

SmartWaikato's



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Secondary School Employer Partnerships

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## 2017- 18 SSEP Evaluation and Next Steps

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September 2018



TRANSFORMATIVE  
REAL  
FOUNDATIONAL  
INSPIRATIONAL  
RESULTS

**SECONDARY SCHOOL EMPLOYER PARTNERSHIPS (SSEP)**



Smart Waikato’s Secondary School-Employer Partnerships (SSEP) are formal relationships where employer groups from priority sectors link into school faculties at Year 9/10, supporting contextualised learning at subject level and introduce students to a wide range of careers.

SSEP is proudly sponsored by Waikato Means Business, WEL Energy Trust, Mercury-Waikato Tainui Partnership, COGS, DV Bryant Trust, Glenice and John Gallagher Foundation, Waikato Farmers Trust, Skycity Hamilton, and Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment (MBIE).

**Smart Waikato** is a charitable trust formed in 2009 to empower Waikato youth through education to employment pathways. Smart Waikato has extensive networks across both education and industry groups and has led the SSEP project since its inception in 2015. Smart Waikato Trust works closely with the Ministry of Education to ensure SSEP supports Ministry objectives and complements national initiatives.

MANY THANKS TO OUR SUPPORTERS



## Executive Summary

Smart Waikato's Secondary School Employer Partnerships (SSEP) sees a range of employer partners working alongside teachers and students to create classroom and workplace activities that link curriculum to the world of work. By creating stronger connections between education and industry, the goal of Secondary School Employer Partnerships (SSEP) is to improve student retention, achievement and education-to-employment transitions. SSEP targets junior secondary school students as a foundation to informing senior school, tertiary and career pathways. SSEP is a medium-term economic development strategy to address future workforce gaps and skills issues in Waikato.

2017 was the second year of SSEP following the successful 2016 pilot. In 2017, 12 Waikato Secondary Schools participated in SSEP, including the five pilot schools (Fairfield College, Hamilton Boys High School, Hauraki Plains College, Morrinsville College and Thames High School) and seven new schools – Cambridge High School, Fraser High School, Huntly College, Ngaruawahia High School, Rototuna Junior High School, Te Kauwhata College and Waikato Diocesan School for Girls. The full 2017 cohort involved 1440 Year 9 and 10 students, 101 employer partners and 56 teachers across maths, English, science, technology and business subjects.

Quantitative and qualitative data was collected at the end of the 2017 school year from students, teachers and employer partners to measure the impact of SSEP on these three key stakeholders. A Hamilton City Council senior analyst oversaw survey design and independently conducted and verified data analysis. Compared to 2016 data, the impact of SSEP on the 2017 cohort of students was equal to, or even stronger than in the previous year. In 2017, 79% of students said SSEP helped them understand why they are studying the subject at school. 78% said that SSEP helped them when thinking about their future career. 84% said it changed the way they felt about what they could achieve and 62% of students said SSEP increased the likelihood they will stay in Waikato when they leave school.

The 2017 student cohort were also asked to rate their attitudes toward school and aspirations for their future at the start and again at end of the year. Following their year of SSEP activities, students' intention to stay in school and qualification aspirations increased by 30% and their interest in the SSEP subject was raised by 50%.

A control group of Year 10 science students at Cambridge High School where half the student cohort did not participate in SSEP revealed that SSEP students are 33% more likely to have a better idea about future careers, 29% more likely to think they will stay in school longer, 24% more likely to think they will stay in Waikato when they leave school and 23% more likely to be interested in the subject and understand why they are learning it at school than students who did not participate in the programme.

Separate analysis of data from Huntly College and Ngaruawahia High Schools, two low decile, high Maori population cohorts saw a significant rise in students' intentions to stay in school and a lift in their qualifications aspirations. At the end of the year following SSEP 73% of Huntly and Ngaruawahia students aspired to achieving NCEA Level 2 or above – up 20% from the beginning of the year.

The impact of SSEP on participating teachers was also significant. Of the 23 teacher survey respondents, 100% saw industry input as a valuable teaching resource, 97% saw a key benefit of SSEP being developing new relationships with the business community, 96% said SSEP supported their professional development, 87% said SSEP supports their ability to contextualise the curriculum and 87% said SSEP engages students in their learning.

36 employer partners responded to the survey and listed key benefits of SSEP to them as personal/professional development of staff (92%), the ability to enhance the profile of their business/industry (85%) and the ability to influence student subject choices (78%) and influence career decisions (72%).

As the five original SSEP schools come to the end of the three-year pilot it is clear from teacher and employer feedback that the schools are not yet equipped to maintain sustainable SSEPs alone and require ongoing support from Smart Waikato Trust. The desire of SSEP pilot school Principals and Ministry of Education to investigate options into building on SSEP into senior school initiatives supports the next stage of SSEP to feed into vocational pathways and education-to-employment transitions.

Key recommendations include:

1. Access further funding so that more secondary schools can participate in the SSEP programme.
2. Participating schools and employers follow best practice guidelines as developed by Smart Waikato Trust to maximise outcomes.
3. Extend the initial pilot to include development of a SSEP Resource Centre to build capability in schools and businesses.
4. Schools leverage SSEP as a conduit to informing and facilitating senior secondary school/tertiary pathways and employment transitions by integrating careers information and relevant tertiary pathways with SSEP experiences.
5. Smart Waikato Trust works with SSEP businesses through Smart Transitions to develop more work experience opportunities, cadetships, apprenticeships and entry level jobs as a basis to developing a skills pipeline.
6. Employers leverage their connections with schools to offer these work and training opportunities to students transitioning into employment.

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 What is SSEP?

Smart Waikato's Secondary Schools Employer Partnerships (SSEP) is a priority initiative of Waikato Means Business – the regional economic development labour market group. SSEP is supported by Waikato Means Business, WEL Energy Trust, Mercury, Waikato Tainui, COGS, DV Bryant Trust, Glenice and John Gallagher Foundation, Skycity Hamilton, Waikato Farmers Trust and Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment (MBIE).

SSEPs are 3-year formal relationships between secondary schools and local employers who link into school faculties at Year 9/10, supporting contextualised learning in the classroom and introducing students to a wide range of careers.

## 1.2 What is the aim of SSEP?

SSEP has been developed by Smart Waikato Trust to help address future workforce gaps and skills issues in Waikato by introducing students to key industries, supporting informed career decision making and encouraging young people to stay in the region.

Higher levels of skills and knowledge attainment for effective workforce participation has been directly correlated with retention rates at school with the risk of unemployment significantly higher for those with Level 1 or no qualification (Ministry of Education, 2018).

The short-term aim of SSEP is to improve student retention, achievement and education-to-employment transitions with the medium-term objective of developing the skills pipeline for the region.

SSEP is targeted at junior high school students. At Years 9 and 10, core subjects are still compulsory, the curriculum is more flexible, and students can be exposed to different industries and careers information before making critical senior school subject choices that can impact on their tertiary education and career options. By developing collaborative relationships between education and industry and exposing young people to real local career possibilities, SSEP provides a strong platform to start addressing future workforce skills and gaps in Waikato.

SSEP provides a framework that brings together education and the local business community.

## 1.3 How does SSEP work?

Each SSEP school nominates one or two key subject areas at Year 9 or 10 level to introduce SSEP (maths, English, science, technology or business studies).

Smart Waikato identifies and on-boards a range of businesses representing key industries in the region that support those curriculum areas. Employers include representatives of primary industries, healthcare, information communication technology, engineering, trades or business sectors.

Smart Waikato introduces school and employer partners, provides the framework for SSEP, facilitates, supports and evaluates SSEP at each school.

Teachers and employers work together to create classroom and workplace activities linking curriculum to the business context.

## 1.4 SSEP in 2017

Following the successful 2016 SSEP pilot in five Waikato secondary schools, a further seven schools introduced SSEP in 2017. Schools included the original five of Fairfield College, Hamilton Boys' High School, Hauraki Plains College, Morrinsville College and Thames High School and new schools – Cambridge High School, Fraser High School, Huntly College, Ngaruawahia High School, Rototuna Junior High School, Te Kauwhata College and Waikato Diocesan School for Girls. Across the 12 schools 56 teachers, 101 different employers and 1440 students participated in SSEP.

## 1.5 Scope of report

In addition to reporting key findings from the 2017 cohort of students, teachers and employers, special interest results are included from Cambridge High School, Huntly College and Ngaruawahia High School.

In 2017 Cambridge High School elected to start SSEP with half its 300-plus Year 10 science student cohort. This enabled a control group comparison between an equivalent group of students who participated in SSEP against one that did not. The results have been analysed and are contained in this report.

Huntly College and Ngaruawahia High School are decile one and two secondary schools with over 50% Māori on the school roll. Ministry of Education (2016) defines priority learners as “groups of students who have been identified as historically not experiencing success in the New Zealand schooling system. These include many Māori and Pacific learners, those from low socio-economic backgrounds, and students with special education needs.” As both schools introduced SSEP to their Year 9 and 10 students through science and maths in 2017 there was an opportunity to examine the student data from these schools separately to evaluate the impact of SSEP on this group.

December 2018 marks the end of the 3-year pilot for the original five SSEP schools. In 2017 pilot school teachers and employer partners were also asked for feedback about the sustainability of SSEP if Smart Waikato were step back from coordinating the programme in those schools. Their responses, along with subsequent interview feedback from the five school principals are included.

This report contains a summary of key findings and immediate outcomes of the 2017 SSEP programme and recommendations for the growth and long-term sustainability of SSEP.

## 2. Method

Quantitative and qualitative data was collected at the end of the 2017 school year from students, teachers and employer partners to measure the impact of SSEP via an online survey using SurveyMonkey.

### 2.1 Student survey

The student survey was an adaptation of the SSEP pilot survey for comparative data. The main change to the 2017 survey was a shift to a single-measure design whereby 'distance travelled' was measured by students being asked firstly to rate their attitudes and aspirations at the beginning of the year (e.g. At the BEGINNING of this year, how interested were you in studying science at school?) and then to rate their attitudes and aspirations on the same dimensions at the time of completing the survey (e.g. NOW how interested are you in studying science at school?). Students rated their attitudes and aspirations on a 5-point Likert scale (e.g. 1= Not at all interested, to 5=Extremely interested). Some additional questions were also asked to capture information not collected in the 2016 pilot.

A control group at Cambridge High School was sent an equivalent survey to the participant group. The majority of questions were exactly the same, with the wording of only one group of questions adapted to apply to the control group. Instead of 'Has the experience of having business people in your classroom and going out to workplaces:' [made you more interested in science?] for example, the control group was asked 'Have your science classes this year:' [made you more interested in science?]. Teachers were sent the survey link and asked to have their students complete the survey. Student survey data was independently analysed by a Hamilton City Council statistician.

### 2.2 Teacher survey

All teachers participating in SSEP were sent the link and asked to complete the survey. Teachers were asked to rate several statements on a scale of 1 (low) to 5 (high) including engagement of students, value of industry as a teaching resource and the ability to contextualise the curriculum. They were asked to comment on their experience of SSEP, what went well and what could be improved upon and what they would say to others thinking of participating in SSEP. They were also asked to rate direct outcomes of being involved in the SSEP programme and whether they had engaged their employer partners in other areas of the school.

Teachers from the 5 pilot schools were also asked to share their ideas about what would be needed to ensure long-term sustainability of SSEP in their schools following the initial 3-year commitment.

### 2.3 Employer survey

All employers participating in SSEP were sent the link and asked to complete the survey. Employers were asked to rate several statements on a scale of 1 (low) to 5 (high) including the value of being involved in SSEP, the ability to showcase careers and the personal/professional development of staff involved. They were asked to comment on their experience of SSEP, what went well and what could be improved upon and what they would say to others thinking of participating in SSEP. They were also asked to rate direct outcomes for their organisation of being involved in SSEP and whether their involvement with the school has changed after participating in the programme.

Employers partnered with the 5 pilot schools were also asked to share their ideas about what would be needed to ensure long-term sustainability of SSEP in the pilot schools following the initial 3-year commitment.



# 3. Participants

## 3.1 Students

Responses were collected from 11 of the 12 schools but data from three schools were discarded due to incomplete surveys or because the school's level of engagement with its employer partners was too variable to gather reliable feedback. Of the remaining seven schools, 546 students completed the online survey.

## 3.2 Aggregate student cohort

Demographic breakdown of the 546 students included in the data analysis included: 73 Cambridge High School students (decile 9, Year 10 science), 72 Fairfield College students (decile 3, Year 10 maths), 72 Hamilton Boys' High School students (decile 7, Year 10 Information Technology), 74 Huntly College students (decile 1, Year 9 and 10 maths and science), 79 Morrinsville College students (decile 6, Year 9 science), 79 Ngaruawahia High School students (decile 2, year 9 and 10 maths and science), 45 Rototuna Junior High School students (decile 10, Year 9 and 10 maths and business studies) and 52 Thames High School students (decile 5, Year 10 business studies). In all, 54% were Year 10 students, 46% Year 9 students, 55% male, 45% female, 45% identified as NZ European, 29% Māori, 4% Pasifika, 6% Asian, 6% European, 10% other.

## 3.3 Cambridge High School control group

63 Year 10 science students from Cambridge High School completed the control group survey compared to 73 equivalent SSEP participants at the school. Students from both control and participant groups were of mixed ability and participated in SSEP or not based upon their teacher's participation in the programme. Two of the four teachers involved taught classes in both the control group and the participant group but due to timetabling not all their classes participated in SSEP.

## 3.4 Huntly College and Ngaruawahia High School cohort

Both Huntly College and Ngaruawahia High School introduced SSEP to their Year 9 and 10 cohorts across science and maths in 2017. Together, 54% were Year 9 and 46% Year 10 students. 54% were male and 46% female. 53% identified as Māori, 24% NZ European, 5% Pasifika, 2% Asian, 3% European, 13% other.

## 3.5 Teachers

23 teachers representing all 12 schools completed the survey. The teachers represent a range of faculties including maths, science, English, social studies/business and Information Technology.

## 3.6 Employers

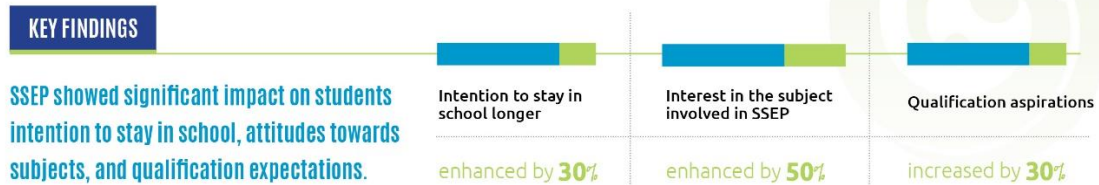
36 employers partnered with 10 schools, completed the survey. These employers represent a range of sectors including retail, hospitality, tourism, engineering, primary industries, banking, trades, council, manufacturing, information and communication technology, business, electricity supply, transport and health.

# 4. Results

2017 SSEP survey results show significant positive impact on students, teachers and employer partners.

## 4.1 Students

### 4.1.1 Aggregate student cohort



Ordered logit regression analysis was applied to compare students’ intention to stay at school, attitudes toward the subject and expectations of qualification attainment at the beginning of the year (before SSEP) and at the end of the year (after SSEP).

Results showed a significant positive shift in students’ ratings on these three dimensions after experiencing SSEP. Students’ intention to stay at school lengthened by 30%, attitudes toward the subject improved by 50% and expectations of qualification attainment raised by 30%.

#### Student feedback:

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*“Now I know I should stay in school to get a better job”*  
- Ngaruawahia High School student

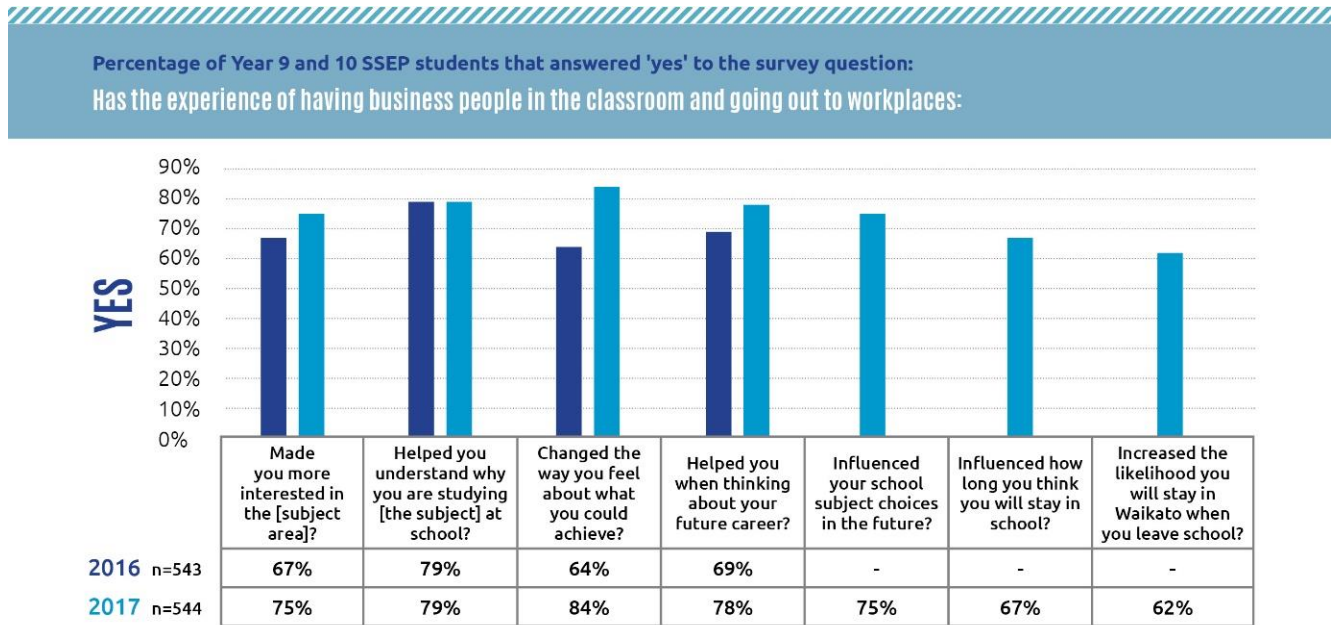
*“Since I now have a better understanding of science and how much our world revolves around it I’ve become more interested”*  
- Morrinsville College student

*“I’m really enjoying Maths n Science and I will push myself to get to the highest level as I can”*  
- Huntly College student

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Furthermore, the positive impact of SSEP saw 79% students reporting that SSEP helped them understand why they were studying the subject at school, 78% said it helped when thinking about their future career, 75% that it influenced their school subjects for the future and 62% that it increased the likelihood they will stay in the Waikato region when they leave school. Figure 1. shows a comparison of responses to these questions between the 2016 and 2017 cohort.

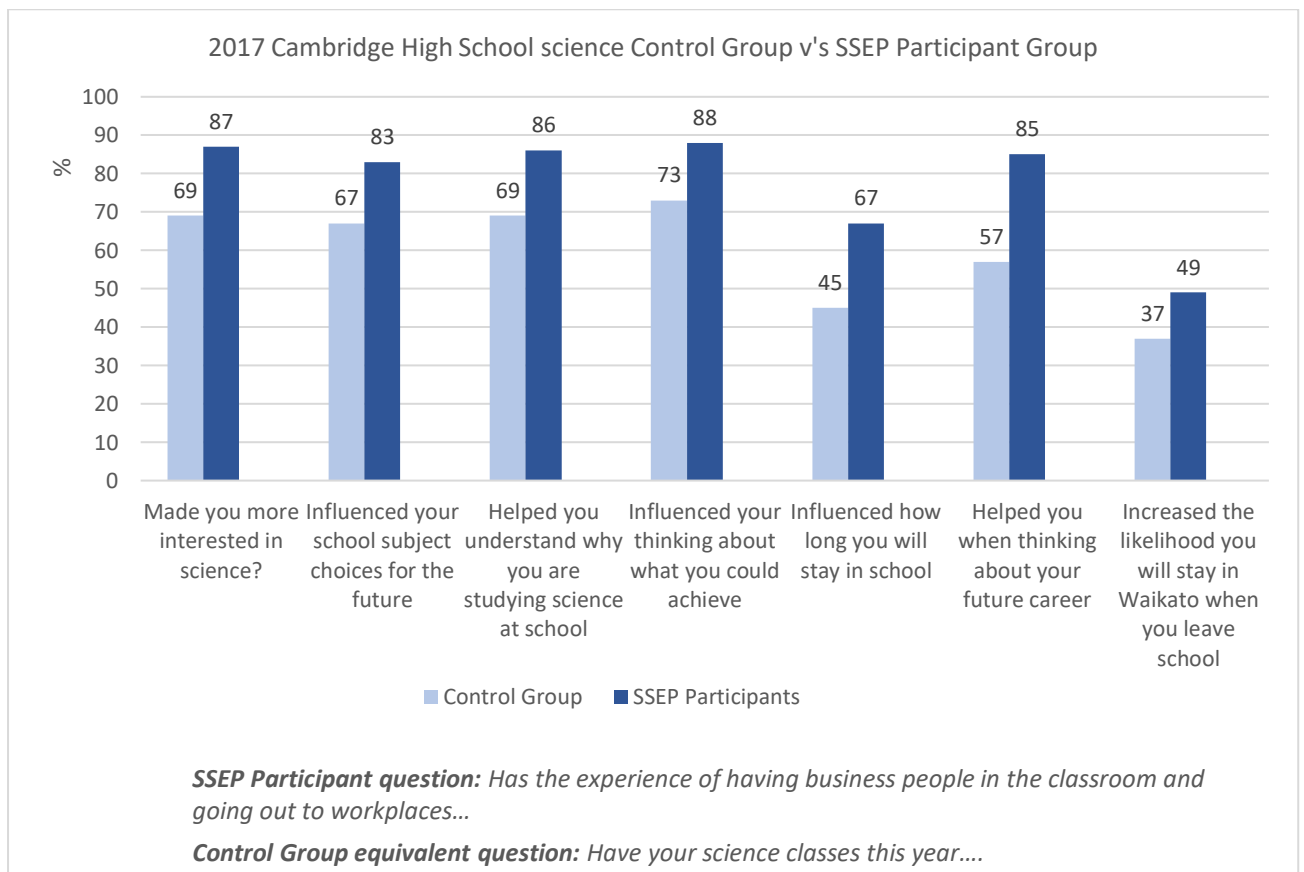
**Figure 1:** Comparison of 2016 and 2017 student cohort survey responses measuring the direct impact of SSEP on students. *N.b. where only 2017 data is reported the question was not asked in the 2016 survey.*



#### 4.1.2 Cambridge High School Control Group results

Comparing survey responses from a control group of Year 10 students at Cambridge High School that did not experience SSEP in their science classes with a group that did highlights the impact SSEP makes on students' aspirations and attitudes towards the subject. Figure 2 shows the difference in responses between these two otherwise equivalent groups of students.

**Figure 2:** Comparison of student survey results between Cambridge High School control group students (n=63) and SSEP participant students (n=73).



## Cambridge High School SSEP student feedback:

*"I have always loved science and the Biology here has been great. I liked that fact that we got to see what and how the stuff we are learning gets us into a job for our futures".*

*"The trip was good fun being able to see how the farm industry works, which is what I want to do when I'm older".*

*"I enjoyed learning about stuff that i would never have any interest in if those opportunities weren't given to me".*

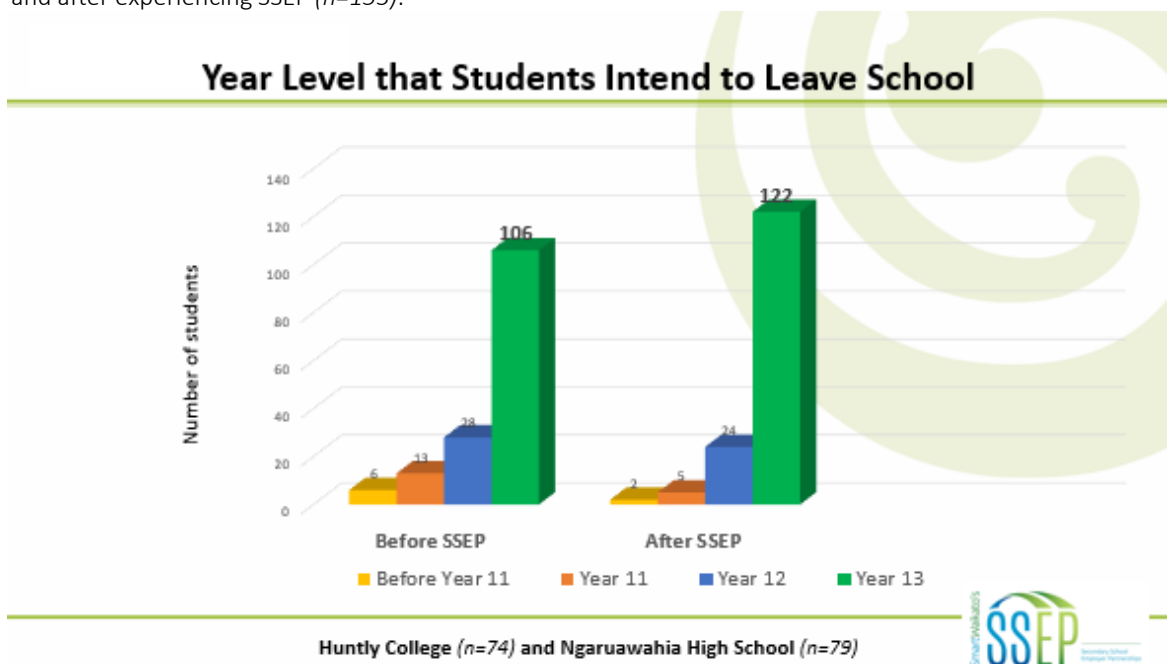
### 4.1.3 Huntly College and Ngaruawahia High School results

Results from 153 Huntly and Ngaruawahia schools' student survey data reveals a marked improvement in students' attitudes towards school and their learning.

Following SSEP only 4% of students reported they intended leaving school before Year 11, down from 12% at the start of the year. 80% of students said they will stay in school until Year 13, compared with 69% before SSEP.

Figure 3. shows students' intentions to leave school at the beginning of the year before SSEP, compared to their intentions at the end of the year after SSEP.

**Figure 3:** Comparison of Huntly College and Ngaruawahia High School students' intention to leave school before and after experiencing SSEP (n=153).



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*“it made me think to stay in school. it was awesome”.*

- Ngaruawahia High School student

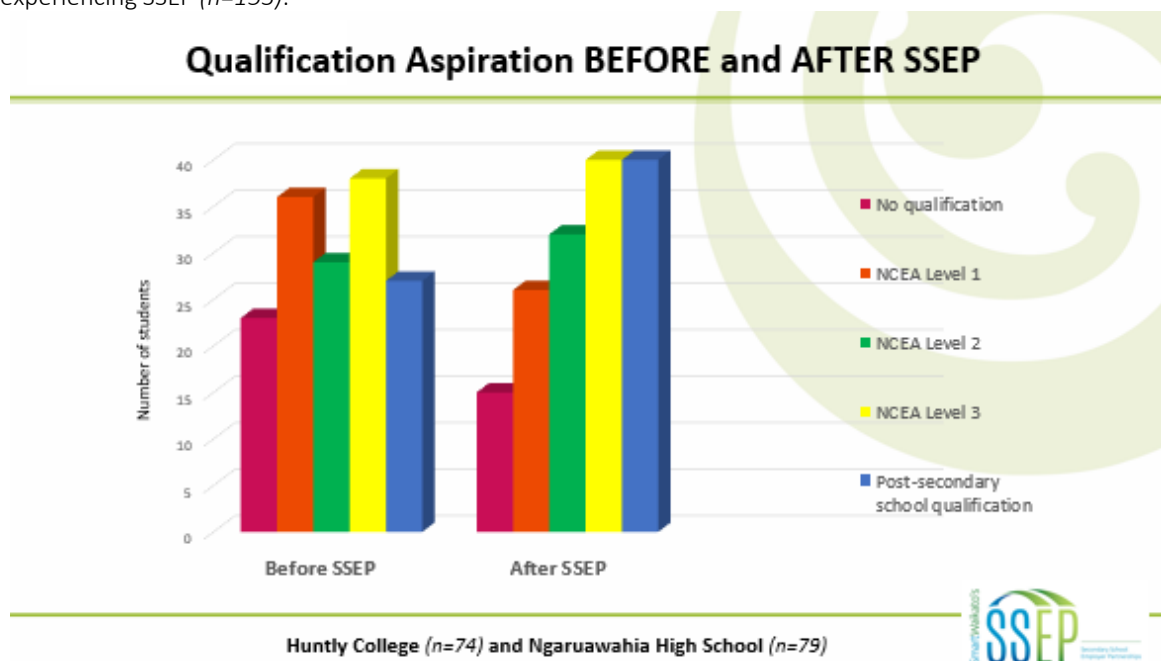
*“[What I got out of SSEP was] Gaining the skills and knowledge to carry on”.*

- Ngaruawahia High School student)

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Since SSEP has been introduced to Huntly and Ngaruawahia there has also been an increase in student achievement aspirations. As Figure 4 shows, those who aspired to NCEA Level 1 or less has dropped from 39% to 27% while those who aspire to NCEA Level 2 or higher has risen from 61% by 20% (12 percentage points) to 73%.

**Figure 4:** Comparison of Huntly College and Ngaruawahia High School students’ qualification aspirations before and after experiencing SSEP (n=153).



**89% agree that SSEP has influenced their thinking of what they could achieve.**

**86% agree that SSEP has helped when thinking about their future career.**

**80% of Huntly and Ngaruawahia students agree that SSEP has made them more interested in maths and science.**

**81% agree that SSEP has influenced how long they think they will stay in school.**

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*“[I am now] very interested [in maths and science] because I want to do better than my parents. [I enjoyed] how they taught us what they did in their job and how they did it”.*

- Ngaruawahia High School student

*“[I enjoyed] seeing new things”*

- Huntly College student

*“It was good to have input from someone experienced in life and it influenced me very much”*

- Huntly College student

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## 4.2 Teachers

Teacher survey responses illustrate the significant positive impact SSEP has on teachers' personal and professional development, engagement of students and the ability to help teachers contextualise the curriculum.

97% of teachers said they have developed new relationships with the business community as a result of SSEP.

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*"SSEP allows you to create genuine and authentic learning experiences and give students the opportunity to see and experience the work place".*

*- Rototuna Junior High School teacher*

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87% of teachers agree that SSEP provides the ability to contextualise the curriculum

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*"Great way to provide contextual learning in your area and allow students to see the alternative job opportunities that might come their way".*

*- Waikato Diocesan School for Girls teacher*

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100% of teachers agree that industry input as a teaching resource is valuable

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*"This is a massive opportunity for students to experience professional situations where our subject is used".*

*- Fairfield College teacher*

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87% of teachers agree that SSEP helps to engage students in their learning

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*"SSEP has been a great experience for us and our students. We have had 3 boys really engage in school after being a part of the SSEP experience. This ignited a spark in the students and has given 3 of them a direction that they want to pursue as a result".*

*- Rototuna Junior High School teacher*

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96% of teachers agree that working with industry partners as personal/professional development is valuable

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*"It was a great experience for me and my students. The concepts covered by the employer partners correlated with the Science concepts taught at that time. Visit to the work place was an eye opener to many and students were fascinated to find out the application of Science in real world situations".*

*- Fraser High School teacher*

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92% agree that SSEP provides the ability to show students the importance of studying their subject

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*“One student who was always sat outside of Maths, went on the Farm visit. There was a financial consultant there talking to the students about saving. This kid answered the compound interest question with no hesitation. This meant he could demonstrate a skill which I had never seen before, which led to coaching conversations re careers and trying to stay in Maths”.*

*- Cambridge High School teacher*

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Half of the 16 teachers responding have involved their SSEP employer partners in other areas of the school beyond SSEP including:

- Guest speaker in senior students’ classes (3)
- Introduced employers to other teaching staff in the school (3)
- Taken senior students into an employer’s workplace (2)
- Involved employers in careers events (2)
- Recommended senior students for job opportunities with employer partners (2)
- Received employer input into curriculum or assessment outside of SSEP (2)
- Involved employers in other school projects or activities outside of SSEP (1)

### 4.3 Employers

Employer survey responses highlight the benefits to industry engagement with students through SSEP.

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*“It’s great to feel like you’re giving back to the students & it doesn’t take up as much of your valuable time as you may think”.*

*- Kerr and Ladbrook Catering representative*

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85% of employers agree that SSEP enhances the profile of their business/industry

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*“I really enjoyed the opportunity working with students and teachers. Being able to share my knowledge, experience and passion for the electricity industry was a privilege. There were some students who I made a connection with and I am confident that they made the most of the opportunity afforded to them”.*

*- Mercury Energy representative*

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83% of employers agree that SSEP provides the ability to showcase their industry and 89% agree that involvement with SSEP is valuable for their organisation

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*“Really positive experience. We enjoyed hosting the students & teachers on site and then when we came to Huntly to participate in the class room. We learnt a lot and was amazed at some of the students and teachers”.*

*- Waikato Milking Systems representative*

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86% agree that involvement with SSEP is valuable for their industry

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*"I think the evidence-based design for SSEP's creates a solid foundation for a great opportunity for you and your business to both provide for your future work force by inspiring local youth to engage with your enterprise / sector and for you to make a material contribution to the Waikato community".*

*- Mercury Energy Manager*

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92% agree that involvement with SSEP is valuable for the personal/professional development of staff

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*"I'd encourage anyone to use SSEP as an opportunity for personal development or to develop those within their team that want to develop their coaching/mentoring skills".*

*- ASB Bank representative*

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78% agree that SSEP provides the ability to influence student subject choices and 72% agree that SSEP provides the ability to influence student career decisions

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*"It was great to be involved in this type of initiative and to link business more closely to education at secondary schools. There were some good ideas and thinking and some great passionate students".*

*- SkyCity Hamilton representative*

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## 4.4 Results of teacher/employer SSEP sustainability questions

Teachers and employers of the five SSEP pilot schools, now in their third year of SSEP, were asked to comment on the long-term sustainability of SSEP in those schools.

Teachers and employers both identified a range of actions they could take within their own organisations to ensure long-term sustainability of SSEP such as having more than one main contact person in the school/company and ensuring copies of presentations, plans and activities are stored in a centralised place in the event of key personnel leaving.

4 out of 6 teachers and 10 out of 13 employers also indicated a minimum level of continued support from Smart Waikato will be required to ensure SSEP continues.

**Teachers indicated they would like external support to:**

- Organise group meetings at the start and end of year (4)
- Help them find replacement employers in the event of attrition (4)
- Induct new business representatives in case of employer turnover and ensure contacts are current (4)
- Follow up with employers difficult to get hold of (3)
- Provide an induction package for new staff (4)
- Share ideas/resources from other schools (3)
- Communications between schools, employers and media (3)
- Mediate any issues between partners (2)

**Employer feedback regarding Smart Waikato's continued involvement with pilot schools included:**

- "Small budget for the programme to continue, additional emphasis for parents at home to be aware that this is an opportunity not given to many"
- "Definitely the beginning meet and greet and the marketing materials/and a mid-course pop in to ensure it's all on track"
- "Maintain an employer/school database and a list of additional employers that could be picked up if any drop out"
- "Perhaps a couple of meetings per year to see how it's going"
- "Assist with the selling of the 'vision'"
- "Assess the programme and make changes as the environment changes"
- "Communication"
- "Perhaps some form of reporting to ensure programme delivery is accurate and consistent"

## 4.5 Pilot school Principals sustainability feedback

In 2018 the five pilot school Principals were interviewed about the value of SSEP to their school and thoughts about sustainability. Their feedback has been summarised below.

**Value of SSEP:**

- Introduction of new businesses to school
- The brokering of relationships
- PD opportunities for staff
- Academic staff developing relationships with business community
- Increased collaboration between staff

- Not just about the focus subject, but the importance of other school subjects, and employment/employability
- Opportunities for students to see relevance of their learning and be exposed to soft skills required to be successful in life

**Sustainability of SSEP in the school:**

- Careers team best placed to drive SSEP long term (3 of the 5 schools)
- Need someone pushing to make it happen or it could easily slide
- We need better connection between careers and curriculum staff
- Would need commitment from the whole school so it becomes business as usual and integrated into curriculum development
- We are really pleased to have been involved in the pilot and want to continue to do so
- SSEP is written into our school's strategic plan/charter (2 of the 5 schools)

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*"[This type of employer engagement] would never have happened without SSEP"*  
– Principal of Fairfield College

*"[Smart Waikato has been] A critical friend – someone outside of education to chew things over with. A touchstone, a different perspective, a sounding board."*  
– Principal of Thames High School

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## 5. Discussion

Results from the 2017 survey data shows SSEP continues to make a significant impact on a large cohort of students across multiple schools.

A marked improvement in students' attitudes towards school and their learning following their involvement with SSEP includes a 50 percent increase in students' interest in the SSEP subject, and intentions to stay in school longer and achievement aspirations raised by 30 percent. This demonstrates clear progression toward achieving the first two goals of SSEP, to improve student retention and achievement at school. This trend was seen particularly strongly in the Huntly and Ngaruawahia cohort of students. As a high proportion of students from this group are Māori and/or from low socio-economic backgrounds, statistically and historically, this cohort of students is particularly vulnerable to low education and employment outcomes. To raise the aspirations of these students are the important first steps to engage rangatahi in their studies and better prepare them for transition into employment.

From an economic development perspective, with skills shortages in key industries on the rise, it will become increasingly important to retain youth in the Waikato to support the region's skills pipeline. 62 percent of students said they are more likely to stay in Waikato when they leave school as a result of participating in SSEP.

While the third aim of SSEP to improve transitions into employment will not start to be realised for another couple of years, the influence of having employers in the classroom and going out on workplace visits clearly supports students' thinking about their future subject choices and career options. Furthermore, while the focus of SSEP is on years 9 and 10, many teachers are leveraging on their SSEP relationships to involve employers in other areas of the school, including activities with senior students.

As a result of SSEP 97 percent of teachers have formed new relationships with people from the business community. Teachers are significant influencers on student scholastic and career decision making. Better connections between industry and educators are vital to informing teachers and students about industry needs, changes and trends so students are better prepared to transition into the world of work. Anecdotal and formal evidence clearly shows that SSEP is providing a strong platform for this knowledge sharing.

Following the 2017 data collection, Principals of the five 2016 SSEP pilot schools have all been interviewed. Each has declared their intention to build on the business relationships established through SSEP and are "determined" to continue SSEP at the end of the 3-year pilot (end of school year 2018). However, teacher and employer feedback from the 2017 surveys indicate the schools are not yet ready to 'go it alone'.

## 6. Recommendations

- 6.1 Access further funding so that all Waikato Secondary Schools can participate in Smart Waikato's SSEP.
- 6.2 Participating schools and employers follow best practice guidelines as developed by Smart Waikato Trust.
- 6.3 Extend the SSEP pilot for one year to consult with the 5 pilot schools in order to develop an effective SSEP Resource Centre to build capability in schools and support the long-term sustainability of SSEP. Schools and employers should have input into its development along with other stakeholders to maximise value potential. The SSEP Resource Centre could ultimately become a membership-based support centre that includes teacher/employer support, activity guidelines and examples, induction material for new teachers and business representatives, independent evaluation services, careers and tertiary education information, a regulatory framework to ensure continuity and quality of SSEP partnerships and activities and other value-add services as identified during the pilot extension.
- 6.4 Leverage the relationships established through SSEP to support the next stage of informing and facilitating senior secondary school-tertiary pathways and employment transitions. At the school level this would mean increased involvement of careers staff with SSEP and closer school relationships with industry training organisations and tertiary providers. A planning session with local tertiary providers has been scheduled as part of the first phase. For employers, the opportunity build on school relationships by developing work experience, internships, cadetships and entry level jobs that could be offered through contacts at school and/or tertiary providers. Smart Waikato's Smart Transitions and FutureForce® Job Board are available to support employers develop and advertise these types of opportunities.

## 7. Conclusion

The positive impact of SSEP on students, teachers and employers has been well substantiated over the past two years. Embedding SSEP in the existing 22 Waikato secondary schools and engaging the remaining 30 into the programme remains a priority. However, attention must now be turned to building upon the SSEP platform into the next stage of integration into the senior school and education-to-employment transitions.

SSEP should not be viewed as a stand-alone intervention. The next phase for SSEP school and employer partners is to look for ways to engage industry at the senior level of the school to leverage on junior school connections.

By working with employers to develop cadetships, apprenticeships and other entry level jobs providing career stepping stones into their organisations, these can be fed back into the schools through SSEP partnership networks. The development of workplace opportunities that connect in with the tertiary sector will ensure ongoing work-related formal training and development for young employees. With continued support and a commitment to building on the platform of SSEP the Waikato region will have a strong foundation for a sustainable skills pipeline.

## 8. References

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# Acknowledgements

In addition to our valued sponsors, Smart Waikato wishes to thank and acknowledge the time and expertise of Hamilton City Council Senior Analyst Upananda Paragahawewa and the hundreds of teachers and business representatives across the Waikato region creating inspirational SSEP opportunities for thousands of rangatahi.

The image displays a grid of logos for SSEP employers at various schools in the Waikato region. The logos are organized into columns and rows, each representing a different school and its associated sponsors. The schools listed include Cambridge High School (Science), Huntly College (Maths and Science), Thames High School (Business), Fairfield College (Maths), Morrinsville College (Science), Forest View High School (Science and Technology), Ngaruawahia High School (Maths and Science), Fraser High School (Science), Otorohanga College (Maths), Piopio College (Maths, Science and Technology), Putaruru College (Science and Technology), Hauraki Plains College (English), and Hillcrest High School (Science). The logos represent a wide variety of businesses and organizations, including agricultural companies like Fonterra, Balle Bros, and Mercury; construction and engineering firms like Deloitte, Foster Construction, and J Swap; and other local businesses like Waikato District Council, Waikato District Health Board, and various community centers. The grid is color-coded with green and blue headers for each school's section.

as at August 2018



For more on SSEP see:  
[www.smartwaikato.co.nz](http://www.smartwaikato.co.nz)

*“Please pass on my greatest appreciation to the team that took us around the plant yesterday. It was learning that we cannot replicate in our school setting and it places our students and teachers in a much stronger position to make choices that are going to produce more positive results and enable all of us to be greater contributors to the communities that we are part of.”*  
 - Richard Crawford, Principal of Fairfield College