Welcoming Schools Programme

FEEDBACK REPORT

Inclusivity Strength Analysis

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Welcoming Schools Programme

BACKGROUND

The concept of the Welcoming Schools Program (WSP) was introduced by Global Parents Support (GPS), which was established in 2017 by a group of parents representing diverse cultural backgrounds. The objective of GPS is to foster increased cultural awareness among students, parents, and school staff

The Welcoming Schools Programme was formalized as part of the Welcoming Communities Initiative 2020–2023 Welcoming Plan bringing together local and central government, schools, and communities with the shared goal of creating a more welcoming and inclusive environment for everyone.

The Welcoming Schools Programme aligns with the Welcoming Communities Initiative principle that communities that make newcomers feel welcome are likely to enjoy better social outcomes. By nurturing a sense of belonging and inclusion, everyone can actively participate in the economic, civic, cultural, and social life of the community.
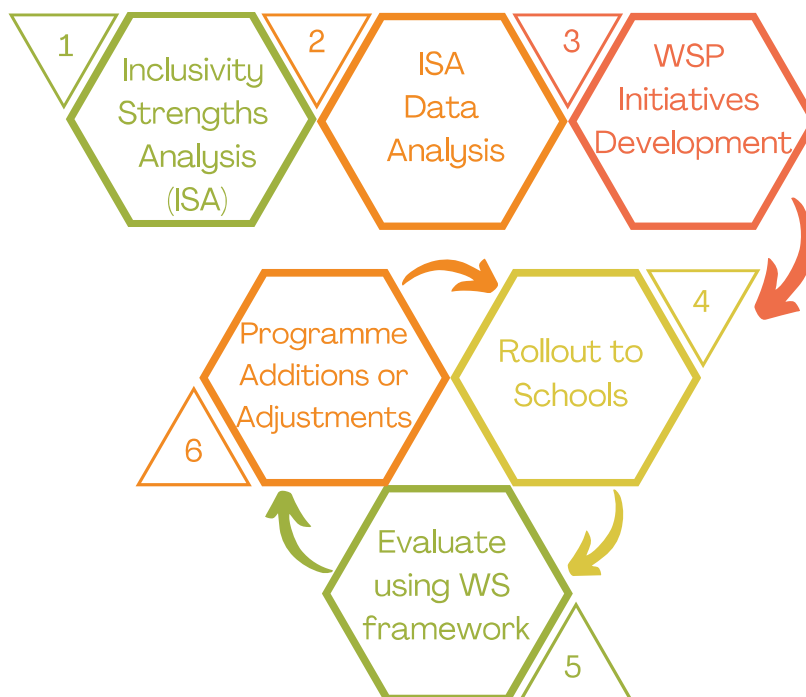
INTENTION

The WSP aims to foster and strengthen cultural inclusion and a sense of belonging through collaborative programmes and initiatives within school spaces in Palmerston North.

Welcoming Schools Programme Framework

The WSP Framework offers a comprehensive approach to examining the aspects of the journey of newcomer students and their families within their new primary school environment. It encompasses 8 essential categories that provide a holistic view of the migrant or refugee family's experience and integration into the school community.

Enrolment & Onboarding	Communication & Support	Connection & Inclusion
Learning & Achievement	**WSP** Framework	Involvement & Participation
School Leadership	School Spaces	Culture & Respect

Welcoming Schools Programme Roadmap

1. Inclusivity Strengths Analysis (ISA)
2. ISA Data Analysis
3. WSP Initiatives Development
4. Rollout to Schools
5. Evaluate using WS framework
6. Programme Additions or Adjustments

Inclusivity Strength Analysis

BACKGROUND

The Inclusivity Strength Analysis (ISA) was developed to gain deeper insights into the effective interventions that foster an inclusive multicultural school environment for newcomer families and to optimize the integration of migrant and former refugee students and their families into the school community. Additionally, the ISA format allowed schools and newcomer families to identify areas where improvements in the integration process could be made with assistance or accommodations.

Voluntary participation in the Inclusivity Strength Analysis was sought from primary schools during term 4 of 2022. School interviews were conducted during the same period, while family/parent interviews began in term 4 of 2022 and concluded in term 1 of 2023. This report for the analysis was compiled and completed in term 2 of 2023.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The ISA delved into the integration of newcomer students and families into New Zealand schools. Interviews with schools and families sought to learn about established processes that work well in integrating newcomer students and families as well as identifying key areas for improvement.

Enrolment & Onboarding – a structured onboarding process was essential for successful integration. Language barriers posed challenges for non-English speaking families. Solutions included language assistance and culturally adapted onboarding.

Communication & Support – effective, culturally inclusive communication is crucial in multicultural schools. 67% of schools indicated a lack cultural diversity representation in communication such as newsletters. Proposed solutions: included access to translation services, bi-lingual teacher aids, staff awareness, and tailored communication for inclusion.

"Connection & Inclusion" emphasized the receiving communities' understanding of diverse cultures. Building connections with support organizations and regular interactions between schools and newcomer families facilitated trust. Solutions comprised the implementation of school based cultural programs, the availability of comprehensive school process information, and newcomer language assistance.

"Learning & Achievement" – newcomer students and families encountered challenges due to language barriers. Solutions included comprehensive language assistance to facilitate communication, newcomer introductory meetings, well supported parent-teacher interactions, and the celebration of all areas of student achievements.

"Involvement & Participation" – optimal newcomer involvement relied on effective communication. Personalized outreach also inspired involvement. Solutions incorporated family participation in school event planning, adapting facilities for diverse beliefs, and accessible communication.

"School Leadership" played a pivotal role in creating an inclusive school community. Solutions involved leadership involvement in enrolment, onboarding, and cultural competence training for staff.

"School Spaces" required culturally inclusive physical spaces. Solutions encompassed showcasing diversity, adapting facilities, and providing cultural learning areas.

"Culture & Respect" addressed inclusivity within schools. School staff cultural competence training and other relevant workshops may facilitate understanding. Solutions also included school-wide communication on topics such as bullying prevention.

In conclusion, the ISA's findings and solutions may serve as a guide for schools to create welcoming and inclusive environments, empowering newcomer students and families in their educational journey.

Acknowledgements

We would like to express our sincere appreciation for the endorsement of Rangitāne of the Welcoming Schools Programme and the Inclusivity Strength Analysis. We further acknowledge the unwavering support and collective vision of the Welcoming Schools Programme Stakeholders. Your dedication to this project has not only made the program a reality but has also paved the way for its continuation into the second year.

The success of the Inclusivity Strength Analysis would not have been possible without the active engagement and invaluable contributions of the participating Palmerston North Primary Schools, and the parents and families who generously dedicated their time to share their insights and experiences. Your commitment to cultivating a welcoming and culturally inclusive environment for all students and families is genuinely appreciated.

Inclusivity Strength Analysis Participation

PARTICIPANT INFROMATION

SCHOOLS

9 Palmerston North Primary Schools participated in the Inclusivity Strength Analysis. Schools were approached and participation in the analysis was voluntary.

The aim was for the school selection process to be as representative of the schools in Palmerston North as possible.
Selection was based on :
1) Geographic Location
2) Number of ESOL Students Registered at the Primary School
3) School Decile Rating

FAMILIES

Family participation in the analysis was through a self-selection process and not as a result of a past or present link or relationship to any of the schools that participated in our analysis.

Number of participating families in Palmerston North:
14 family interviews
9 Migrant families & 5 Former Refugee families

Feedback Format

FINDINGS

Under this section we present a comprehensive overview of insights gathered from the interviews conducted during the Inclusivity Strength Analysis with participating schools and families.

SOLUTIONS

This section encompasses a combination of established school strategies, along with proposed solutions aimed at addressing the obstacles identified by schools and families during the ISA interviews.

PARAGON

The paragon for each category has been drawn from ongoing research, coupled with insights from the Inclusivity Strength Analysis design phase and feedback collected from interviewed schools and families. This model represents the ideal state within each focus area, achievable through process adaptations or external support.

Inclusivity Strength Analysis Findings

The findings of the Welcoming Schools Programme Inclusivity Strength Programme will be presented next.

Enrolment & Onboarding

FINDINGS

The analysis of the enrolment and onboarding processes emphasized the point that this important phase serves as the first point of contact for newcomer families with the New Zealand school system. A well-structured onboarding process significantly benefits the integration of these families into the school community, fostering a sense of support and understanding. It was evident during the analysis that a substantial number of schools have not been able to implement a formal onboarding process.

Schools provided various reasons for the absence of a newcomer family onboarding process:

1. Existing Support Structure: Some newcomer families already have a support network in Palmerston North, such as community or family connections, which they rely on for additional assistance and support.

2. Comprehensive Enrolment Process: Some schools indicated that a well-established enrolment process, which offers sufficient information to newcomer families, reduced the need for an additional onboarding process.

3. Lack of Awareness: Some schools indicated a lack awareness of potential post-enrolment needs or support required by newcomer students and their families, which may result in an underappreciation of the significance of an onboarding program.

One of the most frequently reported challenges encountered during enrolment and onboarding was the issue of language barriers and the lack of translation support. This significantly complicates the process, making it burdensome for both schools and newcomer families. Furthermore, some newcomer families may have limited literacy levels, further exacerbating the difficulties in providing an effective solution.

SOLUTIONS

The implementation of culturally adapted and streamlined enrolment and onboarding processes, considering the cultural and language differences of newcomers, emerged as a valuable solution.

Offering newcomer families access to a designated point of contact within the school, who is culturally competent and knowledgeable about school processes and community support, was identified as beneficial.

Establishing processes to link newcomer families to relevant organizations and programs that aid their integration into the broader community was also suggested.

Additionally, conducting school process information sessions specifically for newcomer families and providing reliable translation or language assistance services were highlighted as essential strategies to improve the enrolment and onboarding experience.

PARAGON

The ideal scenario for enrolments and onboarding is a well-structured process that accounts for cultural diversity and language barriers. This process should build a strong foundation for newcomer families' integration into the school community, identify and address communication barriers, and facilitate optimal understanding and support.

Flexibility, respect, and intentionality in the approach to onboarding are crucial in ensuring a smooth and inclusive transition for newcomer students and their families.

Communication & Support

FINDINGS

One crucial challenge that has garnered increasing significance in an ever-expanding multicultural school community is the need for effective and culturally inclusive communication between schools and newcomer families. This communication plays a pivotal role in shaping positive student outcomes and fostering a sense of belonging and support within the diverse school environment.

Of the schools interviewed, 67% reported that their communication materials, such as newsletters and notices, do not adequately reflect the cultural diversity of their student body. This lack of representation in school communication poses significant barriers to effective communication with newcomer families.
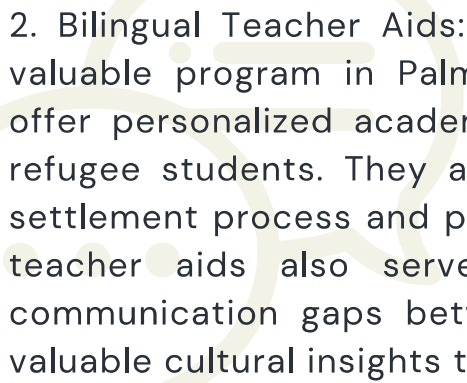
While the minority of schools (33%) have access to resources within the school, such as teachers or bilingual teacher aids that can assist with communicating or translating important information to non-English speaking families, the majority of schools lack such resources. This leaves two-thirds of schools with limited options to improve their communication with non-English speaking families, hindering the effective reach of crucial information.

Many newcomer families reported being left with limited information about school events and activities as a result of ineffective communication. Their ability to participate and provide inputs in school matters is drastically reduced, and a number of parents reported having missed meetings and events due to not being aware of them. Formal parent-teacher conferences also becomes challenging to navigate or don't take place at all.

SOLUTIONS

During the ISA interview process, several solutions were identified that have either been implemented or proposed to address the communication challenges in multicultural school communities:

1. Access to Translation Services: Access to translation services during formal consultations, including parent-teacher conferences, for non-English speaking families. This would ensure that important information is effectively communicated to all parents.

2. Bilingual Teacher Aids: The Ministry of Education has introduced a valuable program in Palmerston North wherein Bilingual teacher aids offer personalized academic, social, and emotional support to former refugee students. They act as mentors, guiding students through the settlement process and promoting their overall well-being. The bilingual teacher aids also serve as bilingual liaisons, effectively bridging communication gaps between families and the school, while offering valuable cultural insights to the school staff.

3. Staff Verbal Communication: School staff can improve their verbal communication with newcomer families by speaking at an appropriate pace and enhancing pronunciation to overcome enunciation differences that may impede effective communication.

4. Translated Greetings and Phrases: Schools can offer translated greeting cards at the school office, particularly in schools with higher volumes of families facing communication barriers.

5. Māori-English Translations: Including Māori-English translations in school communication can foster a sense of cultural inclusion and appreciation within the school community.

6. Staff Awareness: Increasing staff awareness about the experiences of migrants and formers refugees in New Zealand enables them to better support newcomer students and their families.

7. Tailored Communication Methods: Schools to provide translated notices and newsletters or offer verbal communication based on the specific needs of families at the school.

PARAGON

The ideal scenario for cultural inclusivity in school communication involves schools actively addressing communication needs and reflecting the multicultural composition of the school community. In this paragon, families from all backgrounds feel listened to and well informed. Schools collect relevant cultural and background information during enrolment and consultations with newcomer families and share this information with school staff to ensure adequate support. This approach fosters a sense of inclusion and acceptance among families who have made New Zealand their new home.

Connection & Inclusion

FINDINGS

The analysis of Connection & Inclusion in the school environment revealed the critical importance of the receiving community's understanding and appreciation of different cultures and the multitude of challenges faced by newcomer migrant and former refugee families during their integration process.

Such challenges include past trauma, language barriers, differences in culture and religious beliefs, and changes in family dynamics as they assimilate into a new community.

A significant finding was schools' lack of knowledge of or access to organizations and programmes that support migrant and former refugee families in their settlement process.

Several families also revealed that school's limited efforts of direct interaction with them resulted in a sense of disconnect and isolation from the school community as a whole.

SOLUTIONS

Introducing multicultural themes as a regular part of school programmes proved instrumental in promoting a sense of connection and belonging for families from all backgrounds. In this way cultural diversity is celebrated and a greater appreciation for cultural diversity is fostered amongst students and staff.

Providing newcomer families with comprehensive information on New Zealand school processes is essential for easing their integration. Knowledge about school structures and processes helps families navigate the education system more effectively.

School networking sessions with organizations and programs that support migrant and former refugee families can facilitate access to vital resources, further enhancing the integration process and fostering a sense of belonging and inclusion

Cultural competence training for school staff emerged as a critical solution to ensure effective communication and interaction with newcomer families. Culturally competent staff can better understand and meet the needs of students from diverse backgrounds.

Creating opportunities for regular purposeful contact with newcomer families, including seeking their input on school matters and decisions that impact their children, empowers families and encourages active participation in the school community.

Adapting school processes or facilities to accommodate the cultural needs of students is another vital step toward fostering inclusion. Examples include providing Halal food options, allocating prayer space and time, and making accommodations during religious observances like Ramadan.

PARAGON

The ideal scenario for Connection & Inclusion is one where newcomer families feel secure in their identity and sense of belonging within the school community. They are confident in sharing their culture while also being open to learning about other cultures, including that of the receiving community.

In this paragon state, school staff are highly culturally competent, possessing the skills and knowledge necessary to interact effectively with newcomer families from various backgrounds. This competence fosters a strong sense of trust and understanding between the school and newcomers.

Furthermore, the school acts as a bridge, connecting migrant and former refugee families with external organizations that can provide support beyond the school context, enhancing the overall well-being and integration of these families.

By incorporating multicultural themes and celebrations as an integral part of school programs, a school demonstrates a commitment to celebrating diversity and promoting cultural exchange among students and staff.

Learning & Achievement

FINDINGS

The learning and achievement of newcomer students present both opportunities and challenges within the New Zealand education system. Several key findings emerged during the investigation:

Communication Barriers Impact Academic Support: Schools reported that language barriers often hinder effective communication with newcomer families, making it challenging to convey vital information about academic standards and student performance. This obstacle affects the school's ability to provide appropriate support and guidance to students and their families.

Uncertainty in Assessing Student Abilities: Language barriers further complicate the process of assessing student abilities. Educators are often uncertain whether to focus solely on English language acquisition or to provide additional learning support for these students. This uncertainty can impede academic progress and hinder the proper allocation of resources.

Early Childhood Development Impact on Education Outcomes: The standard of early childhood development interventions for children of migrant and former refugee backgrounds significantly influences their education outcomes once they enter the formal schooling system. Like with any student, limited exposure to fundamental life concepts and missed developmental milestones pose challenges to their educational journey.

Varied Academic Challenges for Newcomer Students: Some newcomer families feel that the academic challenges offered to students in school are inadequate for their abilities, leading to unfulfilled potential. Conversely, families of students with additional learning needs believe that their requirements are not adequately addressed through available resources.
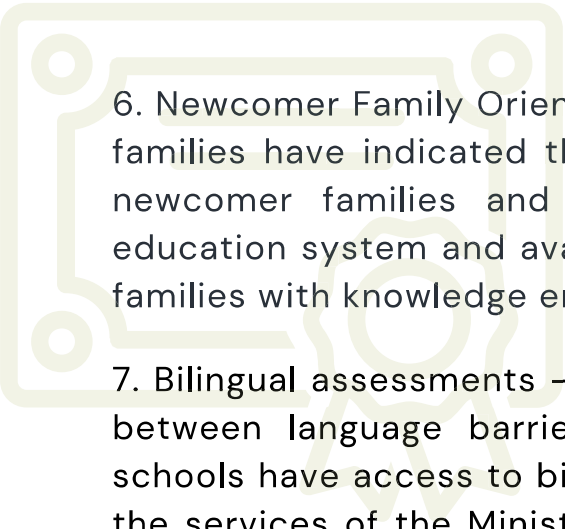
Cultural Sensitivity in Academic Communication: School communication related to student performance is not always perceived as culturally sensitive, leading to misunderstandings and challenges for newcomer families. Some families reported feeling that schools do not consistently support their children due to cultural differences.

SOLUTIONS

To address the challenges identified and maximize the learning and achievement of newcomer students, the following solutions have been proposed or implemented:

1. Pro-active Introductory Meetings: A small number of schools have initiated "before-school-start" meetings between teaching staff and newcomer families to discuss students' social, emotional, and learning needs. These meetings facilitate a better understanding of each student's requirements from the outset.

2. Regular Parent-Teacher Meetings: Implementing regular formal parent-teacher meetings has proven beneficial for providing informative and uplifting feedback on newcomer students' progress. These meetings foster stronger parent-teacher partnerships.

3. Teacher-Led Learning Programs: A small number of schools have introduced practical teacher-led programmes to optimize student learning outcomes. These programs provide targeted support and individualized attention to cater to students' diverse needs.

4. Bilingual Teacher Aids: The Ministry of Education has implemented a programme where bilingual teacher aids from six different former refugee communities in Palmerston North work across a number of Primary, Intermediate and Secondary Schools, providing one-on-one and small group support to former refugee students. These teacher aids serve as crucial mediators, facilitating effective communication between teachers and non-English speaking parents or guardians. They ensure families are well-informed about their child's progress and school activities.

5. Celebrating all areas of Student Performance: Families have noted that schools could move toward celebrating all aspects of student performance, including academic achievements, language skills, sports, soft skills, and individual growth. This fosters an inclusive and encouraging learning culture.

6. Newcomer Family Orientation: During the parent interview phase some families have indicated that schools could do more to actively engage newcomer families and to familiarize them with the New Zealand education system and available learning support resources. Empowering families with knowledge enhances student success.

7. Bilingual assessments – In response to the challenge of differentiating between language barriers and learning difficulties among students, schools have access to bilingual assessments. These assessments utilize the services of the Ministry of Education's Resource Teachers: Learning and Behaviour (RTLB) Service to accurately identify the need for interventions and appropriate support for students.

PARAGON

In a Welcoming School that excels in Learning & Achievement, there is a strong commitment to maximizing educational opportunities for students from diverse cultural backgrounds. Key elements of this paragon include:

1. Understanding and Support: The school prioritizes a deep understanding of each student's learning needs and provides proactive support to ensure their success.

2. Cultural Sensitivity: Communication with newcomer families is culturally sensitive and inclusive, fostering a collaborative environment.

3. Optimal Learning Culture: The school offers tailored challenges to academically capable students and provides comprehensive resources to assist them in excelling. Simultaneously, it offers effective support to students with additional learning needs.

4. Celebrating Success: The school celebrates students' achievements across various domains, encouraging a positive learning culture where every accomplishment is acknowledged and valued.

By implementing these solutions and embodying the paragon, schools can enhance the learning and achievement of all students, regardless of their cultural backgrounds, and pave the way for a more inclusive and successful education system.

Involvement & Participation

FINDINGS

During the ISA, it became evident that effective communication plays a significant role in encouraging newcomer families' involvement and active participation in school programs, activities, and events. Schools that addressed communication barriers experienced a positive correlation with increased family participation.

Language barriers also emerged as a hindrance to family engagement, particularly with written communication, such as newsletters and notices, which may not be provided in a language known to the families or may require verbal communication due to lower literacy levels.

Newcomer families often emphasized that student participation in school would be lower when their customs and beliefs do not align with school programs and processes. This included activities such as student camping trips. It was reportedly rare for schools to consider modifications to their programmes and processes to accommodate the cultural needs of students from various backgrounds.

To enhance student participation, modifications to these processes should be considered to accommodate the cultural needs of students from various backgrounds, such as making adjustments during camping trips, swimming lessons, or organizing Halal sausage sizzles.

SOLUTIONS

Based on the findings from the ISA, the following solutions have either been implemented or suggested as areas of improvement:

1. Adapting School Processes and Facilities: Schools are encouraged to be mindful of the cultural needs of students and their families. This could include catering to various dietary requirements during events and celebrations, providing designated time and space for students to pray during school hours, accommodating religious and cultural practices like Ramadan, and making necessary adjustments during sports events and school camps to ensure broader student participation.

2. Involving Families in Event Planning: Schools can actively involve families from all cultural backgrounds during the planning and execution of school events. Seeking their input and active participation fosters a sense of belonging and ownership within the school community.

3. Accessible Communication: It was requested that schools ensure that all communication regarding school programmes and events is accessible and understood by all families, considering potential language barriers and varying literacy levels.

PARAGON

An exemplary school in Involvement & Participation welcomes newcomer students and families wholeheartedly, promoting their full participation in the school community.

School leadership and staff actively engage directly with students and families, encouraging their involvement in various school activities, such as parent-teacher conferences, assemblies, sports days, and cultural events.

Furthermore, families from all cultural backgrounds have the opportunity to actively participate in decision-making bodies, such as the Parent Representative Body and the School Board. This inclusive approach fosters a vibrant and diverse school environment, where every voice is valued and contributes to the growth and success of the entire school community.

School Leadership

FINDINGS

Schools responses during our analysis showed a wide range of leadership approaches to newcomer families' enrolment, onboarding and continued support at school.
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A small number of schools have put robust leadership-supported or leadership-led processes in place, to foster a welcoming, supportive and culturally inclusive school community. Where these programs are in place it is most often a hands-on function of the school principal or deputy principal.
Examples of such programs/processes include:

- Purposefully structured enrolment processes that consider the background of and challenges faced by newcomer families.
- Additional support processes for families where there are other challenges that do not necessarily fall within the scope of the schools' day-to-day responsibilities.
- Focused programs that promote cultural awareness and inclusivity within the school.

During the ISA interview process, it was reported that newcomer migrant and former refugee families encounter not only the challenges stemming from cultural and language differences but also face obstacles in navigating the unfamiliar New Zealand school system and its day-to-day operations.

School leadership frequently concluded that school induction processes, similar to what is provided to new entrants, would benefit families that have newly arrived in New Zealand.

SOLUTIONS

The following solutions have been implemented or suggested as areas for improvement during the ISA:

1. Active involvement of school leadership during the enrolment process, engaging with newcomer families directly.

2. Regular gatherings between school leadership and newcomer families to establish and strengthen relationships.

3. Enhanced leadership-led onboarding/induction processes, providing essential information about the school, its procedures, and values to newcomer families new to New Zealand and the school system.

4. Leadership's active participation in school cultural programs and events.

5. Implementation of Cultural Competence Training for school staff.

PARAGON

In the paragon scenario, school leaders, whether designated or unofficial, work diligently to cultivate a welcoming and culturally inclusive school community. They are approachable and visible, engaging with families in an open and responsive manner.

Principals and their leadership teams set the tone for the school's cultural awareness and inclusivity. They ensure that staff members attain a high level of cultural competence and provide the necessary tools and resources to create a culturally responsive teaching environment.

During school strategic planning, school leadership establishes clear goals for implementing cultural activities and opportunities to celebrate diversity. School boards seek representation from all cultures within their school community.

Families from all backgrounds and cultures feel confident in the accessibility and cultural receptiveness of their school leadership. They perceive the leadership as attentive and responsive to their needs, knowing that they form an integral part of the school community.

School Spaces

FINDINGS

During the interview process, many schools acknowledged the challenge of creating truly culturally inclusive school spaces and expressed a desire for improvement in this area.

During the family interviews, one notable finding was that a significant portion of migrant and former refugee families felt a lack of cultural connectedness when entering school premises or their children's classrooms. This sense of disconnect was attributed to the perceived underrepresentation of cultural diversity in school spaces.

A small number of schools have taken proactive steps to adapt their programs, processes, and physical spaces to accommodate the multicultural nature of their student body. These changes were aimed at increasing the participation of students and families from diverse cultural backgrounds.

SOLUTIONS

To address these findings and create a more inclusive school environment, several solutions were either proposed or reportedly implemented by schools.

- Having a visible school ground map or pamphlets available to newcomer families.
- Incorporating multicultural books in the library and displaying visual representations such as world maps, flags, and cultural notice boards.
- It was suggested that schools adapt their facilities to cater to the needs of students from all cultural backgrounds including providing designated prayer spaces, considering cultural beliefs in restroom and changing facilities.
- Creating school spaces that allow students to learn about and engage with their own and learn about other cultures. Such spaces may include areas for dance, food preparation and sharing, and cultural art.

PARAGON

The paragon for School Spaces envisions newcomer students and their families feeling welcomed and comfortable in occupying school spaces. It highlights the importance of representing the multicultural nature of the school community in the physical surroundings and providing opportunities for cultural learning and sharing.

By incorporating these strategies, schools foster an inclusive atmosphere that celebrates and embraces the diversity of their student body beyond regular school hours, thus enhancing cultural connectedness among all members of the school community.

Culture & Respect

FINDINGS

School Feedback:

The findings from the school interviews underscored the importance of recognizing and embracing the value of multiculturalism within the school environment.

Some schools expressed a desire to cultivate a more multiculturally inclusive atmosphere akin to the successful implementation of the bicultural component of the curriculum.

It was reported by some schools that their previously implemented cultural events and celebrations experienced a hiatus due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

There were schools who, during the interview process, indicated that they may benefit from external guidance to address incidents of bullying more effectively.

A prevailing recommendation during school interviews was for staff to undergo Cultural Competence training, as this would foster a deeper understanding of students and families from diverse backgrounds.

Parent/Family Feedback:

Parent and family interviews provided a mixed perspective on cultural respect within schools.

While several families felt accepted and respected, others reported instances of discrimination and disregard during school interactions. Some parents faced linguistic racism, which hindered constructive dialogue, while others felt denied opportunities to discuss their concerns due to communication barriers or cultural differences.

Instances of bullying were of particular concern to some families, and they sought school-wide communication and workshops to address this issue effectively. Families also expressed the need for accommodations, such as providing Halal school lunches and allowing time off for religious or cultural celebrations.

SOLUTIONS

Based on the findings, the following solutions have either been implemented or proposed for improvement:

- Cultural competence training for school staff to enhance their awareness and understanding.
- Workshops aimed at fostering cultural inclusion within the school environment.
- School-wide communication and initiatives to combat bullying.
- Establishing check-ins and feedback sessions with families after incidents or extended student absences.
- Education of families on their rights and processes for addressing instances of bullying.
- Accommodating fasting students during Ramadan and supporting cultural celebrations.

PARAGON

An exemplary school demonstrates a shared sense of pride in its culturally vibrant community.

Cultural respect and understanding are fostered through teachers' acceptance of students from diverse backgrounds and the incorporation of cultural elements into the learning environment.

Opportunities to share and learn about each other's cultures, and special events and festivals provide platforms for families to contribute to the school community.

The school proactively addresses concerns raised by families from all cultural backgrounds, establishing an atmosphere of trust and open dialogue. Through ongoing efforts to embrace cultural diversity, the school nurtures a sense of belonging and inclusivity among its newcomer students and families.

ISA Findings Executive Summary

The **Inclusivity Strength Analysis** (ISA) was conducted to gain insights into the processes of integration of newcomer migrant and former refugee students and their families into the New Zealand school system and identify strategies to foster a more inclusive multicultural school environment. The analysis involved interviews with participating schools and families, and the findings were categorized into key areas, along with proposed solutions for improvement.

The first category, "**Enrolment & Onboarding**," highlighted the crucial role of a well-structured enrolment and onboarding process in facilitating the integration of newcomer families into the school community. However, many schools lacked a formal onboarding process, which often led to challenges for schools and newcomer families. Language barriers experienced by non-English speaking former refugee families were highlighted as the biggest factor that impeded the enrolment process. The proposed solutions included establishing avenues of language assistance to assist with written and verbal communication challenges, implementing culturally adapted onboarding processes, designating points of contact for newcomer families, and linking families to relevant support organizations to help with any non-school related assistance they may require.

The "**Communication & Support**" category highlighted the pressing need for effective and culturally inclusive communication between schools and newcomer families in multicultural school communities. Currently, 67% of schools struggle to adequately represent cultural diversity in their communication materials, hindering outreach to non-English speaking families. While some schools have teachers and bilingual teacher aids to assist, the majority lack such resources faced with having to look for help from the community in the rare cases where such support is available. As a result, many newcomer families face limited access to school information, impacting their participation and input in school matters. Proposed solutions include access to translation services and bilingual teacher aids, staff awareness, and tailored communication methods to foster a sense of inclusion and support for all families.

In the "**Connection & Inclusion**" category, the analysis revealed that the understanding and appreciation of different cultures by the receiving community were critical for fostering a sense of belonging among migrant and former refugee families. Establishing connections with organizations supporting newcomer families and promoting regular interactions between the school community and these families was found to be essential for building trust and understanding. The proposed solutions involved introducing culturally inclusive programs and themes within the school environment, celebrating multicultural events and traditions, and providing comprehensive school process information to newcomer families to ease their integration process.

The "**Learning & Achievement**" category explored the challenges faced by newcomer students within the New Zealand education system. Language barriers hindered effective communication with newcomer families, making it difficult to convey important academic information. The uncertainty in assessing student abilities and varying levels of early childhood development also impacted educational outcomes. To address these challenges, the proposed solutions included, proactive introductory meetings with families, regular parent-teacher meetings, teacher-led learning programs, accessing the MoE RTLB Service, and celebrations of all aspects of student performance whether it be individual growth, language skills, soft-skills, sport or academics. Language assistance services would in many cases further enhance the proposed solutions.

The "**Involvement & Participation**" category emphasized the significance of effective communication in encouraging the active participation of newcomer families in school programs and activities. Personalized outreach to families, especially those without existing connections, was found to establish a strong rapport and inspire involvement. The proposed solutions included involving families in event planning, adapting school processes and facilities to accommodate diverse cultural beliefs, and ensuring accessible communication for all families.

The "**School Leadership**" category highlighted the impact of strong leadership support in creating a welcoming and inclusive school community. Noteworthy initiatives driven by leadership at a few schools included purposefully structured enrolment processes and additional support systems for newcomer families. Proposed solutions included active involvement of school leadership in the enrolment process, leadership-led onboarding and induction processes, and cultural competence training for school staff to enhance awareness and understanding.

The "**School Spaces**" category addressed the importance of creating culturally inclusive physical spaces within schools. The findings revealed that a significant portion of migrant and former refugee families felt a lack of cultural connectedness within school premises. To foster a more inclusive school environment, the proposed solutions included showcasing cultural diversity, adapting facilities to cater to the needs of students from diverse backgrounds, and providing areas for cultural learning and sharing.

Lastly, the "**Culture & Respect**" category explored the experience of cultural inclusivity within the school environment. While some schools demonstrated efforts to embrace multiculturalism, instances of discrimination and linguistic racism were reported by some parents and families. To address these issues, the proposed solutions included cultural competence training for school staff, workshops to foster cultural inclusion, and school-wide communication and initiatives to combat bullying.

Overall, the findings and proposed solutions from the ISA provide valuable guidance for creating a more culturally inclusive and welcoming school environment, where school staff feel equipped and students and families feel accepted, respected, and supported in their educational journey.

From Multicultural Schools to Intercultural Schools

The Welcoming Schools Programme Inclusivity Strength Analysis findings in relation to information and guidance from the Ministry of Education and the Education Review Office

In the New Zealand school context, embracing cultural diversity plays a vital role in shaping inclusive school environments. Valuable insights from online resources, including research and guidelines from the Education Review Office (ERO) and the Ministry of Education (MoE), provide guidance on developing effective school programs and processes to facilitate the integration of students and families from diverse cultural backgrounds.

Our investigation into the school integration experiences of newcomer students and families from migrant and former refugee backgrounds highlights the significance of fostering a welcoming and inclusive atmosphere. The correlations we have identified between the WSP Inclusivity Strength Analysis findings, and the guidance and information provided by MOE and ERO emphasize the relevance and reliability of the ISA results serving as a reliable foundation to guide the second year of the Welcoming Schools Programme.

Moving from a Multicultural School to an Intercultural School: Fostering Deeper Connections and Understanding

In today's education landscape, transitioning from a multicultural to an intercultural school marks a powerful shift towards embracing diversity, inclusion, and authentic connections. While both models celebrate diversity, the move to an intercultural approach signifies a commitment to going beyond coexistence, aiming for true integration and mutual understanding among all students, regardless of their cultural backgrounds.

In a multicultural school, various cultures are acknowledged and respected, promoting tolerance for different languages, customs, and traditions. However, interactions between these cultures might often remain superficial. On the other hand, an intercultural school takes it up a notch by actively working to bridge cultural gaps, creating an environment where deep cross-cultural exchanges flourish.

At an intercultural school, cultural diversity isn't just celebrated; it's a valuable resource for learning and growth. Students are encouraged to share their own cultural backgrounds and engage deeply with those of their peers. This involves open discussions, joint projects, and activities that delve into different cultural perspectives, nurturing empathy, curiosity, and a broader outlook.

As the Welcoming Schools Programme (WSP) embarks on its journey towards creating a shift from a multicultural to an intercultural school environment, it's using insights from the Inclusivity Strength Analysis (ISA) to guide it. The goal of nurturing cultural inclusion and a strong sense of belonging through collaborative projects and activities within school spaces, signifies a vision where, in the long-term, community-led initiatives gain traction, ensuring enduring momentum in and around the school environment

EDUCATION REVIEW OFFICE

EDUCATION FOR ALL OUR CHILDREN: EMBRACING DIVERSE ETHNICITIES

IIn March 2022 the Education Review Office consulted with learners, parents and whānau, leaders, teachers and others who shared their experiences, views, and insights through interviews, group discussions, and surveys for the report entitled Education For All Our Children: Embracing Diverse Ethnicities. The final report was published in March 2023 and is quoted below.

The Education Review Office found the following regarding the educational experiences of learners from diverse ethnic communities and their whānau:
- Many learners from ethnic communities achieve well in education. However, there are significant differences across ethnic communities, and within all ethnic communities there are learners who are not achieving well.
- Learners from ethnic communities experience widespread racist bullying, which too often is not taken seriously by their school.
- Learners from ethnic communities often do not feel they belong.
- Education provision does not always reflect what whānau and learners from ethnic communities want.
- Whānau from ethnic communities face barriers to engaging with schools
- Many learners from ethnic communities go on to tertiary study, but pathways are confusing, and, for some, choices are unfairly constrained by teachers' biases.

ERO looked at how are schools meeting the needs of learners from diverse ethnic communities and their whānau. They found that...
- Some schools are already innovating and adopting new practices to meet the needs of ethnic communities. However, we also found schools facing challenges as they adjust, that not all schools are adopting new practices, and many do not know if what they are doing is working.
- Teachers' understanding of their learners, including their culture, is key to learners' experiences at school, but this needs building.

The Education review office found that the implications for education in the future is that...

- Every school needs to be able to respond to increased ethnic diversity.
- Every school needs to be able to tackle racism.
- We need to get better at delivering education for learners from ethnic communities.
- We need to better understand the education experiences and outcomes for learners from ethnic communities and give them a stronger voice in education.
- For Aotearoa New Zealand's future we need education to be good for learners from ethnic communities and their whānau.

Reference:

1. Education Review Office. (2023). Education For All Our Children: Embracing Diverse Ethnicities. Retrieved from: **https://ero.govt.nz/our-research/education-for-all-our-children-embracing-diverse-ethnicities.**

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

THE CULTURAL DIVERSITY PRINCIPAL

The Ministry of Education provides their position on Cultural Diversity in schools and The New Zealand Curriculum.

"The curriculum reflects New Zealand's cultural diversity and values the histories and traditions of all its people."

The cultural diversity principle is the third of eight principles in The New Zealand Curriculum that provide a foundation for schools' decision making.

The cultural diversity principle calls for schools and teachers to deliver a curriculum that:

- reflects our linguistically and culturally diverse nation
- affirms students' different cultural identities
- incorporates students' cultural contexts into teaching and learning programmes
- is responsive to diversity within ethnic groups
- helps students understand and respect diverse viewpoints, values, customs, and languages.

Reference:

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EDUCATION REVIEW OFFICE

CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN SCHOOLS

In 2011 the Education Review Office gathered data from over 200 schools to evaluate the extent to which the principles of The New Zealand Curriculum were evident in schools' curricula. The resulting 2012 ERO report describes how the cultural diversity principle can be enacted in school and classroom curriculum.

The Education Review Office provides their position on what cultural diversity looks like in schools.

In the schools and classrooms where cultural diversity was acknowledged and celebrated:
- teachers were aware of students' different cultural identities
- students' cultural contexts were incorporated into teaching and learning programmes and into the classroom environment
- teachers provided practical opportunities for all students to be proud and share their languages and cultures through cultural groups, special events, and school festivals that celebrated cultural difference
- all students experienced learning contexts from multiple cultures
- there were clear expectations in schools' charters for celebration of diversity, stating the right of all children to feel culturally safe
- boards that had developed such charters sought representation from all the cultures of their school community, and staff were representative of many cultures.

The above text is quoted from the Ministry Of Education.

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Our Stakeholders

Acknowledging our Stakeholders

The Welcoming Schools Programme expresses its sincere gratitude to the founding stakeholders for their unwavering support and invaluable contributions throughout the inaugural year of the project. The commitment and guidance provided by our Stakeholders have been instrumental in shaping the success of our initiative.

Our valued stakeholders include:

– Department of Internal Affairs
– Global Parents Support group
– Manawatū Multicultural Council
– Ministry of Education
– Ministry for Ethnic Communities
– Palmerston North City Council
– Welcoming Communities

As we embark on the second year of the Welcoming Schools Project, we eagerly anticipate building upon the strong foundation laid by our stakeholders to further enhance the inclusivity and cultural richness of our school communities.

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