



Learning in a Covid-19 World:

Supporting Secondary School Engagement

REPORT



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Part 1: Purpose

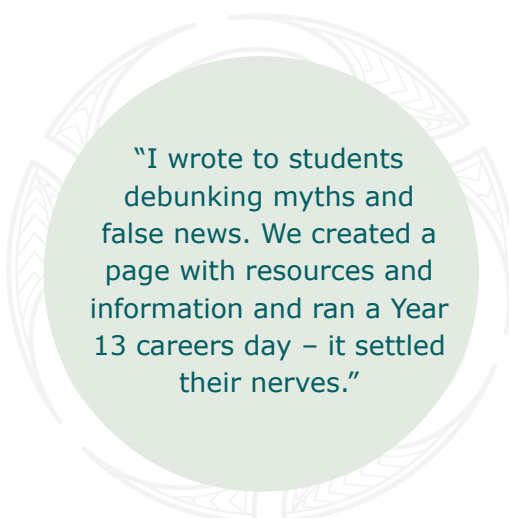
The Covid-19 pandemic has presented significant challenges for schools, disrupting the continuity of learning and teaching across the world. This report provides secondary schools with guidance on practical strategies to maintain student engagement during the Covid-19 pandemic, including re-engaging students who are presenting with wellbeing concerns or showing signs of disengagement.

We have focussed on secondary students because our report *Learning in a Covid-19 World: The Impact of Covid-19 on Schools* found that secondary school students have been most impacted by Covid-19, and as a group they are most at risk of disengaging from learning.¹

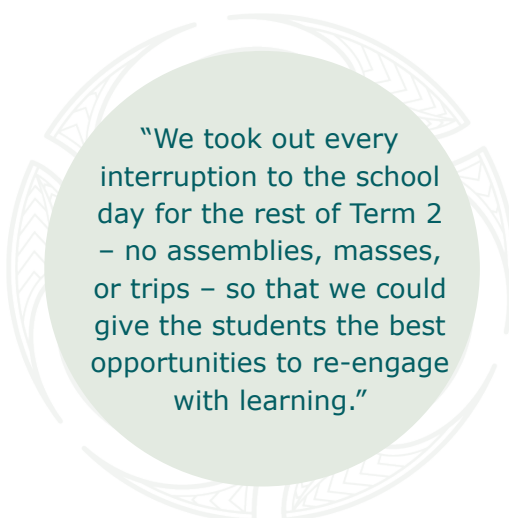
Many of the strategies are well known and may already be in place in schools. To support schools who are looking to try something new, we have also included some of the actions and innovative practices that schools have told us that they used to engage students after the lockdown.

There is no one solution to engagement and disengagement. Rather, schools may need to try a range of, and a mix of, approaches to address the needs of the students in their school. Principals, school leaders, teachers, counsellors, and pastoral care staff can use these strategies and actions when developing a plan for supporting student engagement, or to address specific areas of concern. Additionally, investing in or embedding such strategies proactively into school practice may be helpful in preparing for future challenges. The report also includes a description of the relationships between wellbeing, engagement and learning, which may be useful in communicating to families why schools are focussing on engagement.

The strategies in this report are focussed on students who are still attending school. They are not designed for students who have disengaged completely from education, such as those who have dropped out or who are persistently absent. The Ministry of Education has resources available to support schools who are dealing with fully disengaged students.



"I wrote to students debunking myths and false news. We created a page with resources and information and ran a Year 13 careers day – it settled their nerves."



"We took out every interruption to the school day for the rest of Term 2 – no assemblies, masses, or trips – so that we could give the students the best opportunities to re-engage with learning."

Part 2: How to use this report

While maintaining student engagement during the pandemic is a challenge for all schools, how schools respond to that challenge will depend on the needs of their students. This section describes how we have structured our guidance to help schools to find ideas on how to maintain their students' engagement.

What informed this report

This report synthesises a range of evidence to identify the best approaches for engaging students in education. Sources included:

- a review of published literature to identify key themes and strategies of student engagement
- recent OECD² and United Nations³ reports on education during the Covid-19 pandemic to identify current practical advice
- ERO's 2013 report on educational continuity during the Canterbury earthquake sequence,⁴ to identify themes and strategies to support educational continuity
- surveys, interviews and focus groups ERO undertook with secondary school stakeholders to identify approaches that are already being used to engage students.

This report:

- Sets out six key themes for maintaining and promoting student engagement.
- For each theme, we provide a brief description and explain why it is important.
- For each theme, we provide a list of strategies that schools can implement to promote re-engagement.
- The strategies are split into strategies that promote engagement generally, strategies for those at risk of disengagement and strategies for students who are disengaging.
- For each theme, we also include actions and innovations already in use by schools.

Themes

The six overarching themes are:

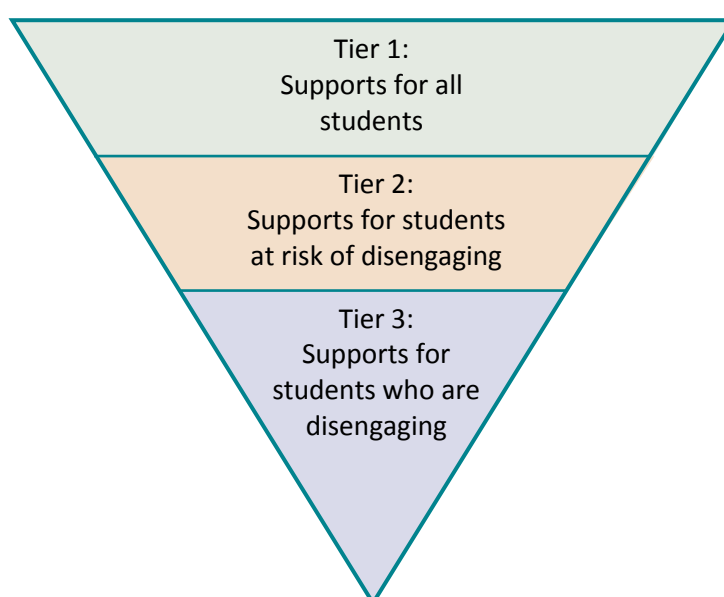
Prioritise wellbeing and connection	Understand the context and respond rapidly to identified concerns	Build and strengthen relationships for learning
Communicate effectively with students and whānau	Individualise learning and promote student agency	Reframe and adapt classroom approaches

Each school will be facing different challenges. Schools may have a small group of students who are showing signs of disengagement, or disengagement may be more widespread. Schools may want an engagement strategy with actions across all themes, or simply choose to focus on one theme.

Tiered strategies

Within each theme, we provide a range of evidence-based strategies that schools can implement to promote student engagement.

As students can present with varied levels of disengagement, we have organised the strategies into tiers, allowing schools to match their approach to the appropriate level of engagement.



Supports for all students (Tier 1) are universal interventions. These strategies represent a core set of approaches to promote engagement across the school. Tier 1 strategies are intended to address the needs of 80-90 percent of students and are intended to provide foundational support for engagement before introducing targeted interventions.

Supports for students at risk of disengaging (Tier 2) are interventions that aim to engage students who may be on a pathway to disengagement (approximately 5-10 percent of students). These students may demonstrate disruptive behaviour, disinterest in class and increased non-attendance. Tier 2 strategies provide the additional support and monitoring that these students require.

Supports for students who are disengaging (Tier 3) are intensive interventions targeted towards students who demonstrate little or no engagement in class and increased levels of non-attendance. These strategies focus on a more individualised and concentrated approach and may be necessary for 1-5 percent of students.

Actions and innovations schools have tried

Schools throughout New Zealand are already implementing strategies to promote student engagement during the Covid-19 pandemic. Through our recent interviews, focus groups and surveys with secondary school stakeholders, we have collated a list of actions and innovations already used by schools and included them under each theme. ERO has not assessed the effectiveness of these approaches.

Tailoring to your school

ERO has identified a range of evidence-based strategies and other approaches that schools can adopt. However, what works will depend on the school's context and strategies will need to be tailored. Overall, the themes and strategies to promote engagement identified in this report exemplify effective teaching approaches.

Running across all themes and strategies is the need to ensure learning is culturally responsive to the needs of all students who are struggling to engage. Comprehensive guidelines exist for providing culturally responsive education for ākonga Māori.^{5,6} When introducing interventions specifically targeted for ākonga Māori, schools need to consider ways to anchor them in te ao Māori and tikanga Māori. The Ministry of Education has also developed advice for supporting Pacific learners^{7,8} and students with a refugee background.⁹

To ensure consistent and coherent implementation of strategies to maintain engagement, schools could allocate the responsibility for engagement strategies to the senior team or home room teachers.

To aid with initial planning around engagement strategies, a series of prompts have been included in Appendix B, grouped by theme.

Part 3: Why engagement matters

Principals have told us that they are concerned about engagement of secondary school students during the Covid-19 pandemic. This section describes why engagement matters and its link to achievement and other wellbeing indicators.

Covid-19 presents an unprecedented challenge for schools

The Covid-19 pandemic has presented significant challenges for schools, disrupting the continuity of learning and teaching across the world.¹⁰ Schools in New Zealand have faced extended closures which can result in a learning loss, particularly for already disadvantaged students.^{11,12} The break from traditional schooling arrangements during the Covid-19 Alert Level 3 and 4 lockdowns, along with ongoing uncertainty and new requirements (for example cleaning, social distancing), may have brought additional stress, anxiety, and fear, which can further impact learning and engagement.¹³

Student disengagement from schooling is a concern

Some principals in New Zealand have expressed concern about the engagement of secondary school students in learning after a period of lockdown. Beginning in June, ERO undertook in-depth conversations with secondary school principals and board chairs. They reported high rates of non-attendance in the transition back to onsite schooling, along with difficulty engaging students in schoolwork and routines.

In Term 3, ERO undertook a second phase of research into the effects of Covid-19 on schools, with a focus on student engagement. This included undertaking surveys, interviews and focus groups with a range of participants. Our research indicated that:

- only 39 percent of Year 9 and 10 students were enjoying learning, and Year 11 to 13 students were even less likely to be enjoying learning
- less than half of the secondary school teachers surveyed thought their students were engaged in their learning
- engagement is particularly an issue in Auckland; only 26 percent of teachers in Auckland felt their learners were engaged compared to 50 percent of teachers outside of Auckland.

Full details of ERO's work on Covid-19 are published on the ERO website.

Wellbeing, engagement and learning are strongly connected. Students with wellbeing needs may have difficulty engaging in learning. Students who are not engaged in schooling are more likely to experience a range of adverse academic, social and wellbeing outcomes.^{14, 15, 16} A recent report into non-attendance (the most easily measured form of disengagement) found a consistent reduction in NCEA credit attainment for every half-day off school.¹⁷ The report indicated that there is no “safe” level where academic results are unaffected by non-attendance.

Self-reported skipping of school is also linked to increased anxiety, a decreased sense of belonging and motivation, and early school dropout.¹⁸ Long term, non-attendance is associated with unemployment, non-participation in further education and decreased life satisfaction.¹⁹

Engagement, disengagement and re-engagement

When students are fully **engaged**, they take **actions** to learn; **feel** positive about engaging in learning; and **think** deeply about their learning and engagement.²⁰ In New Zealand, the principles of presence and connectedness are fundamental to initiatives and strategies aimed at raising the engagement levels of Māori students.^{21,22}

Students can be **disengaged** at different levels and this may not be obvious; they can simply feel bored or they can be hiding emotional distress. Others will show signs of disengagement: they may behave negatively, skip class or even drop out.²³

Disengagement can be linked to students trying to take power and control over their lives, especially when there is less opportunity to do so.²⁴ The Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in substantial reduction in autonomy for everyone, and school students may be feeling especially disempowered. Disengagement is also closely linked to changes in students’ wellbeing.²⁵

Re-engaging students requires actions across the three elements of engagement: feeling, thinking and acting. This may involve introducing or increasing opportunities that enhance students’ motivation to learn or re-igniting their aspirations.²⁶

Part 4: How to improve student engagement

This section sets out the six key themes relating to maintaining and promoting student engagement. For each theme, we provide a brief description and explain why it is important. This is followed by a list of relevant strategies that schools can implement to promote re-engagement, broken down into each of the three tiers. These themes are not prioritised, as they are all equally important.

1. Prioritise wellbeing and connection

There is a well-established relationship between wellbeing and learning.^{27,28} How young people feel at school has a major impact on how confident they are and how well they learn. Although there is no single measure for student wellbeing, the factors that contribute to it are interrelated and interdependent. For example, a student's sense of achievement and success is enhanced when they feel safe and secure at school. This in turn lifts their confidence to try new challenges, strengthening their resilience.²⁹

Ensuring students feel well-cared for as they re-enter schools from a period of disengagement is crucial to enable them to connect with others, develop a sense of belonging and gain confidence to participate. UNESCO notes that crises such as this current pandemic provoke:

...strong negative emotional responses such as panic, stress, anxiety, anger and fear...[which] have a detrimental impact on health and the ability to learn... Only when the brain is socially connected and emotionally secure can it focus on academic content and engage in learning.³⁰

The adverse effects of stress and anxiety in students can be mitigated through positive and nurturing relationships with parents, whānau and teachers who:

- demonstrate good social and emotional learning skills
- create opportunities for explicit social and emotional learning activities
- provide a safe and predictable learning environment which allows students to heal from traumatic experiences and return to normal life.

A comprehensive resource, titled *Mental Health Education and Hauora: Teaching Interpersonal Skills, Resilience, and Wellbeing*,³¹ has recently been made available to all schools by the Ministry of Education to assist teachers to support students' mental health and wellbeing during the current pandemic.³²

A key approach to ensuring wellbeing, especially for Māori and Pacific students, is taking approaches which integrate holistic models of health such as *Te Whare Tapa Whā* and *Fonofale*.^{33,34} Using the 'Circle of Care'³⁵ model can help in coordinating multi-system support centred around the student and their wellbeing needs.

Teaching social and emotional learning skills can also be useful in helping young adolescents develop more resilient behaviours and self-regulatory skills such as self-monitoring, time management and personal reflection.³⁶ These skills support students to engage more effectively at school.

Teacher wellbeing is also important to consider, as it is associated with increased student wellbeing and with fewer psychological difficulties among students.³⁷

TABLE 1: Evidence-based strategies to prioritise wellbeing and connection

Tier 1	<p>Make the school environment welcoming for students and their families: Students are more likely to engage when their first encounter with staff is positive, warm and strongly demonstrates aspects of manaakitanga.³⁸ School spaces can be designed to echo cultural practices and ensure that students from all cultures feel safe and welcomed. The physical environment and school practices can reflect students' cultural identities by: displaying objects and symbols from student's culture around the school, using students' language in the classroom and incorporating culturally relevant protocols into classroom and school ceremonies.</p>
	<p>Provide an inclusive culture for students who are sex-, gender – and sexuality-diverse (SGSD): SGSD students are more likely to experience bullying and other negative behaviours than their peers.³⁹ An ERO evaluation into promoting wellbeing through sexuality education identified a range of approaches schools have used to provide an inclusive environment for SGSD students.⁴⁰ These included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • adopting a gender-neutral dress code • providing gender-neutral bathrooms for students • encouraging and facilitating student-led groups focussed on sex-, gender – and sexuality-diversity • using inclusive language (including current pronouns) and demonstrating sensitivity to the wellbeing needs of diverse students • engaging external contractors to educate staff and students on the inclusion of SGSD students. <p>The Ministry of Education has also developed comprehensive advice for schools to support the inclusion and wellbeing of SGSD students.⁴¹</p>
	<p>Supporting students with additional learning or health needs: Some students and their families are likely to be more anxious about attending school again after a lockdown. Schools may consider increasing the communication and support for these students. This could include reviewing and adjusting care, learning or safety plans.^{42,43}</p>

Tier 1	<p>Develop positive school culture and pro-social relationships (Tiers 1-3): PB4L School-wide is an expansive framework designed to help schools build a positive school culture. It is aimed at changing the school environment, systems and practices, so that students are supported to make positive behaviour choices.⁴⁴ PB4L School-wide also uses a tiered system, with tiers moving from general approaches (looking at improving systems, processes and expectations across the whole school) to focussing more specifically on interventions for students presenting with more challenging behaviours and requiring more intensive support.</p>
	<p>Engage in health-promoting and mindful practices with students including promotion of healthy eating habits and regular exercise and sleeping hours. Follow a flexible but structured daily routine, which includes time to do something fun or relaxing. Promote mindfulness practices, as appropriate.⁴⁵ Create space for students to reflect on wellbeing.</p>
	<p>Support teacher wellbeing: Where possible, leaders can look for ways to support teacher wellbeing, for example through managing teachers' workload and ensuring teachers have a suitable work-life balance. Supporting teacher wellbeing will in turn support student wellbeing and learning.⁴⁶ Many schools throughout New Zealand utilise Employee Assistance Programmes – external contractors who provide confidential counselling and support for employees experiencing a wide range of life, work and wellbeing concerns.</p>
Tier 2	<p>Supporting young people with emerging wellbeing concerns: The Ministry of Social Development provides guidance on how to support young people displaying mild to moderate mental health issues, such as stress, anxiety and/or depression.⁴⁷ Key recommendations include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • listening and being non-judgemental • being approachable and strengths-based • supporting young people to make their own decisions • providing consistent and supportive attention • having hope and belief that positive change for a young person can occur • understanding a youth perspective. <p>The Ministry of Health has also developed Covid-19 specific resources, including a wide range of self-help resources for supporting young peoples' mental health.⁴⁸ A useful strategy may be to approach Non-Government Organisations which focus on young people or family wellbeing and support to see what they can offer in your local area.</p>
Tier 3	<p>Intensive Wraparound Service [IWS]: The Te Kahu Toi IWS provides a "comprehensive, holistic, youth and family/whānau driven way of responding when... youth experience significant challenges in their lives".⁴⁹ Support is tailored to meet the specific needs of the young person and involves whānau and professionals working together. The IWS is only available for students up to 14 years old.</p>

Actions and innovations schools tried

- Undertaking individual weekly wellbeing 'check in' conversations.
- Making the wellbeing of students and their whānau the first priority.
- School leaders undertaking individual interviews with each student and their whānau on their return to school.
- Increasing access to mental health support and counsellors at school.
- Providing specific support for strengthening social-emotional skills and behaviours.
- Providing additional opportunities for students to socialise through 'fun' school events.
- Providing structured and informal opportunities for students to talk through their recent experiences with others.
- Providing quiet spaces when students need to 'chill out' during class.
- Reducing the need for large gatherings such as assemblies.

Additional resources for supporting wellbeing and connection can be found in Part 6: Conclusion.

2. Understand the context and respond rapidly to identified concerns

To effectively maintain students' engagement in learning, it is essential to understand any areas of disengagement and explore underlying causes.

The first step is to undertake comprehensive and systematic collection of data on student engagement. Analysis and reporting of this data enables schools to identify students currently, or at risk of, disengaging. This approach is advocated by Attendance Works, who recommend collecting and reporting on attendance and chronic absence data to provide accurate, accessible, timely and comprehensive information to inform action.⁵⁰ Increasing vigilance in monitoring attendance and engagement alerts schools to emerging patterns or concerns.

While Covid-19 is a key driver of disengagement for many students, they are likely to express their disengagement differently. For instance, a student who is not attending school may still be engaged in learning in other ways, whereas a student present at school may not be engaged with learning at all. Finding ways to identify and differentiate between these students is critical.

It is also important to clarify student and whānau perceptions of the problem, including their understanding of the cause of their disengagement. This may involve developing or implementing measurement tools such as surveys, having one-on-one meetings or classroom discussions. Information on the underlying causes of disengagement can help with formulating plans to support students' engagement/re-engagement.

Any responses from teachers and schools are more likely to be effective if they are connected to the contributing factors or causes of disengagement. For example, this could mean involving a school counsellor to provide wellbeing support or providing a safe place for them during lunch time.

Intervening early to address engagement issues will stop disengagement from compounding.⁵¹

TABLE 2: Evidence-based strategies to understand the context and respond rapidly to identified concerns

Tier 1	<p>Effective monitoring systems: The systematic gathering and monitoring of engagement (including attendance), achievement and disciplinary data allows schools to rapidly identify when students are at risk of, or beginning to, disengage with school. ERO has published several national evaluations that provide guidance on tracking and monitoring student achievement, including <i>Raising Student Achievement Through Targeted Interventions</i> and <i>Increasing Educational Achievement in Secondary Schools</i>. These reports include dedicated advice on approaches to monitoring and tracking student data to identify disengagement.</p>
	<p>Frequent 'pulse checks': Online and phone surveys of students, parents and staff to check their emotional state, home learning environment and basic material needs, attitudes to online learning, preferences for communication, and emotional and other wellbeing needs.⁵²</p>
	<p>Monitor and track changes in student/teacher wellbeing: Monitoring changes in student wellbeing and quickly identifying concerns prepares schools to undertake responsive action to the underlying causes of disengagement. Teachers also face increased wellbeing concerns during system shocks. Their wellbeing issues need to be identified and acted on quickly to support school wellbeing and engagement. Local resources include the Wellbeing@School toolkit, which includes a survey designed to support schools' self-review of their culture and an action plan template to guide improvement. Internationally, some schools are using apps to undertake regular 'pulse surveys' of student wellbeing and to allow students to easily ask for help if they need it.⁵³</p>
Tier 2	<p>Early warning systems: Systematic approaches to identifying students at risk of serious disengagement (e.g. dropping out), using a combination of attendance, behaviour and achievement indicators.⁵⁴</p>
	<p>Identify the needs of students at risk of disengagement: An example is using a 'traffic light' system to identify the most atrisk students and focus on their immediate needs in the first instance. This might be access to technology or learning packs during first stage of learning from home; or an initial observation of wellbeing on the return to school.⁵⁵</p>

Tier 3	Engaging attendance services: The Attendance Service works with students who are not attending school and supports schools to manage and reduce absences. ⁵⁶
	Systematic, tailored approach to addressing identified barriers: Set up and resource a “transition team” within the school to identify specific barriers for disengaged students and their families/whānau, and act quickly to address them. ⁵⁷ This can involve working with external agencies to reduce barriers to engagement – for example, supporting students and their family/whānau to access their full entitlements from the Ministry for Social Development. This may help to provide necessary food, or money for school uniforms. To assist schools in their response – the Urgent Response Fund was established to address students’ attendance issues and re-engagement with learning. This fund can be used at individual, group, or whole-school levels (i.e. throughout the tiers). ⁵⁸
	Evaluate interventions and create actionable data: Collect and report on quantitative attendance data, chronic absence data and qualitative analysis that can identify reasons that students miss school. Reporting needs to be accurate, accessible, timely, comprehensive and understandable. These data can then inform the development of prevention and intervention strategies and allocation of resources that support student attendance. ^{59,60}

Actions and innovations schools tried

- Intensifying attendance monitoring processes to be regular and robust.
- Increasing vigilance about following-up with students (and their families) showing decreased attendance.
- Undertaking increased analysis of attendance data to identify emerging patterns and groups of students who were not engaging regularly.
- Weekly check-in surveys used in lockdown continued once students return to school.
- Using regular staff meetings to develop a collective awareness of emerging issues or groups of students at risk.
- Increased monitoring of playground behaviours and interactions.
- Investigating the problem prior to responding; sensing an issue but pausing to reflect and further probe before moving to action.

3. Build and strengthen relationships for learning

To promote and maintain engagement, the (re-)establishing or (re-)building of relationships is crucial. Research has shown that the following features contribute to positive student-teacher relationships that promote re-engagement:⁶¹

- treating students with respect
- non-punitive behaviour management
- conveying high expectations for learner success
- teaching material that is perceived to be relevant to the student.

In one example, previously disengaged students who re-engaged in learning pointed to relationships with their teachers as crucial to their re-engagement. They believed that staff: treated them with respect, which they reciprocated; spent time getting to know them on a personal level; cared for students, understood that problems at home often caused behavioural issues at school and made a genuine effort to help; and encouraged and believed in them, which actively promoted their self-belief that they could achieve.⁶²

Building strong relationships between parents, whānau and schools is vital for students' ongoing learning and success. ERO has found that education outcomes for students improve when relationships between schools, parents, whānau and communities are strong.⁶³

Developing working relationships that reflect the concept of mahi tahi – working together towards the specific goal of supporting a young person's success – are educationally powerful.

TABLE 3: Evidence-based strategies to build and strengthen relationships for learning

Tier 1	<p>Develop 'educationally powerful connections' with parents and whānau: The ERO report <i>Educationally Powerful Connections with Parents and Whānau</i> includes advice on how to systematically involve parents and whānau in a student's education. Key approaches include providing extended learning opportunities across home and school, as well as involving parents and whānau in the design and implementation of education plans. This approach ensures teachers know who the student is in the context of school and home, and helps them to develop authentic learning goals for their students.^{64,65,66}</p>
	<p>Culturally responsive approaches to teaching: Teaching approaches that respond to students' culture, language and identity support their engagement.⁶⁷ The Ministry of Education has developed detailed advice on providing culturally responsive teaching for Māori and Pacific learners.^{68,69,70}</p>

	<p>Home visits: Home visits by teachers helps to build trusting relationships between educators and families. It helps to engage families as partners in their children’s education, providing a foundational support for student engagement. The aim of teachers undertaking home visits is to nurture trusting relationships, support open lines of communication, and cultivate a partnership mindset between educators and families. In the United States, studies of home visits have shown positive impacts on attendance and achievement.⁷¹</p>
Tier 2	<p>Mentors: Caring relationships at school can enhance a students’ sense of belonging, supporting their engagement. Mentoring approaches using peers, teachers and school counsellors have all shown promise as a means of increasing attendance and engagement at school.⁷² The Stars mentoring programme is a school-based programme that was developed to help transition students into secondary school.⁷³ Year 9 students beginning secondary school in 2021 may face additional engagement concerns after a disrupted year 8, making the Stars programme particularly relevant for the upcoming school year.</p>
Tier 3	<p>Check & Connect: The Check & Connect programmes involve matching nominated students with a trained mentor, who works with the students to help them set and achieve educational goals over a minimum of two years. This includes working with the students’ family, whānau, school and other service providers to help the student achieve their goals. Check & Connect is an evidence-based intervention programme that has reduced rates of dropout and truancy, particularly for students at high risk of school failure.⁷⁴</p> <p>Restorative discipline practices (Tiers 1-3): Restorative justice approaches to discipline focus on building and maintaining positive, respectful relationships across the school community. Restorative justice approaches have been shown to reduce absences due to disciplinary reasons, while creating a safer, fairer school climate that removes barriers to engagement. Positive Behaviour for Learning (PB4L) Restorative Practice incorporates a useful approach to implementing this strategy.</p>

Actions and innovations schools tried

- Providing additional staffing to ensure there are increased opportunities for interactions and one-on-one engagement with students.
- Assigning or employing staff to act primarily in a whānau liaison role to build strong, trusting relationships with students' families.
- Increasing the deliberate inclusion of parents/whānau in learning and decision making.
- Leveraging senior student leadership to provide support for junior students.
- Increasing opportunities for teachers to share strategies that work for particular groups and individual learners.
- Undertaking strategies specifically for Māori and Pacific students, including assessing and removing barriers to engagement with families; increasing contact with students and their whānau; and working through new or existing community networks.
- Actively following up non-attendance through phone calls and family visits by a dedicated "truancy team" consisting of school deans, tutors, pastoral teachers, external attendance officers, and police youth aides.

4. Communicate effectively with students and whānau

Communication matters to promote engagement. During the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, students and their whānau are experiencing increased anxiety and stress, with concern for the health and safety of themselves and their family members. Communication can re-assure students and their whānau about health and safety matters, and reassure them about their learning:

Schools [can] build attention to the challenges of Covid-19 into their back-to-school messaging... [To do that] messages should recognize that many students and families have suffered some trauma during the pandemic and detail steps the school is taking to ensure safe social distancing.⁷⁵

Communication about shifting expectations for learning or school practices reassures anxious students and their families and helps to rebuild a sense of community.⁷⁶

Messaging students and families about the importance of attendance is an effective strategy for promoting engagement. Iterative messages or "nudging parents and students" about attendance and engagement can remind them of the importance of being present. These can be delivered through general messages or for targeted groups. This can form part of a non-punitive approach to absenteeism that is centred on improving students' sense of belonging and engagement. Such an approach is more effective at helping students, families and whānau understand why daily attendance matters.⁷⁷

TABLE 4: Evidence-based strategies to communicate effectively

Tier 1	<p>Emphasise student and whānau safety: The Covid-19 pandemic is an underlying cause of much anxiety and stress for students and their whānau. Schools can promote student engagement by providing reassuring messaging to students and their whānau during this time. This approach is particularly relevant for students who have family members that are older or who have compromised health. Messaging strategies could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • emphasising the effectiveness of strategies that the school has in place⁷⁸ • following the general hygiene messaging recommended by the government • reassuring students and staff that they will remain safe and healthy at school throughout the pandemic. <p>The Ministry of Health has developed advice for supporting young people during and after Covid-19.⁷⁹ They recommend that schools provide accurate information, talk through any fears and reassure students on their safety at school.</p>
	<p>Increase communication with all parents and whānau: When communicating with parents and whānau, it is important to build rapport and take time for trust to develop. The Ministry of Education has developed advice for talking to parents in the wake of Covid-19.⁸⁰ Key points to consider include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • taking time for <i>whakawhanaungatanga</i> (relationship building) • considering the impact Covid-19 may have had on whānau • planning for ongoing communication • whether or not you or someone else should help families connect to services or agencies that they may need • any cultural norms, family dynamics and religious beliefs that may be relevant. <p>The <i>Getting Through Together</i>⁸¹ strategies described by the Mental Health Foundation of New Zealand can also be adapted to support families during the pandemic.</p>
	<p>Positive messaging: Positive messaging is an inexpensive and easy approach to promote attendance and school engagement. Conveying kindness and compassion in all messaging will help students feel comfortable returning to school. For example, teachers can deliberately frame language in a way that focuses on the success of lockdown and engagement rather than the challenges. For families it may be about welcoming messages and inviting their contribution, such as: “We are really excited to see you all again after all this time, but here are a few things we need you to help us with”. Possible avenues of messaging include phone calls, text messages, social media, letters and flyers. While the evidence of positive messaging is emerging, case studies have shown positive effects on attendance.^{82,83} Positive messaging can also be used to build a sense of hope among students that we will overcome the pandemic. Teachers could incorporate into their communications information about the progress of vaccine development and how historical pandemics have been overcome.</p>
	<p>Regularly share schoolwide non-attendance and punctuality data with the school community. This will be useful in emphasising the need for attendance and provide an evidence base and rationale for any actions taken.⁸⁴</p>

Tier 2	<p>Engage study supporters: Study supporters are nominated family members or friends who can encourage students' learning throughout the school term. Schools can engage with study supporters through weekly emails or text messages that include targeted information about what students are learning and enjoying in class. The study supporters then use this information to engage with students around what they have been learning at school. Weekly messaging to study supporters in the United Kingdom was found to increase both attendance and achievement.⁸⁵</p>
	<p>Nudging parents and students: 'Nudges' to remind parents and caregivers about students' absence are an unobtrusive intervention to support student attendance at school. This approach works in part because parents are often unaware of the amount that their children miss school. Studies using postcards⁸⁶ and text messaging⁸⁷ to notify parents of student absences have both shown an associated reduction in school absence. Nudges could be used to inform parents about the importance of school attendance, or to alert them to the number of absences their children have on a regular basis.</p>
	<p>Talking to students showing signs of distress: The Ministry of Education has developed advice for communicating with students showing signs of ongoing distress in the wake of Covid-19 lockdowns.⁸⁸ Their advice includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be patient and take time to listen to the student • avoid making assumptions about how they may be feeling, and acknowledge any feelings they may have • avoid putting students on the spot and invite them to share when they are ready • provide a safe space for students to express their experiences through art, social activities and hands-on projects • model positive reactions to support their confidence.
Tier 3	<p>Home visits/family meetings: When absences add up, teachers can undertake virtual/physically distanced family meetings or home visits to support the sharing of information and show that the school values the student and their family.^{56 89}</p>
	<p>Celebrating improvement: Provide regular recognition and incentives to students and families who have good and improved attendance.⁹⁰ Note that recognition for perfect attendance needs to be balanced by promoting the healthy practices of staying away from school when sick.</p>

Actions and innovations schools tried

- Deliberately using positive language that focuses on the successes of lockdown and engagement rather than the challenges.
- Avoiding phrases which communicate a sense of deficit in learning – for example, not talking about ‘lost learning’ or ‘catching up’ on learning ‘missed’.
- Teachers talking about and showing value for the richness of learnings during lockdown and taking students from where they currently are.
- Teachers communicating their belief in students and high expectations of their success.
- Reassuring students and families of their safety at school through health and safety protocols.
- Ensuring teachers are all on the same page through regular opportunities for sharing and professional collaboration.

5. Individualise learning and promote student agency

Students have returned to school with wide-ranging experiences. Some may have thrived during lockdowns, or developed a new appreciation for school, where others struggled with isolation, hardship, or loss. Teaching approaches need to recognise students’ varied experiences and cater to their strengths.

Schools that are engaging for all students are characterised by their efforts to tailor learning experiences to each student’s individual needs and interests, while not expecting a one size fits all approach to learning.⁹¹ They use their knowledge of each student’s interests to build on their strengths and motivate their learning.

There is also compelling evidence that personal agency and academic self-regulation are key factors in supporting students’ engagement in learning. Some disengagement may be a response to feelings of disempowerment. A key strategy to encourage motivation and promote re-engagement in learning is to enable students to make decisions and choices through exercising their personal agency.⁹² Efforts to provide agency, however, should be carefully scaffolded and supported, so that students build understanding about their learning and are provided with clear teacher guidance and expectations for accountability.

A desire for self-determination or *tino rangatiratanga* is an important consideration when choosing strategies to promote re-engagement, especially for Māori students.⁹³ Providing options for students and involving them more fully in decision-making can be an effective tool to support re-engagement.⁹⁴ This is especially relevant following a period of lockdown with wide-ranging restrictions of movement and limited choices available to students.

TABLE 5: Evidence-based strategies to individualise and tailor learning

Tier 1	<p>Individual learning contracts: These can give students the opportunity to explore not only a given topic but also their own learning strategies and goals, and give students ownership of their learning at the outset of a project or class, prompting students to reflect on how they learn and how they establish clear goals and project timelines.⁹⁵ Individual learning contracts can also enhance clarity and effort across the teaching team in terms of students' goals, aspirations and support.</p>
	<p>Blended learning: Approaches that include a wide range of options for using digital platforms to support learning.⁹⁶ Some students enjoyed learning digitally while at home during lockdowns. Schools may want to identify these students and explore ways to allow increased options for blended learning, where appropriate. ClassroomNZ2020 is an online learning platform that provides a range of 'student-ready' online lessons that can be used to support blended learning approaches. It is available free to all schools until 28 February 2021, as part of the Ministry of Education's Covid-19 response package.</p>
	<p>Autonomy-supportive instructional behaviours: Teaching approaches that build students' sense of capability and autonomy. These include listening to students, asking them questions, acknowledging their wishes, responding to their questions, giving detailed and specific feedback, providing time for reflection, acknowledging students' perspectives and allowing them to sometimes work on their own.⁹⁷</p>
Tier 2	<p>Small group tuition: Provide additional learning opportunities through targeted learning support groups for identified needs. For example, preloading sessions which help set learners up with language and concepts before engaging in a planned lesson.⁹⁸</p>
	<p>Individual development plans: These plans identify the current cognitive level of students at risk of disengaging, and help teachers design a learning programme adapted to each student's ability and interest. If used well, they can strengthen student agency, enabling the level of motivation required to re-engage in learning.⁹⁹</p>
	<p>Goal setting with students: Significantly high effects on students' learning are found where they: (a) can set challenging and specific goals that allow them to direct, evaluate and redirect their learning, and; (b) receive feedback from peers, teachers, parents, and own experience that relates specifically to how the gap can be addressed between current and future performance.¹⁰⁰</p>
Tier 3	<p>Coordinated case management with multiple systems including child protection, mental health, health, housing/homelessness and youth justice (as a last resort).¹⁰¹ In New Zealand, Te Kahu Tōi, Intensive Wraparound Service provides comprehensive support for young people that have complex and challenging needs.¹⁰²</p>

Actions and innovations schools tried

- Increasing opportunities for one-to-one learning support.
- Promoting student independence by increasing choices of tasks and areas of focus.
- Increasing the use of detailed individualised learning plans and tailored work tasks in response to students' interests and needs.
- Interviewing each student on return to school to assess levels of support required.
- Following up with a group of students who had left school to work out a way they could complete their qualifications.
- Resourcing additional staffing to provide increased opportunities for individualised approaches and personalising work.
- Teachers providing individual mentoring sessions and conferences focused on helping students to manage their work programme, assessments and credit completion and supporting students to adapt or renegotiate their learning pathways.
- Revising school schedules, for example providing a work-from-home day for senior students.
- Reframing the use of headphones as a positive option for students to manage their interactions and learning.
- Giving students choices to work independently or with others.

6. Reframe and adapt classroom approaches

For some students, returning to the classroom can bring about a sense of familiarity which helps them to re-engage in learning. For others, it adds to their levels of anxiety, especially if the new normal is not acknowledged. Teachers need to balance the need for routines to be re-established with the need for flexible approaches to accommodate the diverse responses to disruption to learning experienced by students.

Re-establishing classroom and school routines may help students who have missed the predictability of school life. However, this should be balanced with new practices which are required, and which help students to cope with their anxiety and a new normal.¹⁰³ Including students in co-designing new practices for the 'new normal' may be a useful way to support engagement. Relaxing classroom rules so that students can better connect with and work alongside their peers is an important consideration.¹⁰⁴ This enables students to re-engage in a comfortable environment as they rebuild their friendships and share concerns about their experiences and learning.

Ensuring the programme and assessment schedules are adapted for flexibility is crucial. This may involve ensuring students view the teacher as supportive and changing classroom practice so that students see the content, outcomes, and activity options as personally valuable and obtainable.¹⁰⁵ Such changes could include:

- reframing content and processes to clarify purpose in terms of real life needs and experiences, and underscore how it all builds on previous learning
- clarifying why the procedures are expected to be effective, especially those designed to help correct specific problems.

Schools may need to think about how they ensure boundaries are established but remain flexible when necessary. Practices that minimise opportunities for students to feel like they are being coerced or managed help to promote a greater sense of responsibility and motivation.¹⁰⁶

TABLE 6: Evidence-based strategies to reframe and adapt classroom approaches

Tier 1	<p>Flexible assessment: Adapting assessment timetables to take account of work not covered and finding alternative ways to assess learning. A range of detailed advice for developing flexible assessment processes is available on <i>Te Kete Ipurangi</i>.¹⁰⁷ The suggested process includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identifying hidden barriers • offering options and supports for assessment • utilising effective assessment practices • considering students' diverse needs.
	<p>Prioritised scheduling: Schools could change their class scheduling to ensure that classes that are popular with students and have high attendance are scheduled at the start of the day and immediately after lunch.¹⁰⁸ Students could be involved in this scheduling process through a survey or focus groups.</p>
	<p>Share approaches that work (Tiers 1-3): Actively sharing successful approaches with other teachers ensures that positive strategies are disseminated across the school, while helping provide a consistent experience for students.</p>
Tier 2	<p>Restructure classroom practices to enable choices for greater interaction or quiet spaces and greater use of movement for students that find difficulty in concentrating. Find a balance between teacher-directed learning and whole class teaching/instruction, individual and group learning.¹⁰⁹</p>
	<p>Peer collaboration: Providing opportunities for peer collaboration on learning tasks (e.g. co-operative learning).^{110,111}</p>
Tier 3	<p>Flexible learning programmes: Flexible learning options assist students with complex needs who require more intensive assistance. Programmes are most effective when they deliver meaningful qualifications and give students comprehensive wrap-around services to improve their wellbeing.¹¹² The Framework of Quality Flexible Learning Programmes provides detailed advice on how to establish flexible learning programmes for students who have disengaged. It identifies the following key actions of quality flexible learning programmes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • create meaningful learning opportunities • provide significant support for learning • build genuine and caring relationships • provide practical support for living • engage with community • perform reflection and innovation.

Actions and innovations schools tried

- Adapting curriculum and assessment schedules to minimise anxiety and maximise the capacity to identify and respond to the critical learning needs of those at risk.
- Increased flexibility in approaches to credit acquisition.
- Teachers focusing on learning and improvement rather than formal assessment requirements.
- Minimising disruption and maximising in-class time.
- Providing additional learning opportunities such as tutorials and workshops, at times during non-contact time and school holidays.
- Reorganising classroom environments and practices to better cater for students so that routines are more flexible and student-focused.
- Adjusting classroom expectations for participation and behaviour so that students have more freedom to talk and move around.
- Providing additional opportunities for student discussion and reflection.
- Increasing opportunities for students to engage in digital and blended learning.
- Ensuring there was a balance in classroom and schoolwide practices between re-establishing school routines and allowing flexibility.

Part 5: Knowing what not to do

In addition to the six key themes, schools may want to be aware of the approaches that can exacerbate student disengagement or increase stress at an already stressful time.

Overemphasising rewards and punishment

Schools often use tangible rewards and enticements to promote desired behaviours. These forms of incentives are most effective when part of a comprehensive approach that includes outreach to families with more significant challenges to attendance.¹¹³ Overemphasising incentives can have a negative impact on students' motivation for learning, and a reliance on incentives to control behaviour may exacerbate students' problems.¹¹⁴

Providing motivation for improving attendance through rewards, contracts or goal setting and monitoring can result in improving a student's presence in school. However, this approach can sometimes mask the underlying causes of disengagement and heighten students' anxiety levels.

As the pandemic continues, schools will need to balance offering rewards to promote engagement against ensuring that unwell students do not attend school.

Assigning 'busy work'

Setting tasks that have no connection to students' interests, prior learning or goals can generate a disconnection from learning. Reconnection to learning can occur when classroom practice re-ignites interest in the benefits and value of learning, and the learning is relevant and meaningful, especially for senior students.

Promoting overly 'controlling environments'

Environments which limit students' agency can adversely affect engagement in learning. It can result in students being less able to find their own motivation to engage in activities and behaviours.¹¹⁵ This could be particularly significant for students who have experienced unstructured learning when distanced from school.

Ignoring changing contexts

While it is important to get back to regular practice and predictable routines, it is also important to acknowledge the disruption and anxiety caused by the pandemic. To ensure students do not suppress their feelings, they need to feel that their experiences are shared and their responses are normal and valid.¹¹⁶

Part 6: Conclusion

Covid-19 and the disruption to on-site learning presented a substantial challenge for schools and students, particularly for student engagement. This report provides practical information for principals and teachers to promote student engagement, developed through a review of the published literature and a series of interviews, focus groups and surveys with secondary school stakeholders.

We identified six key themes to consider when endeavouring to engage students in learning during the Covid-19 pandemic, along with three tiers of support for student engagement. We also collated a range of practical, evidence-based strategies that schools can implement to promote student re-engagement. The following table summarises these themes and tiers, while also showing how the suggested approaches within each theme can be tailored depending on the level of disengagement.

Theme	Tier 1 (all students)	Tier 2 (at-risk)	Tier 3 (disengaging)
Prioritise wellbeing and connection	Focus on wellbeing, strengthen resilience and promote a positive school climate for students, whānau and staff.	Work with students on their individual wellbeing and connection needs.	Intensive strategies to enhance wellbeing and re-establish connection to school.
Understand the context to respond rapidly to identified concerns	Monitor and track of engagement to identify school-wide concerns and students at risk of disengaging.	Targeted monitoring of at-risk students; ask them why they may be disengaging.	Talk to students and their parents and whānau to understand the underlying causes of disengagement.
Build and strengthen relationships for learning	Build positive and trusting relationships with all students and their families/whānau.	Mobilise family, whānau and community support for students at risk of disengaging.	

Theme	Tier 1 (all students)	Tier 2 (at-risk)	Tier 3 (disengaging)
Communicate effectively with students and whānau	Use positive and consistent messaging across the school community and inform parents/whānau of the value of good attendance.	Target communication for groups of students to mobilise parent and whānau involvement, encourage positive behaviour and address student concerns.	Intensive strength-based communication that builds family, whānau and community support.
Individualise learning and promote student agency	Recognise students' varied experiences, cater to their strengths and facilitate agency for all students.	Target support for at risk students, including one-on-one learning, small group work and building student choice into learning tasks.	Intensive strategies to meet individual interests and needs, and to provide opportunities for meaningful choices about learning.
Reframe and adapt classroom approaches	Provide flexibility in learning opportunities, classroom environments and schedules.	Targeted, additional support to address the diverse responses students have to the disruption of learning.	Flexible learning approaches for students with complex needs who require more intensive assistance.

Following are some additional resources that schools can use to inform their approach to enhancing student engagement in a Covid-19 context:

<https://www.attendanceworks.org/>

This site provides a range of information and resources about monitoring chronic absence and promoting student engagement.

<https://www.edu-links.org/COVID-19?q=resources/education-resources-response-coronavirus-covid-19>

This site has collated resources in the areas of distance learning, psychosocial support, returning to learning and response planning.

<https://casel.org/reopening-with-sel/>

This site provides a range of resources to build social and emotional learning skills. This site has a strong focus on authentic school-family-community partnerships to establish learning environments that feature “trusting and collaborative relationships, rigorous and meaningful curriculum and instruction, and ongoing evaluation”.

<https://www.bastow.vic.edu.au/learning-resources/publications>

This site provides a range of resources to identify and support students at risk of disengaging. It includes a range of frameworks and tools that can support teachers and leaders to:

- undertake early action when students at risk of disengagement have been identified;

- inform a preventative approach to disengagement; and
- evaluate the effectiveness of interventions.

<https://www.ero.govt.nz/publications/wellbeing-for-success-a-resource-for-schools/>

Wellbeing for success: a resource for schools has been developed to help schools evaluate and improve student wellbeing. It highlights the importance of schools promoting the wellbeing of all students, as well as the need for systems, people and initiatives to respond to wellbeing concerns for students who need additional support.

<https://pb4l.tki.org.nz/PB4L-School-Wide/Support-material>

Teaching for positive behaviour: This resource was developed by the Ministry of Education in 2017 to support teachers in all New Zealand primary and secondary schools to understand and draw on effective strategies that enhance students' behaviour, engagement, participation, and learning. This may be useful for supporting teachers to maintain engagement during a pandemic.

There are a range of resources available on inclusive ways to prioritise wellbeing and connection:

- *Tātaiako – Cultural Competencies for Teachers of Māori Learners*: https://teachingcouncil.nz/sites/default/files/Tataiako_0.pdf
- *Tapasā – Cultural Competencies Framework for Teachers of Pacific Learners*: <https://pasifika.tki.org.nz/Tapasā>
- *Effective teaching for Pasifika students*: <https://pasifika.tki.org.nz/Effective-teaching>
- *Inside Out has resources around designing safe, inclusive places of learning for LGBTQIA+/MVPFAFF youth*: <http://insideout.org.nz/resources/>
- *TKI: Inclusive Education – Guide to LGBTQIA+ students*: <https://www.inclusive.tki.org.nz/guides/supporting-lgbtqa-students/>
- *Give Nothing to Racism – resources for our teachers*: <https://teachingcouncil.nz/content/give-nothing-racism-resources-our-teachers>
- *School Leavers Toolkit: racism and other forms of discrimination*:
<https://school-leavers-toolkit.education.govt.nz/en/taking-care-of-myself-and-others/racism-and-other-forms-of-discrimination/>
- *Netsafe Schools*: <https://www.netsafe.org.nz/the-kit/netsafe-schools/>
- *Bullying Free NZ*: <https://www.bullyingfree.nz/>
- *TKI: Everyone's In – An Inclusive Planning Tool*: <https://everyones-in.tki.org.nz/>
- *The Pacific Action Plan*: https://conversation-space.s3-ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/Pacific+Education+Plan_WEB.PDF
- *Support for schools to implement Ka Hikitia*: <https://www.education.govt.nz/our-work/overall-strategies-and-policies/ka-hikitia-ka-hapaitia/>
- Resources on engaging with Pacific parents and communities: <https://pasifika.tki.org.nz/Engaging-with-parents>
- *School kit: Respectful relationships*: <https://www.schoolkit.co.nz/respectful-relationships>

Appendix A:

Developing a plan for promoting engagement

Following are some questions for schools to consider when developing a plan to promote engagement during the Covid-19 pandemic. These are intended to prompt teachers and leaders initial thinking when determining where to focus their attention and prioritise actions. This is not a comprehensive planning tool.

Key theme	Things to consider	Possible strategies to implement	Approaches and innovations shared with ERO
Prioritising wellbeing and connection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the key wellbeing needs for the students and their whānau/families? • What has effective support looked like previously? • What does cultural connectedness look like for different groups within the school? • What advice and support is required? • How can existing relationships be built on and resources allocated effectively? • What are the wellbeing needs for staff? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a welcoming environment for students and their families. • Develop a positive school culture with pro-social relationships. • Develop an inclusive culture for students who are sex-, gender – and sexuality-diverse. • Encourage health-promoting, mindful and kind practices with students. • Support teacher wellbeing. • Support young people with mental health concerns. • Intensive wraparound services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertaking individual weekly wellbeing 'check in' conversations. • Making the wellbeing of students and their whānau the first priority. • School leaders undertaking individual interviews with each student and their whānau on their return to school. • Increasing access to mental health support and counsellors at school. • Providing specific support for strengthening social and emotional learning skills. • Providing opportunities for students to socialise through 'fun' school events. • Providing structured and informal opportunities for students to talk through their recent experiences with others. • Providing quiet spaces for when students need to 'chill out' during class. • Reducing the need for large gatherings such as assemblies.

Key theme	Things to consider	Possible strategies to implement	Approaches and innovations shared with ERO
<p>Understanding the context to respond rapidly to identified concerns</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can we measure engagement/disengagement? • What are the levels of engagement/disengagement currently? • Which individuals and groups are most affected? • What are our assumptions about the underlying causes and issues? How do we challenge and test these? • What can we learn from our students and their families? • What can we learn from other schools? • What are the systems for identifying pressure points for students and their families, and for teachers? • What are the current mechanisms available to provide responsive information? • How is information shared with others so that resources can be quickly mobilised and swift action taken? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective attendance and engagement monitoring systems. • Frequent pulse checks. • Monitoring and tracking changes in student/teacher wellbeing. • Early warning systems. • Identifying the needs of students at risk of disengagement. • Engaging attendance services. • Systematic, tailored approach to addressing identified barriers. • Evaluate interventions and create actionable data. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intensifying attendance monitoring processes to be regular and robust. • Increasing vigilance about following-up with students (and their families) showing decreased attendance. • Undertaking increased analysis of attendance data. • Weekly check-in surveys. • Using regular staff meetings to develop a collective awareness of emerging issues or groups of students at risk. • Increased monitoring of playground behaviours and interactions. • Investigating the problem prior to responding.

Key theme	Things to consider	Possible strategies to implement	Approaches and innovations shared with ERO
Building and strengthening relationships for learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there a shared understanding of what constitutes strong relationships that support learning? • How can the school lever off existing relationships and newly developed relationships to enrich engagement? • What supports are in place for protecting privacy of information so that information can be shared with confidence? • What opportunities are there for regular, meaningful interaction where all views are valid and valued? • What are the opportunities for families to contribute to learning discussions with teachers so that relationships are two-way? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing 'educationally powerful connections' with parents and whānau. • Culturally responsive approaches to teaching. • Home visits. • Mentors. • Check & Connect. • Restorative discipline practices. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing additional staffing. • Assigning or employing additional staff to act primarily in a whānau liaison role. • Increasing the deliberate inclusion of parents/whānau in learning and decision making. • Leveraging senior student leadership to provide support for junior students. • Teachers sharing strategies that work. • Undertaking strategies specifically for Māori and Pacific students, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – assessing and removing barriers to engagement with families – increasing contact with students and their whānau – working through new or existing community networks. • Following up non-attendance through phone calls and family visits.

Key theme	Things to consider	Possible strategies to implement	Approaches and innovations shared with ERO
<p>Communicate effectively with students and whānau</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What messages are needed for students and their whānau? • How will teachers communicate the learning goals, approaches and outcomes regularly with students and their whānau? • What messages and language are likely to be detrimental? • How do we ensure messaging to students and their families is consistent and regular? • How can communications be tailored and personalised for different groups and individuals? • Which methods of communication will we continue/discontinue and what are the new practices to introduce? • How will we know if our communication strategies are effective? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasise student and whānau safety. • Increase communication with all parents and whānau. • Positive messaging. • Regularly share schoolwide non-attendance and punctuality data. • Engage study supporters. • Nudging parents and whānau. • Talking to students showing signs of distress. • Home visits/family meetings. • Celebrating all improvements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliberately using positive language that focuses on successes. • Avoiding deficit framing (e.g. not talking about 'lost learning' or 'catching up' on learning 'missed'). • Teachers talking about and showing value for the richness of learnings during lockdown and taking students from where they currently are. • Teachers communicating their belief in students and high expectations of their success. • Reassuring students and families of their safety at school. • Ensuring teachers are all on the same page through regular opportunities for sharing and professional collaboration.

Key theme	Things to consider	Possible strategies to implement	Approaches and innovations shared with ERO
Individualising and tailoring learning and teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do we know individual students' needs, strengths and interests? How can teachers lever off these to build a responsive programme? • How are students' preferences about their learning used to inform their learning programmes? • How will we reflect students' cultural identities and aspirations? • How is targeted learning support made available for students? • Are there regular individualised conferences in place for students and teachers to check in about their learning progress? • What is already in place to promote student agency? What aspects could be strengthened? • How can students' views be elicited and used to inform learning programmes? • What can be put in place to ensure students make decisions about aspects of their learning? • How will students contribute to the choice of learning content and the evaluation of effectiveness? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual learning contracts. • Blended learning. • Autonomy-supportive instructional behaviours. • Small group tuition. • Individual development plans. • Goal setting with students. • Coordinated case management. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing opportunities for one-on-one learning support. • Promoting student independence by increasing choice over tasks and focus areas. • Increasing the use of detailed individualised learning plans and tailored work tasks. • Interviewing each student on the return to school to assess levels of support required. • Following up with a students who have left school to work out a way they could complete their qualifications. • Finding resourcing for additional staffing to provide increased opportunities for individualised approaches and personalising work. • Teachers providing individual mentoring sessions and conferences. • Revising school schedules (e.g. providing a work-from-home day for senior students). • Reframing the use of headphones as a positive option for students to manage their interactions and learning. • Giving students choices to work independently or with others.

Key theme	Things to consider	Possible strategies to implement	Approaches and innovations shared with ERO
Reframing and adapting classroom approaches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which practices are likely to continue, and which may need to change? • What ways can teachers easily adapt practices so that students feel connected, safe and included? • How will students' views inform new classroom approaches? • What is in place to promote innovation and sharing of successful approaches? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexible assessment. • Prioritised scheduling. • Sharing approaches that work. • Restructuring classroom practices. • Peer collaboration. • Flexible learning programmes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adapting curriculum and assessment schedules to minimise anxiety. • Increasing flexibility in approaches to credit acquisition. • Focusing on learning and improvement rather than formal assessment. • Minimising disruption and maximising in-class time. • Providing additional learning opportunities such as tutorials. • Adjusting classroom expectations for participation and behaviour so that students have more freedom to talk and move around. • Providing additional opportunities for student discussion and reflection. • More opportunities for students to engage in digital and blended learning. • Ensuring there is a balance between re-establishing school routines and allowing flexibility (both in the classroom and school-wide).
Checking what works	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will we know our strategies are working? Who is benefitting most/least? • What will the evaluation process look like and who will lead it? • What data do we have already? How will we gather perspectives of all relevant parties? • How will we decide which strategies we will replicate, reject and upscale? How might we share what we learned? 		

Endnotes

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