

# Totara College Of Accelerated Learning Education Review

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## About the School

Location	Dannevirke	
Ministry of Education profile number	439	
School type	Composite (Years 1 to 15)	
Decile [ <u>1</u> ]	3	
School roll	48	
Gender composition	Male 24 Female 24	
Ethnic composition	NZ European/Pākehā	37
	Māori	11
Review team on site	August 2011	
Date of this report	7 November 2011	
Most recent ERO report(s)	Supplementary Review	October 2009
	Education Review	June 2008
	Supplementary Review	February 2006

## The Purpose of an ERO Report

The purpose of ERO's reviews is to give parents and the wider school community assurance about the quality of education that schools provide and their children receive. An ERO school

report answers the question “How effectively is this school’s curriculum promoting student learning - engagement, progress and achievement?” Under that overarching question ERO reports on the quality of education and learning outcomes for children and for specific groups of children including Māori students, Pacific students and students with special needs. ERO also reports on the quality of the school’s systems for sustaining and continuing improvements.

[1]

School deciles range from 1 to 10. Decile 1 schools draw their students from low socio-economic communities and at the other end of the range, decile 10 schools draw their students from high socio-economic communities. Deciles are used to provide funding to state and state integrated schools. The lower the school’s decile the more funding it receives. A school’s decile is in no way linked to the quality of education it provides.

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# 1 Context

What are the important features of this school that have an impact on student learning?

Totara College of Accelerated Learning is a small Year 1 to 13 co-educational, integrated school in Dannevirke. Students learn in an environment where upholding Christian values is paramount. This special character underpins all aspects of school life. The Dannevirke Christian Fellowship is the school proprietor and is represented on the board of trustees.

The October 2009 ERO report noted significant progress in areas identified in previous reviews that had impacted on student outcomes. With the assistance of a variety of external support and improved school processes, including an action plan related to the 2009 ERO report, progress continues.

The roll has declined since 2008 and is currently 48. Classes are organised into four learning centres of similar aged students.

The school is characterised by a family atmosphere where adults demonstrate a collective responsibility for students. Older students regularly support those who are younger both in formal situations and spontaneously. Assisting others within the school and in the wider community is an important part of school culture. Student opinions and ideas are listened to and valued.

Teaching programmes follow the Accelerated Christian Education (ACE) curriculum. It is a biblicallybased education programme consisting of individual graded study units. In Years 1 to 10 the study of Packets of ACE (PACEs) is complemented with other programmes to meet The New Zealand Curriculum (NZC) requirements. In Years 11 to 13 the students work on PACEs to gain Academic or Achievement Certificates. This is complemented by a range of opportunities to gain National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) credits and to prepare students for their chosen post-school pathways.

Increasing use of information and communication technologies enhances programmes. Technology teaching facilities and a multi-purpose hall add to the opportunities available. Extensive use of community resources, outdoor education and regular activities involving other schools are appreciated by students.

## 2 Learning

How well are students learning – engaging, progressing and achieving?

Teachers make judgements in reading, writing and mathematics based on a range of assessment tools. In the primary school these indicate students generally achieve at least as well as expected for their age and some students are accelerated in their learning. Students at risk of underachieving in reading and numeracy, in Years 1 to 13, are identified and targeted assistance is provided.

Progress in PACE completion for all students is closely monitored and students generally meet expectations.

Comprehensive achievement information for reading, writing, mathematics and PACEs is collated twice a year and considered by teachers and trustees. The reports are used to plan for improved student outcomes, particularly in the primary school. More consistent consideration of individual achievement and progress data to reflect on the impact of teaching should further improve student performance.

Current assessment practices in Years 1 to 8 appropriately reflect the intentions behind the National Standards. Teachers make judgements about student progress using a range of assessment tools and provide useful feedback and feed forward for students and parents.

To further develop assessment against National Standards the school should:

- document procedures to guide overall teacher judgements
- continue to develop internal and external processes for moderating assessment decisions in reading, writing and mathematics
- clearly indicate achievement, in written reports to parents, relative to the appropriate standard
- report to trustees achievement information relative to National Standards for reading
- strengthen achievement targets to show how they relate to the National Standards.

Parents are well informed about their children's learning. Portfolios each half year effectively show learning across the curriculum for Years 1 to 8 students relative to age expectations. Next steps and how parents can assist learning at home is effectively communicated.

Informative secondary school reports include the level of development of desirable attitudinal traits, PACE completion and level of achievement and NCEA credits gained by level. Comments relate to English and a range of other school activities, including project-based

learning for students in Years 9 and 10. Regularly considering retention data and immediate outcomes for school leavers should support improved evaluation of the effectiveness of secondary programmes in providing positive individual student outcomes.

How well does the school promote Māori student success and success as Māori?

Assessment information collected by the school indicates Māori students achieve at similar levels to their peers and generally at least at nationally expected levels for their age.

Consideration of Ka Hikitia (Ministry of Education, Māori Education Strategy) has contributed to an increased awareness and reflection of te reo me ngā tikanga Māori and supporting success for Māori students.

The school has reported to its community on Māori achievement. Through continuing to consult with its Māori community, the school should develop plans and targets to further enhance Māori students' success. The school should also continue to develop its programmes and practices to promote awareness of New Zealand's dual cultural heritage.

### 3 Curriculum

How effectively does this school's curriculum promote and support student learning?

The recently developed Totara College Curriculum has established more coherent primary and secondary school programmes linked to ACE and the NZC. It is underpinned by NZC principles and supports students to develop the key competencies. The school's prioritised values are encouraged and modelled by adults and explored by students. School and NZC values are aligned.

Self-instructional units of work (PACEs) are targeted at each student's developing learning level. Progress is reliant on mastering each unit of work. PACE material is increasingly complemented by other resources to provide coverage of the NZC learning areas and flexibly respond to students' interests and individual needs.

The Totara College Curriculum outlines the scope of programme delivery at Years 1 to 13. In primary classes there is comprehensive coverage of the various learning areas, appropriately focused on literacy and mathematics. The junior secondary curriculum is still developing. The college should continue to review and develop the Year 9 and 10 curriculum to ensure it appropriately reflects the achievement objectives and expectations within the various learning areas of the NZC.

Recent programme development, including the introduction of project-based learning and the South Pacific Education Course (SPEC), extends curriculum in the secondary school. Students increasingly have opportunities to become inquiring learners. Regular monitoring and frequent career advice effectively support student programmes to be relevant to chosen pathways.

A very inclusive environment successfully supports special needs students to be part of the school. Involvement in work experience and life skills supports eventual transition into the community.

Teachers use a range of strategies to ensure sustained engagement and support student progress in both PACE and other curriculum work. For example:

- high expectations for students to be on task
- regular individual conferencing and goal setting
- well known routines that assist students to be self managing
- relevant activities, including using information and communication technologies, to enhance understanding.

Student abilities and needs are well known by teachers. Regular feedback on student work contributes to progress. Students feel safe and supported to learn and they are generally selfmanaging for sustained periods. They support and treat each other respectfully. Students indicate positive and supportive relationships with adults in the school.

Student involvement in leading their learning should be enhanced through providing increased opportunity to:

- self and peer assess achievement in relation to suitable criteria
- make judgements about their progress and determine next steps for learning.

## 4 Sustainable Performance

How well placed is the school to sustain and improve its performance?

Self review is used by the board and staff to investigate the effectiveness of some curriculum delivery in improving student engagement and achievement. The outcomes of review increasingly inform school decision making. School leaders should continue to develop robust review of the impact of actions to improve and support student achievement.

Board decision making focuses on improving student outcomes. Trustees inquire into the comprehensive student achievement information they receive. Resourcing decisions respond to reports on achievement. Trustees have accessed training to assist with understanding their role and developing strategic direction. Principal appraisal is rigorous, aligned to professional standards and focused on improvement.

The performance management system is effectively used to identify and address ongoing improvement in teaching practice. It includes individual teacher goals, teacher professional standards, self appraisal and feedback from classroom observations. The process is affirming but also improvement based.

Professional development matches identified priorities and targets improving teaching and learning. In 2011 the focus is on supporting teacher awareness and understanding of writing. Teachers collaboratively work with colleagues to share practices likely to improve outcomes for students. An emphasis on school wide professional learning contributes to shared understandings. Teachers increasingly inquire into their own practice. Reflections inform future planning and teaching and learning.

### Board assurance on legal requirements

Before the review, the board of trustees and principal of the school completed the ERO Board Assurance Statement and Self-Audit Checklists. In these documents they attested that they had taken all reasonable steps to meet their legislative obligations related to:

- board administration
- curriculum
- management of health, safety and welfare
- personnel management
- financial management
- asset management.



During the review, ERO checked the following items because they have a potentially high impact on student achievement:

- emotional safety of students (including prevention of bullying and sexual harassment)
- physical safety of students
- teacher registration
- stand-downs, suspensions, expulsions and exclusions
- attendance.

When is ERO likely to review the school again?

ERO is likely to carry out the next review in three years.

Kathleen Atkins  
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7 November 2011