



Evaluation of the Community Liaison Role (CLR) Trial

Summary of interim findings



Evaluation of the Community Liaison Role (CLR) Trial

Summary of interim findings

Community Liaison Role (CLR) Trial

The CLR Trial provides financial and staffing allowances to recognise and support the work that teachers/kaiako do to support the achievement, wellbeing and retention of ākonga Māori and Pasifika students in secondary schools. This mahi includes activities such as mentoring students; fostering family and community involvement and cultural engagement; and providing opportunities for teachers to develop their cultural leadership skills within the wider school community.

The Ministry of Education funded the CLR Trial across 66 schools and kura in Tairāwhiti, Te Tai Tokerau, Wellington, Otago/Southland, and Waikato. Each role has been allocated at 0.04 Full-Time Teacher Equivalent (FTTE) and \$1,000 per annum. Kura located in Tairāwhiti have received a higher allocation than kura in other regions, which enables a comparison of the impacts of the CLR trial between regions.

The Ministry and the PPTA commissioned Allen + Clarke and Mana Pounamu to evaluate the CLR Trial. The purpose of the evaluation is to assess the effectiveness and impact of the CLR Trial on achievement, wellbeing, and retention of ākonga Māori

and Pasifika students. It also provides insights about kaiako wellbeing, workload, and activities undertaken to support ākonga Māori and Pasifika students at kura.

The evaluation will answer three overarching key evaluation questions (KEQs):

1	How well has the CLR been implemented in schools/kura?
2	How effective has the CLR Trial been in achieving its intended outcomes?
3	How did outcomes vary given the different formulae used in the allocation of allowances?

These overarching KEQs are supported by investigative questions that explore what differences the CLR Trial made for kura, kaiako, ākonga, and whānau and community.

The CLR Trial, and the evaluation, will run for two years. This report summarises the early findings of the evaluation, after the Trial has been in place for one year.

Evaluation methods

The evaluation data was collected through the following methods:



Online surveys

Three online surveys were conducted with kaiako in community liaison roles to gather data on kaiako activities, workload, wellbeing, and perceptions of support and recognition.



Online interviews

Online interviews with CLR kaiako in Term 2 2024 to explore their mahi, workload, and observed changes in ākonga.



Site visits

Site visits to four kura in Tairāwhiti and Porirua, to kōrero with kaiako, tumuaki, and ākonga. These interviews explored how the CLR was implemented and adapted in each kura, the support provided to kaiako, and any changes in kaiako workload and wellbeing, ākonga outcomes, and whānau/community engagement.



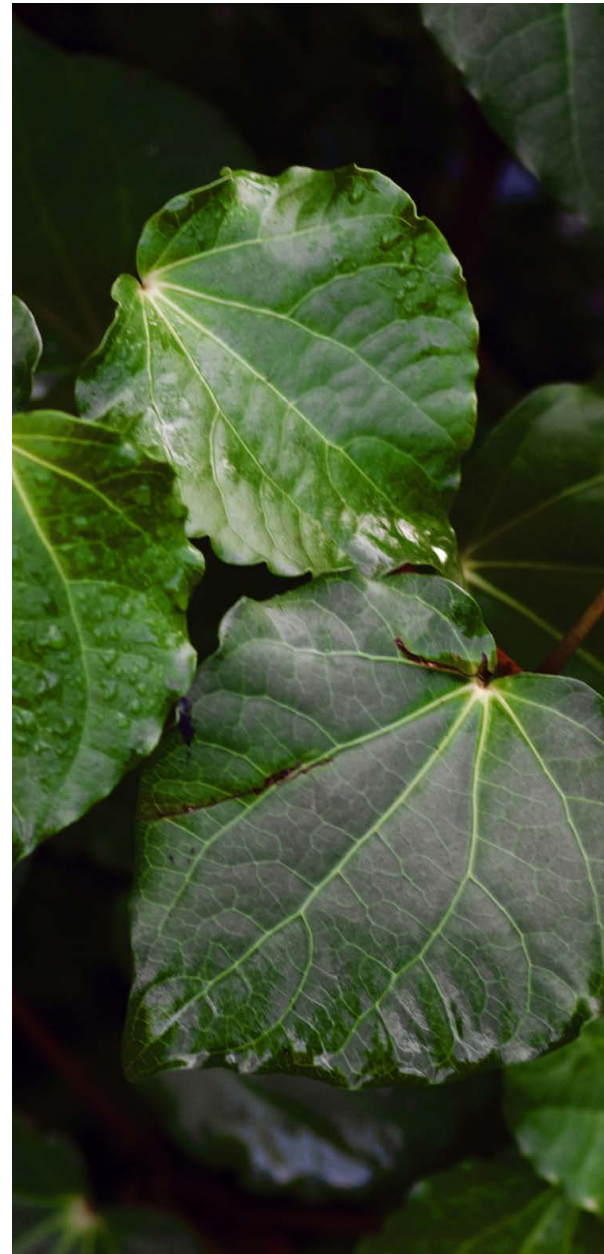
Experience diaries

Experience diaries completed by CLR kaiako at the end of each term reflecting on their community liaison mahi, challenges, and insights.



Self-assessment

Kura self-assessment against an Engagement Framework, which was developed to demonstrate ways kura are working to address inequitable ākonga outcomes and are supporting the kaiako who are engaging with the community to support this.



Interim findings from the evaluation

KEQ 1

How well has the CLR been implemented in kura?

Kura are using different approaches to the CLR, adapting it to fit what works best for their school and community.

Each kura has been allocated CLR roles based on the number of ākonga Māori and Pasifika students at the school. The roles can be distributed according to the needs of each kura.

About two thirds of participating kura have distributed the allowances to individual kaiako, who have scheduled time for CLR mahi as part of their weekly timetables. In most of these kura, CLR kaiako have scheduled weekly time for community liaison work, whereas in a minority of schools, kaiako are offered two flexible days per term that can be used as needed for community liaison activities.

The interim evaluation found that the CLR is flexible enough to meet the diverse needs of kura, allowing them to tailor activities to their unique cultural contexts and priorities. Kura have generally woven CLR roles into their existing activities to support ākonga Māori and Pasifika students. The CLR Trial has enabled kura to strengthen cultural initiatives, formalise pastoral care systems, and create pathways for kaiako cultural leadership that reflect local community needs.

The CLR allowance has enabled kaiako to focus on individual ākonga needs, providing personalised support and building stronger relationships with ākonga and whānau

CLR kaiako are engaging in a variety of activities to support ākonga Māori and Pasifika students. The most common activities are mentoring, tracking student progress, and supporting cultural initiatives such as kapa haka and Pasifika performing arts. CLR kaiako also play a crucial role in educating non-Māori staff about tikanga Māori and effective teaching strategies for ākonga Māori. These activities require substantial time and effort from kaiako but have proven effective in engaging students.

Most CLR kaiako reported that they have long been involved in supporting ākonga, whānau, and communities, and do not view the CLR as introducing new responsibilities. Instead, the allowance has enabled them to expand or dedicate more time to existing activities and provide more tailored support. For example, kaiako have more time to dedicate to building relationships with individual students and their families, resulting in increased student participation and engagement.

The CLR has provided important recognition for the mahi that kaiako were already doing.

Kaiako expressed that having a formal role, financial allowance and time allocation bestows mana on their community engagement efforts, empowering them to advocate for, and implement changes that benefit, ākonga Māori and Pasifika students. This acknowledgment has legitimised their expertise and increased the visibility of their work.

Most CLR kaiako report receiving good support from the senior leadership team at their kura, with many feeling that their community liaison mahi is well-supported. Regular check-ins with senior leadership and the provision of practical assistance, such as funding and classroom release time, are common support mechanisms. However, kaiako in some kura faced resistance to initiatives like developing dedicated spaces for teaching te reo Māori, and others struggle with inadequate funding and classroom release time.

Ākonga value having kaiako that they can turn to for support

Kōrero with ākonga Māori and Pasifika students found that they appreciate that kaiako focus on them as individuals, are familiar with their cultural background and recognise the impact of home life on school performance. They value having specific kaiako who they can turn to for support, which creates a secure environment in which they can discuss any successes, challenges and ask for advice.

When asked to describe the support they receive in a single word, students offered responses that directly reflect the cultural responsiveness of these roles, including: "manaakitanga," "whanaungatanga," "safety," "inclusive," and "ihi" (power/energy). These descriptions demonstrate how CLR kaiako have successfully created environments where ākonga feel like they are valued.

Whānau engagement has been a priority for CLR kaiako

There have been substantial efforts by kaiako across different kura to strengthen relationships with whānau, hapū, iwi, and Pasifika communities. Whānau engagement has been a priority, with kaiako focusing on understanding the broader family context behind student absences and participation. Whānau are engaged in kura through direct communication, participation in cultural activities, hui, and wānanga to foster a supportive environment. Kaiako highlighted the importance regularly meeting with whānau to collaboratively plan for student engagement.

Engagement with hapū and iwi varies significantly between kura. Some report increased mana whenua presence and trust, with kaiako acting as representatives to liaise with Māori organisations and local rūnanga. However, other kura identified gaps in strategic iwi relationships, indicating a need for more intentional engagement approaches. Similarly, engagement with Pasifika communities has been inconsistent.



KEQ 2

How effective has the trial been in achieving its intended outcomes?

The workload remains high for kaiako in CL roles

The evaluation found that kaiako in community liaison roles have a demanding workload. They reported spending an average of 12 hours per week on community liaison mahi. The CLR time allocation for this role is an average of 1.6 hours in most regions and 2.2 hours in Tairāwhiti, showing that kaiako are going above and beyond their formally allocated hours.

This highlights the significant time commitment required for holistic support activities, including mentoring, whānau engagement, and providing pastoral care. CLR kaiako responsibilities often extend beyond kura hours, into evenings and weekends.

The CLR Trial has provided recognition of community liaison work

Despite the heavy workload, many CLR kaiako find fulfilment in their community liaison work, recognising its positive impact on ākonga and community relationships. For many kaiako, these responsibilities have been a longstanding part of their teaching role. Formalising the CLR has enhanced kaiako feelings of being valued through formal recognition, financial acknowledgment, and increased visibility of their cultural work. Appreciative comments from ākonga and whānau further reinforce the importance of their contributions.

However, balancing the demands of the role with personal life is challenging. The evaluation found the majority of kaiako

find their work stressful 'sometimes' or 'often,' with little change over time. A small proportion of kaiako said that they are at risk of burnout, highlighting the need for appropriate support from kura leadership.

There are indications that CLR kaiako support ākonga to feel a sense of belonging within their kura

The interim findings on ākonga Māori and Pasifika students' sense of belonging and wellbeing suggest that while it is too early to draw definitive conclusions, there are positive early indications. Students at one kura reported feeling that the school environment had become more inviting due to increased cultural activities and the supportive presence of their kaiako. These activities have helped ākonga feel more connected to the school, enhancing their sense of belonging and wellbeing.

Regarding attendance and retention, the evaluation has not yet identified systematic improvements, but qualitative data reveals numerous reports of more regular attendance and improvements in academic performance. Kaiako attributed these gains to enhanced communication with families and targeted support for students facing attendance challenges. The emphasis on cultural initiatives has also made school more relevant and engaging for students, motivating them to attend regularly.

The CLR Trial provides dedicated time for liaison work, which helps kaiako to work with individual ākonga, providing tailored support. Personalised approaches involving whānau and community connections have positively impacted student engagement and participation.

KEQ 3

How did outcomes vary given the different formulae used in the allocation of allowances?

Kura in Tairāwhiti received a higher number of CLR allowances than other regions, to enable a comparison of trial outcomes.

Kaiako in Tairāwhiti and other regions report a similar time commitment to CLR activities of just over 12 hours per week. However, Tairāwhiti kaiako report a higher average CLR allocation of 2.2 hours per week, compared to kaiako in other regions who report an average CLR allocation of 1.6 hours per week. This indicates that the CLR allocation is covering more of the actual time spent on community liaison mahi in Tairāwhiti.

The survey asked kaiako whether they have enough hours allocated for this work. While the majority of kaiako across all regions feel they do not have enough hours allocated, Tairāwhiti kaiako are more likely to report having 'more than enough' compared to other regions.

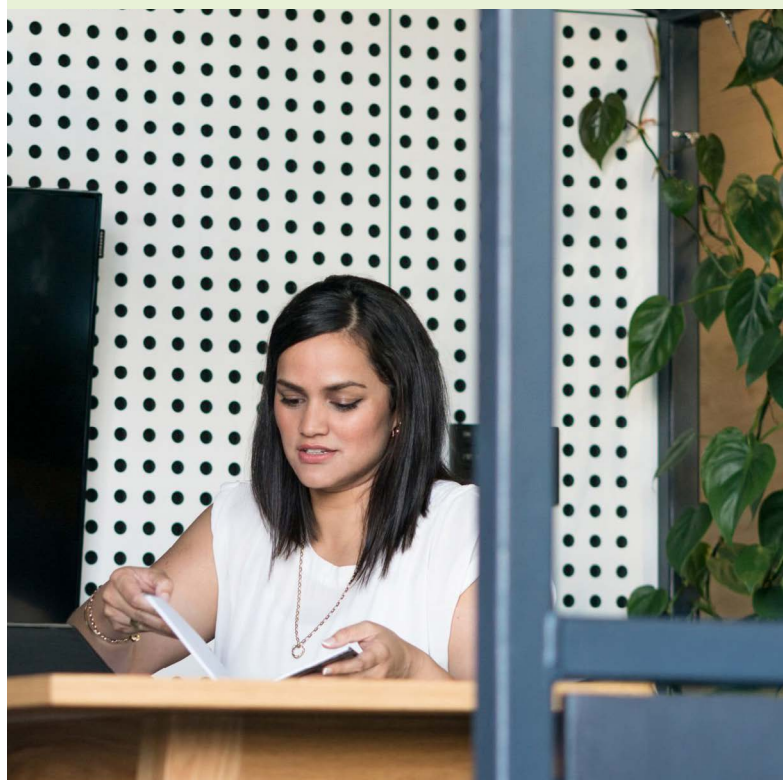
The survey also compared how stressful kaiako found their work and how satisfied they are with work-life balance. At this stage, there were no noticeable differences between the experience of CLR kaiako in Tairāwhiti and those in other regions.

Next steps

The CLR Trial will continue until the end of Term 1 2026. The evaluation will run alongside the trial, and will continue to collect data through surveys, experience diaries and visits to kura to kōrero with kaiako, tumuaki, and ākonga. The focus of the data collection in this period will mostly be on outcomes.

Kura will also be asked to complete another self-assessment against the Engagement Framework, which will enable the evaluation to measure shifts in community engagement practices and maturity.

A full evaluation report which covers all the findings from the CLR Trial evaluation will be available in July 2026.



Any questions?

Please feel free to contact the evaluators:

Marnie Carter from *Allen + Clarke*

mcarter@allenandclarke.com

Pounamu Aikman from *Mana Pounamu*

pounamu@manapounamu.co.nz

