government. The Project works in partnership with schools to transform educational outcomes for students who are currently under-achieving at secondary school and, as a result, under-represented in tertiary education.