EDUCATION REVIEW OFFICE
TE TARI AROTAKE MATAURANGA

INTERNAL EVALUATION: GOOD PRACTICE

NOVEMBER 2015

New Zealand Government

www.ero.govt.nz

Cover photo courtesy of Cashmere High School, Christchurch.
The other photos throughout this report are provided by the schools included in the report.

Internal evaluation: Good practice
Published 2015

ISBN 978-0-478-43830-7

Foreword

Internal evaluation requires boards, leaders and teachers to engage in deliberate, systematic processes and reasoning, with improved outcomes for all learners as the aim.

This good practice report showcases 13 schools and how they've used internal evaluation to change their practice to support students to achieve. The findings from this report have informed the joint Ministry of Education and ERO resource *Effective School Evaluation: How to do and use internal evaluation for improvement*.

As these examples show, internal evaluation is about asking questions and digging deep into data and evidence. The schools in this report identified where student achievement was not good enough, investigated, made sense of it, took action and then evaluated the impact of their action. They were relentless, where their actions did not work, they took different actions. They were ambitious for each and every learner.

What these schools did is replicable – these stories will inspire principals, boards and teachers to identify every child and young person underachieving or at risk of underachieving and work out how to improve their educational outcomes.

Page 10 of *Effective School Evaluation* says: "The whole point of internal evaluation is to assess what is and is not working, and for whom, and then to determine what changes are needed, particularly to advance equity and excellence goals. Much more than a technical process, evaluation is deeply influenced by the school's values and how it sees its role in the community. Effective internal evaluation is always driven by the motivation to improve, to do better for the students."

Collectively, this report, the *Effective School Evaluation* resource and the *School Evaluation Indicators* tell you what's important and how to go about achieving positive student outcomes.

Iona Holsted
Chief Review Officer
Education Review Office

November 2015

Contents

Overview

This good practice report shows the range of ways schools have effectively done and used internal evaluation for improvement. ERO visited 13 schools in Terms 3 and 4, 2014, that had been identified during their regular ERO reviews as having effective internal evaluation.[1]

ERO investigated:

- how the schools knew what and how to improve
- how the schools knew how they were going
- what conditions and actions supported the schools' internal evaluation activities
- how the schools had developed capability and expertise in evaluation

While schools are required to maintain a programme of ongoing internal evaluation in relation to the National Administration Guidelines,[2] they can develop their own approach to improving student learning and addressing national priorities within their own context.

Section one of the report outlines the key role and actions of leaders in creating the conditions and building the capability and capacity for effective school internal evaluation. Section two describes the typical processes involved in school internal evaluation and the evaluative reasoning that informs them. The third section shares specific examples of school internal evaluation from each of the 13 schools including commentary about the processes and evaluative reasoning used.

In all the schools internal evaluation was deeply embedded in everyday practice. Internal evaluation was business as usual rather than a discrete exercise completed solely for accountability purposes. Schools had sophisticated processes in place to support teachers, leaders and trustees to critically inquire into the effectiveness of their practices. They fostered a professional culture of inquiry and were committed to continuous improvement to benefit the learning of all students.

Leaders, teachers and trustees appropriately focused on developing their capability and collective capacity to gather, analyse, interpret and use information for improvement. These schools had developed the conditions in which leaders, teachers and trustees could take an honest and open approach to review, working from the belief that 'we can do better'. Rather than accountability and improvement being conflicting purposes, trustees, leaders and teachers were accountable for improvement.

This good practice report is part of a package of publications that includes *School Evaluation Indicators: Effective Practice for Improvement and Learner Success*[3] and *Effective School Evaluation: How to do and use internal evaluation for improvement.* The latter is a resource for schools and communities of learning published jointly by ERO and the Ministry of Education. These publications are intended to assist schools and communities of learning to develop their capacity and capability to use internal evaluation for improvement.

1 See the appendices for information about these schools and how they were selected.

2 Ministry of Education. (2015). *The National Administration Guidelines (NAGs).*

3 Education Review Office. (2014). *School Evaluation Indicators: Effective Practice for Improvement and Learner Success (Trial Document).* Retrieved from http://www.ero.govt.nz/Review-Process/Frameworks-and-Evaluation-Indicators-for-ERO-Reviews/School-Evaluation-Indicators-2015-Trial.

Introduction

The purpose of internal evaluation

At its heart, effective internal evaluation is about improving student outcomes.

Schools and communities of learning conduct internal evaluation to:

- identify and address areas for improvement
- meet accountability requirements
- create knowledge about what works, for which students and why.

Learners are the focus of school and community inquiry and evaluation processes. For all decisions made in the context of school evaluation, the question needs to be asked and answered:

'How will this impact on our learners?'

And, once a decision has been taken:

'What impact did this have for our learners?'

There is a further, fundamental question which is crucial to being able to answer the two questions above, and that is:

'How do we know?'

Approaching internal evaluation for improvement in this way:

- encourages teachers to focus on what really makes a difference to learning
- enables trustees to allocate resources where they are most needed
- supports leaders to develop sustainable and consistently improving learning organisations.

Student achievement and engagement information are two vital sources of evidence to help answer questions about impact. A range of additional data gathering methods such as video recordings, face to face conversations, focus groups and surveys are used to more deeply understand the impact of school decisions and practices for all learners.

Section one: Leadership for effective internal evaluation

Leaders have a critical role in promoting equity and excellence for all students. The leaders in the schools in this report positioned internal evaluation as a valued activity for improvement and recognised the importance of building evaluative capability and capacity at every level. The quotes below came from school leaders during ERO's visits to their schools.

> *"Internal evaluation is a 'line of sight' to student achievement and wellbeing."*

In these schools, internal evaluation was an indispensable part of school life. Leaders, teachers and trustees had the capacity and capability to engage in robust evaluative discussions.

> *"Leaders have to have a motivational mindset."*

Promoting effective internal evaluation for improvement

Leaders believed in the usefulness of internal evaluation and championed evaluative reasoning as an essential component of their improvement efforts.

Leaders focused on disparity and sought excellence for every student. Improvement actions were strategically planned so teachers were not overwhelmed and could focus on what needed to improve the most.

> *"Everything we've done has been decided with data-both quantitative and qualitative."*

Leaders and trustees prioritised resources based on information coming out of the evaluation processes. This prioritisation included allocating resources to access external expertise and funding release time for teachers and leaders to spend on tasks related to inquiry and evaluation, such as analysing data, working in professional learning groups, and accessing research and evidence about effective practice.

Building capability and capacity

Leaders deliberately built capacity and capability in evaluation by extending participation in internal evaluation to all levels of the school. They drew on both internal and external expertise to do this. Building capacity in evaluation was not just about developing technical expertise, but also about creating the conditions and opportunities to engage in robust internal evaluative discussions.

> *"We want to know what's good but also what's not good enough."*

Leaders successfully extended good internal evaluation practices already evident in the school. They recognised when others in the school had relevant expertise and experience and deliberately gave them opportunities to lead specific reviews in those areas. They also identified where effective evaluation and inquiry practices were happening in their school and impacting positively on the students whose progress most needed to be accelerated. Opportunities were provided for those involved to share practice and new learning with others through collaborative school or syndicate-wide activities, and professional learning groups.

This distributed leadership approach built capacity for those leading evaluation activities, and also helped to improve the quality, analysis and use of the data collected.

Careful planning and clear guidance also extended evaluation capacity. Leaders expected widespread participation during the early stages of an evaluation and introduced new ideas incrementally to scaffold teacher and trustee participation. Leaders also provided explicit guidance around process and in many cases, templates to structure evaluative reasoning. Teachers were involved in identifying the changes necessary to reduce disparities and improve outcomes for students and collectively developed an understanding about what 'good' looked like.

> *"To really effect change teachers needed to be on board – it was not going to be a two-meeting process."*

Leaders in these schools also judiciously used external expertise to build capacity in evaluation by making sure any external professional learning and development specifically targeted what needed to improve.

> *"Prioritising is based on having capacity – you can't stretch yourself too far."*

Collaborative inquiry and knowledge building

A high level of collaboration was evident in the schools in this report. Providing opportunities for professional learning and collaboration supported the development of evaluative, teaching and leadership capabilities. External professional development was often facilitated through existing groups or teams. Group discussions helped to show the learning contexts and approaches that would support student success and assisted with embedding new learning to support change and improvement. Participation in these groups also enabled the sharing of practice to mobilise the experience, skills and knowledge which already existed within the school.

> *"Leaders take a step back in these groups – we're all learners."*

Collaborative knowledge building and inquiry was not always straightforward. Leaders were aware that increasing opportunities for teacher collaboration had the potential for conflict, as diverse views and beliefs surfaced. Respectful disagreement and conversation were, however, a powerful driver for new and improved insights. Relational trust was a pre-requisite for productive inquiry, collaboration and sustained changes in practice.

> *"It is about trust and relationships."*

Leaders promoted relational trust through respectful interpersonal interactions, and by modelling collaborative and improvement-focused relationships. Teachers trusted their leaders as they saw them as leading learning and able to 'walk the talk'.

> *"If teachers are not feeling safe about you being in their classroom you won't see actual practice."*

Leaders, trustees and teachers increasingly engaged in evaluation and reflected on their practice, both individually and collaboratively, in a professional learning environment. Systematic review continued in parallel with an increasing level of day-to-day evaluation. Leaders, teachers and trustees were constantly scanning for issues, while also focusing more sustained inquiry on what they had decided was important to commit time and energy to. Leaders carefully supported teachers' participation in formal evaluation activities. They developed the systems and processes to support systematic documentation of the data gathered, interpretations made and actions taken, ensuring a robust and transparent process.

> *"Success is still fragile – if you have a group that is failing in your school you focus on them and keep focusing on them."*

Leaders recognised that embedding an inquiry habit of mind entailed shifts in thinking. They knew that these shifts did not happen overnight. Sufficient time was allocated for teachers, leaders and trustees to become accustomed to and comfortable with school evaluation.

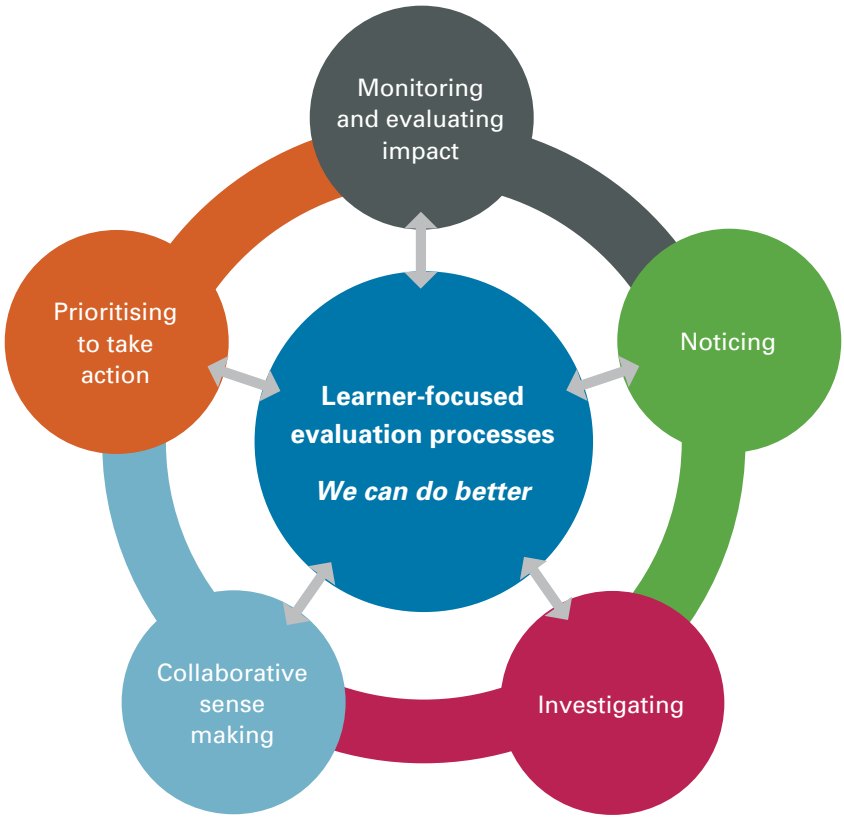
> *"Self-review needs to become embedded in schools as a way of thinking, a culture, a state of mind."*

This time was made available through focusing solely on what needed to improve and judiciously selecting only the professional learning and development opportunities that contributed to the priorities selected.

Section two: Evaluation processes and evaluative reasoning

To achieve equity and promote excellence for all learners, internal evaluation must involve both good processes, and good evaluative discussion. In schools with effective internal evaluation, there were different points of view about what the data was saying, about issues and successes that affected students' learning and about what teachers might do next. Leaders, teachers and trustees did not simply go through the evaluation process as a series of discrete steps. They asked good questions, collected, analysed and made sense of good data and reasoned clearly and robustly about why and how their chosen response would result in the changes necessary for improvement.

Figure 1 below shows the key processes that the schools in this report used in evaluating for improvement.



Learners are at the heart of these processes, providing a lens through which schools:

- investigated and scrutinised practice
- analysed data and used it to identify priorities for improvement
- monitored and evaluated their improvement actions, and
- generated timely and useful information about progress towards goals and the impact and outcomes of actions taken for all learners in their school.

Placing learners at the heart of review and decision-making means:

- trustees scrutinising the work of their school in achieving valued outcomes for learners
- inviting student participation in improvement efforts by talking to them, responding to their concerns and seeking their input into the decisions that affect them
- leaders and teachers developing learner-centred relationships to engage and involve the school community
- checking that students have effective, sufficient and equitable opportunities to learn.

Noticing

Often the catalyst for internal evaluation, especially those that were emergent, rather than planned or strategic, was 'noticing' what was happening for learners. Leaders, teachers or trustees noticed something that caused them to pause and think. Often this was accompanied by questions such as:

- ***What is happening here?***
- ***Is this what we expected?***
- ***Should we be concerned?***
- ***Do we need to take a closer look?***

In these schools, there were always many eyes scanning for potential issues for students, and a variety of ways in which teachers, leaders and trustees knew further investigation was needed.

The most commonly cited catalyst was student achievement data such as NCEA, National Standards, or other assessment information regularly gathered by teachers and leaders.

Other formally collected data provided catalysts too. Sources included:

- observations of, and reflections on, teaching in classrooms
- regularly scheduled surveys of students, staff or parents and whānau
- teacher reflection, either individually or as part of learning groups
- regular focus groups with students
- meetings between the principal and teachers, or between the principal and parents
- parental complaints, and data from pastoral systems (e.g. restorative sessions).

Alternatively, the catalyst may have come from a more informal source, such as:

- conversations 'at the school gate'
- hunches or gut feelings
- anecdotal evidence
- informal feedback from other schools.

Investigating

School leaders and teachers sought to obtain a more complete picture of what was happening and why before making any decisions about *what* and *how* to improve. The investigation focused on finding out what was currently happening in the school, and examining relevant research evidence and good practice guidelines about what effective practice looks like. By investigating together, leaders and teachers had shared understandings and owned the process and the findings.

Data was collected over and above what was routinely collected. Leaders and teachers were clear about what data would provide sufficient evidence to understand the issue or problem. Schools asked questions such as:

- ***What do we already know about this?***
- ***What do we need to find out?***
- ***How might we do this?***

Trustees, leaders, teachers, students and whānau had knowledge, beliefs and attitudes they could apply to understanding the issue. It was important not to assume what these were ahead of time. Internal evaluation took into account the different ways in which participants could contribute, and tailored data collection methods to suit.

Leaders and teachers used a wide range of data collection approaches. Methods included focus groups, interviews, planning checks, classroom observations and reflecting on samples of student work. The perspectives of students, parents and teachers were often sought through questionnaires or discussion opportunities. Some of the schools found that video was a useful way to collect data. Having video evidence made it possible to repeat observations and notice things that were not initially obvious or to look for change. The use of video also allowed teachers to share their teaching strategies and approaches with one another in a professional learning context where capability building was a key focus.

Investigating what 'good' looks like was also part of the process. Teachers and leaders pulled together what they already knew about what they were investigating. This enabled them to identify gaps in their knowledge.

Further sources of evidence included research literature, external experts, other schools, Ministry publications like the *Best Evidence Syntheses* and ERO's *School Evaluation Indicators*. Sound evaluative reasoning helped to ensure a match between the school's context and the kinds of evidence that they drew on to identify what 'good' looks like. They did this by investigating the kinds of practices that were likely to make the most difference for all the learners in their school. They also investigated whether the improvements achieved were good enough in terms of the school's vision, strategic direction and their priorities for equity and excellence. Leaders and teachers could then make defensible judgements about valued student outcomes.

Collaborative sense making

To make sense of the data gathered, leaders and teachers went from asking **"what is happening here?"** or **"what is so?"** to ask **"so what?"** Investigating and sense making were not totally separate processes. The process of analysis began when the first data was collected. Sense making could and did inform the direction of further data collection or research. Investigating and sense making were iterative and interwoven.

In these schools leaders, teachers and trustees understood that data often provided an incomplete representation of a more complex underlying reality. They were able to evaluate the quality of the data they had collected, and analyse and scrutinise it well. Some data were quantitative, like test scores; and some were qualitative, like classroom observations or survey responses. Both forms of data were valuable, and leaders and teachers understood the strengths and limitations of each. Many of the schools had a staff member with expertise in data collection and analysis. That person was working on building the capability of others at the school to understand and use data.

Leaders and teachers worked together to interpret the data and often reported what they had found to other staff and trustees, sharing their insights and testing to check the adequacy of the interpretations that they had made. Making sense of the data involved asking questions such as:

- ***What is our data telling us?***
- ***What insights does it provide?***
- ***Is this good enough?***
- ***What might we need to explore further?***

After investigating and making sense of the issue or problem, schools were clear about where their strengths were, and where they needed to improve. This understanding usefully informed their response.

Prioritising to take action

Leaders and teachers carefully prioritised actions in order to plan for change in practice. Any response incurs a resource cost of some kind, so at this stage leaders asked:

- ***What do we need to do and why?***
- ***How big is the change we are planning?***
- ***What strengths do we have to draw on?***
- ***What support might we need?***

Leaders were clear about what capability and capacity they had, and what support they would need. They recognised that in an environment of limited resources, not all avenues can be explored at once. They were able to draw on relevant expertise to support the change they wanted to make and rejected any professional learning and development opportunities that would distract them from the agreed changes.

Most improvement actions focused on providing well-targeted, timely professional learning and development opportunities to support improved teaching practice. In many cases, collaborative professional learning groups that had participated in the evaluation process were continued. Other responses included changes to curriculum design, assessment practices and expectations, or performance management processes. Planning for how change would be managed was closely linked to the evaluation findings. Leaders and teachers were clear about what success for students would look like and how they would know whether or not the actions taken were working.

Monitoring and evaluating impact

Internal evaluation did not end with the implementation of improvement actions. Monitoring the impact of any changes made was crucial. This stage focused on questions such as:

- ***What is happening as a result of our improvement actions?***
- ***What evidence do we have of progress?***
- ***Is this good enough?***
- ***Do we need to adjust what we are doing?***
- ***What are we learning here?***

Ongoing noticing, investigation and sense making enabled leaders and teachers to see whether what they were doing was having the desired result. Adjustments or further changes were sometimes needed. Where things were working well, ongoing monitoring provided opportunities to recognise and celebrate success.

Section three: Individual evaluation narratives

This section includes narratives of specific internal evaluations from the 13 schools in this report exhibiting good practice. The evaluations are all one example of many evaluations that these schools have undertaken. The schools were chosen because during their regular Education Review internal evaluation was identified as a strength and was contributing to improvements particularly for students that needed to accelerate progress. Some of the evaluations are specific to a curriculum area, while some are school-wide. Each narrative is annotated to show the relevant review processes and associated evaluative reasoning.

Bluestone School – Embedding teaching as inquiry

This school was able to show a range of successful school internal evaluations and improvements including mathematics achievement, reducing bullying through restorative justice, and improving the quality of social science programmes.

This evaluation took a long-term approach to creating the enabling conditions that support both school-level internal evaluation and teaching as inquiry. The review and subsequent changes deliberately built teachers' evaluative capacity and developed a more collaborative professional culture. Achievement data has shown the positive impact of these changes.

Bluestone School – Embedding teaching as inquiry	
In 2012, the principal was concerned that internal evaluation was driven by 'policy, procedures and surveys' with a focus on operations within the school, rather than on lifting student achievement. *The teachers gather copious amounts of information, feedback, and data on many areas of school life. Perhaps we were collecting too much data.* ***– Principal.***	**Noticing** What is happening here? What is the problem or issue here?
During a sabbatical that year, the principal read widely and visited a number of schools with sound internal evaluation practices. He decided that *Teaching as Inquiry* was a powerful way of embedding high quality internal evaluation into teaching practice, and to increase the focus on student outcomes.	**Investigating and collaborative sense making** What does good practice look like?
The principal proposed this focus to the board and staff, and brought in leaders from schools that had successfully implemented teaching as inquiry to support his case. Teachers, leaders and the board agreed to implement *Teaching as Inquiry* over a three-year timeframe.	**Prioritising to take action** What do we need to do and why?

Bluestone School – Embedding teaching as inquiry

The principal, with an external adviser, developed a guideline resource for staff that provided templates, prompts and probes to support teachers to inquire deeply into the impact of their teaching. These guidelines outlined processes to support teachers to:

- monitor the impact of teaching strategies and approaches on the student target groups
- reflect on next teaching action to share at team discussions about student targets and progress
- reflect on professional readings or observations
- discuss with the principal how *Teaching as Inquiry* has impacted their teaching and on the progress of their students.

In 2013 an external expert supported teachers to understand the *Teaching as Inquiry* process. Professional journals were introduced along with strategies for gathering and analysing multiple sources of data, and for using data for improvement.

In 2014 the focus was on working collaboratively to embed processes through:

- building team leaders' capability
- understanding and unpacking data
- deepening the talk about teacher effectiveness
- de-privatising classroom practice
- extending teacher engagement in professional reading through analysis and discussion.

Team leaders were supported to develop leadership skills, including asking the right questions. They also trialled new strategies and approaches with their own classes and discussed the success of these with their team.

In 2015 the external facilitator continues to coach leaders.

What could we do that would help us to improve outcomes for all learners?

What support do we need to do this?

What resources do we need?

How big is the change we are planning? How do we approach it in a way that is manageable for leaders and teachers?

What are our next steps?

What strengths do we have to draw on?

Teacher reflection records are used to facilitate discussions between the principal and teachers in learning conversations for appraisal. The principal meets with each teacher twice a year, and uses a set of agreed questions to prompt the teachers to explain their reflections and actions outlined in their professional journal.

Teacher conversations indicate that *Teaching as Inquiry* has become a key part of school evaluation. By streamlining the activities and providing templates and prompts, internal evaluation processes and thinking have been embedded into different layers of the school and are integral to thinking about practice.

Monitoring and evaluating impact

How are we doing?

Bluestone School – Embedding teaching as inquiry

The school's professional culture changed. Teachers talk about a greater sense of collegiality and trust. They are used to asking questions about their practice. Teachers use research about effective practice and are able to engage in deeper reflection, critical conversations and more robust use of data. Conversations between the principal and teachers are frank, which is an indication of relational trust.

Leaders, teachers, trustees and students now have multiple ways of identifying priority areas to focus on in the future. The principal and associate principals have sophisticated understandings of how to use student achievement data, and know that data is only part of the picture. They interrogate the causes of the issues identified using multiple data sources.

At each board meeting time is dedicated to looking at student achievement data, prepared by the associate principal. Achievement reports show the analysis of longitudinal data (trends) and cohort tracking. Laminated prompt cards are used to assist trustees to ask challenging questions about the achievement reports. Board reports from the principal share a record of ongoing actions undertaken for each charter goal throughout the year.

Students' concerns and ideas are sought through the junior and senior school councils' classroom circle discussion, surveys (such as a bullying survey) and comments made to and shared by parents. Although improved student achievement and progress can't be attributed to one aspect alone, improvements are evident. The number of children achieving at or above the National Standards in mathematics and reading have increased.

What evidence do we have of improvement?

What are we learning here?

Can we use this learning in other places?

Bluestone School – Embedding teaching as inquiry

Standard	At or above 2012	At or above 2014
Reading	74%	78.8%
Writing	70%	75.5%
Mathematics	55%	79.4%

Cashmere High School – building professional capability through learning walks

A vision to take the school from good to great is the driver for improvement at Cashmere High School. As part of achieving that vision, the principal has focused on developing a culture of evaluation and inquiry that involves scrutinising data to identify strengths and weaknesses, discussing solutions openly and critically, and improving the effectiveness of professional practice. The principal wants to know "what's good, but also what's not good enough."

Professional learning walks provide an opportunity for teachers to observe and reflect on effective teaching strategies that will assist, challenge and improve their practice – leading to increased engagement and achievement for students in their classes.

Cashmere High School – building professional capability through learning walks

Noticing

Is what we are doing good enough?

A critical catalyst for a range of school improvement activities at Cashmere High School came from the realisation that students were not performing as well as other students in similar schools.

The school had a 'soggy middle'.

The development and implementation of a coherent approach to enhancing the effectiveness of teachers as leaders of learning was identified as an important focus to improve the quality of curriculum provision and the effectiveness of teaching.

The primary purpose of professional learning and development provision at Cashmere High School is to:

- encourage more professional self reflection
- improve teaching practice
- develop a learning community by sharing and improving good teacher practice with colleagues.

Learning walks are one part of a suite of professional learning and development opportunities to enable teachers to better engage students in learning for achievement. Other opportunities include professional learning mornings and change inquiry teams. The Learning walks involve teachers in observations of teaching and learning, followed by reflection and feedback. The process leads to inquiry into aspects of individual practice.

Investigating

What are we looking at? Why?

The New Zealand Curriculum (NZC) definition of pedagogy which states that "teacher actions promote student learning" provides the context for the learning walk. To improve practice teachers needed opportunities to discuss and debate their understanding about effective pedagogy and what effective practice looks like.

Groups of 10 teachers took part in a half-day programme that started with establishing protocols and clarifying the specific focus of the observations. This included enhancing the relevance of new learning or making connections to prior learning and experience. The observation focus is determined on a school-wide needs basis. Teachers then pair up and visit five or six classes. The in-class focus is simply on observing. Notes are only made outside the classroom.

Cashmere High School – building professional capability through learning walks

Opportunities are provided for group and individual reflection. Each observation pair has a short discussion following a classroom visit.

Follow up group and individual reflections focus on the guiding questions established at the outset:

- What strategies did I see the teacher using to encourage learning to take place and how have students reacted to the strategies?
- What challenged my thinking about my own teaching?
- What impact might this have on my teaching as a result?

Teachers who are observed can ask for feedback.

Collaborative sense making

What strategies did I see the teacher using? How did students respond?

What challenged my thinking about my own teaching?

Participants complete a written reflection within a week of the observations. The analysis and collation of the written reflections in relation to the questions is undertaken and an overview of the findings is presented to all staff. These findings provide detailed insights into the dynamics of effective classroom practice and the provision of a responsive curriculum and opportunities to learn for every student. Teachers participating in the process identify a range of significant follow up actions to improve student learning in their classrooms.

Prioritising responses

What impact might this have on my teaching?

The learning walks initiative is reviewed and refined each year. Teachers' feedback about the value of the learning walks process is very positive.

> *This initiative has improved the calibre of learning conversations and enhanced team work across the school.*
>
> ***– Professional Practice Leader.***

The number of students achieving NCEA Level 2 is improving steadily.

Percentage of students achieving NCEA Level 2:

	2012	2014
All students	72.6%	84.1%
Māori students	54.5%	81.5%

Monitoring and evaluating impact

What is happening as a result of these 'learning walks?'

What do we know about the impact they are having? How do we know this?

Dyer Street School – a review about student learning

The school had been involved in significant projects, such as the Building Evaluation Capacity for Schooling Improvement project and the Literacy Professional Development Programme (LPDP). These projects enabled the school to build staff knowledge and expertise in assessment, inquiry and review. At the same time, the school was in the early stages of a network called the Learning and Change Network (LCN), established during their participation in the LPDP.

This 2012 evaluation considered how the school was giving effect to the curriculum principles, how culturally responsive the school's practices were, and how they were serving those learners who were not meeting National Standards.

Dyer Street School – a review about student learning

Multiple triggers brought about this comprehensive review. Staff felt they may have been failing some of their students. Their hunch was supported by other anecdotal evidence and achievement information. Teachers noticed that some of their past students were not performing well and were disengaged in later schooling. Teachers demonstrated a sense of responsibility to improve their capacity and their performance by considering and changing what they could do better to serve these students and prepare them for later schooling success. They recognised that success at primary school was likely to contribute to a student's success at intermediate and secondary school.

Leaders and teachers wanted to better understand what learning was happening at the school, how this learning was occurring and who was succeeding with the learning.

Noticing

What's going on here?

Should we be concerned?

What is the problem or issue here?

How might we find out?

Dyer Street School – a review about student learning

With guidance from external facilitators, leaders from the school and others in the LCN surveyed their students, parents, teachers and leaders. They sought to find out more about what learning looked like from each of the different perspectives.

Teachers and school leaders used an innovative strategy suggested as part of the LCN to seek the views of what learning might look like for students who hadn't been achieving success. They asked the students, parents and whānau to draw a map explaining "what learning looks like for you". The process entailed a series of meetings with stakeholder groups with each person in these groups drawing a diagram of what learning looked like. They were prompted to think about the place of students and their peers, parents and whānau, teachers, and technology in learning, and position them accordingly in their drawings.

Investigating

What do we want to know? Why?

How might we find out? Whose perspectives do we need to understand this better?

The maps were analysed across the school and across the cluster. The maps showed that students saw the teacher as the main source of their learning, that technology was something that they were rewarded with rather than a part of learning, and that their parents and whānau were not a strong part of their learning experience.

> *In the maps teachers were more likely to be at the front of the room. Technology was at the side and not integrated. Parents and whānau were also at the side. The maps showed us that learning might be teacher directed, with passive learners and passive engagement with parents. Learning was lateral and not blended at all.*
>
> ***– Senior leadership team.***

Collaborative sense-making

What is our data telling us?

Do we have different interpretations of the data?

In collaboration with the staff and LCN cluster, the schools settled on three main priority areas for development and improvement. The three priorities were future-focused learning, families and whānau, and active learning. These priorities were taken back to the stakeholders to refine and understand them.

The three priorities gave direction to all aspects of the school's planning and reporting. They guided teacher-inquiry topics, which also formed the basis of regular teacher appraisal.

Prioritising to take action

What do we need to focus on and why?

How do we give priority to these areas?

What implications do they have for our strategic direction

Dyer Street School – a review about student learning

Strategic and annual plans have changed to keep the focus on the three priorities. The strategic and annual plans describe the activities and outline how they will progress these aims. Reading, writing and mathematics targets now sit under goals to encourage students to be involved in planning their own learning, and to be active in their learning. Improvement strategies and indicators of progress are decided and documented explaining the role of students, teachers and leaders for each of the targets and goals.

Extensive information was gathered before implementing the approach towards future-focused learning. Leaders and teachers looked at how other schools incorporated technology into everyday learning, surveyed the board of trustees, staff and community, and drew on research on 21st century learning. The staff also undertook an analysis of their cultural responsiveness.

Teachers each develop an inquiry question that contributes to knowledge development in one of the three priority areas. Teachers set inquiry tasks, gather data and reflect on what they are learning in reflective journals. Over the term, groups meet three times to exchange what they have found and how their inquiry is progressing. Teachers challenge one another, ask questions and deepen their understanding in these sessions. At the end of the term all teachers give a brief presentation to the staff on what their hunch was, what they did and what they found.

Syndicate leaders observe the teacher and their practice and the teacher and leader then have practice analysis conversations (PACs). The PACs have a three-part format: pre-observation discussion; observation of practice; and post-observation analysis. The conversations follow observations of teaching and use teaching as inquiry cycle questions linked to the school's priorities.

As the change management strategy evolves, leaders are moving away from reliance on external facilitators.

– Principal.

As part of our work on the teaching of writing, teachers have taken the opportunity to be more reflective within and across the school. They have also initiated their own collaborative meetings to discuss issues. In fact when they discussed "digikids" they did this over a glass of wine in their own time! Staff have a different perception of what professional learning is and the difference they can make when going to a course compared with reflection in-house.

Dyer Street School – a review about student learning

Review and monitoring is ongoing and includes the voices of students, teachers, parents and whānau. Team and syndicate meetings include discussions about what has been observed and heard in practice analysis conversations. Some of the information discussed also comes from talking with students.

Teachers have areas of individual focus which are collated to find common trends as well as areas of strengths and weakness.

> *When we looked into these trends we saw we had to do more about deliberate acts of teaching.*
>
> ***– Principal.***

Students later repeated the mapping exercise. Teachers noticed changes in the way students think about their learning environments and their awareness of themselves as learners.

At the start of 2014, the school consulted the groups again and found that teachers, parents and students had differing opinions on student confidence with goal setting. This led to changes in how teachers promote student self assessment and an increased focus on teaching metacognitive skills. Other forms of evidence came from informal sources of feedback. Teachers noticed that in learning conversations with students they were better able to describe their own learning, demonstrating improved metacognition which is a crucial skill in active learning.

Outcomes for students

By the end of 2013 the numbers of students achieving at or above National Standards had improved:

2012	% at or above	2013	% at or above
Reading	74.0	Reading	84.8
Writing	68.8	Writing	79.1
Mathematics	78.6	Mathematics	87.7

Monitoring and evaluating impact

Are we getting the intended results?

What evidence do we have of progress?

Dyer Street School: What happened next?

The improvement story didn't end there. When visiting the schools, some of the leaders talked to ERO about times where their achievement trajectory was halted or even declined – as happened at the end of 2014. This part of the case study highlights how they used their established internal evaluation practices to quickly respond to the achievement dip. Trustees, some parents, leaders and teachers all contributed to the noticing, sense making and prioritising to rigorously investigate what had happened and what they should do next.

In 2014, Dyer Street School identified three priorities for development and improvement: future focused learning, relationships with families and whānau, and active learning. Towards the end of 2014, the principal and staff at this school had a sense that the end-of-year student achievement data may not show the shifts the school had been seeking in terms of its targets.

Dyer Street School: What happened next?	
While the data in priority learning areas across the LCN cluster indicated significant progress overall, leaders and teachers were concerned that the school's own National Standards data was not looking as good as they wanted it to. This was an uncomfortable feeling.	**Noticing** What's going on here? Is this what we expected?
When the board of trustees looked at the achievement data at the end of the year, trustees asked school leadership to what extent they thought the decline in the National Standards data was attributable to the introduction of chrome books. Similarly, the parent community, when presented with the achievement data, asked: "Do you think this is something to do with the introduction of the technology?"	**Collaborative sense-making** What is our data telling us? Is this what we expected?
School leaders recognised that there had been some unintended consequences in introducing new technology. *We had not paid enough attention to how teachers were going to get their heads around the use of the new devices and we had not been thinking about the pedagogy.* ***– Principal.***	**Prioritising to take action** What do we need to do and why?

Dyer Street School: What happened next?

The board of trustees and the parent community accepted the "implementation dip" and responded by asking "What can we do to support you in making the improvements that are needed?"

The principal was very aware that the board and community were positive about moving forward because they had been informed as soon as the dip was identified by the staff:
"…it would be a different conversation if the data was unexamined or unrectified."

The school has made changes to its development approach. Teachers made sure that they set explicit and ambitious targets for their students. Systems were put in place to ensure that the monitoring of student targets is more deliberate and there is more analysis of teaching related decisions. Changes have been made to the meeting schedule to enable leaders and teachers to meet for this purpose. Class-by-class support focused on accelerating student outcomes is provided. Changes have been made to the way the teachers' learning groups operate. To increase the depth of focus and foster a collaborative approach, teachers explore one area of inquiry together for a term. Focused coaching support is provided. Teachers set individual goals, identify an area of inquiry where they want to make improvements, and coaching teams provide support and challenge as part of the process. This focus on practice has increased the rigour and ownership of the change process.

The pace of implementation is being carefully managed. As part of developing the future-focused learning emphasis, leaders and teachers visited other schools to better understand how they might approach this priority area. The visits and the conversations about what was seen contributed to new thinking about the use of space and flexible approaches that moved beyond being device driven. School leaders are now actively managing the change process and monitoring whether they have identified the actual problem and implementing the right solution.

> *We're being much more strategic and systematic. We are thinking about the how and the why before the doing. What we are doing must support the learning. So in introducing the iPads we are making sure we have the right things on them and we have brought in an expert teacher to help us with that.*
>
> ***– Principal.***

What changes can we make that will give us an immediate response to the issues we have identified?

How can we involve other groups in the school is this review?

Fairfield Primary School – writing review

Over three years, the senior leadership team had focused on formalising and embedding their self review practices. Up until this point, internal evaluation had "just happened" in an unstructured way. This informal internal evaluation was well established, but it had been hard for the school to measure the effectiveness of their evaluation. They decided to make their internal evaluation systematic and strengthen the alignment between internal evaluation and the school charter.

The senior leadership team drew on ERO's resources and employed an external expert to work with them and the board of trustees. They also looked at good practice in other schools.

The school identified three main areas of focus: student progress and achievement; staff performance; and the annual aims, goals and objectives stated in the school charter.

This evaluation came about as a result of the analysis of achievement data in writing. The writing review provided a framework for future reviews in other curriculum areas. They have since used similar processes to review their teaching and learning in reading, mathematics, and the arts.

Fairfield Primary School – writing review

At the beginning of this process, data literacy expertise lay mostly with members of the senior leadership team. Their mid-year analysis of data in 2012 revealed poor achievement in writing. This was disappointing as teachers had recently participated in writing-related professional development. Senior leaders decided that they needed to take a closer look at what was happening as what they were doing was not getting results.

"A brutally honest in-depth review of how teachers were teaching writing was needed."

Noticing

What's going on here? For which students?

Should we be concerned?

Fairfield Primary School – writing review

Senior leaders decided to investigate further by carrying out classroom visits, looking at teachers' planning for writing and students' writing samples, and talking with students.

They also:

- used guidance resources to help identify effective practice from research about teaching writing
- collected teachers' views about the teaching of writing
- gathered the views and perspectives of students through interviewing students about their learning about writing, and
- collated samples of students' writing from across the school and from the intermediate school many of their students went on to.

Investigating

What is happening in classrooms?

What might help us identify what good practice looks like?

How do students feel about themselves as writers?

The initial observations and other evidence confirmed that teaching practice was highly variable and likely to be contributing to the "pretty grim" achievement data.

Leaders decided their first development step was to establish a shared understanding across the staff of what effective teaching in writing looked like. The senior leadership team led this as a collaborative activity, collecting the views of teachers and building a consensus around these fundamental aspects.

At staff meetings, teacher discussions and moderation of judgements about writing samples helped to build a shared understanding of what good writing looked like. Leaders and teachers drew on Ministry of Education resources, including curriculum documents, the *English Language Learning Progressions, Literacy Learning Progressions, Effective Literacy Practice,* and the *National Standards Reading and Writing* document.

Leaders challenged teachers by posing the questions:

"Are our students aware of what they are learning?"

Collaborative sense making

What is our data telling us?

What might we need to explore further?

What does the research evidence say about effective teaching?

What does effective practice look like?

To effect real change, teachers needed to be on board. Leaders knew that to achieve this would take time and would need to be well thought out, planned and resourced. A central thrust of the improvement effort was to improve teaching practice through professional discussions, coaching and guided critical reflection.

Prioritising to take action

What do we need to do and why?

How big is the change we are planning?

Fairfield Primary School – writing review

Video recordings of writing lessons were introduced as part of the professional development and proved to be a particularly useful tool for critical reflection. Teachers used their first videos to help identify their own needs. They shared their second videos with the professional development provider, and from there were invited to share their videos and reflections with colleagues or at team meetings.

Leaders initially kept out of the video process to encourage candid and fearless reflection and to help teachers maintain control. Teachers needed to feel that the review process was being done with them, not to them.

Collegial video-review sessions also proved to be effective. Once teachers became comfortable using the video it was accepted as an integral part of the writing professional development. Senior leaders used the videos as part of facilitated discussions with teachers to reflect on practice, celebrate successes and to set goals.

Priority was given to the collaborative development of writing progressions with finely graded sub-levels. This level of detail defined in the sub-levels helped teachers to recognise the steps children may take to progress, particularly for students with low achievement in writing.

Exemplars gathered from children's writing now sit alongside each level and sub-level to provide more detail for teachers and children. Pieces of children's writing are moderated fortnightly in teams and twice a term across the whole school.

How are we going to get teachers involved and engaged in this change process?

What support do we need for our leaders? Our teachers?

What strengths do we have to build on?

Developing the writing progressions involved ongoing clarification and sometimes contentious debate. Leaders felt that they could have developed the progressions themselves and imposed them upon teachers, which would have been faster. However, this would not have achieved the level of ownership by teachers that the collaborative process fostered.

The development of the writing progressions gave teachers more responsibility for analysing their own classroom data. All teaching staff, rather than just the senior leadership team, are now responsible for improving achievement across the school.

Monitoring and evaluating impact

What are we learning here?

How well are our strategies working?

Are we getting the intended results?

How do we know?

Is this good enough?

Fairfield Primary School – writing review

The progressions are now used to inform planning, teaching, identifying next learning steps, assessment and reporting to parents. Students know about and have access to the progressions, and are able use them to reflect on their success and next steps. Leaders and teachers continue to have a focus on improving outcomes in writing. They recognise that this focus needs to be ongoing as results are still not good enough.

The language in the progressions is used by teachers when conferencing with students about their writing and for feedback in the students' writing books.

Outcomes for learners

Percent of students achieving at or above National writing standards:

2012	2014
45%	52%

The biggest gains are seen in Years 4, 5 and 6 and are particularly evident for Māori and Pacific students.

> *"This was the first review we have done formally. It took a long time but it built collaboration and relational trust. The role of the senior leaders as instructional leaders was increased. The review challenged deficit thinking and raised expectations of children and teachers."*
>
> ***– School Leaders.***

Kerikeri High School – English department review

Kerikeri High School's approach to internal evaluation emphasises using data and evidence as a springboard for responsive action and developing 'inquiry habits of mind' rather than on the recording of internal evaluation activities. Internal evaluation is woven through school activities and is "a line of sight to student achievement and wellbeing." The school has capability within the senior leadership team that enables the analysis and presentation of data and trends in specific areas of focus for improvement. Strong, open relationships with the board of trustees supports this approach.

Each department implements a cohesive model of review based on an annual cycle. This example is one of many in this school and shows how the English department implemented its evaluation process. The department has taken a long term view of improvement: "It takes five years before you begin to get where you are going." However, they were monitoring to find the incremental gains. A core key focus of the department has been on developing a professional ethos of ongoing reflection. The department has developed a cohesive model of review based on an annual cycle. The cyclical review process is used to determine priorities, shape the curriculum and develop teaching practice.

Review has contributed to improved performance in literacy, particularly for boys. The structure provided by the review cycle is important for improvement, as is the opportunity for professional learning and development. Leaders lead by example and open the space for discourse.

Kerikeri High School – English department review

Early in the year, individual teachers in the department analyse the performance of all students in detail. The analysis includes a general comment about what worked well from a teaching and learning perspective and areas for improvement.

Teachers in the English department identify specific areas in which their students have done well and do considerable soul searching about aspects that students have not succeeded in. The conversations focus on what the teachers and department could do better rather than on what the students didn't do.

Noticing

What is going on here? For which students?

Is this good enough?

All department members set and reflect on their progress with subject and personal goals which are linked to professional learning and development opportunities. Observations of classroom practice in relation to the goals are carried out and followed by a debriefing. The debrief includes feedback from the observer and the identification of one or two specific areas to focus on.

Investigating

How good is our teaching?

How are we doing in relation to our goals?

Kerikeri High School – English department review

The analysis and inquiry process along with the observations and goals contribute to the annual development plan. The head of department (HOD) uses the information from individual teachers to develop an overview of departmental performance and a standard-by-standard analysis is carried out. NCEA data is analysed and the findings are discussed with the principal. The value of these reviews has increased as teachers have become more confident and analytical.

Collaborative sense-making

What is the data telling us?

Is this good enough?

Reviews also focus on programmes for Years 9 and 10 students. Leaders consider which contexts and skills are working for students and identify resources needed. Year 10 programmes are checked to see that they are giving students learning opportunities for topics that many are likely to encounter again in the senior school.

The quality of the guidance provided for teachers is reviewed for standards where results are poor. Contradictions are discussed and where assessment judgements are subjective, some external moderation is sought to provide robust evidence. Solutions to issues are determined to make sure students have the time to access the resources they need and they can learn through contexts that will engage them.

The outcomes of the data reviews inform the annual report which in turn feeds into the departmental planning process.

- *There are fundamentals we have to apply. Timeliness is important when looking at the data, you need to look at it at a time where you can then be responsive and set up a development plan. Time to wrestle with dissonance is also important.*
- *Having a critical friend gives you someone you can discuss things with.*
- *We sometimes have to take risks and move out of our comfort zone – we should not be afraid of pushing the boundaries.*

Prioritising to take action

What do we need to work on and why?

Students are closely monitored. Every student matters: "We look after all of them." The HOD operates a traffic light system (green, amber, red) to ensure that students' needs are responded to: "If something's not working we will change it." Staffing is organised to maximise students' achievement. "Our most experienced teachers teach the internally assessed classes".

Monitoring and evaluating impact

Are we getting the results we wanted?

Do we need to adjust what we are doing?

Kerikeri High School – English department review

Departmental meetings are student focused and organised to enable teachers to have professional conversations. Meetings focus on the development of resources and sharing best practice. To minimise administration at departmental meetings the HOD prepares a weekly newsletter for staff.

Comprehensive internal evaluation reports outline the issues and successes clearly. Sound reasons are provided for any additions or removal of courses or resources. These detailed records ensure that mistakes from the past won't be repeated and teachers have a clear understanding of what works for students at Kerikeri High School.

Outcomes for students

The close analysis of and responsiveness to achievement data has successfully increased achievement. Improvements for boys and Māori students are significant.

Percentage of students achieving NCEA (based on leavers' data):

Students	2005	2012
Boys	47.8%	97%
Māori	29%	69%

'Success is still fragile – if you have a group that is failing in your school you focus on them and keep focusing on them.'

Manurewa High School – increasing parent and whānau engagement in their child's learning

An important part of Manurewa High School's success in improving student engagement and achievement resulted from a shift from seeing the student and their parents and whānau as the source of the problem – "student blaming" – to finding ways of doing things differently to support learners and their learning.

A strategic focus on improving learning and learning pathways provided the impetus for an increased focus on the close tracking and monitoring of every student and strengthening relationships with parents and whānau.

Enhancing opportunities for parents and whānau to participate in learning-centred relationships and developing the role of the whānau tutor as the significant adult in students' school lives has been pivotal in increasing student engagement and academic success. This example highlights an evaluation and subsequent developments in enhancing opportunities for parents and whānau to participate in learning-centred relationships.

Manurewa High School – increasing parent and whānau engagement in their child's learning

Noticing

What is happening?

Is this good enough?

The principal's leadership brought a heightened awareness of the importance of relationships in understanding the learner and the learner's world. Teachers were asked to *"walk in their* [students] *shoes"* to better understand the challenge of increasing the engagement and academic success of students from low socio-economic contexts.

School leadership and teachers had been concerned about the very small numbers of parents and whānau attending parent-teacher interviews (15 percent). A school-wide focus on better supporting students to succeed academically through building positive relationships had laid the groundwork for developing learning-centred relationships with parents and whānau.

Investigating

What are we already doing that might help us with this?

Leaders realised that they could build on practices and strengths developed through involvement in initiatives such as the Ministry of Education's *Positive Behaviour for Learning – School-wide*[4] and *Starpath*.[5]

4 Ministry of Education. (2015). *PB4L School-Wide.* Retrieved from http://pb4l.tki.org.nz/PB4L-School-Wide.

5 University of Auckland. (2015). *The Starpath Project – Partnership for Excellence.* Retrieved from http://www.education.auckland.ac.nz/en/about/research/starpath-home.html.

Manurewa High School – increasing parent and whānau engagement in their child's learning

Collaborative sense making

What can we learn from these other initiatives?

The school's participation in the *Starpath* project had contributed to an increased awareness of the importance of academic counselling to support student progress and enhance parent and whānau engagement as key strategies to support student success. Leaders wanted to align newly introduced practices to achieve better outcomes for all learners.

It became clear that as well as making changes to how parent interviews were conducted, changes needed to be made to get parents and whānau feeling more comfortable about coming into the school and supported in their involvement in student achievement conferences.

Prioritising to take action

What do we need to do and why?

Preparation for the introduction of student-achievement conferences was thorough. Professional learning and development ensured that teachers understood the theory behind the approach to conferences, how to conduct them well and strategies for contacting parents and whānau.

> *Importance was placed on ensuring families were made aware of the conferences. Sending a letter home was the first step but several different techniques were used such as placement of an advert in the local paper and requesting ministers to promote the student achievement conferences in church. However, the letter sent home was the most significant step as it included a time for a prearranged appointment. To ensure ease of attendance, childcare was also provided.*
>
> ***– Principal.***

The whānau system was changed so that the whānau tutor became the key link person between students, families and staff. The whānau tutor is responsible for academic counselling, meeting regularly with each student and monitoring their academic progress on an ongoing basis. Whānau tutors are responsible for a group of students and move with the group of students as they move through Years 9 to 13.

Parent-teacher evenings were restructured so that students, parents and whānau met with their child's whānau tutor for 20 minutes.

> *The family definition was flexible. Some students brought siblings, or other people's parents, or translators to accommodate anything like language barriers. This was done openly and with difference accepted and the priority being placed on the student's academic achievement and engagement with the learning process.*
>
> ***– Principal.***

Manurewa High School – increasing parent and whānau engagement in their child's learning

The success of the approach was dramatic. The attendance of parents and whānau at student achievement conferences increased to 87 percent. Teachers now "know the kids better" so that the school can tailor the response to the students' wellbeing and learning needs.

> *They know you, there is communication. Success breeds success.*
>
> ***– Teacher.***

> *Teachers see beyond your actual potential – they help you to pave a pathway and push you to do things.*
>
> ***– Year 9 student.***

> *There are some schools that look good on the outside but are not so good on the inside. Our school might not look so good on the outside but it's really good on the inside.*
>
> ***– Year 9 student.***

Outcomes for learners

Students are becoming increasingly confident in talking about their learning, and in contributing to and leading conferences with their parents and whānau. Students said that their parents and whānau have a better understanding of the qualifications system and what students need to do to learn, achieve and be successful.

Ongoing monitoring has identified improved outcomes for students, parents and whānau, and teachers. These are evident in:

- the academic targets reached by the school
- the positive feedback and resounding support from parents and whānau, as well as teachers, for the new approach
- improved relationships between parents and whānau and teachers
- the sustained, high attendance of parents and whānau at student achievement conferences.

Monitoring and evaluating impact

What is happening as a result of the changes we have made?

Since 2011, the number of students achieving NCEA Level 2 has increased:

2011	% at or above	2014	% at or above
NCEA Level 2	61.6	NCEA Level 2	74.2
NCEA Level 2 Māori students	48.8	NCEA Level 2 Māori students	61.0
NCEA Level 2 Pacific students	57.8	NCEA Level 2 Pacific students	71.6

Norfolk School – a writing review

Previously the principal had a year's study leave to work on a postgraduate qualification. The opportunity enabled him to read deeply, research and re-shape his vision for the school and extend his leadership approach. When he returned to the school he decided to introduce a whole-school approach to review and development.

> *I wanted my leadership approach to shift to a more strategic, self-renewing and sustainable one focused on three things: what is best for children, the change process and the importance of involving all players in that process.*
>
> *– **Principal.***

This example is an evaluation triggered by leaders taking a close look at student achievement data as part of developing and introducing a new approach to school evaluation. Although both writing and mathematics were identified for review and development, the example below focuses mainly on the developments in writing.

Norfolk School – a writing review

The National Standards data was showing a decline in performance and board trustees were asking hard questions. When the data was analysed by year level and for individual students, issues were evident in maths (in the shift from advanced additive to multiplicative thinking), and for boys' writing. Although some students showed significant progress, the progress of others showed a plateau or decline. Overall there was insufficient progress.

The principal used the analysis as an opportunity to involve the staff in setting targets and to develop specific outcomes in the annual plan.

Noticing

What's going on here?

Should we be concerned?

Norfolk School – a writing review

We needed to be thinking systematically about the evidence by asking the important questions. What are we doing well? What can we improve on? How can we enrich and accelerate the learning of our students? We also needed to know more about each of the children we were focusing on before we could be clear about what we were focusing on as a school.

– Principal.

The analysis and interpretation of the data provided a starting point for building capability and getting staff to think at a higher level. The aim was to distribute leadership and generate ownership of school improvement by all teachers. The principal shifted his emphasis to building "human systems by listening and hearing." Opportunities for discussions were increased.

The principal also realised he needed to be more direct with staff to ensure expectations were clear and applied. Time was invested in clarifying principles and beliefs about teaching. Staff meetings became a mechanism for structuring how to work together as professionals, focused on building professional capability through, for example, the sharing of readings, research and practice. External expertise was identified and used to build leadership capability and mentoring approaches through challenging and extending approaches to classroom practice.

The principal took a strong instructional leadership role, leading collaborative brainstorming, working in classrooms and modelling approaches to teaching and professional learning, such as the use of video to analyse what could be done differently. He fostered vertical and horizontal connections in the quality of learning, teaching, professional learning and leadership. He also focused on changes to support those students needing to progress faster in mathematics.

As part of leadership development the principal asked the deputy principal (DP) to lead an evaluation focused on writing that would engage teachers to talk about their practice and improve outcomes, particularly for students of concern.

The DP began by analysing the data more deeply to identify who the students were that needed support. She was interested in what their strengths and needs were, what support they had now, their current goals and what support they had already had. The DP visited these students in their classrooms. She also spent time reading research and guidelines about effective practice. This helped her to identify what good practice looked like.

Investigating

What do we already know about these students?

What does good look like?

Norfolk School – a writing review

The DP undertook classroom visits in Term 2. Teachers identified the focus for the first visit, choosing something they had been working on that they wanted DP feedback on. They completed a pre-observation reflection that included an area of personal focus and an area of school focus. They also identified what they thought was an effective strategy they were using and their least effective strategy. During classroom visits the DP talked to children about their goals and how they thought they were doing with them.

> *The Deputy Principal became a risk taker, taking others with her, and focusing on lifting the bar.*
>
> ***– Principal.***

The external mentor assisted with the 'how', emphasising dialogue and coaching strategies such as using reflective questions, thinking about practice, and collaborating.

During the year leaders and teachers participated in an ongoing process of collaborative sense making that also gave teachers multiple opportunities to discuss their practice and how it was influencing children's learning. There was an emphasis on open-to-learning conversations.

> *Relationships were a big part of the process, especially things like showing a genuine interest, listening and having really good conversations. If teachers are not feeling safe about you being in their classroom you won't see actual practice.*
>
> ***– Deputy Principal.***

A further round of classroom observations early in Term 3 followed a similar format with a pre-observation sheet that identified the focus for the observation. A focus was identified from the work staff had been doing to improve practice. An analysis of mid-year data showed some gains for the boys in the target group.

The pre-observation sheet for Term 4 classroom visits had a sharper focus. "Are we doing what we say we should be doing?" Visits to classrooms again included discussions with students about their goals and their progress to find out what was working for them and what wasn't.

> *The emphasis on student voice involves talking with the children, asking them about their goals and the associated evidence, and whether or not the pace of teaching is helping them.*
>
> ***– Leaders.***

What do we need to know to help understand the issues behind our data?

How are we going?

Are we getting the shifts in practice we want?

Does our practice reflect our new learning?

Norfolk School – a writing review

An analysis of the discussions with the boys showed that it was the surface features of writing that were getting in the way. The DP shared with teachers what she had found and they discussed how teachers might make changes to their practice to *"hook the boys into writing"*. The teachers brainstormed approaches and focused on interest, structure, using child voice, modelling writing, prompts, drawing on real experience and using technology.

> *Systems and approaches were changed to support what mattered. There was a need to be clear about the students who were being focused on and how to accelerate their progress.*
>
> ***– Deputy Principal.***

Data from subsequent classroom visits and discussions with students was shared with individual teachers and analysed by the DP to provide a picture of what was happening across the school. That analysis was then shared with staff.

Collaborative sense-making

What is the data we have collected telling us?

How are we doing? Are we making the changes to practice we expected?

The DP was clear about the steps in the change process, framing up questions for teachers to ask about their practice and developing tools to support the process. External expertise was sought to assist the DP to develop a structure for teacher reflection and for the DP to provide teachers with feedback on the strategies they were using in their classrooms.

Prioritising to take action

What do we need to do and why?

Towards the end of Term 2, leaders and teachers looked specifically at the boys' achievement and saw an improvement. Through this monitoring, they identified that some of the senior girls were not performing as well as expected so this group also became a focus.

At the end of 2013 a questionnaire was used to get specific staff feedback on how they were feeling about the changes to their teaching practice.

Monitoring and evaluating impact

What is happening as a result of our improvement actions?

Outcomes for the students in the target group

National Standards data for writing

In **2013**, 14 (58 percent of) students in the target group moved from 'below' to 'at' the National Standards for writing.[6]

6 Norfolk School. (2014). *National Standard Results: 2014.* Retrieved from http://norfolk.school.nz/board-of-trustees/national-standards/national-standard-results-2014/

Oaklynn Special School – Student learning and effective teaching

This was a major, strategic evaluation and improvement process that began in 2010 and was continuing when ERO visited the school in 2014.

Collaborative inquiry groups were put in place for the school's evaluation. These groups also became the vehicles for ongoing professional development. Leaders and teachers faced the challenge of evaluating student engagement within the special education context, and adapted tools from existing research to do so. Engagement for targeted students improved as a result of their pedagogical shifts.

Oaklynn Special School – Student learning and effective teaching	
The principal felt that while strategic and school planning had been embedded at the management level for a long time, there had been growth of teacher involvement and the use of teacher inquiry as an element of school evaluation. The publication of *The New Zealand Curriculum, Best Evidence Synthesis (BES), Autism Guidelines* and *Registered Teacher Criteria* had all acted as triggers to further promote teachers' involvement in review and development. Reflection on the documents above caused leaders to think about how they could do things differently to improve staff professional learning and collaboration, and bring a sharp focus on what their students need to learn.	**Noticing** How might we use this process and evidence in our context?
The school used the Problem Resolving Action Research approach championed by Eileen Piggot-Irvine[7] to structure their inquiry. This iterative, developmental, participatory and contextually responsive approach was seen to be a good fit for their purpose and they had used the approach before. Teachers formed specific professional learning groups, which were distinguished according to the needs of students. Teachers wanted to be in 'like' groups so the school set up three groups – one each for students with moderate learning needs; with profound and multiple learning needs; and with autism spectrum disorder.	**Investigating** How can we use existing inquiry process to look more closely at our practice? What do we know about current practice? What does good look like?

7 Irvine, E. (2009). *Action research in practice.* Wellington, N.Z: NZCER Press. Retrieved from http://unitec.researchbank.ac.nz/bitstream/handle/10652/1473/Piggot-Irvine%20-%20Rhetoric%20and%20practice.htm?sequence=1&isAllowed=y.

Oaklynn Special School – Student learning and effective teaching

Action research started with reconnaissance rather than a predetermined direction. The teachers were valued as experts who knew a considerable amount about their own students and their own contexts. The professional learning groups began by considering where they were now: what it was that *their* students needed to learn and what *they* needed to learn as educators to support any new approaches. The professional learning groups also looked into what good looks like, drawing on local and international research, and what other schools were doing.

One particularly influential programme was the Relationship Development Intervention.[8] This approach "turned the teaching of autism on its head". The school had adapted this programme to be more easily applied in their school. They had combined it with elements of Greenspan Floortime Approach[9] along with other pedagogical approaches and called it 'Experience Sharing'. Teachers became aware that their focus had been on managing autism, rather than challenging it. This insight was seen as applicable to all the professional learning groups, not just the autism spectrum disorder group.

Collaborative sense making

What insight does the information we have gathered give us?

Leaders were conscious of the potential for teacher overload, so the development process was staggered over the year. Teachers had training in the various pedagogical approaches.

Goals for the implementation of the quality interaction (QI) approaches were incorporated into all teachers' performance management goals. QI was a framework developed collaboratively by staff that made explicit the four key areas of focus for enhancing student engagement: responsive adult; student as an individual; fundamentals of learning; and management of class and resources. Indicators of effective teaching were identified and linked to student learning, which created a sense of teacher responsibility for learning. Leaders provided a template to help structure teachers' critical reflection so they focused on how they knew what good looked like, and how they could identify that they were doing it.

Prioritising to take action

What do we need to do and why?

What support do teachers need to make the changes expected?

8 Autism Speaks. (2015). *Relationship Development Intervention.* Retrieved from http://www.autismspeaks.org/what-autism/treatment/relationship-development-intervention-rdi

9 Autism Speaks. (2015). *Floortime.* Retrieved from https://www.autismspeaks.org/what-autism/treatment/floortime

Oaklynn Special School – Student learning and effective teaching

Leaders and teachers also became involved in a research project called the Complex Learning Difficulties and Disabilities Research Project (CLDD) operating in the United Kingdom.[10] This project had a focus on engagement for learning.

> *Teachers now saw engaged behaviour as the single best predictor of successful learning. Effective teaching practice was therefore seen to be practice which supports engagement.*
>
> ***– Principal.***

Increased engagement was included as a specific goal in students' individual education plans (IEPs). Teachers chose their least engaged students, 17 in total, and monitored their progress through the IEP goals.

Firstly, leaders and teachers set about finding the answers to their questions:

- What does the responsive adult look like?
- How much engagement is needed to impact on learning?
- How do our students learn? What do we have to change?

Measuring engagement of students with special education needs posed a challenge. To systematise and formalise the process, the school adopted an observational tool from the CLDD project, called the engagement profile and scale. Teachers videoed their practice and, using the scale, collaboratively scored the engagement of students. Collecting this kind of rich data on practice allowed teachers to evaluate the effectiveness of their implementation of the various QI approaches, and to test the first part of their hypothesis.

At the end of 2012, analysis of the IEP goals revealed that 15 of the 17 students had increased engagement. Teachers also gave lots of positive feedback through annual kanohi ki te kanohi (face-to-face) interviews with the principal. Responding to this success, the senior leadership team decided to give more autonomy to teachers in terms of their ongoing monitoring of engagement.

Monitoring and evaluating impact

What is happening as a result of our improvement actions?

What evidence do we have of progress?

What are we learning here?

Do we need to adjust what we are doing? Why?

What will we do differently?

10 SSAT (The Schools Network). (2015). Complex Learning Difficulties and Disabilities research project. Retrieved from http://complexld.ssatrust.org.uk/.

Oaklynn Special School – Student learning and effective teaching

However, analysing teacher critical reflections at the end of 2013 showed that one year of structured support was not enough time for the engaged learning model to become sufficiently embedded in teacher practice. A second year of structured support would have increased teacher autonomy in the approaches.

The principal had attended substantial PLD in coaching, and the impact of coaching as a leadership style was a focus for monitoring progress at the end of 2013.

> *Coaching is the dominant approach, improving organisation and people together. The majority of staff preferred the coaching model to the older 'peer supervision' approach, which had been previously used in the school for around for 12 years.*
>
> ***– Principal.***

Staff described coaching as being "inspiring, promoting collegiality, and giving an opportunity to REALLY reflect". Staff also reported being able to use coaching in their own work, and across different contexts, including the schools' professional learning groups and the behaviour clinic. The senior leadership team recognised that they had been trying to implement too many things at once, and needed to prioritise for the following year. Consequently, in 2014, leaders decided to reduce the number of focus areas for teachers to two. A return to the QI framework highlighted that in order to build on previous learning, teachers required PLD in the area of 'Management of class and resources. The focus for 2014 became TEACCH[11] and coaching.

11 University of North Carolina School of Medicine. (2015). *TEACCH autism programme.* Retrieved from https://www.teacch.com/.

Otumoetai Intermediate – a review focused on improving teaching practice

This evaluation was part of an ongoing focus on teaching practice as a means to improve outcomes for all learners. Before 2007, internal evaluation consisted of annual curriculum reviews that had not contributed to significant changes for students or teachers.

> *We seemed to be going around and around in circles with maths reviewed one year and science the next without many changes seen in practice. We needed to change from a focus on specific curriculum reviews to a focus on learning and teaching.*
>
> ***– Senior leaders.***

In 2007 the principal invited John Hattie to come to the school and speak to teachers at a teacher only day. The leadership team knew that they needed to have teachers motivated and on board if they were going to effect change. This was the starting point for a relentless focus on effective teaching to improve outcomes.

Otumoetai Intermediate – a review focused on improving teaching practice	
There was a sense of urgency to improve outcomes for students. As an intermediate school, there is only a very small window of opportunity (two years) to lift student achievement. The senior leadership team recognised the need to drive improvement. The senior leadership team was interested in why learning was more effective in some classrooms than others.	**Noticing** We can do better? What is happening in our classrooms? What is the issue or problem?
The primary challenge was to shift teaching practice to a focus on student achievement through identifying learning needs and making teachers accountable for the quality of teaching. We are about being wise owls and not jumping on bandwagons. Everything we have done had been decided through looking at both qualitative and quantitative data. ***– Principal.*** Near the beginning of the development phase the principal attended a presentation by Dr Kevin Knight, whose research was in the area of teacher improvement. The decision was made to implement the teacher improvement model with support from Dr Knight. Teachers were initially quite anxious about this development and so they had a secret ballot to seek the views of teachers as to whether or not to proceed. All voted yes so implementation began in 2008. Teachers were observed to gather evidence and give feedback. During the classroom observation students were asked about how they felt about what was happening for them.	**Investigating** What do we need to find out? Whose perspectives do we need to 'hear'? Why are there better outcomes in some classes and not in others?

Otumoetai Intermediate – a review focused on improving teaching practice

After the observations each teacher was placed on a continuum that outlined several stages of teacher practice. In classes where teaching was identified to be at the highest level, students felt that all learning was necessary, meaningful and relevant for them individually. Observations showed that most of the teachers in the school enthusiastically managed whole-class teaching where students were engaged most of the time.

The small number of teachers that needed considerable guidance had many opportunities to observe and reflect on others' practice. They received ongoing guidance from the more effective teachers and also met weekly to discuss their students' learning and progress. An external expert then observed them a term later and gave feedback on their progress.

Changing to a deputy principal dedicated to teaching and learning was critical to improving outcomes for students. The deputy principal keeps up to date with education and leadership theory and research.

As part of the change management the leadership team used expertise of other New Zealand academics in areas they wanted to improve in, such as mathematics teaching and leadership development, to support real change in classrooms.

The senior leadership team analysed the data collected and noticed some trends across the school:

- Some classroom environments were humming with a sense of urgency and focus. These classrooms had most students on task, and the teacher was often hard to spot. Other classrooms were noisy, with students off task or reading books unrelated to the topic at hand.
- In the humming classrooms students clearly explained how they felt, they stated that their classes were organised, they knew what they were doing and felt their teacher knew what was going on in their classroom. In the noisier classrooms the opposite was reported by students.

Observations also indicated that the depth of questioning by teachers and the affirmation of students and their learning varied.

Some staff felt that professional learning and development (PLD) was relevant and some did not. As a result engagement levels with new ideas and practices differed. After professional development, some teachers had incorporated what they'd learned into their practice and others introduced only parts. In other cases teachers had adopted aspects of what had been learned but quickly reverted to their original practices.

Collaborative sense-making

What insights does the data give us?

What trends do we see?

What are we learning here?

What does the data tell us about teaching in our school?

Otumoetai Intermediate – a review focused on improving teaching practice

It became obvious that teachers' development needs were as diverse as those of their students. Members of the senior leadership team listened to what staff said in group discussions and their comments about professional development were noted.

The senior leadership team then made the decision to change their professional learning approach away from whole staff PLD to differentiated PLD for individual teachers. Leaders and individual teachers determined the PLD needs by identifying student needs from achievement data. They then investigated how to enhance student outcomes in relation to the identified needs. This proved to be more difficult than anticipated. Even with motivated staff, it became obvious they needed a coherent and clearly understood approach to this PLD model.

The school decided to "put all its money in one basket" and draw on external expertise in the professional learning and development process. Funding to do this was from money that had previously been allocated to curriculum development.

The school organisation was changed to accommodate the teacher improvement model. Leaders made a deliberate decision to move away from having curriculum leaders and having curriculum reviews drive teaching and learning. The curriculum reviews had them "going around in circles" with mathematics one year and science the next with no application in the classrooms.

The six team leaders are now seen as 'mini principals' with a strong student achievement and effective expert teacher focus. Their weekly meetings focus on student progress and achievement. They are working on building the capability of team leaders, especially in relation to having the hard conversations. Target students are kept to the forefront.

"Leaders have to have a motivational mindset."

– Deputy principal.

Prioritising to take action

What changes do we need to make and why?

How big is the change we are planning?

What support do we need?

How will we resource this change?

Leaders recognised that students are an important source of information if you genuinely want to find out what is working and what needs to change. As a result, the school established a team of 'learning detectives' who were selected and then trained to observe teaching and give feedback about what they have seen and what could be improved.

Monitoring and evaluating impact

What is happening as a result of our improvement actions?

Otumoetai Intermediate – a review focused on improving teaching practice

The sustained work on teacher improvement has led to a fundamentally different quality of teaching and learning that is being constantly refined and is reflected in the students' levels of engagement in learning. Teachers have a buddy system whereby they observe each other's practice (expert/novice).

Although the school has moved from reliance on external expertise to a more sustainable approach, the external expert is still involved in the focus on teaching practice.

Positive changes are evident for students, the board and staff.

> *Managing a group of students for some teachers has become more effective. This is not only improving the quality of the learning environment but is improving the quality of the teachers' daily experience.*

The board of trustees also looked at how it could refine their practices. Now when the board meets, one hour is set aside to look into student achievement before general business is attended to. Storyboards are used to document and share achievement. This gives everyone an overall picture of achievement and progress across the school.

> *Assessment and evaluation used to be done to please me and because I asked for it. Now it's done for learning. There's a lot of buzz about data. People talk more about knowing how to use the tools, and gathering, analysing and interpreting the data.*
>
> ***– Deputy principal.***

Outcomes for learners

The following information shows the achievement gains for students during their two years at Otumoetai Intermediate. It is based on entry to exit data for 2013 for reading, writing and mathematics.

How well are our strategies working? For which teachers and which students?

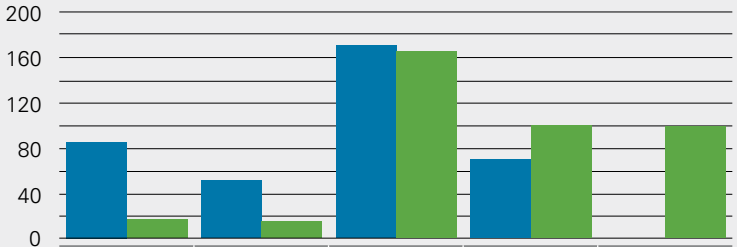
Otumoetai Intermediate – a review focused on improving teaching practice

Otumoetai intermediate – improved achievement – data shifts – (source education counts)

Reading

92% of all our year 8 students at or above the national standard.

Entry to Exit overall teacher judgement (OTJ)s. Reading 2013



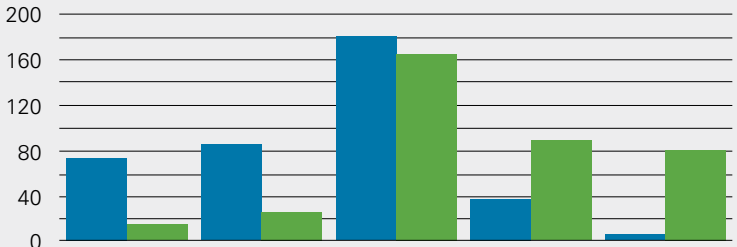
Well Below	Below	All	Above	Well Above
83	53	170	71	
17	15	165	100	99

Yr 7 Reading
Yr 8 Reading

Mathematics

90.4% of all our year 8 students are achieving at or above the standard.

Entry to Exit Maths OTJs Nov 2013



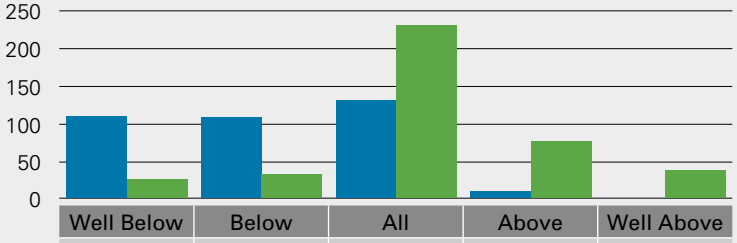
Well Below	Below	All	Above	Well Above
75	84	181	38	4
14	24	166	90	102

Yr 7 Maths
Yr 8 Maths

Writing

86.1% of all our year 8 students are achieving at or above the national standard.

Entry to Exit OTJs Writing Nov 2013



Well Below	Below	All	Above	Well Above
108	106	129	8	0
24	31	228	75	36

Yr 7 Writing
Yr 8 Writing

Rata Street School – 'summer effect' in writing

The school has been involved in several schooling improvement initiatives over many years. These initiatives have shaped their approach to school internal evaluation and built organisational capacity for inquiry over a long period of time. The Building Evaluation Capacity for Schooling Improvement project and the Literacy Professional Development Programme have helped extend their review and development strategies. More recently, the school has been part of a Learning and Change Network with five local schools. This involves challenge, critique and collaboration at every level: students, teachers, leaders and whānau.

At Rata Street School each year students' transience means about 30 percent of children arrive from or leave to other schools. Rather than take a deficit approach, the school focuses on the progress it can make for students while they are at the school. Students are taught how to recognise what level they are at in their learning, and what they need to do to move forward.

Internal evaluation is not seen as a discrete activity or process – it is embedded as an everyday activity. It starts with the analysis of student achievement by teachers working in year groups to identify priority curriculum areas for their year level, and set targets for these levels. The areas chosen for development are those that have the potential to have a significant and positive impact on the students that need to make the most progress. Information is collated to identify common needs and school-wide priority areas. Student, teacher and leader goals are co-constructed to help everyone understand what they are trying to achieve and who are they intending to reach. Once students needing additional support are identified, the teachers reflect on what is and is not working for students. The needs of the student and teacher are identified several times throughout the year. Practice analysis conversations, including class observations and formal pre/post discussion and reflections, contribute to the school's extensive review and improvement practices. This approach has resulted in a shift from deficit thinking to a focus on what teachers can do despite contextual challenges. It has also led to more specific actions that in turn link to teachers' appraisal goals and reflections.

The evaluation outlined overleaf is an example of a recent evaluation and change activity at the school.

Rata Street School – 'summer effect' in writing

In 2009 leaders and teachers noticed a drop in achievement levels evident in the start-of-year writing samples. At that time 42 percent of students in Years 4 to 6 were achieving at lower levels in February 2009 than they had in November 2008. An initial analysis of this data by ethnicity, year level and teacher showed no trends. So no further action was taken at this time.

Noticing

What's going on here?

Is this what we expected?

At the end of November 2009 achievement data was gathered and compared to the February data. The analysis showed that 68 percent of the students had made a gain of two or more sub-levels when using the AsTTle writing levels. A further 30 percent of students had made a one sub-level shift.

However, when looking at the same students using November 2008 data compared with November 2009 data the achievement picture was very different. This data showed students were not making progress, and in some cases had dropped from where they were at the same time the previous year. Using this comparison, only 10 percent of students made a gain of two or more sub-levels from 2008 to 2009, 39 percent had a one sub-level gain, 40 percent had no gain at all, and 10 percent went down.

Investigating

What if we have another look at our data to check again if there are any trends or patterns that would explain what we noticed?

What does it look like if we use a different time period?

Leaders recognised that there was a need to do something different. They wondered if the drop might be attributed to the 'summer effect' – the decline sometimes seen after children return from the six weeks of summer holidays. Leaders and teachers sought to find out more about how to prevent this. Many of the staff did some reading around this effect and found research about the summer effect on students' reading progress but little research about the impact on writing progress.

They decided that it was best to focus their efforts on things they could influence. As research about good practices to remedy their issue was lacking, teachers had to devise and closely monitor their own strategy.

Collaborative sense making

What is this data telling us?

Why might this be so?

Rata Street School – 'summer effect' in writing

The strategy they decided to trial involved teachers pasting an example of the student's writing from the end of the previous year into the front of the student's new exercise book. This action was intended to help the child as they transitioned to a new classroom. By students having the same learning intention at the start of the year as they had at the end of the year it was hoped they would be reminded of their progress and achievement last year. It was also intended to show students that their new teacher understood their strengths and what they needed to do to progress further.

Instead of waiting for students to buy books, they were provided with an exercise book on the first day of term, ready to go, with the example of their writing in the first page.

This practice also meant that clear expectations were set with the child. Teachers and students referred back to the writing sample and teachers talked to students about the quality of work that is expected of them, reminding them what they are capable of. This established joint responsibility to ensure that the momentum in the learning is maintained year to year.

Leaders also ensured that teachers had the students' data from the previous year, and that teachers had time to set groups and learning strategies for the start of the year. On the first day of Term 1, teachers could start where the previous teacher left off, with no need to assess students again. Teachers could also target instruction at a particular level right from the very first day and be very explicit about what the student needed to learn.

Prioritising to take action

What can we do differently?

What school practices can we change?

How do we make sure this practice becomes embedded as part of the practice of all teachers?

Rata Street School – 'summer effect' in writing

In the first year, the senior leadership team conducted rigorous monitoring of writing activities in every class, making sure there were daily writing lessons. These strategies worked well, with less than 10 percent of students dropping their level of achievement over summer. This practice is now used successfully at the beginning of each year.

Throughout the year, ongoing monitoring of all students highlighted those who are not making progress. Teachers reflected on their own practice, identified what they could do differently for these students and implemented these changes.

More recently leaders and teachers have focused on extending the ways that they worked with parents to increase students' progress. An interim mid-year report about a child's progress towards meeting National Standards previously included a section explaining what parents could do to help their children at home. This section is no longer completed independently by teachers. It is completed in consultation with parents. During parent/teacher conferences information is shared about the child's goals and parents discuss how they will support these goals at home.

Other activities to enhance the ways the school works with and values parents included designing homework that children and parents could do together and identifying parent and whānau expertise, as well as expertise in the wider community, and how it could be used to advantage many students.

> *As a school community (students, whānau, teachers and leaders) we need to constantly review what we can do differently to improve the learning.*
>
> ***– Leaders.***

Outcomes for students

From 2008 to 2014 the percentage of students dropping levels in writing over summer went from over 40 percent to under 5 percent.

The numbers of students increasing a level early in the year has also risen from 15 percent in 2008 to almost 40 percent in 2014.

Monitoring and evaluating impact

Are we getting the intended results?

How well is this strategy working?

St. Joseph's School (Onehunga) – Oracy review

A distributed leadership approach to school internal evaluation at St Joseph's Onehunga means that one staff member takes responsibility and is given release time for leading a review of a particular curriculum area or a particular initiative. This has helped to build capacity to undertake review. Teachers also analyse and respond to assessment data in their own classes. They set class targets which are reported each term to the senior leadership team. Reviews at different layers of the school are integrated and inform one another. Curriculum area reviews reflect insights from teaching as inquiry cycles, and vice versa.

The senior leadership team and board of trustees establish priorities for improvement through a variety of processes. The senior leadership team is focused on providing the information the board needs. The principal provides robust achievement information and gives the board members access to whoever has the relevant knowledge. This means recognising that sometimes the results "don't look that good". However, the board understands this, and with frank advice and support from the senior leadership team, is able to respond appropriately. Board trustees spoke to ERO about how comfortable they feel raising concerns and asking questions. Once review priorities have been established, further data is gathered through meetings with parents, parent surveys, and group interviews.

This is an evaluation where the school identified an approach in research that they felt would be a good fit for their context and students. The research had implications for teaching practice and partnerships between home and school. Implementation of the approach necessitated deliberate improvement of their professional development model. The response has started to raise the oral language capabilities of their learners.

St. Joseph's School (Onehunga) – Oracy review	
St. Joseph's School (Onehunga) has focused on oracy since 2009. In this, they have drawn heavily on the research of Dr Jannie van Hees,[12] with whom the school has had a long-standing relationship. The school sees oracy as the foundation stone for all learning – "the power house of meaning making and literacy" – and a prerequisite for improved student achievement, particularly in literacy. Conversely, poor oral language is seen as a major inhibitor to improving educational outcomes. Student assessment results and feedback from teachers and support staff indicated that this was an area of concern for the school, particularly for English for speakers of other languages (ESOL)-funded students.	**Noticing** Why is this important? Should we be concerned?

12 Hees, J. (2007). *Expanding oral language in the classroom.* Wellington, N.Z: NZCER Press.

St. Joseph's School (Onehunga) – Oracy review

The school focused on building a professional learning community and opening up teaching practice. Teachers were given *Expanding Oral Language in the Classroom* as professional reading, and discussed their practice regularly in staff meetings.

They formed three professional learning groups (PLGs) organised by junior, middle and senior school. Dr van Hees gave explicit guidance and detailed feedback, as well as providing expert modelling of oracy strategies, and templates for teachers to structure their own critical reflection. Teachers in the PLGs observed and deconstructed each other's practice. They also took videos of their own practice, and critiqued these collaboratively.

Collaborative sense making

What does good practice look like? What does our practice look like?

Is this good enough?

Early in the review leaders set goals for **students** to improve their:

- ability to articulate clearly and comprehensively
- levels of contribution and participation
- vocabulary usage and understanding
- levels of engagement and meta cognition.

Dr Van Hees' research suggested that students' levels of oracy were impacted by the quality of interactions between students and teachers, and between students and their families. To support the students to reach their goals, the school aimed to improve the ability of teachers to maximise professional development opportunities so that they would be able to optimise learning conditions in the classroom. The focus was also on helping parents to understand their child's learning and how they could help at home. Leaders and teachers also wanted to increase parents' confidence to engage with the school.

To be really clear about the intent of the changes, improvement goals were set for students, teachers and parents.

For **teachers**, they wanted to improve their:

- ability to uptake and maximise professional development opportunities
- ability to optimise learning conditions for students
- ability to develop classrooms that are linguistically and cognitively rich
- pedagogical knowledge and understanding in oracy and literacy
- ability to establish a collaborative culture of professional learning.

Prioritising to take action

What do we need to do and why?

How big is the change we are planning?

What support is needed and for whom?

St. Joseph's School (Onehunga) – Oracy review

For **parents**, they wanted to improve their:

- understanding of children's learning and how they can help at home
- capacity and confidence to engage with school
- talking with their children at home
- recognition of the importance of first language and culture.

The implicit theory of change was that these improvements would lead to improved student outcomes. So, for **students**, the goals were to improve their:

- ability to articulate clearly and comprehensively
- levels of contribution and participation
- usage and understanding of vocabulary
- levels of engagement and meta cognition.

From 2012 onwards, the junior school began to trial the intensive oral language (IOL) programme. Teachers planned lessons focused on the quality and quantity of oral language, building linguistically and cognitively rich classroom environments and supporting students to build their vocabularies. Support staff also became involved at this stage, attending workshops along with teachers.

Measuring student progress presented a challenge, as there are not many established assessment tools for assessing oral language. However, through ongoing monitoring of student work and classroom observation, teachers and the senior leadership team noted that students were participating more, producing more detailed and elaborate sentences, and were more engaged and independent in the classroom.

Teachers enjoyed the challenges and opportunities of working in PLGs. The use of the video tool, and structured critical reflection, led to profound changes in practice. Teachers have also become more confident and comfortable in giving and receiving feedback. The professional development strategy helped to build collaboration between teachers. Coherence between teaching as inquiry, appraisal and professional development processes was also improved by aligning processes and practices.

> *The more we open up our teaching practice the better we will be at optimising language acquisition and expansion, and ensuring learning is occurring for each and every student.*
>
> *– Leader.*

Monitoring and evaluating impact

How well are our strategies working? How do we know?

Are we getting the intended results?

What are we learning here?

St. Joseph's School (Onehunga) – Oracy review

Parents were supportive of the IOL programme and the focus. They gave positive feedback through home and school meetings, and were more confident to talk about their children's achievement. Attendance at home and school partnership meetings increased. More parents were volunteering their time as helpers in classrooms, and reported feeling more engaged in the life of the school. A former board chair reported that the programme "makes sense… storytelling is the essence of Pacific culture." He had seen the benefits with his own children.

The next steps for the school are focused on sustainability by:

> further embedding the most effective practices through the collaborative activity of the PLGs
> continuing to monitor the impact of their professional development programme on student outcomes
> celebrating and sharing success.

Leaders plan to use the professional development model developed through the oral language review in other learning areas.

Outcomes for students

National standards data over this time show incremental gains in the students at or above in reading.

Percentage of students at or above the reading national standards:

2013	2014
77% of students	81% of students

Wellington Girls' College – a review of student wellbeing

Wellington Girls' College has a culture of asking questions

– Principal.

The school uses multiple ways to seek feedback about what the school is doing well and what can be done better. These include, for example: principal-parent forums; parent, whānau and fono group meetings; Year 12 leadership forums; Awhina student meetings; Student Council meetings; Year 13 leadership groups; staff learning groups, head-of-department and staff meetings and a range of surveys with students, staff, parents and whānau and the community. The information gathered is analysed for trends and shared across the school, often providing the trigger for new developments.

Below is an example of an evaluation that has strategic implications. The school is in the process of developing a long-term sustainable response to an important cluster of issues.

Wellington Girls' College – a review of student wellbeing	
This review came about as a response to a variety of wellbeing issues emerging through different channels. The pastoral care team noticed an increase in number of girls presenting with anxiety issues (including panic attacks) and eating disorders. These serious mental health issues were particularly pronounced at Year 11. Wellbeing issues had been a topic for discussion at a regularly scheduled student focus group. Leaders were also aware of concerns from anecdotal information and approaches from parents.	**Noticing** What is going on here? For which students?
The board of trustees initiated a review of how the school's systems worked for parents of at-risk students, consulting the parents of specific students as well as deans and the pastoral care team. The school also decided to use its professional learning group model to establish a learning group to look specifically at wellbeing more broadly across the school. This group did an initial stock take of the current situation by mapping out the support services that were available to students. The group explored various pre-designed surveys that were available, but eventually decided to develop their own, using ERO's publication *Wellbeing for Success*. A range of targeted surveys were sent to students, parents and whānau, staff and external agencies. The surveys were anonymous so that respondents, especially students, could be honest without worrying about being identified.	**Investigating** What do we know about what is currently happening? What do we need to find out? From whom? What does research tell us? What does effective practice look like?

Wellington Girls' College – a review of student wellbeing

Individual teachers in the learning group also conducted their own inquiry into wellbeing, with each teacher taking responsibility for a different aspect. Individually, they looked into relevant research literature and investigated other schools to find out what they were doing to support and promote student wellbeing. Participants used a Google site to share their insights and useful research readings.

The learning group split into three sub-groups, with one sub-group taking responsibility for analysing the survey responses from students, one for community responses, and one for the responses from staff. The survey results showed that some aspects of current practice were seen as positive. However, the overall findings indicated that there was a lack of cohesion in the provision of support for wellbeing. Some students were not well supported.

Collaborative sense making

What is our data telling us?

What is working well and what isn't?

How can we share our findings with others?

After reflecting on and discussing the results of the survey, and what they had discovered through their investigations, the learning group recommended that the school develop a more cohesive and strategic approach to supporting wellbeing. Given the complexity and importance of the issue, the school decided to adopt a deliberate and comprehensive approach to development. This started with the development of the Wellington Girls' College (WGC) Wellness Action Plan.

Although the review and development work was still in progress when ERO visited in 2014, the school had already established a new Pastoral Care Coordinator role. The purpose of this role is to develop wellbeing resources appropriated for each year level in the school to use during form time.

Prioritising to take action

What do we need to do and why?

What change can we make that will give us an immediate response to the issues we have identified?

Wellington Girls' College – a review of student wellbeing

Consultation with various ethnic and cultural groups in the school was carried out in order to develop a responsive and inclusive school-wide definition of wellbeing and a vision statement for how the school will support student wellbeing. The school is developing a more holistic view of the outcomes that are important for its students.

One of its strategic goals for 2015 was to implement the WGC Wellness Action Plan.

Some of the key actions to date include the following:

- Informing parents of the issues and the planned actions in the Principal's speech at Prizegiving 2014.
- Reducing the number of credits in every NCEA Level 1 and 2 course.
- Having Year 13 students choose the Mental Health Foundation as their school charity for the year.
- Implementing a Wellness Day in March for all Years 11 to 13 students and staff, which incorporated speakers and workshops on a range of wellbeing issues, and subsequently running wellness pop-up sessions.
- Holding the inaugural 'Real Teal Challenge' in April – a team event for the whole school encouraging challenge, cooperation, team work and fun along the Wellington waterfront.
- A whole staff meeting on building resilience and promoting wellbeing.
- Employing a contractor to support staff with professional and personal growth.
- The principal and DP involved with the establishment of the Wellington Wellbeing Network, which meets once a term to share expertise and work with professionals across a range of areas.
- Review of the Junior health programme to respond to feedback from 2014.
- 2015 learning group focusing on wellbeing applied to a classroom setting.
- Launch of a wellbeing resource on the school's intranet.
- The 2016-20 Strategic Plan has been developed this year and is explicitly targeting wellness as one of the goals.

As staff, students and parents have brought into focus and talk more about wellness they are now often asked about how a particular decision aligns with the wellness approach.

How can we involve other groups in the school is this review?

How big is the change we want to make?

Wellington Girls' College – a review of student wellbeing

Next steps

- Ongoing consultation to help identify trends and developments.
- Planning already underway for 2016 Wellness Day.
- Increasingly investigating ways to get additional funds to improve equity.

Monitoring and evaluating impact

What difference are we making?

What more do we need to do?

Winchester School – mathematics curriculum review

Winchester School has a systematic and structured approach to "planning for and using school evaluation." Review starts with the charter and feeds back into the charter. Review includes a four-year cycle policy review by the board and major and minor curriculum reviews as well as space for review to be 'triggered'. Leadership for internal evaluation comes largely from the senior leadership team and involves teachers through a project committee or reference group.

This 2010 school-wide evaluation looking at data was sparked by various triggers related to student achievement. A comprehensive programme of ongoing review, professional development, and curriculum and resource design has successfully raised student achievement in mathematics.

Winchester School – mathematics curriculum review

Triggers from a range of sources initiated the review:

- The deputy principal noticed a downward trend in the progress and achievement (PAT) mathematics results.
- Trustees were concerned about what they were seeing in the PAT data
- Some parents were expressing concern about their children's learning in mathematics.
- Teachers were struggling with planning and organisation of mathematics groups to cater for the wide range of strengths and needs of the students in their classes.
- Feedback from the intermediate school students went on to highlight a 'disconnect' for students and their mathematics learning.

Noticing

What's going on here?

Should we be concerned?

Is this good enough?

What is the problem or issue here?

Do we need to take a closer look?

Winchester School – mathematics curriculum review

The principal felt that things were not right with mathematics teaching and learning in the school: "something was broken".

> *"Children were going to intermediate without experiencing the full curriculum in mathematics – we are responsible for this."*

The principal asked the assistant principal (AP) to lead an evaluation of mathematics across the school. The questions established for the evaluation were as follows:

- What does the national curriculum and the Winchester Curriculum Delivery Plan say to guide mathematics teaching?
- What are the teachers doing during mathematics in the classroom?
- What needs changing?

The AP began the review by reading widely. The AP wanted to know exactly what good mathematics teaching and learning looked like for their students to then compare that with the advice given in the school's curriculum documents. This reading involved looking in more depth at the advice given in *The New Zealand Curriculum*, ERO's national reports, National Standards booklets and the *Best Evidence Synthesis* (BES).

Investigating

What are our expectations?

Are these expectations happening in practice?

How might we find out?

What does good practice look like?

A significant part of the review focused on what was happening for students in the classroom. Much of this information was sought by observations and looking at teachers' planning. All staff were able to contribute their ideas about a way forward through their participation in staff meeting discussions about their perceptions of the strengths and weaknesses of the numeracy project.

> *"When we looked at the achievement data together we had some fierce debate that we had to work through to get to consensus."*
>
> *"We had to make sure that we weren't just taking the data at face value. We were breaking down our gut feelings."*
>
> *"The data from our student management system was also useful as we could find out who are the children that that are not succeeding, what are their needs and how do we respond?"*
>
> ***– Staff members.***

Collaborative sense making

What is our data telling us?

Is this what we expected?

Winchester School – mathematics curriculum review

This investigation identified variation across the school in teaching and planning and in teachers' workload. Findings were reported to teachers and the board and recommendations were formulated with the project committee. Recommendations covered a wide range of possibilities to help improve students' achievement in mathematics. Some of the possibilities included the need:

- for more emphasis on problem-solving through regularly using different problem-solving strategies
- to change from a focus on the mathematics strands alone to a focus on strands with high interest context
- to work with parents more by holding parent education evenings, and
- to focus more on students mastering basic facts.

The findings of the review caused the principal to rethink his philosophical stance on teaching and what this meant for the school. A rich-task curriculum model had already been used for science, social studies and technology and he considered how this could be applied to mathematics. School leaders recognised that their results were likely to improve if students' mathematics learning was also through rich tasks and contexts that matched their interests and fully engaged them.

Leaders knew that staff would need support to implement new teaching contexts and approaches. Teachers needed to identify the contexts that would interest their students and would expose them to the various concepts or curriculum strands at the various age levels. Teachers would also have to use new approaches to be able to ensure the mathematical understandings were clear for students working on the new tasks.

In 2012 a teacher-only day focused on modelling effective teaching of mathematics and building conceptual understandings. This was facilitated by an external expert in this area. External and internal professional development was done with all staff.

> *"Everything is school-wide. That is powerful. You are always supported by your colleagues."*
>
> ***– Staff member.***

Work with teaching teams followed and resulted in the development of a 'bank' of rich mathematical tasks for teachers to draw on in their planning and teaching. Many staff meetings followed with teachers and teaching teams leading sessions to share successes and help build all teachers' confidence with the new approaches.

Prioritising to take action

What needs to happen now?

What strengths do we have to draw on?

What support might we need?

Winchester School – mathematics curriculum review

Ongoing review was necessary to monitor whether the new approach and contexts were understood, used by all teachers and were leading to improved student progress and achievement. Ongoing monitoring in classrooms identified increased consistency in the quality of teaching practice across the school.

Outcomes for students

In 2010 the PAT result identified that many students were achieving in the lowest stanines[13] and too few were achieving really well by the time they left the school. In 2014 many more students are achieving success:

	PAT 2010		PAT 2014	
Stanine	1 to 3	7 to 9	1 to 3	7 to 9
Year 4	11%	39%	10%	43%
Year 5	25%	24%	17%	30%
Year 6	22%	11%	18%	30%

Results for 2012 to 2014 show that around 92 to 94 percent of students achieved *at* or *above* national mathematics standards. Feedback from the intermediate school which most students transition to is very positive about students' learning and achievement in mathematics. In 2015 Winchester's Year 5 and Year 6 team achieved top results at the local Mathex competition.

Monitoring and evaluating impact

Are we getting the resulted we wanted? How do we know?

13 Stanines divide the distribution of results from a year group into nine categories.

Conclusion

This collection of narratives shows how some schools 'do and use' effective internal evaluation for improvement. In all of the 13 schools, internal evaluation was valued by leaders and trustees, who made sufficient time and resources available for genuine, improvement-focused inquiry into the areas that mattered most for their learners.

Through widespread participation in internal evaluation, supported by access to internal and external expertise, these schools were building the capacity and capability to engage in robust evaluative reasoning at all levels of the school. This participation also provided a vehicle for the sharing of expertise, building of shared understandings, and ongoing improvements to practice.

These schools all shared a commitment to finding out what is really going on for their learners. This meant collecting data from multiple sources. It meant gathering data in a way which allowed learners to speak for themselves. It meant really interrogating the data – moving from asking "what is so?" to "so what?" In some cases it meant confronting some previously unexamined notions and beliefs about what good quality curriculum design, assessment and pedagogical practice looks like. Teachers, leaders and trustees were able to interrogate professional practice honestly with a commitment to continuous improvement. In doing so, these schools have been able to make decisions to address the issues relevant to their learners. The schools have understood for whom and how their interventions have been successful, and where they need to be adjusted or stopped.

Making improvements for learners is a complex business. Decisions often need to be made without the luxury of time. These schools understood this, and prioritised their efforts in areas where they had identified the greatest potential impact. Widespread and embedded evaluative inquiry meant that the door was always open to recognise potential improvements, to be aware of potential pitfalls, and to generate useful knowledge for decision-making leading to improved outcomes for all learners.

Evidence-informed internal evaluation helped leaders and teachers to understand the strengths and needs of their learners, and what to do to respond. To the degree that they learned from their successes – and from their setbacks – they were well placed to sustain improvement, while adapting to the unique characteristics of the learners in their school community.



Appendix 1: Sample of Schools

1. Bluestone School
2. Cashmere High School
3. Dyer Street School
4. Fairfield Primary School
5. Kerikeri High School
6. Manurewa High School
7. Norfolk School
8. Oaklynn Special School
9. Otumoetai Intermediate School
10. Rata Street School
11. St. Joseph's School (Onehunga)
12. Wellington Girls' College
13. Winchester School

Appendix 2: Methodology

ERO looked for schools that had been identified during their regular education review as conducting effective school evaluation. These schools had all received a four-to-five year return time in their most recent education review, and in many cases were on a second four-to-five year return, indicating that ERO was very confident in their capacity and capability to undertake internal evaluation for sustainable improvement. This yielded a list of 48 schools. ERO then conducted a desktop analysis of these schools to make a final selection. This selection was based on evidence of improvement in student achievement, engagement and retention statistics, and good internal evaluation practice identified in previous ERO National Evaluation Topics (NETs).

Thirteen schools were selected, based on these criteria (see Appendix 1 for the sample). ERO conducted site visits to all thirteen schools in Terms 3 and 4, 2014, to meet with school leaders, and occasionally others, such as teachers, trustees and students. The purpose of the meetings was to allow the schools to tell their own stories – 'narratives' – of using internal evaluation for improvement. These narratives were analysed thematically to identify common attributes of effective internal evaluation at these high performing and improving schools. ERO also gathered information about the general features of internal evaluation at these schools, seeking to answer the following broad questions:

- ***How did the school know what to improve?***
- ***How did the school know how to improve?***
- ***How did the school go about developing and implementing evidence based solutions?***
- ***How did the school know how they were going?***
- ***How has internal evaluation at different levels of the school been integrated?***
- ***How has the school developed capability and expertise in school evaluation?***

EDUCATION REVIEW OFFICE
TE TARI AROTAKE MATAURANGA