MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
Te Tāhuhu o te Mātauranga

New Zealand

CONTRACT RESEARCH

A CONSTELLATION OF PROSPECTS
A REVIEW OF STAR
(THE SECONDARY-TERTIARY ALIGNMENT RESOURCE)

Report to the Ministry of Education

RESEARCH DIVISION
Wāhanga Mahi Rangahau

ISBN 0-478-18755-6

ISBN no. (Internet copy): 0-478-18756-4

Research reports are also available on the Ministry's website: www.minedu.govt.nz *under the Research heading.*

NEW ZEALAND COUNCIL FOR EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

TE RŪNANGA O AOTEAROA MŌ TE RANGAHAU I TE MĀTAURANGA

A CONSTELLATION OF PROSPECTS:

A Review of STAR

(the Secondary-Tertiary Alignment Resource)

Report to the Ministry of Education

KAREN VAUGHAN AND NATASHA KENNEALLY

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We have appreciated the help of those school principals, STAR co-ordinators, school students, and external provider representatives who agreed to be interviewed and who responded to questionnaires. We are grateful to the nine schools and STAR co-ordinators who agreed to be part of this study as case study schools, giving us up to a day of their time. We are also grateful to a number of STAR co-ordinators who provided invaluable assistance and advice in their role as "pilot respondents" to the stage two questionnaire.

Within NZCER, many staff have supported the research process. Fiona Beals played a key role in stage one instrument design, and external provider interviews. Sally Boyd assisted with some of the stage one interviews. Rosemary Hipkins assisted with some of the stage three interviews and also provided editing advice for the final report. Data management was provided by Edith Hogden and Leonid Grebennikov. Christine Williams worked on the formatting of tables and the report.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Secondary-Tertiary Alignment Resource (STAR) has been available to secondary schools since 1996, enabling them to purchase non-conventional tertiary level courses leading to credits on the National Qualifications Framework. Unlike some other forms of funding for schools, STAR is not targeted at any particular group of students (e.g., "at risk" students) but is instead available to all students at Year 11, 12, and 13 (for full courses) and Year 9 and 10 (for short taster courses). Secondary schools apply for STAR funding annually on an EFTS-basis. The funding allocated to the school is managed by a designated STAR co-ordinator.

STAR's main purpose is to assist senior secondary school students in finding suitable pathways into work or further study at secondary or tertiary level by enabling schools to:

- facilitate smooth transition and access from schooling to employment, including work-based learning; or tertiary type study or training;
- improve retention in senior secondary schooling.

STAR sits within the wider international context that has made the *transition* points in young people's lives, particularly from school to work and/or further study, a concern and major focus of policy development. In New Zealand, STAR is, in essence, the most widely-used school resource for addressing the issues of *engagement* and *relevance* in the senior secondary schooling years. This makes current debate concerning curriculum, qualifications, and school retention/exit particularly pertinent in any decisions regarding the future of STAR.

While the challenges associated with STAR's operation in schools, particularly for STAR co-ordinators who do not have the "shelter" of a transition department or any recognition of their position through management units or the respect of other staff, should not be minimised, they can be regarded as a sign that schools are having to engage with a number of newer realities about the environment in which they perform.

STAR provides a way for schools to acknowledge (and begin to deal with) the contestability of their school curriculum and pedagogy alongside those of universities, polytechnics, and other private tertiary establishments. In practice this opens up opportunities for school students to experience learning in different settings, trial their career aspirations, experience success in school, and gain credits towards qualifications which they can continue to pursue after leaving school.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND DESIGN

STAR has never before been evaluated. The main research objectives of this project overall were three-fold:

- to provide sound information on the operation of STAR in schools;
- to gather the views of key stakeholders on how successfully STAR assists student transition to further education or to the workforce;

- to identify and collect data on any outcome measures that could assist in an evaluation of how STAR is meeting its objectives.

Meeting these objectives has entailed a three-stage approach to the project:

1. Interviews with STAR co-ordinators, school principals, and external provider representatives to determine the scope of issues concerning STAR and inform the design of stage two.
2. Questionnaires for STAR co-ordinators and school principals in all schools receiving STAR funding, and for a sample of external provider representatives.
3. Visits to schools "doing well" with their STAR funding, including an interview with the STAR co-ordinator and focus group interviews with students participating in STAR courses.

Methodological Concerns

In 2001, $4 million was diverted from the STAR funding pool to the Gateway programme's 2001 and 2002 pilot years. This reduction of the STAR funding pool available to schools, together with an evaluation taking place so many years after STAR was established, led to a perception among many STAR co-ordinators, principals, and tertiary providers that STAR funding would continue to be reduced or even cut altogether. The entire project has been foreshadowed by that perception despite assurances to the contrary from the Ministry of Education.

At first the NZCER team regarded this state of affairs as an unfortunate challenge methodologically. How could we get around the potential for STAR co-ordinators to misconstrue NZCER's role—as being involved with a Ministry of Education/Tertiary Education Commission scheme to possibly cut STAR funding? Would schools, providers, and students still talk to us openly about how they operated or participated in STAR in their institutions? The political implications and ethical considerations of research have always been important and sometimes prove thorny. However, we soon realised that what teachers and principals, in particular, were worried about was very much part of what needed to be said about the operation of STAR in schools in this evaluation: that STAR has become integral to secondary schools' functioning, curriculum, and arrangements for meeting student needs. STAR is not an add-on. It is not used as extra funding for a small select group of students within a school. It is not somehow *additional to* what schools do. It is, in fact, *a vital feature of* what schools do.

The high regard in which STAR funding is held by schools and co-ordinators was reflected in the response to the evaluation throughout the course of the research. There was an overwhelming response to the mailout survey (83 percent response rate from co-ordinators). Moreover, a number of co-ordinators included personal notes and business cards with their returned surveys volunteering any further participation as necessary or a willingness to be interviewed if need be. Several other people, including tertiary-level provider representatives and STAR/transition co-ordinators contacted NZCER on their own initiative in order to offer their perspectives on STAR.

MAIN FINDINGS

Interpretations of Purpose

STAR has two means by which the goal of assisting students to find suitable pathways may be achieved. Both means – facilitation of transition from school to employment or further study and

retention at school – may be in tension with one another at times. This tension contributes to some of the STAR planning and operational challenges for schools. It also means that a broad understanding of "transition" and how it works is necessary because STAR may be used to facilitate transition *through* retention, allowing students a longer or better-directed transition period.

Most STAR co-ordinators reported understanding STAR's purpose as being related to the provision of links to tertiary courses and tasters, and provision of courses that the school would not otherwise provide. Some schools focus on the facilitation of transition aspect of STAR by having STAR co-ordinators match individual students to STAR courses which lead in to specific employment or careers. Often in these schools, STAR is run as a separate, alternative programme to a conventional school programme. In other schools, the focus is less structured and more related to the retention aspect. STAR involves guiding students into courses which are not necessarily part of a cohesive approach to beginning a career. There is also considerable utilisation of short taster courses. However, most schools attempt to meet both of STAR's aims and, regardless of any focus on one over the other in the school, have a range of STAR courses to meet different student needs in a number of different ways.

Tertiary providers of STAR courses reported perceiving STAR's purpose as being one of bridging secondary and tertiary education through the provision of non-conventional subjects. They therefore tended to focus on the facilitation of transition aspect of STAR. This fits neatly with providers' endeavours to recruit students for their institutions. Provider descriptions of the most successful features of STAR for them were characterised by references to their own needs (recruitment and satisfaction of customers) and how these are bound up with the needs of students (to study/work in an area of interest). These differing perceptions of STAR's role and purpose suggest that more thought needs to be given to defining student needs before any real conclusions can be made about whether, or how, STAR meets those needs.

STAR Courses

Nearly all schools reported offering industry-related courses to students and over half also offer short taster courses to both junior and senior students. Almost half of the STAR courses running were described as tasters or general skills courses. More than half of the schools reported that they offer courses specifically to meet the academic needs of students.

More than three-quarters of schools timetabled at least some of their STAR courses within their usual school timetable of short periods (e.g., 45–60 minutes). However, almost two-thirds had timetabled STAR in other ways that did not necessarily correspond with the school timetable (e.g., block courses running over several days at a time).

STAR timetabling issues in schools were reported as causing a great deal of friction. Through their efforts to organise STAR courses within the school, the STAR co-ordinator frequently found themselves isolated and positioned as an impediment to the smooth running of the school. Students frequently faced difficulties getting exemptions from their conventional teachers in order to attend STAR courses or in catching up on conventional classes missed because of attending STAR courses. There were also difficulties for some schools and external providers in matching school and tertiary provider timetables and terms. This posed attendance and student engagement problems for some schools.

STAR Course Delivery

The delivery decisions and practices for STAR courses highlighted a tendency for school needs to dominate and constrain student needs, even though addressing student needs is the preferred aim and focus of schools.

Most STAR co-ordinators reported using external providers to deliver tasters and senior level STAR courses. There was a fairly even spread of schools in terms of the extent to which they used external providers to deliver senior courses. Just over a third used external providers to deliver more than half of their STAR courses. However, almost a quarter used external providers less than a fifth of the time.

The reasons given by co-ordinators for the extent of external provider use centred upon reasons for using external providers *as much as* the school did. Their responses illustrated the pressure schools face to stretch their STAR funding as far as possible. For many schools, this means trying to deliver STAR courses internally and save on the extra costs associated with purchasing courses and delivery from external providers. This is of course extremely frustrating to providers who understand this to be a downgrading of their role and their *alignment* focus in Secondary-Tertiary Alignment.

More than half of the STAR co-ordinators reported changing the extent to which they used external providers. Some cited the introduction of new courses, suggesting an increase in external provider use. However, just as many gave reasons related to decreasing the use of external providers, suggesting a trend towards increasing internal delivery of STAR courses.

The competing course delivery demands faced by schools were also highlighted by STAR co-ordinators' perceptions of the benefits and difficulties associated with internal and external delivery of courses. The benefits cited for external delivery emphasised the knowledge and resources held by external providers, over and above what schools could offer, particularly in the area of "real world" experience.

The benefits cited for internal delivery focused on ways in which internal delivery could enhance the school or avoid the pitfalls of external delivery (e.g., transport issues). While the pitfalls did not focus on saving money *per se*, they did signal the predominance of *school* needs. However, the responses of the more than half of co-ordinators who reported experiencing difficulties with external providers showed a concern with providers not meeting *student* needs.

Two-thirds of the difficulties with external providers cited by co-ordinators were reported to have been resolved, usually by using different providers or working closely with the current provider. In contrast, only about half of co-ordinators reported being able to solve difficulties with internal course delivery. Nearly three-quarters of the difficulties were related to a lack of staffing resources or facilities within the school. There were comparatively few responses about the specifics of how these difficulties were resolved, suggesting that they were somewhat more intractable than the difficulties faced with external providers.

Student Participation and Needs

Across all schools, Year 11–13 students had high participation rates in STAR-funded courses, indicating that the funding is spread across many students in each school rather than being concentrated amongst just a few students. More than half of the co-ordinators reported that at least 40 percent of their school's senior students participated in STAR courses. Just over a quarter of schools had over 60 percent of their senior students involved.

Nearly all schools had a system for assessing student needs and these systems varied widely. Three-quarters of schools used face–to–face contact between the STAR co-ordinator and the students as at least one of their methods for determining student needs. More than half of schools also carried out surveys of student interests. There was also generally some interaction between students and deans although most student STAR needs assessment activities were generally instigated by the STAR co-ordinator.

The majority of STAR co-ordinators indicated a perception of STAR being for students with an interest in a particular industry or for students who would otherwise leave school without any qualifications. Like the co-ordinators, external providers saw STAR as being for students with an interest in a particular industry. However, just as many also thought STAR was for *all* senior secondary students, which is unsurprising given providers' focus on STAR as a recruiting ground. It is likely that providers are focused on students who are the most likely to succeed in STAR courses and go on to further study (with that provider). Schools, on the other hand, are likely to be more interested in providing an opportunity for a successful experience at school for students *first*, and concerned with further study, *second*.

Nearly all co-ordinators reported using STAR to meet vocational or work experience needs. Two-thirds reported using it to keep students at school. However, over a third of STAR co-ordinators reported using STAR to meet academic student needs. Nearly two-thirds also reported that STAR met some students' needs for basic life skills. This life skills possibility has been compromised by the redefinition of some alternative subjects and core generic skills as "conventional", making these ineligible for STAR funding.

A number of case study schools required students (or their parents) to pay bonds before they were allowed entry to a STAR course. This may contravene STAR regulations which stipulate that students may not be charged fees for STAR. Considering that many bonds are obviously not intended for recovery of STAR costs, bond schemes may be symptomatic of the lack of status of STAR courses and co-ordinators generally, and may represent an attempt to raise that status. It may also signal anxiety about managing relationships with external providers and minimising the fallout from students' poor behaviour, or from students withdrawing from, or failing to complete, courses.

Student Perceptions of STAR

Students found out about STAR in a range of ways, including subject choice booklets, the STAR co-ordinator, school notices. Most students found it difficult to separate *how* they got their initial information about STAR from making the *decision* to do STAR courses. This is likely to be because students relied on STAR co-ordinators to help them make sense of information in ways that would be meaningful to them for career or life plans.

Students' decisions to do STAR courses were heavily influenced by enjoyment of, or interest in, the subject. This is consistent with findings from other research on student subject choice motivation. For many students, interest in STAR was driven by an interest in doing practical, hands-on work, and in looking for new and different challenges in their school work. Many students cited an interest in trying *many* STAR courses in order to gain experience of careers, tertiary study environments, and workplaces.

Students were generally very excited and enthusiastic about STAR courses and programmes. They particularly enjoyed being "treated as adults" and having an opportunity to build new kinds of relationships – with tertiary level tutors, with adult classmates, and with students from other schools. Many also reported pleasure in the independence and freedom of STAR. They enjoyed being away from the school environment, taking responsibility for choosing new courses, discovering the tertiary environment, and organising their own transport.

Many students also enjoyed the fun and practical work involved in their courses. Some were disappointed in courses that included a high proportion of theoretical work. Others found the practical work in some courses boring and repetitive. They wanted a greater challenge from their course. While course design may have been the issue – it can sometimes be difficult for external providers to "pitch" the course to the right level – students tended to see the lack of challenge as related to the career associated with the course and used STAR as a way to try out and reject certain career options.

The Role of the STAR Co-ordinator

STAR co-ordinators' work is multi-faceted and varied. They are more than administrators; co-ordinators have a role in school planning, and spend time building relationships with students, other staff, and external providers. In a similar vein to comments made by Gateway co-ordinators, STAR co-ordinators believed the job required passion and a genuine commitment to students. However, a lack of status within the school made the job difficult and exacerbated existing difficulties with timetabling and STAR programme organisation.

STAR co-ordinators generally spend 5 hours or less working on STAR each week, although a third reported spending between 5 and 9 hours a week. Many co-ordinators did the job as an add-on to their role as careers adviser or transition teacher. Over two-thirds of co-ordinators had no management units. Only 8 percent of co-ordinators believed that other school staff saw their role as important. More than half believed staff saw them as just "fairly important" and a quarter believed staff saw them as "not very important". A number of co-ordinators commented that it was only the staff who were directly involved with STAR in some way who saw the importance of the co-ordinator's role. For other staff, the co-ordinator perceived they were seen as the person who disrupted the school timetable and cut across the other teachers' professional pride.

Professional development was seen by co-ordinators as one step towards improving their status and getting other staff to think about the importance of STAR for students. Co-ordinators also wanted more information and assistance from the Ministry of Education, particularly in the area of gathering information for students and administration. Many felt that professional development in the form of STAR cluster meetings would provide a way to easily share information and experiences.

STAR Funding and Use

STAR funding is paid as part of the school Operations Grant, leaving STAR co-ordinators reliant on their school principals redirecting the allocated funding to them. Nearly three-quarters of STAR co-ordinators reported that they did receive all the funding from their principals. However, over a quarter do not receive all the funding. Of those co-ordinators, most reported that their school budgets were decided in advance. This suggests either that the school considers STAR funding to be part of their Operations Grant to be spent as deemed appropriate by the principal, or that co-ordinators do not actually know how much funding they are entitled to and therefore whether or not they have received it all. Many co-ordinators throughout this research project suggested somehow ring-fencing the STAR funding.

Eighty-eight percent of co-ordinators reported that STAR funding was insufficient, either because they had to redirect EFTS-generated funding from courses which more than covered their costs to courses which did not, or because they had to redirect money from the Operations Grant to cover shortfalls. Just over two-thirds of STAR co-ordinators reported that per-course funding did not cover between 1 and 4 courses in their school. Almost three-quarters of co-ordinators reported resolving this by topping up their more expensive STAR courses with their less expensive ones. Just over a quarter reported using the Operations Grant as a top-up. A few reported using other top-up means, usually asking students to pay.

More than half of the co-ordinators thought that the current EFTS system for funding STAR was the most appropriate one. Other suggestions for funding systems, from just under half of the co-ordinators, included developing a closely-monitored system similar to one used by ESOL funding, tagging a portion of STAR funding for co-ordinators, basing funding of differentiated course costs, and basing funding on a differential system for decile, size, and rurally. Rural schools were interested in some form of extra transport funding to reduce the extra costs they faced in getting students to courses.

The lack of any substantial audit procedures for STAR is problematic, especially when considered alongside STAR's relative lack of status and the inclusion of STAR funding within the school's Operations Grant. In some schools, there is considerable pressure on co-ordinators to spend STAR funding on non-STAR activities or resources. There is also pressure in some schools to teach courses internally in order to use the EFTS while spending less money (because internal delivery is cheaper than external delivery). Moreover, there are unresolved issues around the use of EFTS and at what point these actually count as having been used – when the course, or student places on it, are purchased from an external provider, or when students have completed the course? To add to the confusion, schools interpret STAR-related expenses differently and some pass on costs to students that other schools cover with their funding.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Consider "ring-fencing" STAR funding within the Operations Grant.
- Raise principals' awareness of the importance of the STAR co-ordinator's role in the school.

- Share the Ministry of Education's vision for senior secondary schooling with STAR co-ordinators; work collaboratively with them through an advisory group of co-ordinators and external providers.
- Use existing clusters of schools, or create new ones where needed, to share information.
- The relatively higher costs borne by isolated, rural (and some small) schools is an equity issue. There may need to be a transport and accommodation grant made available.
- Clarify the situation on core generic skills for schools. Consider how to avoid disadvantaging small and/or low decile schools through a careful definition and regulation of core generics.
- Taster courses serve an important purpose. That students may not necessarily go on to careers or further study directly related to what they "tasted" through STAR courses is not a failure of STAR. Tasters could even be made more widely available to senior students.
- Keep schools' actual *and* application data in a Ministry of Education STAR resourcing database.
- Clarify the usage of EFTS. Then audit and monitor usage of STAR funding regularly.
- Give schools clear information on the use of student bonds. Do these automatically contravene the STAR regulations which stipulate that fees may not be charged for students to attend STAR courses?

SECTION ONE: INTRODUCTION

In 1996, funding was allocated by the government to the Secondary Tertiary Alignment Resource (STAR), following a Ministerial Reference Group's recommendations to allow secondary schools to purchase tertiary level courses outside of the conventional programmes. Such courses resulted in or led to assessment for credits or unit standards on the National Qualifications Framework. In this way, STAR aimed to assist senior secondary school students in finding suitable pathways into work or further study at secondary or tertiary level by enabling schools to:

- facilitate smooth transition and access from schooling to employment, including work-based learning; or tertiary type study or training;
- improve retention in senior secondary schooling.

THE PROJECT AIMS

This final report covers all 3 stages of the evaluation project to review how schools use the Secondary-Tertiary Alignment Resource (STAR) to benefit their students. The emphasis in this report is on stages 2 (a survey of all STAR schools) and 3 (case studies of schools "doing well" with their STAR funding). Stage 1 of the project, a scoping exercise designed to ascertain the range of ways STAR funding was being used and the issues involved in STAR's operation, is briefly summarised.

The final outcome of this report is to inform government policy for the education, training, and employment of 15–19 year–olds.

The main research objectives of this project overall were three-fold:

- to provide sound information on the operation of STAR in schools;
- to gather the views of key stakeholders on how successfully STAR assists student transition to further education or to the workforce;
- to identify and collect data on any outcome measures that could assist in an evaluation of how STAR is meeting its objectives.

Each objective had a number of associated specific research questions in the original Ministry of Education Request for Proposals. As far as possible, these questions have been answered in this evaluation, though as a result, more may also have been generated!

	Objective 1 **To provide sound information on the operation of STAR in schools**
1	What courses are funded using STAR funding?
2	How do schools decide what courses to resource with STAR funding, and what will be provided through base funding?
3	How do schools organise their programme/timetable to accommodate the requirements of student attendance at STAR–funded courses?
4	To what extent are external providers contracted to deliver STAR–funded programmes?
5	How are students' needs assessed and students matched with STAR–funded courses?
6	In schools that offer both STAR and Gateway how is the interface between the two initiatives managed?
7	What are the students' experiences of STAR–funded programmes?
8	Does the school keep records on unit standards achieved?
9	What are the characteristics of students doing STAR courses?

	Objective 2 **To gather the views of key stakeholders on how successfully STAR assists student transition to further education or to the workforce**
10	How do principals and STAR co-ordinators see STAR as assisting student transition, and on what do they base their judgments?
11	Do current students believe that STAR is assisting their transition to the workplace or to further education? If so, how do they see it doing that?
12	What is the view of tertiary providers and employers/industry representatives on how successfully STAR assists students' transition?

	Objective 3 **To identify and collect data on any outcome measures that could assist in an evaluation of how STAR is meeting its objectives**
13	What data do schools currently hold about the use of STAR funding, and how do they assess the value of programmes purchased with STAR funding?
14	How can the data currently held by the Ministry of Education best contribute to an evaluation of STAR?
15	What additional data should be collected to evaluate whether STAR is meeting its objectives?
16	What does the data that can feasibly be collected within the time allowed for the evaluation indicate about whether STAR is meeting its objectives?

STAR AND GATEWAY

STAR can no longer be considered without reference to Gateway, an initiative that is similar to, and potentially overlapping with, STAR. Like STAR, Gateway is designed to provide senior secondary school students with learning opportunities in non-conventional subjects. However, unlike STAR, Gateway courses are limited to student placement (and generally also assessment) *in the workplace*. Workplace-based learning *may* occur on STAR-funded courses but it is generally only a small component of any overall course and, in terms of the range of STAR courses available and operating in schools, it is also only one element in a *range* of possible courses designed to meet varying student needs.

STAR, while offering something similar to Gateway in terms of managing, or providing the tools for the management of, the school-work/study transition, has a broader focus than Gateway and is available to all state and integrated secondary schools. The issues related to breakdown or maintenance of any academic/vocational division is something with which STAR contends in terms of the role, status, and timetabling of STAR courses within the school. Potentially, STAR-funded courses may be accessed and used by any or all senior secondary students though schools appear more likely to target specific groups of students with STAR-funded courses. Nonetheless, STAR does mean that students may be able to access and experience courses that are vocational and/or academic at a tertiary level. STAR may offer opportunities towards a specific career or may offer generalised career information and formative decision-making experiences. Gateway can be seen as an efficient means of managing the school-work transition through an emphasis on getting students into work, either as a direct result of Gateway courses or indirectly through providing industry experience as a form of career guidance but is limited to doing either of these through workplace learning. STAR, on the other hand, offers opportunities for students to attain credits towards tertiary level qualifications at a broader, less specified, level *or* through quite specific and closely-directed means or programmes.

As yet Gateway is still a pilot programme which involves 24 decile 1–5 secondary schools. Initial findings of an evaluation of Gateway, carried out by its implementor, Skill New Zealand (now the Tertiary Education Commission), have signalled very positive responses to Gateway from schools, students, and employers. Although funding of STAR has increased by $9.5 million between 1996 and 2000, $2 million was diverted to the Gateway pilot in 2001 and again in 2002. The government is currently committed to providing $2 million to Gateway every year for the foreseeable future.

THE TRANSITION CONTEXT

STAR sits within the wider international context that has made the *transition* points in young people's lives, particularly from school to work and/or further study, a concern and major focus of policy development As it is currently framed within a climate concentrated upon participation in a "knowledge economy", the school-to-work (including school-to-study-to-work) transition is therefore one of the most important (early) transitions in young people's lives.

Although in-depth discussion of "youth" itself is not within the scope of this evaluation, it is worth noting that the very idea of focusing on transition tends to mobilise the category of youth as problematic; youth is, by definition, a transition It is governed by various developmental and

"coming of age" discourses (Lesko, 2001) which transition resources (such as STAR) can be understood as addressing by attempting to contain the potential risk that young people embody (as a danger to themselves or society) if they do not adopt particular roles and develop particular skills and capacities that fit within a "knowledge economy" The broad sweep of transition renders young people as a category that requires intervention to certain ends It is not for this evaluation to question those ends – for social and economic life today demands our participation and choices anyway – but to ascertain how well STAR channels young people to those ends.

In New Zealand, STAR is, in essence, the most widely-used school resource for addressing the issues of *engagement* and *relevance* in the senior secondary schooling years. This makes current debate concerning curriculum, qualifications, and school retention/exit particularly pertinent in any decisions regarding the future of STAR.

Increasingly, the engagement of students is taken to be a consequence of how relevant their school studies are to them. In cases where students have been referred to Alternative Education (AE), attempts are made to "re-engage" students who have become "alienated" from the school system. Those students are offered study subjects and activities which they will perceive as relevant to their particular backgrounds, needs, interests, and aspirations. Similarly, students who have no interest in professional careers which demand university degrees may find certain school subject areas such as technology far more relevant than other more typically (traditionally) academic subjects.[1]

In a thematic review of transition and transition programmes throughout the 1990s, the OECD (2000) reports the transition period between the end of school and the beginning of paid employment has tended to lengthen during the 1990s. This is partly due to bottlenecks (limited tertiary places) and partly due to young people's desire for time-off, short-term work, or travel. This lengthening of the transition period between the end of school and beginning of paid work is particularly pertinent to STAR in terms of STAR's objective to retain students at school as well as provide direction for students during, or immediately preceding, this transition period.

The OECD review also points out that the pathways themselves between school and work have changed. Moving from school into vocational education has decreased in favour of moving from school into various forms of tertiary level study. This shift is capitalised on by such programmes as Gateway, which mobilises the "vocational" aspect of learning in a work *and* study format in a way that reduces the likelihood of a transition from school to work being unfocused or drawn out. This may represent a commitment "less to education as a means of intellectual and personal development than to education as a means to work" (Blakers, 1990). The latter relationship is by no means a new one but it is certainly receiving new impetus with the increased focus on a global economy and government spending in this area of senior secondary schooling.

However, Gateway may also represent something of the breakdown of, or crossover between, the traditional division between the "academic" and the "vocational" in education. This division has historically organised students into "mental" and "manual" career pathways, with the manual strand often constituted in terms of lower intelligence and (academic) school failure. Since the

[1] However, it should be noted that with the introduction of the National Certificate in Educational Achievement (NCEA), it appears that technology subjects are becoming "intellectualised", potentially changing their appeal to different groups of students (Hipkins and Vaughan, 2002).

early 20th century, but particularly throughout the 60s and 70s, the Dewey-inspired progressive schooling movement has attempted to use school-work initiatives to address what was seen as an unfair and damaging division and make school more relevant to the lives of young people. It is this progressive challenge for *relevance* that has been taken up and re-mobilised in the late 90s mainstream schooling and industry context.

The significance of STAR lies in its engagement of the transition "problematic" between secondary school and tertiary study or training for young people. In addition to STAR, various other forms of funding also target this particular period of young people's lives, depending on their status or occupation within certain categories. Are they "at risk", attending a low decile school, "gifted", Māori, or a teenage parent? Do they have "special needs" that must be met? In contrast to these other forms of funding, STAR addresses itself to *all* secondary school students and allows schools to offer almost any unconventional course and design almost any in-school programme for delivery that will help its students within STAR's fairly accommodating and flexible guidelines. There is, for example, no direct relationship between STAR and addressing the needs of "at risk" students, although many schools do use STAR funding for this purpose; equally, STAR may be used to address to the needs of academically-successful students.

Compared with Gateway, the broader approach of STAR may well be a strength in terms of the lengthened, more considered, approach taken by young people to entering paid working life, which the OECD review describes as "milling and churning" (2000; p. 78). "Milling and churning" may be interpreted in two different ways. It may be seen as a useful trial period for young people and a period to which too speedy a matching process (of young person to paid work) may be detrimental *or* as a problematic and economically-wasteful period of time requiring tight administration.

There is also evidence that some young people are trying to "postpone" the development of work identities or even that other sources of identity, such as music, fashion, and leisure, are more central to how young people think of themselves (Ball, Maguire, and Macrae, 2000). However, work does remain central to inclusion within society and access to work is affected by education and training, the major axis of opportunity in this area.

Any changes to STAR should take account of the postponement and possible meanings of this transition period for young people in relation to STAR's dual objectives of *retaining* students as well as *facilitating transition* to work or study.

SECTION TWO: PROJECT METHODOLOGY

STAGE ONE: ESTABLISHING THE PROJECT SCOPE

The first stage of the project was essentially a scoping exercise, intended to gather information about the breadth, variation, and patterns of STAR funding usage and its documentation, in a way that would inform development of stage two (a survey of all STAR-funded schools) and stage three (case studies of schools doing well with STAR).

Stage one consisted of a series of interviews with principals and STAR co-ordinators from 9 different schools around New Zealand. External providers to those 9 schools were also interviewed. These interviews were designed to find out about the perceived role of STAR and the targeting of STAR courses at either all or particular groups of students within each school. The interviews also gathered general information about the organisation and timetabling of STAR courses within each school. Particular attention was paid to the differences and/or overlap between Gateway and STAR in terms of either role or operation at the 3 schools in the sample, which were both STAR and Gateway schools.

Sampling

The 9 schools were selected to form a broad range according to decile and geographical location. Where possible, schools were selected to make use of existing contacts already established through 2 other senior secondary school transition projects running concurrently with this one: Learning Curves (on school organisation of Y11 subject choice as the new assessment regime of the NCEA comes into effect) and Innovative Pathways (on school programmes which assist students failing at school, who may also be known as "at risk" students, to move from school into jobs or further study). Consideration was also given to avoiding schools that could be considered "over-researched" such as those in the South Auckland area.

Table 1

Characteristics of Stage One Schools

Categories	No. of Schools
Gateway and STAR	3
STAR only	6
Roll < 500	2
Roll 500–1000	3
Roll >1000	4
Decile 1–2	2
Decile 3–4	1
Decile 5–6	2
Decile 7–8	3
Decile 9–10	1
North Island	7
South Island	2
Rural	3
Urban	6

The school sample was discussed with, and slightly altered by, the Ministry of Education staff, who had a particular interest in several of the schools. The Ministry of Education-amended sample was then re-adjusted to take account of the new schools' profiles so that the sample would still cover a range of deciles, sizes, and geographical locations. However, it should be noted that the sample was not intended to be representative of all New Zealand secondary schools nor of all STAR-funded schools. It was a scoping exercise only, and stage two was intended to survey all STAR schools in the country.

A sample of external providers for stage one was first gained by reviewing the approved courses and providers for each school, according to the Ministry of Education's database, and confirming these by talking to each school. Following this, a sample of those external providers associated with each school was created by selecting one from each school. Taken together, these formed a cross-section of providers in terms of size (small or large), specificity or focus (e.g., first aid, agricultural, or outdoors specialists, or large providers of many courses), and type of provider (university, distance education provider, polytechnic, or private training establishment).

Table 2

Stage One Course Providers

Provider Types	Course Coverage	No. of Providers
Industry-specific PTEs[2]	Diving	1
	First Aid	1
	Travel and Tourism	1
	Agriculture	1
	Outdoor Pursuits	1
Tertiary	University	1
	Polytechnic	1
	Distance Education	2

Instrument Design and Development

Three interview schedules were developed for principals, STAR co-ordinators, and external providers of STAR courses to schools. The interview schedules were developed through a peer-review process beginning with NZCER researchers designing a schedule of questions for each of the school principals, STAR co-ordinators, and external providers. This schedule was reviewed and refined through discussions between the researchers, and between the researchers and Ministry of Education staff and Skill New Zealand staff involved in the evaluation of Gateway. Skill New Zealand input was particularly valuable in providing information about Gateway that could be used to help frame questions about STAR. For example, the Skill New Zealand staff raised issues such as:

- the issue of employers using Gateway to recruit employees;
- the effectiveness of paying Gateway co-ordinators for their role, and supporting them with plenty of information for distribution to employers and students;
- Gateway offering 2 different contracts to schools – facilitated and brokered. Skill New Zealand either paid a co-ordinator within the school to work with Skill New Zealand to provide workplace learning or an external provider (such as an ITO) facilitating (brokering) the workplace learning;
- organisational challenges for the school in running Gateway, particularly in relation to health and safety.

Data Collection

Interviews with school principals, STAR co-ordinators, and external providers were held face-to-face at the school or over the telephone.

Questions for principals and STAR co-ordinators focused on:

- courses offered using STAR funding;

[2] PTEs are Private Training Establishments.

- the characteristics (e.g., ethnicity, gender, etc.) and participation of students in STAR-funded courses;
- any impressions of particular patterns of student engagement and achievement in STAR courses;
- ways in which courses assist or fail to assist in the successful transition of students from secondary school to the workplace or vocational training and education;
- the forms of documentation or data being collected by schools on retention rates and transition rates;
- STAR-related data on providers and courses currently held by the school;
- school records on unit standards achieved through STAR courses;
- the allocation and usage of STAR funding by the school.

Questions for STAR representatives from external providers focused on:

- ways in which courses constrain or enable students in making a successful transition from secondary school to the workplace or tertiary/industry training;
- arrangements with schools on the operation of STAR courses.

Further consultation and additional interviews were conducted with the Ministry of Education (in particular, the STAR database team), Skill New Zealand, and the president of the Secondary Principals Association of New Zealand (SPANZ).

STAGE TWO: THE SURVEY

The data gathered in stage one provided direction for the overall evaluation. Information gathered in stage one was used to shape the approach and design instruments for stage two.

Sampling

For stage two, the entire STAR school population of 372 schools was used, according to information from the Ministry of Education STAR-funding database. The 372 schools on the STAR-funding database include all secondary schools and some composite schools.

Twenty tertiary-level external providers of STAR courses were selected to provide a representative sample according to the number of schools served by each provider type.

Sampling external providers according to information on the Ministry of Education STAR-funding database proved to be quite a challenge. The database provided the NZCER researchers with a full list of providers entered against STAR schools. Obvious duplicate entries (the same provider listed more than once) were included but these were quickly and programmatically eliminated by NZCER (using the software application's built-in capabilities). However, it was more difficult to eliminate what were effectively duplicate entries (the same provider listed more than once entered under different names or different acronyms or simply different spellings). There was no way to sort this out programmatically; NZCER researchers were forced to review

each provider listed and make comparisons and decisions about duplicate entries on a case-by-case basis for the over 4,000 remaining provider entries listed.

Providers were selected if they were listed against more than 5 schools. In line with the research focus on schools, rather than the providers themselves, this ensured that the maximum number of schools was represented. It also allowed some measure of certainty that the sampled provider would still be providing courses to schools. This was a necessary precaution since the Ministry of Education STAR-funding database stores application data about which providers schools intend to use rather than actual data on those they actually are using or have used. This arrangement caused problems in stage one when researchers telephoned a number of providers, only to find that they no longer worked with the school concerned. In several cases they had not worked with the school for more than 2 years.

The providers on the list were then allocated an institutional category. Coverage of schools was calculated for each provider by category. A representative sample of 20 providers was determined using maximum variation sampling. This sample was checked against coverage of course types (academic, industry-related, or a combination of both).

Table 3

Stage Two Course Providers

Provider Categories	% Coverage	Sample No.
Private Training Establishment	71	14
University	5	1
Polytechnic	21	5
College of Education	<1	0
The Correspondence School	<1	0
Open Polytechnic	<1	0
TOTAL	100	20

Instrument Design and Development

Three different questionnaires – one for STAR co-ordinators, one for STAR principals, and one for external providers – were peer reviewed and developed by researchers within NZCER, the Ministry of Education advisers to the project, and NZCER's statistician. The STAR co-ordinators' questionnaire was also piloted with several STAR co-ordinators who had participated in stage one. These co-ordinators provided valuable written feedback on the questionnaire design and content.

Results from stage one highlighted the importance of the STAR co-ordinator's position and knowledge of STAR operation in the school in relation to that of the principal. For this reason, the STAR co-ordinators' questionnaire was comparatively more complex and longer in length than the STAR principals' questionnaire.

Questionnaires were also kept separate or distinct, mailed in separate envelopes with separate reply-paid envelopes supplied. Information gathered in stage one had highlighted some possible differences in perception between the principal and STAR co-ordinator and separate questionnaires enabled further exploration of these differences. Questionnaires were also kept separate in order to ensure that STAR co-ordinator questionnaires actually reached the STAR co-ordinator rather than being left on a desk somewhere, waiting for distribution!

Questions for the STAR co-ordinator were designed to address:

- the STAR co-ordinator's role:
  - relationships between the STAR co-ordinator and other staff, students, providers, and the school principal;
  - hours, remuneration, and recognition for STAR work;
  - activities carried out by the co-ordinator

- the operation of STAR in the school:
  - types of courses offered using STAR funding;
  - timetabling of courses;
  - use of external providers and in-school delivery (including any particular difficulties, benefits, and changes made to delivery)

- the use of STAR funding:
  - how funding is allocated to the co-ordinator;
  - funding coverage of courses and expenses;
  - opinion on funding mechanisms

- student participation for Year 11–13 students:
  - the characteristics (e.g., ethnicity, gender, etc) and participation of students in STAR-funded courses;
  - any impressions of particular patterns of student engagement and achievement in STAR courses;
  - ways in which courses assist or fail to assist in the successful transition of students from secondary school to the workplace or vocational training and education;
  - the forms of documentation or data being collected by schools on retention rates and transition rates;
  - school records on unit standards achieved through STAR courses;
  - the characteristics (academically-successful, "at risk", unmotivated) and participation of students in STAR-funded courses;
  - school assessment of student needs for STAR courses

- overall STAR successes, challenges, and suggestions to the Ministry of Education.

Questions for the principal addressed:

- the use of STAR funding:
  - how funding is allocated to the co-ordinator;
  - funding coverage of courses and expenses;
  - opinion on funding mechanisms;
- the operation of STAR and participation of students in the school;
- overall STAR successes, challenges, and suggestions to the Ministry of Education.

Questions for the external providers were very similar to those developed for stage one.

Data Collection

In order to deal with fears of possible further funding cuts to STAR and a potential mistrust of NZCER or the research itself, NZCER mailed out a letter with the questionnaire addressing these issues. The letter detailed the evaluation's potential role in finding information to improve the effectiveness of STAR, as well as enabling the sharing of good practice among schools. In recognition of the length of the questionnaire and time taken by co-ordinators to fill it out, a prize draw was held, with a $50 book voucher given to each of three co-ordinators.

Each questionnaire had been marked with a unique identifying number. Returned principal and co-ordinator questionnaires were checked off against a master list of unique identifying numbers. This allowed us to follow up any non-responses. Open answers were coded. All data were captured using SAS (a data management and statistical software package) and summarised as one-way and two-way frequency tables.

Response Rates

The final response rates for returned questionnaires were exceptionally high for a postal survey:

- 83 percent for STAR co-ordinators;
- 71 percent for principals;
- 70 percent for external providers of STAR courses. (NB: this was 14 out of 20 possible respondents.)

Most of these returned questionnaires were received before the deadline. Sixty-three percent of the principals and 57 percent of the STAR co-ordinators had returned questionnaires by the deadline given (2 August 2001). Of the outstanding questionnaires, a number were received soon after the deadline, and just before a faxed reminder on 9 August.

Several principals and STAR co-ordinators who were unable to return the questionnaire by the 2 August deadline, or extended 16 August deadline (in fax), because of other commitments (usually leave), were very keen to have their say and contacted NZCER to make alternative arrangements to return questionnaires at a later date.

A number of STAR co-ordinators included personal notes and business cards with their returned surveys, identifying themselves and indicating their willingness to be interviewed or provide further information if need be.

STAGE THREE: CASE STUDIES OF SCHOOLS USING STAR FUNDING

Sampling

Setting up the third stage in the project was an interesting challenge, given that there were no predetermined parameters for selection, no previous evaluations to review, and no agreed criteria for what constituted good practice with STAR funding.

The Ministry of Education had requested information about 5–10 schools which "were doing very well with STAR" (*see* Request for Proposals, Ministry of Education 2001). The identification of such schools for the third stage was discussed at some length between the NZCER research team and Ministry of Education advisers.

It was finally agreed that what constituted "doing well" would be determined through specific responses to the survey (listed below). We also agreed that the final sample of 8 schools should include North and South Island schools, high and low decile schools, and at least one rural school since the benefits and challenges associated with STAR appeared to be slightly different for each of these school types.

Thus schools "doing well" were selected from survey responses which met the following criteria:

- Both the STAR co-ordinator and the principal of the school had responded to the survey.
- All STAR funding from the Operations Grant went to the STAR co-ordinator (survey question 24.)

- The STAR co-ordinator reported doing all of the following tasks:
  - liaising with external providers (if external providers were used by the school);
  - liaising with departments within school for timetabling STAR;
  - advising students on taking STAR courses, assessing needs of students to assist with selection of STAR courses;
  - gathering summative assessment data on STAR students; and
  - having involvement in decisions related to allocation of STAR funding (options from survey question 4).

- The STAR co-ordinator reported keeping or using data on:
  - participation numbers;
  - course completion details;
  - external provider course details (if external providers were used by the school);
  - correspondence with external providers (if external providers were used by the school);

  - details of unit standards achieved from both externally (if applicable) and internally provided courses; and
  - details on credits achieved towards national qualifications (options from survey question 37).
- More than 9 credits towards a national qualification were reportedly achieved in 2001 (survey question 38).
- Details about numbers and levels of unit standards or credits achieved in 2001 were reported as available through the school (survey question 39).

The final sample included a range of schools which met the criteria.

Table 4

Characteristics of Stage Three Schools

Categories	No. of Schools
Gateway and STAR	1*
STAR only	7
Roll < 500	4
Roll 500–1000	1
Roll >1000	3
Decile 1–2	2
Decile 3–4	1
Decile 5–6	1
Decile 7–8	3
Decile 9–10	1
North Island	5
South Island	3
Rural	1
Urban	7

* Two more of the schools are joining Gateway for 2003.
Note: All of the schools in the sample were co-educational.

It should be noted that while only one of these schools fitted the Ministry of Education rural category, another school from the urban category could well have fitted (on some characteristics) as rural (and has been described as such in the case study section). Rural/urban categories include: main urban, secondary urban, minor urban (population 1000–1999), rural centre (population 300–399), and rural area (population less than 1000).

Including rural schools was tricky since there are few rural schools in the secondary school population to start with and less than 14 percent of the STAR schools' population is rural.

However, we did want to include at least one rural school in the case study sample because survey returns from those schools indicated there were specific issues that were important to explore and report on.

Instrument Design and Development

Interview questions sought to extend the known detail about each school, or to follow up school-specific survey responses. Some general questions, common to all schools, were also included. Because each interview schedule was unique to each school, the schedule in the appendix will be a selection of illustrative questions from the various interview schedules.

The student interview schedules were designed for focus groups of 5 students each. The schedules were peer-reviewed within NZCER.

Data Collection

Researchers generally spent between half a day and one day in each school, depending on how the school was able to organise the day's activities. Interviews were conducted with the STAR co-ordinator, a selection of STAR students, and any other relevant people (e.g., transition team members, STAR administrators).

Students were interviewed in 2 separate focus groups, each with 5 students at a time. Focus groups were chosen for 3 reasons. There was no compelling reason to interview students separately since none of the questions were particularly sensitive or personal. Secondly, organisation of separate interviews for 10 students at each school, particularly so close to the senior exam period, would have been very difficult to organise, especially since teachers are reluctant to lose students out of class at this time. Focus groups also have the advantage of allowing students the "comfort" of their peers who may also serve to jog each other's memories of various incidents or activities.

Selection of students was done through discussion with each STAR co-ordinator, and depended on how the school's STAR programme or courses were organised and which students did STAR courses. STAR co-ordinators were asked to make selections of students based on the students' capacity as a group to give a range of perspectives about STAR, and to group students so that all or most students within each group were on the same course. This had the advantage that students already knew each other, were comfortable to speak in front of each other, and helped ensure that a range of perspectives about the same course – content, provider, organisation – would be covered. STAR co-ordinators were also asked to a achieve gender balance in the focus groups where possible – either one group of girls and one group of boys, or both groups comprising half male, half female in number (since all schools visited were co-educational).

School staff were asked not to attend interviews with students, so that students could speak their minds without fear of judgment. However, in one school, a staff member was present at both focus group interviews. Comments from these students seemed to be not as forthcoming as those made by other groups.

Analysis and Reporting

Case study material has been analysed and reported in a separate section so that each can be considered for comparative purposes. However, sensitive issues that came up during the interviews are discussed in other appropriate sections so as to avoid identifying the school or instigating any direct action involving the school. NZCER assured STAR co-ordinators, students, and principals of as much anonymity as we could provide given the small size of the country, so that they could feel free to speak their minds or raise certain issues without fear of any potential negative consequences. Funding issues were a particular concern given perceptions of an uncertain STAR–funding climate.

SECTION THREE: THE PURPOSE OF STAR

DIFFERENT MEANS TO A STATED END

The Ministry of Education set up STAR with a single goal of assisting senior secondary school students to find suitable pathways into work or further study at secondary or tertiary level. However, STAR has two means by which it may achieve this goal:

1. Facilitate smooth transition and access from schooling to employment, including work-based learning; or tertiary type study or training.
2. Improve retention in senior secondary schooling.

In one sense these two means are in tension within the one funding resource. On the one hand, STAR helps keep students in school. On the other, it helps them to leave and go into meaningful work or study. This tension makes for some of the challenges that schools face in planning and running STAR programmes.

There is also a sense in which STAR helps the transition aspect of its brief *through* the retention aspect. The different means by which STAR may assist students attests to the complexity of young people's lives and the very open and interesting possibilities of "transition". STAR acknowledges the close ties of school to work but it also allows for the possibilities of ties to other sources of identity, fulfilment, and wealth-creation. STAR's flexibility of means, as well of operation, allows schools a chance to design programmes which they believe best meet the needs of their particular students. Sometimes those students needs may be served best through retention in support of their eventual transition beyond school, by allowing students more time to adjust to moving beyond school. However STAR's flexibility in this way does also mean that STAR co-ordinators and principals may have different perceptions about the role of STAR in their school.

Just Browsing, Thanks: School Perceptions of STAR's Purpose

The purpose or role(s) of STAR in stage one commonly perceived by school principals and STAR co-ordinators were spread fairly evenly across several areas. They saw STAR acting as a:

- window into, or taste of, tertiary level study for students;
- way to retain and encourage non-achieving (non-academic) and/or "at risk" students;
- chance to enhance and extend the existing curriculum;
- "mirror" to, and taste of, the "outside" world of work, presenting opportunities and building appropriate work-related skills and attitudes; and a
- form of career advice.

Broadly speaking, these perceptions do encompass STAR's stated aims of providing pathways for senior secondary students by either improving retention at school or facilitating their progress into employment or further study or training. However, within the roles that schools understood STAR to perform, there appeared to be varying perceptions about how closely related STAR courses were to individual student career pathways. For example, some STAR principals and co-

ordinators described spending a considerable amount of time and effort matching each student to a STAR course as part of an overall programme and ensuring that the student was guided onto a particular pathway to a specific employment/career. Other schools appeared to have less–structured approaches, guiding students into STAR courses, not necessarily as part of a cohesive approach to the start of a career, but rather allowing them to trial different types of careers through the mini-course format of tasters.

When STAR co-ordinators around the country responded to an open survey question about the purpose of STAR, the most commonly reported purposes related to STAR's provision of links to tertiary courses, tasters, and/or career options (49 percent) and STAR's provision of courses the school would not otherwise provide (36 percent). It is notable that this—less well defined—STAR purpose is popular with schools.

If the results were grouped slightly differently (as shown with a bracket in the table), nearly half of the co-ordinators (44 percent) understood STAR to be addressing the needs of "at risk", non-academic, or under-achieving students through employment-related skills education. Only 12 percent saw STAR as having a role for the *academic* extension of students. However, it is possible that the more generalised response about meeting student needs and providing motivation (19 percent) might also encompass an understanding of STAR as meeting the needs of achieving students.

Table 5

STAR Co-ordinator Perceptions of STAR's Purpose

	Survey Respondents *(n=307)*	**%**
Provides links to tertiary courses; provides tasters; shows career options	152	49
Provides courses or qualifications the school could not otherwise provide	112	36
Meets student needs generally; supports and motivates students	59	19
Provides for at risk, failing, or alternative education students	47	15
A way to gain unit standards; an alternative route to qualifications	45	15
Provides employment and trade skills while retaining literacy and numeracy focus	43	14
Provides programmes for academic extension or achieving students	38	12

Note: respondents were able to choose more than one purpose so percentages do not add to 100 percent.

Issues about the targeting of particular groups of students will be expanded upon in the Student Participation section of the report.

Recruitment and Alignment: External Provider Perceptions of Purpose

External provider perceptions of STAR's purpose(s) can be grouped into three main areas:

- bridging secondary and tertiary education (8 responses);
- providing non-conventional school subjects (6 responses); and
- preparing students for the world of work (4 responses).

External providers reported that STAR provided additional learning opportunities which helped to bridge the gap between secondary and tertiary education, and that they were able to support schools and students to make informed choices about tertiary study.

Providers also commented on STAR's purpose in allowing the provision of non-conventional school subjects to meet both (non-academic) student needs *and* the needs of the workplace. Some providers commented that STAR courses gave students:

> the opportunity to have hands on experience. Move them [from] classroom environment, give them a chance to get a taste towards achieving credits, and experience what they believe is their chosen career.

It is clear that providers see STAR as a mandate or opportunity for them to bridge the secondary and tertiary worlds. A number of providers felt that alignment of the school curriculum to that of tertiary education was of paramount importance. One polytechnic is undertaking a project to align its curriculum with that of neighbouring secondary schools who currently purchase courses from it, in order to provide more clearly defined pathways for students, increase numbers of students in tertiary study, and improve polytechnic-school relationships (Evans, 2002).

More specifically, STAR is a source of recruitment to provider institutions. When providers were asked to describe the most successful aspects of providing STAR courses to secondary schools, their responses indicated the centrality of *their* needs to their views of STAR.

Table 6

Most Successful Aspects of STAR for Providers

No. Responses	Response Categories
6	Recruitment for their organisation
5	Meeting student needs for particular courses
3	Linking schools to tertiary education
2	Students taking our courses
2	Raising community awareness of what is on offer

While recruitment (n=6) was the most common success cited, other successes such as "linking schools to tertiary education" (n=3), "students taking our courses" (n=2) , and "raising community awareness" (n=2) were similar in that they effectively used STAR as a marketing tool, bringing the recruitment-related successes to a total of 12 responses (60 percent).

Providers commented:

> Exposure in the market place means gaining students who would now have some knowledge of the courses we do at the college.
>
> We often get full-time applications from those who came to our school via a STAR course. We may get a few enrolling on mainstream programmes in subsequent years.
>
> We benefit financially.
>
> The STAR programme is extremely effective in turning young people on to tertiary study at a key decision making period of their lives.
>
> There is a flow-on effect to tertiary study.
>
> A chance for community involvement in schools, supporting the Health and PE Curriculum.
>
> [We have] the ability to provide courses to students over a life-long period (15–years to 85–years–old).

The Contestable Nature of Needs

The obvious self-interest of external STAR course providers is not necessarily at odds with STAR's stated aims. Employers involved in the Gateway programme also reported being motivated by the desire to recruit young people, though in those cases it was recruitment into workplaces rather than institutions of further or higher education. Although the Gateway employers cited recruitment second to a sense of community-mindness as a motivation, the most commonly cited *benefit* from STAR was recruitment (Skill New Zealand, 2002). In the case of STAR, recruitment into an institution or course at an institution, there is a sense in which student needs cannot be separated from institutional needs. So providers who cited the success of seeing students take their courses could be simultaneously expressing pleasure at seeing young people undertaking work/study in an area of relevance to them as well as expressing support for their own institution's interests.

However, further policy development to STAR may need to take account of how the needs of students might conflict with the needs of schools and the needs of tertiary institutions. There could be more thought about what student needs actually are, and how narrowly or broadly to define them, before making conclusions about whether STAR meets those needs.

SECTION FOUR: STAR COURSES AND SYSTEMS

Arguably one of the most notable aspects of STAR funding is its flexibility of operation in schools. One of the aims of the stage two survey was to find out in broad terms just what kinds of courses were being offered, to which students, and how they were timetabled and managed.

TYPES OF COURSES OFFERED

Nearly all schools (94 percent) offered industry-related courses to their senior students. However, over half also offered short taster courses – 62 percent to their junior students and 57 percent to their senior students. Academic courses also featured, in sharp contrast to Gateway's focus on workplace learning. More than half of the schools offered academic programmes to senior students (60 percent).

Other more generalist skills courses comprised 18 percent of the STAR courses offered – employment skills (7 percent), introduction to career choice (5 percent), study skills (4 percent), leadership skills (1 percent) and cultural development (< 1 percent). Taken together with tasters, almost half (47 percent) of STAR funding is used for short career-browser courses or general skills courses. The remaining half (52 percent) is for industry-related and academic courses, which tend to be – though not exclusively – longer courses, and often take place off-site, away from the school. This course-type finding is perhaps not so surprising given that STAR co-ordinators saw STAR as having a number of roles within the school and being broader than a focus on moving to work or undertaking workplace learning (*see* The Purpose of STAR section).

Table 7

Types of STAR Courses

	Survey Respondents *(n=307)*	**%**
Industry-related or industry-based courses for Year 11 to 13 students	290	94
Taster courses for Year 9 and 10 students	191	62
Academic courses for Year 11 to 13 students	184	60
Taster courses for Year 11 to 13 students	175	57
Employment skills	21	7
Introduction to career choice or options	17	5
Study skills	12	4
At our school, STAR is used to fund workplace first aid or used for staff (for unspecified activities)	6	2
Leadership skills	2	1
Cultural development	1	0.3

Note: schools teach more than one type of course so percentages do not add to 100 percent.

TIMETABLING AND COURSE LENGTH

Our survey found evidence of the timetabling difficulties faced by schools in operating STAR courses. More than three-quarters of schools (78 percent) had timetabled some of their STAR courses within their usual school timetable, divided into short periods of time. However, almost two-thirds (66 percent) had timetabled STAR in ways that did not necessarily correspond with the school's general timetable, opting for block courses, whole days, or half days.

Table 8

STAR Programme Timetabling

	Survey Respondents *(n=307)*	**%**
As a period, e.g., 45 minutes or 1 hour	241	78
As a block course of more than a day occurring within the school term	180	59
As full days alongside the school timetable	164	53
As a block course outside of the school term, e.g., in school holidays or weekends	105	34
As half days	85	28
It varies OR no tick boxes selected	42	14

Note: Figures add to more than 100 percent because respondents were able to give more than one answer.

In our interim report, we recounted comments from the principals and co-ordinators we interviewed concerning their various attempts to timetable STAR effectively in their schools. Timetabling seemed to be a fraught area for many of them, not unlike the tricky timetabling issues with Gateway pilot schools (Skill New Zealand, 2001). Our survey results indicate that 88 percent of co-ordinators spend time on liaising with other staff on timetabling issues.

Several of our stage one schools reported "bending over backwards" to fit STAR courses into their timetables. One school's timetable had spread full-time STAR courses across the days and time-slots in order to ensure that the most diverse range of students potentially had a chance to take a STAR course alongside other (traditional) subjects. This represented the school's attempt to provide STAR opportunities in various forms for all their students.

Four schools in our stage one sample had fitted STAR courses into their normal/regular school timetable. One school did this by mainstreaming the STAR courses into the school timetable such that among the traditional subjects, there might also be a "media" or "forestry" class listed in the timetable. One school timetabled STAR in block double periods, or for even longer periods at times, so that students could get valuable course time, something that several providers interviewed said was the ideal for their course teaching but not often achieved when working with schools. This school also operated on a timetable which dealt with STAR courses by including lunchtimes or non-school hours, enabling students to participate in offsite STAR courses which required attendance at particular blocks of time.

Another school reported using a relatively less-complicated timetable until this year. STAR courses had formerly been organised so that they were in the afternoon on the same day of each

week, which they found worked well for the school generally and the students. The external providers particularly liked having a fixed day and time at which they could prepare for the students. However, this school is now running a 9-day timetable and so is unable to place subjects on specific days, making it more difficult for students, teachers, and external providers in terms of the simple previous system of a fixed "STAR day". The school is currently reworking their timetable in order to make it fit around the alternative programmes such as STAR.

Most of the STAR co-ordinators from the 8 case study schools (stage three) also reported timetabling challenges. Where schools operated STAR as a series of courses of varying lengths, the usual school timetable was interrupted and timetabling was a major cause of friction, especially between the STAR co-ordinator and other teaching staff. These challenges were lessened for the school that had built its own workshops and had brought in external provider study materials and assessors. Several schools operated STAR as a separate programme and timetable line. However, even for these schools, timetabling issues caused friction. This served to isolate the STAR co-ordinator in their role when they became seen as the disrupting influence for teachers' and students' routines of learning. For students, timetabling issues meant having to be flexible (and catch up on conventional work missed), and expect flexibility (from their conventional teachers), under school conditions that are generally not noted for their flexibility in this area.

The nature of school timetabling is at the root of these difficulties. Schools generally break their days into a series of short time-spans (often called periods and lasting around 45–60 minutes in duration). It has been pointed out that this kind of disjoined approach to teaching and learning, or to working, only occurs in schools; generally, people are not work at projects or their place of employment in this manner. As STAR attempts to address relevance and engagement for students via more "real world" oriented learning, the timetabling, not only of STAR but of school generally, will have to be addressed. Already there are moves in schools in New Zealand and around the world, to organise timetables and school hours differently (BBC News, 2002). This echoes earlier progressive or radical attempts to uncouple learning from rigid time constraints or claims from home-schoolers and parents that learning takes place at all sorts of times, not just between the hours of 9.00 a.m. and 3.00 p.m. (Vaughan, 2002).

Timetabling difficulties are also raised in terms of the STAR course lengths. In some ways, the shorter courses (less than a full year) may be trickier "disruptions" to the usual school routine than are full-year-length courses. However, this depends entirely on how the school organises its programmes and timetable.

Nearly half of the schools (42 percent) manage to schedule STAR courses over the year. However, a fifth of schools (20 percent) have courses which occupy a considerable proportion of the student's school week and are not likely to conform well to the school's general timetable.

Table 9

Course Lengths

	Survey Respondents *(n=307)*	**%**
Mostly in full school year courses totalling less than 10 hours a week	123	42
Fairly evenly spread across all the courses listed above	60	21
Mostly in short (less than a school year) courses totalling less than 10 hours per week	51	17
Mostly in courses totalling 20 or more hours per week over the year	37	13
Mostly in courses totalling between 10 and 19 hours per week over the year	13	4
Mostly in short (less than a school year) courses totalling between 10 and 19 hours per week	5	2
Mostly in short (less than a school year) courses totalling 20 or more hours per week	3	1

We reported in the interim report that the number of school and provider respondents thought that STAR courses worked best in longer blocks of time. One stage one external provider commented:

> Our classes have to be taught within school time so it's about getting instructors who are able to teach in the 50-minute slots. Really, two hours are needed for quality learning. Once you have done all the preliminary things like roll call and getting the students settled you only have 30-minutes of effective teaching. It is a 16-hour course so it goes on for a couple of months.

Another issue for several schools using external tertiary providers was the "dead period" early in the year when school had started but not the tertiary institution or its courses, meaning students intending to study STAR courses must be fitted into other classes temporarily. One school is currently considering bringing in a Private Training Establishment (PTE) to deal with this period in the year.

Short courses provided a challenge as well in that they were hard to manage in a school used to timetabling full-year courses and one school reported preferring to run these on a weekend in order to avoid disruption to other classes. However, this posed its own problems for several schools as attendance was difficult for students who had home commitments such as being the primary caregiver for younger children.

The timetabling issue may be compounded by difficulties experienced by external providers in contacting the school or STAR co-ordinators. One tertiary provider commented that they send information to a pool of schools at the end of each year but generally find the response rate to be very slow, to the point of sometimes having to turn a school away because the course has already started by the time they get back to the provider.

Other Constraints on Course Possibilities

In addition to the timetabling issues, there were several other factors delineating the scope of what schools could offer. The first factor was the number of students per course. In several reported cases only one or a few students were interested in a particular STAR course, and the course did not run. Students were directed into another course instead. This was a particular issue for the smaller or rural schools. They struggled to offer a wide range of courses to students and/or afford to run courses for smaller numbers of students.

A second factor related to availability of external providers of courses. Two principals (one from a rural school, and the other from a small provincial school) mentioned that their schools were limited by what the community and local external providers could offer by way of STAR courses. However, these schools would like to use external providers more. Because they are too small, do not have the facilities, space, and/or equipment, or the staff to teach the course(s), external providers could be the only way for small schools to provide their students with some types of learning experiences.

The small-school perspective is further illuminated by the stage three case study findings. Two of the small, geographically isolated case study schools would have had a very limited "core curriculum" to offer students if it was not for STAR courses. One school could only offer science, maths, English, and P.E. as its core curriculum. These subjects are sound academic subjects for students who plan to go on to university and perhaps sit Bursary. But they are less likely to meet the vocational needs of students in an area of high unemployment. Students in this school were studying nursing, nannying, hairdressing, automotive, and welding courses. The hairdressing and nannying students could see that these courses could also help them care for younger brothers and sisters, and allow them to travel overseas or to move on to other areas of the country.

STAR Course Delivery

The discussion in the next section centres on the relationship between *school needs* and *student needs*. As discussed in the earlier section on the Purpose of STAR, these are not necessarily incompatible. However, they do bear closer attention. Difficulties with operating STAR mean that school needs dominate and constrain student needs, even though addressing student needs is the preferred aim of those schools. The success of STAR may depend on how well supported schools are to run the scheme, as much as it depends on how well they are able to meet student needs directly.

Delivery Types and Benefits

The link between schools and external providers is an important one. Most STAR co-ordinators (71 percent) reported using external providers to deliver taster courses and senior-level courses. Fewer schools appear to use external providers more selectively, for only senior-level courses (22 percent) or for only tasters (3 percent). Only 4 percent of schools do not use external providers.

Table 10

Types of STAR Course Delivery

	Survey Respondents *(n=307)*	%
External providers are used for taster courses and in Year 11–13 courses	214	71
External providers are only used for Year 11 to 13 courses	65	22
External providers are not used at all	12	4
External providers are only used for taster courses	9	3

When asked the extent to which they used external providers to deliver their senior courses, schools were spread reasonably evenly across 4 categories. Just over a third of schools (36 percent) reported using external providers to deliver 60 percent of more of their STAR courses. However, almost a quarter (24 percent) reported using external providers less than 20 percent of the time.

Table 11

Use of External Providers for Year 11–13 STAR Course Delivery

	Survey Respondents *(n=307)*	%
60 percent or more	105	36
Less than 20 percent	72	24
40–59 percent	58	20
20–39 percent	56	19

The survey asked STAR co-ordinators why their school used external providers to the extent they did, and not more or less. The schools' reasons reported by co-ordinators appeared to centre on giving reasons why they used providers *as much* as they did – which were largely to do with a lack of facilities or expertise in their own schools. The responses are shown grouped in the table below. Very few schools gave reasons indicating that the extent to which they used providers had to do with not being able to use them *more.*

The pressure schools face to make the STAR funding go as far as possible might mean they are interested in minimising external provider delivery if it saves money. Some of the stage three case study schools had also tried, where possible, to deliver courses internally for the purpose of making their STAR funding go further. One school had purpose-built workshops in order to deliver the material on-site (though in this case, they did purchase the course study materials and assessors from an external provider).

Table 12

Reasons for the Extent to Which External Providers are Used

	Survey Respondents *(n=307)*	%
We can't offer it; we're too small; we don't have the staff/facilities	117	38
They have more specialised subject or industry knowledge	80	26
Provides the best value for money	24	8
Access to providers; links with tertiary institutions	22	7
Allows us to provide wide course range; works with, or outside, our timetable	18	6
Tertiary or non-school environment gives confidence or motivation to students	15	5
To provide workplace experience	9	3
Difficult to find providers in our area	9	3
Providers used for holiday times and school staff used for term time	1	<1

Just over half of the STAR co-ordinators (52 percent) in the survey reported changing the extent to which external courses were delivered. The most cited reason was to introduce new courses, suggesting an increase in the use of external providers. However, just as many co-ordinators gave reasons related to decreasing the use of external providers and increasing internal delivery. These are shown grouped in the table below.

Table 13

Reasons for Changing Extent of External Provider Use

	Survey Respondents *(n=307)*	%
New courses introduced; new courses because of student or parent requests	40	13
Better value for money to teach courses within the school	26	9
More in-school courses which particularly suit our community	16	5
Good value from provider	11	4
Student needs assessed annually, STAR changes accordingly	6	2
School lost course teacher so turned to a provider	4	1
Timetabling difficulties	3	1
Changed providers because of transport or accommodation difficulties	2	>1

The benefits of external delivery cited by STAR co-ordinators certainly emphasised the knowledge and resources held by external providers, over and above those which schools could offer. However, the second most-cited benefit was to students who could gain "real world" experience.

Table 14

School Benefits from Externally-Delivered Courses

	Survey Respondents *(n=307)*	**%**
Up-to-date industry-specific knowledge and resources	263	86
Students located off-site gaining wider (real world) experience (including workplace experience) and confidence	256	83
Less work and time required for staff to develop resources or courses	186	61
Opportunities for wider qualifications and experience	14	5
Skills not available through school staff (e.g., not accredited)	9	3
Taster courses before committing selves	5	2
Mentoring/job placement/apprenticeships	2	1
Students continuing with provider for full-time study	2	1
Widened staff teaching opportunities or skills/a form of professional development	2	1

The benefits cited by STAR co-ordinators for STAR courses delivered internally focused more on the ways in which internal delivery could enhance the school or avoid some of the pitfalls of external delivery, rather than on saving money *per se*. However, if some of the school-related benefits are taken together (as they are shown grouped in the table below), STAR co-ordinators do signal the predominance of *school needs* as well as *student needs* here.

Table 15

School Benefits from Internally-Delivered STAR Courses

	Survey Respondents *(n=307)*	%
Students located on-site so no transport issues	249	81.1
Students located on-site so supervision is assured	211	68.7
Students and staff able to develop relationships	201	65.5
Widened student choice; met student needs; expanded student horizons	37	12.1
Courses cost less	24	7.8
No timetable clashes; students don't miss other classes	16	5.2
Student perception that courses are part of normal education	12	3.9
Enhanced school in eyes of community	8	2.6
Widened staff teaching opportunities and skills; a form of professional development	8	2.6
Re-use resources throughout school	7	2.3
Gain industry-related qualifications or experience	6	2.0
Flexibility of re-assessment or assessment	3	1.0

Delivery Challenges

More than half of the STAR co-ordinators (62 percent) reported having experienced difficulties with using external providers for course delivery. The two most cited difficulties related to timetabling conflicts (37 percent) and transport difficulties (36 percent).

However, the greatest *category* of difficulty cited related to the provider not meeting student needs. These are shown grouped in the table below and total 62 percent of the reasons given for difficulties. This indicates that, despite pressures to deliver courses internally to make money go further, STAR co-ordinators are focused on student needs as much as school needs.

Table 16

School Difficulties Working with External Providers

	Survey Respondents *(n=307)*	%
Conflicts between schools' timetables and the providers' timetables	114	37
Difficulties with student transport to provider's site	111	36
Poor value for money	73	24
Provider not meeting student needs	69	22
Poor teaching quality	59	19
Too little actual teaching or learning time on course	33	11
Poor course design or assessment procedures	18	6
Delivery of course material taking too long; too little support for students	7	2
Correspondence courses provide little student support and are too book-based or not practical enough	5	2
Poor administrative arrangements	10	3
STAR funding does not cover cost	7	2
Students missing subject classes	5	2
Cancelled courses	5	2
Students not turning up to outside provider site; poor student commitment	5	2
Provider did not understand schools	5	2
Provider markets STAR courses that are not included within school STAR funding allocation	3	1
Equity issues	1	<1

External provider difficulties with schools focused on school bureaucracy, commenting particularly on the lack of fit between schools' timetables and their own. Evidently, this reflected schools' frustrations with timetabling and fitting in with provider timetables. Providers also commented on late bookings, frustration with school administration and systems (or lack of), and curriculum mismatch which could leave students with "parcels of credit" that was difficult for providers to match to courses and qualifications if the student later enrolled for more studies with the provider.

Table 17

External Provider Difficulties Working with Schools

Response Categories	No. Responses *(n=14)*
School bureaucracy	6
Lack of resources	5
Course selection	4
Student provision	2
Government policy	1

Following the STAR co-ordinator focus on student needs over school needs, resolution of difficulties rarely involved delivering courses internally (6 percent). Instead most resolutions involved changing to a new provider (18 percent) or communicating with the existing provider (14 percent) or working with the existing provider (7 percent).

Table 18

Resolution of Difficulties with External Providers

	Survey Respondents *(n=307)*	%
By using different providers	55	18
Communication to provider	44	14
Got provider to change course material or assessments or timetable	23	7
By extending our own accreditation to deliver courses	18	6
It improved (but not specific reason given)	14	5
Used STAR funding for transport or got students to pay for transport themselves	8	3
Joined school consortium	2	1

While two-thirds of STAR co-ordinators (67 percent) had resolved their difficulties with external providers, only just over half (52 percent) had been able to resolve difficulties with internal course delivery. Considering this, and the nature of the difficulties, internal delivery problems appeared more intractable. Nearly three-quarters of the difficulties cited (73 percent) related to a lack of resources in the school (either staff, n=106 or facilities, n=118).

Table 19

Difficulties with Internal Delivery of Courses

	Survey Respondents *(n=307)*	**%**
Lack of appropriate resources or facilities/lack of space or facilities	118	38
Lack of staff to teach courses	106	34
Timetabling difficulties	83	27
Small student numbers forcing course cancellations	77	25
Perceived lack of status by students and/or staff and/or parents	50	16
Lack of up-to-date industry information	32	10
Moderation/assessment or student workload difficulties	8	3
Lack of time to develop courses or deal with paperwork	4	1
Over-subscribed courses/too many students for course	3	1
Liaison and support promised but not provided; lack of teacher support	2	1
Staff competing for STAR funding	2	1
Funding must be topped up from operations grant	1	<1
Students prefer interacting with external providers and enjoy change of scene from school	1	<1

There were comparatively few responses given when STAR co-ordinators were asked how these difficulties had been resolved. Most of the responses given related to changing the school's delivery patterns or methods – updating resources (8 percent), changing timetabling (7 percent), communicating with staff on an ongoing basis (6 percent), and cancelling or restricting the course (2 percent). Using an external provider instead (6 percent) was one possible solution.

Table 20

Resolution of Difficulties with Internal Course Delivery

	Survey Respondents *(n=307)*	**%**
Got teachers to update resources; bought new resources or staff	25	8
Worked with timetabler or changed the timetable	21	7
Ongoing communication with staff	20	6
Used external provider instead	20	6
Cancelled the course; restricted course entry; amalgamated courses	6	2
Gained relevant information from a provider	5	2
Educated parents on value of course	4	1
Held more courses in school holidays or weekends	1	<1
Used STAR funding to subsidise other courses	1	<1

Given the STAR co-ordinator's relative lack of status within the school, and the relative lack of status for STAR courses and programmes, it is harder for co-ordinators to be able to deal with, or change, internal delivery problems as they involve the school as a whole. As we will discuss in further detail in the Role of the Co-ordinator section, the co-ordinator is often seen as a thorn in the side of the school's functioning from an organisational point of view, though they are clearly invaluable to the school in terms of the school's functioning from a student needs point of view. It is these two needs – the school's and the student's – which need to be resolved for STAR to function well.

SECTION FIVE: STUDENT PARTICIPATION IN STAR PROGRAMMES

Across all schools, Year 11–13 students had high participation rates in STAR-funded courses, indicating that the funding is spread across many students in each school rather than being concentrated amongst just a few students. In their survey responses, just under half of STAR co-ordinators (49 percent) reported that at least 40 percent of their school's senior students took STAR courses. Just over a quarter of the schools (28 percent) had more than 60 percent of their students involved. Very few schools (5 percent) used STAR funding for less than 10 percent of their senior students.

Table 21

Year 11–13 Students Participating in STAR Courses

	Survey Respondents *(n=307)*	**%**
Less than 10 percent	16	5
10–19 percent	42	14
20–29 percent	41	14
30–39 percent	54	18
40–49 percent	36	12
50–59 percent	28	9
60 percent or more	84	28

Schools choose STAR courses primarily for the vocational or work experience (96 percent) (*see* Table 26) that they allow schools to offer. The next most common reasons were STAR providing an incentive for students to stay at school (68 percent) and assisting in basic life skills (64 percent) that can only be gained by working with different cultures, age groups, and backgrounds from their own. These advantages were seen as occurring with external providers, or by being exposed to different teachers or tutors.

ASSESSING AND MEETING STUDENT NEEDS

STAR co-ordinators had a range of systems for assessing student needs in relation to what STAR courses they would offer, and decisions about which students would attend them. Some systems involved finding out about student interests before applying for and organising STAR courses. This occurred through surveying students during the school year and then seeking to develop courses to match. Others systems involved choosing STAR courses and then fitting students to them. A school might identify the students considered to be most suited to STAR courses and then direct these students to the particular courses that met their needs and satisfied their interests best. Some schools looked at where particular unit standards could "take the student" in terms of qualification and career, and determined courses from there. All of these ways of assessing student needs are tempered by the school's geographical location and access to external providers, the school's available "top up" money for STAR course funding, and the school's own resources

(e.g., availability of teachers for internally provided STAR courses and appropriate school facilities).

Methods of Assessing Student Needs

According to the stage two survey results, 99 percent of schools had some way, or made some attempt to, assess the needs of their students. More than half the schools indicated that they had some form of personal contact between students and staff members for this purpose. Three-quarters of schools assessed student needs through face-to-face contact between the STAR co-ordinator and the student (76 percent). Just under three-quarters assessed need through careers adviser interaction with the students. Student surveys of subject or career interest were carried out by more than half of the schools (61 percent), as was some form of interaction between students and Deans (59 percent). This reinforces the role of the STAR co-ordinator as "the face" of STAR since the co-ordinator instigates and collates all of this activity. These findings are reinforced in the Role of the Co-ordinator section and the Student Views of their STAR Experiences section.

Table 22

Methods of Assessing Student Needs

	Survey Respondents *(n=307)*	**%**
Face-to-face contact between the STAR co-ordinator and students	235	76
Face-to-face contact between the careers adviser and students	222	72
Surveys of student interest in courses	187	61
Face-to-face contact between the dean and students	181	59
Face-to-face contact between another staff member and students	166	54
Staff meetings and discussions of student needs	166	54
Test or examination results	68	22
Parent or community surveys	46	15
Students self-select or request courses	7	2
Staff survey	5	2
Guidance counsellors/student representatives/peer mediators	4	1
Student needs are not assessed at all	3	1
Past experience of courses	3	1
Student evaluation of past courses	3	1

Profiles of Students Who Take STAR Courses

The specific processes chosen for school assessment of student needs for STAR courses (or conventional courses) were contextualised by the role that the co-ordinator and principal understood STAR to perform (*see* the Purpose of STAR section). Co-ordinators tended to have an idea about the kinds of students for whom STAR was being provided in their school and therefore *which* needs STAR could or would meet.

The majority of co-ordinators indicated that they saw STAR as being for students who had an interest in a particular industry (80 percent) and three-quarters (76 percent) saw it as being for students who would otherwise leave school without any qualifications. More co-ordinators saw these categories of students as being more aligned with the purpose of STAR than students who fell into the "at risk" categories – for example, "students who are failing or have failed in academic courses" (58 percent) and "students who are disruptive to others in class" (10 percent). With the advent of Alternative Education (AE) which specifically serves "at risk" students, usually off-site with a goal of later returning them to school (Ministry of Education, 1998), it is likely that schools are now able to better serve the needs of their other students. One of the stage three case study schools had a full complement of options for its students: an Alternative Education programme, a Gateway programme, a STAR programme, and a conventional curriculum. Full details from survey responses are shown in the following table. Note that principals' responses to the same question are not reported here as their responses were almost exactly the same as the co-ordinators'.

Table 23

Co-ordinator Perspectives of STAR Student Profiles

	Survey Respondents *(n=307)*	**%**
Students who have shown an interest in a particular industry	247	80
Students who would otherwise leave school without any qualifications	233	76
All Year 11 to 13 students	188	61
Students who are failing or have failed in academic courses	178	58
Students who need to be academically extended	90	29
Students who are disruptive to others in class	30	10
Special needs students	19	6
Academic students with particular interests	9	3
Year 12 students	9	3
Year 13 students	4	1
Students with limited opportunities because of rural isolation	3	1
Students who miss out on their other preferred courses	2	<1
Year 11 students needing job application preparation	1	<1

External providers were asked the same question as STAR co-ordinators and principals about the students for which they thought STAR courses catered. This highlighted a significant difference in perspective between the schools and the providers.

Like the STAR co-ordinators, a similar proportion of the external providers (80 percent) saw STAR as catering for students with an interest in a particular industry. However, just as many providers also understood STAR to cater for *all* senior secondary students. This was a significant

proportionate difference between provider responses and those of the co-ordinators, for whom this was their third choice of category (61 percent) rather than first-equal.

These responses are unsurprising given the providers' focus on STAR as a recruiting ground (*see* Purpose of STAR section). It is likely that, more than schools, external providers are concerned with the students most able to succeed in STAR courses in order that they go on to further study with the provider's institution. Schools, on the other hand, are likely to be more interested in providing an opportunity for a successful school-related experience for students *first*, and concerned with further study (with any provider) *second*.

Table 24

Provider Perspectives of STAR Student Profiles

	No. of Respondents *(n=14)*	**%**
Students who have shown an interest in a particular industry	11	79
All Year 11–13 students	11	79
Students who need to be academically extended	8	57
Students who would otherwise leave school without any qualifications if not in a STAR course	7	50
Students who are failing or have failed in academic courses	6	43
Students who are disruptive to others in class	2	14
NZ Correspondence School senior students and homeschooled students	2	14
Students whose learning needs are not met by the school beyond a Year 13 programme, either in vocational areas or academic areas	2	14

Note: Figures do not total 100 percent because respondents were able to choose more than one category.

The difference related to perspectives on STAR's purpose between the STAR co-ordinators and the external providers was underlined when we asked each whether the students for whom they thought STAR was intended *actually were* the students who took STAR courses. Nearly all the STAR co-ordinators (96 percent) thought the students intended to take STAR were the students who did. This compared with just over half of the external providers (57 percent) who thought they got the students on STAR courses for whom they thought STAR was intended.

External providers commented on this:

> The type of student varies from school to school. Some schools persist in the idea STAR is for 'transition' students only. Some students are not allowed to choose, but are sent.
>
> Schools will sometimes enrol students on STAR courses that they do not know what else to do with. Students may perceive this to be a punishment.
>
> While it can succeed in exposing students to a particular industry, generally it is the non-academic students who are put in these classes.

Students Who Do Not Take STAR Courses

More than half of co-ordinators (59 percent) reported having to turn students away from taking STAR courses at some point. In these cases, the most common reasons related to things beyond the control of the co-ordinator, many of them "practical" such as classes being full or students attempting to enrol too late (37 percent), not having enough funding to run the course (12 percent), not having enough students to run the course (2 percent), and not having enough workshop space (1 percent).

Another set of reasons pertained to timing. Two percent claimed that other teachers would not release students from their classes, timetabling clashes accounted for another 1 percent, and changes made by external providers accounted for the rest (fewer than 1 percent).

In keeping with what appear to be prudent selection processes and assessments of student needs, 22 percent of students were turned away for behavioural reasons – either because they posed a risk to themselves or others in workshop or heavy machinery situations (11 percent), had poor attendance or showed inappropriate behaviour (5 percent), or because the external provider had been unhappy with them on previous courses (3 percent). This reason is likely to be related to poor attendance or disruptiveness. Full details are shown in the following table.

Table 25

Reasons for Turning Students Away from STAR Courses

	Survey Respondents *(n=269)*	**%**
The students were late in choosing courses and the classes were full	101	37
The students were academic and looking to cruise in the 6th form certificate/bursary year	37	14
The students weren't mature enough to safely work with machinery/be in workshop situations	33	12
Funding insufficient	32	12
Inappropriate student behaviour or poor student attendance	17	6
External provider unhappy with the student on previous courses	10	4
The students did not meet our careers or counselling criteria	8	3
Students not able to meet academic demands of STAR course	7	3
Not enough students to run course	6	2
Students missing classes or staff not releasing them from class	5	2
Insufficient facilities/workshop space to cater for the number of students	4	1
Timetabling constraints or clashes/assessment date clashes	4	1
Students can do only one STAR course per year	2	1
Parents against students doing course	2	1
External providers change dates or course numbers	1	<1

Some external providers (36 percent, n=5) also had to turn students away from STAR courses. Their reasons tended to be centred on behavioural issues, with 4 out of the 5 providers citing "inappropriate" students. Two cited administrative reasons and 3 turned students away because of full classes.

Meeting Specific Needs

When it came to actually meeting the specific needs of students, nearly all the co-ordinators (96 percent) reported that they hoped to meet student needs for vocational or workplace experience. Just over two-thirds reported meeting needs by virtue of encouraging students to stay at school.

However, it is clear that STAR is also used to meet academic needs for students and, in this way, STAR's broadness of focus and operation stands in stark contrast to Gateway's. Over a third of co-ordinators (38 percent) reported using STAR to meet student needs for academic extension from secondary level to tertiary level in particular subject areas. Moreover, more than half of the co-ordinators (55 percent) reported using STAR to meet students' needs for academic development at the secondary level. This suggests that STAR may have a complementary function alongside the conventional (academic) curriculum. It may also signal changes to the traditional divisions between academic and vocational subjects.

Interestingly, nearly two-thirds of STAR co-ordinators also reported STAR as meeting some students' need for basic life skills. This is not an overt, stated goal of STAR funding but it is not surprising in light of other recent research which has shown that students gain as much in terms of self-esteem as the actual new skills or career opportunities themselves (Boyd, McDowall, and Cooper, 2002).

Table 26

Perceptions of Specific Needs Met by STAR Courses

	Survey Respondents *(n=307)*	**%**
Vocational or work experience	295	96
An incentive to stay at school	210	68
Assistance mastering basic life skills	197	64
General academic development at secondary school level	168	55
Academic extension above secondary school level	117	38
Help for behavioural problems	49	16
Qualifications achieved allow students into tertiary level courses	6	2
Providing for students burned out through over-assessment	1	<1

EXPECTATIONS OF STUDENTS

Schools appear to hold overt expectations of student behaviour and work commitment. Around 10 percent of the co-ordinators who responded to the survey indicated that students were turned away for behavioural reasons (*see* Table 26). This perhaps reflects the importance that schools place on their relationships with external providers.

Certainly from our stage three case studies, it was clear that schools have certain expectations of students who do STAR courses and often these were spelled out for students in information sheets. One school's information sheet emphasised the investment of funding made to students on STAR courses, the opportunity that students were being given, and that a high level of commitment was required from students (in this case, students were expected to catch up on any conventional class work missed because of STAR courses, and/or attend STAR classes outside of normal school hours, and/or do extra homework).

> All course fees will be paid from STAR funding so there will be no cost to the students, apart from possible transport costs for out of school courses and required textbooks. This does mean that there is an investment of funds into individual students, and it is expected that students who are offered these opportunities use them effectively and positively. STAR is not an easy option and many courses require a degree of commitment and application… (school 1 example)

Bonds and Contracts

Some schools, including several of the stage three case study schools, had also implemented a contract for students' parents to sign, with a bond payable to the school before students were entitled to enter a STAR programme or do STAR-funded courses.

> …each student studying a STAR course will be asked for a $50.00 bond. This bond will be reimbursed fully on the successful completion of the course (this does not mean the student has to pass the course, but all work must be handed in and be of the expected quality, all assessments must be attempted and attendance must be of a high standard). If a student studying STAR by correspondence leaves school during the year, the course may be continued until it is completed and the student may then apply for the return of their bond. If a student does not meet the requirements of the STAR course, the bond will be returned and placed in STAR funds for use by other students. (school 1 example).

> I agree that he/she should be subject to the Tertiary Institute's regulations when attending classes and I acknowledge that his/her continuation in the programme will be dependent on satisfactory conduct. I take responsibility for his/her transport and enclose the bond of $10. I acknowledge that [school] will pay approximately $50 per day for my son/daughter to attend this course. (school 2 example).

> I have read the Student Information Sheet relating to [course] and understand the conditions under which (my son/daughter/dependent) [sic] will operate on the [course] programme…I understand the course carries an expectation that (my son/daughter/dependent) [sic] will complete the course to the best of their ability. I understand that [school] has had to pay a sum of approximately $300 for (my son/daughter/dependent) [sic] to undertake the course. I accept that if (my son/daughter/dependent) [sic] drops out of the course I may be liable to repay [school] the sum of approximately $300. (school 3 example)

Although bonds are not fees in that they are refundable to the students or their parents, the charging of bonds appears to contravene the STAR regulations which clearly state that:

> Schools may not charge fees for students to attend STAR courses, or for any equipment (excepting any take-home component) or activity associated with the course. Schools are expected to meet any additional costs where STAR funding is insufficient to meet the full costs of the course.

In 2 of the 3 cases of the bond-charging practices cited above, it is clear that the bond is not intended as a charge that would (re)cover school costs for the STAR course. It is more likely an attempt on the part of the school to ensure that their relationships with external providers are not damaged by students not taking the courses seriously. Certainly the reputation of the school has become increasingly important since the early 90s, particularly when schools are, in effect, competing for students (and EFTS) and market position (Lauder, Hughes, and Watson 1999). In one of these schools, the co-ordinator who introduced the bond in 2002, saw it as a great innovation. The co-ordinator believed it greatly reduced the number of students opting in and out of STAR to avoid their other school work, and generally raised the status of STAR throughout the school.

All the same, it appears to be a morally suspect action given that *all* students are entitled to a free education from their school – this includes students who are successful in conventional and academic subjects as well as students who have not succeeded academically or shown an interest in those subjects. If students are not required to pay for their mathematics class, why should they be required to pay for their travel course or their automotive programme?

This situation is perhaps symptomatic of the (lack of) status of STAR which co-ordinators, students, and schools are up against. As long as STAR courses are still considered non-conventional and cut across school timetables in a way that conventional teachers find difficult to cope with, there will be a pressure on co-ordinators to find ways to try and impress upon students the importance of working well. Taking into account the bigger picture, this may also indicate other things – anxiety in some schools about making ends meet, poor (financial) management, planning difficulties, changing circumstances beyond the control of the school (e.g., roll rises or slumps). Bonds may well fall onto the uncertain ground that the charging of school fees has sometimes occupied. Nonetheless, this is likely to be an area that needs to be addressed in any reworking of the STAR regulations, audit procedures, and guidelines for schools.

QUALIFICATIONS AND COURSES

In stage two of the research, STAR co-ordinators were asked how many students in their school on STAR courses had achieved credits towards a national qualification in 2001. Most co-ordinators reported that 20 or more students had achieved credits. These findings are summarised below.

Table 27

Number of Students Achieving Credits per School

	Survey Respondents *(n=307)*	**%**
20 or more	238	79
1–9	34	11
10–19	23	8
None	6	2

Most STAR co-ordinators were unable to provide information about *how many* unit standards or credits towards national qualification students on STAR courses achieved during 2002. Three-quarters of the responding co-ordinators (75 percent) reported that they had the records but that they could not easily access them. It should be noted that this response – having the records but not being able to easily report them – was an option provided on the questionnaire in order to reduce respondent burden. Information from stage one and the piloting of the stage two questionnaire had alerted us to the fact that it often took a lot of time for co-ordinators to find this information. In fairness to the co-ordinators, and in acknowledgement of the length of the questionnaire, not much can be read into this seeming choice to take the "easy way out". Perhaps the most notable, and disturbing, aspect of this is that 4 percent of co-ordinators reported not keeping these records at the school at all.

The kinds of data STAR co-ordinators used to keep to track student progress varied considerably, and a large amount of paperwork was kept. A very high percentage of co-ordinators did actually keep data on student participation, details of unit standards achieved on externally provided courses, course completion details, internally achieved unit standards, details on credits toward a national certificate and external provider details. Most co-ordinators report keeping the first nine forms of data listed in Table 28 below – arguably some of the most important kinds of data. However, read another way, it is clear that not all co-ordinators routinely keep this data and this might be troubling.

Table 28

Student STAR Records Kept by the School

	Survey Respondents *(n=307)*	%
Student participation numbers	286	93
Details on the unit standards students achieve on externally provided courses	272	89
Course completion details	259	84
Details on the unit standards students achieve on internal (school) provided courses	244	79
Details on credits towards a national qualification students achieve	215	70
External provider course details	195	63
Course evaluations conducted by external providers	187	61
Correspondence with external providers	178	58
Course evaluations conducted by the school	163	53
Informal verbal feedback from students	7	2
Attendance registrar and student contract forms	7	2
School leaver destinations	2	<1
Providers send info to school that should go to NZQA/ complexity of data gathering is confusing	1	<1
STAR-dedicated school reports	1	<1

Of course keeping data is one thing; being able to report it in a way that is useful for the school (or the Ministry of Education) is another. With the myriad of ways that schools use STAR funding and organise their STAR courses and programmes, collating and using data is likely to be varied across schools and our case studies (see section nine) illustrate this. However *how* schools use whatever data they have to inform any decision-making or practice related to STAR (or indeed school practices generally) seems to be most closely related to meeting student needs in terms of the types of courses and course content offered to students, or the external providers used to deliver courses.

There may be a case for a computer program that all STAR co-ordinators could use. This might help reduce the paperwork, administration, and workload for STAR co-ordinators. Used in conjunction with further discussion on how the purposes and uses of data, it could be beneficial to schools, the Ministry of Education, and researchers in the long term, for obtaining information when needed and informing school practice.

SECTION SIX: STUDENT VIEWS OF THEIR STAR EXPERIENCES

The stage two survey was not designed to take account of student perspectives so these were collated from the focus groups during the stage three case study school visits. Students were interviewed face-to-face in focus groups of 5 students at a time (2 groups per school) about their likes and dislikes on courses, how they came to take STAR courses, and any plans for their futures. In all 8 schools, all focus groups but one were made up of Year 11, 12, and 13 students. The exception to this was a group (in one school) made up of Year 10 students who were doing taster courses. This choice was made because taster courses were very important at this school.

Students were taking a diversity of STAR courses. Automotive engineering, welding, hairdressing, tourism and hospitality, employment skills, business studies, and computing were the most commonly cited courses.

FINDING STAR INFORMATION

We asked the focus groups of students how they found out about STAR courses but their answers indicate that it was difficult for them to separate out the initial information from the advice or information needed to actually do the course. As Fitzsimons (1997) pointed out in an earlier NZCER study of the influence of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) on students and their choices, information alone is not enough. Decision-making about the future, career choices, and further study are context-dependent and linked to/formed by family background (including family knowledge and discussion), the media, and school culture. Consequently, their responses about first contact or information need to be framed and understood within the context of additional information and advice received by students, either at the same time or soon after, so that their actual decisions lie close to processing (rather than simply receiving) the information.

Table 29

Sources of Information about STAR Courses

Information Source	No of Students *(n=75)*	% of Respondents
Course/subject choice booklets	49	65
School STAR co-ordinator/careers advisor	22	29
Announcements/assembly	7	9
Other teachers	5	7
Employers or industry reps	5	7
Invitation by letter following exams	5	7
Friends	4	5
Family	2	3

Note: Numbers do not add to 100 percent as some students selected more than one initial information source.

Almost two-thirds (65 percent) of the students interviewed reported first finding out about STAR courses from course or subject choice booklets provided by their school. Just over half (52

percent) found out through some contact initiated by their school and delivered verbally – usually an approach to the individual student from the STAR co-ordinator. The remainder of this group found out about STAR from their school assembly or other announcements, and other teachers, employer/industry representative visits organised by the school.[3]

For the majority of students, the first contact or information about STAR courses may have been gleaned through printed information, but this was often followed by personal contact with the STAR co-ordinator, sometimes as part of an informal discussion initiated by the student to find out more and sometimes as part of a formal interview and application to do STAR courses (often preceded by an informal discussion as well).

Taking this into account, it is clear that in many of our case study schools, the STAR co-ordinator was the vital link allowing students to gain information and actually get to do the courses. STAR co-ordinators assisted students to make sense of the initial information they had about the existence of STAR courses in terms of their own individual capacities and aspirations. This is entirely in keeping with STAR co-ordinators' own descriptions of their role, and their frustration over lack of recognition. Their job goes beyond the administrative and involves considerable efforts to build relationships (with students, tertiary institutions, industry organisations, and other school staff).

Non-school-initiated sources such as family and friends featured far less as a source of information. Other research has shown that family and friends have *more* influence over student subject choice than school sources (Boyd, Chalmers, and Kumekawa, 2001; Hipkins and Vaughan, 2002), although Boyd's study also found that those students who did use school sources of information and advice ranked these sources ahead of other "home-based" ones for usefulness. However, Hipkins and Vaughan's initial report on the NCEA and subject choice indicates that parents were most influential over students' choices of conventional, core (compulsory) subjects such as mathematics and English (particularly), and science. The conventional but optional subjects of accounting and economics also featured strongly. The parental influence was geared towards subjects with some status (i.e., academic subjects).

It appears that parents may be nervous about their sons and daughters taking "alternative" equivalents of those subjects, such as the ones increasingly being offered through different streams of the same academic subject. Parents fear these alternatives are second-rate options and may close down future possibilities for their children. Parents also tend to identify the content and nature of a subject by its name, even though what is taught may vary considerably from what they were taught (Paechter, 1998). It seems likely then, in the case of non-conventional STAR options, that family sources of information (and advice) might be slanted towards conventional subject choices or simply have nothing much to offer by way of information.

While the means by which students found out about STAR courses varied across schools, they varied little within them. The exception to this occurred in one school where there were two different methods of encouraging students into STAR courses. In this school, a letter to parents "inviting" participation in the STAR programme following poor Year 11 exam results went home

[3] This figure of 52 percent is obtained by adding the numbers of students who selected "School STAR co-ordinator/careers advisor" (n=22), "Announcements/assembly" (n=7), "Other teachers" (n=5), and "Employers or industry reps" (n=5) and recalculating the percentage against the total of 75 students.

with some students. One of the students in this position put it: "Some people cry when they get that letter. They think the teachers think they are dumb." The students in this school who did STAR courses for academic extension, rather than as an "alternative pathway", did not receive the post-exam letter and reported gaining information about STAR from course and subject choice booklets.

MAKING THE DECISION TO DO STAR COURSES

By far the most common reason given by two-thirds of the students (68 percent) as the basis for their final decision to do a STAR course or programme was an interest in, and/or enjoyment of the subject/course/field of study. This is consistent with findings from other research on student subject choice (Boyd et al., 2001; Hipkins and Vaughan, 2002; Lannes, Rumjanek, Velloso, and de Meis, 2002). As with other research, personal enjoyment did not appear to be linked with the perceived "easiness" of the subject (Hipkins and Vaughan, 2002); indeed, only 4 students indicated they were attracted to STAR by a perception that it would be easy. Moreover, 6 of the 51 students who did STAR courses specified that their enjoyment was specifically linked to wanting the challenge. Two of the students specified that their enjoyment of the subject area was linked to the course involving lots of practical, hands-on work.

Adding to the motivation provided by personal enjoyment, the next most cited reason for doing STAR courses was the chance to try out something new or gain some new skills (29 percent), that were not necessarily related to a fixed career decision. As other research into programmes which use STAR funding has found, personal interest or enjoyment is a strong motivator of career decisions (Boyd et al., 2002). It certainly seemed from student responses that they were aware of the need to make choices that kept their learning options open. A number of students made comments about wanting to try *many* different STAR courses (this was particularly the case with tasters). Often this was seen as a way to eliminate certain career possibilities as much as it was used to narrow down interests or career options. This was also the case for students who cited "workplace experience" as a reason to do STAR courses. Those students were unsure about whether or not they wanted to work in that particular industry or career but they were interested in exploring it (rather than committing to it entirely).

Survey findings for external providers also supported this view of career trials. Several providers thought STAR valuable for the opportunity it provided students to "sample something…which may perhaps provide future direction". For this reason, several providers believed that the Ministry of Education should support schools to offer more taster courses to expose students to an even wider range of course options, allowing students to discover or eliminate career possibilities.

Similarly, students who cited gaining qualifications as a motivator tended to regard these as "something to fall back on" as much as something to go on with in life. It is also possible that the appeal of qualifications had to do with a search for something that the student could succeed in. Certainly, success at school has a strong link to enjoyment and interest in a subject, particularly for students who have not experienced much success (academically) at school (Boyd et al., 2002). As one external provider put it:

> It is often the passion of the individual's interest in their subject that inspires students and not another abstract accumulation of units.

Students who did STAR courses upon the suggestion of a teacher (13 percent) could possibly be included with the students who were looking to try out something new. However, the suggestion of teachers might equally have been linked to the student not doing well in other subjects or needing a fill-in subject (to make up subject numbers).

Table 30

Student Reasons for Choosing STAR Courses

Reasons for Taking STAR Courses	No of Students *(n=75)*	% of Respondents
Personal or particular interest/enjoyment	51	68
Chance to try out new things/chance to gain new skills	22	29
Leads to a job	17	23
Teacher suggested that I try it	10	13
Qualifications	8	11
Different learning environment, away from school	6	8
Workplace experience	5	7
Wasn't doing well at other subjects/needed fill-in subject	4	5
I liked the teacher	4	5
The work is easy	4	5
Saves money; it's free	4	5
Family suggested I join	2	3

Note: figures do not add to 100 percent since some students gave more than one reason for their decisions.

The third most popular reason cited for deciding on STAR courses was that the course would or could lead to a job. In some cases, the students' perceptions here seemed anxious, particularly for those who came from areas which had little to offer by way of employment. In other cases, the students had a deep interest and aspiration to work in an area related to the course. These students were already clear or becoming clear about what kind of work they wanted after leaving school; some were ready to leave school and had already prearranged apprenticeships, armed services contracts, or tertiary study programmes for themselves for the following year.

STUDENT LIKES AND DISLIKES

Students mentioned a wealth of things they liked about STAR; they spoke with enthusiasm and passion, and generally enjoyed the courses and the skills they obtained from these courses. They had far less to say about what they disliked. Many students did not necessarily see their STAR courses leading to careers in the same industry or area of interest but instead as a way to eliminate certain work or career options for themselves. STAR represented a chance to broaden their horizons, get into a different environment, and experience new things.

Independence and New Relationships

For most of the students who took courses run by external providers, being away from their school was a big drawcard. Many commented that during these courses delivered off-site they felt

"treated like adults and not like kids". For some, particularly those identified as having behavioural problems, it was a chance for a fresh start with tutors who had no previous knowledge of them and who could make judgements about the students' behaviour based on the here-and-now rather than past experiences.

Others enjoyed the teachers/tutors of the courses and perceived a less-pressured approach to learning there. Several students reported that external provider tutors were "positive and friendly and did not mind if you made a mistake"; they would "let you have another go".

A number of students from different schools reported experiencing pleasure at the chance to form new relationships or interact with new people. Some students were excited by new friendships they had made, "with girls from these other schools that we wouldn't normally even talk to!". They were as much excited by the new people as by finding that they could take charge of building new friendships themselves, and that any old barriers could be transcended. Other students who attended tertiary provider courses on campus were excited about interacting with adults – student themselves – in their STAR classes, and being their equals. For these students, it was a chance to break away from the hierarchy established in school of being young and relatively powerless and facing adults who knew more and controlled most things.

Students enjoyed a freedom of choice about their courses which they felt was missing from their conventional schoolwork and routines. Many commented that they liked STAR courses because they had "really chosen it for ourselves". Others referred to a freedom in "seeing the world". A number enjoyed getting to find out how universities and polytechnics actually worked, particularly if they were from isolated towns or families for whom tertiary education was something new and unfamiliar.

Most students also enjoyed the change of scenery and variety that attending courses off-site provided. Several claimed that getting out of school for a day or so each week revitalised them so they "could get through the rest of the week at school".

A Practical Approach – Having Fun and Experiencing Boredom

A number of students liked the way the work on the courses seemed to be "fun", compared to their usual conventional school subjects which were seen to be "boring". The practical nature of many STAR courses was a particular draw-card for some students. Several students enjoyed being able to put the skills they had learned into practice in their own homes by fixing their own cars or doing home maintenance. These students also enjoyed the practical nature of assessment, as opposed to the written tests and exams they had previously encountered.

There was also some disappointment for students from several different schools (in different geographical areas) who expected more practical work than they actually got in their automotive courses. A number of students complained about the amount of theoretical and book-work required on these courses. This may have particular significance with the introduction of the NCEA. Early research into the NCEA and student subject choice has indicated that the subject content of traditionally hands-on subject areas such as technology is being reshaped with the new qualification so that the subject becomes "intellectualised". Technology heads of department in the Learning Curves study have been particularly worried by the loss of "craftsmanship" and the implications of that for the related industries. They have also been concerned for students who

have traditionally experienced their only school successes through technology subjects, precisely because the subject matter is so practical and emphasises applied skills such as a "feel" for, and creativity with, the particular materials (Hipkins and Vaughan, 2002).

Several other students found the practical, hands-on work in some STAR courses to be boring and not challenging enough. This correlates with findings that students were not interested in STAR out of a perception that the courses were easy and that personal enjoyment did not equate to perceived easiness of the course. Students also found the repetition in some courses boring and unengaging. While it is possible that the nature of the course design itself could have been what students found boring, they tended to see it as related to the career itself (for example, hairdressing) and realised that they were not as interested in that career as they had previously thought. STAR's flexibility in allowing students to try out, but not fully commit to, courses or career training/education proves invaluable here.

Avoiding a Student Loan

The spectre of a student loan in the future loomed large for a number of students. The fact that the STAR courses were free for them made those courses very attractive for these students. Several students even knew how much it would have cost to have done the course after leaving school. They particularly appreciated the fact that the school was willing to fund them. Considering that a number of these students would fall into the "at risk" category, and that are attending educational programmes which are essentially attempts to minimise the risk they may pose to themselves (future options) and to society (through failure to contribute economically), these students showed an astute sense of timeliness and of how to minimise financial risk for themselves.

It also seemed likely that, in several of our case study schools at least, the avoidance of a student loan was emphasised by the STAR co-ordinator. Several co-ordinators declared that they used this as a draw-card for students or to reinforce how important it was to complete the course, and gain credits towards a qualification at no personal expense while they still could.

Timing is Everything

The most common dislike related to students having to catch up on the conventional work they missed while doing STAR courses. Once back at school, students reported finding it difficult to keep up with what had happened in their maths, English, and science classes in particular. With the introduction of the NCEA, this is being compounded as students miss assessments and face the ire of teachers who "mind you being out of class. It annoys some of them." It is possible that the NCEA assessment schedule in some schools will actually prevent students from gaining the teacher permission needed to attend STAR courses.

A few students also complained about missing their holidays. While organising STAR block courses for this time is helpful for schools, who do not have to contend with timetabling nightmares and with upsetting conventional subject teachers, the students felt the loss of not being able to do things with their friends during holidays, or just having a break from studying.

One or two students also thought that compressing courses into short holiday blocks actually mitigated against them learning well. They would have preferred shorter chunks of learning and work spread over a longer time period.

Students who had to travel long distances found it hard. For students from isolated schools, travel involved overnight stays. Those close to cities and external providers had to battle rush-hour traffic, or organise their own public or private transport.

Generally, though, students were very positive about the STAR courses they were doing, the experiences they had, and the changes they noticed in themselves and their skills – both personal and work- or study-related.

SECTION SEVEN: THE ROLE OF THE STAR CO-ORDINATOR

The STAR co-ordinator's role is just as pivotal to the success of STAR in schools as the Gateway co-ordinator's role has been said to be "pivotal" to the success of Gateway (Skill New Zealand, 2002, p 16). Like Gateway co-ordinators, STAR co-ordinators must have a deep understanding of the organisation and workings of the school, as well as have authority and be respected by other teachers, the principal, the students, and parents.

In all of the 8 schools involved in the case study stage of the project, the STAR co-ordinator was seen to be the driving force behind the success of the programmes in place in those schools. The enthusiasm, passion, and commitment of the co-ordinators enabled them to do a job that they assessed as rarely engendering much support or respect from colleagues *unless* those colleagues were closely involved with STAR, taught STAR courses themselves, or the school was small and relationships (between all staff, and staff and students) tended to be closer anyway. STAR co-ordinators were more likely to feel respected and valued if they were part of a transition team within the school or if the school ran a STAR programme separate from other classes.

WHAT STAR CO-ORDINATORS DO

The work of STAR co-ordinators is diverse and multi-faceted. They spend considerable time building and maintaining relationships, not only with teachers, principals, parents, and students within the schools, but also with numerous external providers and their local community. More than just administrators, STAR co-ordinators are everything from advisers and counsellors to budget managers, public relations executives, marketing agents, school timetable negotiators, course planners, and staff liaison experts.

We used information about the co-ordination job from stage one (n=9) to design and provide co-ordinators with a tick-list of options that described their work tasks. Results from that tick-list and other open questions in the survey highlighted again that STAR co-ordinators had a wealth of knowledge and a diversity of skills, particularly in the areas of planning and relationship-building (with students, staff, and external providers). Nearly half (46 percent) taught STAR courses themselves and almost all were involved with external providers (94 percent). Most were also involved in high-level decision-making – about funding (92 percent), timetabling (88 percent), and STAR course selection based on student needs (84 percent).

Table 31

STAR Co-ordinator Tasks

	Survey Respondents *(n=307)*	**%**
Liaise with external providers	289	94
Have involvement in the decisions related to the allocation of STAR funds	284	92
Liaise with departments within your school for timetabling of STAR	271	88
Assess the needs of students to assist you in the selection of STAR courses	259	84
Advise students on taking STAR courses of any type and duration	229	75
Gather summative assessment data about students in STAR courses	203	66
Teach STAR courses	140	46
Advise students on taking STAR courses only (and not taster courses)	69	22
Administration, organise audit; process course applications	59	19
Advise students on taking STAR taster courses only	46	15
Manage budget; check funding; liaise with accountant	25	8
Management and planning; identify STAR priorities; attend meetings	22	7
Organise subject accreditation; deal with NZQA	16	5
Check course attendance	12	4
Market courses within school	6	2
Supervise students	6	2
Report to BOT/parents	4	1

The majority of STAR co-ordinators estimated that they spent less than 5 hours a week on STAR-related tasks (54 percent). About one third spent 5–9 hours a week (34 percent). However, a small group worked more than 10 hours a week on STAR (13 percent). There was no particular relationship between the number of hours spent on STAR and the amount of time that any STAR co-ordinator had been in the job. The differences in time spent are most likely to relate to the way STAR courses and programmes are organised within the school, the size of the school, and which other staff or positions, if any, complement that of the co-ordinator (e.g., careers adviser, Gateway co-ordinator, transition teacher).

Table 32

Co-ordinator Time Working on STAR

Time Spent Each Week	Survey Respondents *(n=307)*	%
Less than 5 hours	156	54
5–9 hours	103	34
10–14 hours	22	7
More than 15 hours	18	6

Status and Remuneration

All the co-ordinators in stage one and in stage three (case studies) believed that the job required a certain type of person – someone with passion, a good understanding of how the school worked, and a genuine interest in, and commitment to, the students. This is not dissimilar to comments made by Gateway co-ordinators about their own work and the rather broad range of skills they needed, though it is sometimes easier to find all these in a team rather than in one person (Skill New Zealand, 2002).

However, co-ordinators also pointed to a lack of status which made their job difficult and this is manifest through the somewhat imprecise and variable conditions of work (for STAR) and remuneration across all schools. Where Gateway co-ordinators have a job title and are paid for this role, STAR most commonly appears as an add-on to another position in the school or is taken on by someone in a part-time capacity. Gateway has the advantage here of being a well-publicised pilot (now being extended) that works with comparatively tighter parameters (workplace learning only) and operating arrangements (usually as a separate stream within a school). STAR's flexibility and general lack of kudos seems to work against co-ordinators in terms of how they feel about their work and the perception of their role by other staff. This is reported in more detail in the following sub-section.

The issue of status is also manifest through the lack of management units held by STAR co-ordinators. Results from the survey indicate that most co-ordinators (68 percent) had no management units; only a third (31 percent) had 1–2 units and less than 1 percent had more than 2 units. The most common form of recompense for co-ordinators was non-teaching/non-contact time (46 percent). A further 30 percent said that they received both non-classroom teaching time with students and management units and 23 percent reported receiving management units only. Those were the categories we offered in the survey but a sizeable proportion of the co-ordinators responding added their own comments about not having any particular remuneration for the job and doing it as part of another job (19 percent) or having no remuneration at all (10 percent).

In the stage one interviews, paperwork was cited as being frustrating, particularly where it was seen as being very complicated in relation to working out EFTS. The complexity also extended to having to plan well in advance in order to comply with STAR application dates. One co-ordinator suggested that a reduction in administration would free up more time to be more effective in the co-ordinator role; that time tended to be "robbed" from other roles in the school. Survey results also pointed to some frustration with the administrative aspects of the job. When asked an open question about what the Ministry of Education could do differently to make

STAR work better, 8 percent of the co-ordinators suggested being given management units or a specific STAR time allocation as part of their other job(s), 19 percent wanted STAR administration streamlined somehow and some help with specific administrative tasks (though not all of them under the auspices of the Ministry of Education).[4]

Although co-ordinators in stage one reported that administrative tasks such as working out EFTS are difficult or time-consuming, or irritating, the stage two survey findings showed there was no apparent link to the time spent on STAR (or any annoying administrative tasks) and the length of time in the co-ordinator's job. More than half (57 percent) of STAR co-ordinators who answered the survey had been in the role for more than 4 years. A fifth (20 percent) had been STAR co-ordinators for 2 to 4 years, with the rest (23 percent) doing it less than 2 years. It seemed that experience in co-ordinating STAR did not streamline the work involved.

Building and Maintaining Relationships

Nearly all co-ordinators are involved with external providers (94 percent) and in liaising with other school departments for planning and timetabling (93 percent). This highlights the centrality of building and maintaining relationships to the job.

We asked co-ordinators to rank the importance of a number of relationships in terms of operating STAR successfully. Consistent with the high-level decision-making involved in being a co-ordinator, the relationships with the principal and external providers were ranked as "extremely important". Given that nearly half of the co-ordinators also taught STAR courses, it was also not surprising that the relationships with students were also ranked "extremely important".

Table 33

STAR Co-ordinator Relationships with Others

Survey Responses *(n=307)*	Other Staff	School Principal	External Providers	Students	Students' Parents
	%	%	%	%	%
Extremely important	30	46	44	44	16
Very important	52	35	46	38	35
Fairly important	18	15	8	12	32
Not very important	<1	3	1	3	15
Not important at all	-	-	<1	2	3

According to the students from several of the case study schools, the co-ordinator's role was critical in anything from encouraging the student to do a particular STAR course to mentoring and taking an interest in the student more generally and in terms of career directions. Many of the students felt that they would not be doing their work in STAR courses without the co-ordinator validating STAR for them as a viable alternative to a largely academic curriculum and, in effect, validating them as well. Students from one of the small schools in our case studies rated the co-ordinator's role as very important because it provided an opportunity to more

[4] For example, several respondents suggested things like combining STAR and Gateway funding, making the NZQA accreditation process in relation to STAR easier, and having external provider reporting systems in place.

students than it would otherwise have been possible. They also pointed out that without STAR there would have been a very limited subject choice for students. That is, they would have been left with the core subjects of maths, science, English, and physical education. STAR opened a door to wider choice for the students in this isolated, rural, small school. It allowed students to do courses without the need for them to travel huge distances or become financially burdened with student loans, accommodation costs, or moving out of their own community and away from family. Another co-ordinator at another school said that STAR gave students a sense of direction and achievement, and provided opportunities for students to try something without amassing a student loan.

While the STAR co-ordinator rated relationships with other staff fairly highly, their perception of how other staff viewed their role was quite different. Only just over a quarter of the co-ordinators (26 percent) thought they were seen as "extremely important" or "very important" by other staff. Slightly more (28 percent) believed they were seen as "not very important" or "not important at all". Most co-ordinators ranked themselves as seen to be only "fairly important". This is a concern since, as the Interim Evaluation of Gateway pointed out, the more "credibility" with other staff that co-ordinators have, the better they are able to do their job (Skill New Zealand, 2002).

Table 34

STAR Co-ordinator Perspectives on Staff Views of the Co-ordinator Role

Importance of the STAR Co-ordinator Role	**Survey Respondents** *(n=307)*	**%**
Extremely important	24	8
Very important	53	18
Fairly important	134	46
Not very important	69	24
Not important at all	13	4
Total	293	100
Staff are not involved/not interested/don't know what STAR is	29	9
Vital to some staff (especially those directly involved) but others not	28	9
Important only in terms of controlling funding	13	4
Total	70	22

Some of the co-ordinators made additional comments to the effect that they were only important to the staff members with whom they had direct contact or involvement in relation to STAR courses. Others reiterated their relative lack of importance by remarking that staff had no interest in them or in STAR.

Many of the co-ordinators who were interviewed in stage one and stage three pointed out that schools had formal careers adviser positions, but that STAR co-ordination was often not formally recognised in the same way. As one STAR co-ordinator from a case study school put it:

> It was passed on to me as part of my job description. I had no experience of STAR at this time…I did not even know what it stood for!

Generally, STAR co-ordinators in the case study schools found they were up against other teaching staff, often because of timetabling arrangements that had students excusing themselves from the more traditional or core subjects to attend alternative STAR courses. Most co-ordinators had experienced other teachers in their school being upset over students missing classes and having to "catch up". Some of these case study schools had timetabled periods for students to catch up with their core subjects. Following the implementation of NCEA in 2002, this issue may become more of a problem for Year 11 students. The high number of assessments for some subjects has meant that teachers are increasingly reluctant to release students for STAR courses which cut across their NCEA subject time.

As one co-ordinator put it:

> You have to be strong to run STAR and you need the support of senior management because you are going against conventional thinking.

This co-ordinator was drawing attention to secondary teachers' professional pride that is generally built around their own teaching area(s), course(s), and schedule(s). For this co-ordinator, the inability or unwillingness of some teachers to see beyond their own subject frustrated efforts to get students into STAR courses.

> Anything that interferes with their subject is a nuisance. But it is not just about administration; it's kids' lives.

Two co-ordinators from the case study schools suggested that paying STAR co-ordinators would help other staff within their respective schools to see the role as a senior management position. Other co-ordinators suggested that there was a potential issue with resources, that in this role of co-ordinator it was essential that co-ordinators had their own phone (preferably with a separate line), a separate office for STAR or shared with the careers or transition department.

MAKING STAR CO-ORDINATION WORK WELL

Professional Development

STAR co-ordinators were interested in being able to get some professional development. Ten percent indicated interest in this when asked an open question about what the Ministry of Education could do differently to make STAR work better. They suggested time off to meet other STAR co-ordinators, formal training, better guidelines about use of funding and courses, and the opportunity to liaise with the Ministry of Education.

Several co-ordinators interviewed in stage one, who were involved in Gateway as well as STAR, cited the support they received from Skill New Zealand as being of a high quality and quantity[5] in comparison to the dearth of information and support available concerning STAR through the Ministry of Education. A number of STAR co-ordinators reported feeling frustrated at not being

[5] For example, pamphlets, Website information, and the guide to information and responsibilities produced for schools (Skill New Zealand, 2001).

able to provide written information packs for their students, which they felt would better inform their students and allow them to see a bigger picture of employment and study opportunities.

Isolated schools also suggested that it would be beneficial for them to have meetings with other co-ordinators, despite the travelling distances involved, in the South Island in particular. There would need to be remuneration (besides the 0.62^{c}/km) or funding for travelling costs and accommodation (as you can rarely travel to and from a place in the South Island in a day without staying overnight) to encourage co-ordinators to attend these meetings.

SECTION EIGHT: STAR FUNDING AND USE

The use of STAR funding in schools is set against a backdrop of STAR funding being paid as (a tagged) part of the Operations Grant and some unclear procedures surrounding the audit of STAR in schools. This situation, together with the relative lack of status of STAR and the STAR co-ordinator in many schools, and timetabling difficulties, has tended to compound any confusion around STAR funding and legitimate usage. Even some of the co-ordinators we spoke to in the case study schools "doing well" with their STAR funding expressed doubts about some of the ways they were using funding, although they were very clear that they were genuinely attempting to best meet the needs of their students and much of what they were trying to do "made sense" in that light.

This section discusses the ways that schools report using their funding, their preferences for funding, and issues raised by co-ordinators about funding. For reasons outlined earlier in the Methodology section, all specific comments on funding made by STAR co-ordinators or principals from the 8 case study schools are included in this section. This is to avoid identifying any one school's actions concerning particularly sensitive issues, with potential consequences for the way that school receives or may use funding in the future.

FUNDING USE IN SCHOOLS

Throughout the course of this evaluation, rumours have circulated about the use of STAR funding. Policy-makers, STAR co-ordinators, school principals, researchers, and tertiary provider representatives have all been curious, had theories, or "heard things" about how schools manage their STAR money. And STAR co-ordinators in all 3 stages of the research project mentioned hearing of another STAR co-ordinator or school somewhere else that was doing something suspect with their STAR funding. Although this evaluation was not an audit, we did ask co-ordinators about how they received and managed the STAR money.

The survey responses indicate that almost three-quarters of STAR co-ordinators received *the entire* STAR funding from the principal.

Table 35

Funding Distribution to STAR Co-ordinators

	Survey Responses *(n=284)*	**%**
The principal gives me *all* of the STAR funding to manage	207	74
The principal gives me *some* of the STAR funding to manage	40	14
The principal gives me *some* of the STAR *and* the Careers funding to manage	37	13

However, even among those co-ordinators who reported receiving all their STAR funding from their principals, a number pointed out that either this had not always been the case, either at this school or at a previous one, or that they personally knew of other co-ordinators who did not receive all the funding. That almost three-quarters of co-ordinators *do* receive *all* the STAR

funding seems like a good thing. Although the STAR regulations do not actually specify who in the school should receive or manage the funding, it is logical and generally accepted that that person should be the STAR co-ordinator.

It might be disturbing to learn that over a quarter of STAR co-ordinators do *not* receive *all* the STAR funding from the principal. Co-ordinators made a number of comments about how the STAR funding actually reaches them.

Table 36

STAR Funding Distribution Comments

	Survey Respondents *(n=307)*	**%**
Budget decided in advance	13	4
Money does not reach me/money is allocated in advance	12	4
I get leftovers from STAR funding/it is allocated to departments/I get an allowance	4	1
Some STAR funding used for other purposes/pay STAR co-ordinator salary	4	1
Decision made by committee	4	1
Unsure/STAR funding not well organised	1	<1

Most of the STAR co-ordinator comments here pertained to the school budget being decided without their input. This suggests one of two things: either that the school considers STAR funding to be part of the Operations Grant and therefore available to be used for anything as the principal sees fit, or that some STAR co-ordinators simply do not know how much money the school has in its STAR funding and therefore do not really know if all of it has been handed over to them or not.

A number of co-ordinators made suggestions about ring-fencing the funding. Several co-ordinators in stage one commented on this and 5 of the 8 co-ordinators in the case study schools wanted a way for the funding to be "protected" so that the co-ordinator was not simply reliant on the principal in order to receive all of the STAR money.

THE COST OF RUNNING STAR

One of the perennial calls from schools is for more funding to do their job properly and STAR is no exception here. Most STAR co-ordinators interviewed in stage one mentioned at some point that funding simply did not go far enough to cover all the costs associated with operating STAR in schools.

Table 37

Courses Costing More to Run Than the EFTS they Generate

No. of courses	Survey Respondents *(n=307)*	%
1–4	186	68
5–9	65	24
10–14	14	5
15 or over	10	4

In the survey, just over two-thirds of STAR co-ordinators reported that per-course funding did not cover between 1 and 4 courses. Almost a quarter of the co-ordinators reported the same for between 5 and 9 of their STAR courses.

Almost three-quarters (73 percent) of the co-ordinators reported paying for the more expensive of their STAR courses (the ones where EFTS generated did not cover course costs) by using the money left from paying the less expensive ones. The rest (27 percent) reported using at least some of the Operations Grant as a top-up, instead or as well.

Table 38

Paying for More Expensive STAR Courses

	Survey Respondents *(n=307)*	%
They are subsidised by other less expensive STAR courses only	204	73
They are subsidised by less expensive STAR courses **and** non-STAR operations grant funding	39	14
They are subsidised with non-STAR operations grant funding only	37	13

A few other co-ordinators reported using other means to top-up where funding was insufficient. The most common method was asking students to pay extra (*see* also "Expectations of Students" in the Student Participation in STAR Programmes). A very small number of co-ordinators reported using other grants (including the Careers grant), money from fundraising, funding rolled over from other years, or fees from international students.

Table 39

Other Ways STAR Course Costs are Subsidised

	Survey Respondents *(n=307)*	%
By the students	10	3
Subsidised with community grants/fundraising	2	1
Using a rotational cycle/use funding from previous year	1	<1
Subsidised with Careers funding	1	<1
Overseas student fees	1	<1

Since 275 co-ordinators of the 307 survey respondents answered the question about the number of courses where funding did not meet EFTS generated, it seems reasonable to deduce that the 32 co-ordinators (12 percent) who did not answer the question had all their course costs covered through their funding entitlement. That is, the EFTS generated for each course covered the cost of that course. This leaves us with 88 percent of co-ordinators reporting that the funding simply does not go far enough – either because the EFTS generated for particular courses do not cover the costs and money must be re-directed from other, cheaper courses (where the EFTS generated more than cover the costs) *or* the money is redirected from the Operations Grant or somewhere else; STAR funding is simply insufficient all-round.

Certainly when we asked STAR co-ordinators what had been most difficult about operating STAR in their schools, funding was a big issue and the second most difficult (the first or most-cited difficulty was lack of time for administration and management). A quarter of the co-ordinators (25 percent) reported that insufficient funding, concern over funding cuts, or the funding mechanism not really working for their school as being their biggest difficulty. Using STAR funding to pay for student transport costs was the biggest difficulty cited for 7 percent of the co-ordinators.

OTHER FUNDING MECHANISMS

The survey offered STAR co-ordinators a chance to say which funding mechanism would suit their school best. Most (63 percent) thought the current system was workable for their school.

Table 40

STAR Co-ordinator Preferred Funding Methods

	Survey Respondents *(n=307)*	%
Options provided by survey		
The current EFTS-based funding system	180	63
A system similar to ESOL funding	45	16
A system in which a portion of the fund is tagged for STAR co-ordinators	33	11
Fund based on differentiated levels of cost for different STAR courses	28	10
Additional ideas from the co-ordinators		
The current system but with differential fund based on school size/rural weighting/decile/SES	10	3
The current system but with clear differentiation between administration and course costs	7	2
Fund according to actual number of students/do not cap funding	3	1
All funding tagged for co-ordinators to spend as they see fit	3	1
The current system plus extra for particular programmes/courses	1	<1

In the survey, when we asked co-ordinators for suggestions about changes that the Ministry of Education could make so that STAR might function better, funding was by far the most cited area for change (administrative and professional development suggestions were the next largest areas of concern at around 16 percent and 13 percent respectively)[6]. Over a third of co-ordinators (37 percent) thought that funding should be increased and some specified increases specifically to pay for technical equipment and transport, and extra funding for rural schools and low decile schools. Five percent wanted the Ministry of Education to pay more attention to auditing schools and checking how they spent the money. Five percent wanted more flexibility to spend the money as they saw fit.

The definition of non-conventional courses, along with moves to make core generic skills ineligible for STAR funding, caused concern among a number of co-ordinators interviewed. Five percent of the co-ordinators in the survey asked the Ministry of Education to consider a wider definition for non-conventional courses.

Continuity of funding was also raised as an issue. One STAR co-ordinator felt that the reduction in funding this year destabilised STAR overall and this was certainly reflected in comments throughout the survey and in the extent of survey response itself. Many co-ordinators expressed disappointment and anxiety over the STAR funding pool being reduced to pay for Gateway, claiming that more money, not less, was needed for STAR. Responses to the final question in the survey underlined the depth of this concern. It is common to have a final open question in questionnaires, asking if there is anything else about which the respondent wishes to comment.

[6] The responses to this question are reported in full in the Successes and Challenges for Schools section.

Typically, this last question does not generate many comments, particularly if the questionnaire has been sufficiently well enough designed to capture information or the respondents' perspectives elsewhere. In this context, the response to that final question was overwhelming – just over half of the co-ordinators responded to the question (51 percent) and two-thirds of them (66 percent) stressed that STAR must be kept going and that it was highly valued by the students, and the majority of them also implored that the funding not be cut any further. Put another way, 30 percent of all the co-ordinators who responded to the survey, made this their final comment. No other comments we categorised even came close (the next most common type of comment was a plea for more funding generally, made by 5 percent of co-ordinators).

STAR ADMINISTRATION

During the research, the development of software systems for recording and reporting on (analysing) information about STAR schools and their funding emerged as an issue. Early in the research process, it seemed to be difficult to get very simple information such as a list of STAR schools for 2002. The Ministry of Education database managers finally had to write a new (Microsoft Access) query in order to provide the information for us (in electronic form, as an Excel spreadsheet), although even then duplicate school information was provided and had to be checked and deleted by NZCER staff. The database managers did point out that they were hopeful of changes to the software, including a reduction of steps in the process for them of entering and retrieving data, and a loosening of restrictions in fields to allow for entering course names where courses lack identification numbers or are "Alternately Approved" (and not yet accredited by NZQA). It is imperative that the Ministry of Education resolve these and any other database or information systems issues as soon as possible to facilitate efficient and intuitive data entry so that *data* may be turned into *information* which will assist with aspects of this project and the ongoing monitoring of STAR.

Several STAR co-ordinators during stage one suggested smoothing out the paperwork. One suggested that this might be partially an internal school problem but that it may be a technology issue too. They suggested that the Ministry of Education develop a computer program that could be sent to all schools involved in the STAR programme that would keep all the information that schools had to provide to the Ministry. This in turn they felt would be beneficial to the Ministry as well as the schools, as all the information would be there for both parties and it would save a lot of paperwork for schools. Another co-ordinator suggested a series of template forms could be developed for schools to do their in-house record-keeping. Sixteen percent of STAR co-ordinators suggested that the Ministry of Education provide a more flexible and streamlined application process, better access to STAR guidelines, and brochures with suggested courses for schools, as well as have a hand in improving provider reporting systems.

Another co-ordinator suggested that the Ministry of Education produce a list of the types of programmes that can be funded under STAR. This would enable schools to know in advance the courses for which they may receive funding. Applying for funding for courses which turned out to be ineligible was seen as a waste of time.

AUDIT AND FUNDING REGULATIONS

Although this was not a specified part of the project at any stage, it became apparent that in order to get to grips with the operation of STAR in schools, we also needed to know more about the Ministry of Education's database on STAR funding and the procedures associated with applications for STAR funding from schools. Consequently, informal discussions were held with a number of Ministry of Education staff involved with the database.

One of the most important issues to emerge relates to audit. There appear to be no checks on what schools do with their STAR funding, as recorded in the STAR database. Schools are obliged to keep accounting records that can be made available during any audit of the school. However, the STAR database appears to have recorded only the approved courses for which the school has applied and received funding, along with approved substitute courses should any of the other approved courses not be run. Similarly, provider data stored is actually based on school applications specifying what providers they *may* use, rather than based on what providers, if any, the schools *actually* use.

Moreover, the only data on external providers held by the Ministry details those providers the school *intended* to use to deliver STAR courses and not the providers that the schools *actually* used. Consequently, in coming to interview providers, we found that the information held on the Ministry of Education's STAR database could not be used to generate an accurate picture of the external providers schools *actually* used to deliver STAR courses. We discovered that one provider we contacted had not been involved with STAR for over 2 years. It appears that it is not uncommon for some providers not to be contracted by the school once the school's proposal had been approved by the Ministry of Education.

Funding is decided using a formula based on the number of EFTS (equivalent full-time students) and paid on a quarterly basis as a tagged part of the operations grant. Schools which do not meet those EFTS should send a return to the Ministry of Education asking for either a rollover of the unused funding into the next year or a deduction of that amount from their Operations Grant. However, the onus is upon schools to do this; STAR resourcing and policy staff seemed unsure as to whether any checks were made by the Ministry of Education, and whether these were recorded in the database.

Schools are required to account for how they have used the EFTS rather than the money itself. This leaves the way open for schools to save money by running STAR courses themselves using their own (NZQA accredited) staff. This is not in itself problematic, nor is it dishonest. However, it does make it difficult for the Ministry of Education to know about the adequacy of funding. It also encourages schools to focus on getting their own staff accredited to run and assess STAR-funded courses since this is cheaper than directing the funding to an external provider. This too is a legitimate use of STAR-funding. However, it does raise questions about the continuing development of areas of expertise expected of teachers and the role of those teachers and the "alignment" in Secondary-Tertiary Alignment.

Several co-ordinators we spoke to were adamant that all the STAR money should be used for STAR students. However, the regulations do not clearly state this as a requirement. Therefore the schools in which some of co-ordinators were perceived to be "doing the bare minimum to use

their EFTS" before the principal took the rest of the money for something else, seem to be operating within the STAR regulations, if perhaps not in keeping with the spirit of them.

Using the EFTS allocation also raises questions about the point at which the EFTS are actually used. A co-ordinator from one of the case study schools was unsure as to whether their school's interpretation of the regulations for using EFTS was correct. The school buys places in courses run by an external provider. Since these must be booked and paid for between 6 and 12 months ahead, it is difficult to accurately gauge the number of places needed; generally 20 places are booked and as long as 14 students enrol for it, the course is paid for. However, if less than 14 students enrol, or if some drop out during the course, that money is unrecoverable for the school. Have the EFTS been used (because the money had been paid)? Or are they still to be used up and, if they are not, does this affect the amount of STAR funding the school is entitled to in the following year? In the case of tertiary students with student loans, non-completion of a course does affect the EFTS used and their full- or part-time status, and therefore also any interest write-offs for which they may qualify.

There is also some confusion over what constitutes a legitimate STAR expense. Several case study schools used their STAR funding to pay for extra-ordinary equipment costs when courses were being set up, and for ongoing materials for these courses. In two schools, computers were purchased for student use. Some schools paid for the New Zealand Qualifications Authority "hook-on" fee for students' Record of Learning and credit of standards passed. Other schools passed this cost on to the individual students.

Several schools also paid for workbooks, textbooks, and videos for students as part of their course materials. These remained the property of the school and were used for other students in subsequent years doing the same course (provided those materials were still current). One co-ordinator was able to cite experiences of working in several other schools where STAR funding was used to take students on trips while the rest of the money was appropriated by the principal for other uses.

Despite some confusion around STAR funding, it was very clear that STAR co-ordinators were generally doing their utmost to use the STAR funding (however, much of it they received) to meet student needs. There was some confusion at times over what was allowed by the regulations and certainly some things that appeared to be dubious (*see* "Bonds and Contracts" in the Student Participation in STAR Programmes section). However, a number of case study schools had written policies spelling out the appropriate uses for STAR funding and co-ordinators were well aware of, and frequently battled against, inappropriate usage of STAR funding in their schools. Many people feel anxious about being audited so it speaks volumes for the commitment of STAR co-ordinators that 5 percent of the co-ordinators in the survey actually *asked* for the Ministry of Education to audit or check schools' spending of STAR money, and that around half of the co-ordinators interviewed in stages one and three also mentioned this (including the ones who had some confusion over their own STAR money usage).

SECTION NINE: CASE STUDIES OF STAR SCHOOLS

These case studies are reported as stand-alone cases. The same main headings are used for each to enable easy comparisons. A table is also provided for an at-a-glance overview of the schools.

Our sample of case study schools has covered a range of ways of operating STAR in any school. Several schools ran STAR as a cohesive "alternative" programme within the school, with its own timetable line. This had the advantage of giving students (and STAR) some status as a group; students got to know each other and management of student's progress was easier, and timetabling difficulties were minimised. In these situations, the school tended to have a transition team working together rather than a solo STAR co-ordinator. Other schools preferred to emphasise conventional subjects with STAR courses providing perspectives on career ideas or future options for further study or training in combination with conventional subject qualifications. In these schools, tasters were an important part of the school's provision for students.

The different STAR programmes and ways of operating are, of course, very much tied to the particular community and student population being served by the school, as well as the available local resources (within the school and community). It is also a feature of STAR's flexibility that each school thinks about how best to meet the needs of its particular students through its approach and use of STAR funding. Two of the schools are also part of Gateway.

The final heading in each school case study section, "A Word from the Co-ordinator", details some issues, questions, and suggestions that co-ordinators have raised directly with the NZCER researchers. Many of these comments, particularly those made as advice to other schools, came as a result of asking co-ordinators an interview question about any advice they might have for schools just new to working with STAR funding. Other comments, particularly those pertaining to the overall funding or regulations of STAR, arose during the interview and during any probing for more detail following the school's survey responses. Given the high level of interest in professional development expressed by STAR co-ordinators, we thought it appropriate to include the co-ordinators' comments separately, so that those comments might be addressed through any changes to STAR policy or practice in the future.

Table 41

Case Study Schools Overview

School	Roll Size	Decile	Rural/ Urban	No. STAR Courses	STAR Student Proportion	Selection Process	Organisational Approach	Co-ordinator	Delivery	Providers
A	< 300	2	Rural	20–29 (13 MOE approved)	50–59%	Individual appointments for each student with STAR co-ordinator or deputy principal to discuss future career plans and their strengths	STAR courses in one timetable line	1 co-ordinator	External off-site and internal on-site	Local private providers
B	> 1300	10	Urban (main)	10–19 (36 MOE approved)	20–29%	Y10 exam results and careers adviser interview House system (pastoral care and guidance)	Tasters for Y11–13 Industry-related for Y11–13 Academic for Y11–13	2 co-ordinators, one teaches STAR courses	External off-site and internal on-site	Consortium with one main provider
C	300–600	4	Urban (main)	30+ (6 MOE approved)	30–39%	Deans and HODs refer student to co-ordinator to discuss suitable STAR courses. Parents included in discussion	Series of separate elective full-year subjects for Y11–13 No taster courses are offered	1 STAR co-ordinator and an administration support person	External off-site and internal on-site	Various private providers
D	< 300	5	Urban (minor)	1–9 (12 MOE approved)	10–19%	Students interviewed by STAR co-ordinator, parents encouraged to call and talk through options	STAR courses organised as separate subjects running within the ordinary school timetable as 45-minute periods	1 STAR co-ordinator who is also the careers adviser	External off-site and internal on-site	One main external provider and an Industry Training Organisation
E	600–1300	8	Urban (main)	10–19 (16 MOE approved)	10–19%	Students self-select into STAR courses once discussed options with STAR co-ordinator who has a high profile in the school	Focuses on Y11–13 students with tasters, industry-related courses, and academic courses No Y9–10 taster courses offered	1 STAR co-ordinator	Mainly on-site internal courses, few external off-site courses	Industry Training Organisations
F	> 1300	8	Urban (main)	30 (29 MOE approved)	30–39%	Courses advertised on notice board, and at assemblies Student's application to co-ordinator with permission of conventional subject teachers	STAR courses timetabled to eliminate disruption to conventional programmes. Tasters are a big focus in the school programme	3 periods a day role as STAR co-ordinator, transition and health teacher	External off-site (longer courses) and internal on-site (shorter courses)	Consortium with one main provider
G	300–600	1	Urban (minor)	10–19 (16 MOE approved)	10–19%	Individual interview about choices after subject staff presentations to classes	Y12–14 students Modular timetable but would prefer block timetable. 5-period catch-up option for students do work missed while attending STAR courses	Transition department of STAR co-ordinator, careers adviser, and transition adviser	External off-site and internal on-site	Various external providers
H	600–1300	8	Urban (main)	30 (37 MOE approved)	> 60%	STAR facilitator approaches students individually Students formally apply for STAR courses	1 fulltime stream for Y13, some Y12 Catch-up time for conventional school work missed included	Transition team of 5 staff	External off-site and internal on-site	Various external providers

SCHOOL A

Background

School A is an isolated rural, decile 2 school serving a mainly (80 percent) Māori population (Statistics New Zealand, 2002). The township and school are located 50 kilometres from a major centre but the shortish distance is deceiving; the nature of the road and lack of public transport necessitate a 45-minute drive, which must be made by private car. While it is, at first glance, an idyllic setting, there is almost no economic activity in the area. Most families do not have telephones. There are 3 local shops, no post office, and no banks. Most of the students living here would never have used an ATM machine. The STAR co-ordinator claims that local people remember Māori trades training as "the good old days". Ironically, although Māori trades training has played a part in education policy in the past that has been criticised for its (racist) integrationist theme, Māori trades training is currently being introduced as the Rangatahi Māia scheme, "new-style trades training for young Māori" and part of Modern Apprenticeships (Tertiary Education Commission, 2002). Just under 12 percent of the population in the area earn more than $30,000, as opposed to an average of 30 percent for the general New Zealand population average (Statistics New Zealand, 2002). The majority of school leavers here graduate to the unemployment benefit.

Programme Structure

School A's STAR programme includes taster courses for Year 9 and 10 students and both industry-related and academic courses for Year 11, 12, and 13 students. The STAR co-ordinator works between 5 and 9 hours a week on average and spends a lot of time sourcing external providers who will be able to give students a broad range of experiences and help generate motivation and aspirations to enter particular careers. The co-ordinator also liaises with a Modern Apprenticeships co-ordinator in the nearest city and attends open days at polytechnics and industry training organisations, Skill New Zealand seminars, and amasses information from different providers.

STAR courses are offered as a separate "line" in the school timetable and are generally seen as part of a broad career initiative for students. The distance learning video-lectures and video-conferencing facilities operate from the same room that the STAR co-ordinator uses as an office. The STAR programme is finely balanced between using external providers off-site, to give students broad experiences, and delivering courses on-site in the school, which eliminates the transport difficulties faced by the school and costs the school less. This allows any extra money to be used to subsidise more expensive STAR courses.

Most of the planning for STAR courses is done up to 12 months ahead and is based on the STAR co-ordinator's knowledge of the students and their interests and abilities. This co-ordinator has been in the job for nearly 3 years. Local knowledge, such as an awareness of a growing shortage of shearers in the area, is also useful in guiding the planning of courses. Hospitality and employment skills courses are popular and are taught in-school. Land-based skills are taught on- and off-site by the school and local private providers. These skills include sheep farming, fencing, and livestock farming.

The definition of subjects as conventional or non-conventional is an issue of particular significance for a small school such as this one. Since only non-conventional courses may be funded by STAR, schools must either have teachers qualified to teach certain conventional courses or not offer them at all. For example, in a small school like School A, there tends to be only one outdoor education teacher/expert. That one person is unlikely to possess the complete range of skills across all the possible areas of the subject. So where computing and outdoor education used to be considered non-conventional by the Ministry of Education but have recently been redefined as conventional, a problem is created. Now that tramping or hiking is classified as conventional, and the school has no qualified teacher for this, they are not able to offer the course internally. If the school finds an external provider to teach it, the conventional designation means they cannot use STAR funding to pay for it. The co-ordinator suggests that a way forward here might be to have different regulations for city and rural schools.

Meeting Student Needs

There are 32 senior students in the school and more than half of them do STAR courses which are typically run for 10–19 hours a week over the entire school year. STAR is specifically targeted at students who would leave without any qualifications and/or have failed academically, as well as those who have shown an interest in particular industries. The nature and location of the school means that students often show interest in courses which simply are not offered, or cannot be taught by the school.

Students are able to opt into STAR courses after a series of interviews with the STAR co-ordinator and other senior staff. Some formal interviews are the result of being in a small school and being able to get to know students more intimately than in larger schools. Students' interest in particular industries or areas of study/work are able to be identified early on, usually before the student reaches Year 11. The co-ordinator cited examples of thinking specifically about the group of male students coming into Year 11 and timetabling a day of non-academic courses for them each Friday, and ensuring that these courses are very goal-oriented so the students will find them relevant and worth staying at school for. As the co-ordinator commented: "You have to keep them at school to keep them learning."

The STAR co-ordinator, who has previously taught at an Auckland city school, is determined that students in an isolated, rural, economically-depressed area such as this one, are not disadvantaged. He is fierce in his belief that they deserve the same opportunities, the same quality advice, and the same choices as city students. However, those students are disadvantaged in terms of STAR's aims. In order to meet the second aim of STAR – advancement to further study or work – students have to leave the community. According to the co-ordinator there is support for this to happen from parents. However, students have no conception of what this means, so a portion of STAR money is spent on actually providing students with physical exposure to a tertiary environment. Study by correspondence is not on its own enough to secure student participation for the future. The local community, the students, and parents, lack the social and cultural capital by which they might understand and navigate the world beyond their local community. The school's distance from urban centres immediately makes transport an issue for the school; students must be bussed in to the nearest centre or anywhere else they visit. The co-ordinator has managed to get student loans and student allowance tertiary provider administrators to visit the school so that students (and parents) have access to the paperwork and support for tertiary provider enrolment applications. This provides support and accessible information, without any transport difficulties.

The community is able to see the bigger picture as well as get help at the practical level. Many of the students who do go on to further study do bridging courses first in order to "acclimatise" to a new and bigger environment.

A Word from the Co-ordinator

To other schools

- Make sure the STAR co-ordinator position goes to someone in the school who has some "clout" as well as administrative ability, and that they have a broad careers focus to help students "think big" about their lives.
- Get to know the providers and follow up on any difficulties thoroughly.
- Get to know the local community well and build networks.
- A separate office with a separate phone line and fax is essential.

To the Ministry of Education

- Tightening the STAR regulations affects small schools adversely; it is critical for us to have STAR's existing flexibility.
- Please keep funding core generic skills through STAR; they are an important part of the STAR programme and generate EFTS with no extra costs for the school and allow extra funding to be redirected to other related needs (e.g., careers trips for students).
- The tightening of regulations (such as redefinition of "conventional" and "non-conventional") disadvantages small schools such as ours because we do not have the teacher expertise to offer certain courses.
- A transport allowance would really help isolated schools.

SCHOOL B

Background

School B is a decile 10 school in a large city. The school serves a largely affluent population of Pākēha (NZ European with growing numbers of white South African) and Asian (mostly Chinese) students. The number of Māori and Pacific Nations students at the school is negligible. However, the external provider used for all the STAR courses is associated with, and targets, neighbouring communities which are poor and comprised largely of Pacific Nations people. The STAR co-ordinator reported unease among the school community over the "appropriateness" of this provider and this has tended to create challenges for getting STAR courses accepted as worthwhile alternatives to conventional subjects.

Although transport to the external provider's site is difficult for students because of the nature of the available public transport, and another large provider might be easier to access, the school stands by a decision to support their local provider. However, the provider's increasing responsiveness to its closer local community has resulted in a focus on being Māori- and Pacific Nations-friendly. One of the issues to sort out is how low-achieving decile 10 and mostly Pākēha students will fit into the current multi-cultural picture. Despite the school's relative affluence, within that particular community, these STAR students are seen as "the bottom of the heap".

Programme Structure

School B's STAR programme operates as a specific class at Year 12 level. The idea for the programme came from another school's "alternative programme" aimed at students not succeeding in the mainstream (academic) programme of the school. 2002 is the first year the programme has run in the school.

The programme runs as an alternative to the school timetable with students spending three days in school studying communication skills (English), maths, computing, physical education, and life skills, with some free study periods included. The remaining two days of the week are spent at the local external provider's site, studying subjects in one of two streams:

1. a technology stream including engineering, furniture-making, carpentry, automotive, and sports leadership;
2. a services stream including travel and tourism, health and beauty, hairdressing, and retail.

The communication skills class taught at School B is actually developed by the external provider but the school purchases the study material and resources for it. The course contains literacy unit standards towards level 1 NCEA and communication skills unit standards towards the NCES (some also count towards the National Certificate in Furniture Making and National Certificate in Plastics Processing Technology). All the assessment tasks are included in the package. The external provider does the marking and moderation; teachers send in sample work for moderation across an assessed range of high, medium, and low grades. Students are enrolled with the provider during the course. Some teacher training is provided by the provider, depending on the school's needs. Some non-conventional classes are designed to tie in with other conventional classes – e.g., STAR photography or STAR computer aided draughting courses are tied closely to the conventional graphics subject.

In 2002, there were 18 male students in the technology stream and 5 female and 1 male student in the services stream. It should be noted that some staff and all the students interviewed referred to the courses as "the boys' stream" (technology) and "the girls' stream" (services). The school's own report (2002) on the STAR programme stated that, between streams, "some interchange was possible, but not convenient", indicating the potential for school organisation to be prioritised over student needs. The in-school courses and streams were titled "girls' courses" and "boys' courses". It is not clear whether the letter that goes home to parents refers to streams in this way, nor how inconvenient it actually is to work across streams.

During 2002, 11 of the 24 students in the STAR programme left to go into jobs or further training. Most of those remaining are expected to gain level 1 NCEA at the end of the year. The school surveyed the remaining students on why they were in the programme and what they found useful and liked about it. According to the survey analysis, most students wanted qualifications, felt that the programme gave them a way to complete Year 12 meaningfully, and rated their courses as successful especially in allowing them to gain new skills. Students particularly liked going off-site to the provider although some felt the coursework was too easy and also repetitive at times. Several students indicated interest in being involved in the STAR programme at Year 13 level next year if possible.

The school has several organisational issues to deal with.

1. The external provider courses start later than the school year. The school needs some courses on-site to keep students busy until external provider courses begin.
2. Attendance at external provider's site and also at school needs closer monitoring; it seems that some students "disappear". A computer program which generates class lists should help with this.
3. There has sometimes been confusion over which days courses are running.
4. Some adjustment to course content is needed.
5. Regular reporting is being requested from the external provider so that attendance, progress, and achievement can be reported to parents.

The school organises the courses for its STAR programme through a consortium involving 12 schools in total. The consortium schools buy between 2 and 4 places in each of various courses run by different tertiary providers. The other schools are not geographically near School B but most do share community socio-economic characteristics. However, in keeping with the school's decision to support local providers and be part of their local community, the school is currently trying to organise a consortium of schools closer to home.

School B usually has 2 top stream classes operating across all subjects but with the new STAR programme this year, the school has effectively had what the STAR manager called a "bottom stream" as well. The STAR class size is around 25 and this appears to be a good number for the school in terms of administration, student relationships, and teacher-student ratio. However, this year's success (and demand from students) has meant that more students are interested in STAR for 2003 and the school is not yet sure how to handle the extra numbers.

Unfortunately, the school has faced problems this year when they found that their major external provider's term start did not match their own. This left students at a loose end for several weeks and caused friction with other staff in the school. In 2003, to "take up the slack" in this time period, the local Rotary Club will deliver a course called "Breakthrough to Excellence" developed by the Pacific Institute in Western Australia. Breakthrough to Excellence consists of 13 units of work which make up a "toolkit" of skills to build self-esteem for disaffected young people.

The STAR programme seems to cut across the school's "house" pastoral care system. There are around 300 students assigned to each house which has its own separate house leader (taking care of disciplinary and pastoral issues), theme, colour, mascot, fundraising events, and core curriculum teachers for 2 form classes at each year level. Each house operates as a mini school within the school, complete with inter-house competitions for sports and cultural events. Interestingly, they are called "whānau houses" although this appears to be the only concession or reference to anything Māori in the school. While STAR programme students belong to their own houses, they tend to exist as a separate group. The STAR co-ordinator stressed that they were still very much a part of their houses and each house's unique culture, but the students emphasised to the NZCER researcher that they did not feel a part of those groups and that they often felt out of touch with what was happening in their houses.

There are 2 co-ordinators in charge of STAR – a "STAR manager", responsible for the set-up of the programme and planning liaison with tertiary providers, and a "STAR co-ordinator", responsible for the day-to-day operating of STAR, contact with students, and administration associated with running STAR. The STAR co-ordinator has 14 periods a week for STAR and works closely with a full-time careers adviser at the school. The co-ordinator also teaches health, transition (non-STAR), and lifeskills (STAR).

The co-ordinator describes the role as "mother-aid" during class (lifeskills) time, following up issues for students (often personal), sorting out problems, bringing in visitors of interest to the group (e.g., Family Planning workers). The co-ordinator estimates that more time and money is spent on these students each week than on all of the other students in the school put together. Although this seems likely to be an exaggeration, it is indicative of the difficult early stages shift in mindset of a school oriented toward the academic, as it shifts towards acknowledging and meeting the needs of its less academically successful students.

Meeting Student Needs

The STAR programme was developed to provide for students who performed poorly (academically) at Year 11 level. Instead of repeating the Year 11 year (as "2nd year fifth formers") as was the former custom at School B, the students now go on to Year 12 and have the opportunity to obtain enough unit standards for level 1 NCEA. For most students, this occurs through the 6–12 credits they are likely to have obtained in Year 11, and through up to 65 credits available through English, maths, computing at Year 12, and up to 30–40 credits available in the technology and services stream of the STAR programme with the external provider.

Enrolment for the STAR programme occurs during the first week of the new year – lists go around to each Year 12 class and students sign up on a first come, first served basis. Students whose Year 11 mid-year exam results are low are sent a letter outlining the STAR option so they can consider this option and any implications for future plans ahead of time. The STAR manager explained that Year 11 exam results act as a "reality check" for students, motivating them to do STAR courses when their low achievement in the exams "makes them realise they can't be brain surgeons".

Students indicate interest in STAR courses for the next year during the previous July and then again in September of the same previous year. The STAR co-ordinator pointed out that students' second indication of interest in courses (in September of the previous year) occurs after the August deadline for school STAR applications to go to the Ministry of Education (based on predicted students numbers for courses). She gave the example of having applied for (and booked and paid for) 20 places on a photography course, only to have just 8 students enrol for it. The STAR class is finalised through individual student interviews with the careers adviser.

The STAR co-ordinator reports that one of the biggest gains for the STAR students is a sense of success and, for those who are seen as "misfit students", the opportunity to make friends. These students "would otherwise get *nothing* from school". There are issues of safety, too. Through STAR, students are kept off the streets and given a chance to mature which the co-ordinator sees as particularly important for students who are not yet "street savvy" enough to go out on their own.

Academically-inclined students are catered for at the school but different providers are sought for them. The co-ordinator gave examples of courses in aviation, legal executive training, advertising/marketing, image manipulation, and CAD. These "bright" students are not part of the STAR class, and must miss their conventional classes and catch up on them in their own time.

While the STAR manager sees STAR as providing an alternative academic or semi-academic pathway for students, the co-ordinator sees broader uses for STAR. The co-ordinator cites sending one student on a hospitality course for the express purpose of having the student develop table-waiting skills so that she could support herself while at university.

The external provider recruits from STAR though this practice is not seen as problematic in any way by the school. The provider does assist the STAR students into full courses with the institution upon completion of Year 12. However, the STAR co-ordinator prefers not to "advertise it", fearing that higher-ability students would want the same attention or assistance. There is a sense, and not just in this school, that STAR is a precious and scarce resource to be used only on the most needy students.

In response to parent demand, reports on individual students to parents are prepared by the provider tutors on each course. The STAR co-ordinator praises the provider here, saying that the administrative staff in particular have "bent over backwards" for the school, and that they talk with the co-ordinator on a daily basis, especially if there are student absences.

A Word from the Co-ordinator

To other schools

- It's important to have a separate phone line, fax, and computer as well as access to a photocopier for one-off copies. E-mail is also useful for contact with providers.
- Cluster arrangements with other schools are a more time- and resource-efficient way to run STAR.

To the Ministry of Education

- Shifting taster courses away from Year 10 and instead to Year 12 might be more aligned with student interest and maturity.
- Support consortium arrangements, which allow courses to run with only a few students (from each school).
- Provide more taster courses for Year 12 and 13 students.
- Templates for tracking student costs and EFTS for all schools would be useful.

SCHOOL C

Background

School C is a decile 4 school in a lower socio-economic area of a large city. It serves a diverse ethnic population, largely because of a high number of international students for whom it has a set of well-developed contracts in areas of study, class activities, and home-stay arrangements.

School C has also been a Gateway pilot school since 2001. The school is "across town" from the university and the polytechnic campuses, although public transport is good.

Programme Structure

The STAR programme is run as a series of separate elective full-year subjects for Year 11, 12, and 13 students. Around one-third of the senior students take STAR subjects; indeed all students are encouraged to participate in some vocational training via the Course Information Brochure given to students. No taster courses at any year level are offered at the school. Approximately half of the STAR courses are delivered on-site by the school and the other half are delivered off-site by external providers.

STAR subjects are organised by negotiation between the school and provider. The automotive programme runs in one week each term on a full-time basis and as a single subject option on the normal school timetable the rest of the time during term. Students may or may not work in the school's own workshop at this time.

All Year 12 students who do not have approval to study 6 academic subjects take a year-long transition course that has a number of externally provided components including job-seeking skills (taught internally by the STAR co-ordinator), keeping yourself safe (with sub-components of first aid taught by the Red Cross and a Plunket certificate taught by Plunket), civil defence (taught by Civil Defence), communicating with people of other cultures, and computer skills (taught internally). Although some of the transition course is taught externally, the co-ordinator remains with students during some of these modules in a supervisory role.

The co-ordination work for STAR is done through an amalgamation of funding and positions. The STAR co-ordinator works on STAR for 5–9 hours a week and has done the job for more than 4 years. There is also an administrative support person who works for 30 hours a week. Only a very small amount of the administration assistant's time is STAR-funded, with Gateway funding 12 hours, and the balance paid through a position as the school's transition manager.

With such settled and knowledgable administration management, the STAR system runs very efficiently. The administration manager has everything documented in computer files and upgrades these records every year as a result of experiences of the various courses during the year. The school is in the process of setting up a database of student courses and interests so that the school can respond very quickly to new opportunities. That said, the 7 working days allowed by the Ministry of Education during 2002 for submission of STAR proposals created huge pressure. Until the Ministry of Education information arrived, indicating the parameters of what would be available, the co-ordinator could not complete her own survey of heads of department.

Generally, once STAR funding has been approved the co-ordinator liaises with heads of department over the best times to run STAR courses. It is then a matter of e-mailing providers, and booking in appropriate times of year for courses. The courses are then entered onto the school's year planner by the end of November. If the STAR budget indicates that there is likely to left-over money, ad hoc courses can be offered as opportunities arise. One-off opportunist courses are advertised in Year Level Assembly, to give all students the opportunity to participate.

Meeting Student Needs

School C does run one-off courses on an opportunist basis and to meet the particular needs of some of its students. For example, one Year 13 student with a particular talent in maths has been able to do a course at the closest university after her needs were identified in August in 2001. The student's fees are paid and course textbooks paid for, although the latter will remain the property of the school for any other students who later do this course. A student who had done the same maths course the previous year had gained entry straight into second year university courses, though that student actually declined the "promotion" in favour of the full experience of first year student life!

Although no taster courses are run at School C, STAR has a kind of career advisory function for students. In fact, the students tend to see more of the transition team than they do of the careers adviser. Since almost all Year 12 students do the transition course, which includes the job seeking module taught by the STAR co-ordinator, and the keeping yourself safe module that the co-ordinator supervises, the students become well known to the transition team and the STAR co-ordinator in particular.

Deans and/or heads of department can refer students any time for discussion about the possibility of suitable STAR courses. This may happen as courses for the next year are decided (e.g., the maths student mentioned previously) or it may be any time during the year if a student has difficulties with motivation. The STAR co-ordinator will check the school files on the student and talk with the student and their parents. If a suitable course for them is identified, the student may enrol in whole subjects or part of a whole subject funded by STAR, though for a STAR-funded one-off course, the student is required to get permission from other teachers (for any time missed from other classes).

Providers are required by the school to send in achievement and attendance data. The administration assistant is responsible for contacting them for these records if they are not forthcoming. Data are collated into folders for addition to each student's record of learning. Providers give their own certificates for students' curriculum vitae and send relevant external assessment information direct to the New Zealand Qualifications Authority.

Courses such as the Year 12 First Aid Certificate paid for by STAR funding give extra value to students from low-income families. They can achieve a "more level footing" with other students when it comes to getting jobs (for example, students need a first aid certificate to be employed by local cinema chain, HOYTS).

A particular concern for the school is the STAR regulation on core generic skills, which can no longer be STAR-funded. At School C, the transition area makes use of these core generics so that teachers can assist the low-achieving students where other arrangements might not give enough time and attention to those students for them to be able to pass.

There have been some difficulties with providers not meeting student needs by not providing value for money. The co-ordinator cited the example of a tourism provider who sent students home early. While most providers do offer at least one unit standard, some offer only "credits towards" a unit standard, but not all of the elements that make up that standard, for example, in some welding and computer aided draughting courses. Such partial qualifications tend to be of

little use to students though the co-ordinator also questions whether they might serve as measures of success for students. A final problem School C has experienced with providers relates to the keeping of course content "secret". These providers have cited commercial sensitivity but the co-ordinator has questioned this, suspecting it to be a cover-up for poor practice. There is a need to be continually selective about providers but there are often limited choices. The pressures of having to change include building new relationships with each provider.

A Word from the Co-ordinator

To other schools

- Communication – with other staff, providers, parents, and students – is the most important thing. Without clear information lines and feedback, the STAR system will not work.
- Good organisation and systems are critical. It takes time to set up a good system and it needs to be upgraded each year – but it's worth it.

To the Ministry of Education

- STAR funding must be tagged, used for STAR only, and protected so it cannot be used for anything else (especially important at the end of the year if there is money to be rolled over).
- There should automatically be a management unit to acknowledge the amount of work involved in being a STAR co-ordinator.
- The ongoing reduction in STAR funding is a source of great concern for this school because STAR is absolutely vital to us, as it is to all low decile schools. Perhaps STAR funding could be made on a needs-basis.
- Is it vital to have unit standards for everything that is learnt through STAR? It might be worth re-thinking this in terms of other possible measures of success which might better account for improvements or developments in students' experiences and attitudes.
- Re-think the funding of core generic skills; these are vital for many students.

SCHOOL D

Background

School D is a small decile 5 school, lying in an isolated part of the country, several hours from any main centres. There are two main local (rural) industries, some small home businesses, and a number of closed businesses in semi-empty buildings on the main street, giving it a ghost-town feel. There has been some debate over the school's future since its roll, and the roll of the contributing primary school, began shrinking some years ago. School D has also suffered some bad press over the behaviour of some of its students who have little by way of entertainment in the township. Students reported simply "roaming the streets", "surfing the Internet", or "hanging out at the river". Drugs are an issue for the community. A sizeable proportion of the local population are "alternative life-stylers".

Without STAR, students would probably have to move to another town and school in order to gain the kinds of skills needed for today's world. The school is joining Gateway this year which the STAR co-ordinator hopes will lead to a greater choice and range of courses for the students.

As it currently stands, the principal believes that the transition goals associated with STAR are "foreign" to the students, whose horizons tend to be fairly narrow.

Programme Structure

STAR is a critical part of the school's curriculum, giving students opportunities they could never otherwise have through a conventional programme within such an isolated setting.

STAR-funded courses are organised as separate subjects, running within the ordinary school timetable of 45-minute periods each day. Some subjects have a STAR component but are not wholly STAR-funded. The co-ordinator, who has been in the job for several years as part of his position as deputy principal, finds timetabling easy in such a small school. Most meetings are fairly informal and decision-making is flexible.

The school had previously experimented with having 3 days at school (on conventional subjects) and 2 days on "experience", but had limited success in organising this. With just 12 teachers, each a specialist in one subject area, it proved impossible to timetable this successfully. The school also previously had a careers adviser but this was dropped because of the small size of the school, so the STAR co-ordinator handles this role as well.

Because of the school's distance from providers, the STAR co-ordinator liaises with them by phone or the Internet. This has not been a barrier to developing good working relationships, particularly with one polytechnic and an industry training organisation.

Meeting Student Needs

Selection into STAR courses takes place on an informal but thorough basis. All students are interviewed about their needs and interests. The school attempts to find courses to match them. Parents are encouraged to call and talk through options and implications, particularly concerning travel which is generally involved (extensively) for any students doing courses with external providers. The idea of their young people leaving town to study is highly problematic for many parents.

Distance and isolation also create funding issues for the school. Teachers must spend hours driving to deliver and pick up students from provider sites. Where possible the school uses its own bus and van as much as possible, though parents also sometimes help out with transport (and are reimbursed the cost of the petrol). However, transport is only the tip of the iceberg; there are also accommodation and food expenses for students travelling away from their township. These costs can be half as much as the course fees. At present the school tops up costs that STAR funding does not cover but the co-ordinator does worry that this may become more difficult over time.

As with some other schools, the co-ordinator perceives a problem with some academically-successful "lazy" students who see STAR as an easy option. However, most students who express an interest in a particular industry or area of study are able to pursue it or something related through STAR; the school does not just target "at risk" or academically-failing students with STAR.

Enrolment in STAR courses is taken very seriously by the school. Staff are very mindful of the best use of the funding and of their relationship with industry and providers. Students must sign contracts and must commit to doing the entire course. Complaints about a student's behaviour outside of school result in their withdrawal from the course.

A Word from the Co-ordinator

To other schools

- STAR needs to be kept fresh and novel.
- Don't be afraid to ask for advice from someone who has done it for longer.
- Some industry training organisations have an annual forum where a lot of information presented about courses and what is on offer.

To the Ministry of Education

- Keep STAR funding separate from the Operations Grant and make sure it goes straight to the STAR co-ordinator.
- We need to meet with other STAR co-ordinators. Many are isolated but are prepared to travel long distances to get information and ideas for their students. Some kind of ongoing network (with a travel allowance) would be ideal.
- Provide isolated rural schools with a travel grant to top up their STAR funding.

SCHOOL E

Background

School E is a decile 8 school set in a semi-rural setting within 30 minutes drive of a major city. Its student population is mainly Pākehā. In addition to the conventional and National Curriculum subject areas, there is a focus on agriculture through the school's Technology: Land Use department which leads to qualifications such as the NCEA (levels I and II) and the National Certificate in Equine Skills. Although the school has a relatively high decile rating, some students who reside the area travel to the nearby city each day to attend larger schools.

Programme Structure

The school offers no Year 9 or 10 taster courses but instead focuses on Year 11, 12, and 13 students, offering them tasters, industry-related courses, and academic courses funded through STAR. There is a general policy of STAR courses running with a minimum number of 10 students. The school approaches STAR funding as an opportunity to get new courses up and running. These are intended to broaden students' horizons and offer non-academic pathways, particularly for those students who are not doing well in conventional, academic subjects. Once a new course has had STAR funding and seems to be working well, it becomes another staff member's or course's "turn" to get STAR funding for their course in development next year.

School E uses few external providers, preferring to deliver courses on-site and internally. This is seen as better value for money for the school and saves on travel costs, as well as fitting easily with the rest of the school timetable. The exceptions to this are a rural skills course run as a

double option, taking 8 hours per week, and an automotive course running for one full-time week of each term and reverting to being a single subject option in the timetable for the remainder of each term.

STAR is also used to pay for small external components of otherwise internally run courses. For example, three students were doing a pattern-making course through an external provider as part of their technology studies and a short block course through an external provider was provided for students completing the National Certificate in Computing at level two. There are also one-off courses run on an opportunist basis to use up any left-over STAR money. In 2002, these courses included 17 students going on a 1½ day Kiwi Host course at a cost of $3,000, 3 students attending an externally provided television and radio production course during the school holidays, and several students doing an automotive taster course at a cost of $300 each. This last course targeted girls and covered the introductory health and safety unit standards that the other automotive students – all boys – must also pass first. As a result one of these girls is now going on to do a related course at a polytechnic.

The co-ordinator, who has been in the job for over 4 years, works an average of under 5 hours a week on STAR, although these hours increase around the time of year when STAR applications for funding are due, and when senior student achievement data are collated at the end of the year. The co-ordinator does not have any management units for the job but does have one hour of non-contact time each week as part of the job. As with many other case study schools, the co-ordinator felt that only those teachers who teach STAR courses are really aware of the size of the co-ordinator role – and of the budget administered through it. Those arrangements generally work well since all activity happens within a transition department and team.

A large part of the co-ordinator's job consists of liaison with industry training organisations (ITOs) and the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA), ensuring that course content matches unit standard and National Certificate requirements, checking assessment and moderation procedures (which, at level three, may require a registered assessor paid for by the school on an hourly basis), and that teacher qualifications are relevant. Costs in liaising with NZQA can be considerable ($100 per hour for telephone calls) and the STAR co-ordinator sets aside some money in the STAR budget to pay for phone calls to NZQA as the course details are being worked through. ITO-related costs are also an issue as some ITOs change rules, forcing schools to re-purchase new course material and resources in order to be able to keep delivering the course. The co-ordinator believes this is done to cut schools out of course delivery.

Meeting Student Needs

The School E STAR co-ordinator has a high profile with the students and they often self-select into STAR courses after discussing course options with her. Pastoral meetings for deans are held once a month, in addition to deans' fortnightly meeting with the school's senior management. In this way students who could benefit from STAR courses are quickly referred to the co-ordinator.

The co-ordinator believes that student motivation improves dramatically as they achieve success and recognition for their learning – often for the first time – and relationships between staff and students often change for the better as a result. A number of teachers reported professional pleasure in seeing their students take up the new options that STAR provided and go on to careers or part-time work in those areas.

The STAR co-ordinator was adamant STAR funding would be used for as many as possible of the pupils who needed the types of courses it could provide; anything less would be "unethical". That commitment means that students who are more academically-successful are not generally given access to STAR-funded courses. Heads of department will typically prevent students from taking STAR courses if, in their opinion, the students are capable of more academic options. When students receive the subject choice lists for the next year, the heads of department check to filter out academic students who have chosen STAR options and subject teachers also double check this at the start of the year, referring to the previous year's assessment results. Subject teachers will also refer individual students back to the STAR co-ordinator if they see a need to do so.

One exception to the policy of not allowing academic students to take STAR courses has been the option to provide a first year mathematics evening course at a university (though there were no takers in 2002). This arrangement has had its own difficulties because of the need to transport students to a main city in the evening. Secondly, students who pass this course are then barred from the full intermediate year at the university, so success in this course at this point can actually work against students' longer-term study interests.

Strangely, the success of STAR in assisting students to remain at school or go on to other study/training may mitigate against some of the further study/training options potentially available for them. As the STAR co-ordinator pointed out, eligibility for Training Opportunities (TOPs) courses was restricted to students with no more than 2 School Certificate passes. With the NCEA, this has translated into a restriction of no more than 39 level one NCEA credits. A number of students who would have been eligible under the School Certificate system will no longer be eligible as it is almost impossible for students *not* to achieve 39 credits. In fact the co-ordinator pointed out that the sorts of students in her school that TOPs courses are intended for will achieve an average of 35 credits this year and, if they return even temporarily to school in Year 12, which success through STAR encourages them to do, they are very likely to pick up even more credits. In this way, the students TOPs was designed to assist will be excluded, and schools such as School E cannot afford to lose this option for placing students who want to leave school.

A Word from the Co-ordinator

To other schools

- Use external providers as little as possible to get the best value for money from STAR.
- Get teachers accredited to deliver ITO-approved unit standards (especially for level 3).
- Be proactive as a co-ordinator. Find out about rules and regulations and lobby for money to be spent accordingly.
- Build a good relationship with your principal; getting the STAR money and spending it appropriately depends on this.

To the Ministry of Education

- It is vital that the STAR co-ordinator gets *all* the funding and that the principal supports this.
- We would like more funding as some courses (e.g. outdoor pursuits) are too expensive to run (with the higher travel and equipment costs).

- Extend the time for STAR co-ordinators to respond to the funding notices sent out.

SCHOOL F

Background

School F is a co-educational, decile 8 school. While the school served a rural hinterland when it originally opened, development and urban sprawl means it is now located on the outer reaches of a major city. The local population is a mix of new immigrant families (many from South Africa) in new subdivisions, and retired people. The school also targets international students. The school is large and operates a house system for pastoral care.

Programme Structure

The school delivers all the longer courses it purchases on its own site, thereby eliminating the transport difficulties into the city centre and providers' sites. This also allows the school to timetable many STAR courses so that they do not disrupt other conventional programmes. School facilities and resources include an automotive garage built from converted woodwork rooms. The school is also setting up a commercial kitchen for catering students and has used some STAR funding to purchase an extractor fan for the motor workshop. Any leftover STAR funding is used for such purposes, which are STAR-related but not directly student related. Short (taster) courses are delivered by various providers and students do travel to these off-site locations.

School F is part of a consortium and buys places in courses from a number of different providers. All the consortium courses are short courses and geared towards students doing conventional senior courses in a related area (e.g., students in the food technology class get first option on catering courses). Longer courses – automotive, carpentry, and pattern-making – are taught on-site, with course materials brought in from the provider. Assessors from those providers visit the school to carry out assessments. The other type of courses offered are 1–2 day taster courses for Year 10 students. These are extremely popular and fill in a matter of days. These courses are generally offered over a 5 day period at the end of the school year and the STAR co-ordinator rates these tasters as a critical aspect in assisting with career direction and subject choice for students.

There have been difficulties with particular providers in the past, with the result that they are no longer used by the consortium. However, it has been difficult to replace or find alternative providers for some courses.

The co-ordinator has been in the job over 4 years and has 3 periods a day for the co-ordinator role, though this also includes co-ordination of transition and health, and the associated administration. The co-ordinator also teaches health and employment skills and works closely with the careers adviser. The co-ordinator points out that all the STAR funding for the school gets used but they provide twice as many EFTS as required for that funding.

Meeting Student Needs

School F has a clear-cut system for enrolment into STAR courses. Students select into STAR courses by the end of February each year, for that year. They find out about courses through announcements made at assemblies and advertisements on notice-boards. Places in courses are

filled on a first come, first served basis. Spare places in courses are sold off to other schools in the consortium.

Students are expected to catch up on any missed work in conventional classes and may not enrol unless this is approved by conventional course teachers. Some students who want to take STAR courses are prevented because they cannot take time off from their conventional courses. Teachers of other classes in which the student is enrolled must give signed permission for the student to miss those classes and the librarian must also attest that no books are overdue at the time of enrolment. The co-ordinator says that while most teachers do agree, some visit her first and state agreement only on the basis of the student completing a particular piece of work for their subject, while others refuse to release the student and at that point the dean becomes involved to sort it out. While there is some resentment that sees some protecting their "patch", increasingly teachers see that, for many students, STAR represents the only positive school experience they may have. For this reason, conventional course teachers are increasingly willing to exempt students from their classes.

However, the introduction of the NCEA may make enrolment in STAR courses which cut across the rest of the curriculum more difficult. Already the English department in School F is publishing schedules of assessment and dates, and refusing to let students out of class during these times. This situation leaves the co-ordinator paying for unfilled places in short courses. Longer courses are easier because they are timetabled. The 2003 year may be even more confusing because some departments wish to run their courses as Sixth Form Certificate and some wish to run theirs as level two NCEA. For these reasons, the co-ordinator is extremely worried about the future of the short (taster) courses, that are considered a vital part of STAR for students because they lead into later employment or higher motivation back in school.

STAR was initially used to target non-academic students (similar to those targeted by LINK). However, School F has now expanded this to include academically-successful students who use courses to find out about career options. Some external providers make available an introduction for students who are thinking about further study options.

Of the STAR schools the NZCER researchers visited, this was one of the best administered. The STAR co-ordinator uses a bespoke (Filemaker Pro-based) computer program to track and record student STAR courses and credits achieved. Every student receives a Record of Learning (not the same as the NZQA Record of Learning) which details the courses they have done or are doing, the unit standards associated with those courses with levels and number of credits available, and, if applicable, the date the credit was achieved (or not). Students are given these several times during the year and may also request a printout at any time. These serve as motivators. For curriculum vitae purposes, students receive a printout detailing credits achieved against certain unit standards and on courses. This computer program meant that the NZCER researchers could be given a printout showing credits achieved at each level by number of achievers (students) and by number of credits available for unit standards. This was not easily possible at other schools.

A Word from the Co-ordinator

To other schools

- Most important is to have good systems; the database is great and also provides lists of students so teachers always know where they are.
- Develop good systems (e.g., a database) which can provide lists of students so teachers always know where they are. Printouts for teachers are good public relations since many are very protective of their subject/class time (particularly for top stream teachers) and perceive STAR to be an interruption.

SCHOOL G

Background

School G is a small, decile 1 school in a provincial centre. It serves a mainly Māori and Pacific Islands student population. Pastoral care in the school is well-established and includes a learning and behaviour support committee, a learning centre, a sensitive issues team, a health clinic, a home liaison officer, deans at each year level, and a guidance counsellor. School G is also a Gateway school and an Alternative Education (AE) contractor.

Programme Structure

STAR is managed through the school's Pathways Faculty. The STAR co-ordinator is also the careers adviser and transition adviser and has 13 classroom hours per week to teach travel and tourism and another 12 non-contact hours for STAR and careers, of which an average of 5–9 hours is spent on STAR. The co-ordinator has been in the job for over 4 years but has no management units.

Most STAR courses are offered to Year 12, 13, and 14 students with a few tasters for Year 9 and 10 students. The senior level STAR courses are run as a programme which incorporates work experience (run by the Pathways Faculty at the school), some of which is additional to other (conventional) school work. The school also operates their own pathways programme which comprises alternative courses for Year 12, 13, and 14 students. The programme is designed to constitute an "educational pathway" through the senior school to help with a transition to work or further training. Qualifications achieved include unit standards or the school's own programme certificate. For School G, the point of STAR and other programmes is to change the way the school works with students. This contrasts sharply with Alternative Education (AE) programmes which have an ideal outcome of return to the classroom. Most students do not, or cannot do this while school structures and subjects remain unable to really accommodate the students' needs (O'Brien, Thesing, and Herbert, 2001).

STAR programme students have the option of adding a line of 5 periods to their timetable, to allow them to catch up on school work missed while away on courses. When students are not out of school on courses, they are in class with the co-ordinator, who runs 2 separate groups and monitors their progress in catching up on work missed. All STAR students do a first aid course. The co-ordinator found other staff unhappy about students missing their conventional classes at first but they later came to see the benefits of students coming back to their (conventional) classes with extra skills and greater motivation.

Ideally the co-ordinator would like to see the timetable changed to a system where STAR could run for a term with free days for seniors doing STAR. This would eliminate interruptions to other classes. This could be organised as levels of learning rather than by age groupings or year levels.

External providers are located through experience and networking with other schools. Competition between providers is fierce. This pushes prices down, although quality is always the first criterion for choosing a provider.

Meeting Student Needs

The co-ordinator was very enthusiastic about having a principal who saw "the whole picture" and supported a shift in focus. Where transition had once been seen as temporary jobs for those who left school early and were unsure about their future, the focus was now on various different pathways. This shift in focus gives students a sense of direction and achievement and has provided opportunities for them to try something without amassing a student loan. While the co-ordinator perceives that some schools think of STAR as being for "dummies", STAR can also be used for "bright" students whose aspirations fit with the pathways offered by STAR. The co-ordinator gave the example of a female student who was interested in joining the navy and did a STAR automotive course with a view to continuing this training in the navy. While senior management within the school felt this was the wrong course for such an academically capable student, the student did join the navy, after completing School Certificate, University Entrance, and Bursary, in additional to her STAR courses. The broad approach and flexibility of STAR can be used for any student.

Overall, the co-ordinator sees STAR as a privilege, not a right. Every year, students are given a course booklet for the year ahead. Subject staff make presentations to individual classes to assist students in making subject choices about conventional and non-conventional subjects. Students complete subject choice forms and have an individual interview with the careers adviser (also the STAR co-ordinator) about their choices.

The timetable is compiled as a result of these student choices. STAR students' parents are notified and students are asked to complete a profile about themselves, their career interests, and their reasons for wanting to join a STAR programme. Form teachers provide information about the student on a form via categories of "attendance", "attitude to authority", "commitment to work", communication skills", "flexibility", "initiative", and "suitability for STAR programme". Once these steps are completed, students will receive permission to enrol in a STAR course.

The co-ordinator considers that the seriousness of the selection process for enrolment into STAR courses is part of what makes STAR so successful. Students with a history of truancy are excluded from STAR since they are likely to waste the STAR funding by not turning up to courses, and to potentially damage the relationship between the school and employers or providers. However, these students are taken into an Alternative Education-funded mentoring programme which can better cater for them. Having this option, as well as the considerable number of pastoral care networks operating in the school, allows the STAR programme to be very structured for the students. This school was one of the very few which was relatively easily able to report in some detail on the credits (and levels) achieved by STAR students. The co-ordinator

keeps the profile for each student and estimates that 75 percent have gone on to the next stage of the qualification they began through STAR, though this relationship is not always direct.

A Word from the Co-ordinator

To other schools

- The STAR programme will run well if it is treated as a privilege for students to be part of, and they apply to get in.

To the Ministry of Education

- STAR and Gateway funding could be combined to good effect.
- Audit forms should always be returned from schools to the Ministry of Education to discourage mis-use of STAR funding.

SCHOOL H

Background

School H is a large, co-educational decile 8 school set in a provincial city, serving a mainly Pākehā student population. The surrounding countryside offers numerous opportunities for outdoor pursuits, agriculture, and viticulture.

Programme Structure

The STAR system at School H is run by a team within a transition department. The team comprises a STAR manager, a STAR facilitator, a careers adviser, a transition manager, a transition teacher, and a representative of senior management who, although still officially the STAR co-ordinator, has a very hands-off role and acts as an adviser at a school policy level. The STAR manager, careers adviser, and transition manager share a large office space and work together as a team, meeting every week to discuss administrative matters.

The transition manager's role (20 hours a week, paid as support staff) is largely to provide administrative support to the STAR manager, as well as organising work experience and a Year 11 careers day for the students. The STAR manager is generally a point of first contact for students. This person oversees the STAR budget and administration. The STAR manager works 20 hours a week, 4 of which are teaching hours, with the remaining 16 paid for out of STAR funding.

The STAR facilitator has the most contact with STAR students, approaching and advising them individually in terms of enrolment for STAR courses. The facilitator works 18 hours a week, 16 of which are for STAR tutorials and 2 of which are for marketing and liaison. Four of those hours are paid for by STAR funding. The facilitator pointed out that in fact she tends to be at the school on a full-time basis although she is not paid for this. She also commented that further administrative support was needed, perhaps across all the transition department positions, and that the data-entry work done by the STAR and transition managers seems like a "waste of talent".

The team approach to transition carries over into the programme approach used to operate STAR courses. For the first time in 2002, the school offered a full-time STAR stream for Year 13 students. This arrangement was more successful than those operating in previous years when STAR courses were offered across all lines in the timetable with students left to manage their own study.

The facilitator acts as a tutor for STAR students. They meet 4 times a week in a study period used to catch up on conventional schoolwork missed or to work on their STAR coursework. Thus while students attend different STAR courses (with external providers), they come together each week and get to know each other as they work on their different projects within the same classroom space.

The team rate the employment of a STAR facilitator (new in 2002) as a very successful move. It has enabled a STAR programme to be run as a line within the timetable, incorporating the various student courses and the supervised semi-structured tutorial sessions. They point out in a report to the school's Board of Trustees that the past arrangement of leaving students to organise their own time and study management (once signed up for STAR courses) did not take into account the fact that many students were not yet up to this level of independence. In order to use the opportunity presented by STAR courses for students to *become* self-directed and get some experience of tertiary level study, students actually needed support in the process. The STAR tutorial also enables the school to better monitor student attendance and deal with any problems early. Some funding has also gone to administrative costs and salaries for 2 co-ordinators (16 hours for the STAR co-ordinator and 4 hours for the STAR facilitator).

Meeting Student Needs

More than 60 percent of School H's senior students attend STAR courses. In 2002, 34 Year 13 students and 5 Year 12 students did STAR courses as part of the new STAR stream. Eleven students left during the year, 8 to jobs, 1 to a course, and 2 to the armed services. A further 22 Year 12 and 18 Year 13 students attended STAR courses during the year but not as part of the Year 13 STAR stream. A further 209 students attended short STAR courses/tasters. A number of STAR students attend *only* STAR courses; they do not undertake any conventional studies during Year 13. The team estimate that 20–25 percent would have difficulty with an academic Year 13 programme but they are not yet ready to go out into the world.

Part of meeting student needs in School H has been about changing the image of STAR. Although the team reported having to constantly remind other staff that STAR courses were not a dumping ground, the reputation of STAR has grown within the school. The expectations of students and image of themselves – "STAR is no longer about slackers; it's about success" - have also changed. As part of this approach, STAR certificates are always publicly presented at school assembly. Having STAR classes in one option line has meant students get some status and continuity as a group as they get to know each other. This makes management of the students easier too.

Getting students to formally apply to get into the courses is seen as part of the process of raising the status of STAR. Students are interviewed individually by one of the team. Their application and academic record are checked by heads of departments. This is to guard against students

looking for a "way out" of academic course work because, although STAR is aimed at all students, "at risk" students are prioritised.

A Word from the Co-ordinator

(In this case, the entire transition team had some final thoughts).

To other schools

- Work 6 months ahead all the time.
- Get to know the students *and* their families; take a photo and have a student profile.
- Don't leave it too long to get students started in the new year.
- Don't force students into pre-chosen courses; be flexible because students do change their minds and it is part of the process of them finding pathways.
- Take a team approach and don't just give a random teacher the "duty" of STAR; it's important for students to see us working together.

To the Ministry of Education

- There is too much paperwork; if a provider changes one unit of a course, a new application has to be made all over again.
- Applying for funding ahead of time is tricky because it is guesswork as to numbers of students on courses and it often changes.
- Some professional development would be useful. We need to upskill and gain extra qualifications.
- We would like more information that we can use in the job. For example, we would like to know more about other providers so that individual students (and not just groups of students) can do courses (perhaps by correspondence).

SECTION TEN: SUCCESSES AND CHALLENGES FOR SCHOOLS

This section reports on STAR co-ordinators' and school principals' perceptions of successes and challenges involved in operating STAR. Although the findings have been reported elsewhere in this report, as part of discussions on particular issues, this section gives summarised responses to open questions from the survey through a series of tables. Both the STAR co-ordinator and school principal response summaries are shown. This allows comparisons and highlights any differences of perception, based on the relative different positions of each role in the school. The most significant difference is illustrated through the Most Successful Aspects tables for STAR co-ordinators and school principals. While STAR co-ordinators tend to focus on successes at the level of the individual students, school principals tends to focus on successes in terms of curriculum development and provision and the attainment of qualifications.

Table 42

STAR Co-ordinators' Perceptions of the Most Successful Aspects of STAR for the School

	Survey Respondents *(n=307)*	**%**
Variety and flexibility of courses; wider experiences and opportunities for students	167	54
Opportunity to provide vocational courses or specialist qualifications	80	26
Provides motivation, direction, or challenge related to a career path for students	56	18
Provides qualifications, experiences, and success for students who would otherwise fail	46	15
Seeing students continue with subject, go on to tertiary study, or succeed in area of interest	39	13
Increased retention at Year 12 and 13 level	12	4
Students gaining time management and work-related skills	12	4
Flexible timetables and different learning environments are enjoyed by students	7	2
Allows us to run courses for small numbers of students	3	1

Table 43

School Principals' Perceptions of the Most Successful Aspects of STAR for the School

	Survey Respondents *(n=266)*	**%**
Extension of qualifications for students at risk or non-academic students	127	48
Offer breadth and depth to complement curriculum	79	30
Giving students chance to try career and/or occupation before they leave school/give students access to wider course range	72	27
Specific course or courses cited as successful	33	12
Enabling or motivating students to continue schooling	20	7
Extension of academic or achieving students	10	4
Access to quality courses or specialist knowledge	5	2
Enables a specific department to grow, e.g., technology department	1	>1

Table 44

STAR Co-ordinators' Perceptions of the Most Difficult Aspects of STAR for the School

	Survey Respondents *(n=307)*	**%**
Administration – lack of time, management and accountability issues, sending results to NZQA	85	28
Funding mechanism doesn't work; it's hard to use funding efficiently; there is not enough funding; worrying about funding cuts	77	25
Interruptions to other programmes in school	37	12
Finding quality providers	25	8
Assessing and planning ahead of time to meet student needs	23	7
Having to use STAR funding to pay for student transport costs	22	7
Getting STAR recognised as viable alternative to NCEA by students and/or senior management	17	5
Checking students' progress or satisfaction	12	4
Small staff numbers to monitor programmes; replacing experienced staff	9	4
Liaison with staff; isolation of co-ordinator position within school; keeping abreast of courses and opportunities	7	2
Getting accreditation	5	2
Falling rolls	4	1
STAR funding used inappropriately; STAR co-ordinators should manage all STAR funding	3	1
Getting parents interested or on-side	2	1

Table 45

School Principals' Perceptions of the Most Difficult Aspects of STAR for the School

	Survey Respondents *(n=266)*	**%**
Funding all courses needed/not enough funding/understanding funding/uncertainty of funding	83	31
Paperwork for unit standards/administration time or workload	46	17
Timetabling/core classes missed	40	15
Getting quality providers	24	9
Funding travel for students on some courses/transport	20	7
Finding qualified and competent tutors/staff (at school)	9	3
Keeping track or students/supervision/off-site attendance problems	9	3
Workload demand for co-ordinator means less contact with students	8	3
Getting teachers to understand value of STAR	8	3
Encouraging creative thinking for STAR applications etc.	6	2
Students not meeting deadlines	4	1
Cancelled courses (by providers)/student numbers dropping	4	1
General positive responses	3	1
Changing co-ordinators	2	1
Preventing able students from taking easier STAR options	2	1

SECTION ELEVEN: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The three objectives of this research project were:

- to provide sound information on the operation of STAR in schools;
- to gather the views of key stakeholders on how successfully STAR assists student transition to further education or to the workforce;
- to identify and collect data on any outcome measures that could assist in an evaluation of how STAR is meeting its objectives (to facilitate retention at school and/or smooth transition to employment or further study).

The first two objectives were perhaps the easiest and most obvious ones for this project, particularly since STAR had never been evaluated before. The next two sub-sections summarise the main aspects of operational information and stakeholder views in this review. The third objective of the project – to identify and collect outcome data measures that could be used in an evaluation – was complicated by the differing, and sometimes conflicting, positions of stakeholders, by the tensions between the STAR's two aims of retention and transition, and by the way retention could serve eventual transition beyond school in multifaceted ways. Nonetheless, there were a number of outcome measures detailed in this report – such as provision of STAR courses, participation in courses, attention to meeting student needs, and student achievement - which gave an indication of STAR's success and are useful measures of how STAR is meeting its objectives.

OUTCOMES TO FACILITATE RETENTION OR TRANSITION

Despite some structural school difficulties such as timetabling, *provision* of STAR courses was comprehensive ranging in course type. Nearly all schools offered industry-related courses to their senior students and over half also offered short taster courses to their junior and their senior students. The flexibility and broad approach of STAR, particularly in contrast to Gateway, was illustrated. More than half of the schools offered academic, as well as vocational, programmes to senior students. While around half of STAR co-ordinators reported that they believed the opportunities for specialised vocational qualifications or experience for students were the most successful aspect of STAR, just as many reported that the wide-ranging and varied experiences for students – in a general sense and applying to all students - were the most successful aspects of STAR.

The *spread of participation* throughout the school was also very strong. Just under half of schools reported that at least 40 percent of their school's senior students took STAR courses and just over a quarter of the schools had more than 60 percent of their students involved. STAR also seemed to be successful in terms of the *intended participants* for STAR courses: nearly all STAR co-ordinators reported that the students they believed STAR was intended for were the students who actually did the STAR courses. It should be noted, however, that tertiary providers did not believe they were always getting the appropriate students for their courses.

Schools also reported taking care to match course provision and delivery to assessed *student needs*. While STAR co-ordinators were mindful of some of the needs of the school (such as to

minimise costs associated with external providers), most of the reasons given for any difficulties with external providers were focussed the ability of the provider to meet student needs (and most of those difficulties were solved through communication or working together with the provider). The centrality of student needs was also indicated through the measures that almost every school had in place to assess those needs, with more than half of schools having one or more forms of face-to-face contact between students and STAR co-ordinators and other school staff. For some schools, meeting student needs meant assessing their interests and having this drive the courses offered and course providers used. For other schools it meant matching STAR courses already being offered to the individual student. Schools also reported using STAR to meet a *range* of student needs – names vocational (96%), retention-related (68%), basic life skills (64%), general academic development (55%), academic extension (38%).

Finally, s*tudent achievement* was not as easily measured because the data did not seem as readily available. However more than three-quarters of STAR co-ordinators reported that at least 20 students in their school had achieved credits towards a qualification through STAR courses. Students' own experiences of success with STAR (detailed elsewhere in the report and summarised in the next section) attest to their own sense of achievement and sense of opportunities available.

All of these outcome measures indicate that STAR is retaining students and facilitating their transition beyond school. However the much-valued flexibility of STAR coupled with the potential for *mis*-alignment between school and tertiary provider, summarised in the following sub-section "STAR's Purpose and Operation", point to some of the difficulties associated with measuring STAR's outcomes when the overall aims (and regulatory practices) are not entirely clear – or perceived by schools or providers to be unclear - in places. Several of the final sub-section's recommendations also suggest further (re)consideration of STAR's aims and then what outcomes would best fit with those.

PERSPECTIVES ON STAR'S SUCCESS

Feedback about STAR from STAR co-ordinators, school principals, external providers, and students has been unequivocally positive. Indeed the overwhelming response to the project from those who manage STAR demonstrates just how committed they are and how much they want the funding to continue.

It seems highly unlikely that this is enthusiasm motivated by self-interest alone. STAR co-ordinators have not been shy about coming forward with suggestions for improvements, including invitations to be audited, so they can continue to do the best job possible for the students.

The co-ordinator's job is fraught with challenging negotiations of relationships within the school and with external providers. STAR co-ordinators are generally also administrators and advisers to students, and have involvement in financial, planning, and timetabling decisions within the school. Often they do all this with a comparatively lesser measure of status than teachers of conventional school subjects or with recognised management positions. Nonetheless, they are convinced of STAR's capacity as a resource to offer students something valuable in addition to a conventional programme.

External providers have emphasised STAR's potential to align secondary and tertiary curricula, open up pathways for students, and recruit more students into their institutions. School principals have reported on STAR's importance in terms of their school curriculum and the ability to meet the needs of all students.

STAR has provided students with a vast array of courses and course types. These include courses for academic extension, industry-based training, vocationally- and academically-oriented tertiary study, general life skills, and career exploration. Students report that STAR courses have offered them a raft of opportunities: a fresh start to learning and relationships with others, experiences of success in school, new challenges and pleasures, new skills, new environments of learning, a sense of direction in life, and a sense of the possibilities for their lives.

Students have relished the space that STAR has provided. It has allowed students to explore possibilities for their lives in a broad sense. In the case of tasters particularly, STAR has allowed students to explore previously unthought-of life/career options that conventional (academic) courses or more tightly-circumscribed programmes have either not made accessible or not been open enough to reveal.

STAR'S PURPOSE AND OPERATION

Flexibility is one of STAR's great strengths. Schools are using STAR funding in a myriad of ways within the rather broad parameters of its goals and regulatory framework. STAR's strength is in allowing individual schools to design programmes which they believe best meet the needs of their particular students and community. STAR has allowed schools to widen their curriculum, acknowledge the importance of vocational as well as the academic, and re-engage students by presenting possible pathways to them. STAR is possibly the only resource for schools to use in this way. It potentially targets *all* students in the school.

However, STAR's weakness is also precisely this capacity to accommodate all students through a vast array of courses, organised into different types of programmes and systems, limited only by the school's imagination and resourcing. The tension between STAR's dual aims – to retain students *and* to assist them to leave school – has coincided with a lack of clear direction from the Ministry of Education. This has left some STAR co-ordinators, school principals, and external providers confused about how to use STAR most efficiently, and to best give life to its intent. It has also made compliance with STAR's regulations somewhat ambiguous and challenging. These tensions have also contributed to some disjunction between external provider, principal, student, and STAR co-ordinator perceptions of STAR's overall purpose.

Unresolved tensions within STAR's purposes of retention and transition assistance also constrain schools' ability to meet the needs of students. For STAR to fully realise its potential in schools requires sharing a greater clarity of vision about STAR and providing better operational support to schools. With this, school needs for good relationships with providers, good reputation generally in the community, a broad curriculum to attract more students, and a functioning timetable, are less likely to dominate decision-making at the expense of meeting student needs.

External providers clearly focus on the *alignment* aspect of the Secondary-Tertiary Alignment Resource. Their aims are very much bound up with meeting student needs in terms of making the

customer happy, with an end-goal of recruitment to their institution. The efforts of many schools to make their STAR funding go further by delivering courses internally are very frustrating to tertiary providers since they lose STAR as a source of funding (since it is kept within the school) and perceive school-delivery as a potential *mis*-alignment between the school and tertiary provider as students do not get a taste of the tertiary learning environment.

Insofar as recruitment to a tertiary institution involves students following pathways from secondary schooling to tertiary education and training, it is not necessarily incompatible with STAR's purpose to assist transition. However, any policy development of STAR could also involve some consideration of secondary students' needs so that these are not misconstrued or placed in conflict with the needs of tertiary institutions. The emphasis given to alignment, and which institutions (schools or tertiary providers) are best placed to meet student needs, needs consideration.

The broadness of STAR's purpose and operation are problematic when coupled with what appear to be somewhat insubstantial auditing procedures. Not only may STAR co-ordinators not receive all the STAR funding but they may also be subject to pressure from their school principal or other staff to use the funding in ways which at best, may not reflect the spirit of STAR, and at worst, may simply contravene STAR's funding regulations. However, there seems either to be no way for the Ministry of Education to know what is actually happening, or no regular procedures in place to check what is happening.

RECOMMENDATIONS

As we reported earlier, those involved with STAR are concerned about any moves to reconsider the funding and purpose of STAR. This situation has foreshadowed the research and, at times, contributed to a sense of desperation amongst those working with STAR. However, it has also encouraged those involved to speak up. Most of them have expressed a keen interest to be involved in building upon what STAR already does well. It is in this light, that the following recommendations are made.

- Consider "ring-fencing" STAR funding within the Operations Grant. At present, STAR co-ordinators are reliant on their principals to receive this funding. If STAR co-ordinators are the best people to receive the funding, they need to be assured that they are getting all of it.
- Raise principals' awareness of the importance of the STAR co-ordinator's role in the school. Currently, STAR co-ordinators are unlikely to have had management units conferred for the co-ordination job. This not only reflects, but contributes to, their relative lack of status in the school.
- Share the Ministry of Education's vision for senior secondary schooling with STAR co-ordinators; ask for their contribution and ideas; work collaboratively with them through an advisory group of co-ordinators and external providers.
- An advisory group of STAR co-ordinators could also develop template forms and administrative systems that would benefit collation and use of data for schools, external providers, *and* the Ministry of Education. The group could also develop a handbook of regulations, suggested systems, and STAR courses through external providers for distribution to schools.

- Use existing clusters of schools, or create new ones where needed, to share information. Bring co-ordinators together at regular intervals to share innovations, problems, and successes.
- The relatively higher costs borne by isolated, rural (and some small) schools are an equity issue. There may need to be a transport and accommodation grant made available.
- Consideration should also be given to the meaning of the success for students involved with STAR. Is the achievement of credits to be the only marker of success? If so, what should they represent about the learning experience? If not, could non-NZQA accredited providers be included as potential STAR course providers?
- Clarify the situation on core generic skills for schools. Consider how to avoid disadvantaging small and/or low decile schools through a careful definition and regulation of core generics.
- Taster courses serve an important purpose. That students may not necessarily go on to careers or further study directly related to what they "tasted" through STAR courses is not a failure of STAR. Providing an avenue by which students can eliminate career options or gain more information before making decisions makes good sense for the individual and the economy. Tasters could even be made more widely available to senior students.
- Keep schools' actual *and* application data in a Ministry of Education STAR resourcing database.
- Clarify the usage of EFTS. Then audit and monitor usage of STAR funding regularly.
- Give schools clear information on the use of student bonds. Do these automatically contravene the STAR regulations which stipulate that fees may not be charged for students to attend STAR courses? In some schools, the intent of any bond charge is not to recover costs but to raise the status of STAR courses among students. Nonetheless it may mean that some students may be discriminated against. In these cases, the Ministry of Education could work with, and provide some direction for, STAR co-ordinators to assist them in meeting the needs of all students, including those who pose a potential risk for the school and its relationships with providers, to other students, or to themselves while on STAR courses.
- In many respects further successful development of STAR is intimately linked to general structural changes in the secondary school and to specific changes to the ways we invite students to engage with education. There needs to be further policy work that addresses what STAR does well as part of - rather than an adjunct to - the overall vision for, and practice of, senior secondary education.

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APPENDIX ONE: STAGE ONE

STAR Co-ordinator's Information Sheet

Evaluation of STAR
New Zealand Council for Educational Research (NZCER)

The New Zealand Council for Educational Research is undertaking an evaluation of the operation of STAR (Secondary-Tertiary Alignment Resource) operates in schools. We are particularly interested in the outcomes for, and experiences of, students, and in how STAR funding is actually used for courses.

Your school has agreed invited to take part in the first part of the evaluation – interviews with principals and STAR co-ordinators at eight schools. These interviews will help shape interviews and questionnaires for the rest of the evaluation (which will involve all STAR schools in New Zealand). When selecting schools for this first stage, we aimed for a mix of deciles, sizes, and locations.

We would like to interview you for about 20-25 minutes. We will also be interviewing your school principal.

ALL INFORMATION RECEIVED WILL BE CONFIDENTIAL. Neither your name nor your school's will be mentioned in any publicly released reports on the project, nor will any information you give be provided on an individual basis to the Ministry of Education without specific clearance from you.

No financial payments are offered for taking part, but all participating schools will have access to the final report.

Thank you for giving your time to this request.

If you have any questions about this project, please contact:

Karen Vaughan
Project Leader/Researcher
New Zealand Council for Educational Research
Ph. (04) 384-7939 ext.826
Email: karen.vaughan@nzcer.org.nz

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Principal's Information Sheet

Evaluation of STAR
New Zealand Council for Educational Research (NZCER)

The New Zealand Council for Educational Research is undertaking an evaluation of the operation of STAR (Secondary-Tertiary Alignment Resource) operates in schools. We are particularly interested in the outcomes for, and experiences of, students, and in how STAR funding is actually used for courses.

Your school is invited to take part in the first part of the evaluation – interviews with principals and STAR co-ordinators at eight schools. These interviews will help shape interviews and questionnaires for the rest of the evaluation (which will involve all STAR schools in New Zealand). When selecting schools for this first stage, we aimed for a mix of deciles, sizes, and locations.

If you agree to participate, your school would be involved in:
1. an interview with you, the principal, of about 20-25 minutes
2. an interview with your STAR co-ordinator of about 20-25 minutes.

These interviews may occur in person if we can visit your school or over the telephone at a time convenient for you, either late in the first term or early in the second term.

ALL INFORMATION RECEIVED WILL BE CONFIDENTIAL. Neither your name nor your school's will be mentioned in any publicly released reports on the project, nor will any information you give be provided on an individual basis to the Ministry of Education without specific clearance from you.

No financial payments are offered for taking part, but all participating schools will have access to the final report.

Thank you for giving your time to this request. I hope you and your school will agree to your school participating.

If you have any questions about this project, please contact:

Karen Vaughan
Project Leader/Researcher
New Zealand Council for Educational Research
Ph. (04) 384-7939 ext.826
Email: karen.vaughan@nzcer.org.nz

Code Number:

NZCER use only:

STAR Course Providers' Information Sheet

Evaluation of STAR
New Zealand Council for Educational Research (NZCER)

The New Zealand Council for Educational Research is undertaking an evaluation of the operation of STAR (Secondary-Tertiary Alignment Resource) in schools. We are particularly interested in the outcomes for, and experiences of, students, and in how STAR funding is actually used for courses.

This evaluation is not an evaluation of the schools you provide STAR courses to, nor is it an evaluation of STAR courses. Instead the evaluation will be used by NZCER to guide the next stage of research, which will attempt to construct a national picture of STAR operation in New Zealand secondary schools.

A school your organisation provides courses for has been specifically selected for this study from all STAR schools. As a result, in selecting organisations, we have attempted to include those providing courses to the schools selected and participating in the study, this is how your organisation came to be included in this selection.

The interview should take about 10 to 15 minutes.

ALL INFORMATION RECEIVED WILL BE CONFIDENTIAL. Neither your name nor your school's will be mentioned in any publicly released reports on the project, nor will any information you give be provided on an individual basis to the Ministry of Education without specific clearance from you.

No financial payments are offered for taking part, but all participating schools will have access to the final report.

Thank you for giving your time to this request.

If you have any questions about this project, please contact:

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STAR Co-ordinator Interview

During this interview I will be asking you questions relating to your role as a STAR co-ordinator in your school and the delivery of STAR courses at your school.

This first set of questions looks at the STAR courses your school offers and their relationship to the larger school programme.

1. What do you see as the role of STAR courses at your school?

2. How does your school decide which STAR courses to offer students?

3. Does your school offer any *Gateway* courses?
   a) ☐ Yes *(Elaborate)*
   b) ☐ No - ***go to question 9***

4. Are you also the person co-ordinating *Gateway* at your school?
   a) ☐ Yes
   b) ☐ No

5. When it came to the courses or workplace learning, how did your school decide which would be delivered through STAR funding and which would use *Gateway* funding?

6. In terms of funding, course objectives, and organisational matters, has your school experienced any overlap between STAR and Gateway?
   a) ☐ Yes *(Elaborate)*
   b) ☐ No - ***go to question 8***

7. How has your school managed this overlap?

8. How has your school found having both STAR and *Gateway* available to students?

This question concerns your role as STAR co-ordinator in your school.

9. As I read the following please answer yes or no as applicable. In the role of STAR co-ordinator for your school, do you:
   a) ☐ Liaise with external providers
   b) ☐ Liaise with departments within your school for timetabling of STAR
   c) ☐ Advise students on taking STAR courses
   d) ☐ Assess the needs of students in your school to assist you in the selection of STAR courses
   e) ☐ Gather summative assessment data about students in STAR courses
   f) ☐ Teach STAR courses
   g) ☐ Have involvement in the decisions related to the allocation of STAR funds
   h) ☐ Is there anything else that you do in your role as STAR co-ordinator
      a) ☐ Yes *(Elaborate)*
      b) ☐ No

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10. What is the most challenging aspect of your role as STAR co-ordinator?

11. Is there anything that would make you more effective in your role as STAR co-ordinator?
    a) ☐ Yes *(Elaborate)*
    b) ☐ No

12. Can you tell me about the communication and feedback practices your school has in place to support you in your role as STAR Co-ordinator?

This set of questions looks at the delivery of STAR courses in your school.

13. How are student needs in your school assessed so students can be matched with STAR-funded courses?

14. If you broke down the delivery of STAR courses in your school, what percentage would be:
    a) Delivered by school staff

       Is this:
       b) ☐ Within your school grounds, or
       c) ☐ At another location *(Elaborate)*

    b) *(Read external provider percentage out)* ____ percent of your programmes are delivered by school staff, is the remaining percent delivered by external provider/s? *(By external provider when mean any provider of courses that the school has contracted to deliver STAR courses. Common examples of external providers are polytechnics, industry training organisations, universities and other workplace providers).*
       a) ☐ Yes
       b) ☐ No *(Elaborate)*

       Do the external providers deliver their courses:
       c) ☐ Within your school grounds, or
       d) ☐ At another location *(Elaborate)*

15. In the answers you just gave me about who and where your courses are delivered, what has influenced your school's choices of delivery?

16. Can you describe how your school timetables STAR courses?

17. Has your school experienced any problems in timetabling?
    a) ☐ Yes *(Elaborate)*
    b) ☐ No - ***go to question 14***

18. Have these problems been resolved?
    a) ☐ Yes *(Elaborate)*
    b) ☐ No
    c) ☐ Unresolvable

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19. As I read the following say please answer yes or no as applicable. Does your school currently keep records relating to STAR on:
    a) ☐ Student assessment
        a) ☐ Unit standards
        c) ☐ Credits
        d) ☐ Other *(Elaborate)*

    b) ☐ Student participation numbers
    c) ☐ Student retention at school
    d) ☐ Student transition to tertiary education
    e) ☐ Student transition to industry education
    f) ☐ Student transition to the workplace
    g) ☐ Course completion details
    h) ☐ Course evaluations
    i) ☐ External provider course details
    j) ☐ Correspondence with external providers
    k) ☐ Budgeting and accounting details
    l) ☐ A breakdown of what your school's STAR funds are spent on
    m) ☐ Other *(Elaborate)*

This set of questions looks at student involvement in STAR.

20. At your school, how do students come to be in a STAR course?

21. Do the STAR courses in your school target
    a) ☐ All students, or
    b) ☐ Specific groups of students *(Elaborate)*

22. Are these target students the one that do participate in STAR courses at your school?
    a) ☐ Yes
    b) ☐ No *(Elaborate)*

23. Do you have any students in your school that you feel miss out on STAR courses?
    a) ☐ Yes *(Elaborate)*
    b) ☐ No - ***go to question 24***

24. Do you have any opinions on how STAR could be changed to meet the needs of these students?
    a) ☐ Yes *(Elaborate)*
    b) ☐ No

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25. Which of the following things can your school's STAR students get from the courses:
    a) ☐ Self development skills
    b) ☐ Academic development
    c) ☐ Career information
    d) ☐ Workplace learning
    e) ☐ Unit standards
    f) ☐ Credit towards a qualification
    g) ☐ A national certificate *(Elaborate)*
    h) ☐ Other *(Elaborate)*

Finally, these questions concern the broader objectives of STAR and any general comments you might have.

26. Do you have anything you would like to add about the operation of STAR in your school?

27. If another school was setting up STAR what advice would you give them?

28. Do you have any questions concerning our research?

29. Would you like a summary of the interim report?
    a) ☐ Yes
    b) ☐ No

Code Number:

NZCER use only:

Interview Schedule for STAR Principals

This first set of questions looks at the STAR courses your school offers and their relationship to the larger school programme.

1. What do you see as the role of STAR courses at your school?

2. How does your school decide which STAR courses to offer students?

3. Does your school have any other non-conventional courses, which are not STAR-funded?
   (Non-conventional subjects are those that would not be assessed under previous NZQA secondary certificates such as School Certificate, Sixth Form Certificate and Bursary)
   a) ☐ Yes *(Elaborate)*

   b) ☐ No - ***go to question 6***

4. Were any of these courses in your school's original application for STAR funding?
   a) ☐ Yes *(Elaborate - tick the courses above in original application, you may need to read these out again)*

   b) ☐ No - ***go to question 6***

5. How did your school decide which courses would be STAR-funded?

6. Does your school offer any *Gateway* courses?

   a) ☐ Yes *(Elaborate)*

   b) ☐ No - ***go to question 10***

7. When it comes to courses or workplace learning, how did your school decide which would be delivered through STAR funding and which would use *Gateway* funding?

8. In terms of funding, course objectives and organisational matters. Has your school experienced any overlap between STAR and Gateway?

   a) ☐ Yes *(Elaborate)*

   b) ☐ No - ***go to question 10***

9. How has your school managed this overlap?

10. How has your school found having both STAR and *Gateway* available to students?

Code Number:

NZCER use only:

This set of questions looks at the delivery of STAR courses in your school.

11. If you broke down the delivery of STAR courses in your school, what percentage would be:
    a) Delivered by school staff

    Is this:
    b) ☐ Within your school grounds, or
    c) ☐ At another location *(Elaborate)*

    b) *(Read external provider percentage out)* ____ percent of your programmes are delivered by school staff, is the remaining percent delivered by external provider/s? *(By external provider when mean any provider of courses that the school has contracted to deliver STAR courses. Common examples of external providers are polytechnics, industry training organisations, universities and other workplace providers).*
    a) ☐ Yes
    b) ☐ No *(Elaborate)*

    Do the external providers deliver their courses:
    c) ☐ Within your school grounds, or
    d) ☐ At another location *(Elaborate)*

12. In the answers you just gave me about who and where your courses are delivered, what has influenced your school's choices of delivery?

13. Can you describe how your school timetables STAR courses?

14. Has your school experienced any problems in timetabling?
    a) ☐ Yes *(Elaborate)*
    b) ☐ No - ***go to question 15***

15. Have these problems been resolved?
    a) ☐ Yes *(Elaborate)*
    b) ☐ No
    c) ☐ Unresolvable

16. As I read the following please answer yes or no as applicable. Does your school currently keep records relating to STAR on:
    a) ☐ Student assessment
        a) ☐ Unit standards
        b) ☐ Credits
        c) ☐ Other *(Elaborate)*

    b) ☐ Student participation numbers
    c) ☐ Student retention at school
    d) ☐ Student transition to tertiary education
    g) ☐ Student transition to industry education
    h) ☐ Student transition to the workplace

n) ☐ Course completion details
o) ☐ Course evaluations
p) ☐ External provider course details
q) ☐ Correspondence with external providers
r) ☐ Budgeting and accounting details
s) ☐ A breakdown of what your school's STAR funds are spent on
m) ☐ Other *(Elaborate)*

This set of questions looks at student involvement in STAR.

17. At your school, how do students come to be in a STAR course?

18. Do the STAR courses in your school target
    a) ☐ All students, or
    c) ☐ Specific groups of students *(Elaborate)*

19. Are these target students the ones who do participate STAR courses at your school?
    a) ☐ Yes
    b) ☐ No *(Elaborate)*

20. Do you have any students in your school that you feel miss out on STAR courses?
    a) ☐ Yes *(Elaborate)*
    b) ☐ No - ***go to question 24***

21. Do you have any opinions on how STAR could be changed to meet the needs of these students?
    a) ☐ Yes *(Elaborate)*
    b) ☐ No

22. Which of the following things can your school's STAR students get from the courses:
    a) ☐ Self development skills
    b) ☐ Academic development
    c) ☐ Career information
    d) ☐ Workplace learning
    e) ☐ Unit standards
    f) ☐ Credit towards a qualification
    g) ☐ A national certificate *(Elaborate)*
    h) ☐ Other *(Elaborate)*

Finally, these questions concern the broader objectives of STAR and any general comments you might have.

23. Do you have anything you would like to add about the operation of STAR in your school?

24. If another school was setting up STAR what advice would you give them?

25. Do you have any questions concerning our research?

Code Number:

NZCER use only:

26. Would you like a summary of the interim report?
    c) ☐ Yes
    d) ☐ No

Code Number:

NZCER use only:

Interview Schedule for STAR External Providers

During this interview I will be asking you these questions relating to your role as an external provider of STAR courses.

This first set of questions looks at the STAR courses your [polytechnic/university/ organisation].

1. What do you see as the role of STAR at your [polytechnic/university/organisation]?

2. How does your [polytechnic/university/organisation] decide which STAR courses to offer schools?

3. As I read the following please answer yes or no as applicable.
   Does your [polytechnic/university/organisation] currently keep records relating to STAR on:
   a) ☐ Student assessment
      a) ☐ Unit standards
      b) ☐ Credits
      c) ☐ Other *(Elaborate)*

   b) ☐ Student participation numbers
   c) ☐ Student transition to tertiary/industry education/or the workplace (*choose most applicable).*
   d) ☐ Course completion details
   e) ☐ Course evaluations
   f) ☐ Budgeting and accounting details
   g) ☐ Other (*Elaborate*)

4. What has been the most challenging aspect for your [polytechnic/university/ organisation] in providing STAR courses to secondary schools?

This set of questions looks at student involvement in STAR.

5. In your experience, how do students come to be in a STAR course?

6. Do the STAR courses offered by your [polytechnic/university/organisation] target
   a) ☐ All students or
   d) ☐ Specific groups of students *(Elaborate)*

7. Are these target students the ones that do participate in STAR courses at your [polytechnic/university/organisation]?
   a) ☐ Yes
   b) ☐ No *(Elaborate)*

Code Number:
NZCER use only:

8. Which of the following things can STAR students get from the courses your [polytechnic/university/organisation] offers:
   a) ☐ Self development skills
   b) ☐ Academic development
   c) ☐ Career information
   d) ☐ Workplace learning
   e) ☐ Unit standards
   f) ☐ Credit towards a qualification
   g) ☐ A national certificate *(Elaborate)*

   h) ☐ Other *(Elaborate)*

Finally, these questions concern the broader objectives of STAR and any general comments you might have.

9. Do you have anything you would like to add about the operation of STAR in your [polytechnic/university/organisation]?

10. If a school was setting up STAR and intended to involve external providers of courses, what advice would you give them?

11. Do you have any questions concerning our research?

12. Would you like a summary of the interim report?
    e) ☐ Yes
    f) ☐ No

Code Number:

NZCER use only:

Code Number:

NZCER use only:

APPENDIX TWO: STAGE TWO

Coordinator Questionnaire

Section One: Your Role as a STAR Co-ordinator in your School

For approximately how many years have you been the STAR co-ordinator at your school?

1. ☐ Less than 1 year
2. ☐ More than 1 year but less than 2 years
3. ☐ Between 2 and 4 years
4. ☐ More than 4 years

How many management units do you have for being STAR co-ordinator?

1. ☐ None
2. ☐ 1-2
3. ☐ 3-4
4. ☐ More than 4

How many of these management units are of limited duration (e.g., less than one year)?

1. ☐ None
2. ☐ 1-2
3. ☐ 3-4
4. ☐ More than 4

As the STAR co-ordinator for your school, what do you do?
(please tick all the applicable boxes)

a) ☐ Liaise with external providers
b) ☐ Liaise with departments within your school for timetabling of STAR
c) ☐ Advise students on taking STAR taster courses **only**
d) ☐ Advise students on taking STAR courses **only** (and not taster courses)
e) ☐ Advise students on taking STAR courses (of any type or duration, including taster courses)
f) ☐ Assess the needs of students in your school to assist you in the selection of STAR courses
g) ☐ Gather summative assessment data about students in STAR courses
h) ☐ Teach STAR courses
i) ☐ Have involvement in the decisions related to the allocation of STAR funds
j) ☐ Other (*please elaborate*)

Code Number:

NZCER use only:

Approximately how many hours per week do you spend on STAR related tasks?
(please tick one box)

1. ☐ Under 5 hours
2. ☐ 5 to 9 hours
3. ☐ 10 to 14 hours
4. ☐ 15 or more hours

How does your school remunerate you for STAR related task time?
(please tick one box)

1. ☐ Non-classroom teaching time (or non-contact time) with students **only**
2. ☐ Management units **only**
3. ☐ Both non-classroom teaching time with students **and** management units

Other (*please elaborate*)

(a) How important is the position of the STAR co-ordinator seen to be by staff in your school?
(please circle one)

extremely important	very important	fairly important	not very important	not important at all
1	2	3	4	5

(b) Please feel free to add any comment to your response.

In your opinion, for the successful operation of STAR how important are the following relationships?
(please circle one for each relationship)

a) The STAR co-ordinator and other members of the teaching staff

extremely important	very important	fairly important	not very important	not important at all
1	2	3	4	5

b) The STAR co-ordinator and school principal

extremely important	very important	fairly important	not very important	not important at all
1	2	3	4	5

c) The STAR co-ordinator and any external providers of STAR courses

extremely important	very important	fairly important	not very important	not important at all
1	2	3	4	5

d) The STAR co-ordinator and school students

extremely important	very important	fairly important	not very important	not important at all
1	2	3	4	5

Code Number:

NZCER use only:

e) The STAR co-ordinator and the parents of school students

extremely important	very important	fairly important	not very important	not important at all
1	2	3	4	5

f) Please feel free to add any comment to your response.

What do you see as the purpose of STAR?

Section Two: The Operation of STAR in your school

What kinds of courses is STAR used for in your school?
(please tick all the applicable boxes)

a) ☐ Taster courses for Year 9 and 10 students
b) ☐ Taster courses for Year 11 to 13 students
c) ☐ Industry-related or industry-based courses for Year 11 to 13 students
d) ☐ Academic courses for Year 11 to 13 students
e) ☐ Other *(please elaborate)*

How are STAR programmes timetabled at your school?
(please tick all applicable boxes)

a) ☐ As a period (e.g., 45 minutes or 1 hr)
b) ☐ As half days
c) ☐ As full days alongside the school timetable
d) ☐ As a block course of more than a day occurring within the school term
e) ☐ As a block course occurring outside of the school term (e.g., in school holidays or weekends)
f) ☐ Other *(please elaborate)*

To what extent are external providers of STAR courses used in the delivery of courses in your school?
(please tick one box)

1. ☐ External providers are not used at all *(please go to question 20)*
2. ☐ External providers are **only** used for taster courses *(please go to question 20)*
3. ☐ External providers are **only** used for Year 11 to 13 courses
4. ☐ External providers are used for taster courses **and** in Year 11 to 13 courses

Code Number:

NZCER use only:

For the delivery of STAR courses to Year 11-13 students, approximately to what extent are external providers used at your school?
(please tick one box)

1. ☐ Less than 20 percent
2. ☐ 20-39 percent
3. ☐ 40-59 percent
4. ☐ 60 percent or more

Why does your school use external providers to this extent (and not more or less)?

(a) Has the extent to which external providers have been used by your school changed while you have been a STAR co-ordinator?
(please tick one box)

1. ☐ Yes
2. ☐ No *(please go to question 16)*

(b) Why?

Has your school experienced any difficulties when using external providers?
(please tick one box)

1. ☐ Yes
2. ☐ No *(please go to question 18)*

What difficulties, if any, has your school experienced with using external providers?
(please tick all applicable boxes)

a) ☐ Conflicts between school's timetable and the provider's timetable
b) ☐ Difficulties with student transport to provider's site
c) ☐ Provider not meeting student needs
d) ☐ Poor teaching quality
e) ☐ Poor value for money
f) ☐ Too little actual teaching/learning time on course
g) ☐ Other (*please explain below*)

(a) Have these difficulties been resolved?
(please tick one box)

1. ☐ Yes
2. ☐ No (please go to question 19)
3. ☐ Unresolvable (please go to question 19)

(b) **How** did these difficulties get resolved?

Code Number:

NZCER use only:

What benefits have there been for your school from **externally** provided courses?
(please tick all applicable boxes)

a) ☐ Up-to-date industry-specific knowledge and resources
b) ☐ Students located off-site gaining wider experience (including workplace experience)
c) ☐ Less work and time required for staff to develop resources or courses
d) ☐ Other *(please explain below)*

What difficulties, if any, have there been with **internally** provided courses in your school?
(please tick all applicable boxes)

a) ☐ Timetabling difficulties
b) ☐ Lack of up-to-date industry information
c) ☐ Lack of appropriate resources or facilities
d) ☐ Lack of staff to teach courses
e) ☐ Small student numbers forcing course cancellations
f) ☐ Perceived lack of status by students and/or staff and/or parents
g) ☐ Other (*please explain below*)

(a) Have these difficulties been resolved?
(please tick one box)

1. ☐ Yes
2. ☐ No *(please go to question 22)*
3. Unresolvable *(please go to question 22)*

(b) **How** did these difficulties get resolved?

What have been the benefits for your school from **internally** provided courses?

a) ☐ Students located on-site so no transport issues
b) ☐ Students located on-site so supervision is assured
c) ☐ Students and staff able to develop relationships
d) ☐ Other *(please explain below)*

Are the staff in your school expected to achieve NZQA accreditation status?
(please tick one box)

1. ☐ Yes, **all** staff are encouraged to achieve accreditation, regardless of whether or not they currently teach STAR courses
2. ☐ Yes, but only staff **currently** teaching STAR courses are encouraged
3. ☐ No, we only use external providers
4. ☐ No, we hire tutors for specific STAR courses who liaise or work with teaching staff

Code Number:

NZCER use only:

Section Three: STAR Funding

How does STAR funding actually reach you as the STAR co-ordinator?
(please tick one box)

1. ☐ The principal gives me **some** of the STAR funding to manage
2. ☐ The principal gives me **all** of the STAR funding to manage
3. ☐ The principal gives me **some** of the STAR funding **and** the Careers funding to manage

Other (*please explain below*)

How many courses funded by STAR (in part or totally) are currently running in your school in 2002?

1. ☐ 1-9
2. ☐ 10-19
3. ☐ 20-29
4. ☐ 30 or more

How many of those STAR courses running in 2002 cost **more** to run than the EFTS-funding generated for them?

1. ☐ 1-4
2. ☐ 5-9
3. ☐ 10-14
4. ☐ 15 or over

How are these more expensive STAR courses paid for?
(please tick all applicable boxes)

1. ☐ They are subsidised by other **less** expensive STAR courses
2. ☐ They are subsidised with non-STAR operations grant funding
3. ☐ Other (*please explain below*)

In your opinion, what kind of funding mechanism would work best for STAR at your school?
(please tick one box)

1. ☐ The current EFTS-based funding system
2. ☐ Funding based on differentiated levels of cost for different STAR courses (low, medium, high)
3. ☐ A system in which a portion of the funding is tagged for STAR co-ordinators
4. ☐ A system similar to ESOL funding, where the school receives the money and a Verifier visits a selection of schools each year to check on how the money has been spent

Other (*please explain below)*

Code Number:

NZCER use only:

Section Four: Student Participation in STAR Courses for Year 11 to 13 Students

What approximate proportion of your school's students in Year 11 to 13 students attend courses which are fully or partially funded by STAR?
(please tick one box)

1. ☐ Less than 10 percent
2. ☐ 10-19 percent
3. ☐ 20-29 percent
4. ☐ 30-39 percent
5. ☐ 40-49 percent
6. ☐ 50-59 percent
7. ☐ 60 percent or more

Are these STAR students:

1. ☐ **Mostly** in full school year courses totalling **less than 10 hours** a week
2. ☐ **Mostly** in short (less than a school year) courses totalling **less than 10 hours** a week
3. ☐ **Mostly** in courses totalling **between 10 and 19 hours** a week over the year
4. ☐ **Mostly** in short (less than a school year) courses totalling **between 10 and 19 hours** a week
5. ☐ **Mostly** in courses totalling **20 or more** hours a week over the year
6. ☐ **Mostly** in short (less than a school year) courses totalling **20 or more** hours a week
7. ☐ Fairly evenly spread across all the course times listed above

Which students are STAR-funded courses at your school **intended** to cater for?
(please tick all applicable boxes)

a) ☐ All Year 11 to 13 students
b) ☐ Students who would otherwise leave school without any qualifications if not in a STAR course
c) ☐ Students who need to be academically extended
d) ☐ Students who have shown an interest in a particular industry
e) ☐ Students who are disruptive to others in class
f) ☐ Students who are failing or have failed in academic courses
g) ☐ Other *(please elaborate)*

(a) Are these mostly the students who **actually do** end up on STAR courses?

1. ☐ Yes (please go to question 33)
2. ☐ No *(please elaborate)*

Code Number:

NZCER use only:

Has your school ever had to turn students away from STAR courses?

1. ☐ Yes
2. ☐ No *(please go to question 34)*

What were the reasons for turning away students from STAR courses?
(please tick all applicable boxes)

a) ☐ The students were academic and looking to "cruise" in the Sixth Form Certificate or Bursary year
b) ☐ The students were not mature enough to safely work with machinery or be in workshop situations
c) ☐ The students were late in choosing courses and the classes were full
d) ☐ The external provider was unhappy with the student on previous courses
e) ☐ Other *(please elaborate)*

Which "student needs" does your school attempt to meet through identifying students for STAR courses?
(please tick all applicable boxes)

a) ☐ Academic extension (above secondary school level)
b) ☐ General academic development (at secondary school level)
c) ☐ Vocational or work experience
d) ☐ An incentive to stay at school
e) ☐ Help for behavioural problems (for inclusion on courses such as Anger Management)
f) ☐ Assistance mastering basic life skills
g) ☐ Other *(please elaborate)*

1 2 3
4 5 6
7 8 9

How are "student needs" (for STAR courses) assessed or measured at your school?
(please tick all applicable boxes)

a) ☐ Surveys of student interest in courses
b) ☐ Face to face contact between the STAR co-ordinator and students
c) ☐ Face to face contact between the Careers Advisor and students
d) ☐ Face to face contact between the Dean and students
e) ☐ Face to face contact between another staff member and students
f) ☐ Staff meetings and discussions on student needs
g) ☐ Test or examination results
h) ☐ Parent or community surveys
i) ☐ Student needs are not assessed at all
j) ☐ Other *(please elaborate)*

Code Number:

NZCER use only:

How well do the STAR courses offered by external providers meet the needs of your school's students?
(please circle one)

extremely well	very well	fairly well	not very well	not well at all
1	2	3	4	5

What kinds of data does your school keep to track the progress of students on STAR courses?

(please tick all the applicable boxes)

a) ☐ Student participation numbers
b) ☐ Course completion details
c) ☐ Course evaluations (conducted by **external** providers)
d) ☐ Course evaluations (conducted by the **school**)
e) ☐ External provider course details
f) ☐ Correspondence with external providers
g) ☐ Details on the unit standards students achieve on **externally** provided courses
h) ☐ Details on the unit standards students achieve on **internally** (school) provided courses
i) ☐ Details on credits towards a national qualification students achieve
j) ☐ Other *(please elaborate)*

How many students on STAR courses achieved credits towards a national qualification in 2001?

1. ☐ none
2. ☐ 1-9
3. ☐ 10-19
4. ☐ 20 or more

How many unit standards or credits towards a national qualification were achieved by students on STAR courses in 2001?

1. _____ credits at Level 1
2. _____ credits at Level 2
3. _____ credits at Level 3
4. _____ credits at Level 4
5. ☐ We have these records but I cannot easily access them
6. ☐ We do not have these records at the school

Code Number:

NZCER use only:

Section Five: STAR Successes and Challenges

In your opinion, what has been the most successful part of STAR for your school?

In your opinion, what has been the most difficult part of STAR for your school?

What, if anything, would you suggest the Ministry of Education change so that STAR might work better?

Is there anything else you would like to add about the operation of STAR in your school?

Thank you for your time.

Code Number:

NZCER use only:

Principal Questionnaire

Section One: The Operation of STAR in Your School

1. (a) How important is the position of the STAR co-ordinator seen to be in your school?
(please circle one)

extremely important	very important	fairly important	not very important	not important at all
1	2	3	4	5

(b) Please feel free to add any comment to your response.

In your opinion, for the successful operation of STAR how important are the following relationships?
(please circle one for each relationship)

a) The STAR co-ordinator and other members of the teaching staff

extremely important	very important	fairly important	not very important	not important at all
1	2	3	4	5

b) The STAR co-ordinator and school principal

extremely important	very important	fairly important	not very important	not important at all
1	2	3	4	5

c) The STAR co-ordinator and any external providers of STAR courses

extremely important	very important	fairly important	not very important	not important at all
1	2	3	4	5

d) The STAR co-ordinator and school students

extremely important	very important	fairly important	not very important	not important at all
1	2	3	4	5

e) The STAR co-ordinator and the parents of school students

extremely important	very important	fairly important	not very important	not important at all
1	2	3	4	5

(f) Please feel free to add any comment to your response.

3. Which students are STAR-funded courses at your school **intended** to cater for?
(please tick all applicable boxes)

a) ☐ All Year 11 to 13 students
b) ☐ Students who would otherwise leave school without any qualifications if not in a STAR course
c) ☐ Students who need to be academically extended
d) ☐ Students who have shown an interest in a particular industry
e) ☐ Students who are disruptive to others in class

f) ☐ Students who are failing or have failed in academic courses
g) ☐ Other *(please elaborate)*

Section Two: STAR Funding

4. How do you organise STAR funding at your school?
(please tick one box)

1. ☐ I give **some** of the STAR funding to the STAR Co-ordinator to manage
2. ☐ I give **all** of the STAR funding to the STAR Co-ordinator to manage
3. ☐ I give **some** of the STAR **and** Careers funding to the STAR Co-ordinator to manage

Other (*please explain below*)

5. How many courses funded by STAR (in part or totally) are currently running in your school in 2002?
(please tick one box)

1. ☐ 1-9
2. ☐ 10-19
3. ☐ 20-29
4. ☐ 30 or more

6. How many of those STAR courses running in 2002 cost **more** to run than the EFTS-funding generated for them?

1. ☐ 1-9
2. ☐ 10-19
3. ☐ 20-29
4. ☐ 30 or over

7. How are these more expensive STAR courses paid for?
(please tick one box)

1. ☐ They are subsidised by other **less** expensive STAR courses
2. ☐ They are subsidised with non-STAR operations grant funding
3. ☐ Other (*please explain below*)

8. In your opinion, what kind of funding mechanism would work best for STAR at your school?
(please tick one box)

1. ☐ The current EFTS-based funding system
2. ☐ Funding based on differentiated levels of cost for different STAR courses (low, medium, high)
3. ☐ A system in which a portion of the funding is tagged for STAR co-ordinators
4. ☐ A system similar to ESOL funding, where the school receives the money and a Verifier visits a selection of schools each year to check on how the money has been spent.

Code Number:

NZCER use only:

Other (*please explain below)*

Section Three: STAR Successes and Challenges

9. What has been the most successful part of STAR for your school?

10. What has been the most difficult part of STAR for your school?

11. What, if anything, would you suggest the Ministry of Education change so that STAR might work better?

12. Is there anything else you would like to add about the operation of STAR in your school?

Thank you for your time.

Code Number:

NZCER use only:

Provider Questionnaire

1. What do you see as the purpose of STAR?

2. Which students do you believe STAR-funded courses are **intended** to cater for?
   (please tick all applicable boxes)

   a) ☐ All Year 11-13 students
   b) ☐ Students who would otherwise leave school without any qualifications if not in a STAR course
   c) ☐ Students who need to be academically extended
   d) ☐ Students who have shown an interest in a particular industry
   e) ☐ Students who are disruptive to others in class
   f) ☐ Students who are failing or have failed in academic courses
   g) ☐ Other *(please elaborate)*

3. In your experience, are these mostly the students who **actually do** end up on STAR courses?
   a) ☐ Yes
   b) ☐ No *(please elaborate)*

4. Have you ever had to turn students away from STAR courses or suggest the school do so?
   a) ☐ Yes
   b) ☐ No (please go to question 6)

5. What were the reasons for turning away students from STAR courses?
   (please tick all applicable boxes)

   a) ☐ The students were not mature enough to safely work with machinery or be in workshop situations
   b) ☐ The students were late in choosing courses and the classes were full
   c) ☐ Other *(please elaborate)*

6. What has been the most successful aspect of providing STAR courses to secondary schools for your organisation?

7. What has been the most difficult aspect of providing STAR courses to secondary schools for your organisation?

8. What, if anything, would you suggest the Ministry of Education change so that STAR might work better?

9. Is there anything else you would like to add about the operation of STAR organisation?

Thank you for your time.

Code Number:
NZCER use only:

APPENDIX THREE: STAGE THREE

Student Interview

1. Which STAR courses are you taking this year?

Student/Name	Year Level	Courses
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		

2. What have you liked about your STAR courses?

3. What haven't you liked? Is there anything that you've found hard? Is there anything that has worried you?

4. How did you find out about STAR?

No.Students	Information Source	Interesting Comments
	School careers/transition advisor	
	School STAR co-ordinator	
	Other teachers	
	Pamphlets/notices	
	Employers or industry reps	
	Friends	
	Family	
	Other	

5. Did you get any special information or advice about doing a STAR course? Who from?

No.Students	Information Source	Interesting Comments
	School careers/transition advisor	
	School STAR co-ordinator	
	Other teachers	
	Tertiary providers (university or polytechnic liaison officer)	
	Employers or industry reps	
	Friends	
	Family	
	Other	

Code Number:
NZCER use only:

6. What made you decide to do STAR? What attracted you to the course?

No.Students	Decisionmaking	Interesting Comments
	Workplace experience	
	Leads to a job	
	Qualifications, e.g., unit standards	
	Interest/enjoyment of subject	
	Doing well in related subject(s)	
	Friend(s) were doing STAR/suggested I do it	
	Teacher suggested I join	
	Family suggested I join	
	Wasn't doing well at other subjects	
	I liked the teacher	
	The work is easy	
	Other	

7. What would you have probably done this year if you had not done STAR?

No.Students	Activities	Interesting Comments
	Not sure	
	Stayed at school	
	Gone to another school	
	Gone to a tertiary training course	
	Got a job	
	Travelled overseas	
	Left school without a job	
	Other	

8. What are you hoping to get out of STAR?

No.Students	Hopes	Interesting Comments
	Qualifications (Unit standards, National Certificate)	
	Job skills	
	Experiences (what work is like)	
	Job prospects	
	Attitudes/motivation/social skills/self esteem	
	Career goals/sense of direction	
	Other	

9. Do you see STAR leading you into *other* qualifications, courses, or training?

No.Students	Qualifications	Interesting Comments
	Not sure what type	
	Vocational/trades (e.g., hairdresser, apprenticeship)	
	Degree or higher	
	Tertiary other than trades or degree (such as polytechnic diplomas, e.g., journalism)	
	Other	

10. What is the main thing you plan to do when you finish your STAR courses?

No.Students	Future Plans	Interesting Comments
	Not sure	
	Stay at school	
	Tertiary training course	
	Get a holiday job/temporary job	
	Get a permanent job	
	Leave school without a job	
	Travel overseas	
	Other	

11. Do you have any ideas about the sort of job or career you would like to have in the future?

No.Students	Career	Interesting Comments
	Job related to STAR	
	Job related to other school subject	
	Job related to a completely different area	
	Other	

Code Number:
NZCER use only:

12. Which ethnic group(s) do you belong to? (you can have more than one. It can be helpful to tell students your own background)

No.Students	Ethnic Groups	Interesting Comments
	Maori	
	Cook Island Maori	
	Pakeha/European	
	Samoan	
	Tongan	
	Fijian	
	Other Pacific Nation	
	Asian	
	Indian	
	Other	

13. This is the last question. Are there any other things you would like to say about the STAR that we have not already talked about?

Code Number:

NZCER use only:

Student Consent Form

Evaluation of STAR (Secondary-Tertiary Alignment Resource)
New Zealand Council for Educational Research (NZCER)

I have read the Student Information sheet and understand what my involvement will be.

I agree to participate in the project and provide the information that is asked of me.

I also understand that I may withdraw form the project at any time.

Please print your name clearly.

First Name: _____

Last Name: _____

School: _____ Class: _____

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Please put this form and the questionnaire in the envelope at the front of the class..

Thank you for your participation and help.

Code Number:

NZCER use only:

Co-ordinator Interview

(NB: Because each interview schedule was unique to each school, this schedule of questions is a selection of illustrative questions from the various interview schedules).

1. How did you get the STAR co-ordinator job?

2. How does the STAR co-ordinator position work – is it part of a transition team?

3. Tell me more about / how does in work in practice / at what points during the year….

   Q4a) Liaison with external providers

   Q4b) Liaison with departments within school re: timetabling

   Q4e) Advising students on taking STAR courses

   Q4f) Assessing needs of students on taking STAR courses

   Q4h) Gathering summative evidence data

4. You mention that the STAR co-ordinator's position is fairly important in the school. Can you say more about this?

5. It sounds like STAR courses are mostly for students not achieving academically at your school. Do you get students who have academic interests wanting to take STAR courses? What happens with those students?

6. Your questionnaire mentions assessing student needs for STAR through methods listed below. Are any of these formal, timetabled or pre-arranged regular meetings?

   - face to face contact between STAR co-ordinator and student
   - surveys of student interest in courses
   - parent or community surveys
   - staff meetings or discussions – are these formal or informal?

7. Can you tell me some more about the challenges you have faced in terms of travel costs for students.

8. You say in the questionnaire that you contract different external providers every year, depending on student need. How much do the needs change from year to year? And how do you go about picking an external provider?

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9. You mentioned how important auditing is to ensure appropriate funds are transferred over in total each year. Can you say more about what you mean here?

10. How does the school deal with students whose behaviour (e.g. truancy) excludes them from STAR courses?

11. Can you give some examples of students you have seen STAR courses benefit particularly? (thinking of academically extended student and students who haven't achieved academically).

12. You mention that you've had difficulties in the past with external providers – poor teaching quality and too little teaching time on the course. Can you say more about that?

13. Is there anything you would like to change about your STAR programme that you think would benefit students more or better meet their needs? (i.e. what is your vision?)

Final Question:

14. If you were advising another school about to set up STAR programmes, what would you say? What have you learned along the way that you can pass on (perhaps so that the other school doesn't have to learn it the hard way)?

Code Number:

NZCER use only:

STAR Co-ordinator Consent Form

Evaluation of STAR (Secondary-Tertiary Alignment Resource)

I agree to participate in the project and provide the information that is asked of me.

I also understand that I may withdraw from the project at any time.

Please print your name clearly.

First Name: _____

Last Name: _____

School: _____

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Thank you for your participation and help.