

Accomplishments, challenges and reflections: The voices of Kāhui Ako practitioners

A report by the
New Appointments National Panel
Date

*Ehara taku toa i te toa takitahi. Engari he toa takitini
Ko koe ki tēnā, ko au ki tēnei kīwai o te kete*



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Summary

This is the second report by the Kāhui Ako New Appointments National Panel (NANP). Our first report, *Collaborative practice emerging across Kāhui Ako: Ten Trends*¹, published in November 2021, outlined our Panel's collective observations about trends in collaborative practice emerging across Kāhui Ako.

This report presents the voices of reappointed Kāhui Ako Leaders and Across School Teachers (ASTs) gathered through two open-ended surveys conducted early in 2021. We coded all responses to the survey questions (see Appendix 1: Survey Questions) and analysed these to identify what respondents wished to say about current practice in Kāhui Ako.

The observations and reflections of reappointed leaders and ASTs identify developments that have taken place, and some point to the possibilities for the future of their Kāhui Ako roles. These Kāhui Ako voices are an endorsement of the power of collaborative endeavour. Effective Kāhui Ako are building relationships across educational settings and providing significant value in bringing education communities together; they report that the diversity of participants is making collaborations richer.

Leaders and ASTs not only described shifts in teacher practice and resulting benefits for ākonga, but they also enabled us to see the potential of Kāhui Ako to help solve some of the previously intractable problems challenging our education system.

We were excited to hear of the support for a significant upswing using assessment data to inform, drive and monitor change, not just big system-wide data, but the small data that belongs in each school and each classroom. Data is being used to make a difference. Teachers across Kāhui Ako told us about sharing data from collaborative inquiries, along with ākonga achievement and other data at transition points. ASTs' comments described gathering 'robust', 'consistent', 'mana enhancing' data collected by 'judicious use of tools' to provide a 'unified whole picture' across the Kāhui Ako.

Respondents told us that inquiry and evaluation processes bring structure and rigour while nurturing continuous improvement. We heard about many examples of research-based inquiries and enhanced evidence-based practices. Our respondents described and celebrated how these processes are changing teacher practises and ākonga learning.

Reappointed leaders are feeling recharged and refreshed by the opportunities provided by the leadership role. Reappointed ASTs see their ability to work strategically and to 'see and be' a part of the big picture in a wider professional endeavour across schools as a career bonus. They enjoy developing strategic and action plans and aligning their work with the strategic plans of schools. Both groups are motivated by the opportunity to make a bigger difference to student outcomes.

Leaders applaud the growing pedagogical knowledge of ASTs and Within School Teachers (WSTs). ASTs talk knowledgeably and passionately about the expertise and resources they are now accessing, and their enthusiasm for facilitating the translation of educational research into improved classroom practice shines through their comments.

Many WSTs are progressing to AST roles, and a number of ASTs are winning leadership positions, ensuring an increasing number of pedagogically well-informed School Leadership Team members. ASTs and WSTs are 'expanding' what might constitute the roles and practices of educational leadership, not necessarily in management.

Opening and expanding new pathways to educational leadership remains a key objective of the IES policy. The voices from this survey are empirical evidence of sustainable steps towards the realisation of that system shift.

1 See <https://www.educationcounts.gov.nz/publications/schooling2/workforce/collaborative-practice-emerging-across-Kāhui-Ako-ten-trends>

Leaders and ASTs spoke of a strong focus on connecting with mana whenua. They provided eloquent examples of ways of ensuring that Māori voice is heard, Māori aspirations acknowledged, and collaborations and partnerships with mana whenua are established and leveraged. Their responses provided a clear indication that commitment to Te Tiriti and a focus on cultural responsiveness is very strong across Kāhui Ako. However, it is important not to underestimate the steps between developing an initial connection with iwi and the significant partnerships that 16% of respondents have developed with iwi.

Respondents drew our attention to their enabling of a direct voice for mana whenua (not necessarily iwi) in the design and delivery of a local curriculum for their tamariki.

Many Kāhui Ako see student pathways as being of fundamental importance to their mahi. This has encouraged a blossoming of cross-sector dialogue leading to greater awareness of other sectors and many examples of collaborative initiatives focused around transitions. Early childhood providers are increasingly acknowledged and included as essential partners, and there are calls for their participation to be resourced and formalised.

The potential of Kāhui Ako to advance national education imperatives such as better supporting priority learners, strengthening culturally responsive practice, advancing STEM and introducing changes in refreshed curriculum areas is clearly evident.

The feedback we received also lays bare just how challenging it is to lead successfully in an environment that requires lateral leadership. The overwhelming sentiment from ASTs is that principal buy-in and their willingness and ability to collaborate are critical in Kāhui Ako success. Leaders' conception of their roles and their skills in leading across a network set the conditions for collaboration across the Kāhui Ako.

Leaders and ASTs told us that challenges that can cause slower progress include: lack of shared clarity about roles and responsibilities; inefficient systems and processes; mixed engagement, participation and commitment to working together; and difficulty ensuring a coherent learning pathway for ākonga because of the nature of the schools that make up some Kāhui Ako.

Leaders voiced disappointment at the apparent wider-system disinterest in what they are achieving and disappointment in what they perceived as a lack of system appreciation of the lessons being learned. Their comments also lamented the professional jealousy experienced by some ASTs and the tenuous nature of Kāhui Ako momentum.

Respondents suggested ways in which Kāhui Ako roles and conditions might be strengthened. Suggestions included calls for increased time and tenure to enable all Kāhui Ako roles to support the in-depth change leadership required. There were also requests for increased clarity to ensure national consistency for the most important aspects of each role. At the same time, there were some calls for increased flexibility to enable the roles to be designed in ways that are more responsive to local conditions.

The insights Kāhui Ako leaders and ASTs shared with us illustrate how Kāhui Ako are modelling significant improvements to the ways in which we can collaborate to improve teaching and learning. Their insights and experiences challenge us to reimagine what our education system might become.

The report

The report begins with an introduction that briefly outlines the intent of the Kāhui Ako | Community of Learning policy, the three school-based roles designed to support it, the role of NANP, and the response rates to the two surveys.

This is followed by Part 1, which outlines the findings from the Reappointed Kāhui Ako Leaders' Survey and Part 2, which outlines the findings from the Reappointed ASTs' Survey.

Introduction

Kāhui Ako | Communities of Learning have been operating in Aotearoa | New Zealand, since 2015. The intent of the policy is to improve equity and excellence by encouraging school, teacher, whānau and community collaboration of a different order than has been the historical practice. A second goal of the policy is to strengthen the teacher workforce's professional capability and pedagogical effectiveness over time through teacher-led innovation and improvement; in this way, whole-system change is to be effected from within individual classrooms. Schools and Kura within a Community of Learning are resourced to allow time for teachers to work together to improve ākonga transitions across their education pathways and tackle local achievement challenges, drawing on leaders, teachers, whānau and community skills, knowledge and experience.²

The Community of Learning | Kāhui Ako initiative included the establishment of three new roles to facilitate the Communities to work towards their goals: Kāhui Ako Leader, Kāhui Ako Across School Teacher and Within School Teacher. The guidelines for the appointment of these roles was agreed between the Ministry of Education, New Zealand Post Primary Teachers' Association (NZPPTA), New Zealand School Trustees' Association (NZSTA), the Secondary Principals' Association of New Zealand (SPANZ) and the New Zealand Educational Institute (NZEI Te Riu Roa).

The NANP supports Kāhui Ako in the assessment, review and reappointment of people to the Kāhui Ako Leader and AST roles. The Panel consists of 11 independent advisers³ selected for their experience and expertise in the assessment and evaluation of teacher and leadership practice. Each Kāhui Ako is assigned a Panel member to support them in the assessment, review and reappointment of people to the Kāhui Ako, Leader and AST roles.

The independent Panel provides quality assurance and consistency to the sector and Crown and ensures that accomplished practitioners are appointed to leader and AST roles.

Our NANP role has enabled us to follow the progress of all Kāhui Ako across the country since 2015.

In early 2021 we surveyed 128 Kāhui Ako leaders and 258 ASTs who had been reappointed to their positions after two years. We believed that reappointed Leaders and ASTs had the experience and credibility to comment on the role and provide useful insights.⁴

We received responses from 144 (56%) of the 258 reappointed ASTs⁵ from 85 Kāhui Ako and 69 (53%) reappointed Kāhui Ako leaders in 65 individual Kāhui Ako. These response rates, the considered and fulsome reflections that made up many of their 1,900 comments, and the high-level consistency of views about value and improvement have led us to assume that those reappointed respondents who did not reply to the survey are likely to hold similar views to those synthesised here.

2 A very brief summary of the policy intent of IES is in Appendix 3.

3 See Appendix 2: Panel Members.

4 Reappointed Leaders and ASTs have been at least two years in their role.

5 Responses were received from 85 of the 170 Kāhui Ako across the country who had reappointed ASTs.

Part 1: Reappointed Leaders

About 60% of leaders were reappointed after two years in the role. These reappointed leaders have some characteristics in common. First, they have generally been judged by their peers to have been sufficiently successful in their first two years to be worthy of reappointment and second, the leaders must believe in the value of the Kāhui Ako and their own ability to lead, to wish to put themselves forward again.

These two characteristics mean that reappointed leaders have approached the survey from reflecting on their practical experience and could be seen as holding an optimistic perspective of the policy. While this perspective may or may not be shared by Kāhui Ako leaders who did not seek reappointment, the fact that such a large proportion of leaders were willing to offer themselves for a further term, and that the survey found such strong commonality of positive views across respondents, shows that most leaders believe that the Kāhui Ako model has considerable merit.

The key findings that emerged from our survey of leaders are outlined below.

Kāhui Ako offer significant value in bringing education communities together

Kāhui Ako leaders' responses were almost unanimous in their view that Kāhui Ako offer significant value. When asked, 'What value can you see in Kāhui Ako at this time?' two-thirds of leaders mentioned increased collaboration across their schools and communities and many added descriptors such as 'better' or 'huge' or 'invaluable' collaboration. Around a quarter of leaders also commented on the advantages accruing from a 'greater sense of community', the 'increased sharing expertise and practice' and the 'strengthening of professional relationships'.

- *It is helping schools work together for the improvement of student outcomes. There has been too much competition in the sector for too long... The Kāhui Ako allows for an opportunity to collaborate widely to help meet our shared vision and goals.*
- *For us it is bringing coherence to education delivery across the schools. The sharing of professional capital has increased. There is a greater depth of collaboration across the schools, facilitating better outcomes for students.*
- *This work has been invaluable in strengthening our pathway and building stronger collaboration for our schools. It has also assisted our whānau in transitioning between the sectors.*
- *HUGE value - it has brought our community together and created a sense of belonging for all educators. The Mana of iwi has been hugely enhanced. Many teachers have had leadership opportunities and schools (and ECEs) are working together and sharing great practice.*
- *Creates collaboration and cohesion between schools. The sharing of strengths of staffing between schools. Better opportunities for professional development.*
- *The coming together collectively as a network of professionals to address the issues we face for many of our tamariki is vital in providing a seamless educational pathway for all young people.*
- *The traction around collaboration and sharing of pedagogical knowledge is awesome.*

The potential and the concept of Kāhui Ako lived up to or exceeded most leaders' expectations

Given respondents to the survey were reappointed leaders, it is not surprising that 100 % already held a positive value position. They all believed in the concept of collaboration and saw the potential of Kāhui Ako. Some 58% of reappointed leaders have found that their implementation experience strengthened their positive beliefs in the concept and potential of Kāhui Ako, and a further 26% did not change their initial positive view of the value of Kāhui Ako. However, 16% report that, while they still believe in the value of working collaboratively, their experience has made them more circumspect as to the value of the Kāhui Ako model.

Respondents believe that their Kāhui Ako is resourced to help make their vision a reality, and they can see the ongoing benefits of across-school interactions resulting in growth in teacher practice.

Those leaders whose expectations were exceeded report the change is deeper and wider than they expected. Those leaders appreciate their ability to prioritise for their unique environment. They also believe that their Kāhui Ako is evolving to meet the needs of their community and that it is strengthening over time. Building a shared vision collaboratively was seen as a beneficial action.

Respondents provided many examples of sharing resources to meet needs in particular contexts, for example, shared social workers or counsellors working one day per week in primary schools.

- *I see the value being much broader. I have seen that secondary teachers can learn a huge amount about pedagogy and supporting wellbeing from working with primary and intermediate colleagues – also strengthens student transitions. Early on we looked at wellbeing, Māori student and whānau engagement, pedagogy, positive psychology, connection with iwi, student agency, etc. This was a master stroke as schools did not feel a hierarchy of successful or not – they all could contribute.*
- *It has made us more aware that as a community of schools we, the principals and the teachers, are here for our local community. We must ask the questions, listen to the answers and act upon the answers given by our community. We need to listen and hear the aspirations of our school communities. Yes, we can share our thinking, but we need to be more connected with our communities. Having created a strategic plan for our Kāhui Ako has created more clarity for the schools within our Kāhui Ako. It has also become an umbrella for most of our school's individual strategic plans. The plans of our schools should reflect the work of the Kāhui Ako. The Kāhui Ako should not be seen as an add on. It is the work of our collective schools.*
- *The level of support that we can provide one another, as school leaders, has changed over time. This mutual support has been invaluable, especially for the 13 principals, as each school has faced emergent challenges throughout our time working together. Our focus on what we can do to support learners and teachers has developed further into what we can also do to support our leaders, and our Boards.*

A small number of respondents report that their experience is not yet meeting their initial expectations. Key reasons expressed by the leaders who felt that their Kāhui Ako had not lived up to their initial expectations included: changes in leadership which had impacted negatively; the reluctance of some schools to commit, competing demands on schools, the inflexibility of the framework as they understood and applied it, and the demands of the time, energy and coordination needed to lead large Kāhui Ako.

- *The ‘framework’ is a problem... I was part of a cluster of 8 schools that worked together very effectively pre Kāhui Ako because we had initially a shared need and then developed relational trust to continue to work together both as leaders and as with staff. Sadly, this has been lost. Current Kāhui Ako are too big, there has not been a relational trust developed. Transition to High school is not a natural progression for a majority of some of our students for some of our schools.*
- *I always saw the value in them and continue to do so BUT when I first began in the role, I assumed that there would be more immediate collective enthusiasm and participation of school staff within the Kāhui Ako as a whole. Unfortunately, the nature of the Kāhui Ako roles as set by the Ministry means that many staff in schools see the work attached to them as ‘additional to’ or ‘extra on top of’ the numerous foci that schools have to engage with. The busy nature of schools means that Kāhui Ako focus and work can be pushed to the side by other initiatives or be seen as the job of Kāhui Ako staff and Kaahui Ako staff alone. This means the CoL Leader and Across School leaders spend a lot of time motivating and trying to engage staff across all schools. Whilst we have actually been quite successful with this it takes constant time and energy and cajoling at times!*
- *For Kāhui Ako to work effectively all schools need to be onboard and committed to making it work. If not then it will be less effective in its outcomes.*

Kāhui Ako are building relationships across educational settings

Kāhui Ako are building relationships across educational settings, with a focus on teacher practice and positive outcomes for ākonga. One of the key reasons that leaders endorse the value of Kāhui Ako relates to emerging collaborations across early childhood, primary, secondary and tertiary pathways.

Some Kāhui Ako have also developed closer relationships with Boards of Trustees across their schools and a common approach to working with agencies, including DHBs. Kāhui Ako are collaborating to develop new curricula (NZ history and Digitech) or local curricula, and some are finding the collaboration crucial during COVID lockdowns. Increased collaboration has enabled more effective and coordinated connections, including expanded distance learning and engagement tools, across the Kāhui Ako and with ākonga and whānau at home.

- *I see so much value in the depth of collaboration that is now taking place across our schools since we first started working together. We are sharing expertise across our schools/ECE, learning from the practises of others. We are consciously thinking about the pathways of learners now and are beginning to develop a “transition” website to provide information for our community. Six years ago, we were all very “collegial” – now we are actively working together to improve education provision in our community.*
- *I think the need for across-school collaboration within communities is incredibly important, especially in low decile communities such as ours. We all share collective challenges within our community schools and Kaahui Ako are a vehicle for addressing these challenges. I think the refresh of the New Zealand Curriculum and the need to prepare and implement the new curriculum content over the next five years is an example of a community challenge that Kāhui Ako could be pivotal in addressing. The collaboration between like-minded people who work in different schools but within the same community is vital.*
- *Huge value. Kāhui Ako provides a formalised platform and structure for schools, ECE’s and kura to be innovative in collaboration and achieve student success as a collective. Having been an EHSAS cluster in 2007 our Kāhui Ako is now making greater gains regarding social capital, student achievement, teacher pedagogical practice and professional relationships between schools and ECE’s. Without a Kāhui Ako we would never have been able to make the difference for students we have made over the past five years. John Hattie epitomises this with Collective Efficacy topping the effect sizes for learning.*

Kāhui Ako are developing authentic relationships with mana whenua

Some Kāhui Ako are developing authentic partnerships between centres, schools and iwi/hapū, and some have developed MOU with iwi. There is also an enhanced focus on Te reo Māori, tikanga and the importance/development of a local curriculum.

- *It has brought our community together and created a sense of belonging for all educators. The mana of iwi has been hugely enhanced.*
- *The forming of relationships with mana whenua as legislated by the Education and Training Act section 127⁶ is more achievable through a Kāhui Ako framework.*
- *We have a formal MOU with two iwi and hapū and are working on developing partnerships with other mana whenua. This means developing authentic work around strategic goals, strengthening transition and learning pathways, and including community voices to support our students and whānau. Our Kāhui Ako is evolving to be responsive to our communities' needs. We're not the same as when we first started.*

Kāhui Ako are accessing and sharing professional expertise with a focus on growing pedagogical practice

Most respondents report that the opportunity to engage in shared professional learning and collaborative inquiries is changing mindsets and equipping teachers with the knowledge and skills needed for enhancing ākonga learning. Leaders are sharing professional capability across the Kāhui Ako using the strengths of people in different schools for the benefit of the whole. Professional development providers are being engaged in partnerships across Kāhui Ako with a clear strategic focus. Collaborative inquiry is becoming embedded as a way of doing things that enables teachers and leaders to reflect systematically and to learn together, to address common issues and to provide the best possible learning opportunities for ākonga.

- *We are getting better bang for our buck for PLD – we run joint PD/Conferences – some for everyone, some that are voluntary. We have learnt to appreciate/understand the different contexts of our schools and often this has helped float to the surface expertise within school that we didn't know was there in our community. We are building collective capability of teachers/leaders across the cluster; this has been supported by our PLD partners.*
- *We have built genuine and positive relationships across our schools about LEARNING. Together, as a Kāhui Ako, we decided to teach our teachers how to teach better. This has made a huge difference to the learning culture within and across our schools.*
- *We have worked hard to ensure the Kāhui Ako is viewed as providing a mechanism for teachers to collaborate, benefit from greater expertise, observe one another's practice and give feedback about their practice across the board. Collaborative opportunities for our Kāhui Ako are identified as being the: sharing of ideas, networking, breaking down barriers, and tapping into expertise that would usually not be available to everyone. The coming together collectively as a network of professionals to address the issues we face for many of our tamariki is vital in providing a seamless educational pathway for all young people.*

6 See <https://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/2020/0038/latest/LMS274508.html>

Leaders are being recharged and refreshed by the role but believe some changes would improve it

Leaders mentioned being recharged and refreshed by the role. The role is providing experienced principals with new challenges. It is also providing a way of supporting principal colleagues who are new to leadership or new to a region.

Leaders' suggestions about alterations to the role were mostly related to providing increased time for the role, with a total of 57% of respondents suggesting either the position be full time, or shared leadership, or more time be allocated to carry out the role. The Table below outlines the issues they mentioned in response to the question- 'If you could alter the Leader role, what would you alter?'

Alterations to the Kāhui Ako leader role suggested by Leaders

Shared leadership arrangements	20	29%
Flexibility including around salary	12	18%
More time to carry out the duties	10	15%
Full-time position	9	13%
Other suggestions	10	15%
No change suggested	7	10%
Total	68	100%

Although a few leaders preferred that the leader role was a single person role, perhaps with the ability to co-opt, a third of respondents indicated a preference for sharing the role through co-leader positions. Some suggested that the leadership opportunities should be flexible enough to allow some leaders to step out of their schools and lead one or more Kāhui Ako in a full-time role.

Although acknowledging they could apply for reappointment, some leaders feel that change takes 5-7 years and that the term of the initial appointment should reflect that. These leaders believe continuity is needed to keep momentum and maintain the vision and relationships.

Some Kāhui Ako had designed different leadership models that worked for them. Examples included 3 to 4 leaders in a revolving co-leadership, a non-principal either an ex-principal or a DP as leader or an ECE leader. Leaders acknowledged that the Ministry had 'loosened the requirement' of a single leader and were now open to considering variations. Some leaders also commented that they had to forge their own way initially and that meetings with other Kāhui Ako leaders, either regional or national, would have helped immensely. In some areas, leaders noted that some useful regional meetings were held, but they were disappointed that these stopped early on.

- *I am delighted to be a part of the system. It has recharged and refreshed me personally. Similarly, I believe that there are some great and experienced principals for whom the CoL leader position would be a great way to step out of principalship but enable them to still offer something back to the profession. They have the time and would be really valuable. They should be encouraged to apply for a Leader position and perhaps they could even Lead more than one Kāhui Ako. Flexibility is key. Finding the best leader is paramount.*
- *I would love for this to be full time in our community. I find it very challenging to manage both roles and now that people are seeing the value, we could be bigger than Ben Hur – the possibilities are only limited by time.*
- *Research will tell you it takes 5-7 years for change, having the same leader (if they are effective) and getting traction to stay in that role for up to 5 years. The appointment process every two years is not helpful.*

Leaders believe that this role’s time allocation and remuneration needs to be reviewed. They reflected that there is a wide variety in the size of Kāhui Ako from a few schools to very large Kāhui Ako, but all get the same time allocation and remuneration. Many also expressed unhappiness about the discrepancy between primary and secondary remuneration. A few leaders (8%) said they would be prepared to forgo some of the extra salary.

- *The resourcing needs to be more responsive and recognise the differences in Kaahui Ako. Our Kāhui Ako has 19 schools and 12 ECEs but as Lead principal I receive the same resourcing as a Lead Principal of 3-4 schools.*
- *Leadership of a small Kāhui Ako is quite manageable. Feedback to me from Leaders of large Kāhui Ako is that this can be very demanding of time and much less manageable alongside existing Principal job demands.*

The AST role is crucial in getting traction and some changes to conditions would further improve it

Leaders acknowledged that the AST position was well resourced and described the role their ASTs played as ‘the glue’ and ‘crucial in improving learning’. The AST and WST roles offer leadership pathways and enhanced career opportunities for teachers.

- *We have found that the ASL⁷ roles are very flexible and hugely valuable. The growing capacity, relationships and leadership of these people has been critical. A fantastic team of committed teachers.*
- *The across-school appointment either makes or breaks the Kāhui Ako. They are the glue that holds it together.*
- *The Across School Leads have been great as a support for the Within School Leads in bringing their projects together cohesively.*

While 15% of respondents would make no change to these roles, many suggested improvements to enhance them. Suggestions included changes around conditions, professional development, review, the inclusion of early childhood, and clearer accountability.

The Table below outlines the issues leaders mentioned in response to the open-ended question - ‘If you could alter the Across School role, what would you alter?’

Alterations to the Across Schools role suggested by Leaders

Flexibility around eligibility and conditions	13	21%
Role clarity and consistent expectations	11	18%
Reduced remuneration	8	13%
More ASTs - including ECE	7	11%
They are the glue	5	8%
No change wanted	9	15%
Other suggestions	9	15%
Total	62	100%

7 Schools use the terms Across School Teacher (AST) and Across School Leader (ASL) for the same role.

While 15% of respondents would make no change to these roles, others suggested a variety of improvements including, changes around conditions, professional development, review, the inclusion of early childhood, and clearer accountability.

- *More allocation especially with a large geographic area as we have.*
- *AST number of roles based on number of schools not number of students so they can spend time with all schools.*
- *Make it easier to allow for early childhood to be a part of this kaupapa. If we are totally committed to true pathways for our students in our Kāhui Ako then ECE MUST be included in this kaupapa.*

Leaders see flexibility (including the involvement of ECE) as key in ensuring that these positions best meet the needs of their Kāhui Ako. However, it is interesting to note that while 21% of leaders appreciate the flexibility that enables them to develop the role for their specific context, 11% would like more role clarity and consistent expectations. The parties to IES went to considerable initial lengths to prepare advice and information about the implementation and proposed operation of the policy. These responses suggest that Leaders are not all familiar with the broader policy intent of IES and that greater effort may have been required to ensure that the evolution of the policy was guided and adjusted as it was tested in practices. Such double-loop learning on the basis of grounded theory development offered an innovative developmental project to all parties.

- *Once again, not limiting it to a one size fits all. Some Kāhui Ako may wish to have the roles shared and broken down so as to fully use expertise within their Kāhui Ako.*
- *I think the role of an Across School Teacher needs to be more prescribed by the Ministry. At the moment, it is too loose and there is little consistency in the work being done within Across School positions up and down the country.*

Respondents also noted that some of the collective contract conditions constrain their flexibility, especially the 0.5 teaching requirement and the limit of 2MU in secondary schools because this means that primary DPs and part-time teachers cannot take up these roles. The limit on MUs also means some teachers may need to take leave from, or relinquish, their positions.

- *I would alter who can be appointed to an AST role firstly. These roles are equivalent to an AP/DP role in salary (sometimes more!), however, currently AP/DP's cannot apply. Yet I would love to have that high level of leadership expertise in these roles.*
- *The ability to appoint teachers who are part time to take on the role. We have some very capable emergent leaders who are interested in the role but cannot work 0.5 in the classroom in addition to the 0.4 ASL time due to family commitments.*

The 13% of leaders who did not agree with the amount of the AST allowance referred to the relativity with primary school DPs, with the salaries of the principals of small primary schools. They also noted ill-feeling in some staffrooms around the allowance and release time provided to an AST.

- *I believe that the role of the Kāhui Ako is outstanding in our community however, I don't believe that the roles need to have both the allowances and the release. I think the release is excellent and maybe a small allowance, but it creates real inequity in our schools with some ASTs and even WSTs earning more than their Principal and this is unfair.*
- *There is often a lot of discontentment about the pay received by ASTs compared to the two days a week they are released to do the mahi. In addition, the ASTs tell me it is challenging for them to have this high-level leadership role across a cluster and then go back to being a classroom teacher in their own school.*

Most found being able to create AST roles from WST ones useful but, there was also concern at the lack of resourcing to support these roles.

- *We have used the option of collapsing WSTs to gain an extra ASL when we have had extra strong applications for ASL roles. This is a great option. Please keep.*
- *The funding model means that the ASTs' school receives the funding and things like mentor time etc can get swallowed into operations without clear guidelines. I do wonder about a management system that allows for greater accountability around release and funding support for ASTs.*

The Within School Teachers role is valued, and more time would be appreciated

Leaders value the Within School Teachers role. They appreciate the opportunity to appoint additional people to leadership and the fact that these teachers directly influence teacher practice in their own schools.

- *These should be two year roles... we have some amazing inquiry mahi done in one year and the following year this should be built on.. and the ideas developed more widely. This is another way of providing leadership opportunities and driving change in school.*
- *Potentially the WSL role is a powerful one connecting the work of the KA with the school. Over the years as principals have become more aligned with the goals of the KA the WSL role has had greater influence. Again sharing of good models would be beneficial.*

Some 24% percent of leaders did not want to see any changes in the WST role.

- *Nothing at all! This is the best role within the whole Kāhui Ako with big impact on other teachers! Schools have the flexibility to appoint their own people and due to that it is more likely to meet the school's needs. These teachers have a direct influence on other teachers' practice in their school (even though we have a range of capability, they are still influencing others by improving their own practice and modelling that for others.*
- *This role does not need to change as it brings the most positive change to the school culture.*

Most respondents felt that each school in a Kāhui Ako should have at least one WST. 27% of leaders commented that two hours a week was not enough and that time allocated to the role should be at least 0.1 or up to 0.2 FTE.

Just 15% of leaders wanted more flexibility around eligibility for appointment and conditions. A further 21% wanted more clarity around WST role expectations in general and more accountability in relation to the contribution the WSL role should make to broader Kāhui Ako endeavours.

Leaders noted that collective requirements pose some barriers with the lack of access for part-time staff and the fixed term/permanent requirements. Leaders see the value of shared roles, and some have implemented this approach.

Alterations to the Within Schools role suggested by Leaders

More time for the role	17	27%
Flexibility around eligibility and conditions	9	15%
Role expectations as a kāhui resource	7	11%
Role clarity and consistent expectations	6	10%
Other suggestions	8	13%
No change wanted	15	24%
Total	62	100%

Leaders' comments on the WST role are grouped below under key themes: more time for the role, flexibility around eligibility and conditions, and role expectations and clarity.

More time for the role

- *I would increase the release time for these people to make a greater impact within their own school. Provide a larger release component so that they can lead coaching and mentoring within their schools, running modelling sessions, and follow up discussion work.*
- *For WSL, the time allowance is quite small, but the payment is quite large. I would like to see the time allowance doubled and allowance halved.*
- *Make the position equitable across all schools based on their roll so that every school has at least 1 person who can coordinate with the rest of the COL team.*

Flexibility around eligibility and conditions

- *Union rules [need] to be relaxed so that more teachers are eligible. We have had difficulty fulfilling some of the WST roles in our small schools.*
- *These roles should be fixed as well, rather than the stupid rule of permanence if you have 3 or more ONLY in the STCA.*
- *They should be offered tenure of up to two years in the role at the discretion of the Kāhui Ako Leader. One year to introduce and manage an Achievement Challenge is sometimes too short.*

Role expectations and clarity

- *Clearer communication that the Within School role (as is the Across School role) is a Kāhui Ako resource and that the work of the within school leaders is to deliver the strategic goals of the Kāhui Ako. Schools should not be able to use this resource to compensate a teacher to do work that does not reflect the work of the Kāhui Ako.*
- *Much clearer job descriptions and being able to work as a team with the Across School Teacher and Leader. The structure does mean that Within School Teachers can get captured by internal demands that may not always be Kāhui.*

Part 2: Reappointed Across School Teachers

The purpose of the AST role is to ‘support improvement in student achievement and wellbeing by strengthening teaching practice’⁸. The role is designed to provide the time and resources for practising teachers to share their skills and knowledge in new ways across a wider community of schools. The intent of the role is to enable teachers to learn with and from their colleagues in cycles of inquiry and improvement.

Reappointed ASTs have had a minimum of two years in the role. Their reappointment indicates that they have demonstrated their ability to strengthen teaching practice across schools. They have established effective personal and professional relationships across schools and sectors and have successfully navigated some of the challenges that need to be worked through when supporting their peers to grow their practice. This means they have and continue to hold the experience and credibility to comment on the impact and effectiveness of the AST role. There were 258 reappointed AST, and 143 responded to the survey (56%). The respondents represented 85 of the 220 Kāhui Ako.

Two areas that stood out to us across all 144 AST responses were; first, ASTs’ emerging insights and skills in growing their own and others’ practice, and second, the importance of leadership in setting the conditions for successful learning-focused collaboration at local and national levels.

The key findings are outlined below.

ASTs are motivated by making a difference to student outcomes and supporting teachers to grow their practice

When asked, ‘What are the three things you most enjoy about the role?’, the phrases most mentioned by ASTs were ‘collaborating with others,’ ‘working across schools’, and ‘making a difference’. While a number of Kāhui Ako experienced a shaky start because ‘not everyone was on board’ and there was ‘misunderstanding about the roles’ and instances of professional jealousy, almost all reappointed ASTs report that their Kāhui Ako has now created strong foundations for collaboration.

The aspects ASTs enjoyed most in their role	Weighted Ranking
Making connections, building relationships and collaborating	1
Being part of Team AST, identifying needs and planning, and delivering support for teachers	2
The stimulating role including research and personal professional growth	3
Working across schools and building a shared mahi	4
Making a difference and improving student outcomes	5

8 <https://www.education.govt.nz/communities-of-learning/guidance-for-boards/across-schools-teacher/>

ASTs appreciate connecting with other experienced teachers beyond their own workplace, who have chosen to stay in the classroom. They are experiencing their AST colleagues as ‘like-minded’ and passionate about making a difference for ākonga and teachers, and this ‘makes for a varied, professionally rewarding and forward-thinking approach to their work’. ASTs see their ability to work strategically and to ‘see and be a part of the big picture as a bonus. They enjoy developing action plans and aligning their work with schools’ strategic plans. They are collaborating with agencies, iwi, and a range of community groups. They see their connections as ‘stimulating’ and great opportunities to spread ‘good pedagogy and innovative teacher ideas’.

- *The connections I have been able to forge with other WSLs and teachers across the community have been a highlight- a powerful and rewarding experience.*
- *[I enjoy] working with like-minded ASTs who want to make a difference.*
- *[I enjoy having the] ability and time to lead beneficial educational initiatives that lead to accelerated educational outcomes for our students.*
- *[We are] seeing collaboration amongst teachers across schools at a level we have never experienced before.*
- *[I enjoy] being a change agent and helping others to build their agency and capabilities.*

The depth of AST responses, when asked about changes in practice they had led, left us in no doubt that many ASTs are leading worthwhile shifts in teaching practice. Kāhui Ako are addressing curriculum and wellbeing issues across sectors, subjects and levels.

ASTs cited more than 40 discreet focus areas when providing examples of where shifts in practice are occurring. At the time of the survey (early 2021), culturally responsive practice (15%) and wellbeing (12%) were the two strongest areas of focus, followed by writing (5%) and learning progressions, transitions, student agency, science and STEAM at 4% each.

Focus areas for AST supported “shifts in practice”

Culturally responsive practice	19	15%
Wellbeing	16	12%
Writing	7	5%
Others*	89	68%
Total	138	100%

*There were more than 40 discreet focus areas used as examples of where shifts in practice are occurring.

ASTs are working alongside teachers to ‘provide quality data’, ‘model teaching approaches’, ‘lead collaborative inquiries’, ‘share practice’ and ‘build relationships. They note that their work is enriched by professional learning offered by external facilitators and/or by using internal expertise from across the Kāhui Ako.

The key strategies that ASTs mentioned for leading change in practice are outlined in the table below

AST strategies for Leading Changes in Practice

Growing teacher capacity	17	14%
Working alongside others to share practice - relationships	25	21%
Offering PLD, resources, strategies and expertise	26	21%
Setting focus and purpose	11	9%
Reviewing progress	17	14%
Outcomes	19	16%
Other - uncertain or misunderstanding the question	6	5%
Total	121	100%

- The use of Oral Language strategies to develop literacy and writing skills across cohorts has seen teachers using strategies that have been presented in workshops, modelled in classrooms and available on our Kāhui Ako website to accelerate student achievement – particularly in writing. A rubric was designed to monitor a selection of students who were not achieving the expected outcomes in writing and/or Oral Language. Data demonstrated that 40% of students selected made significant accelerated progress in their Oral Language within a year. There was a shift of 28% more students from this selected cohort who moved from ‘below expected curriculum levels’ for writing, to be ‘at expected curriculum level’. This year we are seeing a growing use of Oral Language strategies being used for students attempting NCEA, with some early promises of changes in student achievement.*
- Our use of PAT online reporting to identify trends across our schools has led us to using the LPF to identify key progression steps in mathematics and how we can support teachers with next steps. Every primary school in our Kāhui Ako has used PAT online reporting this year and we are all working on unpacking and moderating using the LPF’s. This has also been helped by analysing our Kāhui Ako and identify some significant data dips in Years 3 and 7. We are looking at how we can use this information to create content workshops for our teachers and better support their content knowledge.*
- [We have seen a] shift in teachers’ practice to support student agency based on the engagement data collected over 3 years and the Effects of Lockdown report. This has come about through constant leadership and mentoring of the 14 WSTs in the programme and equipping them with the skills and knowledge needed to lead others in the school. This is driving our whole PD programme now and is the whole focus across the Kāhui Ako, so all schools are doing it together in a way that supports their school goals and foci going forward.*

ASTs are leading cross-school collaborations

ASTs are leading cross-school collaborations where groups of teachers explore, inquire and learn in structured and disciplined ways. Engagement in collaborative inquiries and the resulting impacts on learning is contributing to strengthening commitment to ongoing collaboration. Many ASTs are experiencing their Kāhui Ako as a place of increasing collaboration, underpinned by a high trust model for sharing ideas and expertise.

When asked, ‘How is the nature of the collaboration different in your Kāhui Ako compared with a previous school network experience?’ – keywords and phrases in ASTs’ responses were: ‘powerful, better, trust and honesty, across the sector, and deliberate and purposeful.’ ASTs report experiencing ‘deeper levels of conversation’ about things that matter than in previous collaborations. They noted that sharing data requires some personal and professional vulnerability and high trust and this deprivatisation of practice then leads to a deeper level of conversation and an openness, and honesty. Some respondents also noted that in their Kāhui Ako, the nature of collaboration was different to previous networks because it has ‘moved from subject-specific networks to pedagogy-based networks that work within the local community’.

- *Moving our school and our Kāhui Ako to an inquiry mindset approach has been very valuable. Inquiry was becoming somewhat of a ‘bad word’ 4–5 years ago, now it is viewed by most as an effective approach to teaching.*
- *The level of networking in our Kāhui Ako has become incredibly powerful – schools are reaching out to each other in a variety of ways that didn’t exist before as we have opened up many opportunities for the schools to learn from each other (this did not exist previously). Our Kāhui Ako creates networks across many different platforms (eg. PCTs, Digital Technology leads, WSTs, Wellbeing teams, ECE-NE and Intermediate-Secondary transitions, PLD across a range of levels and interests).*
- *Teachers are becoming more open. They are considering things that have not been discussed or implemented before. Role of iwi in schools is becoming real and tangible and this is impacting on practice too. We set high standards as ASLs and we produce well-researched and quality presentations, we spark conversations and draw others together. All of this comes together to create positive change.*
- *As an AST I have supported WSL in developing their own appreciative inquiries. With regular feedback and hui I have been able to observe changes in practice from each WSL across the Kāhui.*
- *Our community has come to a place of understanding and valuing the importance of working together. We are working alongside school leaders with the support of our WST to make change. In doing this we have also been on a journey of growing capacity within individual schools while at the same time celebrating achievement as a Kāhui Ako. Our Kāhui Ako is about the people inclusive of; whānau, tamariki, schools, iwi and expert partners.*

ASTs’ observations on the nature of Kāhui Ako collaboration

There is an emerging culture of collaboration	16	13%
Described as better (9%) and powerful (7%)	19	16%
Based on trust and honesty in relationships	9	7%
Reaching across sectors	17	14%
Deliberate and purposeful (12%), underpinned by structure (6%) and enhanced by the time and resources available (7%).	31	25%
There are challenges	13	11%
Other – including impact	18	14%
Total	123	100%

Almost all ASTs described growing professionally as leaders and as teachers. They learn from the Professional Learning and Development (PLD) provided through their Kāhui Ako from expert partners and their Kāhui Ako colleagues.

Delving more deeply into research, developing more depth in their pedagogical practice, and developing their coaching and mentoring skills with colleagues were the key opportunities ASTs mentioned as supporting their professional growth.

- *1000 times stronger [than previous networks] more common approach and goals means more directed, focused collaboration. Purposeful and directed.*
- *We never collaborated outside of our four walls. Now we have the keys to staff rooms across a large group. I see WSLs making connections and then working together on projects outside of Kāhui ideas. There has been more open conversation and discussion. Sharing of ideas and expertise is becoming normal. It has been a massive change to the norm that I can't stress enough.*
- *The power of sharing across schools has been one of the most rewarding aspects of Kāhui Ako collaboration. The honesty and openness of conversations to support our learners from our principals has been a breath of fresh air. In my past leadership roles within schools, more often than not, we have worked in silos. The bigger picture that working in Kāhui Ako networks provides means that we can channel our efforts where it matters and pre-empt barriers that may come later for our students.*
- *There is far greater sharing across levels of schools. The connections between primary, intermediate, secondary, RTLB teachers are continuing to develop at an escalating rate. People are looking for ways to share strategies for at risk learners, establish a language of assessment and learning so students will transition easier. Previously collaboration was within subject clusters predominantly.*
- *It is a teaching leadership role... This to me is its power and what separates it from other senior leadership roles in NZ.*

Conversations and deep thinking about pedagogy and ways of supporting learning and growth of teachers and students.

- *[There are positive shifts] because we have, as ASTs, made it a priority to be known, to attend staff meetings in other kura and ECE, to gather voice of kaiako, and to listen to and provide opportunities that they want, I feel that the attitude and commitment has shifted significantly over the 3 years. Our goal was to not have anyone ask who are you- what do you do- or what's in it for me!*
- *Having expert partners to guide us in our first year was so important. This was much more minimal for the new ASTs and needs to be part of every new ASTs training.*

In response to the question- 'How much have attitudes and commitment to the Kāhui Ako model and roles shifted in your schools?'- 77% of ASTs agreed that schools' attitudes and commitment to the Kāhui Ako model have shifted. Of these, 21% said schools' attitudes and commitment had shifted significantly, and 56% said they had shifted 'quite a bit'. The remaining 23% of respondents said attitudes had shifted a little. Not a single respondent reported that their attitudes had not shifted at all.

The key reasons given for positive shifts in attitude were through 'a growing sense of community', 'demonstrating the value of the resource', 'facing challenges' and 'improving the Kāhui Ako' vision so that it better integrated initiatives, practices and Kāhui Ako roles and 'better aligned with individual school goals.'

The collaborative process of negotiating a self-determined common vision is seen as important in uniting all parties in most Kāhui Ako and providing a clear purpose for their work. AST comments highlighted the ways in which their Kāhui Ako vision is 'providing a sense of belonging to a community', 'a mandate for change', and/or 'the opportunity for engagement for all'.

What are Kāhui Ako and ASTs doing that is driving these shifts?

Growing a sense of community and building relationships and trust	46	32%
Demonstrating the value of the resource and driving professional development	29	21%
Improving Kāhui Ako vision, alignment to school goals and role clarity	26	18%
Many comments focussed on challenges to lifting engagement - including other principals' attitudes and mixed engagement by other schools and teachers	34	26%
Other comments	4	3%
Total	139	100%

There are some common challenges that cause slower progress. The 26% who commented on challenges that caused slower progress mentioned issues related to an unclear pathway for students, other principals' attitudes, unclear expectations around systems and processes, lack of role clarity, and mixed engagement and participation by schools. In addition, some DPs and APs felt out of the loop initially, and some felt disconnected.

Another shift noted by ASTs was that not all schools joined initially, and some left and re-joined. When secondary schools left the Kāhui Ako, this had a significant impact- especially in small communities.

- *There's a growing consensus that collective problem-solving (Kāhui Ako) is more powerful and transformative than the capabilities of individuals (schools).*
- *I think there has been an increase in commitment over the past couple of years and also a greater clarity around how the Kāhui Ako is supporting the work of the schools. Schools are now more deliberately planning their own strategic goals to better align with those of the Kāhui Ako and have accordingly aligned their structures and processes, like for example their own PLD models, release of teachers etc to support the desired shifts. Also as a Kāhui Ako we are reflecting on what is working well and what our next steps are and as a result we have agreed on ways to better support WSL collaborative inquiry. Connecting to learn together across our schools, I believe has led to greater shared purpose and action.*
- *For the first year there was not a huge amount of buy-in. In the second, more of the primary schools were on board, but this year we have seen a change in attitude and commitment from our high school. This is truly exciting and shows progress. We are better able to manage transitions, student wellbeing is easier to address.*
- *The Kāhui's success is directly linked to two important aspects of the organisation: 1. SLT investment and drive - 2. all Principals and DPS must be involved...*
- *Senior Management initially felt left out of the loop and disconnected. There was little buy-in and possibly some professional jealousy too.*

ASTs are strengthening ākongā pathways

ASTs' comments show that they value working across different schools and sectors, including ECE, primary, secondary, Māori medium and in some cases, workplaces and tertiary organisations. They are building relationships with a diverse range of students, teachers, leaders, whānau, iwi and other organisations. ASTs note that this gives them a sense of where their ākongā have come from and where they are going to and that it helps them see the 'big picture' around their Kāhui Ako Achievement Challenges.

The diversity of participants in the Kāhui Ako is making collaborations richer. ASTs report experiencing 'bigger networks and stronger collaborative partnerships.' Participating ASTs are able to share expertise, resources, ideas and experiences across these networks, and they feel that they have the time and opportunity to do so. Many ASTs report a focus on improving practice across transitions from ECE to primary school and primary school to secondary school.

Of particular note is the focus of work around the ECE to primary school transition. 35% of respondents mentioned this important transition, and many have this transition as a particular area of focus. This has led to strong calls for ECE to be recognised with resourcing so that the 'system does not make them feel like the poor cousins or add ons.' Respondents recognised the educational importance of connecting with ECE, understanding the pedagogy, and seeing ECE participation in the Kāhui Ako as legitimate.

- *Over the 3 years this transition work continues. We have regular visits by junior teachers and ASTs to the ECEs, and vice versa. The ECEs run play-based learning workshops for Primary teachers. Junior Teachers have done some work around developing better knowledge of Te Whāriki. We have put together a Transition Booklet (led by the Kindy teachers) We have a Transition Slide with information from every school. We still meet regularly. This all came from a self-review of what is working well across the Kāhui, and what can we do better.*
- *One of my workstreams I was asked to develop was Transition in particular from Intermediate to Secondary. Therefore in 2019 and 2020 the sharing of relevant data in terms of our students' needs became a focus for both our Primary and Secondary teachers.*
- *Collaboration across the Kāhui Ako has increased from ECE to Secondary School. PLD provided has been adapted to suit all levels. Teachers across all levels are talking about learning and education. Everyone is more aware of the importance of each level and role.*
- *Of all the yr 9 students surveyed, the significant majority found the move to our high school was smooth and they felt welcome and supported in the process. There were no incidents of new anxiety and all students who started remained in school (apart from those whose family moved out of district). As a school we invested in the transition process and built some empathy for our most compromised students.*
- *During 2020 I was able to focus on transitions between primary and secondary school. This work helped to tweak some of the transition practises in the secondary school. The communication between secondary and primary schools has enabled clarity and this is due to the relationships built from being in a Kāhui Ako.*

Many Kāhui Ako are focused on strengthening connections with mana whenua

ASTs see connecting with mana whenua as important in incorporating mana whenua voice in the local curriculum, providing guidance in connecting with whānau, offering more Te Reo and tikanga classes, involving iwi as part of their stewardship group and reflecting iwi voice in student profiles.

Local histories and stories of the place and people are valued and made visible in the curriculum. Many respondents gave examples of ways in which mana whenua voice is being heard and responded to. Responses also indicated that relationships with local marae are highly valued.

Connections identified by Kāhui Ako* engaging mana whenua	Responses
Guidance in connecting with whānau	63
Iwi as part of the Stewardship Group	54
Student profiles representing iwi wishes	49
More Te Reo and tikanga classes	42
Mana whenua voice in local curriculum	16
Other	23

* 94/144 ASTs responded to this question

Some ASTs note that iwi are actively engaged with their Kāhui Ako through their stewardship or governance group, and some signalled that iwi partnership is key to their strategic goals. Some have carried out a cultural audit. Some have also been given special local gifts, including whakatauki, karakia, waiata, haka and received input into the Kāhui Ako logo. Some iwi are also involved in the development of graduate profiles and environmental projects.

While AST responses provide a clear indication that commitment to Te Tiriti and a focus on cultural responsiveness is very strong across Kāhui Ako, it is important not to underestimate the steps between developing an initial connection with iwi and the significant partnerships that 16% of respondents have developed with iwi.

- *Our iwi has had input into our graduate profile and strategic plan. They have given tours with local history at our staff development day. They have gifted us our whakatauki. We are digging into local stories in order to find out what kaupapa we want to restore.*
- *We have worked closely with the marae to ensure that the mahi we do aligns with the goals, plans and aspirations that they have for all tamariki, including Māori, within our area. ...Two years later we met again to assess the growth that we as kaiako and leaders have made to our practice using the Rautaki Reo as a measuring tool and will continue to do regularly to ensure that we are progressing and that all students are receiving equitable experiences across all of our kura.*
- *We have had a number of full days with iwi representatives to gain a better understanding of local histories and localised curriculum. In the last 3 years we have had full days at the Marae and in locations of historical importance. The information gathered from these days is currently being made into teaching resources to be shared across our Kāhui.*
- *My biggest mahi is around culturally responsive practice. We have presented at staff meetings around what does it look/feel like through the lens of a Māori parent when they walk into a school. Also, what is our perception of success as Māori? The korero colleagues are having and the "Ah ha" moments are great to see.*

- *Significant connection has been established with our local iwi. All schools have now signed a Kawenata – deed of collaboration. The Māori Resource Hub has also been established – aimed to support students and teachers to develop and grow their knowledge and understanding of Te Ao Māori – both Te Reo and Tikanga as well as deepen their understanding of the history of our place – the lake around which all our schools are located. One of our WSLs has provided ongoing Te Reo and Tikanga classes for our teachers.*
- *Our connection with all of our iwi has been one of the driving forces behind all the mahi that we as a Kāhui have done. The relationship is a very close one and their voice they know is heard and acted on. It was one of the most important roles as AST to develop and nurture these relationships with our iwi leaders and now we have these collaborative and shared roles in developing the Kāhui Ako. The iwi leaders readily participate, contribute and often take the lead in the mahi that we are all part of.*

A few Kāhui Ako are finding connecting with iwi ‘difficult,’ especially those Kāhui Ako spread over a large geographical area with many iwi involved. Some Kāhui Ako wish to do more preparatory work themselves so they ‘don’t go to iwi empty-handed.’

Intensity/authenticity of Kāhui Ako engagement with Mana Whenua

Meaningful partnership	14	16%
Collaborative engagement	16	18%
Active connection	13	14%
Initial steps	24	27%
Yet to engage	15	17%
Other	8	9%
Total	90	101%

Research-based inquiry and enhanced evaluative practises are changing teacher experience and ākonga learning

Many ASTs provided compelling rationales for using data. Some also outlined some of their hesitations and challenges related to gathering, analysing and using data.

Aspects of data use commented on by ASTs

Rationale for using data	55	44%
Impact and case studies of data in action	31	25%
Student, teacher and whānau Voice	7	6%
Hesitations and challenges around the use of data	30	24%
Other	2	2%
Total	125	101%

86% of ASTs considered sharing data to be either very important (45%) or quite important (41%). Less than 1% thought it was not important. 128 respondents also provided comments, which provided further insight into these percentages.

A range of data sources is being used to inform discussions, planning and evaluations. Many ASTs see data as providing a reference point that helps answer the question ‘why’ noting that ‘teachers can be reluctant to change unless given a reason to; therefore data is an excellent starting point to begin conversations’. Most also pointed out that data is a key component of any inquiry cycle – saying, ‘if you don’t use data how can you legitimately show growth or change?’

Data is being used to make a difference. Teachers across Kāhui Ako are sharing data from collaborative inquiries, along with ākonga achievement and other data at transition points. ASTs are focused on gathering 'robust', 'consistent', 'mana enhancing' data collected by 'judicious use of tools' to provide a unified whole picture. Analysis of teacher and student voice is proving valuable in reviewing and planning and in shifting practice. Qualitative and anecdotal data is seen as important in providing the stories behind the quantitative data to give it more nuanced meaning.

ASTs are exposing and then addressing the challenges of gathering useful data. Sometimes quality data was hard to get, sometimes there was a reluctance to share data, sometimes the sharing of data made people uncomfortable, and sometimes it could have been done better.

- *Our schools use attendance, retention, engagement and achievement data to identify groups of students that are not achieving equitable results – they then focus their actions and set school wide goals to reduce this disparity, teachers then use these school wide goals to set goals.*
- *Sharing high integrity and robust data between schools for aggregated analysis as well as in transitions is vital in developing a moderated/common understanding of the definitions in the learning support space. For example what is considered extreme behaviour in one school is only considered a daily occurrence in another. By sharing data and stories each school can gain an insight into what is happening overall in the learning support bubble. If we all work in isolation and don't share then we don't have a big picture view of the learning support needs across the Kāhui Ako.*
- *Sharing data has been important, but the data is often smaller scale and contextualised. I think Pasi Sahlberg's comments about being led by small data rather than big data is important here, and one of the massive strengths of the Kāhui Ako model is allowing smaller sets of community or school data to inform and drive changing teacher practice through collaborative inquiry teams. The moderation of writing was a big focus as we started out and establishing samples and exemplars of writing progression is an example of meaningful and consistent data being shared.*
- *Data from students and especially student voice cannot be denied. If we are to shift practice, we need to show the evidence of what students are telling us about how they feel about teaching and learning/school climate and culture as this directly aligns to our achievement challenges. Teachers need to be sure of the why before they are willing to make changes to their practice.*
- *As an AST, working with data has just become part of our role. Previously, the lead principal and other principals dealt with this side of things and we did not work in this space. It has been great to be part of these discussions as we move forward.*

Kāhui Ako Leaders' design the conditions for AST and WST success

The overwhelming sentiment from ASTs is that principal buy-in and their willingness and ability to collaborate are critical in Kāhui Ako success. Leaders' conception of their roles and their skills in leading across a network set the conditions for collaboration across the Kāhui Ako. Lateral leadership of a network is a new role in our system, so it is not surprising that there was no strong shared conception of the role across our system in the first few years.

Some ASTs commented that they had been 'caught in the crossfire' of principals who did not always see the value being invested in the Kāhui Ako and were more focused on 'what is in it for our school individually'. Some also observed that the collaboration within Kāhui Ako is about seeking knowledge and skills from wherever it exists, including the wider community and that allowing 'more lights to shine' was a struggle for some Principals.

- *At the end of the day it is the school leaders who determine what happens in their schools. Which means that the implementation of the philosophy of the Kāhui Ako is only as effective as principals allow it to be.*
- *I think the Kāhui Ako have the potential to be amazing spaces for collaboration, support and professional development to effect change in student achievement. Principals really need to be on board with this to enable it to happen. They could consider themselves as part of the across schools teams rather than principals in their individual schools. I also think that if they looked at Māori tikanga they would see value in working for the collective rather than the individual.*
- *Some schools have been very engaged with our Kāhui but many have felt let down by the lack of direction from the Lead Principals. This has unfortunately resulted in the model getting a 'bad wrap'. Ours is also a large Kāhui which comes with challenges around everyone feeling engaged/ supported/involved etc at the same time.*
- *Not all school principals fully understand the role of Kāhui and our role as ASTs. Being a member of the Kāhui Ako means contributing as well as taking. Only some school principals appreciate the importance of their school contributing; others have a purely 'what's in it for us' attitude when asked to collaborate.*
- *The power of sharing across schools has been one of the most rewarding aspects of Kāhui Ako collaboration. The honesty and openness of conversations to support our learners from our principals has been a breath of fresh air. In my past leadership roles within schools, more often than not, we have worked in silos. The bigger picture that working in Kāhui Ako networks provides means that we can channel our efforts where it matters and pre-empt barriers that may come later for our students.*
- *Collaboration across sectors and schools is very evident as a culture of collaboration and connection has been fostered right from the outset. Our Principal group is very cohesive and this ensures that the work of the ASL team is valued, purposeful and relevant and in turn collaboration can thrive. Getting into each other's school and connection across sectors is becoming the norm.*

ASTs and WSTs make a bigger difference when they work as a team

Respondents noted that ASTs and WSTs have a bigger influence across their Kāhui Ako when they work as a team. Successful examples included WSTs having combined responsibilities for leading Kāhui Ako related change within their school and also for sharing successful practice more widely across the Kāhui Ako.

In some cases, principals saw WSTs as 'just another unit holder' in their own school. This often meant that the ASTs were not part of the Kāhui Ako team and were not contributing to collaborative initiatives. It also meant that the ASTs were not benefiting from all that the other ASTs had to share. In some cases, the AST could not demonstrate to sceptical colleagues the virtue or value of the role and the worth of the release and salary the AST received. In these cases, ASTs had less leverage with teachers in their own school and their school and its teachers lost their direct conduit with the Kāhui Ako. Seeing a WST as 'a resource for my school' may have been an initial view of their strategic usefulness; now, there appears to be less of that view.

- I believe Within School Teacher and Across School teachers could collaborate more effectively. Collaboration has been most effective when AST and Within School teachers have a similar focus and there are opportunities for collaboration. For example, I previously led a mathematics PLC and one of the WSTs was part of the PLC. I could then support her in her middle leadership within school and connect other teachers to her to spread her effective practice across the KA. However, I feel that WSTs are quite often treated by principals as just another 'unit holder' and as ASTs we are not always able to draw on their examples of effective practice to other KA schools.*
- This example is more a shift of culture and a shift of practice of management in schools. We designed a survey on the wellbeing of teachers within our Kāhui Ako. As ASTs we disseminated the data and presented it back to individual school principals with 3 key goals they could work on to address the issues affecting the wellbeing of teachers within their school. A common goal was team building. We then worked with the WST to plan activities, strategies they could implement to build a positive sense of wellbeing amongst staff. This has had a positive impact on teachers and many schools are continuing to find ways to build a sense of community, positive relationships and care for each other.*
- I have worked with a team of WSTs weekly for the past 4 years. These staff have been involved with school leadership to bring change to a range of areas within the College. WSTs have worked in interest groups with colleagues from other departments. This model has resulted in a change in all teachers' practice as they have a combined responsibility for change across departments and to each other. The role of WST has provided time and a reason to change practice. We are accountable to the Principal and report to him each term.*
- I feel like Kāhui Ako has the mana and trust to go ahead and try/organise things on behalf of their colleagues. Others see it as a role with a job to do so are more onboard. There is also the expectation within schools for ASLs and WSLs to be working towards a common goal and outcomes. I feel as though schools are more open to collaborating too as ASLs are often in their schools and we meet regularly with WSLs and Kaitiaki. We have an active online presence so our community sees that we are active within our role too.*

ASTs would appreciate more time and extended tenure to lead change

Time is needed to build the relationships and establish the systems and processes that are the key foundation for collaboration. ASTs see Kāhui Ako as a positive new approach that has been ‘allowed to develop as there are time and resources to make it happen’. They appreciate that it is not constrained by time in the same way as 1- or 2-year professional development contracts areas; this has meant there has been the necessary investment in relationship building and contributed to the increased success.

ASTs believe that dedicated time for collaboration has enabled schools to ‘sharpen one another’s practice’, has supported ‘investment in relationship building’ and contributed to their success.

While they appreciate the time they have been given, 13% of ASTs would like more time in order to ‘fully fulfil the expectations of the role,’ and 10.5% would appreciate extended tenure. Some feel more support from the ministry at the beginning would have saved time as some Kāhui Ako ‘wasted a lot of time’ trying to shape AST roles.

Many express hope that the current AST model will be strengthened and refined in coming years.

- *Having dedicated time for KA collaboration has allowed teachers to see it as valued and not something added on top, it is instead of, not as well as.*
- *The way our school uses the Kāhui Ako resource has impacted our school significantly. Growing leaders, improving teaching and learning, improving student outcomes. Staff have seen the value in this as it was made visible and tangible by the ASTs in our school.*
- *Ability and time to lead beneficial educational initiative that lead to accelerated educational outcomes for our students.*
- *What teachers are crying out for is to get into other teachers’ classrooms. ...The release time provided for these and the within school roles is invaluable and essential to any progress. We are all very grateful for this provision. I feel that a more hands on approach from the MOE for new Kāhui Ako would be helpful. As my observation, a few Kāhui Ako’s, including ours, have wasted a lot of time trying to figure out exactly what each role is supposed to be doing.*

When asked, ‘How is the nature of the collaboration different in your Kāhui Ako compared with a previous school network experience?’ – 16% said they were happy with the role and/or suggested no changes. They noted that there is diversity in how the roles are being conceptualised and used, and they suggested that further role clarity, more time, and extended tenure for these roles would be beneficial.

Changes ASTs would make to the AST role

Happy with the role and/or no changes suggested	20	16%
More Time to meet expectations of the role	16	13%
Greater role clarity and consistency of approach	14	11%
Extended tenure	13	10%
More opportunities for sharing and collaboration	10	8%
Challenges around release time secondary-based ASTs	10	8%
Management issues to be addressed	10	8%
Other comments across a wide range of issues	32	26%
Total	125	100%

Some ASTs requested that more systematic learning, sharing and collaboration opportunities be provided at regional and national levels. They noted that there were a number of opportunities early on but that these opportunities varied in quality and quantity across regions and have now stopped.

Some respondents suggested the need to resolve the inequity of ECE receiving no funding for their participation. Secondary school timetable restrictions are a problem for some. Some suggested making the position full-time for a shorter period.

Many ASTs noted that there is a greater depth of the collaboration where WSTs are working on the Kāhui Ako programme, rather than being focused purely on their individual school purposes.

- *It was difficult to get the AST team together, working around College timetables. I think we would have been more efficient with our time if we had been released full time for one or both of the winter terms.*
- *I would love to see ASTs provided with more opportunities to find “highly functioning”, successful Kāhui Ako. Finding out the key factors that have really made a difference would be powerful to create even more momentum in this role.*
- *Despite our best efforts there is still a lack of understanding of our role shared amongst our school colleagues.*
- *Clearer expectations to schools around the role and time allocations. Different schools interpret the roles in various ways, which can lead to inequity across Kāhui Ako in terms of time allocation, support and expectations.*

Appendix 1: Survey Questions

Survey of reappointed Across School Teachers

- Qu.1 Details of respondent.*
- Qu.2 What are the three things you most enjoy as an AST?*
- Qu.3 What changes would you make to the AST role and why?*
- Qu.4 How is the nature of collaboration different in a Kāhui Ako compared with a previous school network experience?*
- Qu.5 How much have attitudes and commitment to the Kāhui Ako model and roles shifted in your schools?*
- Qu.6 How has your leadership of inquiry or self-review as an AST led to teachers changing their practice?*
- Qu.7 Outline the most robust example of a shift in teacher practice you have contributed to – preferably refer to supporting data.*
- Qu.8 Importance of sharing data across teachers and schools in changing teacher experience.*
- Qu.9 Connection with iwi and the outcomes of that connection.*
- Qu.10 An open invitation to add any comment.*

Survey of reappointed Leaders

- Qu.1 What value can you see in Kāhui Ako at this time?*
- Qu.2 Has your view of the value of Kāhui Ako altered and in what way?*
- Qu.3 If you could alter the Leader role, what would you alter?*
- Qu.4 If you could alter the Across School role, what would you alter?*
- Qu.5 If you could alter the Within School role, what would you alter?*
- Qu.6 An open invitation to make any comment.*

Appendix 2: Panel Members

Prue Kelly (Chair of NANP)

Mary Chamberlain

Colleen Douglas

Adie Graham

John Houston

Leytia Leota-Preston

Graeme Macann

Charles Newton

Denis Pyatt

Bruce Ritchie

Evelyn M Tobin

Ken Wilson

Appendix 3: IES initial policy intent – brief summary

IES Cabinet Paper 21 January 2014 para.3

Joint Ministers have agreed system changes to significantly strengthen the profession’s teaching practice and education leadership. The changes will introduce new career pathways, incentivise teacher-led innovation of practice and help to get highly effective principals to the schools and kura most in need. The proposal will support whole system change, building the foundations for career pathways and strong incentives for collaboration and innovation. These changes will lead to measurable gains in learning and student achievement.

Investing in Educational Success Working Group Report 3 June 2014, p.5.

The IES initiative has two major themes. The first is to enable collaboration between teachers, leaders, schools and communities across the national network. There is a need for greater and more substantial collaboration within and between schools. IES provides the ability for schools to do this by recognising that expertise and funding are needed to attend to shared problem solving. The second theme of IES is to improve career pathways for teachers and leaders. IES provides recognition for classroom and content expertise and for leadership of improved outcomes for students.

