

## Starpath previews latest research at Partners' Day 2017

Principals and senior leaders from all nine partner schools joined the Starpath team and some Advisory Board members for the annual Partners' Day on 12th September at the Kohia Teachers Centre. Partners' Day afforded us an opportunity to present our latest research findings. We also appreciated the thought-provoking contributions from our guest speakers.

Dr Rachel Williams from the Woolf Fisher Research Centre delivered a presentation on the Summer Learning Journey. This is an ongoing research project which encourages primary aged students to 'blog' over the summer holiday. Further information about Rachel's research and its promising results can be found on page 3 of this newsletter.

Young Pasifika woman Roneima Koro was invited to speak at Partners' Day about her journey from secondary school to tertiary study. Roneima attended Palmerston North Girls' High School and is in her first year of study at the University of Otago, aspiring to get into medical school. More about Roneima's inspirational journey can be found inside this newsletter.

Starpath's Professional Development Facilitator Tania Linley-Richardson prepared a special presentation for Partners' Day summarising the Project's Phase Three research findings. A condensed version of this presentation can be found on Page 2.

A representative from each school then shared a successful initiative with the group, demonstrating a range of different approaches to enhancing learning. Finally, Starpath's Morgan Rangi presented a UE Literacy flowchart, which is a visual aid for schools to follow to assist Year 12 and 13 students with potential to gain UE Literacy.

All of the presentations from Starpath's Partners' Day have been made available on our website. We encourage you to read them and discuss with your colleagues.



Teachers, school leaders and researchers gather at Starpath's annual Partners' Day.

## From the Director



E ngā kaiako o te motu,  
e ngā pou o te ako, e  
ngā pūtake o te mārama,  
e ngā mana o te iwi,  
tenei tā mātou ko Te Ara  
Whetu e mihi atu ana ki  
a koutou kia tautoko i te  
kaupapa nei.

To the teachers of  
this land, the pillars of  
learning and teaching,  
the initiators of  
understanding, the pride

of the people – the Starpath team acknowledges your immense contribution to our project. We are deeply grateful for your continued support of Starpath and the ways you have worked alongside us on Phase Three to investigate an enduring problem of practice: what will enable significantly more Māori and Pasifika students from low socio-economic schools achieve University Entrance (UE) that allows progression into degree level study?

Starpath asked schools to focus on this problem of practice because UE is the highest qualification that can be gained from school. No matter what students' immediate post-school plans are, gaining UE opens opportunities for future study at degree level, and/or employment. To achieve this goal Starpath encouraged schools to:

- Create ambitious UE target lists, based on course opportunities and student aspirations;
- Track and monitor students' progress to ensure systems and processes are in place to maintain their achievement;
- Promote high expectations and ensure opportunities to achieve are kept open;
- Ensure students are offered and maintain viable UE courses, including the opportunity to gain UE Literacy;
- Strengthen data capabilities of managers and teachers;
- Track Year 9 and 10 students of potential for Merit and Excellence grades at Level 1 & 2.

We are immensely proud of the collaborative ways we have worked with schools, school leaders, students and whānau to better understand what enables Māori and Pasifika students to achieve UE and subsequently progress onto university studies. We are currently preparing the final Starpath Phase Three report and look forward to sharing our findings, conclusions and recommendations with you soon.

Starpath Director Associate Professor Melinda Webber

# Higher learnings - findings from Phase Three

Starpath’s Phase Three research has been completed in our partner schools. It has allowed us a greater understanding of what works (and what doesn’t) for Māori and Pasifika students to succeed at secondary school. We are now ready to share this important knowledge with our partner schools and the wider education community.

Phase Three was a two-year programme of extensive observations and research. Our primary aims were to answer three key research questions:

1. What factors enable highly successful Māori and Pasifika students from Starpath schools to excel?
2. What barriers restrict or inhibit Māori and Pasifika students in achieving educational success in Starpath schools?
3. What systems and processes could be changed at the secondary school and tertiary levels to enable more Māori and Pasifika students to succeed at a high level?

We are especially grateful to our partner schools for allowing us to observe and gather extensive data for this ambitious project. To conduct our research the Starpath team visited all schools. Discussions were held on the processes around course design and review, timetable restrictions, and the withdrawal of students from NCEA achievement standards.

We conducted 92 observations of “2 and 3-way conversations” between student and teacher, and student, teacher and parent; surveyed 318 teachers on school practices; completed six UE Literacy audits; conducted 70 interviews with students and whānau; and interviewed 49 school leaders. The table below provides a snapshot of our main findings:

Enablers	Barriers
Effective classroom teachers	Ineffective teaching practices
Whanaungatanga and manaakitanga	Perceptions: of poor attendance and/or literacy
Effective school systems, processes and practices	Poor school systems and processes
Use of data	Data issues and lack of information
Academic counselling	Poor/inconsistent academic counselling
Effective course design and review	Time - management of interventions and workload
Careers Advisors	Distance and financial issues in regard to getting to university

## What is an effective classroom teacher?

Effective classroom teachers were identified by students, whānau and leaders as those who provided individualised instruction, support, encouragement and specific feedback to their students. These teachers appropriately scaffold material to enable understanding of content and give explicit instruction for students to attain Merit or Excellence grades in NCEA. They are committed to their students, will go the ‘extra mile’ at lunchtimes and after school, and have high expectations for behaviour and achievement.

## Whanaungatanga and manaakitanga

Students and whānau talked about the importance of school engagement with families, regardless of whether it related to positive or negative behaviour or achievement. They valued having a sense of belonging to a supportive community and valued schools engaging with iwi and hapu. For example teachers were observed to be genuinely interested in their students’ lives outside



Our latest research defines the enablers and barriers for Māori and Pasifika students to gain University Entrance. (File photo from University of Auckland Graduation 2016)

of the classroom during 3-way conversations. In the context of our research, manaakitanga was identified as a school culture of giving and generosity, including giving time and expertise, as highlighted by this comment from a student: “Tutorials, even in the holidays, the teachers take time out to have tutorials just for kids”.

## Recommendations for Schools

Starpath has a number of recommendations for schools. One of these is employing a person who has responsibility for data management and analysis. This person would need broad spectrum training around data literacy and evidence-based decision making. In addition we recommend schools carefully monitor course design, to ensure students have opportunities to learn for UE Literacy; are able to gain credits from both internal and external assessments; and that an appropriate number of credits are offered in each course.

A key recommendation to improve literacy is to implement cross-curricular collaboration in order to develop students’ writing skills. All staff need a clear understanding of school goals and targets and accurate knowledge of the complexities of NCEA and UE. For successful academic counselling teachers and mentors should be accountable and shadow coaching for academic mentors would assist teachers new to this practice. This is one aspect of induction processes for new teachers that schools should consider.

Students and whānau suggested schools provide more individualised support for learners and improve home/school and student/teacher relationships. They also requested greater access to role models, preparation for further study and resilience in the transition process. They also talked about school processes such as a more responsive curriculum, reviewing where double periods are scheduled for Year 13 classes, other opportunities for learning and stricter policies around the non-completion of assessments and homework.

## Recommendations for the University of Auckland

The main message for the University was to connect more with students, families and communities. Assistance with transport was mentioned often in interviews with whānau – both in South Auckland and Northland. Financial support was another main theme. Students and their families talked about lowering fees or providing more scholarships to enable Māori and Pasifika students to participate in degree level study. Other suggestions included connecting students to current University research in Northland, improving the culturally responsive and relational pedagogy of the University’s teaching staff, capitalising on students’ existing expertise such as Pasifika languages, and connecting students to work experience so they can see future work opportunities.

The Phase Three research findings will be shared formally with partner schools, the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Auckland and the wider education sector early in 2018.



# SUMMER LEARNING JOURNEY

An area of concern for many schools is the 'summer slump', when a student's learning and knowledge slides after a holiday break.

Dr Rachel Williams from the Woolf Fisher Research Centre presented on the Summer Learning Project at Partners' Day, explaining



Dr Rachel Williams

how a fun and educational blogging programme she designed can help children overcome this slump in learning.

The project was piloted in the 2015-16 school holidays with 23 students from three schools, and last year it expanded to nine schools involving 141 students.

Each student blogged about the culture and customs of an overseas country and Rachel responded with comments. She also recruited students from five countries around the world to comment on posts.

Rachel then demonstrated how the writing and reading abilities of the students involved in the project were significantly better than their age-matched peers when they returned to school, measured using scores from the e-asTTle writing and PAT reading tests.

The results also showed significant and sustained evidence of student engagement, evidence of student enjoyment from emails and tributes and evidence of student learning and achievement.

"The students who blogged over the summer experienced massive increases in their learning compared with their peers," Rachel said.

A winter learning journey was also implemented in 2016 with a theme around the Olympics. One aspect of the programme's development involved partnering with local libraries and acknowledging participation with badges and certificates.

The next steps for Rachel involve exploring how to promote sustained engagement in the programme and to re-design, re-launch and re-evaluate the summer learning journey. It is hoped the programme will extend to 60 schools for the upcoming holiday period.

## Navigating the western school system in jandals

The youngest speaker at Partners' Day was 19-year-old Roneima Koro, who shared her personal journey to tertiary education.

Roneima was the 2016 recipient of the Prime Minister's Pacific Youth STEM award and is on track to become a medical doctor.

Of Tongan, Tokelauan and Samoan descent, Roneima grew up in Palmerston North and remembers being "the only brown person" in her class. She also suffered from a profound hearing loss.

"When I was five I started wearing hearing aids. But my parents didn't want me to think there was something wrong with me so they told me they had computer chips in them to make me super clever. And it worked, I tried really hard to show everyone I had superpowers."

Roneima had incredible support and understanding from both her parents – who came to New Zealand on scholarships from Tonga and Tokelau. She credits them as the main reason for her academic success.

"I was fascinated with science and my parents always supported that. When I was a kid I would collect rocks from neighbours' gardens and they never made me feel like I was weird for doing that. That was important. I didn't have any excuses for not doing well at school."

However at high school Roneima realised there were assumptions about Pacific people and their capabilities.

"There was an elitist view of STEM subjects. They are known as the 'Asian 5': English, maths and three sciences. People were amazed when I wanted to take those subjects, let alone do well in them," Roneima said.

"We need to get rid of that mindset. It makes Pasifika children feel less than they already do. Luckily my teachers believed in me and didn't have those low expectations."

Roneima also talked about the lack of homework time for most (not all) Pasifika children. Most Pasifika families are not able to



Roneima Koro

provide the recommended study space in their homes due to the number of members per household. It is difficult for parents and students to establish ongoing study routines outside of school hours due to family commitments at church and community events.

Her advice for principals and teachers – to get to know your Pasifika families: "like, really get to know them". And to be aware of the stigma against STEM subjects as far as Pacific students are concerned as well as the systemic barriers which continue to reinforce this mindset and perception.

Roneima is currently in the foundation year of a Health Science degree at Otago University. We wish her all the best in her studies.

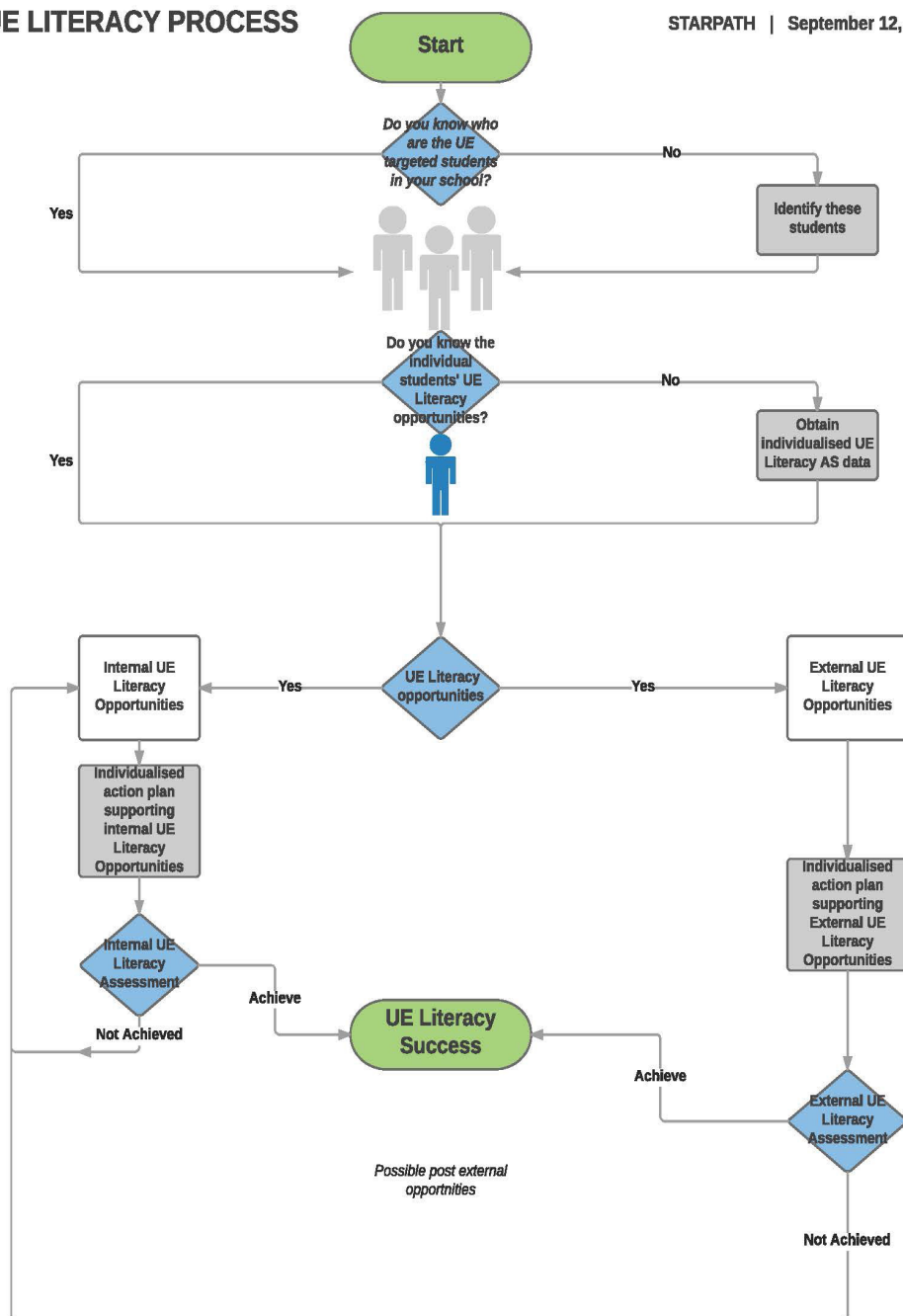
# UE Literacy Flowchart

The UE Literacy Flowchart is a useful visual snapshot teachers can use to support students.

Starpath's Morgan Rangi designed the flowchart and presented it at Partners' Day. He describes it as an overview of a process schools could implement to ensure they have a robust system in place to support Year 12 and 13 students of UE potential to gain the 10 UE Literacy credits. We hope this will be helpful for schools with the tracking and monitoring of achievement towards this requirement of the UE award.

## UE LITERACY PROCESS

STARPATH | September 12, 2017



## A message for Starpath schools



Joy, Director: School Engagement

As we write the final report for the Starpath Project I take a moment to reflect on the privilege it has been to work alongside dedicated leaders and teachers as you strive for the very best outcomes for your students. Starpath, with its unrelenting focus on equity, has challenged you to critically review practices, to promote conditions that allow students to reach ambitious UE goals and to build a culture of success for all.

By agreeing to become a partner for excellence you have welcomed us into your space, you have willingly opened your practices to scrutiny and you have embraced the critical mirror we held up for you. I believe it has been a true partnership.

The Starpath metaphor resonates strongly – tackling equity is complex work, not easily solved. I urge you to continue the step by step journey and reach for the stars – te ara whētū.

*As the first navigators crossed the Pacific they followed the stars from island to island.*

*At the beginning of their journey, they found the star which marked their direction, and followed it until it sank towards the horizon.*

*Then they located the next star on the star path, and the next, and the next, until they reached their destination.*

May our paths cross again. Ka kite ano.



**EDUCATION AND  
SOCIAL WORK**  
STARPATH  
TE ARA WHETŪ

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

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