

# PACIFIC RESEARCH AND POLICY CENTRE

## PACIFIC KNOWLEDGE RESEARCH HUB

## ‘Bobbie maths’ raising Pasifika achievement

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*A revolution in maths achievement using a culturally-tailored approach developed by Associate Professor Roberta (Bobbie) Hunter at Massey University is attracting worldwide attention, and making a difference in the lives of South Auckland school children.*

### Background

Dubbed ‘Bobbie maths’, this approach aims to raise maths achievement amongst Pasifika students in low decile schools, using culturally-based examples and contexts, such as the weight of a taro, or dimensions of a tapa cloth. [A/Prof Hunter’s](#) approach is a major factor in breaking down barriers that inhibit many from engaging and achieving in maths. Its success hinges on training teachers to understand the approach and to learn how to facilitate it through drawing on cultural contexts that reflect the lives of their students. This means involving parents and communities too.

### Rationale

This approach aligns with the Ministry of Education’s Pacific Education Plan 2013-2017 to ensure all Pasifika learners are participating, engaging and achieving in education, secure in their identities, languages and cultures. It can also have additional benefits for student learning across all subjects and adapted to different cultures.

### Achievements

Otuomoetai Intermediate in Tauranga won the Supreme Prime Minister’s Award for Education in 2014, with accelerated mathematics achievement based on Dr Hunter’s approach noted as one of the attributes they were commended for.

### Recommendations

Evaluate the method and success of the programme, and provide professional development and training to teachers in the facilitation of this cultural approach, with the aim of rolling the model out in low decile schools across the country.

*“I believe if you improve things from the bottom up, the New Zealand figures will improve overall” (A/Prof. Hunter)*

For more information go to the [PRPC website](#) or contact [Litea Meo-Sewabu](#).

### Key Points:

- Culturally tailored approach to maths aims to raise maths achievement amongst Pasifika children in low decile schools
- Major factor in breaking down barriers to engaging and achieving in maths
- Success hinges on training teachers to draw on cultural contexts that reflect the lives of their students
- This approach can have benefits for learning across all subjects and adapted to different cultures