

# Enhancing Learning Design - Growing Teacher Effectiveness: Final project results.

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## Executive Summary

This report details the findings of a second year project that examined whether the SchoolTalk and Engagement Sliders apps could be used to grow teachers' capability by implementing the teaching, learning and assessment cycle [TLA] to design and deliver differentiated learning, including learning that engaged and supported Māori and Pasifika learners. Teachers were provided with professional learning and support for using the apps. In addition, SchoolTalk Leads were provided with professional development targeted to their growth as leaders within their schools. Surveys were implemented at the beginning and end of the project to understand the perceptions of teachers and learners shifts in their usage and impact of SchoolTalk and Engagement Sliders across the year.

The main findings were that:

- The TLA cycle and SchoolTalk functionalities encourage the use of the core teaching practices that cannot be left to chance, such as utilising progressions and gap analysis to inform learning design, and regular review of the progress and achievement of each learner. Across the schools, there has been a considerable shift in teachers using gap analysis to inform fluid groupings of learners with 91% of pilot teachers stating that SchoolTalk helps them to differentiate their learning design.
- 76% of Teachers reported that SchoolTalk has a positive effect on all learners' engagement; including Māori and Pasifika learners. This was confirmed by the students' perspective of their own learning with almost all survey statements

recording a positive increase. Further analysis of the data will allow us to explore this specific impact on Māori and Pasifika learners' progress and achievement.

- Teachers are struggling to take on board evidence from two different information sources, make sense of this evidence and then apply it to their teaching practice. To combat this, project insights have shown that the information from the Engagement Sliders app could be accessed from within the SchoolTalk app so that teachers can see a range of data within one space.
- Although the project saw significant upward shifts in the teaching practices of teachers and the engagement of learners, this was not the case for using the project to strengthen home/school partnerships. It was evidenced across all user data that this area requires significant focus and development. There is emerging research from the covid-19 lockdowns of the important impact that parent engagement has on student learning outcomes, and therefore, this will be the main focus of our PLD and research in 2023.

Our next steps are to:

- a) focus more closely on strengthening home/school partnerships to support the progress and achievement of learners,
- b) engage in further analysis of the data across 2021 - 2022 to investigate our emerging hypothesis that unconscious bias may inform some teachers' overall teacher judgement and that this may be overcome by the easy availability of progress data on every child in SchoolTalk and a more differentiated approach to designing learning. We will apply a specific lens on whether there is a difference between Māori and non-Māori learners in this regard and,
- c) support teachers to become more adaptive in their practice by using information from more than one source to design effective learning.

## Introduction

'SchoolTalk,' is an online learning platform developed by The Stonefields Collaborative Trust (SCT). As a modern online learning tool, SchoolTalk is designed to grow teacher effectiveness in learning design and delivery through codifying the Teaching, Learning, and Assessment (T/L/A) cycle.

Engagement Sliders version 1 is an online application that enables teachers to gain quick insights into a learner's engagement via their enjoyment and challenge of a learning task or curriculum area. Teachers use this information to adapt their learning design so that it hits the mark for each child or prompts teachers to converse with learners about their learning.

In October 2021 the Cognition Education Trust (CET) awarded a second year grant to SCT to continue their collaborative inquiry across eight New Zealand schools. This inquiry aimed to continue to lift teacher capability in differentiated learning design through the use of the SchoolTalk and Engagement Sliders apps, with six specific aims (described in detail below).

As a condition of the CET grant, SCT is required to report annually on progress for each of the three aims (see Appendix 1). This report briefly discusses the methods used in the collaborative inquiry project before detailing progress on each of the three aims.

Across New Zealand, there are currently 6 existing schools that have been a part of this project since the beginning of 2021, and there are two new schools that joined at the start of this year.

## Methods used in the research

The collaborative inquiry involved professional learning and support to teachers in order to use the T/L/A cycle methodology, the SchoolTalk app, and the Engagement Sliders app to;

- A) Use the full functionality of SchoolTalk, including progressions and gap analysis, to design differentiated learning and inform teacher decision making .
- B) Design learning collaboratively to grow teacher capability across each of the project schools in order to embed effective teacher practices and visibly share learning and progress with whānau, learners and teachers.
- C) Consistently analyse and align the insights provided through the Engagement Sliders with the information in SchoolTalk.

This professional learning and support took the form of a project lead from the Stonefields Collaborative Trust working closely with each participating school's SchoolTalk lead. The project lead provided three professional development sessions as well as ongoing one-to-one coaching conversations via email, in person and online meetings.

The criteria for the investigation were as follows:

- 8 New Zealand based schools currently using the SchoolTalk App to varying degrees.
- 8 SchoolTalk Leads (one per school).
- A pilot teacher group. 5 - 10 teachers per school (expand the pilot teacher group beyond 40 teachers).

The selection criteria for the pilot teacher group included:

- Teachers who have used the SchoolTalk app for at least two terms.
- A proportion of teachers who identify as Māori or Pasifika.
- A proportion of learners within each school who identify as Māori or Pasifika.
- Age range (New entrant - Year 8)
- Socio-economic factors (urban - rural)

Evidence was gathered at the beginning and end of the project by means of teacher and learner surveys, SchoolTalk Lead journals, pilot teacher self-assessment rubrics, and some qualitative stakeholder interviews (teachers who identify as Māori or Pasifika). Additional insights were gathered throughout the project via three professional learning forums for the SchoolTalk Leads and frequent one-to-one conversations between the Project Lead and each SchoolTalk Lead during the project.

It should be noted that some of the results are based on data from seven schools rather than the eight that were initially involved in the project as one school ceased to be involved from Term 3. Additionally, due to the complexities of extended restrictions because of the pandemic and constant illness throughout a large portion of the year, pilot teacher numbers have not increased as much as we anticipated. Many teachers are still working under stressful conditions, which has caused some teachers to leave the project. Therefore, 42 pilot teacher results have been used in this report.

## Results

The following is a summary of progress made on each of the project aims stated in the initial grant application. To view the underlying data, please refer to the Project Facilitation Website, SchoolTalk Leads Journal Entry Results, and the Survey Results in Appendix 2.

### 1. Extending use of tools to the entire curriculum.

#### 1.1 To have all of the pilot teachers confidently using the TLA cycle across the entire curriculum.

It is pleasing to report that 71% of pilot teachers have improved in their understanding of the TLA cycle (see figure 1a below). Upon review of the data, we believe this is attributed to their increased SchoolTalk functionality usage with 80% of pilot teachers making a positive shift in their abilities (see figure 1b below). For example, the teacher survey results showed 60% of pilot teachers are now more often using the gap analysis function, and a large increase in pilot teachers are fluidly grouping learners as well as accessing their progressions individually.

This conclusion is further strengthened by the teachers' perceptions of their own shifts in practice, with 93% of pilot teachers stating that SchoolTalk has supported them to grow in their teacher capabilities, and 91% of pilot teachers reporting that SchoolTalk helps them to differentiate their learning design.

**The biggest impact that has been evident amongst those teachers, who had a head-start using ST, is that the teachers are getting themselves into the TLA cycle through the use of SchoolTalk. SchoolTalk has enabled us, teachers to have all the necessary documents, e.g. Planning, Learning tasks and the Assessment Data all in one place.**

- **Kawerau Pūtauaki SchoolTalk Lead**

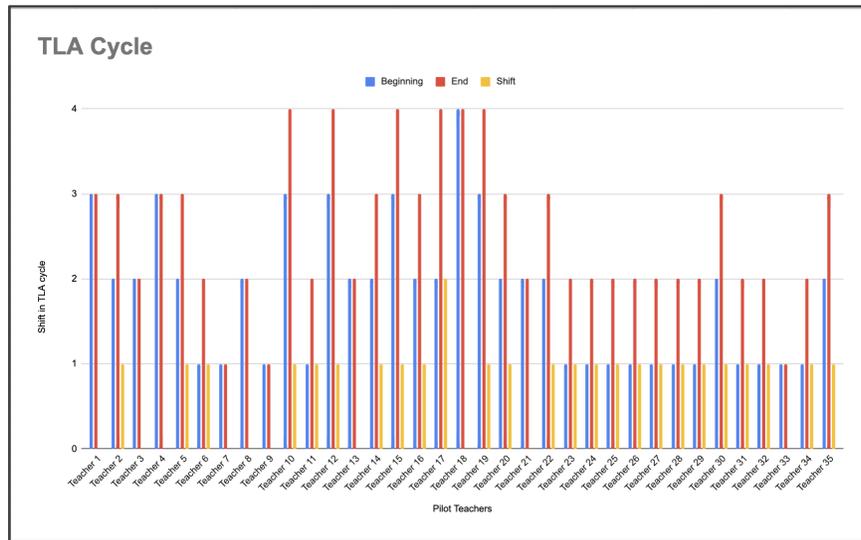


Figure 1a. Shifts in pilot teachers' ability to use the T/L/A cycle to design differentiated learning across the CET project.

Teachers rated their ability to use the T/L/A cycle on a scale of 1 (beginning) to 4 (Part of me) at both the start of the project and (March 2022) and at the end (Nov 2022).

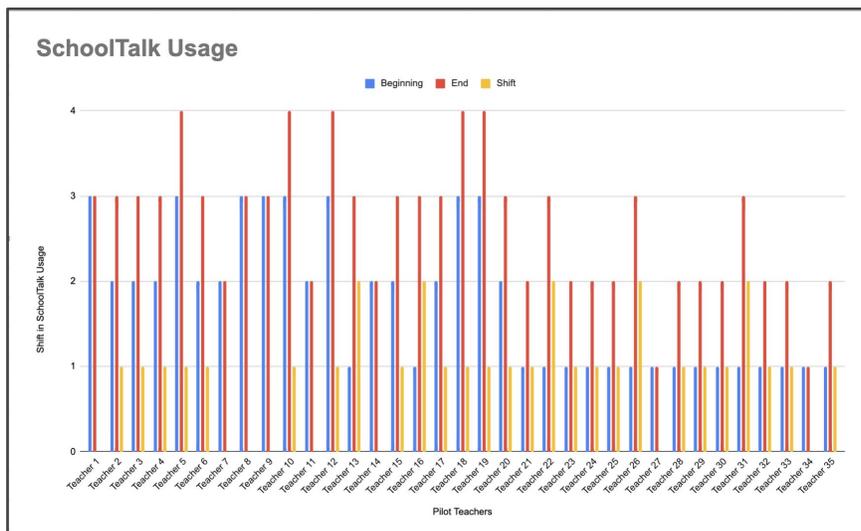


Figure 1b. Shifts in usage of SchoolTalk by teachers across the CET project.

Teachers rated how much they use SchoolTalk to design learning on a scale of 1 (beginning) to 4 (Part of me) at both the start of the project and (March 2022) and at the end (November 2022)

## 2. Promote collaboration in learning design

### 2.1 To have two pilot teachers in each school support one to two new teachers each in utilising information, like progressions and gap analysis to inform future learning design.

95% of pilot teachers state that SchoolTalk enables collaborative practices. Reflected in some of the SchoolTalk Lead journals as a key focus, pilot teachers were stretched in their roles to work with other teachers, either within the project or beyond. For example, there was mention of:

- Pilot teachers buddying up to induct new teachers to their school.
- Pilot groups attempting to regularly meet either weekly or fortnightly. The intention was to take turns to showcase new learnings or trials they are engaging in with the T/L/A cycle, SchoolTalk and Engagement Sliders.
- Pilot teachers meeting to review data together from both of the apps.
- Positive responses to the external SchoolTalk Facilitator's coaching input to supporting pilot teachers growth.

*'One of the things that has been evident within school is that the teachers have started having informal but professional talks about SchoolTalk, e.g. the use of the Calendar and what kind of mahi has been set up for the Design for Learning page'.*

- *Kawerau Pūtauaki SchoolTalk Lead*

*'SchoolTalk was very helpful in moderation meetings - it was great to be able to talk through the progressions to promote consistent teacher judgements'.*

- *Ohakune SchoolTalk Lead*

### 2.2 To have the 4 teachers from the new schools consistently embed their learning design within SchoolTalk so that it is shared with whānau, learners and colleagues within their own school.

Both of the two new schools that were added to the project exceeded expectations; especially in light of the fact that they are both located in areas that were hit hard with covid during term 1 this year.

All of the pilot teachers are consistently using SchoolTalk through the methodology of the TLA cycle. Both schools took a careful approach to implementing SchoolTalk through implementing:

- Weekly/fortnightly pilot group working sessions with a specific SchoolTalk focus to

encourage collaborative learning and problem solving.

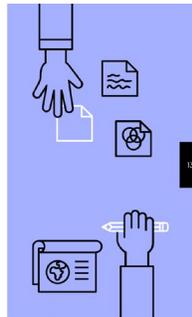
- Whole staff sharing sessions to keep others informed of the school's strategic direction and create excitement amongst other potential staff to onboard early.
- Personalised coaching from an external SchoolTalk Facilitator to provide individual goal setting and targets.

***'I presented to the whole staff at our Term 3 Callback Day. I tried to use it as a chance to run through the why of SchoolTalk, embedding it within our wider school context of a curriculum review and discussions about collaboration. At the time I was not sure about how successful the presentation was: there were a number of tired, blank faces after a long morning of PLD. However, afterwards 6 more teachers approached me and expressed their wish to be involved in the next roll out of SchoolTalk'.***

- **Lucknow School SchoolTalk Lead**

#### What have we achieved so far?

- What is working well:
- Planning collaboratively in an ILE
- We are becoming more aware of the importance of having clarity in lesson design
- We are also becoming more deliberate about targeting students needs
- Building ST Lead's capacity as a leader



Presentation shared with the whole staff by Kawerau Pūtauaki pilot teachers.

#### Whaea Tina

Being new to an ILE space, SchoolTalk has helped to keep all 3 of us teachers on the same page. Shared planning, Shared and clear expectations for learners and teachers. I have found while planning Learning Intentions and resources are already available which is a great help. Backfilling gives me a clear indication of what each child has achieved so far during each lesson and gap analysis allows me to plan effectively for future lessons.

#### Whaea Tarsh

As a beginning teacher I have found SchoolTalk helpful when planning. Learning intentions for each level and area of learning is already on there. All I have to do is pick what we will be working on. There are resources available as well. I really like that I can see our timetable for each day and I can foresee how SchoolTalk will be beneficial to our students, once we are all using it daily.

#### Giichi

Simply the SchoolTalk has been a game changer. I had never known of a tool/platform that can synthesise all Planning, Teaching, Learning & Assessment together all in one so effectively, till I learnt about ST. While we need to continue building our teacher capability, training our students and eventually making ST accessible to our whānau, ST has so much to offer!!

Reflections from the Kawerau Pūtauaki pilot teachers to the whole staff.

**2.3 To develop leadership capability in learning design so that the learning gained from this project is disseminated within the participating schools and to a wider educational audience utilising the Stonefields Collaborative Trust networks.**

Upon reading the reflective journals of the SchoolTalk Leads this year, many have grown in their confidence as leaders. For example, many have:

- Shared regular insights about the TLA cycle and the two apps with their Senior Leadership Team to inform them of progress and what specific PLD inputs are needed.

- Created consistent expectations across the school to raise the bar of teacher practice.
- Built relationships with their pilot teachers so that they feel safe to be open and vulnerable about their learning.
- Reached out to an external SchoolTalk Facilitator when they have felt stuck and need support.
- Met regularly with their pilot group and used the time to focus on particular gaps they are seeing in practice.
- Considered and adapted the way they are developing their pilot teachers in order to create a co-leadership of expertise in the T/L/A cycle, SchoolTalk and Sliders.

Finally, the project lead implemented a professional learning day that was dedicated to the SchoolTalk Leads' growth as leaders. This session enabled them to collaborate and learn alongside each other as well as take away new leadership tools to put into practice at their schools.

**SchoolTalk**  
How the students at Kohimarama School interact with SchoolTalk:

- In Year 1 I will:**
  - Know what our SchoolTalk calendar looks like.
  - Know what is my learning goal.
  - Be familiar with using a tool to reflect on my learning. (Slider Tool, SOLO, ST Green and Yellow)
- In Year 2 I will:**
  - Know what goal I am working on with my teacher.
  - Know when my teacher uses SchoolTalk to access my learning.
  - Have used a tool to reflect on my learning. (Slider Tool, SOLO, ST Green)
  - Have experienced my teacher upload my work as evidence.
- In Year 3 I will:**
  - Know how to access SchoolTalk using my google account.
  - Know when my teacher uploads my work as evidence.
  - Know how to find the modelling books in the calendar.
  - Know what goals I am working on.
  - Be able to see how much of my goal I have achieved.
  - EXT: Know how to upload my work as evidence.
- In Year 4 I will:**
  - Know how to independently access my calendar.
  - Begin uploading my own evidence.
  - Begin creating simple reflections.
  - Know how to make a copy of a google presentation and share it.
  - EXT: I will be able to find my progressions.
- In Year 5 I will:**
  - Know what goals I need to add evidence to.
  - Use the calendar and design for learning to know what I will be doing for the week.
  - Begin using my progressions to look myself into the correct workshop.
  - Write reflections to go with my evidence.
  - EXT: Know what makes a suitable piece of evidence.
- In Year 6 I will:**
  - Use my progressions to look myself into the correct workshop.
  - Write detailed reflections to go with my evidence.
  - Begin selecting quality evidence that shows I am achieving the goal.
  - Know how to go with my evidence.
  - Use my calendar to know when and where my workshops are and attend them on time.
- In year 7&8 I will:**
  - Use my progressions to look myself into the correct workshop.
  - Write detailed quality reflections to go with my evidence.
  - Select quality evidence to show I am achieving the goal.
  - Understand when my next steps are after each piece of evidence is added.
  - EXT: Plan a rich informing workshop to meet my needs.

*'My hope with this document is that all teachers can be clear and on the same page with how SchoolTalk needs to be used across the school, as well as avoid the bottleneck we are currently experiencing in Year 3 & 4.'*

*Throughout the process of creating these guidelines, we have involved the teachers and used their input. Next, we will be putting together a document outlining the expectations on how teachers need to be using SchoolTalk. It will include the following: Planning expectations (DFL, Goals, and when the calendar needs to be updated), Updating of progressions'.*

- **Kohimarama School SchoolTalk Lead**

### 3. Better Monitoring of Student Engagement

#### 3.1 To have all of the pilot teachers consistently analyse and take into account the insights provided through the Engagement Slider with the information in SchoolTalk.

As can be seen in figure 5 below, only 51% of pilot teachers made a positive shift in their ability to use information from two data sources to inform their learning design. Upon review of the SchoolTalk Leads journals, several perspectives were shared about this, such as:

- Teachers' confidence has taken a hit this year due to the follow-on ramifications of the pandemic; leaving them at times resistant to receive any feedback on their teaching effectiveness that could possibly be perceived as negative rather than used for growth.
- Learning to use the TLA cycle and SchoolTalk takes time and has meant there was not always the same level of attention provided to the use of the Engagement Sliders app.
- Working between two apps was inefficient.
- The schools lack clarity of expectations around Engagement Sliders use.

This has led to some hypothesis and possible next steps:

- The teacher survey results for the statements relating to Engagements Sliders still had 38% - 50% with N/A as the response. This leads us to believe that a portion of pilot teachers did not have a chance to begin adequately using the Engagement Sliders app as much as they might have wanted. Therefore, it is important to consider how much 'new learning' pilot teachers can take on within a year. When introducing new learning, there is likely to be an appropriate time to introduce Engagement Sliders so that pilot teachers feel it builds on to their practice to be data informed rather than an add on.
- It makes sense that if SchoolTalk requires school expectations of use, then the Engagement Sliders app does too. For teachers and learners to embed this app into their practice alongside SchoolTalk, schools need to consider implementation guidelines that reflect when, with whom and why.
- Develop the functionality for the Engagement Sliders app to be embedded within the SchoolTalk app so that all data results are displayed in one place.

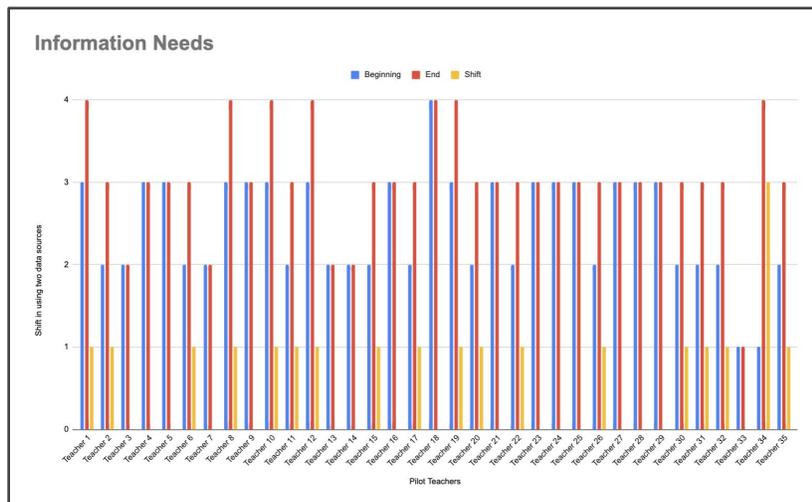


Figure 5. Shifts in the range of formal/informal assessment tools teachers utilise to inform learning design decisions by teachers across the CET project.

Teachers rated how experienced they are to seek out and gather information to inform their teaching design and impact on a scale of 1 (beginning) to 4 (Part of me) at both the start of the project and (March 2022) and at the end (Nov 2022).

### 3.2 To understand the insights of the Māori and Pasifika teachers, learners and whānau to inform the ways in which the TLA cycle is successfully shifting outcomes for priority learners, and to identify what might need to be developed to aid further support.

Of the 586 learners that completed the final survey, 100 identified as Māori and 26 identified as Pasifika. The increase in Māori learners is due to the onboarding of new classes from one of the new schools to the project.

Even with the increase in Māori learner results, both Māori and Pasifika teachers and learners continue to have a pleasing perception of SchoolTalk with the general consensus being that they engage positively with the app and it supports their learning and progress. For example, 100% of all Māori teacher survey responses had a positive increase and most areas in the Māori and Pasifika learners' responses retained high ratings.

To further elaborate, Māori and Pasifika learners collectively use SchoolTalk to gain feedback on their learning, such as insights into how they are progressing overtime and what they need to focus on next. When comparing this to the Māori teacher survey results, their perception shows that they view SchoolTalk as an effective way for Māori and Pasifika learners to engage in their learning. Additionally, when comparing the positive shifts in pilot teachers' capabilities, it is not surprising to see that 86% - 88% of Māori and Pasifika learners feel the lessons their teachers put into SchoolTalk supports their

learning progress. Our hypothesis is that visibility in SchoolTalk removes any opportunity for unconscious bias towards Māori and Pasifika learners, and focuses on where they are at in their progress, enabling teachers to target learning specifically to their needs.

Finally, it can clearly be seen that there is continued work to be done to strengthen the use of SchoolTalk between school and home for Māori and Pasifika learners. It should be noted that 66% of pilot teachers believe SchoolTalk strengthens home/school partnerships in general. However, this result is lower than previous responses in this category. We know that there are various factors that are likely causing this low result:

- Some of the pilot schools are yet to provide parents access to SchoolTalk and therefore, 20% of teachers responded N/A to this survey statement. We believe this is why learners were less inclined to respond positively to survey statements relating to learning in the home as they haven't had teacher and school input into how, what or when to share with whānau.
- Engaging parents in a child's learning today requires them to be digitally literate not just in using digital devices but also in navigating SchoolTalk and accessing their child's learning. Not all parents are equipped with the right digital skills or devices and this requires a school to provide support to its community to ensure parents are suitably up-skilled.

Now that we are seeing very positive inroads into the growth of teacher practice, it is emerging that a focus on home/school partnerships is an increasingly important contributor to students' learning journeys; especially under the ongoing hybrid learning conditions.

## Conclusion

We now have appropriate implementation support programmes available for schools subscribing to SchoolTalk, which focus on growing effective teachers to design differentiated learning that enable learners to engage in learning that is specific to their needs. Additionally, we have relevant surveys to accompany this professional learning to ensure we are consistently gaining feedback and insights to remain informed about user perceptions of SchoolTalk and Engagement Sliders.

The above processes have enabled us to discover the significant shifts that can occur in a teacher's practice through embedding the TLA cycle. In particular, teachers' ability to use learner evidence and progress data to differentiate learning for different groups of learners. Our expectation is that this will result in steady and continued progress in each learner's learning journey.

Excitingly, this poses a new opportunity. Moving forward, we aim to do a retrospective analysis correlation between the positive perceptions we have collected and the actual progress data within the SchoolTalk app.

Finally, this project has significantly highlighted the need for the same amount of rigour to be applied to home/school partnerships. All stakeholders are required to be digitally literate to be able to engage in a child's learning and progress, and it is a school's responsibility to support and foster this.

*'Home-school partnerships involve collaborative working relationships between families and schools. They can support students in more productive and consistent work and behaviour, which in turn can improve students' interest, motivation and engagement in learning both at home and at school.'* (Home-School Partnerships: What the research says. The Education Hub, 2019).

In 2023, we will inquire into ways in which schools can strengthen the engagement of their learners' whānau and parents. The intention is to weave the strategies we learn to be successful with the SchoolTalk and Engagement Sliders implementation methods and surveys so that all stakeholders are involved in every child's learning journey.

## Appendix 1: Statement of Work from CET

### DELIVERABLES

Improved teacher practice by (1) extending use of tools across the curriculum, (2) strengthening collaborative practice, and (3) enabling better monitoring of student engagement. Specific objectives are:

*Extending use of tools to the entire curriculum:*

- To have all of the pilot teachers confidently using the TLA cycle across the entire curriculum.

*Strengthening collaborative practice:*

- To have two pilot teachers in each school support one to two new teachers each in utilising information, like progressions and gap analysis to inform future learning design.
- To have the 4 teachers from the new schools consistently embedding their learning design within SchoolTalk so that it is shared with whānau, learners and colleagues within their own school.
- To develop leadership capability in learning design so that the learning gained from this project is disseminated within the participating schools and to a wider educational audience utilising the Stonefields Collaborative Trust networks.

*Better monitoring of student engagement:*

- To have all of the pilot teachers consistently correlate and analyse the insights provided through the Engagement Slider with the information in SchoolTalk.
- To understand the insights of the Māori and Pasifika teachers, learners and whānau to inform the ways in which the TLA cycle is successfully shifting outcomes for priority learners, and to identify what might need to be developed to aid further support.

## **Appendix 2: Project Data**

Project Facilitation Website

[Mid Year Progress report](#)

Can provide upon request as this is stored in large files

- Teacher Surveys - Match Data
- Learner Surveys - Match Data