Achieving is cooler than it was

ACHIEVEMENT IN MULTI-CULTURAL HIGH SCHOOLS

1998

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Achievement Initiative in Multicultural High Schools

AIMHI: December 1998

Eight decile one schools with high ratios of Pacific Island and Maori students have been part of a schooling improvement initiative with the Ministry of Education called AIMHI. This project was the first collective and pro-active schooling improvement initiative set up by the School Support Project of the Ministry of Education in 1995. AIMHI has the following goals –

- To increase the market share of students attending the participating schools

- To raise the levels of performance of the schools and students in the areas of

    - high student achievement

    - strong college governance and management

    - strong school/community relationships

    - integrated social services support policy

- To achieve sustainable self-managing schools

The research was set up as an independent, longitudinal, five-year evaluation of the AIMHI Project. Over the 1996 year the research tasks were to describe the baseline situation of the eight schools with the particular focus being on the factors that influence student achievement. At the end of the 1996 year a baseline research document was produced. As well as evaluating the outcomes of the project, a formative component began in 1997 and was continued into 1998. The researchers have given each school, the AIMHI Forum and the Ministry, ongoing oral and written feedback. This 1998 document is the mid-project evaluation report.

The Ministry had appointed a Project coordinator, and in 1996 a Steering Committee and two Reference Groups began to meet regularly. The Project did not get off to an easy start because the eight schools were not all initially involved in the main planning group. Even later, when all eight were, they felt the process was being controlled by the Ministry and was not meeting their needs. The Ministry was also establishing policy in this area and setting up appropriate systems and, at times, this development process impacted adversely on the AIMHI Project. At the end of 1996, a collective action plan was drawn up based on needs identified by the research. This was never actioned as such but was used as a blueprint by the individual schools and the Forum for future action plans and decision making.

Some important collective initiatives were taken during 1997. These included the development of valid attainment tests, a student assessment project, a Pacific Island community/parent liaison project and ongoing formative evaluation research.

The attainment tests have provided invaluable baseline data on student achievement on entry to secondary school. Testing is continuing annually and has been extended to year ten. The formative assessment project is well underway in all the schools and, in the classrooms where it is being implemented fully, there is clear evidence that students are taking more responsibility for their learning. As part of the Pacific Island Liaison Project, a valuable resource was produced, which schools are continuing to distribute and use with parents and families.

In the first half of 1997, the AIMHI Steering Committee was not functioning well and in August of that year the eight Principals negotiated with the Ministry to set up the independent AIMHI Forum. The Forum works in a partnership relationship with the Ministry. The Ministry was very supportive in reorganising the relationship and by the beginning of 1998, there was a new commitment to making the Project work. The Forum comprises the eight Principals, their Board Chairpersons and four Ministry personnel. The researchers attend and participate in the regular meetings.

The AIMHI Forum has developed a vision and an action plan. One of the collective goals is that all students in each of the schools will attain relevant school qualifications at a level consistent with national averages. This is a goal that has not been achieved anywhere in the world. National and international data show a direct and negative relationship between socio-economic status and student achievement in external exams.

As well as the collective initiatives, the eight schools each developed individual projects and programmes to implement as part of achieving the AIMHI goals. Three of the schools had their support delivered through Business Cases because they were regarded as being more seriously at risk. Frustrating delays in the formatting of, and approval for, the individual school plans meant that the five non-Business Case schools did not receive their 1997/1998 funding until August 1998. This means that most of the individual school developments could not begin until then and that there have been only three months of implementation of the AIMHI funded school developments for the researchers to include in this follow-up evaluation report.

These individual school developments have been reliant on the Project funds. They include literacy programmes, health provision, teacher professional development, specialist programmes to manage attendance, truancy and behavioural problems, community liaison programmes, school image building projects and provision of much needed facilities, resources and equipment. Early indicators are that some of these developments have great potential to meet student and parent needs.

These AIMHI funded initiatives, however, are by no means the only developments that have taken place in the schools. Some changes had begun, in three of the schools, as a result of requirements identified by critical ERO reports. As soon as the AIMHI research findings became available, all the schools began making a wide range of changes. These included changing the ways they were organised, dealing with personnel and teaching quality issues, beginning targeted programmes of professional development, initiating specific projects, increasing efforts to involve parents, improving induction programmes for year nine students, and initiating specific projects to deal with truancy, at risk behaviour, low literacy, health problems and poor metacognitive skills. These have been monitored and evaluated in an

ongoing way and the schools given feedback so they could make any modifications needed to make the developments successful. Early indications are that some of these developments appear to be meeting important student needs.

The goal of developing strong community relationships is one of the more difficult to achieve. It is also hard to measure outcomes. The schools have put enormous effort into finding more effective ways to inform parents and help them fulfil their role in their children's education. Involving Boards directly in the Forum and other AIMHI meetings has improved participation at that level. Some new community liaison initiatives look extremely positive but are in the very early stages of development.

Prior to 1996, several of the AIMHI schools had serious problems with leadership and governance. Significant progress has been made in the schools in terms of their ability to self-manage. Five out of the eight schools now have Principals who have been appointed since the Project began. New Boards were elected this year and are committed and, in the main, well organised. The very serious problems of teacher performance have mostly been addressed, although schools are still working on some concerns about teacher delivery.

The problems that five of the schools had with falling rolls have lessened for them all, in spite of several contributing intermediates, in one area, retaining their year nine and ten students. The rolls have either begun to increase, have stabilised, or the decline has been slowed considerably. There are no census data for this period available to indicate the extent to which this might merely be caused by demographics but Ministry school population trends indicate that secondary rolls have not been under pressure during this period.

It is too early in the development process to expect that national benchmark indicators will reflect the improvements that the schools have made to student learning opportunities. There are, however, both qualitative and quantitative data available in individual schools to demonstrate improvements. While there have been profound positive changes in the AIMHI schools over the last two years, the underlying difficulties that they are presented with on a daily basis, and over which they have no control, continue to affect learning opportunities and student underachievement. There are no indications that these external factors such as poverty, health, housing, employment, family circumstances and attitudes, and social welfare have in any way improved for the students at these schools.

Another external constraint for these secondary schools, over which they have no control, is being able to make up the deficit in attainment that their students arrive with, in time to be measured against national data through external qualifications. Three years is not adequate, given the learning and social needs of the students in these low decile schools, to cover five years of curriculum to the level at which students can compete nationally in School Certificate.

The fragmentation and isolation of the primary, intermediate, secondary, tertiary, and recently middle school sectors, creates a range of educational problems for children as they negotiate their way from one to another. They are like isolated educational islands with few bridges to aid student transition. The professionals at each level have an obligation to co-operate and co-ordinate in order to support

students at the transition points, whenever they occur, and to be knowledgeable about and supportive of the other sectors.

Assuming the new developments continue to deliver the benefits that the early evaluations indicate, these schools will make a significant difference to the wellbeing and achievement of their students. As mentioned previously, some of the developments have taken place without project funding. Some of the Business Case developments, on the other hand, have required significant injections of additional resources from the Ministry. In terms of meeting the identified needs of their students, the AIMHI schools are still severely limited by the funding, and therefore staffing, that is available to them. Many of the developments represent a prioritising and fiscal compromise. The challenge for the AIMHI Project, and for education policy makers, is how much difference these secondary schools are going to be able to make with the limitations imposed on them by those external factors. This raises the issue of the long-term sustainability of some of the developments that have been made possible only by the additional AIMHI Project funding. It also raises questions about the transferability of the benefits to other low decile schools that have the same needs but do not have access to project funds.

An enormous amount of goodwill, commitment and energy has gone into the development of the AIMHI Project by all parties involved. Irrespective of the earlier organisational difficulties, there is a lot of evidence that the schools, with the support of Ministry funding, are doing everything they can to improve the achievement outcomes of their students. There is also clear evidence that the AIMHI schools, both individually and collectively, are better equipped to meet the needs of their students than they were prior to the Project.

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Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

This is the second collective report written as part of the longitudinal AIMHI Project evaluation. The first was written at the end of 1996 and was a Baseline Study of the factors influencing student achievement and under-achievement in the eight decile one multicultural high schools. This report will focus on the AIMHI Project as an entity, and on the changes and progress made in the eight schools. Schools will not be named in this report because the success of the Project relies on a high level of trust and co-operation and comparisons between individual schools are not helpful.

1.1 HISTORY OF THE AIMHI PROJECT

Origins

The Achievement in Multicultural High Schools (AIMHI) Project was the first collective and pro-active project set up by the Ministry of Education as part of its schooling improvement policy. Its origins were in a strategic plan for Pacific Islands Education, 'Ko e Ako 'a e Kakai Pasifika', which was developed during 1994. One of the aims of the plan was to raise the achievement levels of Pacific Island students. The plan was officially launched in 1996.

The Ministry goals for AIMHI reflect another need that had been identified at the time and was an integral part of the development of the project. This was to change some 'failing' schools into effective self-managing schools and to achieve increasing rather than falling rolls[1]. This need is linked to the population bulge that is heading towards secondary schools. As well as meeting community education needs, it is good economic sense to fill the schools that have unfilled capacity, instead of building new ones.

At the end of 1995, before the end of Maris O'Rourke's term as Secretary for Education, the AIMHI initiative was launched. There was significant media coverage, which created very high hopes and expectations in the minds of many Pacific parents. The expectations related to the considerable resources that were being committed by the Ministry to improving achievement for Pacific children. These expectations were later fed back to the Pacific researchers, who were part of the AIMHI team, when they interviewed parents in 1996, and they have often been mentioned to the writers by trustees of the AIMHI schools.

The schools

Eight secondary schools were selected and invited to participate by the Ministry of Education. The participation criteria included being in the decile one[2] category and having a high proportion of Pacific Island students. Seven of the schools are located in Auckland and one is in Wellington.

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[1] This goal of increasing the school roll was later built into each school's Funding Provision Agreement.

[2] All New Zealand schools are ranked on a decile scale of one to ten. It is a measure of socio-economic position with decile one having the lowest status. Some school funding is allocated on the basis of decile ranking in an attempt to provide for equity.

Two of the Auckland schools were anxious about joining the Project as they felt their parents might associate them with failing schools. Principals, trustees and senior personnel in the other Auckland schools were annoyed that the Ministry had included these two schools as they are in direct competition[3] with them for local students. This was an issue frequently discussed at early meetings and during the researchers' interviews of the Principals.

Some of the Principals were anxious because they were cynical about the way they had been dealt with in the past by Ministry of Education personnel and were suspicious that this was *"just another self-help and self-improvement project disguised by a fancy name".* Their concern was that what they saw as the underlying causes of student underachievement, particularly issues related to poverty, would not be addressed because of the funding implications and that the schools would feel set up to fail because of this.

At that time, three of the schools had had very negative ERO[4] reports and had rapidly falling rolls. They were very fragile organisations and were wary of any publicity.

When the researchers began to work in the schools in 1996, it became clear that there was very little knowledge, and no ownership, of the Project by the teachers or the parents. Going through the processes involved with gaining informed consent for the research was probably one of the main ways that staff and parents began to understand the project. Even then, it was probably not until 1997 that people, other than the Principals and Trustees, came to really understand what it was about. By the end of 1998, however, most teachers were involved in one or more AIMHI projects in their school and were feeling positive about the school's involvement.

Aims

The agreed aims are to –

- help Pacific Island and Maori students to reach their potential

- ensure the schools have a strong future and are able to manage themselves

- increase the numbers of students attending some of these schools

Project Structure

The aim of the Ministry was for the project to be a partnership between the schools and the Ministry. The Ministry set up the organisation as follows:

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[3] Many students, parents and teachers gave examples of a student attempting to enrol at one of the favoured schools and having to accept their second choice.

[4] The Education Review Office is the Government department responsible for evaluating and reporting on education delivery in all schools.

- A part-time co-ordinator was appointed, as a Ministry employee, to oversee the day-to-day running of the project.

- A Steering Committee was formed and it comprised several Ministry officials, the Principals from two of the schools and a number of Pacific Island "representatives" of the Pacific communities. The Steering Committee met monthly over the 1996 year.

- Two Reference Groups were set up. One was in Wellington and one in Auckland. These groups were chaired by Ministry officials and comprised Ministry representatives, students and school staff, representatives of the Pacific communities, and representatives from local support agencies. The agencies invited included Children and Young Persons' Service, Income Support Service, Child and Adolescent Health Services, Pacific Island Affairs, Teacher Support Service and the Pacific Island Business Trust.

1996 Developments

The project got off to a slow and problematic start for a number of reasons.

- Only two of the eight schools were represented on the decision making body, the Steering Committee. This made it difficult for the two Principals, and impossible for the other six schools, to feel any ownership of the process. Part way through the year, it was agreed that all eight Principals would join the Steering Committee.

- Some of the schools were in direct competition with each other and there was a high level of suspicion and anger in one or two Principals. Their participation was patchy, and sometimes unhelpful, and made it very difficult for the co-ordinator and the other principals to agree on decisions.

- It became clear to the researchers, as they observed Steering Committee meetings, that the co-ordinator had divided loyalties. As an employee of the Ministry, the person in this role was required to carry out its wishes. At the same time the role required gaining the trust and co-operation of the eight Principals and their schools. Whenever the wishes or views of the Ministry and the schools differed, it put the co-ordinator in a very difficult position.

- As soon as the researchers began, they collected data on the ethnicity of the students in the eight schools. It was immediately clear that all the schools had significant numbers of Maori students, but Maori were not represented on any of the committees or in any of the initial consultation carried out to set up the Project. The Ministry and school Principals immediately agreed that the Project was for all the students in the schools but it was felt, because one of the Principals was Maori, that Maori were adequately represented. This Maori Principal left the school shortly after the Project began, so Maori representation was discussed at a number of meetings, but they were never represented regularly on any of the committees.

- Because this type of schooling improvement initiative was new, the Ministry was developing the processes for organising and resourcing such initiatives at the same time as the AIMHI Project was being established. Therefore, the way the AIMHI schools would operate together and receive alternative funding was unclear. Consequently, the Steering Committee meetings often became tense and decision-making was difficult. A number of potential 'providers' were invited to meetings to present their solutions but, very often, little action resulted. For a range of different reasons, members of the committee became increasingly frustrated.

- Several leadership changes took place in some of the schools. Three Principals went on sick leave or resigned and there were some changes in senior managers also. These changes were not coincidental. The spotlight was on the schools through the publicity generated by the ERO reports. The work of the researchers in the school also had an impact through their questions, requests for documents and feedback. In three of the schools, the Ministry was working to develop and implement a methodology for presenting Business Cases to Government. The leadership changes brought temporary acting leaders in and out of the Steering Committee and made the issue of continuity of information and decision making even more problematic. It also resulted in new leaders being appointed who had not been part of the decision to join AIMHI and, throughout the Project, the researchers had an important role in informing new people about the Project and its history. For example, when the researchers made appointments to brief new Principals on the research component, it became clear that they had no knowledge of the research and little, if any, knowledge of the history of the Project.

- The Pacific representatives were not connected to the schools in any way and some of them felt the schools were mostly, if not wholly, to blame for student underachievement. They also felt the schools were responsible for the parents not becoming involved. This made it difficult for group members to trust each other and work well together.

- Towards the end of 1996, the Principals were requested to develop a collective action plan for 1997. It was the Ministry's intention that this planning would coincide with the preparation of the Ministry's Budget proposals for the 1997/98 Budget, although this was not clear to the Steering Committee. The researchers had completed their data collection and were finalising the writing of the collective report. The Principals wanted to know the findings of the research before they decided on priorities and developed a plan. It was agreed by all that the researchers could present their findings orally and be available during the development of the plan to answer questions and have input. A plan was developed and sent to the Ministry. The schools were told that a Budget initiative had been prepared for consideration by Government in the 1997 budget round and that funding would come through to them, either collectively or individually.

  The Ministry did not accept the collective plan because of its resourcing, policy and precedent implications but some collective projects were initiated during 1997, prior to the 1997 Budget announcements.

The AIMHI group collaborated to apply for two contracts that had the potential to meet needs identified by the research. The funding for both of these projects was available from divisions of the Ministry other than the School Support Project. The first of these was a Pacific Islands Community Liaison project[5]. The Wellington school was part of a joint application with some other local secondary schools for the Feso'ota'iga Project. The seven Auckland schools were successful in receiving funding to employ a Pacific liaison worker who consulted with the Pacific community and used the research findings to produce a booklet for parents. This booklet explains what parents need to know about their child's secondary school and ways that they can help their child both at home and at school. It is available in English and all the main Pacific languages.

The second contract was a Ministry of Education development contract in Assessment for Better Learning (ABeL). This involved all eight schools and provided expert induction, ongoing facilitation and teacher release for the schools. The teachers of a year nine class of students worked with a model which articulated a process of assessment that included self and peer assessment, teacher assessment and feedback, criteria for assessment, exemplars, and parental involvement. This contract began in term three of 1997 but did not get underway in classrooms until term four. It was then extended for the 1998 year.

A third collective initiative was the development of measures of attainment which are valid for children in these decile one schools. With School Support Project resourcing, the AIMHI group commissioned the University of New South Wales to work with teachers from the Auckland AIMHI schools to develop tests of numeracy and literacy for entry to year nine. A follow-up measure was to be done at the end of year nine and again at the end of year ten.

The Ministry organised for a consultant to develop an information technology plan for each school and for each school to be connected to the Internet. Neither of these initiatives was effective at the time. None of the eight schools has used these IT plans, although most have since developed another one. The Internet connection was installed in different places in the schools but the goal of communicating with each other, and with the Ministry, did not become a reality. Comments made to the researchers made it clear that, because these initiatives were imposed on the schools, were not their priorities, and did not meet important needs at that time, the Principals did not encourage their implementation.

Project Difficulties

The group dynamics of the Steering Committee got progressively more difficult. Some individual members expressed views that demonstrated their cynicism and increasing doubts about the future of the Project. There was a lack of unity of

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[5]   These projects were funded by the Ministry of Education.

purpose or focus and discussions sometimes ended without progress having been made. The Principals became increasingly frustrated as the messages from the Ministry about funding became less and less clear. For their part, the Ministry was waiting for the government Budget to be announced. At the meetings and in interviews with the researchers the Principals often referred to the drawn-out nature of the process and the frequent changes that were made. They felt under pressure from their staffs who had been encouraged to plan for the developments, some of which depended on funding, and who were feeling increasingly unsure about the whether the plans would proceed. There were also confusing and negative messages from some of the Pacific representatives on the Steering Committee. School personnel felt blamed for the lack of student achievement and the lack of involvement of Pacific parents in the schools. The Pacific representatives, on the other hand, felt that the Project did not adequately take into account Pacific views.

Another frustration and concern related to the negotiation of a new research contract. This depended on the successful negotiation of the 1996 evaluation report, which took some time. In the meantime, the schools wanted the research to continue and, in order to accommodate this, the researchers continued to work without a contract or payment for the first half of 1997.

In August of 1997, as a result of the need identified by the research for leadership training, the Steering Committee approached Lion Nathan to arrange a leadership retreat for the eight Principals. At the retreat, they discussed their anger and frustration and used some of the time to develop strategies for the future of the AIMHI Project. They decided to ask the Ministry to establish a new partnership format. The changes they wanted included:

- The eight schools having collective control of the Project and the funding decisions (in partnership with the MOE) rather than the Ministry controlling the process

- No longer having a Ministry employee as co-ordinator

- Having a support/monitoring group that comprised people from their own school communities rather than Ministry-selected representatives

As a result of these discussions the Principals requested the Secretary for Education to set up a Forum that would provide them with the autonomy they wanted to run the Project. The Ministry was open to this negotiation and worked positively with the Principals to find a mutually acceptable format for the partnership. By the end of 1997, the Forum, funded by the Ministry, was officially a partner with the Ministry for the delivery of the AIMHI Project.

The AIMHI Forum

The Forum comprises the Principals of the eight schools, the Chairpersons of the Boards of Trustees and up to four Ministry of Education representatives. The agreement with the Ministry is for a two and a half-year period ending on 30 June 2000.

The Forum provides services to the AIMHI schools, and their communities, with the intention of making demonstrable improvements to –

- Student achievement

- School performance

- School/community relationships

Three Forum meetings are held each year and are attended by the Principals, Chairpersons and up to four representatives of the Ministry (one Pacific Island adviser, one Maori adviser, and two other persons, invited by the Ministry after consultation with the Forum). The researchers also attend and report to the group.

Between Forum meetings, the eight Principals meet monthly and the researchers and one Ministry official attend these meetings. A secretary has been appointed, paid for out of the Forum budget, from a budget agreed with the Ministry. This person is accountable to the Forum.

The formation of the Forum coincided with the appointment of new Principals to two of the schools. A third had recently joined the group. This brings the total of Principals appointed since the setting up of the Project to five out of the eight. These changes in personnel changed the dynamics of the group and occurred just when the Principals' group was forming a new cohesive approach to the Project. The new members had not been part of the past difficulties and found it easier to look ahead with positive expectations. A new spirit of determination and co-operation began to grow. This was helped significantly by two retreat days that the Principals arranged to develop their own AIMHI vision (see next section), to plan how they would work as a group and to decide how they would interact with the Ministry.

As well as the days for the Principals, a day was organised in which the senior staff members of the schools were informed about the history and achievements of AIMHI and were involved in setting priorities for future development.

As described above, there have been positive outcomes from the re-organisation of the structure of the AIMHI Project. School personnel feel more ownership of the Project and have worked to increase the involvement in AIMHI activities.
There have been two areas of difficulty. Some of the Pacific representatives, invited by the Ministry to be part of the original Steering Committee, were upset when the new organisational structure did not include them and they interpreted this as the schools not caring about their Pacific communities. This was not evidenced by the data collected from interviews with Principals, Board discussions or discussions at Principals' meetings. The schools wanted their own parents and caregivers[6] directly involved and part of the decision making, rather than individuals who did not have any personal involvement with the schools and who, in some instances, sent their children outside the community to be educated. Chairpersons became directly involved as Forum members. Whatever the understanding and feelings involved, the AIMHI Project and schools were, for some time, given bad press in parts of the

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[6] Most of who are Pacific Islanders.

Pacific community. This made the job of liaison with Pacific parents more difficult for a time.

The second difficulty arising from the re-organisation was that it happened at the stage when the Ministry was clarifying a format and process for the allocation and monitoring of the additional resources appropriated in the 1997 Government Budget. The time involved in legally setting up the Forum agreement also slowed down the process of approval of additional resources.

Forum Vision

The Forum vision was developed by the Principals at two retreats. It states:

Through a partnership between the AIMHI schools and the Ministry of Education the students in those schools will succeed by

- attaining relevant school qualifications at a level consistent with national averages

- going on to meaningful employment **OR**

- going on to further education or career training

- developing a sound work ethic and taking responsibility for their own learning

The AIMHI schools will be committed to:

Innovation and collective purpose

1. Be open to innovation and risk taking
2. Share expertise and resources
3. Share what they learn about student achievement

Research and evaluation

4.   Research what they need to know and evaluate what they do

Student achievement

5. Be active and credible sponsors of student learning

6. Be committed to robust monitoring and evaluation of student achievement

7.   Be committed to a common set of skills and abilities that form the core of student learning.

Professional standards and practices

8.   Have skilled and competent governance and effective, accountable managers.

Community partnerships

9.   Achieve community partnerships that are open, positive and productive.

MOE policy partnerships

10.   Co-operate to establish a well-resourced and productive relationship with the Ministry of Education and other agencies.

There are several aspects of this vision that are significant. The first statement was the most difficult to decide on. National and international data show a direct and negative relationship between socio-economic status and achievement through external measurements[7]. The Principals know this but they felt it was imperative for the sake of the students, their parents, the schools and the country to find ways to support the students to attain at a level consistent with national averages. At the same time, in their experience, this cannot be achieved without a commitment to a partnership, with the Ministry of Education (and other agencies), through which the schools are well resourced. This does not mean that the Principals thought that additional money alone was the answer to the difficulties they were experiencing. Data from interviews and discussions from meetings show that there has always been a willingness to seek solutions and trial developments that do not, necessarily, require funding. Some of the changes that have occurred began well before the schools received any project funding through AIMHI[8].

Through this vision, as well as a collective partnership with the Ministry, the eight schools are committing themselves to a partnership in which there is honesty, openness and sharing rather than competition and secrecy. They are also making a commitment to risk taking and innovation, backed by research and evaluation. Current conventional forms of delivery are not meeting student needs and some of

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[7]   There are examples in the literature of individual schools that 'beat the odds' but the overall data are consistent from country to country.
[8]   See Chapter 5.

the developments that are being trailled are quite different from past efforts. These include a new type of partnership with parents and caregivers[9].

The Principals' group has had difficulties from time to time. In September of 1998, the researchers gave the group some feedback about the way it was operating and some concerns they had. One problem was that different people from the schools were attending the meetings and there was a loss of information and continuity of decision-making. There were also problems with decisions not being clear enough or not specifying the actions to be taken. Some things were not being followed through. As a direct response to the researchers' feedback, the group changed some of its ways of operating. Discussions during meetings, comments by individual Principals and researcher observations showed that very speedy and significant progress was made over the last term of 1998.

The Forum has set up sub-committees to further specific developments in:

- Curriculum and Assessment
- Policy Development & Communications
- Community links
- Research & Evaluation
- Student Health & Welfare
- Teacher Effectiveness

It is too early at the time of writing to know how effective these will be.

Funding Issues

The School Support Project was an initiative that came from a new policy direction for the Ministry of Education. Previously the non-interventionist interpretation of Tomorrow's Schools legislation had stressed that all schools should be self-managing and that the Ministry should not intervene except to direct the appointment of a financial manager, to dissolve a Board of Trustees or to consult about possible closure of a school. Even when schools were showing signs of being at risk, intervention did not always take place. Since 1995, the School Support Project has developed a number of ways[10] to support schools at risk, depending on the types of risks identified and the level of severity. Because AIMHI was the first major schooling improvement project to be set up, it has been used to develop and trial many of the implementation processes. Interviews with senior staff in the schools and Ministry personnel, as well as ongoing observations in the schools, show that the greatest difficulties were related to the procedures for applying and getting approval for project funding. From the time the group began

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[9] See Chapter 5.
[10] The two main elements of the project are the individual 'safety nets' for schools at risk and the schooling improvement initiative. The latter provides pro-active ways for clusters of schools to work together with the intention of minimising the occurrence of individual school risk.

meeting until the funding was finally received, concerns and confusion about what was required became a major discussion topic at Principals' meetings.

Before funds could be released, new Government-agreed criteria, introduced in March 1997, required schools to clearly establish their needs and the Ministers of Education and Finance to 'sign off' all Funding Provision Agreements (FPAs)[11]. Other procedural changes were made as Ministry personnel worked with Treasury over several months to develop quality assurance systems to accompany the process. In the meantime, several format changes were made to the school performance plans. These format changes cost the Principals and other senior personnel many hours over an extended period. While it was critical to the sustainability of the School Support Project that rigorous processes be put in place for the release of project funds, the delays and changes were very frustrating for the schools.

Many of the projects planned were slowed down[12] or could not begin at all because people could not be employed and resources could not be purchased without the project resources. The funding for the mid-1997/mid-1998 period arrived two months after the funding period ended in August, 1998. This meant that monitoring and milestone report dates had expired or become invalid. Staff in the schools became very cynical and angry towards the Ministry, the AIMHI Project and their Principals for involving them in planning and restructuring without delivering what they expected in terms of project resources. By the end of 1998, this anger had subsided as the staff began to implement the projects and programmes. Early benefits are already evident, even though the delays and changes meant that some of the initiatives got off to a shaky start.

An ongoing challenge for all the parties in the project has been the difficulty in measuring and demonstrating changes in student achievement. The only national data are the external exam results and retention figures. The Funding Provision Agreements, however, required the establishment of agreed outcomes and performance indicators that could be measured. The process of developing a range of achievement outcomes, whilst also referring to examination results, was new to both the schools and the Ministry and extensive dialogue was required in order to get agreement. Initially some of the outcomes in the agreements were quite unrealistic. There were also philosophical and ethical issues for the schools to grapple with, particularly in relation to external examinations. For example, it would be easy for all of these schools to immediately increase their external exam results by simply allowing only students who will pass, to sit the exams.

Another related problem for the schools was the changes in Government policy priorities in education and changes in Government and Ministry personnel. In 1997 the schools were told that project funding would be made available. However, half

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[11] FPAs are written agreements drawn up between the Ministry of Education and each school. They set out the agreed goals, areas for development, specific strategies for each, a timeframe (milestone dates) and allocated funding. They are used for any proposal where the cost is more than 10% of a school's annual operating grant or $25,000. They are negotiated annually and are monitored and evaluated.

[12] Examples include the inability to begin a timetabled reading programme because the books could not be purchased, employment difficulties because of funding delays and holdups in implementing professional development programmes.

of the amount available had to be spent on information and communications technology (ICT). This had not been identified as a need by either the research or the schools. The schools were not unhappy at spending money on IT because they were all struggling to find funds for this purpose. Consequently, they worked with the Ministry to develop ICT proposals but when these were submitted to Ministry and Treasury's quality assurance process, the use of project funding for this purpose was challenged[13]. Feedback to the researchers showed that the Principals felt as though they were being made to feel guilty for something that was not their idea in the first place. During the subsequent negotiations, it was agreed that the additional resources would be used to 'kick start' the schools' ICT strategies, on the proviso that they work with the Ministry advisor for ICT to support the ongoing implementation of the plans, and take responsibility for the costs associated with the ongoing purchasing of capital assets.

Perhaps the most problematic challenge, from the schools' point of view, concerned three of the schools who had funds in reserve accounts. The concerns related to ensuring that the three schools were using their current operations grants effectively and to determining whether they should use their reserve funds to support their AIMHI performance plans. Treasury officials were unhappy that these schools should receive any funding until they had used their reserve accounts. These accounts existed prior to the schools being invited to be part of AIMHI and are the means by which they compensate for their inability to collect donations from parents. It was very difficult for the schools to be put in this position at such a late stage of planning and for the group to be divided, once again, over some schools getting more funds than others[14]. Ministry personnel worked very hard to clarify the schools' financial positions and to justify their need for additional resources. Eventually, project funding for all five remaining schools was released.

Other Related Initiatives

When AIMHI was set up in 1995 it was the first of the Schooling Improvement initiatives. Since that time many developments have occurred within the School Support Project itself as well as other collective initiatives that have impacted on AIMHI.

Business Case schools

Shortly after the group began working together, and as it was developing an understanding of what could be done as a collective and what needed to be done as individual schools, the Ministry began developing a Business Case for three of the schools most at risk. A separate needs analysis was conducted and an individual Business Case prepared that aimed to resolve the issues particular to each school. The proposals were accepted and they were set up with Funding Provision Agreements (FPAs) over a three-year period. They each began receiving funding through these agreements in 1997.

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[13] AIMHI Principals' Meeting Minutes, 3 September 1998.
[14] Previously three became Business Case schools and they received millions of dollars each, in contrast to the other five schools which received hundreds.

This was a complication for the AIMHI Project in several ways. The Ministry's position is that equity is not about giving all schools the same and that, based on need, different schools will require different levels of additional funding. The Ministry believed that the three Business Case schools had particular issues to resolve that could not be addressed without access to additional funding. However, these decisions made it more difficult for the group to feel supportive of each other, when some members were receiving significantly higher levels of resourcing than others. This issue has been raised on many occasions, both individually by Principals with the researchers, and at Principal and Forum meetings. Two Principals suggested that it might be better to get yourself a series of bad ERO reports as a means of getting the financial support you need, than to work conscientiously and effectively.

It also made it difficult for the eight schools to decide how to allocate the AIMHI funding when three of the eight were getting significant extra amounts[15]. This was raised as an issue at several group meetings before it was finally discussed and resolved. While the group has worked its way through the immediate issues, there are still have unresolved concerns about equity for some of the schools.

Mangere and Otara

The Education Review Office wrote a report in August of 1996 on schooling in Mangere and Otara and made a series of recommendations about what needed to happen for the schools in this area[16]. As a result, the Ministry set up a Schooling Improvement initiative specifically for all the schools in this area. The initiative is called 'Strengthening Education in Mangere and Otara' (SEMO). The complication for the AIMHI schools was that four of the eight schools are located in either Mangere or Otara. In addition, another secondary school in the area, whose decile ranking had just changed, specifically requested to be allowed to join the AIMHI initiative rather than participate in SEMO. Following discussions with the SEMO team and the AIMHI Forum, it was agreed that not only would the four schools remain with AIMHI, but the additional school would also join the AIMHI Project. Links between the two initiatives are maintained through the attendance of the SEMO coordinator as one of the Ministry's representatives at the AIMHI Forum meetings.

Another aspect of the Mangere/Otara initiative was concerned with resolving the difficulties resulting from intermediate schools in Otara applying to change their status to middle schools. Some were retaining their year nine and ten students, even though they had not been given approval for the change. As a result, the schooling community has become one in which distrust, rumours, anger, frustration and confusion abound. Competition and competitive marketing strategies[17] have reached new heights as schools try to enrol and retain students. A year-long moratorium was placed on all changes to school status in the area. The Ministry commissioned a review of the situation and a report was published in March 1998. The Ministry has set up a group of Chairpersons of the 18 Otara schools to make a

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[15] Targeted to identified projects.
[16] Education Review Office (1996). **Improving Schooling in Mangere and Otara**. Wellington: Education Review Office.
[17] The researchers collected examples of school advertising and enrolment incentives.

recommendation to the Minister on the future plan for schooling in the area. This process involves two of the AIMHI schools and requires further evaluation by ERO to establish the quality of education provision in the local area.

Figure 1:   Project overlaps

The following picture emerges for the schools in the AIMHI Project:

School A, B and C: AIMHI

School D: AIMHI
                            School Support Cluster initiative[18]

School E: AIMHI
                            SEMO

School F: AIMHI
                            SEMO
                            Business Case

Schools G and H: AIMHI
                            SEMO
                            Otara Plan (part of SEMO)
                            Business Case

Each of the initiatives has its own demands. They have all involved many meetings, most involve planning and negotiation, and some involve extensive documentation and evaluation. At this point in time, the eight schools have worked their way through the challenges of all the initiatives and any confusion created by the overlaps. It has been a difficult process and there are still inequities, described earlier, which inevitably become an issue when, for instance, funding applications are challenged.

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[18] An initiative that involves eight schools that are geographically clustered.

1.2 HISTORY OF THE RESEARCH

Baseline data on achievement

The data collection began in May of 1996 in the eight AIMHI schools. The methodology is fully explained in the 1996 report[19]. A report was written which identified the factors that influence achievement, and underachievement, of the students in these schools. The schools used the research findings to develop their strategies for improving the educational performance of their students and their schools.

Groups and individuals received the findings of the report very differently. They were received extremely favourably by most school personnel[20], who felt both affirmed by being understood and, at the same time, weighed down by the implications. The report was challenged by some Ministry personnel, because they felt the researchers had exceeded their brief in discussing Government policies in areas other than education, such as health and social welfare, that impact on student achievement. Initially some members of the Pacific Islands communities also felt very uncomfortable with some of the messages about their communities. On the other hand, there were many Pacific people who said the report was correct and it was time that such issues were out in the open for discussion.

From the early days there was a great deal of interest in the research findings and the researchers have tried to find ways to get the results to relevant people in usable ways. Conference papers and workshops, talks to relevant groups, liaison with other low decile groups of schools and printed articles are some of the ways that have been used. The Ministry has provided, at no charge, many hundreds of copies of the report to people who have requested it.

As the weeks, months and years have passed, school personnel have continued to use the research findings in a wide range of ways. The findings have formed the basis of an information booklet for Pacific Island parents, the foundation of the AIMHI vision and planning, the formulation of the SEMO planning and the basis of a wide range of school initiatives.

The baseline description can be used, in an ongoing way, to measure and document progress in the project and in the individual schools. The researchers have given ongoing feedback on developments to the Ministry and the Forum.

Formative evaluation

This part of the research role has become increasingly important as the schools make changes and initiate new programmes. The researchers have combined the need to collect evaluative data with the need for the schools to have feedback at early stages of the development process.

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[19] Hawk, K. and Hill, J. (1996). **Towards Making Achieving Cool: Achievement in multi cultural high schools**. Wellington: Ministry of Education.

[20] The researchers held briefings for senior management teams and Boards and staff meetings for teachers. Time was allowed for questions and feedback.

Sometimes the feedback has been very positive and has affirmed the process. This has been reassuring and very motivating for the people involved. At other times the researchers have collected data that identified problems and have been able to feed this back immediately. There have been many instances when programmes have been re-directed or salvaged as a result of the feedback. Examples include a Tu Tangata initiative, the functioning of a guidance team, two student leadership initiatives, a technology development programme, two community liaison projects, a discipline and behaviour management system and specialist academies. Over the 1997/1998 years the researchers have worked with the schools to help them collect their own data. There have been times, however, when it has been the safe ear of an independent researcher that has enabled critical information to be made available.

Another dimension of the ongoing formative process has been giving feedback to Ministry personnel, to the AIMHI Forum and to the Principals' group. This has given the groups opportunities for each to reflect on its own role and performance as well as understanding the perceptions of the others. While it has not always been comfortable for the parties to receive the feedback, there have been a number of positive interventions and changes in practice that have occurred as a result.

Accountability evaluations

The ongoing evaluation of the AIMHI programme and process has required the researchers to attend all key events and meetings as well as monitor the in-school developments.

A new requirement was negotiated when the Funding Provision Agreements (FPAs) had been finalised. The Ministry of Education and Treasury required that Ministry of Education officials monitor the FPAs twice yearly and that an independent qualitative evaluation be carried out on an annual basis. The AIMHI schools requested, and the Ministry agreed, that ERDC conduct the qualitative evaluations and reporting. The three Business Case school evaluations were completed mid-1998 and the five non-Business Case evaluations at the end of this year. These were not part of the AIMHI research contract and were commissioned separately.

Evaluation overkill

Since the beginning of the AIMHI Project, and because of the implementation of the extra projects and ERO reviews described in the earlier part of this section, some of the schools have felt heavily over-reviewed and over-evaluated. This feedback was passed on to the Ministry early in 1998 and was discussed in relation to the AIMHI research requirements. The reality has not changed for these schools; some of which will also have full ERO reviews next year as well as all the individual project evaluations.

Future AIMHI Research

When the AIMHI Project was set up in 1995, the research team was requested to plan for a five-year evaluation programme to accompany it. The methodologies developed and the reporting process were designed around this five-year timeframe. This report is the second collective evaluation report and should be read in conjunction with the 1996 baseline report[21].

School and Ministry personnel commented on the importance of the formative feedback for their project development and requested that this be continued. At the same time, there have been ongoing efforts to encourage the schools to become self-reviewing organisations and the research programme has supported the development of their skills in the collection and use of data.

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[21] Hawk, K. and Hill, J. (1996). **Towards Making Achieving Cool: Achievement in multi cultural high schools**. Wellington: Ministry of Education.

Chapter Two

METHODOLOGY

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the methodology used in the second phase of the project covering the period 1997 and 1998. It provides an updated description of the sample, explains the details of the research design, discusses issues relating to reliability and validity and outlines the key ethical issues that needed to be resolved as the study progressed.

2.2 THE SAMPLE

The eight schools that comprised the study schools in 1996 have all remained in the AIMHI Project. As described in the introduction, they are all decile one secondary schools with very high percentages of Pacific and Maori students. One of the schools is in the Wellington area and the other seven are located in South Auckland. All are state co-educational schools except for one integrated Catholic girls' school.

Two of the schools have had maximum rolls from the outset of the Project. In 1996, the rolls of the other six schools were not full, not growing, and, in most cases, falling. At this point, two now have stable rolls, two have experienced a small increase and one is estimating a 20% increase in its Year 9 intake. The sixth school is anticipating a stable roll but is more vulnerable to public perception, at this point, than any of the others. For two of the schools, the retention of Year 9 and 10 students at local intermediate schools is making it more difficult for them to maintain or increase their rolls.

In 1998, one of the schools became part of a campus consisting of a primary school (years 1-6), a middle school (years 7-9), a senior school (years 10-13) and a Kura. Data are now being collected from all four sites. However, the data from the campus incorporated into this report were collected from the senior school, the Kura and from the year 9 students, their teachers and the senior staff at the middle school.

Since the Project began in 1996, five of the schools have appointed new Principals. All of them are first-time Principals and all but one had previously taught in low decile schools.

2.3 THE RESEARCH TEAM

In 1996, the research team comprised the two researchers from ERDC[22], who conducted the in-school data collection, and a community research team of three Pacific researchers and one Maori researcher, who undertook the task of collecting data from the parents. In this 1997/1998 phase, there has been no community data collection. Most of the funding for AIMHI Projects was not received until mid-August of this year, too late to measure parent perceptions of the benefits of the initiatives

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[22] ERDC was the Educational Research and Development Centre. It has now been restructured to become IPDER, the Institute for Professional Development and Educational Research.

that have resulted. Instead, it is planned that data be collected from parents in term one of 1999 and, again, in term one of the year 2000.

The research for this middle phase of the Project (1997,1998) was carried out by the two ERDC researchers and focussed on in-school data collection and monitoring the progress of the Project. From the beginning of the Project, each researcher has worked in four out of the eight schools. All other Project meetings and events have been attended by at least one, and usually both, of the researchers.

2.4   THE RESEARCH DESIGN

Aims of the research

The goal of this phase of the research was to evaluate the progress made by the schools in achieving the project aims to:

> ➢ increase the market share of students attending the participating schools

> ➢ raise the levels of performance of the schools and students in the areas of high student achievement; strong governance and management; strong school and community relationships; and integrated social services support policy

> ➢ achieve sustainable self-management in each of the schools

The specific aims of the research were to:

> ➢ monitor and evaluate the implementation of the AIMHI Project

> ➢ formatively evaluate the change process in the schools and provide the schools with ongoing feedback

> ➢ assist the schools to set up effective data collection systems that meet the needs of the evaluation as well as the Funding Provision Agreements (FPAs)

> ➢ review the key issues, concerns and needs identified in 1996 report in order to evaluate the progress of the schools and the AIMHI Project

Methodological approach

The methodological basis for the research design is a combination of formative evaluation, process evaluation and outcome evaluation. These are defined in Benseman et al (1996)[23] as follows –

➢ **Formative evaluation**: The collection and feedback of information relevant to programme planning and operation, for use in developing and improving the programme as it is designed and developed. Conducted during the 'forming' of a programme (especially with new or trial programmes), the main intention of formative evaluation is to ensure that it is as successful as possible by evaluating its progress while it is still being developed, rather than waiting until its completion. Formative evaluation includes needs assessments, specification of overall goals and specific programme objectives, development of performance indicators, literature searches, testing programme materials, piloting of strategies and assessing short-term impacts.

➢ **Process evaluation**: Providing clear information of what the programme consisted of in practice and answering the questions of how and why a programme produced the results it did. It includes documenting details of what was done in the programme (especially in relation to what was planned), and how it was perceived by those involved or affected by the programme and what resources were required to implement it.

➢ **Outcome evaluation**: The assessment of programme effects, allowing judgement on whether the programme objectives have been achieved. Outcome evaluation includes the collection of baseline data, developing outcome indicators of programme effectiveness and success and the collection and interpretation of the outcome data.

As a key purpose of the AIMHI Project is to assist the schools to improve student achievement, it was important that the research methodology be designed to assist them to do that. To this end, as well as evaluating project outcomes, the evaluation has been formative in nature. This aspect of the research has occurred in a number of ways:

➢ The researchers met frequently and exchanged information, asked questions and challenged their own and each other's data. As new issues emerged, they would be discussed and the researchers would go back into the schools to collect more data.

➢ The schools were given informal feedback during or after all visits to the schools. This took place through talking to the Principals, members of the senior management team, teachers, students and/or trustees.

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[23] Benseman, J., Findsen, B. and Scott, M. (eds) (1996). **The Fourth Sector: Adult and Community Education in Aotearoa/New Zealand**. Palmerston North : The Dunmore Press.

➤ Feedback was also given to the schools in a number of formal settings such as management team and staff meetings and at meetings of the Boards of Trustees.

➤ The researchers also attended the 1997 Steering Committee and Reference Group meetings. In 1998, they attended the Principals' meetings and retreats and the Forum meetings. At the meetings, the researchers gave verbal and/or written reports and these often included feedback on developments in the schools or on the Project process itself. At the retreats, the researchers were used, when necessary, as sources of research information to inform decision making and to help plan for the future.

➤ Almost every month, the researchers met, or held a teleconference, with Ministry of Education Research and School Support personnel. This provided an opportunity for an update of progress being made by the two groups and for an exchange of feedback.

The research design is primarily qualitative. While a number of quantitative data collection systems were set up in the schools[24], to monitor particular issues or programmes, and Ministry and AIMHI achievement data are being closely monitored, the researchers are using qualitative data gathering techniques to collect most of their own data. This provides an opportunity to gain detailed, 'thick' descriptions and in-depth understandings of participants' experiences and perceptions. The researchers are also collecting quantitative data on such things as roll changes, national benchmark indicators[25], ethnicity of students and the numbers, recruitment and retention of staff and Trustees.

Data collection

A number of data collection tools were used over the two years. These consisted primarily of individual face-to-face or telephone interviews, group discussions, analysis of documents, analysis of the schools' own data gathering information and attendance at a range of Project and school meetings and events. The researchers spent many days at all the schools over the two years and comprehensive field notes were taken from formal and informal situations as observations were made in classrooms, in the playground and generally around the school.

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[24] One of the research tasks was for the schools to set up their own data collection systems, with the assistance of the researchers. The purpose was to support them in carrying out their own monitoring and evaluation. A more detailed description of this process is included in the section on individual school data collection on p.24.

[25] The Ministry of Education collates data on schools and once a year each school receives a copy of its benchmark indicators that compare its data against those of schools of the same type and against schools of the same decile. The data include roll numbers, funding, staffing, land value, student achievement in external exams, student retention and student/teacher ratios.

Individual interviews

Members of the senior management teams (27), teachers (326 in total), and support and specialist staff (40) were interviewed over the two years. Almost all were interviewed, most were interviewed twice, and some were interviewed on many occasions, especially if they were responsible for a particular area or programme being evaluated. The Principals were interviewed on many occasions over the two years. Board Chairpersons were interviewed several times, as were some individual trustees.

Most interviews were conducted face-to-face in the schools although, from time to time, telephone interviews were organised, more often with Principals than with other participants. The duration of the interviews varied from half an hour to two hours, depending on the areas of responsibility the person had in the school. The interviews were either semi-structured or unstructured. Both researchers are extremely experienced qualitative interviewers with forty collective years of practice in this specialist field of research.

The content of each interview varied depending on its focus at the time. When specific projects/programmes were being evaluated, the questions related to the particular aspects of the programme and the people involved (there are examples of interview guidelines in Appendix B). When a Funding Provision Agreement was being evaluated, the questions followed the categories stipulated in the Agreement document. Interviews for the purpose of evaluating the AIMHI Project, and to collect the data for this 1996 report, were wide ranging and covered the same areas articulated in the research questions for the 1996 baseline report (Appendix C).

Group discussions

Students participated in small group discussions. The size of the groups varied but ranged from three to eight. Most groups comprised five or six students. They were selected across all year levels but usually each group comprised age peers. Some groups were of boys or girls only and some were groups of both genders. Each discussion lasted a school period i.e. between forty-five minutes and an hour. Approximately one hundred students from each school were involved in the group discussions in each of the two years (1600 students in total).

Some groups were selected for a special purpose, for example, if they were involved in a new school initiative or a particular AIMHI programme or were part of a year group where a particular issue was being followed up, such as the transition of year 9 students to secondary school. Some were selected to provide control and experimental groups so that comparisons could be made. As with the interviews, the content of each discussion was tailored to meet the evaluation focus at that time. When any programme or project was being evaluated, care was taken to ensure that the perspectives of the students involved were heard, as well as those of the teachers. Some discussions included general exploration of wider issues such as the current school climate, school reputation, school discipline and student needs.

The researchers attended four Board meetings at each school over the two years. As well as observing the meeting process, the researchers had discussion time to

both inform trustees about the ongoing research and to discuss their roles and perspectives. Field notes were kept.

As in the collection of the baseline data, the researchers did not attempt to tape record the interviews or the group discussions. The primary reasons for this were the large size of the sample and the fact that funding was not available for very time-consuming and therefore expensive transcriptions. The researchers took notes throughout the discussions and added detail immediately following the discussions.

Document analysis

A wide range of documents was analysed by the researchers over the two years. Some were documents specifically requested from each school by the researchers. These included such documents as lists of staff and trustees, the July 1 roll returns, staff handbooks, school prospectuses, school newsletters and Board of Trustees meeting minutes, school meeting minutes, ERO Reports, accreditation documents and policies, procedure and planning documents. Some documents were collected that specifically related to special school initiatives. Some of these were directly related to the AIMHI Project or the FPAs, others were a result of individual school developments.

Individual school data collection

One of the research tasks was to assist the schools to set up effective data collection systems that would help them become self-reviewing organisations and which could also be used for the general evaluation process and the monitoring of individual FPAs. In the last term of 1997, the researchers worked with individual staff who were responsible for particular areas or programmes, to review current data collection systems and then to either fine-tune the current process or set up new systems. After decisions had been made about what data would be collected, how, who would collect it, and when, the schools undertook to get the individual systems up and running. The researchers compiled an overview of all the systems each school had set up and these were typed up and sent back to them so they could be used to monitor progress (Appendix D).

For a number of reasons, some of the data gathering in some schools was not done or was not maintained. Factors that contributed to the data not being collected as planned included:

➢ changes in school personnel and not handing the data collection task on to the new person

➢ computers crashing and data being lost, with no back up.

➢ a change in data collection processes (such as manual to computer) and the nature of the data collected changing as a result, so that it is no longer comparable to that collected as a baseline

➢

➢ individuals not doing what they agreed to do, for a range of reasons

➤ installation of computer programmes taking a great deal longer than predicted

➤ data being kept manually and not being analysed because of lack of time or skills

➤ the extent to which people value data in decision making.

The schools in which the Principal took a personal interest in the data collection and those that appointed a senior staff member to oversee the process, or provided additional support staff hours for data entry and analysis, met with greater success.

In addition, data were collected for specific projects or developments using questionnaires and other data collection schedules. Sometimes these were school initiatives and sometimes they were developed by outside organisations or researchers. The AIMHI researchers were able to use these data. Examples can be found in Appendices D and E.

Observations and informal data gathering

As mentioned earlier, the researchers attended all of the Steering Committee and Reference Groups' meetings in 1997 and in 1998 have been at all the monthly meetings of the Principals, at the Principal retreat days and the Forum meetings. They have also spent many days in the schools over the two years where they have been able to attend school meetings and events, observe classrooms in action, spend time in the staff rooms and the playgrounds and sit alongside teachers and students. Collectively the researchers recorded over 230 school visits in the 1997/8 years. There were many other contacts made at other venues and by phone and fax. Both the project meetings and the in-school work have been important opportunities to gather additional data in the form of field notes. Two Board of Trustees' meetings were attended at each school in each of the two years.

'Successful Practice' meetings

One of the 1998 research tasks was to share the strategies each has found successful amongst the eight schools. The AIMHI Community Liaison worker was given a similar task and, after negotiations with Ministry personnel, it was decided that this would become a joint task and would involve school staffs more directly. A staff meeting was held in each school, facilitated by the researchers. Staff worked in groups to record successful school-wide and then departmental or faculty practices. They then worked to record successful individual practices. (See Appendix G for a sample of the forms used). These data are being drafted into a handbook for teachers and will be available in 1999.

2.5   DATA ANALYSIS

The data have been analysed in an ongoing way throughout the two years. Summaries of notes were made after each period of time spent in the schools. Each aspect of the summaries was dated and references made to their source. These were then used for a variety of purposes such as providing feedback to individuals and groups within each school, reporting to the MOE, reporting to the Steering Committee and later the Forum and monthly reporting to the Principals' meetings. The same process was followed for topics arising out of the Project process.

The summaries were then sorted into a number of folders that were set up for each school, each holding information relating to a particular topic e.g. Health, Achievement, Tutor Groups. As the research progressed, other relevant documentation was added to the folders and as new issues emerged, new folders were set up. From time to time and for the preparation of this report, the contents of all the folders relating to a particular topic, and common to all or some of the schools, were photocopied then sorted and organised into sub-topics. The photocopying allowed for the summarised data pertaining to each school to remain intact for further use with each of the schools.

2.6   VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

The researchers have now been working in the schools for two and a half years. They know the schools, and the people who work in them, very well. This gives them special insights and a level of understanding that could not be gleaned by a researcher who was new to any of the schools. It also has the potential to compromise objectivity. This has been addressed in a number of ways. Firstly, the formative nature of the research has meant that they were constantly reviewing the data with the participants and seeking verification of information. Also, with two researchers working in four schools each, there were constant opportunities for them to make comparisons and to interrogate and verify the data. All reports are sent out in draft form for comments and changes are made when necessary. Data do not allow the researchers to alter everything that is requested but they have willingly altered any inaccuracies or added omitted material.

As described in the first report, although the schools are very different from each other in many ways, the issues, experiences, feelings, opinions and interpretations are very consistent across the eight schools irrespective of location (Auckland and Wellington), researcher, and the gender, age and ethnicity of the participants. This has continued to reassure the researchers and give them confidence in comparing and contrasting the developments that have occurred over the two years. The large sample size also increased the validity and reliability of the data by giving very many opportunities to verify information across a wide range of respondents.

An eclectic range of data gathering methods and strategies was used and included interviews, group discussions, document analysis and observations. The researchers also had access to other independent reports such as ERO reports, the Mangere/Otara reports, and other evaluations of AIMHI or individual school

projects[26]. Though not consistently successful across all the schools, the data-gathering systems set up by individual schools were also useful sources of information and provided yet another opportunity to triangulate the researchers' own data.

A valuable situation, from a research perspective, is that each of the eight schools has had autonomy over its decision making and therefore has carried out developments in its own way. This has enabled the researchers to compare and contrast the processes as well as the outcomes and much valuable learning has resulted. For example[27], two of the schools implemented the same programme for students at risk. One school selected only students identified by the programme testing as belonging to the at risk group. The other school chose students in the moderately at risk category. The effectiveness of the programme, overall, was different for the two groups and identified some important considerations regarding the selection of students for the programme and how the programme might need to be modified to accommodate those students who are seriously at risk.

In another example[28], two schools implemented a daily, sustained silent reading programme but used two very different systems for ensuring students had reading material. One has worked well, the other has not and student and staff attitudes have been less positive as a result. Had the researchers not had this comparison, it would have been possible to conclude that it was the programme that was not working, rather than the system of supplying literature.

2.7   THE ADVISORY GROUP

An advisory group was established at the outset of the study and although the membership has changed slightly over the two and a half years, the group has continued to meet bi-annually. Currently the group comprises a Samoan ex-secondary school Principal, two Massey University lecturers with wide experience and expertise in the methodological approach being used, two representatives of the Research Division of the Ministry and the Manager of the Ministry School Support Project. They have challenged, critiqued and provided the researchers with invaluable support and guidance. Minutes have been kept of each meeting.

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[26] Examples include: an independent evaluation of one school's assessment practices; an audit of the equipment and environment of each classroom in two schools; the commissioning of independent reviews of teachers and departmental performance in two schools; an independent report on bullying in two schools; and reports on student smoking habits in two schools.
[27] This is discussed fully in 5.12.
[28] This is discussed fully in 5.7.

2.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

One of the important ethical issues was the degree of honesty and directness the researchers used in giving feedback to the schools and the Ministry. The Ministry and the researchers were committed to ensuring all stakeholders received feedback. From the researchers' point of view, it was essential that the feedback empower the people involved rather than disempower them. The issue was what sensitive data to feedback, how explicit to be, and whether to do it orally or in writing. It is our experience, through this project, that people who seem receptive to challenging feedback when it is given orally, sometimes become very defensive if it is put in writing.

After the 1996 report was written, both before and after its release to the public, there were many instances when the researchers were accused of being too negative, too damning and of implicating others in ways that "*would upset them and not be helpful*". Even though none of these criticisms came from the schools, it highlighted the very sensitive nature of some of the data being collected. There have been many times over the last two years when the researchers have debated amongst themselves and sought advice from their Advisory Group, and sometimes Ministry personnel, about what feedback is given to which stakeholders, and how and when it is delivered. Although some individuals have had difficulty accepting feedback and have felt challenged by it, the researchers are constantly being told that getting ongoing feedback is one of the most valuable aspects of the research and that it has prompted some major shifts in some of the schools. The honesty and directness of that feedback, which has sometimes   involved identifying and describing major problems, has been critical to the data being used successfully.

The 'Successful Practice' meetings also presented the researchers with some ethical difficulties. At the suggestion of the researchers, the decision was made to make the data collection for this exercise an opportunity for the schools to celebrate good practice in their schools. Meetings were held in each school to gather the data and, overall, it proved to be a very positive and morale-boosting exercise for many of the teachers. Because the ideas are to put into a booklet and shared amongst the eight schools and possibly with schools outside the AIMHI Project, it became critical that the information be correct. The dilemmas were: whether to include examples considered successful by teachers but deemed unsuccessful by the researchers; how to overcome the virtually impossible task of verifying the countless individual examples collected.   On the advice of the Advisory Group, the researchers decided to use the research data to make judgements about whether or not to include each of the examples given. This feedback was given to the writer of the handbook. Also, in the chapter on individual practices, it will be made clear that many of examples have not have been independently researched and that the measure of each success is based on teacher opinion and self-evaluation.

Even though many people in the schools are now very familiar with AIMHI, gaining informed consent and engaging people in the formative relationship remains an ongoing issue for the researchers. Over half the Principals are new, many new teachers have been appointed, some new Trustees were elected to Boards in April of this year and since the research began, two new intakes of Year 9 students have entered the schools.

Because of the large numbers involved (approximately 4500 families/whanau), there is also a problem in gaining the informed consent of parents and caregivers for their children to participate, especially those in the junior classes. At the beginning of the study, letters were sent out in all the main languages to every parent and they were given the opportunity to withdraw their child's name from those being included in the group discussions. Only one parent requested such a withdrawal but the researchers were very aware that not all parents or students would fully understand the research process. This exercise has not been repeated. Now that more of the schools are using AIMHI funding to post their newsletters home, the schools and the researchers have an ideal vehicle for keeping parents more informed about the research process and for gaining ongoing informed consent.

Great care is still taken by the researchers to explain the relevant parts and purpose of the research and to seek the respondents' permission to take part. This happens at the beginning of every interview or group discussion, and always with new staff and trustees and with every group of students.

Chapter Three

ACHIEVEMENT

3.1   INTRODUCTION

Since 1996, little has changed for many of the students or the schools in terms of quantitative, measurable achievement. The exception to this is the unit standards programmes that have expanded in all the schools. However, the external examinations and academic subjects are still seen as very important to many of the senior students. This chapter outlines the current issues in relation to senior achievement, discusses the national qualifications benchmark indicators for the eight schools and draws comparisons with the other decile one secondary schools across the country. Comment is also made on developments in achievement in relation to junior students.

3.2   SENIOR ACHIEVEMENT

Despite the increasing number of unit standards being offered in a growing number of subjects by the AIMHI schools and more students gaining credits on the Qualifications Framework, School Certificate and Bursary remain the most highly regarded measures of achievement for many of the teachers, students and parents in these schools. They continue to be the key indicators used by the Ministry to measure secondary school achievement outcomes[29] and, in the public's mind, they remain symbols of academic rigour.

In recent weeks, the decision regarding the future of the external examination system and unit standards was made public. From 2001, a new qualifications system will enable students to gain a National Certificate of Achievement. The currency for the Certificate will be credits awarded in the form of unit standards (for non-conventional subjects) and achievement standards (for conventional subjects). The Achievement 2001 pamphlet[30] states that credits towards the Certificate will come from:

➢   Internal assessment using achievement standards

➢   Assessment using unit standards

➢   External assessment (including examinations) using achievement standards

Ministry information available to the researchers suggests that there will be no differentiation between the unit and achievement standards and that gaining a level 2 or 3 credit in a non-traditional area, for example, will be just as demanding and rigorous as that in a traditional subject.

At this stage, the AIMHI teachers still fear that the externally assessed components will remain the most desirable and 'high-stakes' aspects of the new Certificate.

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[29] The Ministry provides each school with data that compares their School Certificate and Bursary results with the national and same-decile results. Summaries are also published annually in Education Statistics and the School Sector Report.

[30] Ministry of Education (1998). **Achievement 2001**. Wellington: Ministry of Education. This pamphlet accompanied the launch of the new qualifications system and outlines the policy in very broad terms.

They also anticipate that, if they offer non-conventional or vocational subjects, their schools will be classified as second-rate and the students who achieve in them will be rewarded with what will be regarded as a second-rate qualification. Teachers in these schools reported being wary of what appears to them to be a dual system of unit standards (for *"qualifications developed by industry and other national standards bodies"*[31]) and achievement standards (for *"school curriculum subjects"*[32]). They want all achievements acknowledged equally. Ministry personnel have stated that they believe the new system has the potential to do this.

In the meantime, the schools have continued to develop more programmes that allow students to achieve unit standards programmes. These programmes cover a wide range of subjects, including the more conventional subjects such as English, the Social Sciences, Economics and Science. Some schools have also used AIMHI or Business Case funds to purchase additional programmes from outside providers. It has not been easy for the researchers to get up-to-date and accurate data or an analysis of the students' achievements in unit standards. The task of collecting and collating the data is ongoing and teachers each have their own methods of keeping track of credit components as they are accumulated by the students. As yet, very few of the eight schools have perfected a standardised school-wide system that all teachers follow and almost all of the schools are still aggregating their data manually.

Overall, feedback from all of the eight schools about the unit standards system is encouraging. Teachers and students report that there are a number of ways in which unit standards contribute significantly to helping students learn. Firstly, learning is broken down into small units of work that are more manageable and help to keep students focussed. Assessment is ongoing and so provides the students with regular feedback. The baseline report documented that it is not uncommon for students to 'drop out' of a subject altogether rather than to risk failure. Re-sitting and re-submitting gives students more than one chance to demonstrate what they know and this eliminates that fear of failure. Students who, in the past, would have left school without achieving any success are now collecting credits towards a nationally recognised qualification and this highlights the advantages of cumulative, standards-based assessment over one-off examinations that have served these students so badly in the past[33].

As well as the added workload, there have been many practical difficulties associated with the new framework that teachers have had to work through or learn to live with. The greatest of these were problems with moderators and moderation and having to manage a dual system of assessment. Many of the students are only just beginning to understand how the unit standards system works. Many of them struggle to keep track of the total number of components they have achieved towards a credit and to keep a record of the total number of credits they have passed. Even when the teachers have encouraged students to keep their own records by providing them with a form, students have not always kept them up-to-

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[31] Ministry of Education (1998). **Achievement 2001**. Wellington: Ministry of Education.
[32] ibid
[33] Hawk, K. and Hill, J (1996). **Towards Making Achieving Cool: Achievement in multi cultural high schools**. Wellington: Ministry of Education.

date. Other difficulties for students include the exactness required to pass a credit component and what they see as the inequitable workloads in gaining credits in the different subjects.

3.3   ANALYSIS OF KEY ACHIEVEMENT INDICATORS

The data for the table that follows are taken from the Ministry of Education benchmark indicators which have been published each year since 1996.   These data represent the only achievement measures collected from secondary schools. These data are percentages of students who were graded B or higher in both school Certificate and Bursary; percentages of students who leave year 13 with a qualification and those who leave, regardless of the year level, with no qualification.

The first table provides the data, in each of the categories described above, for each of the AIMHI schools for the years 1996 and 1997.

Table 1: **Achievement data for the eight schools** (taken from the Ministry Benchmark Indicators)

School	SC: Papers graded B or higher		UB: Papers graded B or higher		School leavers: with year 13 qualification		School leavers with no qualification	
	1996	1997	1996	1997	1996	1997	1996	1997
*	3.8	6.0	5.3	-	6.9	9.9	82.1	90.1
*	6.5	10.5	9.9	8.4	12.1	15.7	44.2	29.3
*	12.8	8.2	11.8	14.6	27.2	30.8	8.0	1.5
*	8.0	7.6	14.9	11.7	30.8	28.3	24.1	18.3
*	5.6	6.7	8.8	10.9	30.3	39.0	25.8	23.4
*	9.1	1.6	13.7	9.8	11.9	22.2	51.2	33.3
*	5.9	5.6	-	-	7.4	12.3	56.6	12.3
*	1.7	2.0	1.1	2.5	17.6	16.3	59.3	51.3
Decile 1 avge	11.0	10.7	15.8	13.5	16.4	22.7	42.7	34.9

In 1997, four out of the eight schools improved the percentage of students graded B or higher in SC, even though some of the changes are very slight, when compared with the figures of the previous year. Four schools also improved their Bursary percentage although it is important to remember that the sample size is very small in most of the schools. Two schools improved both their SC and Bursary results, using 'graded B or higher' as a benchmark. The two schools with the highest percentages of students graded B or higher in both SC and Bursary are the schools with highest rolls. These schools have more choice over which students are enrolled at the school and also have higher percentages of Asian and Pakeha students. Collated achievement data from the AIMHI schools as measured by the Progressive Achievement Tests (PATs)[34] and AIMHI/New South Wales (NSW) tests

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[34] These tests are used by many schools across the country to measure student achievement in Reading comprehension, vocabulary and Mathematics.

provide evidence that the students from these two schools arrive at year 9 with higher levels of achievement than students from other AIMHI schools[35]. Only one school, in one year, achieved above the average for all decile 1 schools in School Certificate. In Bursary, no school achieved above the decile 1 average.

In 1997, seven out of the eight schools had more students leave in year 13 with a qualification, than in 1996, even though, once again, some of the changes are slight. In both years, four of the eight AIMHI schools have had a higher percentage of students leaving with a year 13 qualification compared with the average for all decile 1 secondary schools, even though the average for all the decile 1 schools increased somewhat. Three were the same schools in both years. Seven out of the eight had fewer students leave with no qualification than in 1996, with some substantial reductions in the percentages in at least three of the schools. In 1996, five of the schools achieved higher percentages of students leaving with no qualifications when compared with the average for all decile 1 schools. This was reduced to two schools in 1997, demonstrating a significant improvement in this area for the AIMHI schools.

There is a wide range between the schools in both external examinations and school leaver data. The discrepancy is more pronounced in the two school leaver categories and is particularly so in the data related to school leavers with no qualification (1996: 8%-82%; 1997: 1.5%-90.1%).

A member of the researchers' Advisory Group is investigating the validity of presenting the data as medians rather than means which, in light of the sample sizes, may prove to be a more valid measure.

It is important to remember that the AIMHI Project has been operating for only two years and when students sat the 1996 examinations, AIMHI had only just begun. Even though many new initiatives have been undertaken by the schools since that time, it will take more than two years for the impact to be measured more accurately, especially as many of the new programmes are concentrated in the junior area of the schools.

3.4   JUNIOR ACHIEVEMENT

The initial research documented the schools' dissatisfaction with the Progressive Achievement Tests (PATs). It was clear that, because of their low content and construct validity for AIMHI students, the schools needed to establish their own tests to measure the entry levels of their year 9 students. They also needed to be able to accurately measure the value added at the end of year 9 and again at the end of year 10.
Throughout 1997, teachers from each of the schools worked in collaboration with the Educational Testing Centre at the University of New South Wales in Sydney to prepare three tests in English, Writing and Mathematics. At the beginning of 1998, year 9 students at all eight schools sat the three tests. The face, content and construct validity of all the tests was high and the students were very positive about

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[35] Harker, R. (1999). **AIMHI Project: Report on prior attainment in AIMHI schools**. Massey University: Palmerston North.

using them. When the first test results were received, school personnel felt the achievement descriptors had been set at levels which presented a profile that was too positive. These descriptors were altered for the baseline tests, and subsequent tests, in order to present a more accurate profile. Schools received marks for each student and an overall analysis of their students' performance in each area of the tests eg number, algebra, graphs. Each student received their marks and an individual analysis of what they needed to work on. Results for the November parallel tests are not yet available. Next year, tests will be prepared to measure the value added over the Year 10 year.

Students in seven of the schools sat both the PAT and AIMHI/NSW tests in 1998. The schools then commissioned Professor Richard Harker from Massey University to ascertain the correlation between the two sets of tests. Preliminary results show a high level of correlation[36] and, in spite of the teething problems, school personnel are optimistic that the new assessment tools will be more valid and, therefore, more valuable than the PATs as measures of what these particular students know. So far, the trialing indicates that they will also provide more relevant and accessible diagnostic information for teachers and a measure of the value added over years 9 and 10.

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[36] Harker, R. (1999). **AIMHI Project: Report on prior attainment in AIMHI schools**. Massey University: Palmerston North.

Chapter Four

EXTERNAL INFLUENCES

4.1 INTRODUCTION

There are a number of policies, agencies and community realities which impact directly on the functioning of the schools and both directly and indirectly on student achievement. In order to improve learning opportunities for students, the schools find themselves having to attempt to deal with these factors in some way, even though they have little or no control over them. These were described in detail in the 1996 report. This detail will not be repeated in this report, although much of it still applies. This chapter will update some of the changes that have occurred over the two-year period from the end of 1996 until the end of 1998.

4.2 POVERTY

The schools could provide no evidence that this has in any way decreased for the families of the students. School accounts and feedback from teachers and students demonstrate that it is as difficult as ever for the schools to get school donations and exam fees paid and to fundraise, even for curriculum-related trips.

If any change has occurred, the general media-generated data suggest that the situation is even more difficult because of the impact of the Asian crisis on the New Zealand economy. Redundancies and unemployment have both increased.   Public awareness of poverty seems to be greater than in 1996. The New Zealand Herald ran a series of articles on the effects of poverty. The Paul Holmes show has had a similar series.   The Anglican Church, with the co-operation of other Churches, organised the Hikoi of Hope to highlight the issue of poverty.

The Salvation Army has data for the Wellington area, where one of the AIMHI schools is located, on the rise in the numbers of food parcels distributed. Over an eighteen-month period (1988-1989) they went from 1500 to 20,000 and have remained close to this level since. The rise corresponded with a reduction in the benefits and the introduction of market rentals for state houses. Most of the AIMHI schools are surrounded by empty state houses but the recent report on housing in New Zealand[37] indicated that there is an increasing trend for low socio-economic families to spend about 50% of the family income on housing. The United Nations guidelines specify 25% as reasonable. One of the reasons the student population in these schools is so transient is that the families are often not able to afford their own housing and whole families, or individuals, move from relative to relative in an effort to survive.

The difficulties for the students, their families and the low decile schools remain. While not all the schools involved in School Support programmes are at risk, the majority of those that are at risk[38] are low decile schools. For a number of them, this support has come after they have become sufficiently at risk to qualify for support.

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[37] Published by the Department of Statistics in 1998 but based on the 1996 census data.
[38] 60% of the schools in the School Support Project are in the bottom three deciles.

4.3   HEALTH

Since 1996 the Government has introduced free doctors' visits for children under six. While this may have a positive long-term effect, it has not impacted on the AIMHI schools at this point in time.

Three of the AIMHI schools have employed a nurse out of their operational funding with some recent help from the AIMHI funding. One still has a nurse funded by a short-term contract with the local Health Authority. The schools have done their best to improve the clinic facilities and the nurses are building up student profiles and collecting data on the nature of the visits.

Two of the schools have rheumatic fever clinics (sore throat clinics) so students can be tested and given regular injections. In this 1998 year there have been two outbreaks of TB which have directly involved children and staff in two of these schools.

Teachers and health staff reported that issues relating to students' diets and eating habits remain the same, as do the problems caused by part-time work and lack of sleep. Data from interviews and observation of students supports this view. The AIMHI booklet for parents[39], published in all the Pacific languages, has a section on how parents can help their children and it addresses these issues but it is too early in the dissemination process to measure any impact it might have in this area. Some early feedback indicates that parents have concerns about these issues and often address them with their young children but do not know how to set boundaries with their teenage children and have them respected.

Teachers and students reported that smoking is still a major issue in all the schools. The students indicated that their siblings are beginning to smoke at even younger ages than they did themselves. One school has data from a confidential survey organised by the student council which shows that 51% of junior smokers started before attending secondary school compared to 33% of the senior student smokers.

Another school took part in a national survey on smoking in 1992 and again in 1997. The survey was conducted by Action on Smoking in Health (ASH) and 168 year 10 students (approximately 14 years old) took part. The following data apply to the AIMHI school involved.

Table 2:   Smoking Patterns in 14 year olds in one school 1992 and 1997

	1992	1997
All smokers `	28%	45%
Daily smokers	12%	24%
Buy own cigarettes	11%	15%

The increases demonstrated by both these sets of figures are alarming and illustrate the difficulties the schools are having in maintaining standards and enforcing rules.

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[39] The Partnership Between Your Family and Your Secondary School (1998). Wellington, Learning Media.

The issues raised in our 1996 report about iron levels have been substantiated by a number of investigations and reports since that time. The Auckland Starship Hospital published figures which were almost identical to those from the Porirua area and a South Auckland study published data for Maori and Pacific children.

Since 1996, interview and observation data suggest that the general behaviour of students in some of the schools has improved. The Schools also reported that substance abuse is not occurring during school hours to the extent that it was previously. Some students acknowledged, however, that it is still a regular part of their lives outside school and a normal part of the lives of some of their families.

4.4   GOVERNMENT POLICIES

Many of the outcomes of previous policies of Governments, as outlined in the 1996 report, are still having a very direct impact on the AIMHI schools and the children in them. This chapter will discuss some recent policy changes and their influence.

Funding for equity and special programmes

Targeted Funding for Educational Achievement

The Targeted Funding for Educational Achievement (TFEA)[40] funding formula has not changed in the last two years for the schools. Some individual schools have had a change in their decile ranking but this has not altered their TFEA funding allocation in any way. The only way decile ranking has affected the AIMHI schools has been to make one more school eligible to join the project.

Special Education 2000

The main focus of this programme is on children with special educational needs but there is also provision for the management of children with social and behaviour problems. Some staffing funding is available to geographic clusters of schools across the country for the appointment of Resource Teachers of Learning and Behaviour (RTLBs). Each cluster can decide how it wants to use the allocated staffing resource and appoint accordingly. This gives the schools more flexibility and more freedom than they had in the past and has been generally well received. RTLB support will be available to schools from the beginning of 1999.

There are three of the AIMHI schools which have been badly affected by the new provisions for the children with more serious intellectual and learning handicaps. These schools have well-established special units that would have had to close under the new policy because not enough of the students in the units qualify for the new ORS[41] funding to provide the current staffing levels. The schools have been given one year of temporary bridging finance to maintain the units but the dilemma

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[40]   This funding is given to lower decile schools to support the provision of equitable achievement outcomes for students.

[41]   Ongoing Resourcing Scheme.

will represent in twelve months' time. In the meantime they are required to consult with the parents as to their wishes.

Truancy initiatives

Truancy has always been a serious problem for the AIMHI schools along with the closely associated problems of wagging[42] and lateness. The Government provided truancy schemes but the schools report that these do not get close to meeting their needs. The truancy officers do not have the time available to deal with the great majority of truants and tend to get only a small number of the most difficult cases referred to them. Even then, senior staff reported that the schools do not have their needs met. There is often a lack of feedback and liaison which makes it difficult for the school personnel to re-integrate students. The overall message from these schools is that they need their own on-site truancy personnel. Some of the AIMHI initiatives have been set up to trial programmes that meet this need.

English as a Second Language (ESOL)

Funding is available for some staffing to meet the needs of children for whom English is a second language. As identified in the 1996 report, the level of formal language that students in the AIMHI schools have is problematic and affects every area of their learning. In the view of senior and specialist staff in the schools, the ESOL funding that is available does not meet the needs of the majority of the children. Some of the schools have focussed on literacy as a major development area but the extra funds have been essential to their being able to implement the necessary strategies.

Social Workers in Schools

One school successfully negotiated to have a CYPS-accredited[43] social worker based at the school during 1998. Feedback from the students and staff about the accessibility, proactive approach and follow-up provided by the social worker was very positive. In 1998 the Government announced that it would provide fourteen social workers to work in schools. The AIMHI schools were very excited at the prospect of having another identified need met and were very disappointed to learn that they have all gone to clusters of primary schools. To date, there have been no indications that the position funded in one of the schools in 1998 will be carried over into 1999. The ongoing needs of these schools in this area have yet to be met.

Dezoning

The very recent Education Amendment Bill has introduced some new requirements of schools, and of the Secretary for Education. These are designed to ensure that a child can enrol at its local school. It is not clear at this early stage what impact this will have on schools in general, or on the AIMHI schools, but it appears unlikely to assist them in any way. The local children can already get into the AIMHI schools and this amendment will not help them to get into other schools. This suggests a

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[42] Wagging refers to the selective missing of school periods during the day.
[43] CYPS is an acronym for the government agency, Children and Young Persons Service.

neutral outcome. It will not reverse the very serious situation created when de-zoning occurred.

School competitiveness

The Government policies which espouse individuals having a choice in their school have resulted in schools doing the choosing rather than the students or their families. Several New Zealand studies have demonstrated this (Ainsworth: 1994; Hughes and Lauder et al: 1996; Lauder and Hughes et al: 1999[44]). It is also demonstrated in the Auckland AIMHI schools where there is still a parent preference order that places two of the schools at an advantage. The advantage is having enough applicants to have a full roll and having the more able students make the effort to apply out of zone. These two schools do not aggressively market their schools or actively encourage children to come from other areas. Nevertheless they do take students from the traditional areas of other AIMHI schools. The cycle becomes self-fulfilling because the entry levels of achievement[45] of the students arriving at the two more preferred schools are higher than those at any of the other six schools.

The situation described in the 1996 report, where primary schools were recapitating and intermediate schools were becoming middle schools by retaining year nine and ten students, is still a major threat to the viability of two of the secondary schools. Even though the applications of two of the intermediates were put on hold, pending the development of a schooling plan for the area, they were able to legally retain these students by becoming an "attached unit" to another school. A Schooling Improvement initiative (in addition to AIMHI) has just prevented this scenario from occurring in a third AIMHI school.

The Otara area has been put under further threat by a Howick school which is sending in buses every day to transport children out of the area. The irony is that it has now created a falling roll in one of the Otara schools that previously caused the falling rolls in the local secondary schools. The reason the Howick school is bussing in the children, at significant expense, is that a new intermediate was built in their traditional zone. The new school took many of their students and they had to take from other schools in order to maintain their roll. The domino game is one in which one school takes from another school to survive but, in the process, they create a new problem for that school which then takes from another, and so on. The new dimension to this domino effect is that a more affluent school, adversely affected by the Ministry's programme of building new schools in Auckland, had the resources to

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[44] Ainsworth, V. (1994). **Tomorrow's Schools and Freedom of Choice: A recipe for disaster: A study of the effects of roll changes on Christchurch state schools**. Christchurch: University of Canterbury.
  Hughes, D., Lauder, H., Watson, S., Hamlin, J., and Simiyu, I. (1996). **Markets in Education: Testing the polarisation thesis**. Wellington: Ministry of Education.
  Lauder, H. and Hughes, D., Watson, S., Waslander, S., Thrupp, M., Strathdee, R., Simiyu, I., Dupuis, A., McGlinn, J., and Hamlin, J. (1999). **Trading in Futures: Why markets in education don't work**. Philadelphia: Open University Press.
[45] As measured by PATs and the newly developed AIMHI/NSW tests of literacy and numeracy (see Chapter Three)

travel right outside its local area to entice and collect children from a less affluent area.

There are other concerns about the school building programme. Because of the predicted increase in the Auckland population, the Ministry is encouraging schools to enlarge and to put more buildings on site. This expansion has become the only way that most schools can upgrade their facilities. This has two detrimental outcomes for the AIMHI schools, more particularly those that are non-Business Case schools. Because they are not in a position of roll growth, they are not regarded as a priority for upgrading. Their current buildings are steadily becoming more and more worn and less and less attractive. In contrast, neighbouring schools are willing to increase their rolls and are getting attractive new facilities. This encourages local children to go **out** of the area for their schooling.

Another significant outcome of school competitiveness reported by the schools, is an increase in the money being spent on marketing and promotional materials and activities. Several of the AIMHI schools have produced very high quality and expensive newsletters, prospectuses, posters and other up-market image creating documents. Early indications are that these have made a difference to the way the schools are perceived by parents. They have also helped engender student pride in their school. Some principals have expressed concern at the need to prioritise money in this way. While they recognise the need to market the school, they would prefer to spend the money on programmes designed to improve student achievement.

Teacher recruitment

For the majority of schools, teacher recruitment is not such a serious issue as it was two years ago. Nonetheless, it remains a problem for most of the AIMHI schools. Some Principals cited figures that demonstrate that many of the applicants for teachers' positions in their schools are immigrants whose English is not clear enough for them to be considered. Because every teacher in these multicultural schools needs to be a teacher of language, it is not possible to consider their expertise in other areas simply because of their pronunciation. Sometimes the schools have had no choice but to employ them.

Middle management and Principal positions have been the hardest to fill. One problem in the recruitment of a Principal is that the roll size determines the salary. Most applicants for Principal positions are deputy-principals. One of the schools had to advertise twice before an appointment was made. Some of the applicants had never held a management position. Although there were very competent DPs interested in the position, many would have had to take salary decreases if they had been successful in securing the job. Another deterrent was the unstable educational situation created by some schools going ahead with status changes whether or not the Ministry declines their applications. In terms of roll numbers, this makes the viability of the school a risk that some applicants are not willing to take.

Some of the schools have chosen to appoint long-term relieving Heads of Departments or Faculties rather than appoint from the current pool of applicants.

Technology

The implementation of both the technology curriculum and information and communications technology has been a problem for these schools because of the expense of the equipment necessary for programme delivery and because of a lack of funds and an inability to fundraise effectively. Partnerships with industry have brought other advantages but they have not been the answer to getting extra funding or equipment. Some 'kick start' AIMHI funding has given them all a much-valued contribution to help ensure that these students have access to at least some of the equipment provided for their peers in higher decile schools, both at home and at school.

Qualifications

The long awaited decision about the future of the qualifications framework has been received with apprehension by most AIMHI staff, and with quite a high level of confusion and anxiety by many senior students[46].

Their greatest fears relate to the status of the external examinations, especially those in year 11. As documented in detail in the 1996 report[47], the effect of an external exam in their third year of secondary schooling is seriously detrimental to these schools and to their students. Parents see the exam as a key aspiration for their children and the main measure of the success of a school. Both students and schools usually fail on this measure because the students arrive, on entry to year nine, about two or more years behind the average student in literacy and numeracy. It is then impossible for the schools to help students catch up to the level required to pass the exams in the three years available. Although detail on the new system still unclear at this stage, it appears that it could offer positive alternatives for these students. Data from the schools suggest that they are not yet convinced.

Most of the AIMHI schools made an early start to trialling and adopting unit standards in a wide range of subjects. Even two years ago the feedback from the teachers and students was, in the main, tentatively positive. Feedback now is even more positive. Some students who have never experienced success before are collecting credits towards a nationally recognised qualification. They find that breaking down the process of learning and evaluation into smaller packages helps to remove the fear of failure. So, also, does the knowledge that one can resubmit and/or re-sit parts of the learning. The anxiety for these schools is that this process, which has provided new opportunities to achieve, appears to have been relegated to "unconventional" subjects only. This will stigmatise these subject choices as second rate, as it will the reputations of the schools that offer them.

4.5   EDUCATION REVIEW OFFICE

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[46] See 3.2.
[47] Hawk, K. and Hill, J. (1996). **Towards Making Achieving Cool: Achievement in multi-cultural high schools**. Wellington: Ministry of Education.

After the seriously detrimental effects of the publicity of ERO reviews on several of the AIMHI schools[48], it was a relief when they were able to get on with making changes and not have the old problems publicly revisited. It was not long, however, before the Review Office published their report on Mangere and Otara (1996) and all the negative feelings and bad press began all over again.

In the second half of this 1998 year, the Review Office briefly re-visited the Mangere and Otara schools to provide follow-up reports to those completed in 1997. These were not full reviews and the individual school reports reflected the superficiality of the visits. Several of the schools needed to ask for many changes before they were accurate and school personnel were unimpressed by the process. Because significant progress had been made in these schools, the reports did not contain negative messages. At the time of writing this report, the ERO report on the schools has been released. It is school holidays, so it will be next year before the impact on the schools will become evident. The TV item[49] presented a negative impression of most schools in the two areas.

Two of the schools have had full reviews. Staff said that they found being part of the AIMHI Project and having the research reports and data-collection processes in place, meant that they had the documents and information to hand to give to ERO. This assisted with the process and the outcomes of the review. They also commented that, because their programmes are continuously being evaluated by the researcher, there were no unknown problems they were not already fully aware of and already addressing.

Overall, school staff felt that the reviewers were much more willing to listen than they had been in the past. They also felt that they were more aware of, and empathetic towards, the difficulties that low decile schools experience.

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[48] Hawk, K. and Hill, J. (1996). **Toward Making Achieving Cool: Achieving in multi-cultural high schools**. Ministry of Education.
[49] Channel 1 news programme , 6pm , 21 December 1998.

4.6   AGENCIES

The difficulties that these schools have in accessing the help they need from the various agencies were discussed in detail in the 1996 report. If anything, these problems are even more severe now than they were two years ago. Senior staff report that the schools' inability to get support from the Children and Young Persons Service (CYPS) is a particular ongoing difficulty and source of frustration. Situations that school staff consider to be very serious are often not seen to be serious enough by CYPS staff to get any support at all. Specialist and senior staff spend precious hours in their attempts to get the appropriate help. More often than before, the schools try to deal with the problems themselves because they are unable to access help and resent the wasted time and energy spent in the attempts.

Principals, other senior staff and guidance counsellors reported that it is almost impossible to get any of the support agencies to co-ordinate services or even communicate with each other. School personnel frequently find themselves playing this co-ordinating role.

Some of the AIMHI initiatives, such as the tutor group programmes and the community liaison schemes, are attempting to find ways to work in a preventative and pro-active way with children and families in order to prevent some of the situations arising that later require agency intervention.

A notable exception to the comments above was the service provided by the Health Authority when the TB outbreaks occurred. The schools were used as the main site for the testing and much of the treatment.

It is interesting to note that one of the main reasons the Ministry set up the two Reference Groups[50] was to keep the various agencies aware of the needs of the schools and to enable them to liaise to provide support. Although some of the representatives said they would discuss ways in which they could help, the schools and the researchers have been unable to find any evidence of action that resulted from these meetings. Nor has the AIMHI Forum convened any combined meetings of the agencies.

4.7   RESOURCES AND EQUIPMENT

The support the schools have had from the School Support Project, through the AIMHI Project and the Business Cases, has provided some of the schools with equipment and resources that they would otherwise not have been able to afford. This has been a great morale booster for teachers, who are able to provide a better teaching programme as a result.

These schools are no more able than previously to get school donations from parents or to fundraise effectively and so the gap remains between what these schools can provide and their higher decile counterparts. The advantage the higher decile schools have is that their parent donations are set and recovered at a higher

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[50] The educational policies continue to present ongoing threats to the viability of these Reference Groups which have not operated since the setting up of the AIMHI Forum.

rate. The AIMHI funding per student ranges from $118 to $455 and is for a finite period.

Teachers and students reported that many of the children in the AIMHI schools do not have access in their homes to computers, cameras, videos, musical instruments, sports equipment, facsimiles or art equipment. Many do not even have access to a phone, newspaper or books. If they are not able to access these things at school, this is a vital part of life skills and learning that they will have missed out on.

4.8 CONCLUSION

Most of the policy changes over the last two years have not advantaged the AIMHI schools or the children in them. The notable exception is the acknowledgement by the Ministry, through the School Support Project, of the particular needs of the low decile schools. Approximately 60% of the "at risk" schools in the 'safety net' component of the School Support Project are low decile schools. Proactive Schooling Improvement initiatives may prevent this figure from being so high in the future. The concern remains that current policy and practice in the areas of health, housing, welfare and employment still mean that the children present at schools with a wide range of problems. The decile one schools are not resourced or staffed to address many of these problems and they remain serious impediments to achievement. Some educational policies continue to present ongoing threats to the viability of these schools and to the ability of their students to achieve.

Chapter Five

SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT

5.1   INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the wide range of developments that the eight AIMHI schools have undertaken in response to the special needs of their students, staff, trustees and parents that were documented in the 1996 research report.

Many of the changes described have been initiated by the schools themselves and have not required any additional Ministry funding. A few, such as ABeL[51] and the Community Liaison Project, are separate Ministry contracts won by the AIMHI Forum but which are not funded by the School Support Project. Some of the changes have been made as a result of Business Case funding that three of the schools have had access to since mid-1997. It is important to remember that the other five schools did not receive any funding to support their particular AIMHI initiatives until mid-August of this year. Many of these programmes did not get under way until the start of Term 4 and, although the initial data are already signalling some important benefits, it is too early to make comprehensive or long-term claims.

It is also important to recognise that the issues raised in the initial report about the influence of school practices on student achievement have not changed[52]. This chapter needs to be considered in the context of those issues.

5.2   TYPES OF PROGRAMMES

At Steering Committee and Forum meetings the Principals agreed that they would use the needs identified by the research, and prioritised in the 1996 AIMHI collective plan, as the foundation of school projects. Each individual non-Business Case school then undertook a process of staff consultation to decide on priorities for development. Existing programmes and facilities were taken into account as were the funding limits of the Project.

The three Business Case schools achieved their prioritisation of needs through analyses undertaken by Price Waterhouse.

The draft Funding Provision Agreements for all eight schools were discussed and agreed to at Forum meetings prior to their being sent to the Ministry and Treasury.

The following table summarises the types of programmes that the five non-Business Case schools have provided through the Funding Provision Agreements.

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[51] ABeL stands for Assessment for Better Learning. It is a generic title given to a number of professional development contracts in assessment that have operated for schools over the last five years. The Ministry has funded them all.

[52] Hawk, K. and Hill, J. (1996). **Towards Making Achievement Cool : Achievement in multi cultural high schools**. Wellington: Ministry of Education.

Table 3   Types of programmes provided through the FPAs[53]

Type of project	No. of projects	Total cost	% of total Budget
Attendance: projects to do with tracking/following up on truants, support programmes for returning truants.	7	169,000	37
Better teaching programmes: projects to provide more focussed curricula, mostly aimed at literacy and LTL	5	109,000	24
Better learning: projects for improved motivation and study	4	51,000	11
Health	1	20,000	4
Community: better relationships, public relations, liaison staff	6	107,000	24
Information Technology: there was also a one-off grant for Information Technology. This grant, of $500,000 was split between all eight schools.			

5.3 LEADERSHIP

Two of the schools appointed new Principals just prior to AIMHI beginning and since then, five of the eight schools have made new appointments. In three of the cases, the existing Principals went on sick leave or resigned. As described in Chapter 1, these changes were not coincidental: the spotlight was on the schools from a number of directions, including ERO and the AIMHI Project and research. In two of these schools, new Principals were appointed almost immediately and they were able to get on with the job of continuing the development work in their schools.

In the third school, which was considered to be most in crisis, the Board of Trustees, in consultation with the Ministry, made the decision to appoint an acting Principal. This was always intended to be a short-term caretaker appointment but towards the end of the year, a further decision was made to appoint another very experienced principal as acting Principal for a further year (1997)[54]. As part of the development of a Business Case, other options considered at this point included closing the school completely, closing the school and then reopening it with completely new staff or making a permanent principal appointment. Community backlash, industrial implications and high costs made the first two options unpalatable. It was also believed by senior staff, trustees and Ministry personnel, that poor publicity about the school in the educational community and the threat to the school's viability

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[53] The source of this table was an AIMHI Update: June-November 1998, presented by the Forum Secretary to the AIMHI Principals.
[54] The original acting Principal was unable to continue in the position.

posed by local intermediates retaining their year 9 and 10 students would make the appointment of a permanent Principal very difficult, at that point. The purpose of appointing an acting Principal was to get the school 'back on track' and to make it a more attractive proposition to prospective applicants when a permanent position was advertised. While much was achieved during the year, including the negotiation of the Business Plan with the Ministry, having an acting Principal reinforced the vulnerability and uncertainty surrounding the school. It was not until a permanent appointment was made at the very end of the year (1997) that people began to believe again in a long-term future for the school and to start to tackle some of the basic school management issues that needed to be addressed by someone who would be there in the long-term. While it will never be known if a suitable applicant could have been found to permanently fill the position at the beginning of 1997, there is evidence to suggest that having a series of Principals does not create a stable environment for staff or students. It delays the making of some important decisions and, as a result, slows down the pace of change and the rebuilding of the school.

A fourth school appointed a new Principal at the end of 1997 and this position was taken up at the beginning of this year. There were 12 applicants for the position and the Board reported being very pleased with the calibre of the applicants. The Principal of the fifth school resigned at the end of Term 1 and the Board advertised the position three times before an appointment was made at the beginning of December. The two DPs shared the position in the interim period. Once again, one of the significant problems for this Board was the uncertainty created by the change of status applications of the local intermediate schools and the possible implications of the Otara Schooling Development Plan. This made it a very high-risk career move for any potential applicant.

All the schools which were vulnerable in terms of leadership in 1996 are now in a much stronger position because of the appointment of the new Principals. Some of the other schools are also in a stronger position because of the fresh perspectives and energy of a new Principal or because changes have been made to the senior management team. New staff have been appointed to replace DPs or APs who have resigned and, in some cases, additional staff have been assigned to the team. Where these changes have been made, the additional skills and new ideas brought into the team have increased the overall effectiveness of the school's management. In a few of the schools, there are still some issues relating to the degree of effectiveness of some personnel in the senior management teams. As described in 1996, these schools are at the cutting edge of innovation. Every day they are faced with difficult situations for which there are often no ready-made solutions. Coming up with new ideas, being prepared to take risks and playing an active shared leadership role is critical to successful senior management in these schools.

Since the schools have taken over the management of the AIMHI Project through the Forum, the Principals, in particular, have found a new determination and a greater sense of collaboration. A number of factors have contributed towards this:

➢   regular monthly meetings

➢ the setting up five sub-committees of the Principals whose job it is to work on issues and follow up on tasks between meetings[55]

➢ ongoing research feedback about the schools' development as well as the functioning of the group

➢ two separate retreat days which gave the Principals uninterrupted time away from their schools to plan and make some major decisions about the Project's vision and direction

➢ a combined retreat day for the Principals to get senior staff more involved in the project

➢ the arrival of the money in the schools so that plans made could become a reality

➢ a belief that the Minister and the Ministry are listening to and respecting the views of the Forum more than was the case in the initial stages of the project

5.4 GOVERNANCE

Seven of the schools have had Boards of Trustees throughout the project. The eighth had a Commissioner until November of this year. The triennial elections of Boards of Trustees were held across the country in April 1998 and, because in each case more than five nominations were received, an election was held in each of the schools. With one exception, the schools have good representation of the different ethnic groups on their Boards. A great deal of hard work has gone on to ensure that this occurred and, in some instances, that more skilled people put themselves forward for nomination or, later, co-option. Only three of the Boards have undertaken on-site training through Ministry initiated contracts or using a private provider. Overall, trustees and Principals reported finding the on-site training sessions useful because they had the time and the people present to directly apply the information to their school. However, a number of individual trustees from the other schools have attended other types of training workshops. All of the schools have continued to operate some form of sub-committee structure. Some of these work very well but others rely very heavily on the Principal or the Executive Officer for carrying out their responsibilities.

The Campus school did not have a Board of Trustees until recently. A Campus Establishment Board was formed comprising the existing Middle School Board of Trustee members plus the two Commissioners who governed the Junior and Senior schools. This group met and operated as a Board of Trustees and made decisions for the whole Campus. It was chaired by the chairwoman of the Middle School Board. While it provided a legally acceptable means of collective decision making, there were complications. The difficulties included the informality of the role of the

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[55] These committees comprise no more than two Principals each and are based around the current priorities of the Project. The committees are: Curriculum and Assessment; Research and Evaluation; Community Links; Student Health and Welfare; Teacher Effectiveness; and Information Technology.

Directors of the four different schools within the Campus and ensuring that parent representatives were empowered to contribute to decision-making in a situation that requires considerable educational and technical knowledge. The newly elected Board of Trustees will include two co-optees to be appointed by a Campus Foundation comprising people from business, education and the professions.

One of the schools has entered a partnership with Fletcher Challenge[56]. One of the many benefits to the school is that Fletcher Challenge personnel have been co-opted onto the Board, attend the meetings regularly and assist the school in a wide range of governance matters such as the appointment of the new Principal. Another school has just co-opted a past Commissioner of a school onto their Board to provide additional support and expertise. In this school, community politics have made the Board hesitate to co-opt other 'outsiders' even though the Board and the school could benefit from doing so.

Currently, all the Chairpersons have good relationships with their Principals (or acting Principals). Most Boards do not have a great deal of interaction with their staff and not all trustees are known by them but, overall, the Boards have a good relationship with, and are trusted by staff. In recent months, this relationship has been tested in one of the schools over the decision to become fully funded[57]. Currently, the only bulk-funded schools in the project are the three schools who have a School Support business plan and this was a prerequisite to their having such a plan.

Overall, the Boards are stronger and more actively involved than they were two and a half years ago. Some have reviewed their Charters, all have sound policies in place and all are involved in well co-ordinated, long-term planning for their schools. The schools whose financial practices were in need of an overhaul have carried out major reviews and put sound systems in place. Difficulties with English and the complex jargon and terminology used by the Ministry and other agencies in all their correspondence with schools continue to be a barrier for many trustees. This means that information is not necessarily read in advance or may not be understood. In turn, this can slow down Board processes or mean that Pacific trustees are overpowered by strong and articulate Palagi trustees and stopped from fully participating. Five of the schools are well served by Executive Officers or additional office staff who do all, or considerable amounts, of the administrative work for their schools. This takes considerable pressure off their Principals.

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[56] See 5.10 for a full explanation of how this partnership works.
[57] This was known previously as bulk-funding. This is an option for schools who wish to operate and control the teacher salaries component of their budget as well as the operations grant that all schools currently oversee.

5.5   SCHOOL CLIMATE

In 1996, the climate in six of the schools was described by senior staff, teachers, support staff, students and trustees as positive. All six have remained positive and, in some instances, some dramatic changes have increased the levels of positivity. These changes are described in detail below. In one or two of these schools, the research data are challenging some of the traditional, taken-for-granted practices. Not all staff find this easy to accept and senior staff are having to make difficult decisions in the face of considerable reluctance.

In two of the schools, where conflict and division had created tension and dysfunction amongst all the groups in the schools' communities in the past, significant progress has been made towards repairing some of the damage. In both schools, however, there is still a small pocket of staff who want to cling to the past and obstruct some of the changes being made. These attitudes have a powerful effect on staff morale and, at times, on some of the students.

A number of the schools have just been through a CAPNA[58] process. None have been because of a falling roll but are due to changes in SES[59] funding anomalies resulting in overstaffing. Because they have not been caused by a drop in roll numbers, the short term effects have been less devastating than in the past.
Some of the schools have worked very hard to change their image in the community. For some, this has meant changing the appearance of the school. This has been easier for the schools with Business Cases who have had the funding for doing major work like painting the exterior of buildings, upgrading their school entrances, erecting new fencing and removing old, run-down prefabs that are no longer needed. Another non-Business Case school has used AIMHI funding to alter the appearance of the front of the school with extensive landscaping and a large eye-catching sign at its front entrance. Part of the sign is changeable and is used to advertise important events and the school's successes. The comments from one group were typical of students' responses to the changes -

> *It feels like we go to a real school now...we're as good as a Pakeha school.*

Many of the schools have redesigned their prospectuses and are now posting out attractive newsletters to parents. One school has paid a koha to certain staff who are bi-lingual to translate newsletters into the main ethnic languages represented in the school. A number of the schools have promoted their schools through the media, including the Pacific Island radio station. One school has employed a part-time consultant to promote the school with stories and photographs in the local Courier and have plans to develop a comprehensive communications and public relations package in the near future. Others are using the expertise of people willing to donate their time.
Some of the schools who received negative feedback about their uniform have made some changes in this area, particularly to the senior uniform. Three of the

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58 CAPNA stands for Curriculum and Pastoral Needs Analysis. This is the name given to the process used to identify teachers who are to be re-deployed. It is usually associated with a drop in the number of students enrolled at a school requiring the school to decrease the number of teachers it employs.
59 Special Education Service.

schools have completely revamped their uniform. Feedback from students and anecdotal feedback from parents has been very positive when these changes have occurred. The teachers are invariably disappointed that students and parents place so much importance on school appearance and uniform as an indicator of a 'good' school. However, there is evidence that these factors influence the pride the students have in their school, how they feel about coming to school and their self-esteem, particularly when they mix with students from other schools.

School personnel are, by and large, developing a high degree of openness to feedback. While the schools are aware that they are in the spotlight, the confidentiality that surrounds the sharing of research information has created a climate in all the schools, where participants know it is safe to be honest with the researchers and that this will be reciprocated. School personnel know that none of the details will surface in the public arena where they might damage the school in a very unhelpful way. They also know the researchers will give full and honest feedback even if the messages are not positive. Despite the difficulties with collecting their own data, there is some evidence that the schools are beginning to address some of the issues that have surfaced over the year in this area.

One school, in 1996, had a climate characterised by verbal and physical violence, racism, student insolence to adults and generally unruly behaviour. The school embarked on a 'respect campaign'. A Respect Committee was set up and a set of students and staff guidelines were drawn up for classroom walls. Respect includes respect for self, others and property. Two years later, the climate has changed greatly. Students report fewer put-downs, less verbal and physical violence and less racism. Staff report greater respect for adults and for school property.

5.6   SCHOOL ORGANISATION

Many of the schools have put considerable time and effort into reorganising the ways in which their schools are structured in order to meet student needs more effectively. One of the changes has been a shift from vertical (years 9-13 combined) to horizontal (single year) tutor groups. Prior to 1996, only three of the schools had horizontal form groups. Now, 6 schools operate this system. Because of small numbers, some of these schools have combined the Year 12 and 13 students in a senior tutorial.

There were a number of reasons for this change to horizontal groups, prompted by feedback from the students:

➢   students did not voluntarily socialise within a vertical tutor group

➢   teachers often commented that they did not get to know their students well enough because they often did not teach across all the year groups

➢   because they did not get to know them well, they were unable to provide co-ordinated support that linked and addressed both the students' pastoral care and their learning needs

➢ teachers were unable to accommodate either the special transition needs of the year 9 students or the particular needs of the senior students

➢ it was difficult to create a senior school culture geared to their particular learning and study needs when the numbers of seniors in any one tutor group were so small

➢ the rationale of seniors being good role models for juniors is often not a reality

➢ some quite negative informal induction that occurred for year 9 students in vertical forms

At one of these schools every teacher, including the Principal, has a tutor group and tutor time is scheduled for a full period every day. The time is used to focus on supporting the whole child - in other words, meeting both pastoral care and learning needs and making the connections between both. The programme has varied across the year groups so that particular needs can be met.

Teachers reported that a key factor in the overall success of these tutor groups was having an outside curriculum facilitator providing training and support for teachers. The facilitator helped with the ongoing planning of the programme, made resources for the teachers to use, monitored progress by visiting classrooms, evaluated the introduction and implementation of the programme, provided feedback for the individual teachers and made adjustments to the overall organisation or planning. All teachers received intensive professional development in being a successful tutor teacher and clear guidelines were established to ensure that there was no ambiguity about their role.

Feedback, after a year of trialling the programme, is almost totally positive. Students have learned many skills, done homework and study for the first time ever, felt more confident about their learning, set goals and achieved them, implemented self-management strategies and received remedial help with particular subjects. There have been improvements in attendance, discipline, behaviour, standards of uniform and the co-ordination of school services. Teachers report being able to get to know the students in their tutor group very well and being better able to support them in a wide range of ways. The only problems are associated with one or two tutors not performing as well as they should. The intention is to provide them with targeted development and support next year.

Two of the schools have no vertical structure. Of these, one has an extensive peer support system, maintained throughout the year, that provides valuable links between the junior and the senior students. Others have maintained a vertical structure in the form of houses. These provide an important link with the schools' histories and traditions and are a successful way of getting the students to mix and support each other across year levels. They are also a focus for school wide events such as sports days and lunchtime competitions. One school has just introduced a house (aiga) system with a view to complementing their horizontal form structure. In one school the vertical system that was organised along ethnic lines has been abandoned and students and teachers report that student relationships within the school have improved as a result. This school has still to find appropriate ways of

acknowledging and promoting the cultures represented in the school without compromising the school's cohesiveness and taking limited time away from the key task of supporting students' learning.

There are both advantages and disadvantages in horizontal and vertical groupings. The important learning for the schools has been to identify which needs have top priority and which tasks can be carried out most effectively in the limited time available and will best support students' learning.

Four schools have also trialled some major changes in the timetabling of the school day or the organisation of teachers' time. These changes include:

➢ Extending the length of periods to 70 minutes to avoid the number of interruptions to work and to avoid loss of time as the students moved from period to period. Teachers report being able to give fuller explanations, more students being able to complete work, fewer disruptions and being able to plan for more effective lessons. Students find they are able get more one-to-one time, can make better links between lessons and are not so bored by the last period (there is only one period in the afternoon).

➢ 'Blocking' the timetable for core subjects so that extra teachers can be brought in to lower class sizes. 'Blocking' also allows the school to have ability groupings for these subjects without having to opt for full 'streaming'. One school has operated this system across the junior school for three years and is very positive about the outcomes.

➢ One teacher teaching more than one subject to the same class. One school trialled one teacher teaching three subjects to the one class - English (this included extra English while other Year 9 students were taking another language), Social Studies and Religious Instruction. This was a major adjustment for the teacher but, by the end of the year, there was very clear teacher and student enthusiasm for the programme.

For three years now, one school has trialled a home room concept with their junior classes. Another school has trialled it with one class. A home room means that students stay in the same room with their own desk for all their subjects, unless a specialist room or space is required e.g. for Science and PE, and the teachers move from room to room rather than the students. This has reduced the amount of wagging, reduced the amount of time wasted between periods and eliminated the issue of students arriving late for class. Another important spin-off has been that it has encouraged teachers to display more of the students' work and the rooms feel as though are 'owned' by the occupants.

One of the co-ed schools trialled a year 9 girls' class in 1997, mainly because a local intermediate, which has since closed, was proposing to become a girls' school and said they had community support for such a proposal. The class was not a success mainly because the school took allcomers and, therefore, were unable to achieve a good balance of behaviours and attitudes in the group; they saw themselves as different and acted accordingly; and there was an imbalance of boys in all the other classes. Once the intermediate closed, there were no benefits, that the school could determine, to warrant continuing the trial.

Another trialled mixed and single sex classes because a contributing intermediate organises itself this way. After a year, like the school mentioned earlier, it decided not to continue them as, once again, the disadvantages outweighed any possible perceived advantage. The dynamics in both the boys' and the girls' classes became more of a problem as the year progressed and teachers reported more bullying and dominating behaviour in both single sex classes than in the mixed class. Another disadvantage was that organising the classes in this way eroded the ability of the school to manage learning needs within classes.

It is important to recognise that these schools are looking outside the square in many of the ways they organise themselves and are challenging the ways that secondary schools have traditionally provided for the needs of their students. In many instances, this effort highlights a tension between what meets student needs and what is convenient for teachers. It has also resulted in the schools having to challenge some past practices that have become institutionalised, even glamorised, but which no longer meet the needs of their students.

5.7   TEACHER QUALITY

In the 1996 report, teachers and students, in particular, were able to describe the qualities and skills of teachers that help them learn and contribute in a positive way to student achievement. There were numerous examples given from all the schools of teachers who exhibit many of those qualities and skills and a few examples in all the schools of teachers whose attitudes and behaviours are a barrier to achievement. The researchers often hear from those who work in schools and other education organisations, that it is a commonly held belief that many of the teachers in these schools are incompetent. This is not the case. The majority are very capable teachers. However, because many of the AIMHI students enter year 9 behind their peers in other schools and have only five years, at the most, to gain some qualification that will help them get a job or get into a tertiary institution, quality teaching matters more to these students. They cannot afford to have a teacher who does not give them a good deal.

In three of the schools, there were more teachers than in the others who had either never been competent, had become lazy, or who had been professionally neglected. One of the schools resolved many of their problems by involving the teachers in a review and competency programme carried out by 'outside' curriculum experts. Competency procedures and attrition have dealt with the most of the serious issues in the other schools.

Where there is a teacher causing grave concern, the schools do not find it easy to follow through on a competency or discipline process. There have been a number of instances when teachers have been put under review and have, as a result, received extensive professional development and support. Even though they may have made small improvements, in the view of students, senior staff and outside curriculum experts or education consultants, they often are still not meeting the needs of the students. The message from the PPTA is that they have judged their performance as meeting the minimum competency requirements and that there is

nothing more the school can do. It is very frustrating for the researchers to see the schools put so much time, effort and money into working through a process with these teachers and then get the same negative feedback from students and their colleagues as was given in 1996. This raises the issue of who sets the standards of teaching performance in a school and quite clearly the minimum standards that the Union has set are not rigorous enough in the view of the students or the senior staff at these schools.

The foundations of performance management and appraisal programmes are well set in policy and procedure documents in all the schools and implementation is under way. In some instances, the systems have been in place for some time and considerable trialling, review and fine-tuning has taken place. In others, it is still early days and implementation is inconsistent across Departments or is seen to be a paper exercise rather than one that addresses real development needs and/or accountability issues. In two of the schools, there is a requirement to collect student feedback as part of the data collection. Some schools have participated in an appraisal training programme and skills for appraisers is one area signalled for further development, particularly the skills of giving and receiving feedback.

One of the schools has written an excellent staff handbook that is one of the most practical documents of its type that the researchers have seen. It contains all the usual organisational information about the school in precise detail as well as copies of appropriate policies. A whole section is devoted to very practical guidelines for working with the types of students who attend the school. It also includes a role brief for tutor teachers and how to manage the attendance system. One of the other schools spent a professional development session writing up the expected behaviours and attitudes they expect of each other in order to support students' learning.

Some of the school development and professional development programmes, although they are have a specific focus, are helpful in addressing a wide range of quality issues. Examples include the Learning through Language programme, Assessment for Better Learning, the tutor group development, assertive discipline, managing at risk students and skills development programmes such as 'You can Do It'.

5.8 CURRICULUM

<u>Literacy</u>

Improving the literacy of the students features prominently in all the curriculum initiatives across the eight AIMHI schools. All of them have special language and reading programmes in place. Four have improving literacy rates as a major focus in their Funding Provision Agreements (FPAs) and three have targeted the training of all teachers in the use of Learning Through Language (LTL) strategies. The following section details the key developments in this area.

➢   The use of FPA funding to employ additional ESOL and reading tutors. These teachers work with groups as well as individuals. One school has met with particular success when the tutor has worked alongside students in their regular English class. This kind of programme usually only involves junior students although there is a clear need for remedial reading help to be made available to many older students also.

➢   Establishment of a home room for year 9 students who required additional and specialist language teaching. This included ESOL as well as lower ability students. One teacher took them for a number of subjects and where possible, the timetable was blocked to allow subjects to be integrated and to reduce disruptions. As some students progressed, they were moved into other year 9 classes.

➢   The 1996 AIMHI research identified the need for every teacher to be a teacher of language. Three of the schools have identified this as one of their priorities for development and are in the process of extending the training in the use of Learning Through Language (LTL) techniques to all teachers. The LTL programme is well established in many secondary schools and teachers in the AIMHI schools who have done the training this year, or in the past, report very favourably on the usefulness of the strategies and the positive outcomes for the students in their classrooms. Like all development programmes, there is a danger that some teachers will do the training and will not transfer that training into their practice. One of the schools plans to employ a teacher part-time to make LTL resources and support teachers in their use. Another school has given HODs additional release time to work with teachers and this includes spending time planning LTL activities and making sure they are implemented. Finding ways to share resources, both within and between Departments, could further maximise the time and effort being put into this valuable training. They would also serve to model and advertise best practice.

➢   Five of the schools run Sustained Silent Reading (SSR) reading programmes. Despite general agreement amongst teachers and students about the benefits of the programme, the time is not always utilised well. All the teachers can state the optimum conditions for the programme to succeed. These include: teacher modelling; having a good range of appropriate reading material available that is regularly changed and updated; a good issuing system so that students can pick up the same book the next

day; avoiding an after-lunch schedule when students are hot and prefer to sleep; employing a teacher aide to monitor the use of the reading materials and involving the students in the selection of the reading material. The five schools have worked hard to make SSR work and some have fine-tuned their programmes over the years to make them more manageable. Sometimes these changes have been made to accommodate a few who do not want it to work (SSR is a waste of time), cannot be bothered to make it work or do not have the classroom management skills. These behaviours raise different issues, unrelated to SSR, but are often confused with it.

➢ Through a Ministry contract aimed at targeting Maori students, one school has established a Pause, Prompt, Praise reading programme with junior students. It was set up by a Maori teacher on the staff but, quite quickly, was taken over by a fully-trained community worker. Based on the school's marae, the community worker used Bingo contacts to organise a pool of parents. After going through a training programme, these parents come into the school and work with up to three students each on an individual reading programme. Programme personnel attribute the marked increase in the reading ages of the students to the individual attention they receive from trained personnel and the nature of the particular technique used.

➢ One school has developed a 'Literacy Action Plan' and all the aspects of their AIMHI development, as well as the school-funded developments, are designed to support improvements to literacy. As well as the types of programmes already mentioned in this section, it includes an information technology focus on literacy, the Tu Tangata programme and literacy intensives. The intensives occur with the junior classes and are organised and supported by a teacher with expertise and a time allocation.

Pathways programmes for seniors

In 1996, the research identified the issue of students not always getting the guidance they needed for subject selection and seeing the relevance of some of the subjects for their future. There were many instances of students ending up with a programme that did not lead into tertiary study or a job. As a result, all of the schools have initiated pathway programmes for their senior students in an effort to prevent such problems[60].

The introduction of Unit Standards provided these schools with an ideal opportunity to find other ways to help students to gain qualifications and to ensure that all their courses would lead, at least, to the completion of the National Certificate in Employment Skills (NCES). This has meant rethinking the coursework for some students. For example, ensuring that students on special programmes, such as a Sports Academy, supplement their programme by taking some Unit Standards in core subjects; carefully monitoring students' credits so they are aware of how many they still need to gain the Certificate. Some students are coming to terms with how the whole system works. Many of them still struggle to monitor their own progress,

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[60] A new National Administration Guideline (NAG 1, vi) also made it mandatory for schools to provide appropriate career information and guidance.

especially if they are accumulating credits across a number of areas. Some teachers have this information but do not always make it available to the students. In one school the teacher displayed the credits information on a wall chart that students updated as soon as they gained more credits. This kept the students informed, focussed and motivated and was judged by both their teacher and the students to be a highly successful strategy.

One of the schools has established two academies this year, one in sports and the other in the performing arts, each with twelve students. Some advertising was done outside the school which attracted a small number, but by far the majority of the students were the school's own pupils. Many of them would not have returned to school if the academy programmes had not been available. Most of the students had not completed a qualification that would be a passport to further learning outside the school. The students were interviewed by the researcher after a term and the feedback used to fine-tune aspects of the two courses. It was a steep learning curve for the teachers. They had to organise the course, gain access to local facilities for some of the specialist activities, establish a programme and iron out all the difficulties that inevitably occur with a major new initiative. Almost all the students completed the course and, at the time of writing, five students had been accepted for further tertiary training. One has been accepted to play professional rugby league in Australia. Senior staff and the teachers are already planning to ensure a more secure qualifications path is in place for next year. The same two groups of students were interviewed again at the end of the year and the quality of the contributions made and their confidence levels were markedly higher than observed in the earlier interviews. The students were able to describe, and give examples, of how the programmes and their teachers had given them more skills, more confidence and more hope than would have been the case at the end of last year. A key factor in the success of the programme appears to be the small size of the group. This allows for students to receive individual attention and for a close rapport to develop amongst the group and with the teacher. Other key factors are the balance between written and practical work and access to specialist programmes or experiences outside the school.

Four of the schools have established senior mentoring programmes, two through business partnerships, another through the Presbyterian Church in a nearby suburb and another as part of a Pacific Island initiative with another secondary school. It is important to note that many of the mentors are Palagi but, for the students, ethnicity is not an issue. For them, some critical components of their programmes were:

➢ getting extended time in the particular workplace

➢ one-to-one contact with the mentor(s) - this meant they could ask plenty of questions

➢ working with a group of mentors so there was choice about the liaison
➢ 'shadowing' the mentor and not being 'palmed off' to another person or forgotten or given a fill-in job to do as has often happened on other work experience occasions

➢ the personal interest the mentor took in them eg telephoning them, helping with an assignment, writing a reference, putting them in touch with key people

➢ the unexpected bonuses e.g. going out 'on location', being taken to a tertiary Open Day.

Not all one-to-one mentoring has been successful. These programmes are still being trialled and need to be the focus of further evaluation.

Metacognitive skills

Five of the schools have developed their own programmes or bought into commercial packages to improve the metacognitive or 'learning how to learn' skills of the students. The introduction of all of these programmes has required funding and schools have relied upon either their FPA or a sponsor to provide the dollars needed. In 1996, the teachers constantly talked about the need for many of these students to learn how to take responsibility for their learning and to develop their skills in goal setting, communication and work and study skills and to become proficient problem solvers. A number of initiatives have occurred in this area over the last two years.

➢ One of the schools trialled the 'Mind Kind' seminars in 1997 and with some minor timing and personnel changes, the series was repeated this year for a group of approximately twenty-five year 11 and twenty-five year 13 students. The purpose of the seminars is to help senior students prepare and perform for external exams. Specific learning, memory and study skills are taught but also wider issues related to learning, such as having a healthy body and healthy attitudes. Follow-up interviews with students after both series clearly indicated that they had found them beneficial. They reported feeling more focussed and finding study easier as a result of the strategies. The year 11s were more positive than the year 13s who felt they would have benefited more if they had been exposed to the strategies much earlier.

➢ 'You Can Do It' is an American-based programme sponsored by Amway. The year 9 students at one school have just completed almost a full year of working through the different modules that make up the programme. Workbooks are provided, which give the two teachers involved access to a readymade and structured resource. Although the students have responded well to the workbooks, there is a danger of getting into a pattern of book-video-exercise. The teachers found it essential to vary the programme from time to time and to provide another context where the students could practice applying the skills they had learned. The students were very clear about the goals of the programme and a number could give several examples of how they have used the ideas outside the programme. There would be benefit in teachers of other subject areas knowing more about the programme and what topic and activities the students are covering each week so they can reinforce the messages and incorporate the skills into their programmes.

➢ In 1997, Lion Nathan offered to support one school by giving them $10,000 to run the 'Discovery' programme for their senior students. This was used for student trips and activities outside the school that were designed to support their learning and develop their social skills and confidence. In the same school, and at another school in 1997, a business skills programme was run for year 12 students. They worked in groups to conceptualise and plan the development of a product or service. They found the programme challenging and useful and gained some important insights into future possibilities that were totally new to them.

➢ The extended tutor period[61] has also had the improvement of students' metacognitive skills as a prime focus. The small groups allow the students to receive personal attention and support to develop their study skills, prepare for lessons and get support to complete homework.

Assessment

In mid-1997, the AIMHI schools successfully tendered for a year-long MOE contract in Assessment for Better Learning (ABeL). The contract has since been extended and will now run until the end of 1999. A contractor was employed and there were funds to bring in additional expertise for the initial training workshops with the teachers who were to be involved. A facilitator was employed and an assessment expert engaged to initiate the programme with a series of school-based workshops. At each of these workshops, the teachers developed an assessment model for their school, although, in the final analysis, the models were very similar and included a number of generic components.

To begin with, the programme only included the core-subject teachers of one particular year 9 class in each school. At the beginning of this year, the intention of most of the schools was to expand the programme to include all year 9 core subject teachers or all year 9 teachers or all the teachers in particular departments, often those with an HOD or a group of teachers who were enthusiastic about ABeL. After eighteen months, and for a range of reasons, only a small number of teachers in each school are using the process. However, the results from some of the classes where the ABeL model has been used are extremely positive. These include comparing quantitative data from students' test results with other non-ABeL classes as a control. The model includes clear assessment criteria, use of exemplars, self-assessment, peer assessment, teacher assessment, feedback and parental involvement. The teachers who are using it are also very enthusiastic about the profound effect it is having on their own teaching methods.

The Principals were very keen for the programme to continue and, to this end, teachers from across the AIMHI schools who teach the same subject organised a number of combined meetings. These were used to discuss progress being made, to share resources and ways of getting other teachers in their school or department involved and to work through some of the assessment issues. The schools have all made plans to continue the professional development into 1999, with the support of

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[61] See 5.5

a Ministry Contract. At this stage, there appears to be greater commitment to more widespread implementation of ABeL.

If this is to occur, consideration needs to be given to:

➢ providing release time for teachers to adapt their units and plan their assessment tasks and time to work with other members of their department

➢ creating opportunities for the ABeL teachers from each school to share units, assessment tools, exemplars and student work samples

➢ ensuring HODs become fully conversant with the project and take responsibility for its implementation across their departments

➢ Principals becoming fully familiar with what is happening in the contract so they can evaluate, for themselves, the effect the project is having in their school

Curriculum Support

A Tu Tangata programme has been established in one school with the dual objectives of decreasing truancy and minimising disruptive behaviour in classrooms. Originally established at Parkway School, the basis of the programme is one of adults (Education Support Persons: ESPs) working alongside students. They do the classroom work themselves and, at the same time, play a role in settling the students, asking questions of the teacher in order to clarify instructions or information and generally support the students. A classroom was modestly renovated and furnished as a base for the seven team members who are involved in the project.

Very early, the research identified that teachers had differing expectations of the role of the ESPs and some were more active in the classrooms than others. Some teachers were resentful that initial expectations of the programme were not materialising. Students had a different opinion but had some clear feedback about the need for the ESPs to be good role models. Since then the whole programme has been discussed, confusions and concerns addressed and feedback is now more positive. There are sufficient positive indicators for the trial to continue into next year and data are now being collected regularly and entered into a database for evaluation purposes.

Another school is setting up its own adult education programme, 'Side by Side' with a particular emphasis on the adult students being there to support younger learners. Adults work alongside students in regular class lessons, attend special literacy classes and run the school's breakfast scheme. The programme has only just got underway and it is too early to comment on outcomes at this stage.

5.9   TRANSITION TO SECONDARY SCHOOL

The transition to secondary school is traumatic for many students[62]. Most come feeling fearful because of the differences their intermediate teachers have told them to expect and because many of the messages are negative. Some schools, especially those who are campaigning to become middle schools, actively discourage them from attending the local AIMHI school.

Four schools have peer support or 'buddy' programmes. Students and teachers believe that these programmes work best when:

➢   they are a part of a carefully planned induction programme

➢   when seniors have the opportunity to fully understand their role as a 'buddy' (i.e. supported by good leadership training)

➢   there are structured opportunities for the programme to be ongoing

➢   there is a formal conclusion to the programme and the juniors, in particular, know that they not just being abandoned and forgotten.

Many students greatly appreciate the initial support but, in some of the schools, this fades away rather than coming to a timetabled end. This leaves the juniors feeling that the seniors' efforts were insincere because there was no formal conclusion to the programme.

The data from the group discussions with junior students also show that an informal, counter-productive induction process occurs. New students learn from the seniors where to go to smoke, how to wag and to which teachers they can give a hard time.

The Pastoral Care Team at one school visited every Year 9 class as part of their induction programme. After an initial discussion, the Team got the students to complete a Health profile and made the most of the opportunity to get to know the students. These students had a very clear idea of the roles and responsibilities of the Team, where to find them and how they could access their help.

While the juniors value the induction programmes when they are done well, they are often not enough. Interview data and researcher observations suggest that placing Year 9 students in horizontal forms and in home rooms with their own tutor, coupled with a carefully constructed school induction programme, has resulted in more settled behaviour, happier students and fewer problems than in previous years.

5.10 HOMEWORK

As in 1996, staff and students report that whether homework is set or not, whether it is done or not, and the amount of time spent on it, varies from student to student and teacher to teacher. For almost all the students interviewed, the critical factors are consistent checking of homework by the teacher and teacher follow-up, in some way, when it is not done. When these occur, then students are more likely to ensure it is completed. All the schools now have some form of homework notebook. They work best when teachers consistently remember to make time for students to

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[62] Hawk, K. and Hill, J. (1996). **Towards Making Achieving Cool: Achievement in multi cultural high schools**. Wellington: Ministry of Education.

enter in the tasks to be completed and when form teachers or tutors keep a watching brief over the students' homework attitudes and work completion rates. Without being taught how to use the notebooks and without proper supervision, they are largely ineffective for many students. This has been an important task for tutors in schools with a longer daily form or tutor time.

It was noted in the earlier report that many students do not have access to a desk or a quiet place where they can do homework. Often, they do not have access to resources at home. In light of this, and to reinforce the importance of homework, a number of the schools have established or expanded their Homework Centres. Some have brought in a part-time person to organise it; others have paid volunteer teachers; one has a teacher in charge but has a team of parents who come in to sit alongside the students. Many, but not all, of the Centres are based in the library and the key ingredients appear to be a combination of a comfortable and attractive environment, access to resources, computers and adult support and expertise and beginning immediately or soon after school finishes. Providing food has been helpful and motivating for some students.

5.11 LATENESS, WAGGING AND TRUANCY

Lateness refers to students arriving late for school in the morning, wagging (a term used by the students) describes selective skipping of classes during school time, and truancy covers taking a day off school, days off school over a period of time, irregular attendance and chronic non-attendance. None of the issues outlined in the baseline report has disappeared and they are still as complex and interrelated as they were at that time. Although significant progress has been made in some schools, senior staff described how they are still struggling with such things as keeping phone numbers and addresses up-to-date and accurate; students' 'excuses'; validating absences; liaising between teachers, students and families; and parents condoning absences.

All the schools now have a computerised system for tracking lateness, wagging and absences. Using the recommendations from the original research, many of them have worked hard to make their systems more efficient and therefore more effective. Two of the schools have invented their own software systems and the others are using MUSAC[63] software.

Some valuable learning from the work of the schools in this area include:

➢   The importance of having support staff to input the data and process it. This ensures a fast turnaround of data to the teachers or truancy personnel, who are then in a position to respond and follow up. Some of the schools are using AIMHI or business plan funding to employ staff for this task.

➢   Getting the data back to teachers quickly is essential. For example, wagging has been significantly reduced in one school because teachers get the list of absences, with the lates deleted by the end of the first period. Teachers

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[63] MUSAC is a series of school administration computer software packages produced by a group within Massey University College of Education.

mark their subject roll then check any students absent against the school absences sheet. This sheet is set out in alphabetical order under year levels. Students who used to wag said they now think twice about it because they know they will get caught. Form teachers also reported a reduction in the cases of wagging to which they have had to respond.

➢ Finding time for proper follow up when students are wagging or absent is also essential. At one school, the teachers receive the data they need before the daily 30-45 minute tutor period. They then have the time they need, as well as the data, to follow up immediately and fully.

➢ In term 2 of 1998, one school began 'publishing' the percentage of students away each day in the staff room and drew attention to the data at each morning briefing session. In terms 2 and 3, the percentage of full-day student absences was 10% or less. In the past, absences often exceeded 20%. The national average is 12.7%.

➢ Sharing an attendance officer with a number of other schools in the area is not as effective as having one based at one school and following up only that school's absences. Schools who share attendance officers report that they are difficult to contact and they are rarely available when they are needed most. It is also more difficult to keep them accountable and to get the feedback they need on the outcomes.

➢ Three schools have whole school assemblies every morning to begin the day in order to ensure rolls are marked, students begin the first class on time and all students receive the same messages. Assemblies are not totally successful in achieving these aims but are better than no system.

➢ One school has initiated a special programme for chronic or potentially chronic absentees involving the newly appointed Community Liaison Officers (funded as an AIMHI initiative)[64]. They visit students at home and develop an action plan that involves the student, their caregiver and the school. Interviews with the coordinator of the programme, parents and students indicate very encouraging results. However, the programme has been operating for only a few weeks.

5.12 BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT

Discipline systems are a problem for the schools. Teacher interviews, student group discussions, feedback from senior staff and researcher observations show that the more effective the classroom teachers, the fewer problems the school experiences. Discipline systems can easily become top heavy with vertical layers of tutors or form teachers, deans, house or whanau leaders and then senior management. Professional time is spent in reacting to somebody else's inadequacies rather than on proactive school development. Another issue is that the schools sometimes tend to change a good system because one or two teachers are not fulfilling their responsibilities. Sometimes, senior staff have been reluctant to front accountability issues with individual teachers and to provide them with the

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[64] See 5.12

support and accountability they need in order provide a better learning environment for the students they teach.

Some of the schools have developed a student code of conduct[65]. These have been important documents for students when they have had input into their development, when they have been written up in student-friendly language, displayed prominently in classrooms and when they have been referred to and responded to in an ongoing and consistent way by teachers and senior staff.

Assertive discipline programmes have also contributed significantly to the effectiveness of some discipline systems. These programmes have been continued in some schools and introduced into others, most of them with support from SES. Many of the teachers involved are able to describe many benefits for both themselves and the students as a result of the professional development they received in the lead up to the introduction of the programme. Feedback from students is also very positive. Once again, the success of the programme is dependent on ongoing and consistent implementation. Prerequisites for success are: active support for and modelling of the strategies by all senior staff; full training provided for new teachers, part-time teachers and relievers who often work at the school; giving teachers the support they need; and making individuals accountable for its implementation. The latter is where assertive discipline programmes are most likely to break down. Teachers who were conscientiously using the techniques reported that when others 'watered down' or did not use the system, it was a disincentive to their maintaining the programme.

Detention systems remain a constant problem for all the schools. Students have consistently told the researchers in the group discussions that the detention systems do not work for most students because they do not respect them as a means of making them accountable. Some schools are aware that, as is the case with the 'time out room' or 'quiet room', the detention systems are often used by the same teachers and the same students. Teachers and the students are frequently not made accountable and when this happens, the same behaviours get repeated. It is at this point, that students describe the systems as *'a joke'*. Students from the eight schools continually reported over the two years that teachers are inconsistent in handing out detentions, in deciding what behaviour requires a detention, in what they get students to do and how long they have to spend in detention. Often, the consequences bear no relation to the behaviours that prompted the detentions. The systems work least well in schools where there is no assertive discipline programme and where it is very easy for teachers or even senior staff to pass their detention responsibilities on to someone else. The researchers know, from working in other schools, that this is a problem for many schools. However, inconsistent, unfair, mindless or easy activities are not respected by students and do not change the behaviours of the recidivists. It appears that detention systems more often meet the needs of frustrated teachers than the needs of students.

5.13 PASTORAL CARE

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[65] See 5.4

One of the important developments in this area is much greater co-ordination between the members of the pastoral care teams in the schools and between the teams and the staff. One school has used its own funds and money won through the Financial Assistance Grant Scheme, to establish a stand-alone Student Health Centre. The Centre is the base for the guidance counsellor, a trained paediatric nurse and a CYPS-accredited social worker who have formed themselves into a strong and collaborative team. They cover for each other when others in the team are busy and referrals within the team are common place and occur in a co-ordinated and student-friendly way. A member of the Senior Management Team participates in their weekly meetings and changes are being made all the time to improve the communication between the team and other staff. The Centre, the staff and the work they are doing are all highly valued by staff and students.

The school is only the second in the country to have such a social worker on site and AIMHI funding is providing the school's contribution to her salary. Over the years, it has taken constant lobbying to get a social worker based at the school and because it is a trial, the lobbying has had to continue. The Principal tabled a log of his activities at an AIMHI Principals' meeting. He had documented hours of work writing letters, visiting agencies and holding meetings at the school to ensure the trial continues. One of the major stumbling blocks identified was Work and Income New Zealand's (WINZ) requirement that the social worker's workload be recognised only by the number of direct referrals from the base office. On that basis, a full-time position at the school is not warranted. Official recognition is not given to the preventative work that is done because it cannot be measured as an 'output'.

Two other schools have also worked to improve student support by co-ordinating the work of a guidance team comprising such people as a qualified nurse, guidance counsellor, liaison worker, Community Liaison Officer co-ordinator, careers adviser and a senior staff member with pastoral care oversight. Combined meetings, an 'at risk' action sheet and a co-ordinated referral system are just some of the ways that the teams are ensuring that there is no double up of care and that no students fall through the gaps.

Another school has established a reception centre for at risk students. Its purpose is to provide a supportive environment for students who have been chronic truants and need to be integrated back into mainstream classes. A teacher has been appointed who will supervise and work in co-ordination with the recently appointed Community Liaison Officers. The school has been lent a pre-fab classroom to house the students and AIMHI funding is to be used to furnish and resource it. Even though the programme has only just got under way, early evidence from all stakeholder groups is extremely positive. Students are being carefully monitored and are back in class and feeling positive about being there. Parents have given very positive feedback and have passed the word on to other parents who have approached the team for help and support.

Two of the schools are involved in Project 'K', a programme for students at risk that is run by an independent trust in conjunction with the schools. The programme has a number of components including a wilderness experience, a community experience and an ongoing mentoring programme. Approximately 60 students from the two schools have taken part. While teachers and students report that many of them have benefited from the programme in terms of increased self-esteem, gains

in confidence and improved goal-setting skills, some important lessons are being learned about how to increase the effectiveness of the programme. At this stage, critical factors appear to be the school's direct involvement in the selection of the students, selecting those who are moderately rather than seriously at risk, parental or family support and systems to support the maintenance of the mentoring programme.

5.14 COMMUNICATING WITH AND INVOLVING PARENTS AND THE COMMUNITY

The schools are acutely aware of the important contribution parents can make to the success of their schools and to the achievement of the students. Nonetheless, communicating with parents remains a problem for the schools despite their best efforts and the investment of time, energy and money.

At the beginning of 1997 the AIMHI schools successfully applied for a Pacific Islands School-Parents Community Liaison Project contract[66]. The purpose of this particular contract was to employ a Pacific community worker to consult with the Pacific community and produce a parent resource in English and all the major Pacific languages. The booklet[67] explains what parents need to know about secondary schools and outlines the ways they can support their child's learning both at home and at school. The booklet was launched earlier this year and has been distributed to the AIMHI schools and a wide range of community organisations. Data on its effectiveness will be collected in the parent survey early in 1999.

The Community Liaison contract was extended until the end of 1998 and a new liaison worker was appointed to the position. One of the tasks this year included working with the schools to establish stronger networks with parents. When the contact was non-specific, schools said that no direct results accrued. The contact worked best when the networking was linked with a special programme or event. For example, when helping a school to recruit parents for a reading programme; phoning parents to remind them about a school report evening; phoning parents of year 8 students to interview them about their choice of school for the following year.

In another effort to raise parents' awareness of their responsibilities and to highlight the school's expectations and standards, one school has developed an enrolment contract. It is based on the findings of the 1996 research report and, in an attempt to ensure understanding by as many parents as possible, has been translated into Maori and four of the Pacific languages. Parents were not interviewed in this phase of the research and at this point, the impact of this strategy has not been ascertained.

The 1996 AIMHI Report highlighted a number of issues that make traditional methods of keeping parents informed very difficult for these schools. These include language difficulties and students acting as gatekeepers by not passing on or

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[66] The contract was initiated by the Ministry and was one of a number operating around the country.

[67] Ministry of Education (1998). **The Partnership Between Your Family and Your Secondary School**. Wellington: AIMHI Schools, Parents and Community Liaison Project for the Ministry of Education.

deliberately mis-translating newsletters or notices. In response to this, many of the ideas below are now common-place in the AIMHI schools:

➤ posting out regular newsletters

➤ informing parents in each newsletter of the date when they will receive the next newsletter

➤ reformatting the newsletters to make them more attractive and reader-friendly
➤ publicising the names of students who achieve - including those who are awarded a Principal's certificate

➤ translating newsletters into the different languages represented in the school

➤ advertising upcoming events or the school on Pacific Island radio

➤ posting out student reports with a newsletter

➤ not posting out reports and inviting parents in to collect them

➤ telephoning parents to invite them to parent evenings or school events

➤ employing a part-time person to ensure the school has a high media profile and gets to publicise its good news stories

In the last term, two of the schools have employed their own Community Liaison Officers (CLOs) using funding from their FPAs. Both schools had a good field of applicants and each appointed a team of three people - a Maori, Tongan and Samoan in one school, and a Maori, Cook Islander and Samoan in the other. One of the schools has a fourth person who is a teacher and is the co-ordinator of the team. In one of these schools, the parents of thirty serious truants have been visited and action plans have been put in place for the students, their parents and the school. Attendance is checked on by the CLOs and, to date, it has been almost perfect. The students interviewed said they now know they cannot get away with wagging and truanting. One said it was a relief to have been caught. Another student had been unable to stop the parents keeping him/her at home. One mother was shocked because she had no idea that there had been a problem with her child's non-attendance.

In the other school trialling this scheme, the CLOs have been making up to 20 visits a week each. They have visited families for a whole range of reasons including following up on absences; acting on at-risk referrals from the student support committee that meets each Friday; following up for form teachers on issues relating to behaviour, homework and class work; visiting parents whose children have not shown up for exams; and visiting the families of local students who have not yet enrolled for 1999. Another of their tasks is to set up appointments for teachers and parents. Appointments are made to coincide with teachers' non-contact times and have been designated as a top priority for non-contact periods. Staff report that since the CLOs have been in the school they have never seen so many parents in the school and the outcomes for students and teachers, so far, have been extremely positive. These two schemes have been operating for only a term but already the

impact of their work has been remarkable. While more data need to be collected, initial evidence suggests that having people with the time, the focus, ability to speak another language and local knowledge are vital ingredients in setting up more useful and possibly longer-lasting links with parents.

A number of community and business relationships have been established over the past two years. These include:

➢ Establishing an association of past pupils - this group has been involved in a number of school activities and was instrumental in setting up a special seminar for senior students to talk with past students who have had successful careers.

➢ Establishing a genuine partnership with Fletcher Challenge who have provided help in a wide range of ways. These include the designing of the prospectus and a public relations plan; providing some equipment surplus to their needs; supporting a mentoring programme for senior students; providing ongoing work opportunities; providing financial training and advice; organising and facilitating two teacher professional development days on change; conducting a review of the school office; and helping with the appointment of a new Principal.

➢ Approaching local businesses to contribute to a scholarship scheme to encourage worthy local students to attend their local school. The amount is not prohibitive and opportunities are created for the sponsor to meet with the students. At the end of the year, senior students donated a piece of their art work to give to a sponsor and in return, the school framed a second piece of each student's art for the students to keep.

➢ Some links are still at the development stage. One school is endeavouring to encourage local community sports groups to use the school facilities by basing their club at the school. They have also set up a Foundation which will comprise people who are in business, education and other professions. These people will appoint two trustees to co-opted places on the school's Board.

➢ Encouraging more adults into the school by offering tailor-made programmes in employment skills. At one particular school, 15 Tongan women were involved in a series of highly successful cooking classes over the last semester. It was funded by a Community Education Grant and presented an opportunity that the school is considering extending.

5.15 FACILITIES

Because the researchers are in and out of a wide range of schools on a daily basis, they are in a position to make clear comparisons between the facilities of the AIMHI schools and the many other schools they visit. The School Support Project provided the AIMHI schools with Business Case funds (for three schools), FPAs (for five schools) and a one-off grant for Information Technology (for eight schools). While

this funding support has been vital to the schools' development, in no way will it enable the schools to offer their students the same environment or the same facilities as their counterparts in the higher decile schools. With the exception of the Information Technology Grant, the five non-Business Case schools have used very little of their funds for improvements in facilities and equipment. Primarily, they have been put towards directly supporting student learning.

The biggest changes to facilities have occurred in the Business Case schools. At the campus school, the middle school was moved onto the site and then totally upgraded. Some work has also been done in upgrading the junior school and the kura but little has changed for the staff and students at the senior school at this point in time. The second Business Case school has been painted and some old, unused buildings, visible from the front entrance and a real eyesore, have been removed. At the third school, plans for an Art/Music block have been approved and building is about to begin. Substantial amounts have also been spent putting up boundary fences to make all three schools more secure. In the immediate future, two of the staff rooms are to be refurbished. Some of the money has been spent on invisible upgrading such as the replacement of old and dangerous electrical wiring. Upgrading of other buildings in all three schools is planned over the remaining two years of the Business Plan cycle.

Some of the other schools have been able to make some changes to their buildings, using deferred maintenance funding or from bidding successfully for a Financial Assistance Grant. These funds have helped to upgrade a Technology block, refit a Science lab and build a student support centre. It is important to note that 1998 signalled the end of Ministry funding to carry out deferred maintenance. Schools were given the option of taking the remaining deferred maintenance money owing or getting the last few items completed by the Ministry.
One of the schools has used some of its own funding to landscape and tidy up its front entrance, which has made a huge difference to the pride of the students and how they feel about the school. Three of the schools, in particular, remain very drab and uninviting, both inside and out, and need considerable funds spent on them to put them on a par with even their AIMHI counterparts. Feedback from students continues to reinforce that the environment and facilities a school offers do act as a motivator and affect the way students feel about the school and their perceptions of themselves. This also extends to the way students feel about the effort teachers put into creating a stimulating learning environment in their classrooms.

Many of the issues described in the first report remain for the schools. The schools which have had, or still have, falling rolls have a number of unused buildings that are expensive to maintain and make it more difficult to create a close-knit school culture. Four still need exterior face-lifts. The layout of the buildings in most of the schools follows a traditional secondary design where the classrooms for one subject are grouped together which means that students have to move from classroom to classroom and, invariably, building to building. This is not conducive to making the organisational changes that some of the schools intend. Some areas are no longer suitable for the curriculum the schools are required to teach, as is the case with Technology. Some schools want to expand their programmes, and are doing so, but do not have the money for the kind of facilities needed. For example, one of the schools is setting up a sports academy this year but has a small gym with a low-ceiling. There are holes in the ceiling and it looks old and out-of-date. The staff and

students are jealous and resentful of the large, modern gyms with all their new equipment, showers and storage areas, which they see in other schools and they know are only a pipe-dream for them.

5.16 PROMISING DEVELOPMENTS IN SUMMARY

As part of the AIMHI developments, the eight schools have used the research findings to adapt programmes, strategies and school organisation and to introduce new programmes to try to address the identified needs. Although it is early days in terms of long-term outcomes, evaluation data to date indicate that significant changes have occurred in student attitudes, behaviour and learning. Whether or not these translate into achievement, as measured by external exam results, is yet to be shown.

The following strategies have been put in place in some of the AIMHI schools and look very promising.

- **Induction programme** for year nine students. The transition to secondary school is traumatic for students. Most come feeling fearful, because of differences their intermediate teachers have told them to expect. Many schools use programmes such as peer support or buddies. These help but are not always enough. The research shows that an informal induction process happens amongst students, which is counter-productive. New students learn from seniors where to go to smoke, how to wag and which teachers to give a hard time to. Placing year nine students in horizontal forms and 'home' rooms with their own tutors and a carefully planned school induction programme have resulted in more settled behaviour, happier students and fewer problems than in previous years.

- **Horizontal form groups** have been trialled by some of the schools which previously believed in the importance of their vertical/whanau groups. Without exception they have proved to be successful, not only for year nine students but also for other levels. Form periods are usually a problem for schools because they do not allow the time needed to achieve their espoused goal of pastoral care. The longer the time a school is able to programme for form period, and the better trained the form teachers, the more effective the use of the time. This is the case for all school systems. When the form class is horizontal, students' needs have been able to be met more effectively.

- **Home rooms** for year nine and ten students have proved very successful in improving attendance and increasing learning time by preventing lateness. This is a system in which all students are based in a room with their own desk and teachers travel to them, at least for the core subjects, rather than the students' moving from class to class.

- **Longer periods and block teaching** have been trialled in two schools. In one of the schools, periods are 70 minutes long and there are only four each day (only one in the afternoon). The teachers whom the students regard as

effective have found the time enables them to make links between lessons, give full explanations, give one-to-one time more often and have more students complete their work. Students reported the same benefits and said they are finding it easier to understand the work and are feeling more confident about coming back to the next lesson. In the same school for the year nine and ten classes, the timetable is organised so that the same teacher will take students for English and Social Studies and the same teacher will take maths and science. Students find it easier to learn when they interact with fewer teachers in a day. They can adapt more easily to the voice, the style of teaching, the systems and expectations of the teachers, when there are fewer of them.

- **Holistic care** for individuals was a need identified by the research. Most schools have a separation between their systems of pastoral care, discipline and learning care. It is not often, unless a student is in difficulty, that an adult spends time monitoring and supporting all their needs. One of the schools has introduced a system of tutors, who are like case managers, for each child. Every professional in the school, except one senior manager, is a tutor, which means the groups can be kept to about 15 students. Time is programmed every day for the group to have a period together. This time is spent doing study and homework, as well as on an organised programme of study skills, self-management, life skills, career planning, family liaison, monitoring of health and attendance, self-esteem building and goal setting. There has been a dramatic change in the school climate and attendance patterns as well as an improvement in student behaviour and attitudes to their work.

- A programme of **formative assessment** has been introduced for year nine students in all eight schools**.** This requires teachers to incorporate assessment into their planning, clarify criteria with students, use exemplars, have a combination of self, peer and teacher assessment and involve parents in an ongoing way by sending the work and the assessment home for them to sign and comment on. There is qualitative and some quantitative evidence that the learning has improved for these students. In particular, the components of self-assessment and parental involvement seem to be very important.

- A **parent booklet** was produced for Pacific parents, to help them understand how a secondary school works and what they can do to support their children's learning. This has been published in English and all the main Pacific languages.

- The use of **Pacific radio** to get school information through to parents has proved very effective. Some schools have advertised school events and encouraged parental attendance at report evenings. This bypasses the gate-keeping activities of the children and enables parents to be informed.

- **Two schools have employed community liaison staff**. They are available to visit homes and talk with parents. In one school, the parents of thirty serious truants have been visited and action plans have been put in place for

the students, their parents and the school. Attendance is checked on by the CLOs and, to date, has been almost perfect. The students interviewed said they now know they cannot get away with wagging or truanting. One said it was a relief to have been caught. Another said she had been unable to stop her mother keeping her at home for a range of reasons. One mother was shocked because she had no idea that there had been a problem with her child's behaviour.

- **Homework Centres** have been set up in several of the schools. It was noted earlier that many students do not have access to a desk or quiet place where they can do homework and often have no access to resources at home. Some schools run evening or late afternoon sessions, provide afternoon tea or snacks and have tutors available to help. The time immediately after school seems to be the most effective and least likely to cause problems. Access to the computer databases and help from teachers is greatly appreciated. Some schools are using the library for their Homework Centres and this expands the resources available for the students to use.

- **A student support centre or a coordinated pastoral care system** have been set up in three schools. These involve the coordinated support provided by a qualified nurse, guidance counsellor, social worker or liaison worker, careers advisor and sometimes other specialists. Such a system is able to ensure that all the health needs of students are met in a coordinated way, so there is no duplication and no students falling through the gaps.

- Some of the schools have established **senior mentoring programmes**, two through business partnerships, another through the Presbyterian Church in a nearby suburb and another as part of a Pacific Island initiative with another secondary school. It is important to note that many of the mentors are Palagi, but feedback from students suggests that ethnicity is not an issue.

- There are early indicators that some special programmes are having a beneficial effect on student learning, metacognitive skills, self esteem, career development and/or general behaviour. These include **Project K, Lion Nathan Challenge, You Can Do It, and Mind Kind**.

- Discipline systems are often a problem for schools. It is our observation that the more effective the classroom teacher is, the fewer problems the school experiences. Discipline systems can easily become top heavy with vertical layers of tutors, deans, house leaders and then senior management. Professional time is spent in reacting and dealing with somebody else's inadequacies rather than on proactive school development. Another problem we have observed is that sometimes schools tend to change a good system because one or two teachers are not fulfilling their responsibilities. Senior staff are often reluctant to front accountability issues with individual teachers. Teacher consistency is the key to successful systems. **Assertive discipline** programmes are an answer to this, providing they are actively supported in an ongoing way and providing individual teachers are supported and made accountable for their implementation.

- Self-management systems such as a **learning diary, journal or homework diary** are effective, if students are taught how to use them and supervised in their use. They are often not effective without such support.

5.17 FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO SUCCESS

Remembering that most of the programmes are still in the early stages of their development, the researchers are already able to identify factors within the schools which have contributed towards early success in implementation.

All the programmes were set up because they had been identified, both through research and consultation, as **meeting priority needs**. The exceptions were some aspects of the Business Case projects which the schools did not see as top priorities. In most instances, therefore, there was already ownership by the staff of the initiatives. This has been especially important during the occasions when difficulties have arisen and the desire to make the Project work has provided much-needed motivation.
A school culture of cooperation has been critical. In some of the schools there have been a small number of staff who have either been unsupportive of an initiative or attempted to sabotage it. Each time, this has resulted in complications, a slowing down of progress and unhappy people. In the schools where staff relationships have been more positive, the implementation has been more straightforward. Open discussion of problems, and making time for this to happen, have been very valuable and important factors in their resolution.

As part of the AIMHI research programme, the schools have had assistance to carry out **self-review** and have sought independent feedback on developments as they evolved. A very important component of the **independent research feedback** was passing on the views and experiences of the students affected by the programme. Early and ongoing feedback has enabled the schools to adapt or make minor changes to programmes before difficulties developed into problems.   The **willingness of school staff to act promptly on the feedback** is another success factor.

The **careful selection of appropriate staff** for particular positions and/or roles has been critical. This has sometimes involved appointing someone already on the staff and at other times has meant advertising for a specialist. A nurse, community liaison officer, sports coordinator, 'at risk' teacher and truancy officer are examples of specialists who have been appointed. At times the appointment of the specialists has been difficult because of the shortage of funds and/or the short term nature of the appointment.

Projects have run more smoothly when **school systems are efficient and back up support is available from senior staff**.

Sound and appropriate professional development has been critically important for some projects. It has been needed at the initiation of the Project as well as at

various stages during the implementation. On occasions it has required a school to employ expertise part-time, over a period of time.

Some of the developments have required **facilities and equipment** that have been critical to their success. Medical clinics, a student support centre, special needs and guidance facilities, parent liaison space, performing arts and sports facilities and a welcoming reception area are some examples.

Finally **the extent of the changes and the rate of change needs to be carefully monitored**. Too much, too fast has sometimes resulted in staff being overloaded or in Project developments running into unnecessary difficulties. There is a limit to how much time teachers can take for professional development and planning, without it adversely impacting on their teaching.

Chapter Six

DECILE ONE ISSUES

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter is, in some ways, a summary of much of what has already been discussed in other parts of the report. The researchers feel that it is important to update the position of the AIMHI schools in this context, including new understandings that have emerged from the research data gathering. It is also important to reiterate some of the issues discussed in the 1996 report that are particular to these schools and as important today as they were two years ago.

6.2 DECILE ONE SCHOOLS

Prior to the AIMHI Project, there was little interaction, shared understanding or co-operation amongst these schools or other similar decile schools. There was, and still is, a 'schools-at-risk' group, which meets from time to time in Auckland and which comprises Principals of low decile schools. This was the extent of the support network at that time. Over the last two years a group of low decile primary schools has met in Christchurch[68] and recently a group of central North Island decile one secondary schools has met. There are also 14 Ministry of Education schooling improvement initiatives currently in operation and a number of these involve decile one schools.

Back in 1995, there seemed to be very little awareness, in the education community, of the particular needs and issues relevant to decile one schools (other than by teachers who had worked in them). This was very evident to the researchers, who work with a wide range of people in education, from comments and opinions expressed about equity issues. There is a widely held perception that the extra funding low decile schools get per pupil, more than makes up for the difference in socio-economic status. What people tend not to understand is that the special and extra needs these children have are social and economic as well as educational. The 'extra' funding acts as a substitute for what most other schools get through donations and fundraising. It does not achieve this as well as provide for the extensive range of needs that are evident. The AIMHI schools know what they could do to address most of the needs of their children but current funding/staffing do not allow them to do these things.

There does seem, two years later, to be a greater awareness of the severity of the needs and more understanding of the implications of poverty generally. This has been reflected in newspaper articles, conferences, schools' networks and Ministry of Education support initiatives. ERO reports on schooling on the East Coast and in Northland have demonstrated that it is not just schools with falling rolls in South Auckland that are having difficulties and that there are underpinning socio-economic issues.

There are still some common misconceptions about low socio-economic schools that we hear some Ministry personnel, Principals and teachers in other schools espouse. One of these is the belief that there are many incompetent and/ or racist teachers in the schools. While there were three of the AIMHI schools that had

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[68] There are no decile one secondary schools in Christchurch.

problems with the attitudes and competency of a limited number of teachers, this was a result of poor leadership and appointments made in past years. It did not apply to the rest of the AIMHI schools and, even in the three that had problems, there was always a majority of teachers who are able or exceptional. Over the three years of group discussions, AIMHI students have reported very few examples of racist teacher behaviour. Those that have been described have been limited to a very small number of staff.

Another misconception, that we hear less about than we did two years ago, is that the heart of the problems, and therefore the solutions, lies in effective leadership and governance. This belief is also evident in some of the solutions proposed in reports which, for instance, suggest that a Board of Trustees could govern several schools. What the AIMHI Project has demonstrated is that even schools with highly effective leaders and governors are faced with the same problems. It is clear that poor leadership and/or governance will do a great deal of damage, especially in the long term, but they are not the primary reason that children are not achieving in these schools.

What is very real is the range of serious educational and social needs the children present with, and the lack of resources and facilities these schools have, compared to other schools. This is still the case and it is detrimental to the recruitment and retention of staff. Teaching in these schools is a day-to-day challenge. When teachers are able to choose between a position that is less challenging and well resourced, and one that is more challenging and poorly resourced, it is not hard to see why these schools do not get the same pool of quality applicants as others.

6.3 FALLING ROLLS

Six of the eight schools were in a falling roll situation between 1992 and 1996. This was the period prior to the AIMHI developments beginning. The following data show the percentage roll change over that period, followed by the percentage change since the AIMHI developments began. (Roll data are from the national benchmark indicators).

Table 4:   Roll Change in the AIMHI Schools from 1992-1998

		1992/96 % change	1997/98 %change
School	A	-30	-15
	B	-25	-4
	C	+1	+6
	D	0	+5
	E	-36	+6
	F	-43	-12
	G	-15	+8
	H	-33	+4

It is not possible to get demographic data for precisely the same time periods or for the specific geographic areas served by the schools. However over the period of 1991 to 1996[69], the population of secondary school aged students (13- 17 yrs), in Manukau City, increased by 2.4%[70]. This small increase was not reflected in the roll figures for any of the AIMHI schools apart, possibly, from one. A population study written in 1998[71] noted that "Total New Zealand secondary school rolls have remained reasonably constant over the past decade, despite increased retention rates due, at least in part, to the raising of the compulsory leaving age to 16". What demographic data we do have, therefore, indicate that there are no obvious external reasons for the roll decreases over the 1992-1996 period or for the improvements evident over 1997-1998.

Over the period of the main AIMHI developments (1997/98), there is an improvement for every school, despite major middle school expansion and the intensification of school competition.

Census data on the post 1996 years are not yet available but Ministry planning over this period has been focussed on increases in the primary age range over this period, rather than the secondary age range.

The neutral and small increase schools (1992-1996) are the two that are higher up the parent preference ladder than the others. They have always had full rolls because a significant number of their students come from outside their geographic area. Nonetheless, the nature of their student body has changed steadily over the years as the number of pakeha students has declined and the overall socio-economic status of families has declined (See graph in Appendix F). One of the schools used to be described as a school for working class people. Many of its families no longer have work.

The four schools with the high percentage decrease, prior to 1996, were all severely affected by dezoning, changes in school status in the local area and/or the change to market rentals for state housing. In the past, three of the schools also suffered from poor leadership and negative ERO reports about their effectiveness. In three instances the fall has been changed to a slight increase and in one the rate of decline has slowed. Two of these schools still have vulnerable rolls because local intermediates are retaining their year nine and ten students in order to become middle schools. Some very unethical things have happened in this process. In both instances there has been a stabilising of the retention of students in the secondary schools. One of these schools has had an increase in the number of students staying on for senior years.

One of the four with the greatest decline rate (1992-1996) has narrowly avoided the situation of its main contributing intermediate becoming a middle school and it has a stable roll (increase of 6% in the last three years) as a result. The recent intervention and support from the School Support Project (Ministry of Education) for

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[69] This is the census period that provides us with the most recent data. The Ministry of Education Planning Division provided the data.
[70]   From 20430 in 1991 to 20931 in 1996.
[71] Waitakere City Council (1998). **Waitakere City Population and Schools: New Projections 1996-2016**.

this cluster of schools appears, at this stage, to have prevented the uncertainty and acrimony that has occurred in the two Auckland areas.

One of the remaining schools has had a slight increase over the past eighteen months. It is worth noting that this school has put a significant effort into co-operating with its contributing schools. It has used the area of information technology as a focus.

There has been no further deterioration in roll numbers for any of the eight schools and an improvement, albeit slight, for all of them. The 1999 year will be the end of the 'middle school' expansion phase and, unless some unknown and unpredicted changes occur, it will see the bottoming out of the roll readjustments. Even the two most vulnerable schools should be able to build steadily.

6.4   SCHOOL REPUTATION

Most of the AIMHI schools have had bad reputations, compared to other schools. Some of the reputation is linked to perceptions people have about the local community itself, which reflect on the school. If it is a community where fights and drugs are common, then it assumed that these will be common at the school. This is one of the most difficult perceptions to change in people who do not live in the area. Students in the other AIMHI schools know, and can articulate, the reputation of each of the schools. The students in each school know what others say about their school and feel bad about it, even when it is not their experience as students.

All these schools have suffered from the fallout of the publication of the external exam 'league' tables. Even though the newspapers are no longer publishing these tables the way they used to, at least one Auckland principal recently published and distributed a set which soon became widely available. Most parents in these schools place a very high priority on their children passing School Certificate and they see it as the responsibility of the school to get the children through. Parents do not understand that norm referenced exams, by definition, will produce schools that are below average. Nor do they realise that their children are behind in achievement from the day they enter school, and never catch up. The first national comparison is made at the mid-point of the years at secondary school. Because the primary and intermediate schools tend to send home positive reports about their children's progress, parents often do not realise their children's achievement has always been below 'the national average'. They blame the secondary schools for the failure. The messages from the Review Office have supported this perception by saying that some primary schools in these areas are doing an excellent job. Parents interpret this to mean that their children are achieving at a high level, at that stage, and that it is only after they get to secondary school that this changes.

Three of the schools have suffered from problems with leadership, governance and community conflict, which left a legacy of damage. Over at least the three years, even the most damaged schools have worked very hard to address all the leftover problems from the past. There is no doubt that, inside these schools, the climates are very different from those first observed by the researchers. It is difficult, however, to demonstrate these positive changes to outsiders and they cannot be

measured by statistical means. Bad reputations are not difficult to get but are very difficult to overcome.

Some of the schools have made great efforts to communicate with their parents in order to keep them informed about the positive changes. Since the research showed the extent to which students gate-keep between school and their parents, some schools have started posting newsletters home or finding incentives to get the students to take them. Many school publications have been of a very high standard of production, in an effort to present a quality image.

Four schools have made uniform changes in an effort to generate pride amongst the students and present an attractive public image. This is a dilemma for the schools because they often get feedback from students and parents about not being able to afford to buy uniform items. Because of this awareness some of the schools allow 'any black shoes', 'any white shirt', and/or 'any black trousers' in order to make the cost manageable. This, to some extent, backfires on the schools because the students 'look scruffy' or don't look as though they belong to a 'proper school'. Some outsiders equate this flexibility in uniform requirements with low standards of behaviour and discipline.

Two schools, for whom it was a problem, have made a concentrated effort to keep their students on site during the school day. One of the ways the public makes judgements about a school is how they see students behaving outside of school, especially during school time, including lunch time.

All the schools have also made an attempt to get positive media attention. The six which do not have full rolls have carried out a campaign to get the radio stations, local and city newspapers and television to publish positive stories about the school and/or their students. This positive publicity, along with a lack of negative publicity, has resulted in a very different balance from previous years. The schools are still very vulnerable to media presentations, as the recent publicity about the TB outbreaks demonstrated. Because some families feel that having such an illness is something to be ashamed of, the naming of the schools associates them with that shame.

Overall there is a much greater awareness of the importance of public perceptions and public relations than there was in 1996. Although the schools do not want to have to spend money on promotional materials, they believe that, in this era of marketplace competition, they are forced to do so in order to compete. They have a strong desire to keep parents informed and involved and have been trialling some strategies to improve this aspect of their communication.

6.5   SCHOOL COMPETITION

One of the very positive outcomes of AIMHI has been that personnel from the eight schools have overcome the suspicion and resentment, towards each other, that some of them felt strongly in 1995. They are now working as a collective and co-operative group in order to gain the maximum advantages for the schools, their staff, the parent community and the students. A number of co-operative initiatives

are being planned and some have already brought benefits. An important outcome is the feeling of being part of a group that shares similar problems and can work together to solve them. It is less lonely and individuals feel less personally responsible for all the difficulties, now that there is more shared knowledge.

For three of the AIMHI schools, the relationship with their contributing schools is mostly uncooperative and often antagonistic. This is the cutting edge of the competition for student numbers. Some of the intermediate schools have espoused a middle school philosophy and believe they are doing what their parents want by keeping the children through to year ten. In Ministry organised meetings[72], and on numerous other occasions, the Principals and Chairpersons of three of the schools made a strong point about the mandate they believed they had from parents. A difficulty for the secondary schools is that the messages that are being given to parents are often inaccurate, unfair and misleading. The parents and students often do not get the opportunity to see both options and make a decision for themselves. Rather, they have been exposed to one perspective because the secondary schools have been blocked from having access to parents and students, in order to talk about what they can provide. Students and parents have been 'signed up', sometimes with a range of financial incentives[73] for parents to enrol their students early, before the secondary schools could offer an open day or visit. Some parents who enrolled at the secondary school have sworn the school staff to secrecy, because they felt so strongly pressured by the intermediate school that they were afraid, if the school found out, it would make life uncomfortable for the student. Some parents sent their secondary enrolment forms back to the intermediate school, as requested, and then found[74] they had not been passed on. Students who have moved on to secondary school described, to the researchers, feeling strongly pressured not to do so and were given very negative information about what secondary school would be like for them. These messages included being told that they would *"become bad if we went to high school".*

Overall, there is much ill-feeling between many of the schools and the students and their families have not been given the open choices to which they are entitled.

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[72] The researchers have attended several meetings of the Otara schools, called by the Ministry.

[73] The researchers have copies of a brochure advertising lists of financial incentives to enrol. The earlier the enrolment, the greater the number of incentives. The incentives included having school 'fees' paid, stationery provided free and a free T-shirt and cap.

[74] They became aware of the situation only when they visited the secondary school.

Chapter Seven

ISSUES RAISED BY THE RESEARCH FOR DISCUSSION AND FUTURE ACTION

INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on key issues which have emerged as important over the last two years, and which require further discussion and consideration by a range of parties. Comments are not directed at any particular agency because, in many instances, there is no one agency that alone could make effective changes. Nor is it the researchers' role to advise on "who should do what". Many of the issues are inter-dependent and there may be several ways that the needs could be addressed. It is unlikely that many of the identified needs could be met without consideration being given to possible changes to current legislative, policy, contractual or fiscal constraints. The role of the researchers, through this report, is to describe the needs, identify successful strategies and point to the directions that future action might consider in order to make the necessary changes.

The issues in this chapter are all important. They are not written in order of importance, or in order of what is most urgent. It is vital that the professionals in the schools decide on the priorities and how their schools, with appropriate support, can best deliver a service to their students and their families. This can be achieved through the ongoing partnership with the Ministry that the AIMHI Forum goals articulate.

Enormity of the task

School Support and school personnel are under no illusions about the enormity of the task in which they are engaged. It has been a shock for some of the newly appointed Principals until they have settled into the role.

As well as the great range of issues and needs to deal with, there is still the day-to-day running of the school to manage. There are days when anything extra is more than can be managed.

Many of the initiatives **are** additions to current practice. They are developments that are not necessary in higher decile schools. Some are experimental and require a great deal of physical, mental and emotional energy to drive. Keeping staff motivated is an ongoing challenge.

At the same time, being monitored by researchers and by Ministry personnel in an ongoing way does add extra demands, however well the demands are co-ordinated (and they have often not been well co-ordinated). All schools are working their way through becoming self reviewing organisations and collecting and reflecting on data collected for the purpose. In most schools it is very ad hoc and there are few people with the skills or the time to manage it. The AIMHI schools have been pushed into a relatively high level of ongoing research and reflection. Key personnel have had to learn to receive and use feedback. Many professionals do not find this easy to do, until they have experienced the benefits and can stop feeling personally threatened by feedback that is not always totally positive.

Educational islands

There is a tendency in New Zealand, for the pre-school, primary, intermediate, secondary and tertiary education sectors to operate independently of each other. Teachers in each usually have little understanding of how the other sectors operate and are frequently critical of them. This has become evident as several of the AIMHI schools employ primary/intermediate trained teachers for the junior area of the secondary school. The sharing of skills, perspectives, strategies and knowledge has been very beneficial and often a surprise for both groups.

In recent years, some middle schools have emerged and are claiming that a distinct educational philosophy and pedagogy is appropriate for this phase of schooling. They are in danger of becoming another 'island' in the system.

The educational needs of children change as they grow and develop and as they move through the various sectors. It is not helpful for them, however, to have to hop from one isolated island to another. Children have described to us the stress, trauma and difficulties for them at each of the transition points. They have also talked about the things that their contributing schools did which helped them, and/or hindered them in making the transition. One that we mentioned in the 1996 report still features as being very important: the positivity/negativity and the accuracy of the messages given by teachers about the next level of education.

The transition from intermediate/middle school to secondary school, **at whatever year this occurs,** is usually the most difficult because it coincides with the teenage years and all the emotional and physical issues that are associated with them. It also requires students to adjust to completely new ways of school organisation. Islands also occur within secondary schools with departments often having a very high degree of autonomy. At this stage of the research, feedback from students and teachers in the AIMHI secondary schools indicates that the higher the level at which the student enters secondary school, the more difficulty they have adjusting socially and academically.

Using the research feedback, some of the AIMHI schools have made structural, pastoral care and learning programme changes in order to better induct their year nine or ten students. Without exception, these changes have made significant differences to student attitudes and behaviour. Some systems have resulted in more settled and focussed work habits, more organised students, decreases in lateness and truancy and a higher standard of general behaviour. Students report feeling more confident and less stressed than did their contemporaries of the previous years.

They still report, however, on things that the contributing school and its teachers did that could be improved in order to make the transition even easier.

The isolation of the 'islands' is a characteristic of our education system, as well as a characteristic of individual schools. This separation makes it harder to meet student needs. It is imperative that the professionals on each of the islands has knowledge about, and respect for, the skills and teaching approaches of those on other islands. It is important to note that a number of recent schooling improvement initiatives

require schools to work together on common issues and a number of these involve schools across the sector. It is imperative that more bridges are built and that communication becomes more frequent between teachers as well as schools. Students deserve to look forward positively to every new phase of their education and to have each sector work actively to prepare them for the next.

Teaching at an appropriate level

The AIMHI secondary schools find themselves in a very difficult 'no win' position. Most of their students arrive about two years behind, in literacy and numeracy, what a year nine student needs to have attained in order for teachers to begin teaching programmes at that level. At the same time, parents expect the school to progress the children's learning to the point where they are able to pass School Certificate at the end of year eleven. This means that teachers and students need to cover, on average, five years' work in three years. At the same time they have all the issues associated with many of the students being in an "unteachable state"[75]. The dilemma for the classroom teacher is that if s/he begins to work at the level the students are confident at, they will not cover the year nine syllabus which means they will be behind for year ten. If, on the other hand, the teacher begins the year nine programme, a significant number of students will experience the beginning of the failure cycle because they are not adequately prepared for work at that level.

Another related pressure is that the 'tyranny of coverage'[76] forces a teacher to move through the syllabus at a steady rate without stopping for the students who have been left behind.

As discussed earlier in the report, most parents do not realise that their children are behind average attainment when they begin secondary school and so they blame the secondary school for the failure when it becomes nationally measurable.

It is clear that responsibility for each individual child's progress remains at every level of schooling, including secondary. The unique difficulty for secondary schools is that in the middle of their educational programme, students are assessed and compared nationally.

Some teachers in the AIMHI schools have special revision/remedial programmes that year nine students begin on before progressing to a full year nine programme. Some have worked, and still are working with a four-year School Certificate programme that is carefully planned. It does not just involve repeating a failed year eleven.

There are no easy solutions for these secondary schools other than the types of programmes that are currently being trialled and, for parents to be educated so that they understand the reality. The solution lies in the 'catching up' occurring at the pre-school and early school stage rather than at secondary school. In 1999 the campus junior school will begin a programme which involves double the number of

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[75] Hawk, K. and Hill, J. (1996). **Towards Making Achievement Cool: Achievement in multi cultural high schools**. Wellington: Ministry of Education.

[76] An expression often used by Ruth Sutton in her addresses on student assessment.

teachers working intensively with the new entrants. They will begin with a pre-school education programme and progress to a literature intensive one. This will be a very valuable opportunity, along with the SEMO initiatives, to observe what difference can be achieved at earlier levels.

Separation of student needs

In the 1996 report we commented on the problems associated with the ways secondary schools separate the systems they use for learning care, pastoral care and discipline. Our ideas have firmed up on this problem, as we have watched the schools try a variety of systems.

In the same way that it is not realistic or helpful to separate a child's needs and deal with them in isolation as behaviour or pastoral care needs, it is not helpful for a school to organise its systems in this way. It is easy to see why it is that big schools, with personnel who have specialist expertise, do organise separate systems but, for students, it causes as many problems as it solves.

Most schools intend that the form/tutor/whanau teacher should be the person who keeps track of the needs of the child as an individual, but the reality in most schools is that they do not have time to do most of what would be necessary to achieve the holistic care.

It is also the case that, in most schools, it is the learning care that is least often attended to in an holistic way. Problematic behaviour is the most likely issue to be dealt with because it directly affects others. Well behaved students can often get well through a secondary school before any adult talks with them generally about their progress, health, needs, anxieties and future plans. The children in these schools need a great deal of ongoing help, advice and support and they particularly need this type of holistic care. Some of the AIMHI initiatives are attempting to address this very complex issue. Early evaluations look very positive but the process requires a willingness to look outside the usual systems instead of adjusting small parts of them.

Teacher performance

As is probably the case in almost every large school in the country, there is a small number of teachers in each of the AIMHI schools who are not performing as they should be. Because the learning and social needs of these children are so great, and because working in these schools is so demanding, it is more critical than in other schools that all teachers pull their weight and do a more than competent job.

In three of the schools there were several teachers whose performance was poor enough to warrant action. They had either never been competent, had become lazy or had been professionally neglected. One of the schools made a planned effort to resolve their problems and followed through with action. Some of the problems were dealt with through competency procedures and others have been resolved through attrition.

One of the difficulties has been who decides on what is an appropriate standard of performance. There have been instances where a teacher has not been meeting the needs of students and the school has followed all the appropriate competency procedures, only to be told by the Union that, in their view, the teacher has demonstrated that s/he is competent. The teacher is not teaching in a way that is appropriate or that is meeting student needs, but the school is then afraid of taking further action because it is afraid of Union action.

There have been instances when Union personnel have been very professional and supportive in their approach and teaching quality issues have been dealt with. There have also been cases in which they have protected a poor teacher by threatening the school with action it cannot afford financially. The researchers have found it frustrating to watch the time and effort spent by some schools in professional development and support for some teachers and, at the same time, to hear the same negative feedback from new cohorts of students that we heard three years ago.

Another difficulty that some of the schools have involves the attitudes of some teachers who sabotage important developments because they do not want the changes. The problem for the school is that this is not an issue of teacher competency. It is an attitude and/or behaviour problem that is very hard to define and it is difficult to collect the type of evidence needed to take action. The damage such teachers sometimes do must not be under-estimated and there needs to be an appropriate means of dealing with it. In several of the AIMHI schools there has been a tendency for senior personnel to make changes to a system/programme, or allow it to be less effective than it should, rather than deal with teacher inconsistency.

Dealing with teacher incompetence or attitudes that cause problems is very time-consuming, expensive and stressful for schools and holds up the learning for students, sometimes for many years. Surely it must be the school that sets the standards it requires of its staff and there must be more manageable means than there are at present to deal with teachers who are barriers to student learning.

Ministry intervention

The situations that have occurred in Mangere and Otara, with individual schools making decisions that affect others and finding 'legal loopholes'[77], have come about because there were long-standing problems in some schools for which nobody would take responsibility. Whether what has happened is in the interests of children, in the short or long term, is another issue. This was an era in which Ministry personnel were prevented from interfering with the self-management of

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[77] At this point in time, two intermediate schools were refused permission by the Ministry to change their status to middle schools. They were able to achieve what they wanted anyway by finding another school that would agree to have their secondary aged children nominally 'attached' to their school.

schools[78]. The School Support Project is a welcome change to this policy and an important acknowledgement that there may always be some schools that need help.

How the help is delivered has been an evolving process and has been frustrating in many ways for both Ministry and school personnel. What we have learned in watching these schools is that there have been major advantages in –

➢ The Ministry being pro-active rather than re-active when it is clear that a problem is developing. Offering a cluster of Wellington schools an incentive to co-operate, for example, has prevented the domino effect of recapitations[79] that occurred in Mangere and Otara.

➢ Getting and using research feedback in decision-making. People in the day-to-day management situation are not always able to see things objectively or in a wider perspective and do not always know how serious a situation is or when to ask for help. The placement of skilled people on a School Board is an example of a situation that may never have happened, had the school not been required to do it as a result of the Ministry acting on research feedback.

➢ The cluster, in this instance the AIMHI schools, having a high degree of autonomy and responsibility rather than being guided or controlled by Ministry personnel.

➢ The 'community' being the parents and caregivers of the school, and/or others who are directly interested and involved, rather than some indefinable wider entity with 'representatives' with no connection to this community of interest.

➢ Ministry personnel being open with the schools and the researchers about the day-to-day difficulties they are experiencing. This allows understanding to develop rather than suspicion and anger.

➢ Processes, including formats and procedures, being clarified in writing before a school, group or researcher is asked to undertake the task.

Timelines for change

Most of the AIMHI schools have had falling rolls for some years with all the disadvantages that accompany that situation. These include losing good staff, losing the financial economies of scale, a decline in the purchase of capital equipment and resources, difficulties in maintaining facilities and grounds, contraction of the senior programme, declining community confidence and falling staff and student morale.

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[78] Several officials who were employed by the Ministry at this time told the researchers that this was the case. Recently, AIMHI personnel have had it described to them as the Ministry *previously turning side on, or back on to the schools'*.

[79] Hawk, K. and Hill, J. (1996). **Towards Making Achieving Cool: Achievement in multi cultural high schools**. Wellington: Ministry of Education.

At the same time, some of the schools suffered from poor leadership, which resulted in some problematic appointments. These then created new problems, because of poor teaching, and the decline escalated.

None of these problems are things that can be reversed overnight. The questions are 'how long is it reasonable to expect it to take?' and 'how much can any one school manage at a given time?'. Staff development is a good example. The research identified a number of professional development needs in the schools and funding has become available for this extra development. The teachers, however, still have to maintain their already demanding teaching programmes and cannot take off too much time, even for a legitimate reason like professional development.

School Support Personnel have been very reasonable in listening and making adjustments to milestones and indicator outcomes. In the views of school personnel and of the researchers, the same cannot always be said about the approach taken by the Review Office, as reflected in the short timeframes between re-visits. Public reports which reiterate problems identified in a previous review visit, without giving a school time to address the issues, create a self-fulfilling prophecy situation. The review report then causes problems to escalate rather than being a trigger for action to deal with them.

Clusters of schools

There are several things to learn from the AIMHI Project, about schools working together in clusters. The cluster members need to have interests in common and be willing to work together. The best way for this to happen is for the group to work out for itself how it will operate. If it does not take responsibility for its own operations, it is too easy for individuals to distract the group and for the group not to deal with it.

The logistics of a big group of schools meeting together are difficult but not impossible, if the members believe that something positive will come from it. One crucial aspect of the dynamics is that the same individuals attend regularly. If different people attend, then the continuity of information and decision-making is lost.

Even when schools are in competition with each other, it is possible for them to work co-operatively, depending on the attitudes of the individuals involved. Every member needs to experience the benefits of collaboration for it to be worth the effort.

Choice

From the personal histories described to the researchers by students and parents, it is clear that many of the students in most of the AIMHI schools have not chosen their school. This does not mean that they are unhappy. Students often say that the school was not their choice, but they are happy there. There are certainly students and parents who do not make an active choice, but there are also many who try to, but are unable to go to their school of choice. Many other schools are able to select students who apply from out of the area. If the student is accepted s/he is more likely to be motivated to perform because s/he feels lucky to have been accepted, knowing that the school had a choice.

Most of the AIMHI schools, on the other hand, end up taking students who have been a problem at a previous school and trying to give them another chance. There is no extra recognition or support for the school for doing this and it often puts a great strain on staffing resources.

As recently as this year, a Ministry employee expressed the opinion to the researchers that it might be better if students were supported to bus out of the area to other schools. There are many students in these schools who would not be accepted by any other schools. Often, with the extra support, they make good progress but it seems unfair that there is no tangible recognition of this important contribution to education nationally.

Inequity

The process of selection of schools for particular initiatives is one that has been managed in order for the Government to cope with fiscal constraints. While this is a practical reality, it has resulted in inequities both within the AIMHI group and in the country as a whole. For example, some of the non-Business Case AIMHI schools have many of the same needs as those being addressed through the three Business Cases. While there will always have to be cut-off points and grey areas, it is important that schools that are expected to work together have these issues carefully considered.

The other equity issue that continues to be very obvious is that of the TFEA funding and other funding that is linked to decile ranking. Again the researchers acknowledge that it will never be easy to find the perfect formula, but one only has to walk into the low decile schools to see the inequality of facilities and resources, compared to schools in higher socio-economic areas. If a Government believes that this is an inevitable situation, then it should say so. If a Government espouses equity, then it has not been achieved through our current system of funding schools.

Long term solutions

Finally, and of greatest significance, is the question of the long-term sustainability of the AIMHI initiatives, in particular, and of the decile one schools in general. One of the concerns expressed by some of the Principals at the initiation of AIMHI was that they were looking for the underlying issues of student under-achievement in these schools to be addressed and not just for some short term, superficial solutions to roll increases. They were assured that the Ministry had the same goal and this was articulated in the project goals.

Initially the AIMHI group was told that funding would be available through the project for a period of at least five years. Recently, School Support personnel have made it clear that funding for school-based projects is not going to be available for such a sustained period[80] and that the initiatives the schools introduce need to be self-sustaining. The eight schools have selected a wide range of projects and programmes to trial. Each school has decided what it thinks are priorities for its situation.

Some of the changes that have occurred have not required funding. The leadership changes, and some of the school structural and organisational changes, are good examples. Some initiatives have needed extra support, sometimes financial, to get them underway but **will** be able to sustain themselves in the long term, now that the initial development and re-organisation has taken place. Staff development and support for the tutor system and for the literacy initiatives are examples. Other initiatives, however, are fully dependent on funding to provide a facility or personnel for a specific role. Examples include the employment of specialist personnel such as a nurse, CYPs accredited social worker, an 'at risk' programme supervisor, Tu Tangata personnel, community liaison personnel, and staff to maintain a viable senior programme. These will not be able to be sustained from the schools' normal operating budgets.

The bigger question relates to improvements in student achievement. It is too early to be able to measure such changes. All the initiatives appear to be, in some way or other, making positive changes to student attitudes, health, work habits and learning situations. Each school probably needs to be doing **all** of the positive things that the others are doing. This is not financially viable now, and there is no reason to think this situation will change for the schools. Even if all the schools could incorporate all the positive developments, it leaves the question about how far these positive changes can counter the underlying forces working against achievement, over which the schools have no control. These include the level of attainment of year nine students, family situations and attitudes to education, socio-economic and housing realities, long term health deficits, employment and unemployment and the financial realities of poverty.

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[80] Five of the schools did not receive their project funding until August 1998. At the time of writing, the schools were being given the message that their funds would be reduced for the following year and they should be looking in the immediate future to being financially independent. Even in 1998 the school Principals were led to believe that 1999/2000 would be the end of the funding and, as a result, they discussed the implications of this at a Principals' retreat.

At a meeting with the Minister of Education, and at the most recent Forum meeting, these bigger issues were raised. There were no specific answers given. There is a very high level of hope amongst the AIMHI people that they are being heard and there is a high level of determination to achieve long-term solutions. The AIMHI Project alone does not have the ability to do this.