

12 December 2022

## **Cognition Education Trust**

### **Final report**

Thank you so much for last year's generous grant towards our Teach First NZ mentoring programme in 2022.

I'm pleased to provide the board with our final report.

As you read in our interim report in July, the pandemic and its after-effects have impacted all our work. We have, however, made significant progress in developing and finalising our online mentoring modules and rolling those out, and our mentor manager has met with many schools and teachers and welcomed new schools in Kaikoura and Invercargill to the programme.

Some key developments in our work since July include:

- Some additions were made to the online modules in the light of feedback from mentors and other stakeholders: A checklist of mentoring tasks, a Must-know and Must-do sheet. The designer worked on the presentation of these documents to bring their appearance in line with the rest of the modules.
- Details of mentors and coordinators were added to Salesforce (our customer relationship management software) and Canvas, our Learning Management System (LMS)
- All mentors and coordinators were enrolled in the learning modules on Canvas.
- The mentor manager invited feedback from mentors on the content, time frame and presentation of the modules.
- The mentor manager continued to build relationships with coordinators and mentors with visits to a number of Auckland schools, several in Waikato and the Bay of Plenty and, at the end of the year, new partner schools in Kaikoura and Invercargill.
- A mentor hui has been planned for the new year. Key features of the hui will be talks from expert presenters, reviewing the online learning modules, and enabling novice mentors to learn from their more experienced colleagues.

The pandemic era continues to be a challenging time for the Ako Mātātupu: Teach First NZ whānau (family/community). It has illuminated and exacerbated the health and educational inequities that are at the heart of Ako Mātātupu's kaupapa. In our 59 current partner schools, student attendance remains significantly lower than in pre-COVID times.

As an indigenous-led organisation, we have learnt:

- We cannot just 'go back to the way it was'. Schools are struggling and students are struggling, with a number of them dropping out of school, wholly or partially, in order to work in essential services to financially support their families. Inequities are being highlighted like never before. We need to ensure we are meeting schools' needs as they adapt to the ongoing effects of the pandemic, which we expect to last well into the future. We need to work hard to ensure teaching and learning pathways are embedded in our school community and local stakeholder partnerships, and that they are informed primarily by the needs of our students and their families, addressing the inequities in their communities.

- The pandemic has illuminated and exacerbated the inequities already existing for our Māori and Pasifika (indigenous) participants and students. In 2022 there are 15,5058 Māori and 12,741 Pasifika students in the schools where our participants are teaching. A recent study has found that New Zealand students are most likely to have reduced their attendance in response to COVID-19 if they attend a low decile (low socioeconomic) school, are in earlier year levels, are Pasifika or Māori, or participate in Māori medium education. The study shows that about 40 percent of students with reduced attendance did not have concerning attendance patterns at the beginning of 2020, prior to COVID-19.
- We have to adapt to the new world in which our young people are operating and navigate it with them so they are able to continue to develop and grow. Integral to this is engaging families, caretakers, and other stakeholders to support students' learning and skills development.
- Schools are under a sustained amount of pressure that has not abated even as the pandemic has taken more of a backseat, and we need to adapt to them (rather than expecting them to adapt to us) to support them to deliver for our young people.

Building on our learnings from the last two years, Ako Mātātupu has made strategic shifts in order to better serve the communities in which we work. We have created a new role: the Pule Nu'u / Community Lead. The Pule Nu'u role formalises and resources our organisation's increased focus on serving community, nurturing current and establishing new relationships with the communities we seek to serve. This work is particularly vital in the wake of the pandemic, as many students feel disconnected from learning, families are struggling financially and in many other ways and are finding it challenging to support their children's' learning, and schools are under huge pressure to not only ensure the academic progress of their students, but also to provide more and more pastoral care and wraparound support.

Our core mission is to work for educational equity and to help ensure that all young people in Aotearoa New Zealand have the opportunity to reach their full educational potential, *on their own terms*. This last portion of our mission is vital, and cannot become a reality unless we invite communities, schools, and students themselves to partner with us in ways that centre their needs and leadership in the education space instead of our perceptions around what we think might be best for them.

Our mentoring programme is a key component of our community-focused work. Mentors will be integral to working with participants to integrate this community focus into all aspects of their teaching and engagement with students.

Thank you for your incredible support. Your partnership has been invaluable to us as work to establish a world-class learning and support programme.

Yours most sincerely,



Michelle Johannson  
Kaitiaki | Chief Executive