



Board Employment Responsibilities:
Linking charter targets to appraisal in
primary schools



February 2013

Foreword

The Education Review Office (ERO) is an independent government department that reviews the performance of New Zealand's schools and early childhood services, and reports publicly on what it finds.

The whakataukī of ERO demonstrates the importance we place on the educational achievement of our children and young people:

*Ko te Tamaiti te Pūtake o te Kaupapa
The Child – the Heart of the Matter*

In our daily work we have the privilege of going into early childhood services and schools, giving us a current picture of what is happening throughout the country. We collate and analyse this information so that it can be used to benefit the education sector and, therefore, the children in our education system. ERO's reports contribute sound information for work undertaken to support the Government's policies.

Principal and teacher appraisal play a key role in improving outcomes for students. This report focuses on appraisal and school targets, and provides good examples to help boards and school leaders strengthen their own appraisal practices.

Successful delivery in education relies on many people and organisations across the community working together for the benefit of children and young people. We trust the information in ERO's evaluations will help them in their work.



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Overview

This is the first in a series of evaluations related to principal and teacher appraisal in New Zealand schools.

These evaluations are intended to provide information to help boards and school leaders strengthen appraisal practice and links with school development to improve outcomes for their students.

Appraisal of principals and teachers became mandatory in 1997. The Ministry of Education published a series of guidelines and information to help boards and principals develop and implement a performance appraisal system. The guidelines state that appraisal is intended to foster improved teaching by connecting the principal's development goals to the school's strategic goals and priorities. Performance appraisal establishes objectives for teachers and leads to professional growth through reflection and formal feedback.

Information for this report came from ERO's evaluation of schools' processes and practices to accelerate the progress of priority learners in 178 primary schools. As part of the evaluation in Terms 2 and 3, 2012, ERO investigated whether primary school leaders' and teachers' appraisal was linked to charter targets or school achievement goals. ERO also sought to identify some of the practices found in schools where appraisal did link to charter targets and goals for priority learners.

In one-third of schools, the principal's appraisal was linked to targets or strategic goals. Examples included goals related to accelerating achievement for priority learners, improving achievement for all students, or improving teaching. Teachers' appraisals were related to targets in one-third of schools. The principal's appraisal also had links with targets or goals in some, but not all, of these schools. Goals for principals were more likely to refer to raising achievement for students or priority learners throughout the school, while teachers' goals more often related to developing strategies for teaching those students identified as requiring targeted support in class.

In 21 percent of schools, both the principals' and the teachers' appraisals were linked to targets or achievement goals. Many of these schools had a strong commitment to priority learners, high expectations for achievement, a sense of shared responsibility for all students achieving, and a planned approach to identifying and meeting student needs. They used student achievement data effectively to match teaching to needs, monitor progress, discuss evidence of learning, review programme effectiveness and inform decisions about resourcing priorities.

Next steps

For Ministry of Education:

- Raise awareness among boards and principals about the need to strengthen performance management approaches, to improve links between principal and teacher appraisal and school and student targets.
- Review the Ministry's guidelines and advice about appraisal to ensure these include information about effective appraisal practices and their link to improved student outcomes.
- Include information about the importance of appraisal and effective practices in other Ministry documentation, such as information for trustees and school leaders. Ensure this information is readily available for schools.
- Consider how best to support training for boards and principals, and build leaders' capacity to mentor and develop staff.

For schools:

- Strengthen links between the school's strategic priorities and charter targets, and the appraisal goals for principals and teachers.
- Increase the focus of appraisal on improving outcomes for priority learners.
- Strengthen the links between appraisal and teacher and school development.

Introduction

Appraisal plays an important role in improvement, accountability, and planning career development for principals and teachers. School leaders have a pivotal role in ensuring appraisal procedures are working well and are resulting in improved teaching.

Appraisal is also used to guide salary progression, and inform recommendations for full registration and for renewing teachers' practising certificates.

Performance management systems were first introduced in to schools in 1987 and annual appraisal of principals and teachers became mandatory in 1997. The Ministry of Education published a series of guidelines¹ which gave boards, principals and teachers an overview of performance management and information to help them develop and implement a performance appraisal system.

The guidelines state that appraisal is intended to foster improvement of teaching by documenting expectations for teachers, identifying development objectives and targeting professional development. They note that effective appraisal involves observation of teaching, self-appraisal, and opportunities for discussion. Boards of trustees appraise the principal and delegate responsibility to principals to ensure teachers are appraised annually.

Appraisal is more likely to improve the quality of teaching and learning when:

- development goals are specific and challenging
- goals focus on teaching and learning
- assessing the achievement of goals is based on evidence of student learning
- appraisal tools challenge assumptions about effective teaching and develop teachers' capacity to inquire into the impact of their teaching
- appraisal discussions focus on the impact of teaching on learning.

ERO will investigate these aspects in greater depth during school reviews in 2013.

Methodology

Source of information

Information for this report came from an evaluation of schools' processes and practices to accelerate the progress of priority learners in 178 primary schools in Terms 2 and 3, 2012.

Information about the links between appraisal and school goals or targets was gathered in response to three evaluation questions:

¹ Ministry of Education (1997), *Performance Management Systems in New Zealand Schools. A series of Guidelines on Performance Management Systems*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.

- To what extent do the board’s processes contribute to improved outcomes for learners, particularly priority learners? (links with principal appraisal expectations)
- To what extent are leaders’ processes and practices accelerating the progress of priority learners? (appraisal links)
- To what extent are teachers focused on accelerating the progress of priority learners? (appraisal links to targets)

ERO also sought to identify some of the practices found in the schools where appraisal did link to their charter targets and goals for priority learners.

The report includes examples of good practices and processes ERO reviewers found during the reviews.

Findings

School targets, achievement goals or expectations reflected or aligned with the principal’s appraisal in one-third of schools (34 percent), and with teachers’ appraisals in one-third of schools (35 percent). In 38 schools (21 percent) both principals and teachers had appraisal goals linked to school targets or achievement goals.

Principals in most other schools did not have goals that linked directly or specifically to priority learners or charter targets. In six percent of schools, the principal did not have a current performance agreement or had not been appraised during the year of the review.

ERO identified other good practices in the 38 schools where both principal and teacher appraisal was linked to school goals or targets. Eleven of these schools demonstrated consistently high quality performance related to the six dimensions of a successful school, and ERO’s reports indicated their next review would be in four-to-five years.

Principals’ appraisal goals linked to school targets or achievement goals

Examples of appraisal goals were goals related to carrying out the strategic plan, implementing programmes, developing curriculum and improving teaching. Some appraisal goals referred to priority learners or targeted students, or to improving students’ achievement or progress or accelerating their learning.

Principals’ goals were more likely to refer to raising achievement for all students or for priority learners, while teachers’ goals more often related to identified target students in their class.

The principal’s appraisal goals strongly reflect improved outcomes for all learners with a particular focus on priority learners.

[Full primary, rural, decile 1, small school]

In 2012 there is a renewed focus on improving achievement with alignment through the strategic plan, target setting, identification of target students, and action plans developed for target students and linked to teacher performance management.

[Contributing, main urban, decile 3, small school]

Goals for some principals referred to improving teaching for priority learners, or for all learners.

The principal's appraisal expectations link to the analysis and actions to develop student learning with a particular focus on Māori and Pacific students. In pursuing this, the principal has developed actions related to increasing professional knowledge of Māori achieving as Māori and developing more intensive inquiry into student achievement to develop teacher practice in accelerating progress.

[Contributing, secondary urban, decile 4, middle-size school]

Some schools collated appraisal information to gain an overview of development needs across the school. They linked whole-school professional development to accelerating the achievement of students identified for targeted teaching, school achievement targets, and/or personal appraisal goals. Related professional learning and development helped teachers to identify specific needs and effective strategies to accelerate progress and to reflect on student learning. The appraisal process provided a context to encourage teachers to trial new strategies, focus classroom observations and discuss the impact of their teaching on students.

A variety of internal and external professional development opportunities, linked to the appraisal system, provide teachers with appropriate experiences to improve their current practices especially when working with targeted groups of students, particularly Pacific students.

[Full primary, secondary urban, decile 7, large school]

Appraisal goals and professional development are set around the school targets for priority learners and have a focus on effective teaching. There is a clear focus on developing effective teaching programmes to support target groups. The strengths of individual teachers are used to model to other staff.

[Full primary, rural, decile 7, middle-size school]

Teachers' appraisal goals

Teachers' appraisal in one third (35 percent) of schools had links to the school's charter targets, priority learners, or school achievement goals. Appraisal for some of these teachers involved identifying or developing strategies to teach some students in their classes who had been identified as needing targeted support.

Each teacher has written an action plan for their target students for 2012. This action plan is aligned with the strategic plan and also to teacher appraisal. Each teacher has been observed by the principal in Term One

and given specific feedback and next steps for their teaching to become more specific and deliberate. Although this is a good start, teachers have yet to identify in their day to day and weekly planning documents the precise strategies they are going to use to help accelerate these students and they need also to give further consideration to how they will monitor and document the shifts these students make.

[Contributing, main urban, decile 3, small school]

Priority learner groups are key focuses of teachers' appraisal and professional learning. A cluster of schools had professional learning groups based around these priority groups of learners. Teachers opted in for their choice of group/focus and based on a group of target students in their class e.g. Pacific, Māori, English as a Second or other Language (ESoL), those below expected standards and those with special learning needs. Accelerated progress for these priority groups is a goal for each of the teachers.

[Intermediate, main urban, decile 3, large school]

In some schools, appraisal observations were described as linked to learning areas such as literacy and numeracy or to using specific strategies.

Appraisal observations are linked to the target area of mathematics. For example, teachers have received feedback about how well they are using achievement information to personalise class and group programmes in mathematics in particular.

[Full primary, secondary urban, decile 7, small school]

Reflection was part of the appraisal process in some schools. Teachers were expected to keep diaries or journals where they reflected on their teaching practices, professional learning and development (PLD) and how well all students or target students were learning. The reflective diaries were used as part of the information considered for teacher appraisal.

Professional development and regular staff meetings are supporting teachers to focus on students identified as needing to raise their achievement in reading. Focus students are the priority for teachers' reflective journals and form part of their appraisal system.

[Full primary, main urban, decile 3, large school]

In a few schools, teachers used achievement information to identify target students, develop action plans for the students, monitor student progress and achievement, and determine next steps. They documented their reflections on the effectiveness of their teaching in appraisal journals.

Teachers continually use formative and formal assessment processes to monitor progress and determine next learning steps to accelerate students' progress. Their progress and achievement is linked to their performance appraisal.

[Full primary, rural, decile 3, very small school]

Evidence about student outcomes was noted as a requirement of the appraisal process in some schools.

The appraisal system links directly to outcomes for students. School leaders' observations of teaching provide teachers with useful feedback to improve their teaching. There is a clear expectation that teachers are reflective about their teaching and provide evidence in their appraisal documentation of successful teaching for target groups of students.

[Full primary, rural, decile 8, small school]

Leaders used the appraisal process to give feedback to teachers in relation to targets set for priority learners in their class. Teachers in these schools also analysed student achievement data and reflected on the effectiveness of their teaching.

Schools where both principal's and teachers' appraisals linked to school targets and goals

This section is based on the 38 schools where both principals and teachers had appraisal linked to targets or goals (21 percent). Many of these schools were committed to supporting all students to achieve, had a strong focus on priority learners, and developed a planned approach to identifying and meeting their needs. They had effective systems to identify students needing support, documented strategies to accelerate student progress, planned professional development to meet student and teacher needs, supported teachers, and monitored student progress closely.

An action plan has been developed for the improved achievement of Pacific students as part of the 2012 annual plan. Principal appraisal is linked to school targets. The principal appraises her management team with a focus on school-wide goals and personal objectives. This is part of a school-wide rigorous appraisal system linked to professional development programmes that include targeting Pacific and Māori students who need support. Teachers identify students needing targeted support in their classes and engage in professional dialogue at team meetings.

[Full primary, secondary urban, decile 7, large school]

In some of the 38 schools there was a clear understanding of having a shared responsibility for students' learning. Leaders supported teachers to identify, monitor, and focus on the needs of targeted students. Teachers used student achievement data to reflect on their own practice and consider whether to modify strategies to better support the specific needs of learners. Leaders provided regular opportunities for discussion through Professional Learning Circles and team meetings. Teachers discussed the progress of their students needing support with

other teachers, and shared ideas about how to accelerate their progress. Syndicate leaders provided feedback on the effectiveness of teaching strategies. These schools had built teachers' capability to address identified student needs. This occurred through participating in external professional development, accessing targeted support from experts such as Resource Teachers Literacy, using the strengths of school staff, or a combination of these.

The board of trustees feels well informed about student achievement in literacy and numeracy and about progress of target and priority students. The information trustees receive is analysed to show levels of achievement for different cohorts. Impacts of programmes are reported to the board. The principal's appraisal reflects targets for priority learners and teacher appraisals are linked to accelerating priority learners' progress.

Teachers personalise their programmes to reflect the needs of all students including the priority and target groups. Teachers reflect on their students needing targeted support and these are a focus for discussion in syndicate teams and then in whole-school staff meetings. Trustees, leaders and teachers work collaboratively and are committed to supporting all students to achieve.

The SENCO identifies strengths and gaps in teacher practices which help inform possible PLD and particular support needed for teachers to refine and improve their practice. Teachers have had PLD in mathematics to support their practice to improve outcomes for students and in particular guiding teachers to respond to targets. The PLD in maths is reflected in teachers' appraisal as goals.

[Contributing, urban, decile 2, middle-size school]

Priority learners are identified from the previous year's data by the whole staff. The board uses this information to develop targets and inform resourcing. The principal appraisal process is focused on the outcomes of these targets. The school's leaders focus on the targets as well as the whole school picture from the current year. As data is gathered over the year on a term-by-term basis further groups or individuals are identified who require accelerated progress.

Priorities are identified in terms of student and teacher learning needs. Processes and practices are developed through staff discussions and knowledge of the learner. This is then supported through appraisal goal setting, moderation, syndicate meetings and an expectation of what a learner is expected to achieve at each stage.

Teachers understand the need to focus on deliberate acts of teaching to enable some students to make the accelerated progress required. Teacher's individual appraisal goals are linked to reading, writing and mathematics and include improving teaching strategies for priority learners and meeting school targets. Teachers work together as a team to develop strategies to

accelerate the progress of targeted students. Data collected over the year highlight the positive impact of such processes and practices.

[Contributing, main urban, decile 8, middle-size school]

Some schools linked their teacher appraisal with student outcomes by making it clear that teachers are responsible for the progress of students identified as needing additional support. These links included achievement and accelerated progress of target students, responding to the needs of priority students, annual reporting targets, charter goals, and how well students are progressing to reach or exceed benchmarks.

The principal and all other teacher appraisals include an expectation to show that they have made a difference with reaching school targets. The principal and her senior leadership team have very detailed information about students' achievement against the National Standards. The leaders get at least three progress reports from each teacher. All staff are involved in setting action plans for students needing targeted support and linking appraisal to school targets. Teachers use reflective journals to gather evidence about student achievement, their class action plans, their students' progress and reflections on what they as teachers could do better. All teachers were involved in setting the school targets and know the ones relevant to their class. Teachers are able to describe what they are doing to accelerate learning. Trustees, the school leaders, and teachers strongly focus on raising student achievement. Well-aligned systems and shared commitment to targets and goals improve outcomes for their students.

[Full primary, urban, decile 3, middle-size school]

In a few of the 38 schools, appraisal was linked to priority learners when teachers were appraised against specific professional standards or the Registered Teacher Criteria.

Principal appraisal contains specific personal goals and the professional standards related to raising student achievement for Māori and diverse learners. Teacher appraisal links to priority learners are through review of practice in relation to the professional standards. Comment is made against each standard by the appraisee.

[Contributing, rural, decile 6, small school]

One school developed a resource to support their links between appraisal and the charter targets.

Teacher and principal appraisal is strongly linked to targets through a highly effective four minute walk-through booklet. The booklet is used to help teachers link their targets for raising achievement of priority learners to their appraisal goals. This has been a highly effective and reflective tool. Results of this reflective practice are shared with the board and more specifically the trustee with responsibility for curriculum. Trustees and the

principal articulated the usefulness of this process in raising targeted student achievement and improving pedagogy.

[Contributing, main urban, decile 9, large school]

In another school, the leaders and teachers were trialling ways to improve their appraisal processes.

The school is currently trialling two appraisal systems for 2012. One is more traditional and focuses on the core components of excellent teaching practice and the other is linked to the teacher focusing on their own inquiry as part of their own professional learning. Teachers in the senior school are focusing on teaching as inquiry and the target in writing is linked to appraisal.

[Full primary, minor urban, decile 8, middle-size school]

Ongoing improvement

Although good practices were evident across the 38 schools where both leaders' and teachers' appraisal were linked to school targets and goals, ERO identified some next steps to improve appraisal and teaching. These next steps include:

- providing training and support for boards on appraising principals and managing their performance
- building knowledge about strategies to accelerate progress of priority learners
- building leaders' and teachers' capacity to use data to monitor student progress and reflect on the effectiveness of their practice
- building leaders' and boards' capacity to review the effectiveness of their programmes, especially for priority learners
- specifying appraisal goals as outcomes for students rather than what teachers will do
- supporting teachers to inquire more deeply into the effectiveness of their own practices
- building leaders' capacity to mentor and develop staff.

Conclusion

Many schools did not recognise that appraisal is a key part of a systematic approach to improving the effectiveness of teaching and outcomes for students. Improvements are more likely to occur when key elements are connected and support each other. Appraisal provides an opportunity for leaders and teachers to inquire together into the impact of teaching on student learning.

Only one-third of schools linked their principal's appraisal goals to the school targets or goals, and only some of these schools made these links with their teachers' appraisal.

Many of the schools that linked school and appraisal goals demonstrated consistently high performance in the six dimensions of a successful school. These included a commitment to all students achieving, and a sense of shared responsibility for student learning, as well as a systematic approach including:

- using data to identify student and staff needs
- setting school goals
- linking staff goals to the school goals
- planning and accessing related professional learning
- establishing processes where teachers discuss strategies to accelerate progress
- monitoring the impact on student learning to identify effective practices.

Next steps

For Ministry of Education:

- Raise awareness among boards and principals about the need to strengthen performance management approaches, to improve links between principal and teacher appraisal and school and student targets.
- Review the Ministry's guidelines and advice about appraisal to ensure these include information about effective appraisal practices and their link to improved student outcomes.
- Include information about the importance of appraisal and effective practices in other Ministry documentation, such as information for trustees and school leaders. Ensure this information is readily available for schools.
- Consider how best to support training for boards and principals, and build leaders' capacity to mentor and develop staff.

For schools:

- Strengthen links between the school's strategic priorities and charter targets, and the appraisal goals for principals and teachers
- Increase the focus of appraisal on improving outcomes for priority learners
- Strengthen the links between appraisal and teacher and school development.