

Perceptions of Kāhui Ako 2025

Report

July 2025



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Executive summary

In term two 2025, NZPPTA Te Wehengarua invited members to complete a survey on the announced disestablishment of Kāhui Ako. The survey was not a random selection of members.

Who responded

There were 678 responses of whom:

- 21% identified themselves as tumuaki/principals;
- almost all were currently in schools that were part of a Kāhui Ako;
- 54% had never held a Kāhui ako role;
- 28% were currently in Kāhui Ako roles and 14% had previously led roles;
- almost 70% thought disestablishment would have no direct employment implications for them personally.

Favouring disestablishment

Slightly more favoured disestablishment over continuing the Kāhui ako. Support for disestablishment was strongest amongst those who have never had Kāhui role.

The main reasons for supporting disestablishment were:

- The money could be better spent elsewhere.
- They are not seen as value for money.
- Their experience was they don't work well.
- Kāhui Ako teachers get better pay and time than middle leaders.
- They have never supported them.

Some who supported disestablishment were not happy with where the funding was being diverted to, mostly to teacher salaries and units, or were not happy about the process that was followed, primarily the lack of consultation.

Not favouring disestablishment

Disestablishment is not favoured by a majority of those who currently hold or who previously held Kāhui Ako positions.

The main reasons for wanting to keep Kāhui ako were to:

- allow schools to collaborate for the benefit of ākongā;
- support positive changes in teaching and learning practice;
- give classroom teachers a pathway to pedagogical leadership;
- have improved outcomes for students;
- support classroom teachers to be more effective.

A majority of those wishing to keep Kāhui Ako wanted to see some changes, most often:

- All schools being able to be in one.
- An option of secondary-only Kāhui ako.
- More Within School Teachers.
- More open appointment process.
- Increases to the time allowances for the roles.

For those who want to keep the Kahui Ako, the most important initiatives for students they thought would be impacted were:

- Literacy and numeracy initiatives.
- Improving academic achievement.
- Collaboration/networking between schools/teachers.
- Transitions.
- Culturally responsive pedagogy/schools.

For teachers, the most impactful loss of initiatives were identified as:

- PLD (general pedagogy, theory of learning, etc) and inquiry.
- Collaboration with other schools/teachers.
- Meeting student needs.
- Literacy support and literacy and numeracy-specific PLD.
- Alternative career paths.

Aspects to retain

A majority of all responding thought some elements of the initiative should continue, most frequently:

- Collaboration between schools and teachers.
- PLD, mentoring, research opportunities.
- Networking between schools and teachers.

Consultation on disestablishment

95% of principal said they had not been asked by the Minister informally for their opinion on disestablishing the roles and none had been formally approached.

Discussion

The responses showed a deep divide between members in their perceptions of the value of Kāhui ako. They emphasised the lack of objective research evidence on Kāhui ako and why they appear to be highly successful in a number of cases but not so in others.

Several concerns are about structural issues of the Kāhui ako (e.g. the salary rates for the roles).

The responses raise several questions that are important for assessing the potential of Kāhui ako, evaluating the relative merits of alternative initiatives, and also for the potential success or failure of other government initiatives which should be addressed as a matter of urgency.

1. What do we mean by success for the initiative?
2. What supports those perceptions of success or failure?
3. What are the characteristics and behaviours of schools perceived as successful and what are the characteristics and behaviours of those that are not?
4. Are the characteristics of successful schools transferable to others?
5. If so, what practices, accountabilities or supports would be needed to replicate those successful characteristics?
6. What are the lessons and implications for other policy and resourcing initiatives?

Summary

The disestablishment of Kāhui Ako highlights the need for robust evaluation before making major policy changes. It also underscores the importance of sector consultation and the value of learning from both success and failure. PPTA should advocate for structured, evidence-based reviews of all major initiatives to ensure that decisions are informed, equitable, and effective.

About the survey

Methodology

The May 2025 budget announced the disestablishment of Kāhui Ako. In term two 2025, PPTA Te Wehengarua invited members to give their thoughts anonymously and provided a SurveyMonkey link in the Collective News. This was followed up with a reminder in a subsequent Collective News issue.

Who took part

There were 678 replies¹. A disproportionate number (21%) were from members identifying themselves as tumuaki.

Those who replied to the survey were predominantly currently in schools that were part of a Kāhui Ako. Only 1% reported never being employed in one.

Two thirds of responses were from members who currently or previously were in Kāhui Ako roles.

Experience in Kāhui Ako schools	Responses (%)
Currently in a school that is part of a Kāhui Ako	93
Previous school was part of a Kāhui ako	6
Never employed in a school that was part of a Kāhui ako	1

Experience in Kāhui Ako roles	Responses (%)
Not held a Kāhui Ako role	54
Currently a Within School Teacher	19
Previously a Within School Teacher	9
Currently in a Kāhui Ako lead role	5
Previously in a Kāhui Ako lead role	3
Currently an Across Community Teacher	4
Previously an Across Community Teacher	2
Currently have a Kāhui Ako Responsibility time/salary allowance	3

¹ At this level of response the margin of error for 95% confidence for random responses would be 3.7%. When compared with previous randomised survey questions or whole membership votes on Kāhui Ako the indications are that the opt-in survey captured those with strong views from and against rather than a general profile of views.

Impacts on employment

For those with roles with permanent or long-term fixed term appointments in Kāhui Ako, the disestablishment will mean the loss of those roles, along with the loss of the associated salary and time allowances. They will generally return to their original position.

The survey asked all participants what they thought might be the impacts of the disestablishment on their personal employment circumstances, other than those above. They could indicate more than one possible impact. Almost 70% thought there would be no direct employment implications for them.

Expected personal employment impact of disestablishment	Responders (%)
No implications foreseen	69
Will look for middle or senior management/other roles instead of Kāhui Ako role	11
Will try to keep doing the work of the Kāhui Ako role without the time/pay	8
School may try to keep roles going	7
Not sure of consequences	5
Job may be at risk because the loss of Kāhui Ako staffing to the school	4
May leave teaching because Kāhui Ako role and allowances are removed	4
Workload will increase	3
Less effective in their teaching role	2
Inability to maintain programmes	2

For those currently in Kahui Ako roles (31%) the disestablishment may, of course, be more impactful:

“Grateful for the time I have had as an AST in our area. My leadership has grown exponentially and I am thankful for this opportunity. I will now look outside of teaching to continue this leadership journey as there is nothing in my current school and I don’t wish to restart in another educational setting.”

Its very sad that at a time of a teacher shortage, that an initiative such as this which provided extra money and time for the good of our students that it is taken away. As such, many of my colleagues are considering leaving and they feel there is no chance of

promotion in a school such as ours with such limited opportunities. Also, the pay cut is massive in the economic times that we currently live in.

“Keeping expert teachers in schools requires providing ways to make the job manageable. Opportunities to decrease contact time and improve skills is essential. Not everyone wants or should be going for SLT roles and the removal of kāhui roles means that the only way to step up and manage work life balance is to exit the profession.”

“It means I may not be able to afford to keep living where I do which is an expensive place so may need to look for work elsewhere probably overseas.”

Support for disestablishment

Slightly more of those who took the survey favoured disestablishment over continuing the Kāhui ako.

The strongest level of support for disestablishing them was from those who have never had a Kāhui role.

Disestablishment is not favoured by a majority of those who currently hold or have held Kāhui Ako positions.

Support disestablishment of Kāhui Ako	By group (%)			
	All	Had role	Never had role	Principals
Yes	49	25	69	50
No	47	71	26	45
Not sure/no opinion/DNA	5	4	5	5

"I did not see any positive changes or results to come out of the across school and within school roles. I worked at two different schools with these roles. The principals in charge and getting paid \$25000 a year didn't appear to do anything for that money. It was just cream."

"Ultimately, disestablishing Kāhui Ako would be a step backward for Aotearoa's education system, especially at a time when we need more collaboration, equity, and innovation in how we support both teachers and learners. The Kāhui Ako model is not a perfect system, but it provides a framework for collective action that can continue to evolve and improve with the right resources and commitment."

"I have seen very mixed outcomes from the Kāhui Ako. Some teachers with roles worked well and made meaningful contributions to improve learning outcomes for akonga. Unfortunately, many of the roles showed no measurable positive outcome. A lot of money and time was given to the Kāhui Ako positions, but the outcomes did not match this allocation of resources. The over-allocation of time and money was insulting to middle-managers in school and yet there was no attempt to address this over the ten years."

"The cross-school expertise and leadership they bring to the table are vital for driving continuous improvement. Removing these roles would be a huge loss of human capital, and schools may find it hard to replicate the same level of expertise without these positions. One of the key strengths of Kāhui Ako is the collaborative model that allows teachers to work together across schools, share resources, and tackle common challenges. Without these positions, the culture of collaboration may weaken, resulting in more isolated practices and less innovation in teaching and learning."

"They may have been ok for the primary schools. Just not sure what they did. Our secondary school was the only secondary that was part of it but had so much other stuff going on that they didn't fully embrace it. teachers were being paid so much more money and nothing seemed to be happening. and it is interesting that those involved always preempted any conversations with "so much work goes on behind the scenes " but it seemed to be a bit more like let's have a meeting to discuss what to do at our next meeting. I am sure that there were lots of people trying to make changes and working hard, but money could definitely be better spent. When Deans are getting one Unit 5000 for their role, and yet within school leaders getting 8000. across school leaders are getting more than Learning area leaders! I think it is a good thing they are going."

"I feel that in some schools these roles have not improved practice or student outcomes for other teachers to see and therefore no acknowledgement of the good work Kāhui Ako roles can do - this is a problem of the leadership in those schools rather than the Kāhui Ako program itself. In other schools these roles are clear, well defined and the teachers share knowledge openly with other staff for their development and for improved student outcomes - it is in these schools where the loss will be more greatly felt."

Some supported disestablishment, but were not happy with where the funding was being diverted to, and others were not happy about the process that was followed.

Support disestablishment of Kāhui Ako	All	By group (%)		
		Had a role	Never had role	Principals
Yes	34	16	49	36
Yes, but not the process	8	6	10	6
Yes, but not the use of the funding	7	3	10	8

Those unhappy with the process felt that the problems were:

- No consultation with PPTA Te Wehengarua.
- Announced as part of budget.
- No consultation with other sector groups.
- Not an evidence-based decision.
- Not part of coalition party agreements/election manifestos.

Those who wanted the money spent differently wanted it directed to:

- Increasing teacher salaries/units.
- Teacher aides in our classrooms.

- Increased learning support for secondary and composite schools.
- Increasing operations grant funding.
- More professional development for teachers.
- More support staff in schools.
- Increased teacher staffing.

Other alternative uses for the funding referenced in the general comments were:

- Additional staffing for middle management and deans.
- Improved working conditions.
- Neurodiverse support.
- Pastoral care.
- Paying teacher registration.
- Reducing class size.
- Teaching Assistants.

Support for making changes

Amongst those not supporting disestablishment, over half wanted some changes to Kāhui Ako.

Support disestablishment of Kāhui Ako	All	By group (%)		
		Had a role	Never had role	Principals
No	20	32	9	21
No, but some changes are needed	27	39	17	24

The main changes to Kāhui Ako identified among those who did not want them disestablished were, in order of frequency:

- All schools should be able to get into one.
- Should be able to have secondary-only Kāhui ako.
- More Within School Teachers.
- More open appointment process.
- Time allowances increased.
- Pay rates reduced relative to middle leadership rates.
- More formalised accountability of and within schools.

“I believe the system needs to be overhauled. Kāhui Ako were a big ask after so many years of pitting schools one against another, you can’t expect instant successful cooperation to occur. I think the aims and processes needed to be introduced and implemented in a more structured manner to start with.”

“The Kāhui Ako is a good initiative to encourage collaboration between schools by sharing expertise, resources. Unfortunately, there is little guideline and structure how each role is expected to work. The inconsistent effort and impact of each role lead to unbalanced workload and performance.”

“Sometimes the processes around hiring kāhui ako staff was not transparent enough. Some schools used the funding for pet projects of the principle or for staff disgruntled at missing out on a role. Some staff sat in roles but did not deliver much. There needed to be more accountability and more rules around hiring and the roles available. At times the primary/secondary relationship was good. At times it meant the majority

of PD was targeted to the primary schools since there were always more of them in the kāhui.”

Reasons for keeping Kāhui Ako

The main reasons given by those who indicated they did not support the disestablishment were predominantly that they:

- allow schools to collaborate for the benefit of ākonga;
- support positive changes in teaching and learning practice;
- give classroom teachers a pathway to pedagogical leadership;
- have improved outcomes for students;
- support classroom teachers to be more effective.

Reason to retain	Mentions (% supporters of continuation)
They allow schools to collaborate for the benefit of ākonga	80
They support positive changes in teaching and learning practice	76
They give classroom teachers a pathway to pedagogical leadership.	72
They have improved outcomes for students	65
They support classroom teachers to be more effective.	61
They allow development in schools of education theory and associated practices.	57
They are cost effective ways of providing professional development	56
They provide a pool of mentor teachers to support classroom teachers	53
They provide important alternative career options	50
They allow the exercise of personal professionalism.	46
They support positive changes in student behaviour	41
The roles have helped retain teachers who may otherwise have left teaching	35
They reduce disengagement and truancy amongst students	29
They have reduced competition among local schools	24

“We had a lot of Iwi involvement and when has that happened at a community level in Education. We were also piloting a role with local Police. As they know the wider whānau across generations they were able to work with our community in a holistic way.”

“Across school PLD ... department days are extremely helpful. The full days of PLD with all primary and secondary skills aren't as helpful. Within school leads needs to continue, one person (SCT) cannot manage teaching practice of all teachers in large schools”

“Teachers being able to drive inquiry and improve practice at their kura and their cluster kura, for the benefit of ākonga outcomes.”

Reasons to disestablish Kāhui Ako

Those that supported disestablishment were asked why they supported disestablishment. The main reasons given were that the money could be better spent elsewhere, they are not seen as value for money and their personal experience was that their Kāhui ako did not work well

Reason to disestablish	Mentions (% supporters of disestablishment)
The money could be better spent elsewhere	85
They are not seen as value for money	76
Their experience was they don't work well	55
Kāhui Ako teachers get better pay and time than middle leaders	44
They have never supported them	20
They make work for teachers	19
Don't know what they do	15

"In my experience it was money wasted on projects that did not benefit teaching and learning. Any PD I have received as part of the project was not useful and took time away from me preparing for lessons."

"My experience of Kāhui Ako in our school and the collective was terrible. We were one of three secondary schools in amongst mainly primary school members of the Kāhui Ako collective. We saw very little benefit returned to our school, the member of the Kāhui Ako collective from our school was away a lot due to her role in Kāhui Ako and other trips associated with her in-school role which put pressure on acquiring relievers or in-school teacher cover. The return for the amount that she was paid was comparable to our Deans and just about a DP's equivalent of units and nowhere near the amount of work or benefit was seen in our school. If there had been, definite benefit back to our school, 'value for money' for us as well as the collective, I would have more support for the initiative. The fact that it could become a permanent role, without more stringent KPI's followed up, under these circumstances was frustrating and in my opinion unfair as to workload and benefit for our school. "

“Our one was a shambles from the start. There were 30 schools across primary and secondary, all different. And no real obvious goals that were relevant. Lots of grandstanding but nothing worthwhile.”

“I was a within-school teacher for 2 years, for most of that time I had no real idea what I was meant to be doing for the role and can confidently state that all our schools work made no educational difference whatsoever. The across school leads had mixed results, some were fantastic, but others were absolutely useless and appeared to gain the role as they were a leader amongst the school but didn't have any management units at the time.”

Aspects of the Kāhui Ako that should continue

All members responding to the survey were asked if there were aspects of Kāhui Ako that should continue. A majority said there were.

Are there aspects which should continue?	Responses (%)
Yes	51
No	32
Not sure	17

The most frequently referenced aspects were:

- Collaboration between schools and teachers.
- PLD, mentoring, research opportunities.
- Network between schools and teachers.
- Keep everything.
- Non-management leadership pathways.
- Role functions or specified roles.
- Initiatives that support students.
- Transition initiatives.
- Work on culturally responsive practices.

“They have potential to work in areas of weaknesses that the education system might not even be aware of yet.”

“The exciting ability to pursue solutions to the 'big questions' in education! Who else has time allocation to do this?! This is a gift of the KA system. We have been able to research and collaborate to make change on major issues in education, such as equity, well-being, and now Generative AI”

“I understand not all Kāhui Ako were using their resources effectively, however many were. Schools that were meeting student/staff needs with the targeted work of those in Kāhui Ako roles were doing a great job - losing these initiatives and people is going to be a significant loss to everyone.”

Impact of loss of initiatives for students

The key programmes for students that will be affected

Members who did not support the disestablishment were asked to identify any programmes in their school that they thought would have an impact on students if lost. The most frequently referenced programmes or initiatives were:

- Literacy and numeracy initiatives
- Improving academic achievement
- Collaboration/networking between schools/teachers
- Transitions
- Culturally responsive pedagogy/schools
- PLD related to improved student outcomes
- Student welfare - hauora, wellbeing initiatives, behaviour, student support, careers
- Specific programmes
- Community liaison/connection
- Attendance initiatives

Some specific initiatives mentioned were:

- Academic tracking
- Academic deans
- Assessment for Learning
- Evidence-Based Decision Making
- Trauma informed practice
- Pasifika Education
- Pasifika Success (PILOT) initiative
- Relationships First
- The Pulse initiative
- Gifted and talented
- Wellbeing surveys

"I feel we will miss out on the opportunity to collaborate with the local schools in our area and the student who come to our school won't feel as prepared as they have done previously when starting College."

"Based on previous data it would be the transition and relationships for our Pacific and ELL learners/families that would be missed. Without the consistency and opportunity to build relationships it could take more time and resources to engage them."

“The majority of programs that support student outcomes and teacher development within our kura are driven by kāhui ako members.”

Impact of loss of initiatives for teachers

Members who did not support the disestablishment were asked to identify any programmes in their school that would have an impact on teachers if lost. The most frequently referenced programmes or initiatives were:

- PLD (general pedagogy, theory of learning, etc) and inquiry
- Collaboration with other schools/teachers
- Meeting student needs
- Literacy (support and specific PLD)
- Alternative career paths
- Teacher support for teachers, PCT support
- Resource and information sharing
- Culturally responsive pedagogy/schools
- Transition

“We need to continue the kāhui ako because it is one of the only initiatives that actually improves pedagogy in nz schools, nz is so far behind the rest of the world academically, and teachers do not have the skills (and certainly not the time) to make the changes needed. Kāhui ako gives teachers in nz BOTH of those things, ultimately enabling our country to prosper.”

“Will make it more difficult for small and isolated schools to share practice and access expertise.”

“The benefits of connecting between primary schools and secondary are immense and have supported change in our practice as teachers. With the Kāhui gone, primary and secondary will return to separated silos that blame each other for perceived failings.”

Consultation with principals

There were 139 replies from members identifying themselves as tumuaki/ principals. This is 27% of all state and state integrated secondary and composite school principals. 59 were currently in or had previously been in Kāhui Ako leadership roles.

They were asked about the nature of the consultation they had been engaged in with the Minister over the disestablishment of the Kāhui Ako. Two percent indicated they had been approached informally by the Minister about it; none were formally approached.

This suggests that the Minister sought advice on the disestablishment of Kāhui Ako, informally, from fewer than a dozen principals from the secondary/composite sector, and may have been approached by half a dozen others with advice.

Nature of consultation with Minister	Principals' responses (%)
Not asked for advice and did not offer any	95
The Minister spoke to them informally about it	2
They approached the Minister with advice	1
Not sure	1
Formally approached by the Minister for advice	0

Discussion

Consequences

Disestablishing Kāhui ako is one of the most significant decisions by a government in education since the decision to implement them in 2014. From whichever position you view the change, it has consequences.

For individuals, there is the loss of income and of an alternative career option. Although most impacted teachers indicated no immediate impacts on their plans, some may leave teaching. Some may try to go into the limited number of middle and senior leadership roles available.

For those supporting it, those consequences may be perceived as minimal for students as their Kāhui Ako wasn't seen by them to be improving things. It might be that irritation about inequities between role holders and middle and senior leaders is eliminated. They may see that the return to full teaching loads for role holders as beneficial.

For those opposed to it those consequences may be perceived to be the loss to students of effective programmes in literacy and numeracy, transition support, and the loss of support and effective PLD for teachers, collaborative networking, and data sharing. Gains made in teaching and learning practice and in culturally safe practice may be lost.

Funding will be redirected into new initiatives, though mostly in the primary sector and not into areas most members answering the survey wanted it directed into. The funding will provide new initiatives, but these have not been rigorously assessed for likely success and may have variable outcomes.

Teacher workloads may increase, workloads may decrease, possibly in the same school at the same time.

"Loss of staffing is huge in a small area school"

"Will put teachers back in the classroom."

"This will make it infinitely harder to retain and recruit staff and will mean that precious positions that support student achievement and engagement in the school may be lost."

"Critics argue that these funds could be better spent directly supporting students, particularly those with additional learning needs, rather than sustaining a bureaucratic structure with questionable impact."

"We have built a strong community of learning within our Kāhui Ako and collaborate efficiently to support our learners - I hope this will not be lost."

"I imagine the workload will be distributed back to other leaders in the school."

“For teachers who don’t want to be in middle management it is a great opportunity to get some extra units. Also great for high equity schools to retain staff. These are typically harder to staff.”

Issues of structure

Several issues raised by those responding to the survey are structural.

1. All schools should be able to get into one

“The problem with the whole scheme is that not all schools could be part of it. because of our location and the original parameters we could not be part of the collaboration. From our point of view lots of schools got lots of funding and opportunity, but many missed out altogether - and could not join up later when the parameters changed.”

The blocking of some schools from access to a Kāhui ako is the consequence of a budgetary decision made by successive governments since the 2018. It is not in itself a feature of the Kāhui ako model, and can be changed by a decision of the minister. The original parameters of the scheme also made it difficult for some schools.

2. There should be the ability to have secondary-only Kāhui ako

A core intent of Kāhui Ako/IES was to promote collaboration between schools along the student’s pathway.

Having secondary-only Kāhui ako implies primary-only ones too, which would mean changes to the funding model to allow those to be viable as the bulk of resourcing in a typical Kāhui ako lies in the secondary school as a function of its relative size.

3. There should be more/fewer Within School Teachers/Across School Teachers

The number of WST and ASTs is set by the government and could be increased, though this would require increased funding, or decreased by agreement. PPTA has previously indicated that there are too many Within School Teachers.

4. The time allowances should be increased or reduced

The time allowances were set in 2014 and have not been formally reviewed since then. They could be adjusted by changes to the collective agreements

5. Pay rates reduced relative to middle leadership rates

There is widespread agreement that the rates for Kāhui ako roles are out of relativity with middle and senior leadership roles, particularly in primary schools, and the responses in the survey reflect an elevated level of discomfort with this from those who support disestablishment.

Another way to look at this is as a relative undervaluing of the middle and senior leadership roles in schools. This has been progressively addressed by increasing the value of unit and management allowances since 2014 while leaving allowances for the Kāhui ako roles untouched.

6. There should be more formalised accountability of and within schools

There is no formal accountability mechanism built into the Kāhui ako other than the National Advisory Panel for Kāhui Ako Lead and Across School appointees. Accountability between and within schools for the proper appointment of Within School Teachers and the use of Kāhui Ako resources is professional accountability, reliant on the individual boards and principals within each Kāhui Ako.

In part, this is mirrored by the absence of a formal ongoing evaluation of the outcomes of the Kāhui Ako individually and collectively against the local goals and the broad policy intent of the IES.

These are choices made by the government in 2014, and subsequent governments, rather than inherent aspects of the model. Structural issues can be addressed without disestablishing a programme. A 2018 PPTA conference paper addresses many of the structural issues and suggests ways to address them. [Conference Paper - Improving the community of schools model](#)

Issues of effectiveness

The most contested view presented in the responses to the survey was whether the Kāhui Ako were effective or not. Responses to this survey² represent two entirely different pictures of them in this regard.

To summarise those dual views, they are either providing overpaid sinecures for some teachers, which are not producing results but increasing workload for other teachers, or they are great opportunities for the professional growth of teachers who can lead innovation in teaching and

² A 2018 survey indicated the largest group of members were those who were ambivalent about kāhui ako. Formal voting has always given a clear majority in favour of their underlying purposes.

learning, provide important professional development and support for other teachers, and producing tangible improvements for students.

The less involvement there is in the kāhui ako the more likely the former view prevails, but some members who have been in the roles also express that view. Conversely, members who have been engaged in the roles are more likely to express the alternative view, but so are some who have never held any of the roles.

“This in my opinion has not benefitted my school, I do not see any evidence of how it has improved any aspect of teaching, learning or management in my school. It has also been difficult with the current lack of relievers. Often relief for Kāhui Ako is given to staff who are already overloaded. “

“Specifically, the one I work in is strong, and the people in their roles work extremely hard with their passion and time to support other kaiako to improve outcomes for their taura. I understand that people believe some kāhui ako aren't using the funding and resourcing to the best of their abilities and it is possibly wasted. However, working in a school that serves a community of children who live in poverty, we work hard with our kāhui ako to use our time, resourcing and funding to improve their lives, make a difference, and support each other to support them as much as possible.”

“In my recent experience the KA was not taken seriously by my current school's SLT. The Principal simply used it as a means to reward their favourites with KA positions.”

Some members were able to make direct comparisons about effectiveness between different schools/kāhui ako.

“I have a friend who works at a school where it seems the system is working well. It is not at our school. It would be a shame if all the good work that some schools are doing disappears. If the funding is gone from our school it will make no real difference to outcomes. Other places it will make a big impact. ...”

“My current school does it well and has lots of great mahi to share with others. My previous school was adding nothing.”

Issues of evidence – drawing lessons

“I would like to understand why the positions were removed, what criteria were being measured & why the sector was not allowed to reflect on & make improvements.”

The decision to disestablish Kāhui Ako was made without presenting clear evidence that redirecting its funding will lead to better outcomes for students or schools. While PPTA supports change that is considered, evidence-based, and properly resourced, the Minister did not consult with the sector - principals included - nor did they provide any evaluation to justify ending the initiative. This lack of transparency and engagement undermines confidence in the decision-making process.

Initially, there was to be an ongoing programme of evaluation and assessment of the IES initiative, but it was dropped unilaterally by the Ministry early in the process. In retrospect, it is clear that the sector, including PPTA, should have actively lobbied harder for the continuation of that longitudinal evaluation of Kāhui Ako. This was a missed opportunity – especially once the moratorium on creating new ones was imposed. Without a structured evaluation, we were left with anecdotal evidence and mixed perceptions. Some members reported strong, positive outcomes from their Kāhui Ako, while others experienced little benefit or even additional pressure. This suggests that success was highly context-dependent, and that a more nuanced understanding was needed before making system-wide decisions.

Rather than asking whether Kāhui Ako were effective or not, a more useful approach would have been to investigate what attitudes, practices and conditions led to success and how those could be supported or replicated across the system. Key questions should have included: What does success look like in this context? What practices, supports or structures contributed to that success? Are those factors transferable to other schools or clusters?

Evaluating the characteristics of successful Kāhui Ako could have revealed adjustments to structure or practice or supports that might improve outcomes nationally. It could also have identified cost-effective ways to scale local successes and highlighted the preconditions necessary for future initiatives to succeed. Understanding these factors would help avoid the patchwork success that often accompanies national education reforms.

Perceptions of success or failure should also have been tested with data. For example, if a principal believed their Kāhui Ako improved student attendance, that perception should have been supported by comparative data, clear links to specific initiatives, and evidence that those outcomes were directly tied to the Kāhui Ako structure. Similarly, if there is a perception that there was no impact in their school, then that perception could be tested empirically. Without this kind of evaluation, decisions risk being based on anecdote rather than evidence.

Finally, the lessons from Kāhui Ako could have informed future policy and resourcing decisions. If success was not achievable in all contexts, then it would be important to ask whether new initiatives are likely to succeed more broadly, or whether they too will face similar limitations. A structured evaluation would have helped identify what supports are necessary, what barriers exist, how to constructively engage school leaders and teachers in the initiatives, and how to design initiatives that work across diverse school environments.

In summary, the disestablishment of Kāhui Ako highlights the need for robust evaluation before making major policy changes. It also underscores the importance of sector consultation and the value of learning from both success and failure. PPTA should advocate for structured, evidence-based reviews of all major initiatives to ensure that decisions are informed, equitable, and effective.