



# Starpath newsletter

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## MAST meetings at Aorere College

A case study of how Aorere College has adopted a Starpath strategy and made it its own.



Aorere College Year 12 Dean Richard Talbot talks with students in the school library.

Starpath partner school Aorere College is a large South Auckland school with a keen focus on student academic achievement. Aorere has adopted its own version of 'core group meetings' which it has dubbed MAST meetings (mentors and subject teachers).

Many Starpath schools will be familiar with core group meetings – where teachers who teach a common junior form class, such as English, Science, Maths and Social Studies, meet to discuss and share student achievement data and hold professional learning conversations. MAST meetings at Aorere have a facilitator (a teacher) who has experience in using data, allowing the discussion to better concentrate on student achievement.

Improving Māori achievement has been a strategic focus at Aorere College and this was reflected in MAST meetings. To ensure the MAST meetings were linked to the school's goals, teachers were asked to engage in inquiry about the achievement of their students in core classes. Teachers each selected four Māori students as priority students around which to structure their inquiry. The goal was to improve literacy and numeracy outcomes for these students. This was aligned to a goal for all teachers in 2015: to meet Practising Teacher Criteria 11: 'analyse and appropriately use assessment information'.

A Google document was set up to help teachers structure their collaborative inquiry through the

MAST meetings. This helped to guide each group through the process of analysing data, selecting focus students, developing learning goals and setting targets for these students. Pedagogical strategies or approaches were also decided upon in the MAST meetings, with the principles of culturally responsive pedagogy and co-construction emphasised. Additionally, teachers were given documents to assist with the recording of actions taken and an evaluation of these in terms of improved achievement for the priority students.

MAST meetings were held early in terms 2, 3 and 4 for Year 9 and 10 core classes. In terms 2 and 3 these were followed by academic conferences with parents and students a week later. Four items of data were provided for the meetings: asTTle reading, writing, mathematics and PAT listening results, along with a variety of reports. Each teacher had the responsibility for presenting an analysis of a piece of asTTle data (given to them ahead of time) at the meeting. Starpath also delivered professional development to the whole staff at the start of term 2 which focussed on the use of data to improve teacher understanding and target setting for junior students.

Authentic participation in the MAST inquiry was important to the initiative functioning well. In addition the teachers were able to meet up to six of the Practising Teacher Criteria with their contributions to goal setting, critical inquiry and evaluation forming part of the evidence required.

## From the Director



**Professor Cindy Kiro**  
Director, Starpath Project

The highlight for this final quarter of 2015 was definitely the School Partners' Day. Who would have thought such talent resides among our principals? John you take top prize for song composition and delivery, even though you tried to charge us for the song – until we announced that a scaled down version of Starpath will continue for 2016 and 2017, supported by the University of Auckland Vice-Chancellor. This song will be added to our kete of taonga from our precious time with you all as partner schools.

Work now begins on how to focus our efforts over the next two years given our more limited funding. In particular we want to concentrate on raising students' achievement in Year 13 with UE, as changes to requirements have impacted Māori and Pāšifika students disproportionately in 2014. We look forward to working with some of you over the next two years in doing this.

You should have received a letter explaining what we want to do to maximise the learning from our partnership with your school. This includes information about how we will use future data – anonymisation of data will be critical to protecting your privacy, as will archiving, so 11 years of data can be used to learn about what to do and how to do it better to raise student achievement. We are doing everything we can to ensure that we honour the commitments made to your schools in how we use and protect this information.

We are actively recruiting two PhD students who will focus on analysing the Starpath data further. We are hopeful that one of them will have a focus on Māori student achievement and one will focus on Pāšifika student achievement. I have already spoken with a few senior school members with an interest in growing academically through this work. Please let us know if you are aware of people who would be eligible for a PhD, can live on the modest scholarship for three years, and who have a passion to work in these areas.

Once again, thank you to all of our 39 partner schools in the last two phases of our work. We look forward to the next phase working with a few of you and wish you, your staff and students all the best over the examinations period and with Christmas holidays looming.

Ngā mihi nui ki a koutou katoa

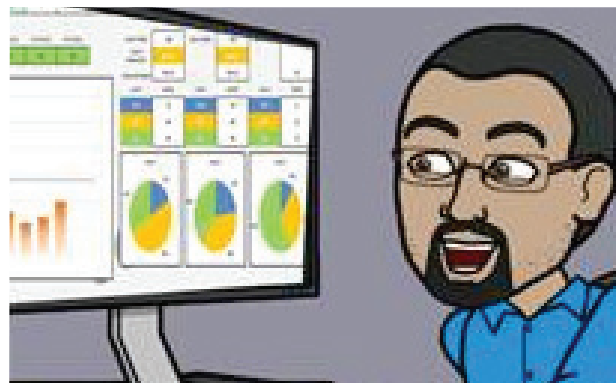
# Dashboard tool for student achievement data

The dashboard tool is an easy way for teachers to visually display a snapshot of data on student achievement. It was developed by Morgan Rangi from Starpath's schools team following his tracking and monitoring visits, when he realised schools didn't have the time to produce the data in the visual ways Starpath was requesting. He wanted to give schools something that was user friendly and allowed them to capture the data they need on a regular basis.

The dashboard tool uses student achievement data from the KAMAR student management system (SMS). It works on the principle of exporting published key student achievement information for Years 11-13, simply by copying and pasting the data from the SMS into the dashboard file. The dashboard auto-populates the data and provides graphs which are currently missing from the SMS, such as NCEA requirements and banding of NCEA credit totals. It also allows for disaggregation of data with student groups like Pasifika ethnicities.

The dashboard tool would be particularly useful for academic counselors in one-to-one conversations with a student about their academic achievement. These could take place at the teacher's computer.

If you are already using the dashboard and you have something you would like added to it, or you have student achievement data you would like personalised for your school, Morgan will do that for you. He is investigating how this tool might work with other SMS providers. Schools who are interested in using the dashboard should get in touch with Morgan at: [m.rangi@auckland.ac.nz](mailto:m.rangi@auckland.ac.nz)



## Starpath partner schools' annual gathering

The annual Starpath Partners' Day was held on Thursday September 17 at the Novotel Hotel in Ellerslie, Auckland. More than 60 people from partner schools, Starpath and the Kia Eke Panuku teams attended. John Paitai, Principal of Bay of Islands College, welcomed everyone with a short waiata he had written to farewell the project. Jim Peters, Pro Vice-Chancellor Māori at the University of Auckland, opened the day.

Leanne Webb, Associate Principal at Aorere College, delivered a presentation on working with multiple initiatives, core group meetings (MAST meetings at Aorere) and their use of reciprocal teaching to raise students' reading levels. The schools team demonstrated two sections, target setting and literacy, of the Starpath toolkit – an online resource for schools which will be completed by the end of the year. Morgan Rangi demonstrated the dashboard tool he developed to help leaders save time when working with student achievement data (for more information on this see article above).

Presentations from Starpath included 'Delving into the performance of Pasifika Students: What happens when we disaggregate?', 'Important subjects for tertiary Science success', 'Update on Starpath research' and 'Key Findings and Implications' from the University of Auckland's Centre for Educational Leadership's work with partner schools.

The afternoon session concluded with speeches from Professor Graeme Aitken, Dean of the Faculty of Education and Social Work, and Professor Cindy Kiro, Starpath Director. They announced that the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Auckland will underwrite Starpath



*More than 60 school leaders and teachers attended the Starpath Partners' Day in September.*

for a further two years, so the project can move into a Phase Three. Long serving Chairperson of the Starpath Board, Professor Raewyn Dalziel, was presented with a large bouquet of flowers as thanks for the significant contribution she

has made to the project. We finished on a humorous note with John Paitai making adjustments to his 'farewell' waiata and the Starpath team receiving some praise for their singing abilities!

## Ministry responds on e-asTTle

Earlier this year Starpath approached the Ministry of Education on behalf of its partner schools outlining some of their frustrations with the e-asTTle tool. While both the Ministry and Starpath regard e-asTTle as a valuable assessment tool for New Zealand schools, teachers and leaders have been reporting difficulties with the server capability, the outdated materials, the time it can take to download large reports and the Helpline.

The Ministry responded to our concerns, outlining plans for e-asTTle's development and recognising that it needs modernisation. To this end they are seeking investment from the private sector to the tune of \$4 to 8 million, to work with them over a three year period. The

aim of this project is to refresh the test questions, review the data that contributes to e-asTTle reports, modernise the software and upgrade the systems.

Currently the interface of the student portal and test player are being enhanced, both of which will improve user experience. Some of the enhancements to the tool will be made available in 2016. Helpline issues have been raised with the e-asTTle business team and a request made for corrective actions to be taken.

Starpath has a positive working relationship with the Ministry. If you have further feedback you wish to pass on, please contact Tania at the office who will do this on your behalf.



# University of Auckland to fund Starpath in 2016 - 2017

The Vice-Chancellor of the University of Auckland has agreed to underwrite Starpath for a further two years to ensure that critical aspects of the work can continue past the expiry date of TEC funding, due to end in December 2015. We are also exploring other possible sources of funding to expand the work that we can do with partner schools or communities of learning.

Starpath will continue to work with some of our partner schools - though not all schools. Some schools may not wish to continue. Some new schools may want to join Starpath and some schools may not need Starpath as much as others. We need to make decisions about how best to use a smaller resource in 2016, to raise student achievement for Māori, Pasifika and low income students.

We will target our resources towards low decile schools who are committed to continue working with us, and those who have high numbers of Māori and Pasifika students. There will be fewer schools across Northland Tai Tokerau than currently, and also fewer within Auckland Tāmaki Makaurau. Despite this we are optimistic that the analysis currently taking place of our data and preparation of a toolkit for schools will enable us to work more effectively with schools to improve practice and outcomes for these students.

It is expected that a more focused approach to working with fewer schools based upon a stronger evidence base will likely comprise:

- Working with schools in Years 9 and 10 – as well as the senior school.
- Increased use of academic counselling.
- Clear checklists for NCEA attainment – especially for UE.
- Embedding data utilisation skills among staff and active use of this data for quality academic planning.
- Working with classroom teachers to enhance the quality of learning through increased teacher literacy in specific subject specialties and therefore, enhanced opportunities to learn for priority learners.
- And finally, much clearer targets that are disseminated strongly among all staff and active monitoring of activities that undermine this – for example early academic profiling that is used to discourage student expectation or achievement.

## Toolkit for schools

The Starpath schools team has been working throughout this year to produce an online toolkit. It will provide our schools, and others interested in adopting the Starpath programme, with a bank of materials to support implementation and sustainable practice. The toolkit has seven sections: About Us, Implementation, Data, Tracking Progress, Academic Conversations, Literacy and Leadership. It contains templates, some readings and other resources such as powerpoints from subject specific literacy workshops, which teachers and leaders can use and adapt for their own school context. Case studies from partner schools illustrating good practice will also be included. It is hoped that the toolkit will be live on the Faculty of Education and Social Work's website by the end of this year. We anticipate it will generate a great deal of interest amongst educators in New Zealand, both in Starpath partner schools and non-partner schools, and from overseas.



*'We are optimistic about our future and grateful for the ongoing support of our partner schools'.*

A specific workplan will be developed in the New Year, once our commitments to the TEC funded work are completed. We will also have a clearer picture of additional funding that is available to support other aspects of our work, specifically fit for purpose data access tools, training and working with clusters of schools and their communities in the roll out of Communities of Learning and their use of effective data for academic achievement. We are optimistic about our future and grateful for the ongoing support of our partner schools.

## Summary

1. The University of Auckland is supporting the continuation of a more limited Starpath Project for two years from Jan 2016-Dec 2017.
2. We will focus our efforts on strongly committed, low decile schools with high Māori and Pasifika students within Northland Tai Tokerau and Auckland Tāmaki Makaurau.
3. We will embed data utilisation, start earlier with Years 9 & 10, enrich subject specialty (increased opportunities to learn), academic counselling and parent student teacher conferencing.
4. We also want to increase student and whānau family engagement in academic decisions earlier for students.
5. We are hopeful that additional funding will be available and have ambitious plans for student achievement should this come to fruition.
6. We continue to learn from our mistakes and successes – modelling an evidence based approach using data to refine what and how we do things.

# Navigating Equity and Excellence

Professor Cynthia (Cindy) Kiro delivered her inaugural lecture as a Professor of the University of Auckland on September 10 to a large audience which included fellow academics, researchers, the Starpath team and whānau. Her lecture was entitled 'Navigating Equity and Excellence in Education: The Starpath Experience'.

Cindy said that she had come to work in education late in her career but with a real passion for it. One key message she articulated was that equity and excellence need each other: "inequity is our most persistent and enduring challenge and it has lasting effects," she said, adding that educators and researchers need to ask the hard questions, look at different elements of learning and what is valued in education.

Professor Kiro observed that different people wanted different things from education, for example parents had different wants from politicians. There are significant disparities in higher education for Māori and Pasifika students and it is essential that research and development projects are based upon collaboration and are culturally responsive.

Cindy questioned the degree to which we still have an education system designed for inequity. OECD and PISA data were used

to highlight New Zealand's high quality/low equity education system. Professor Kiro advocated the need to tackle system-level policies that hindered equity in education, for example grouping students by ability based on historical judgements (New Zealand has one of the highest percentages of streamed students in the world at 98%). She said that children in low streams are arguably subjected to lower expectations, inferior curricular and less qualified teachers.

A brief history of the Starpath Project was provided and Cindy explained the work that has been happening in 2015 for the evaluation focus of Phase Two. She said there were perceptions of improved relationships and information sharing in Starpath partner schools and emerging interrelated themes connected to the idea of "a change in what we do".

In closing Professor Kiro reiterated that New Zealand has an equity issue in its education system, there are lessons to be learnt from other sectors such as health, and that education is a profound opportunity to change what happens for children. At the lecture's conclusion the Starpath team sang their new waiata, written especially for the project, to honour Cindy's expertise and position as Director and Te Tumu at the Faculty of Education and Social Work.

## Implementation update

Joy Eaton, Director: School Engagement



In terms of implementation the second half of 2015 has been relatively quiet. Our focus has been on helping schools to build capacity to sustain the innovation. Visits to schools have been about two important areas: literacy leadership and data development. Morgan has been in high demand for demonstrating and customising the dashboard he demonstrated at Partners' Day. Another key component has been the completion of the tailored leadership course in the Far North. For the most part this half year has been dedicated to completing the research work and, for the schools team, the development of a toolkit that we can leave for you to use in the future.

We are winding up and although we have a life in 2016 it will not be the same. This is likely to be our last newsletter. I want to say a huge 'thank you' for all the great work you do supporting the aspirations of the young people from Auckland/Northland, and for how you have all embraced the challenge we have given you and the ways you have made shifts in practice to help and support student learning.

At this point I want to acknowledge the Principals and schools leaders who have been part of the Starpath Project. In the last five years close to half our schools have changed leaders and I want to include those who have moved on in this acknowledgement. Thank you for taking up the challenge, and for allowing us to walk into your school and work alongside you and your teachers. It has been a privilege to support you in this very important mahi.

We wish all staff in Starpath schools a safe and happy festive season and we hope you have a relaxing time with family and friends over the summer.

## Staff awards and farewells

### Farewell for Dr Irena Madjar

The Starpath team farewelled a long serving member at the end of July when Dr Irena Madjar retired. Appointed in 2007 as a qualitative researcher, she was a driving force behind Starpath's work in schools, leading the Transition Project, editing *Unibound?*, writing the *Understanding NCEA* book with Professor McKinley and numerous academic articles and reports. Irena led the qualitative team's work with observations of academic counselling and three way PST conferences and the Group A and B school interviews, analysis and evaluation reports. She was regarded as "the ethics guru" of the team and was often called upon for her expertise in this area. Irena has been enjoying time with her family, friends and church groups and doing some volunteer work in the community. We wish her all the best for post Starpath life!

### Queen's Birthday Honour

Former Director of Starpath, Professor Liz McKinley, was made an Officer of the New Zealand Order of Merit in this year's Queen's Birthday Honours, for services to education and Māori. Liz was recognised for her 36 years working in education in New

Zealand, and for her leadership of the Starpath Project and contributions to Māori education at the University of Auckland and the University of Waikato. Liz received her award at a ceremony at Government House in Wellington in September, where she was joined by close members of her family.



Professor Liz McKinley



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.