

**Managing
Professional Learning
and Development
in Secondary Schools**

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Overview

Teaching is a complex and demanding profession. Teachers require high quality support and training throughout their careers to ensure they have the strategies and skills to meet the needs of learners. Professional learning and development (PLD) is central to maintaining and improving teacher quality.

This is one of two national reports by the Education Review Office (ERO) on how well schools manage teachers' PLD. This one is about PLD in secondary schools and the other is on primary schools.

PLD refers to all the formal and informal processes used to improve the knowledge and practice of teachers. It includes more formal and specifically structured courses and initiatives as well as less formal collaboration and discussion between colleagues. The central purposes of professional learning and development are to improve the quality of teaching and to improve student outcomes.

While many different forms of training and development are undertaken by teachers, (including training to update curriculum knowledge or to develop particular pedagogical and technical skills), improving what happens in the classroom is the dominant rationale for PLD.

This report discusses how well secondary schools:

- plan for PLD;
- build a culture in which teachers learn and develop; and
- monitor the effectiveness of teachers' learning and development.

The report discusses the impact that schools achieve through their PLD programmes and some of the challenges for managing these programmes effectively. It also has an analysis of the levels of spending on PLD by secondary schools of different decile, location and size.

Schools fall into three categories of effectiveness. Of the 44 secondary schools in the evaluation 27 percent were in the most effective group. These schools managed their PLD well. They had a strong focus on improving student achievement and they had implemented effective school-wide development initiatives. Their strategic frameworks for PLD were understood and there was useful collaboration among staff. PLD at these schools contributed to better teaching and improvements in student achievement.

The second group included 30 percent of the schools. Aspects of their PLD were managed effectively but at least one significant area of their performance needed strengthening. This could be in their planning, their culture, their monitoring and/or their evaluation practice. PLD at these schools was not consistently making a significant impact on student learning.

Forty-three percent of the schools made up the third group. These schools demonstrated the least effective management of their PLD. There were significant weaknesses in the way they managed their teachers' PLD. In most of these schools ERO found only a few instances where PLD had improved the quality of teaching and student achievement outcomes.

An important feature of this third group was the emphasis placed on attendance at one-day courses and teacher conferences, usually at the expense of school-wide PLD. While almost

all schools included short courses in their PLD mix, an over-reliance on such activities meant that these schools did not develop robust school-wide approaches to PLD and spent more on average per teacher than the other two groups of secondary schools, where PLD was managed more effectively.

The report includes case studies that describe how eight different schools have managed their PLD. Four of these had effective management strategies and the other four were less effective. The different approaches taken by these schools have been presented to help staff in other schools reflect on how professional learning and development can best be managed in their situation. The report also includes a series of self-review questions on PLD. These can be used for reflection by senior leaders and at departmental level.

If the purposes of professional learning and development are to improve the quality of teaching and to improve student outcomes, self review is a critical element in determining the effectiveness of school and teacher practice in PLD. Schools with good systems to manage PLD can demonstrate the impact their programmes are having on improved teacher practice and student outcomes. However, variability in the quality of PLD management signals a place for guidelines to support schools in managing their PLD programmes.

Recommendations

Schools

ERO recommends that principals and senior managers:

- assess the quality of their management of professional learning and development with reference to the findings discussed in this report;
- develop a vision and plan for professional learning and development that is aligned with school planning priorities and has a focus on improving teaching and learning;
- establish a system to embed and sustain new practice; and
- review and/or establish a process for evaluating the effectiveness of the school's professional learning and development programmes.

Ministry of Education

ERO recommends that the Ministry of Education consider producing guidelines to support secondary schools in their management of professional learning and development.

Introduction

Teacher development has been an important focus area for educational research in recent years. In New Zealand, the publication of the Ministry of Education's *Best Evidence Synthesis: Quality teaching for diverse learners (BES)* (2002) and the earlier work of John Hattie¹ has helped to emphasise the importance of teacher quality and its role in improving student achievement.

The emphasis on the quality of teaching has prompted a resulting interest in the professional development of teachers. Increasing numbers of educational researchers, policy-makers and professionals have sought to understand how teachers acquire new skills to meet the learning needs of students.

This evaluation focuses on how effectively secondary schools manage teachers' PLD including how schools make decisions about professional development, the nature of PLD in schools, as well as its impact on teaching and learning. Information for this report was gathered from 44 secondary and composite schools as part of each school's regular ERO review in Terms 1 and 2 of 2008. *Appendix 3* has further notes on the methodology for this evaluation.

Professional 'learning' and professional 'development'

Until recently the term 'professional development' was commonly used in New Zealand schools as a catch-all phrase for the various training courses and initiatives used to extend teachers' knowledge and practice.² While this term is still used, it is frequently now coupled with the term 'professional learning.'

Professional learning is a broader concept that refers to what teachers have gained (or actually learnt) from their formal professional development, while acknowledging that teachers also acquire knowledge and understanding in informal ways. Teachers get better at teaching through various formal and informal forms of feedback, discussion, reflection and action. The phrase *Professional Learning and Development* captures this complexity and reflects the diverse ways in which teachers develop their skills, abilities and approaches for the benefit of students.

Types of Professional Learning and Development undertaken by secondary teachers

Secondary school teachers undertake many different types of PLD and there are many ways that teachers can work together informally to improve their skills and knowledge. Examples of informal professional learning activities include reading relevant educational research, seeking and/or providing feedback from, or for, a colleague on teaching practice or a new educational resource, and asking a colleague about specific strategies for tailoring their teaching to suit individual students. Informal PLD may also occur in the relationships secondary teachers develop with subject advisers, senior subject advisers and teachers from subject associations.³

¹ For example John Hattie (1999). *Influences on student learning*. Inaugural Lecture: Professor of Education, University of Auckland. Retrieved August 2, 1999

<http://www.teacherstoolbox.co.uk/downloads/managers/Influencesonstudent.pdf>

² The term *in-service training* has also been used to describe professional learning and development.

³ See: Taylor, M., Kinsella, P., Yates, A., Mckenzie, L., & Meyer, L. (2008). *Evaluation of the senior subject adviser pilot initiative 2007*. <http://www.minedu.govt.nz/educationSectors/Schools/Initiatives/EvaluationSSAPilotInitiative2007.aspx>

Formal PLD activities include one-or two-day courses or training sessions, conferences, post-graduate study, and departmental and/or school-based professional development.

These approaches offer various sorts of benefits. Training courses are useful ways for teachers to acquire new skills, such as using information and communications technology (ICT) or data analysis techniques. Conferences and one-or two-day courses can be a good way to understand new developments in a specific context, such as in a curriculum area or in working with particular groups of students. Postgraduate study can be an appropriate way for teachers to develop a deeper understanding of educational research.

Professional development across a department or school offers a good way for teachers to reflect on particular aspects of their pedagogy. Departmental or school-based PLD can take many different forms. It may include formal training sessions as well as informal conversations and meetings. Ideally, departmental or school-based PLD includes links to classroom activity, so that the knowledge gained by teachers is applied in the classroom. The individual teacher and/or a wider group of colleagues then provide feedback on how well this new practice worked.

The Ministry of Education has initiated several school-wide professional development projects or initiatives in recent years. The examples cited by the schools in this study included the Literacy and Numeracy projects,⁴ Te Kotahitanga, Te Kauhua, the ICT clusters and the many different initiatives occurring as part of *Extending Higher Standards Across Schools* (ESHAS).

New Zealand's investment in PLD in schools

The New Zealand government invests a considerable amount in learning and development for teachers.

A 2008 report from the Office of the Auditor-General (OAG)⁵ calculated that the Ministry of Education invested approximately \$200 million per year in the following areas:

- funding professional development providers;
- providing operational funding to schools, some of which schools use for the professional development of teachers;
- funding other types of professional development, for example Schooling Improvement initiatives and scholarships for teachers;
- monitoring professional development providers and evaluating professional development initiatives; and
- collating and providing evidence of effective professional development.

Of this \$200 million, the Ministry of Education currently spends \$108 million per year on professional development initiatives across all schools. This is allocated through various contracts and includes the work of the School Support Services (advisers) and such national initiatives as the Literacy and Numeracy Projects.

In the other categories listed above is the money for professional development provided to schools through their operational funding.

⁴ The numeracy project work is often concentrated in secondary school mathematics departments

⁵ Office of the Auditor General (2008) *Ministry of Education: Supporting professional development for teachers*.

In addition to government funding, many school boards of trustees also contribute their own money to PLD through locally-raised funds. The overall spending on PLD (Ministry money and schools' own funds) is higher than \$200 million per annum. In addition to the investment of financial resources by the Ministry and schools, PLD represents a considerable investment by providers, boards, teachers and school leaders.

Research on teacher professional learning and development

In January 2008, the Ministry of Education released *Teacher Professional Learning and Development: Best Evidence Synthesis Iteration (BES)* report. This document details the nature of effective professional development for schools. PLD can vary considerably and depends on each school's context.

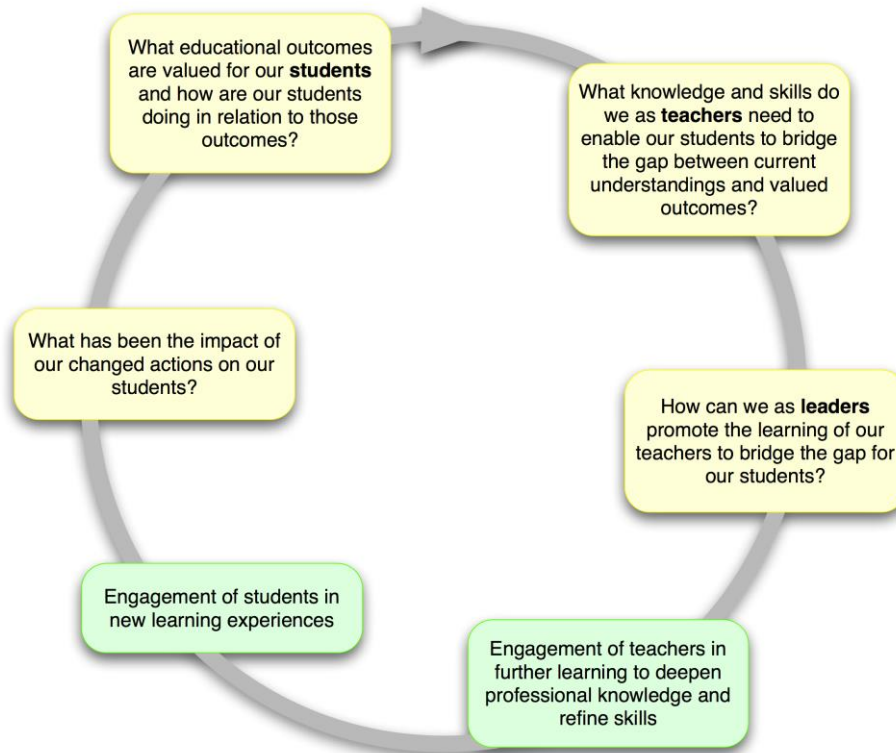
Despite this complexity, certain themes or principles can be summarised concerning the nature of high quality PLD. Helen Timperley, lead author for *Teacher Professional Learning and Development*, has synthesised 10 principles in a monograph for the International Academy of Education (IAE).⁶ PLD needs to:

- be focused on student outcomes, with links between classroom activity and the desired outcomes;
- be based on worthwhile content, such as the findings of established educational research, and related to the particular context of the teacher;
- integrate theoretical ideas about teaching with teaching practice;
- use assessment information about the performance of teachers and students to make a difference in the classroom;
- provide many different sorts of activities for teachers to learn and apply newly acquired knowledge;
- work with and challenge teacher assumptions about learning;
- allow teachers to work with others to explore and develop their new knowledge about teaching;
- draw on experts (including subject teaching experts) who can also facilitate teachers to develop their own understandings of new ideas;
- have active school leaders who can create a vision for professional learning as well as lead and organise staff learning;
- sustain momentum where theoretical understandings continue to develop teacher practice.

Some of the aspects of these principles are highlighted in the diagram below.

⁶ Timperley, H. (2008). *Teacher professional learning and development*. International Academy Of Education

Figure 1: Teacher inquiry and knowledge-building cycles to promote valued student outcomes⁷



This diagram emphasises student outcomes as part of the professional learning process and as integral to identifying professional development priorities. The circular structure of the diagram also helps to illustrate the extent to which the principles of PLD need to be integrated as an ongoing professional inquiry.

Two aspects of effective PLD not included in this diagram but considered vital, are the importance of external expertise and of research evidence in building the professional knowledge of teachers. External experts can be crucial where they support teachers in developing the inquiry cycle summarised in the diagram. This includes the facilitation of evidence, discussion and reflection that may challenge the assumptions of teachers and provoke them into modifying their approaches to teaching and learning.

Teachers' assumptions about what works in the classroom can be challenged by relevant research, particularly where this has strong links to proven teaching strategies for improving student outcomes.

Additional detail about these PLD principles is available in Helen Timperley's IAE publication,⁸ the summary section of *Teacher PLD*, or the full *BES* report. This report also contains case studies of PLD which schools can use to consider their own management of PLD.⁹

⁷ Timperley, H. (2008) *Teacher professional learning and development* International Academy Of Education

⁸ Timperley, H. (2008). *Teacher professional learning and development* International Academy Of Education

⁹ School personnel and teacher educators might also be interested in *Ki te Aotūroa – Improving Inservice Teacher Education Learning and Practice*. Published by the Ministry of Education in 2008.

ERO's previous reports on teacher professional learning and development

ERO has written two previous reports on the professional development of teachers: *The In-Service Training of Teachers: The Responsibility of Boards of Trustees* (1995) and *In-Service Training for Teachers in New Zealand Schools* (2000). The 2000 report was based on questionnaire responses from 187 schools and a follow up visit to 21 case-study schools. It included a considerable amount of contextual information about professional development in New Zealand and overseas. In particular, ERO examined how well training was managed in order to inform government policies about in-service training. ERO also reported good practice to assist other schools.

The 2000 report discussed the characteristics of good practice in managing professional learning and development. Principals in these schools:

- identified school needs and sought appropriate training;
- evaluated the effectiveness of their in-service training;
- reported on ways to overcome barriers caused by location or size;
- identified the specific role of the principal as leader; and
- identified the specific role of teachers as professionals.

Areas for further development identified in ERO's 2000 report included:

- the need for teachers to examine their beliefs about teaching and learning;
- the need for principals to know the importance of the links between the professional development content and its relevancy to teachers' needs (ownership);
- finding ways to ensure the transfer of knowledge from the in-service training to the classroom occurred;
- increasing the range of in-service training that schools in isolated areas participated in;
- the evaluation of in-service training for teachers including criteria that could be used to evaluate the extent to which the outcomes have been met;
- knowledge creation where teachers undertake classroom-based research; and
- in-service training to meet the needs of newly appointed principals.

Schools in this study

ERO evaluated how well schools managed professional learning and development in 44 secondary schools in Terms 1 and 2, 2008. The evaluation took place as part of each school's scheduled education review.

The study included 25 Years 9 to 15 schools, 10 Years 7 to 15 schools, and nine Years 1 to 15 schools. Thirty-seven schools were located in urban areas and seven were rural.

Evaluation approach

ERO gathered and analysed information in response to the following evaluative questions:

- How well is professional learning and development managed for the benefit of teachers and students?
- What is the quality of the school's planning and decision-making for professional learning and development?
- How well does the school's implementation of professional learning and development support ongoing teacher development?
- What changes have occurred for teachers and students as a result of professional learning and development?

In the following section of this report, case vignettes of eight secondary schools are interspersed to provide the reader with examples of how different schools have managed their professional learning and development.

School reviews were conducted with the support of an indicator framework based on the evidence set out in *Teacher professional learning and development: Best evidence synthesis iteration (BES)*. The indicator framework guided reviewers in their evaluation of the management of professional learning and development in each school.¹⁰

In addition, ERO judgements were also informed by a school questionnaire and teacher surveys from some or all of the teachers at each school.¹¹ The questionnaire collected data on the school's planning and spending on professional learning and development; the nature and broad outcomes of any school-wide professional learning and development initiatives; as well as any constraints or challenges the school faced in accessing high quality professional learning and development.

The teacher survey provided information from staff members on the types of professional learning and development undertaken in the last 18 months; the decisions made to choose their professional learning and development programme; and an outline of the teacher experience of school professional learning and development practices.

Both the school questionnaire and the teacher survey material have been aggregated to give a national perspective. The analysis of this data has been used in this report and is discussed further on.

¹⁰ See *Appendix 2*.

¹¹ Review teams used surveys to help gain a picture of professional learning and development across the staff. The number of surveys therefore varied between schools, although a maximum of 25 surveys was set as a guideline.

Findings

Overview of this evaluation

Teachers need a range of knowledge, skills and attributes to meet the diverse learning needs of students today. Ongoing professional learning and development is therefore critical to maintaining and improving teacher quality.

In making judgements about secondary schools' management of professional learning and development, ERO considered the following:

- planning and decision-making;
- school culture and practices; and
- the impact of professional learning and development.

Each of these is discussed in more detail in the following sections of the findings. A separate section on the monitoring and evaluation of PLD is also included, given the significance of ERO's findings in this area.

Based on the three aspects, secondary schools in this evaluation can be grouped into three categories. These groups will be used throughout the report to describe differences between schools with high quality management of professional learning and development, and those with areas of management to improve on.

As with the self-review questions in this report, the case vignettes have been written for school leaders to consider in relation to their own management of professional learning and development.

Grouping the schools in this study

Twenty-seven percent of the secondary schools demonstrated the characteristics of high quality PLD management. These were categorised as Group 1 schools. Their good practice included:

- the use of relevant educational research and student achievement analyses to inform their PLD programme;
- the alignment of their PLD goals and the outcomes sought in the school's overall planning;
- a supportive professional culture where practice was shared and critiqued;
- evident changes in the quality of teaching at the school; and
- significant improvement in student outcomes as a result of PLD.

While Group 1 schools were effective managers of PLD, there remained some important areas for improvement. For example, most of the schools in this group were in the early stages of formally monitoring and evaluating the impact of their programmes.

A slightly larger number of schools in Group 2 (30 percent) shared some common aspects of their management of PLD with those outlined in Group 1. There were, however, differences in the effectiveness of their decision-making and in the level of teachers' involvement in and commitment to planned professional development. In comparison with Group 1, these schools were more likely to have:

- a smaller evidence base for planning their PLD, including analysis of student achievement;
- less coordination between their PLD planning and their school-wide planning;
- less focus in their PLD initiatives on improving student outcomes;
- lower levels of staff collaboration in achieving their goals, including fewer opportunities for staff to meet and discuss aspects of teaching;
- few, if any, processes for formally monitoring and evaluating PLD; and
- less significant changes to teaching as a result of PLD.

PLD was not well managed in the 43 percent of schools that made up Group 3. Schools in this group could improve their systems and processes in many areas. In these schools there was:

- little relationship between the school-wide planning and planning for PLD;
- less emphasis on school-wide initiatives and a greater focus on individual teacher professional development, including one-off courses and conferences;
- little collaboration between staff, including few forums for discussing teaching practice, initiatives and research; and
- little change to teaching and learning as a result of PLD.

Were particular types of schools more effective than others?

The distribution of school decile, size and location in the above groups showed that no particular types of secondary schools were either more or less effective at managing PLD.¹² Rural and urban; small and large; low, mid and high decile schools were each found in the three groups of schools. Some schools that faced possible challenges connected to their isolation or decile status were still able to manage their PLD effectively. There were two (rural) area schools and three low decile schools amongst the 12 most effective schools.

Discussing the findings in more depth

The following five headings provide a framework for more in-depth discussion of the findings.

1. The quality of planning and decision-making for PLD.
2. The quality of schools' professional development and learning culture.
3. How well schools monitor and evaluate professional learning and development.
4. Changes (impacts) that have occurred as a result of PLD.
5. Other issues affecting the quality of PLD.

Case studies of eight schools are also presented in the findings and are interspersed among each of the sections. Each discusses the school's context as well as two or three different aspects of how these schools have managed their PLD.

ERO categorised the schools into three groups according to the effectiveness of their management processes. While schools A, B, C and D demonstrated high quality management (Group 1), schools E and F were moderately effective (Group 2), and management practices in schools G and H were of limited quality (Group 3). The mix of effective and less effective examples gives a range for school staff to include in their reflection of their own school's management of PLD.

¹² With only 44 schools, there would have to be a high proportion of a particular type of school in any one effectiveness group in order to find a statistically significant pattern.

School A (Group 1)

Context

School A is a large, high decile, urban, secondary school. School A's analysis shows that almost 40 percent of students who enter Year 9 achieve below national averages in literacy, numeracy and reasoning skills. Despite this, students achieve well in national qualifications. The school's results in National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) Levels 1, 2 and 3 exceed national averages and are consistent with student attainment levels in schools of a similar decile.

School A has had a busy professional development programme. It has included a school-wide focus on literacy, numeracy, e-learning (through its ICT cluster) and developing students' higher order thinking skills. The school has put emphasis on teachers being able to analyse and evaluate student achievement data.

High quality school-wide planning

The principal and senior leaders have a good understanding of theory relating to school improvement and change management. This has helped them give a high priority to raising student achievement through focused, ongoing teacher PLD.

The school uses a variety of data sources in its planning, including student achievement analyses, research information from their ICT cluster, staff and student surveys, and information from the teacher appraisal processes. PLD is also closely aligned to wider strategic and annual goals for improving teaching and learning.

The links between the school's strategic plan and its PLD are reflected in the ways departments plan and deliver the curriculum. School-wide goals are used to provide a basis for annual department planning. Heads of department and teachers can readily translate their new approaches to teaching into curriculum management documentation, teaching plans, department reports, and criteria for classroom observations.

An active PLD culture

The expertise of the school's teachers and particular external facilitators has been used to develop greater staff understanding of the teaching strategies that are most likely to improve student achievement. The PLD programme is aimed at increasing staff proficiency in the teaching and use of higher order thinking skills, promoting literacy, and developing practices to support effective teaching through e-learning opportunities. Action plans that identify goals, success indicators, delegations of responsibility and timelines accompany all of these initiatives.

The principal has allocated a designated weekly session for PLD. These one-hour morning sessions provide a sense of continuity and manageability for teachers. The model is specifically structured to encourage leadership at all levels of the school. While the principal and senior managers participate in and monitor the process, some teachers are receiving targeted training and mentoring to take on leadership responsibilities both in and across subject areas. A shared drive on the school intranet promotes sharing of ideas and resources.

Monitoring and evaluating PLD

Senior managers use a range of formal and informal processes to monitor teachers' implementation of new professional learning. Together with the school's Director of Teaching and the specialist classroom teacher they regularly visit classes and give feedback on specific aspects of teachers' practice. Further assistance is also available from professional development lead teachers. A survey of students has shown that they are aware of recent changes to teaching practices and have appreciated opportunities to give feedback on classroom practices that help or hinder their learning.

The performance management system provides a formal mechanism for monitoring implementation of initiatives. All teachers' appraisal documents include school-wide goals as part of developmental objectives, and these are assessed as a component of teacher observations.

Strategies for evaluating the effectiveness of PLD, assessing its impact, and identifying areas for further improvement are well thought through and include teacher and student perception surveys, observations of teaching practice, examination of planning documents and analysis of student achievement information.

Challenges for the future

There are several areas for School A to think about in managing their PLD. Work is still needed to build teachers' skills in data analysis so they can use student achievement analyses to improve teaching and learning. Work is needed to embed the teaching of thinking skills as part of all teachers' practice and fully align planning and assessment with the school's professional development approach.

At the time of their review some teachers at School A were concerned that they may not be able to consolidate the changes made through their PLD programme. They pointed to the amount of new learning they were expected to implement. In order to sustain the gains made through the school's PLD programme, ERO recommended that senior managers discuss the year's programme with a view to rationalising or limiting the number of new initiatives.

1 **What is the quality of schools' planning and decision-making for PLD?**

ERO evaluated the extent to which school goals, plans and decisions for PLD reflected:

- self-review and evaluation information;
- student social and academic needs;
- planning and development priorities;
- teachers' interests and needs (including the development needs as identified through the appraisal process);
- current educational research; and
- the interests and needs of families, whānau and the wider community.

ERO also looked at the practical or technical aspects of planning and decision-making, such as the extent to which school planning for PLD:

- demonstrated a realistic process and timeline for PLD goals to be achieved;
- reflected any 'supply' matters likely to occur in delivering quality PLD (including accessing quality providers, travel, affordability and isolation);
- was manageable in terms of teachers' time, facilitation and materials; and
- set out the key steps, processes, timelines and responsibilities.

In the most effective Group 1 schools, the key factor that differentiated their planning from others was the extent to which they had coordinated their approach to PLD. Staff learning and development was well aligned to school-wide priorities and strategic goals and focused on improving student achievement. PLD planning was an extension of their strategic planning and provided a framework for action. Staff at each school understood the school's strategic and developmental goals and their own role in achieving these goals.

The school-wide focus on formative practice has been important in influencing what happens in the classroom. It has affected teaching practice as well as the structure of the lesson. Students are more actively involved in the learning goals of the lesson, unit and course. Teacher at a large, middle decile secondary school.

For schools in this first group, identifying teaching and learning needs contributed to the quality of strategic planning, and the planning for PLD. In most cases planning incorporated consultation with teachers and, in some cases, consultation with students and community. The staff at these secondary schools used reliable forms of evidence to make decisions, including: analyses of student achievement; relevant educational research; teacher appraisals; cluster group priorities (such as for literacy and numeracy); Ministry of Education priorities; and their most recent ERO report. This evidence provided a baseline for schools to check whether their PLD programmes would make a difference to the quality of teaching and to student outcomes.

The professional leadership of the principal and/or senior managers was a critical factor supporting the high quality of planning in these schools. School leaders were central to building the links between PLD, the schools' strategic intent and the emphasis placed on improving student outcomes. Good quality leadership was therefore important for developing the coordinated, evidence-based and focused planning required for effective professional development.¹³

In comparison to Group 1 schools, Group 2 and Group 3 schools were less likely to demonstrate high quality leadership as part of their planning for PLD. While most Group 2 schools showed some form of alignment between their strategic planning and their planning for PLD, these schools lacked the strong focus on student achievement outcomes, intent and coordination found in the 12 most effective schools.

Group 2 and 3 schools were less likely to have an effective framework or plan for PLD, and less likely to have a focus on improving student achievement outcomes. In the absence of high quality school-wide planning, some of these schools took an ad hoc approach to decision-making based on individual requests from teachers and subject-related activities. This led some departments to develop their PLD independently from the rest of the school.

Most of the Group 2 and 3 schools also had a poor evidential base for their PLD planning. In particular they made only limited use of student achievement data and were unable to accurately identify students' learning needs, set appropriate targets and then plan to meet these targets.

School B (Group 1)

Context

School B is a small, low decile, area school. Over half of its students are Māori. The roll has been falling in recent years and the school's managers, community and board want to find strategies to maintain and increase the roll. These include providing programmes that motivate students and meet their needs, strengths and interests.

We take full advantage of being an area school, with integrated programmes and collaborative planning. We have a school-wide focus on PLD and on high quality teaching and learning from Years 1 to 13. Principal, School B.

Achievement data shows that the school's secondary students are achieving well at NCEA Levels 1, 2 and 3, with achievement levels higher than national averages. Classroom data shows that the school's Māori secondary students are achieving at similar levels to non-Māori.

PLD for the whole staff

PLD processes are linked to school-wide initiatives and a collaborative learning culture. The principal actively leads the school's PLD, drawing on her significant knowledge and understanding of schooling improvement.

¹³ See also Viviane M. J. Robinson. (2007). *William Walker oration: School leadership and student outcomes - identifying what works and why*. As sourced from <http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/series/2515/13723>

This knowledge has helped build a strong sense of teamwork and community around the school's goals and resultant plans for PLD. Each year the school produces a comprehensive PLD action plan. This plan makes use of its analysis of student achievement, and indicates the desired outcomes sought by the school and the roles to be undertaken by key staff members. The plan is subject to community-wide consultation that includes a meeting with the rūnanga held on the local marae.

The school has a tight budget and cannot afford to send staff on many external courses. Moreover, in order to make sure that its PLD spending is effective, it concentrates on school-wide professional development initiatives involving both the primary and the secondary staff.

School-based, whole-staff PLD is delivered through three staff meetings each term, weekly syndicate meetings, teacher-only days and development days during the term breaks. Professional learning is reinforced by a culture of reflection and collaboration. For example, staff regularly read and discuss national and international research about teaching and learning.

The leadership team provides good support to staff through an active performance management system and one-to-one staff mentoring. In addition, every secondary teacher receives external advice and support in relation to his or her curriculum area.

School leaders ensure that logical frameworks and expectations guide planning, implementation and monitoring of outcomes. Classroom planning documents show that teachers are integrating new professional learning into the design of their programmes. The implementation of teaching practices promoted in the school's PLD programmes is widespread across different departments.

PLD for better social and academic outcomes

A 2006 review by school personnel found that they needed to address aspects of student behaviour, including the levels of bullying occurring amongst students. Since that time they have instituted a major school focus on increasing students' voice, leadership and well-being. This focus has included particular PLD initiatives for staff.

Senior managers use several measures to gain information about students' behaviour. They used a bullying survey and a youth service survey to find out about specific issues in their school. They also used the 2007 ERO report on *Safe Schools: Strategies to Prevent Bullying* to help identify strategies to support their initiatives and also consulted students on their chosen strategies to address bullying.

Specific staff professional development initiatives have included the *Cool Schools*¹⁴ programme, stress management strategies for teachers and students, and non-violent crisis intervention. Staff have been encouraged to integrate students' voices into classroom learning and assessment activities. The PLD theme for staff and students in 2008 was making the most of mental health and well being. For staff this meant participating in restorative justice training to improve support for vulnerable youth. This professional development programme has been undertaken in partnership with the rūnanga.

There is a strong school-wide focus on strengthening students' sense of belonging in the school and developing ways in which the students' voice is more apparent. Students play a significant role in leading school initiatives and activities and they have benefited from the leadership opportunities in areas such as the

¹⁴ *Cool Schools* is a Peer Mediation Programme that has been operating in New Zealand schools since 1991.

environment, sport, and student health and wellbeing. The positive way junior and senior students interact is evidence of the success of the many opportunities for student leadership. Most students have a sense of responsibility and take pride in the school, which is reflected in the way they discuss issues and contribute ideas to decision-making.

The importance placed on student voice has had a positive impact on student achievement. In 2006 there was a significant rise in student achievement levels, a trend that has continued through to 2008. Student achievement at NCEA Levels 1, 2 and 3 is higher than national averages and significantly higher than achievement levels in schools of a similar decile.

2 What is the quality of secondary schools' PLD culture?

ERO used a large range of indicators to support its judgements about the culture of PLD at each school.¹⁵ ERO considered aspects such as the extent to which:

- teachers had time for engaging with the professional learning material;
- there was a focus on improving student achievement;
- teachers were challenged on their assumptions about learning;
- teachers collaborated in planning and evaluating classroom activities;
- staff had regular opportunities for reflection and dialogue;
- senior managers were active participants in regular professional activities and discussions;
- teachers (other than senior managers) had opportunities to lead PLD;
- the school drew on well-regarded external facilitators for aspects of their professional learning and/or development;
- professional learning integrated relevant educational research with what the staff knew about their own students;
- professional learning was linked to classroom activity;
- there was a variety of professional activities to engage teaching staff; and
- PLD could be sustained in terms of school finances and teacher time.

Collaborating on clear goals

ERO found that staff in Group 1 schools showed a common sense of purpose and high levels of teamwork and cooperation. While staff in all three groups variously demonstrated a collegial approach to professional learning, the key difference in the high quality approach to planning in Group 1 schools was the way staff worked together. The focus, goals and direction of Group 1 planning gave staff a platform for achieving specific improvements in both student outcomes and their own performance as teachers.

These teachers collaborated in different ways including formal and informal sessions where staff discussed specific aspects of practice relevant to the school's current focus for PLD; working with lead teachers or specialist classroom teachers to improve classroom teaching; sharing resources and approaches across departments; formal and informal classroom observations with feedback; and peer-mentoring systems where teachers could discuss and share classroom strategies.

¹⁵ These are presented in full in *Appendix 2: ERO's indicator framework for the review of school management of PLD*.

In some cases, Group 1 schools needed to include better opportunities for teachers to be observed, and for teachers to observe their colleagues. While these schools had departmental and school-wide ways for discussing and sharing good practice, some of these schools had not yet provided time for teachers to give and receive feedback. This is especially important given that it is one of the main ways in which teachers receive professional feedback about their practice, and their assumptions about teaching and learning.

One school, for example, had used video footage of classroom teaching so that teachers could be observed and observe others. The video footage was then considered by a group of teachers, outside normal teaching time. They were able to discuss teaching strategies and interactions, and give detailed feedback to the ‘observed’ teacher.¹⁶

Leading professional learning

Group 1 schools had strong leadership, not only from the principal and senior managers, but also from among the staff.

Most principals showed a good understanding of school change and schooling improvement. This knowledge helped them to develop focused, workable and well-supported plans for PLD. Senior staff were active participants in PLD activities undertaken at the school. They took part in the formal activities as well as the informal discussions about teaching and learning. They set the tone and standard for the school’s PLD and were able to link the school’s emphasis on school improvement to the types of learning and development activities teachers were undertaking.

Group 1 schools had a shared approach to leading PLD. This meant that several staff took responsibility for particular initiatives or activities, and that PLD was championed from different areas of the school, rather than just from those at the top.

PLD gives us renewed enthusiasm. It increases teachers' confidence in our subject delivery and gives us an ability to adjust to the needs of students. It gives us an opportunity for professional dialogue and consistency in our teaching practice. We share research articles, compare them to our current practice, support one another when the workload is too much, share management and leadership stories that have worked, help find solutions or discuss current issues schools are facing. I have developed a good relationship with the English teacher in the [specialised] unit and we check and mark each other's assessments. It has helped me to identify the strengths and weaknesses in my teaching. Teacher at an area school.

Sustaining and consolidating professional learning

Sustaining and consolidating PLD was a challenge for all three groups of schools. Sustaining the gains made through PLD requires a school culture, systems and practices that align with what has been learnt in order to reinforce the gains made in changes to teaching practice. It requires departments to reflect on and alter their planning, where necessary, to include ways to maintain the impetus of PLD. Where teachers are new to a school, it means making sure there are thoughtful and supportive induction processes in place to upskill or update them in expected practices. For

¹⁶ The teacher in charge of this initiative emphasised the importance of the observed teacher having control of this feedback process. For example, the observed teacher may provide specific questions for the group to answer or they may ask for comment on specific aspects. This helps the observed teacher become comfortable with the process and prevents an overwhelming range of comments from many different perspectives.

established staff it means reinforcing what has been learnt and encouraging the maintenance of practice.

For many schools in the first two groups, sustaining new practices resulting from PLD was especially pertinent where particular initiatives had made good short-term gains. Consolidating and embedding new practices was equally important. Where senior managers took a planned approach to PLD activities and did not take on new projects or activities without ensuring previous gains became well-established practice, their success was more assured.

For the third group of schools, there was less likelihood of what teachers learnt in PLD becoming part of their day-to-day classroom practice. PLD activities often failed to make an impact on improving the quality of teaching and learning.

Frequent personnel changes in some Group 3 schools made it difficult to create the same school-wide focus evident in the other two groups. It was more difficult to consolidate or sustain the effects of PLD, as the level of staff turnover had an impact on the manageability and effectiveness of induction processes.

School C (Group 1)

Context

School C is a large, urban, low decile, secondary school. In recent years it has undergone considerable change including significant roll growth and a change in principal. Recent improvements to PLD are reflected in a rapidly improving school.

High quality assessment information has allowed School C to analyse the academic performance of boys and girls as well as the different ethnic groups at the school. While many of its junior intake achieve below average on their entry to the school, School C's data showed that Year 9 students in 2007 made good progress with literacy learning during the year, and were achieving at national expectations by the end of the year.

In the senior school, the achievement of senior students has continued to improve. Analysis of overall trends and patterns of achievement in the NCEA shows that student pass rates for Levels 1 and 2 qualifications continue to increase. Improvements in student performance are particularly evident in 2007/08, bringing school-wide attainment at Levels 1 and 2 increasingly in to line with both national statistics and with schools of a similar decile.

Although the school is succeeding at Levels 1 and 2, student attainment at Level 3 lags behind schools of a similar decile. While the proportion of students obtaining a national qualification and/or completing university entrance requirements continues to grow, senior managers and teachers acknowledge that the challenge is to lift success rates for Level 3 NCEA. They also recognise the need to increase the proportion of students who attain merit and excellence grades in NCEA.

Recent changes to PLD

The school's professional learning programme is underpinned by sound decision-making processes and is supported by the board. Focus areas selected for school-wide teacher professional development are designed

to support the achievement of strategic goals for raising student achievement and address areas for improvement identified by ERO. They feature a range of complementary improvement initiatives and make use of current educational research about effective teaching and learning.

Senior managers have introduced a planned, school-wide approach to teachers' PLD that complements the school's involvement in a cluster of schools aiming to improve the literacy and numeracy of local students.

Their model is based on a three-pronged approach.

- Sharing different teaching strategies.
- Trialling new strategies in the classroom.
- Evaluating new teaching strategies with staff.

Teachers have become more reflective and collegial and are developing an increased awareness of effective teaching strategies. This is contributing to the development of a toolkit of teaching strategies and should provide a good basis for the development of school-wide teaching and learning expectations.

The school's approach to PLD has resulted in several positive outcomes. Teachers report increased staff collegiality and greater discussion of professional practice in and across departments. They say they reflect more on their classroom practice and have a greater understanding of how student achievement information can be used to guide and review their teaching. PLD is likely to have influenced recent improvements in student achievement and, based on ERO's observations of classroom teaching, has also been influential in raising the quality of teaching.

What are the next steps for PLD in this school?

The school's rapidly changing context means that there are still many significant development areas both for the school generally, and for its PLD processes.

The main challenge for PLD is to ensure that the positive impact achieved to date is sustained over time. This is likely to involve strengthening the school's monitoring and support for new teaching strategies. It will also involve processes to consolidate the gains that have already been made at classroom level.

3 How well do secondary schools monitor and evaluate PLD?

In examining schools' monitoring and evaluation of PLD, ERO focused on how well schools understood the impact of their professional learning activities. Ideally, impact information about PLD should include data on student achievement (from a range of sources including NCEA data, information from assessment tools such as asTTle¹⁷ and PATs¹⁸ and other relevant assessment tools). Student achievement information helps to identify what, if any, changes have occurred in learning as a result of PLD.

¹⁷ asTTle stands for *Assessment Tools for Teaching and Learning* (He Pūnaha Aromatawai mō te Whakaako me te Ako). It is an educational resource for assessing literacy and numeracy (in both English and Māori) developed for the Ministry of Education by the University of Auckland.

¹⁸ Progressive Achievement Tests are standardised tests developed by the New Zealand Council for Educational Research in reading and mathematics.

Although student achievement information is one of the most important factors in understanding the impact of PLD, a broad range of information and the careful judgement by the teachers is also involved.¹⁹

ERO considered how well schools had monitored and evaluated their PLD with reference to a range of possible outcome indicators. These included:

- the use of student achievement information;
- changes in teacher's knowledge and attitude;
- changes in classroom planning;
- changes in school organisation and systems;
- changes in teacher pedagogy or assessment; and
- changes in student's social skills, attitudes or behaviour.²⁰

The monitoring and evaluation processes used in schools needed to be manageable and sustainable, while providing information for planning and decision-making. Good quality monitoring and evaluation involved schools in gathering reliable evidence about the effects of PLD and making good quality judgements for future planning and action.

The quality of PLD monitoring and evaluation is an area for improvement in almost all secondary schools. Even in the Group 1 schools, monitoring and evaluation was sometimes limited. Most schools had yet to formally monitor and evaluate the quality of their professional development and/or were in the early stages of organising the different forms of evidence required to undertake these processes. This included the development of a system to enable teachers to give and receive feedback about how well they had integrated new learning into their teaching strategies.

Group 1 schools drew on a student achievement evidence base and generally good self-review processes. These schools had collected enough information to make an informed judgement about the effectiveness of at least some aspects of their PLD. The next logical step for these schools was to develop more formalised and systematic monitoring and evaluation processes that could contribute to their planning and decision-making, as well as providing information on the impact of their professional learning on the success of different groups of students, such as Māori, Pacific and students at risk of underachieving or failure.

All schools in the second group needed to make improvements to their PLD monitoring and evaluation. This was especially so with regard to implementing systems to gather and analyse student achievement information, or undertake self-review and reporting. Schools in this group had more 'evaluation infrastructure' to develop before they could assemble systematic evidence and make informed judgements about the effectiveness of their PLD. In some cases this also included ensuring that their appraisal systems gave teachers more substantial feedback and gave schools information that could help inform decisions about PLD.

¹⁹ See also *Appendix 1* of this report for a more detailed discussion about evaluating professional learning and development.

²⁰ For more information see Thomas Guskey, (2000). *Evaluating Professional Development*. California: Corwin Press.

This is an ongoing programme of professional learning and, as such, the benefits are evolving. Data analysis will be a further stage of evaluation that we will need help with, but I am confident this will come. Teacher at a large, middle decile, secondary school

Group 3 schools did not monitor and evaluate their PLD. As with Group 2 schools, many of the schools lacked good quality self-review systems and they did not undertake regular analysis of student achievement to tell them about the impact of PLD or help future evaluation. Additionally they had poorly-developed teacher appraisal systems and few processes for teachers to either give or receive feedback from other staff.

Unlike the first two groups, the evaluation and monitoring of professional learning was made more difficult in the Group 3 schools because they lacked focused professional development goals. There was no platform to begin monitoring and evaluating professional learning and development. The third group of schools could improve their monitoring and evaluation by analysing evidence about the quality of teaching and learning and identifying what school-wide changes they could make to their teaching. This would then provide a basis for evaluation.

School D (Group 1)

Context

School D is a large, middle decile, secondary school in a provincial town. The school has had high levels of achievement over the years. Just over 50 percent of the students are Pākehā/European, and approximately 40 percent are Māori. Analysis of NCEA data indicates that the proportion of students, including Māori, gaining Levels 1, 2 and 3 certificates exceeds national averages.

A history of effective PLD

The school adopted principles of good practice in managing a professional learning culture at an early stage. In 2003 their strategic plan incorporated ‘the development of an effective, ongoing and sustainable professional learning environment’. This concept was built on contemporary research into quality school-wide PLD.

As a result of their discussions and readings the school moved away from professional development processes that offered one-off presentations and courses. Instead senior managers put effort into school-based PLD that was closely linked to classroom activity and the work of teachers.

By early 2004 they had established a series of staff groups to discuss, reflect and then implement research-based ideas about classroom learning. Staff were able to choose which groups they participated in, and 10 different groups were set up overall. A key aspect of these professional groups was the personal reflection and evaluation undertaken following the implementation of new teaching strategies. Staff also sought regular feedback from students.

This school-wide approach to PLD has grown from 2003 to 2008. The school is involved in several Ministry of Education professional development initiatives and has developed an infrastructure to manage these. In 2008 the school-wide PLD activities included work on restorative practices, improved teaching in the core curriculum, literacy development, student well-being, career education, formative assessment and feedback, and gifted and talented education.

A staff booklet includes a timetable and outline of each year's PLD. This booklet also outlines how teachers will be observed during the year and what sorts of feedback they can expect from their peers and heads of department.

What's next for this school?

As with many other schools, consolidating the success of its PLD is important for the school. As part of this process senior managers need to know more about the impact of their PLD especially in terms of educational outcomes for students. Overall it seems that student achievement levels have risen in tandem with the school's approach to PLD. Finding out how these improvements are linked to particular PLD initiatives may help in deciding what require further consolidation and what may need further exploration.

4 The impact of PLD

The quality of school monitoring affected the degree of understanding school managers had about the impact of PLD. ERO examined various forms of evidence such as:

- student achievement data;
- school engagement data such as retention, suspension, stand-down and truancy figures;
- observations of teachers;
- changes to school and classroom organisation and planning;
- teacher survey data and school questionnaires (ERO initiated);
- teacher interviews; and
- discussions with principals and senior managers.

The impact from some PLD initiatives overlap with other initiatives operating in the school. For example, an initiative that aims to increase student engagement might have a professional development aspect connected with making classrooms more engaging, together with efforts to minimise student absences and lateness. Understanding the exact contribution made by professional development can be problematic. However, by gathering quantitative and qualitative evidence about the effects of a professional development initiative on teachers and students, it is possible to make a sound judgement about the influence and/or impact of PLD. This understanding, in turn, could inform planning.

In Group 1 schools PLD contributed to significant changes in teaching and learning. Reported and/or measured changes in student achievement were combined with changes in the way teaching occurred.

The impact was less clear in the second group of schools. Although ERO found some evidence that there had been changes for teachers and to school systems as a result of PLD, the impact was often limited to certain departments or particular aspects of some initiatives.

The impact in the Group 2 schools included changes to teachers' thinking, changes to teacher and departmental planning, and changes in teachers' practice. In particular, changes in practice involved teachers in using new questioning techniques, cooperative learning activities and formative feedback. ERO also found that PLD at these schools led to better teacher-student relationships, the improved use of ICT, more informed discussion among teachers, increased use by teachers of research and a greater focus on student achievement. In some cases the impact of an initiative was limited to a minority of the staff.

In all but one of the Group 3 schools, PLD had a limited impact. There were, however, some instances where initiatives had led to changes in the attitudes of staff. This included a greater willingness to take part in professional development and a greater openness to change. The extent to which these changes would provide a platform for subsequent improvements to student achievement is unclear.

Furthermore, in most of the Group 3 schools, where there were noticeable changes to teaching practice, these affected only a minority of teachers who were making increased use of student achievement information or had become less teacher-directed in their classroom practice.

Were there particular PLD initiatives that made a significant impact?

Each of the principals in this evaluation gave ERO a report on the PLD their school had undertaken since January 2007. Included was an outline of the initiatives that had had the most significant impact on teaching and learning. The aggregated comments made by schools provided some insight into the differences between the three groups of schools.

Principals in all three groups indicated that similar sorts of initiatives had had a significant impact on teaching and learning. Initiatives that were commonly cited included those connected with literacy, numeracy or ICT.

We had time and ongoing support [for this ICT professional development]. Too often professional development is a day out of school and then we are left to try to implement something. This development was ongoing, with time and support available to work with students in class. Teacher at a small, rural, middle decile, secondary school

Although secondary schools in each group indicated that similar sorts of initiatives had had an impact, Group 1 and 2 schools were much clearer about the outcomes of these initiatives compared to schools in Group 3. Schools in the first two groups noted particular changes in student achievement more often as a result of their PLD, while Group 3 schools tended to note more general and less quantifiable changes such as ‘increased staff awareness’ and ‘greater staff confidence’.

Overall, the similarities and differences among the three groups support the view that the focus of PLD is not as important as the way that it is managed. Group 1 and 2 schools were more likely to have processes in place to ensure that PLD had links to the classroom and supported changes in the way teachers taught.

School E (Group 2)

Context

School E is a large, low decile, secondary school. Most of the students are Māori. NCEA data indicates that the senior students achieved at a similar level to other low decile schools. In the junior school most Year 9 students were achieving below national reading norms on entry.

NCEA data also shows that Māori students’ qualification success is significantly below that of their non-Māori peers.

Some good things...

The school has developed some notable strengths in its approach to PLD. These include its recent literacy professional development and aspects of the school's professional learning culture.

Literacy PLD followed an analysis of the school's asTTle data for its Year 9 intake. These data showed that, at the beginning of the year, less than 20 percent of the students achieved above national norms. As a result the school invested considerable time and effort in school-wide literacy PLD. The school used an external facilitator to help staff develop their literacy teaching strategies, and its own literacy leader to facilitate sessions for staff.

Five formal literacy professional sessions were scheduled in the school's regular Friday morning professional development sessions between 8:00am and 8:50am. Staff presented and reviewed classroom literacy activities. The learning from these literacy sessions has had some impact on student achievement. By the end of the year just over 40 percent of the Year 9 students were achieving above the national norm.

When the Friday morning slot was not used for literacy PLD, teachers had the opportunity to take part in a variety of other professional learning activities. Departments or particular interest groups ran these sessions and some teachers also undertook their own professional reading.

Some staff members also initiated their own PLD. These staff had expertise in ICT in particular. There is some evidence that the PLD undertaken by this group has led to improvements in teaching. For instance, these teachers used strategies that were effective in engaging students in their learning. Students reported being more motivated and successful in their learning as a result of these initiatives.

... and some things to work on

Not all teachers are benefiting from the school-wide PLD activities initiated by the school. Although all teachers were involved in the literacy professional development, and most said they enjoyed the experience, only some of the teachers wanted this to continue. Moreover, only a third of the teachers were regularly using the Friday morning sessions to discuss relevant educational readings about teaching and learning and, subsequently, incorporating new strategies as part of their classroom teaching.

Part of the reason for this low take-up may rest with the involvement and support of the school's leaders. During 2007 and 2008 there was a lack of cohesive leadership in PLD. This was linked, in part, to several personnel changes in the senior management team, including changes in the leadership and coordination of PLD.

In tandem with this, the school had no rationale or vision for its PLD and, consequently, no clear planning link to the school's strategic goals and targets. A rationale for PLD would provide a better framework for improving teaching and learning. It would also provide the impetus for more staff to become active participants in the school's PLD activities.

The process of encouraging greater staff engagement in PLD is also linked to the quality of the feedback teachers receive about their classroom teaching. For most staff there was no clear link between performance appraisal and professional learning and development. Classroom observations occurred only once a year for most staff and were done by negotiation with peer appraisers using a standard format that was not tailored to each teacher.

5 **Other issues affecting PLD at secondary schools**

This section presents a range of issues that arose in addition to the initial questions asked in this evaluation and include:

- the challenges and barriers to effective professional development;
- spending on professional development;
- Ministry of Education contracts and national professional development initiatives; and
- the role of appraisal.

Information in these sections is based on data from the school questionnaires and teacher surveys completed at each secondary school. While ERO used the information from these sources in making their overall judgements about the school, the information from the school questionnaires and teacher surveys also reflects a national pattern for some aspects of PLD.

The challenges and barriers to PLD

Secondary school principals identified a wide range of perceived barriers and challenges. In particular these referred to:

- the costs of PLD, including the cost of courses, facilitators, as well as the costs of employing relievers;
- the amount of time available for PLD;
- the distance of the school from professional development centres and facilitators;
- the challenge accessing high quality PLD providers; and
- balancing PLD with teacher workload.

Time for professional development

ERO found that some secondary schools made time for professional learning and development by delaying the start of the school day by an hour or so, on one day of the week. Although this is an expedient way to operate school-based PLD, boards and principals must consider the implications of a later start to the day, including legislative requirements for the times a school must be open for instruction, and any possible disruption for students and their families.

Principals in all three groups of schools identified these challenges. In addition, different sorts of challenges were reported in the three groups. Principals of Group 1 schools suggested that the challenges they faced were more closely associated with sustaining their PLD approach, including the provision of school-wide PLD.

Although not all of Group 1 principals referred directly to sustainability as a challenge, sustainability issues could be inferred from many of their comments.

Developing a culture of data interrogation is taking some time. Any shift of culture is difficult; changing habits and worldviews can meet tough resistance. Principal a of large, urban, low decile, secondary school

Change can be scary, as it can require us to go outside our comfort zone into the area of conscious incompetence. Resistance and avoidance are common human responses to change. Principal of a small, middle decile, Area school

In contrast to the comments in this first group, the challenges reported by the principals of the other two groups were less likely to relate to issues of sustainability and more likely to be focused on the costs and logistics of staff attending professional development courses and conferences. Principals of these schools were slightly more likely to cite difficulties connected with winning teachers over to PLD.

We agree that iterative long-term mentoring is wonderful, but it is rarely able to be implemented. Principal of a medium-sized, urban, middle decile, secondary school.

The distance from where the courses are held is a challenge. Our costs for travel expenses are high and because of time constraints on staff and students (most of whom travel to school by bus), professional development can only run after school. Principal of a medium-sized, rural, low decile, secondary school.

School F (Group 2)

Context

School F is a small, middle decile, Years 1 to 13 school. Half of its students are Pākehā/European and a third are Māori.

Since its 2005 ERO review, the board and staff have worked together to review aspects of the school's performance and improve student learning. A new principal was appointed in 2006 and the school's senior management team has been strengthened to include senior and junior school leaders. With the new leadership team in place, the school's review and development initiative has continued through to 2008. The current focus for staff included developing the quality of teaching, improving the academic and social outcomes for students, and increasing the retention of students through into the smaller secondary section of the school.

The senior management team used both school-based and national assessment tools to collect useful achievement data in numeracy for students in Years 1 to 10. School analysis indicated that, for most year levels, the percentage of students achieving at or above expectations increased significantly over a year.

In the senior school, NCEA data shows that student achievement in Years 11 and 12 has been variable since 2005. School leaver information indicates that the number of students leaving the college with no formal qualifications is increasing and that Māori students are over-represented in this group.

Junior and senior schools

The school's ongoing review has led to some uneven areas of development. These are evident in the different approaches of the senior and junior school, including their management of PLD.

The school has been part of several PLD activities. Across both the junior and senior schools, staff have participated in the Ministry of Education numeracy contract and Assessment to Learn (AtoL). In the junior school professional development has included a literacy professional development contract. Each of these initiatives is underpinned by a school-wide focus on formative assessment.

The staff at the junior school, especially have benefited from their PLD activities. The junior school leader has helped her staff to develop formative teaching practices. She has also supported the development of high

quality assessment information, including the analysis and use of AsTTLe data. At the time of the review, the junior leader had an excellent understanding of each junior student's literacy and numeracy abilities. The work undertaken by the junior school has contributed to the improved performance of students in the junior school.

In the senior school success has been far less evident from PLD. There was a lower uptake of the formative assessment practices and there has also been far less development in the analysis and use of achievement information. Although there was a greater focus by the teachers in the senior school on learning, rather than behaviour, there was still some work to do to raise the overall quality of teaching.

An important reason for the difference in the uptake of professional learning between the senior and junior schools appears to be the performance of the two school leaders. The leader of the junior school had success leading the work on numeracy, literacy and assessment and junior school staff were keen to follow her. In the senior school, the leadership was not as effective. One reason for this may have been the school's concentration on increasing the senior school roll. This took some of the staff's energy away from a focus on improving the quality of teaching.

School leadership needed more focus on improving student outcomes. This included placing a greater emphasis on analysing student achievement and using this information to improve teaching. It also included attending more to the needs and aspirations of the senior students and using these aspects to shape the professional development of teachers in the senior school. At the time ERO reviewed the school, the senior school leader was reluctant to talk to senior students about their learning programme and said that teachers had a better understanding of their learning needs than students.

Spending on PLD

In addition to identifying barriers and challenges to professional learning, principals collated financial information about their spending for PLD. They were asked to note the amount spent on courses, facilitators, travel, accommodation and relief.

Differences in spending in the three groups

The spending data of all three groups of schools aligns with other findings in this report. For the 2007 academic year, Group 1 and 2 schools reported that they spent \$480 and \$490 respectively per teacher on PLD.²¹ Group 3 schools, identified in this report as having less effective PLD, spent an average of \$800 per teacher.²²

The difference between schools from Groups 1 and 2 and schools from Group 3 adds weight to the earlier evidence indicating that Group 3 schools draw less on school-wide PLD (less expensive) and more on external courses and conferences (expensive).²³

²¹ These numbers are rounded to the nearest \$10. Teacher numbers based on roll generated full-time equivalent

²² These differences are also reflected in the 2006 spending levels and the 2008 budgeted spending for professional learning and development.

²³ Despite the alignment between the funding information supplied by schools and the overall judgements made by ERO, it is important to note that these spending amounts are an indicative, rather than definitive. There are two main reasons for this. The first is based on the findings from earlier national reports that have cautioned the extent to which schools can accurately recall their levels of spending in areas such as professional development. (See for instance *Schools' Use of Operational Funding*.) The second is due to the small size of the overall secondary sample (only 35 of the 44 schools provided suitable data). Within these limitations therefore, the differences in spending between Group 1 and 2 schools and Group 3 schools could change with further information.

Rural and urban schools

The information collected on school spending indicates that rural schools have to pay more for PLD than urban schools. Based on the average spent per teacher,²⁴ the average in 2007 for rural schools was \$970 per teacher compared to \$620 for urban schools.²⁵ A similar figure for each group of schools was also budgeted for 2008.²⁶

It should be noted however that only six rural secondary schools were included in these calculations. The rural schools were all small schools, which may also have contributed to the higher per teacher amounts of spending on PLD (see also the section below).

Differences in the spending between schools of different decile and size were also included in this evaluation. On a per teacher basis, economies of scale mean that it could be expected that small schools (\$1,110 per teacher) would spend more per teacher on PLD than by both medium-sized schools (\$780 per teacher) and large schools (\$530 per teacher). However, economies of scale are not the only issue affecting school expenditure. Five of the eight small schools were rural schools, and this is likely to have influenced the costs faced by these schools (for example additional travel and accommodation costs). These numbers were also reflected in the 2008 budget figures provided by schools.

Differences in spending between other types of schools

Low decile secondary schools spent more per teacher in 2007 than middle and high decile secondary schools. The differences were reasonably marked with low decile secondary schools spending \$810 per teacher, middle decile spending \$470 per teacher and high decile spending \$670 per teacher. The 2008 figures suggest only a small gap between the forecast spending levels of the high and low decile schools, although middle decile schools budgeted spending levels were similar.

These figures are broadly consistent with the data collected by ERO for its 2005 report *Schools' Use of Operational Funding*, which showed that low decile secondary schools spent more on teaching and learning areas (including professional development) than middle and high decile secondary schools. These higher levels of spending are due, at least in part, to the additional income lower decile schools receive through Targeted Funding for Educational Achievement (TFEA).

School G (Group 3)

Context

School G is a large, middle decile, secondary school. The school has reasonable levels of student achievement. In 2007, its NCEA results were slightly below those of other middle decile schools.

School-wide analysis of assessment information for Years 9 and 10 is still in the very early stages of development. It does not yet give a clear or comprehensive picture of how well students overall are progressing and achieving across the curriculum during their two years in the junior part of the school.

A mixture of effective and less effective practices

The school has had a range of PLD activities over the last three years. Its main areas of focus have included school-wide efforts to make learning more explicit to students through the use of *learning intentions*, a focus on student engagement, and literacy and ICT activities. The principal makes decisions about school-wide

²⁴ Roll generated full-time equivalent

²⁵ These numbers are rounded to the nearest \$10

²⁶ Because of data limitations the 2006 figures were not analysed

themes for PLD based on relevant educational research and feedback from senior and middle managers. Departments and individual teachers also seek student feedback.

In turn, there is considerable scope for departments to shape their response to school-wide professional development and learning. The school philosophy values individual choice, so school-wide PLD is not compulsory, although there is an expectation that teachers will participate in at least one school focus area.

The school enjoys a collaborative and collegial professional learning environment. Professional conversations are moving towards evidence-based decision-making and teachers are beginning to ask questions about matters such as classroom effectiveness, and identifying and responding to the strengths and needs of students. Anecdotal evidence suggests that PLD has resulted in improvements in teaching strategies and levels of student engagement.

However, the school's philosophy of individual choice and departmental leadership has come at the cost of the school's overall management of PLD. While teachers have considerable discretion over their own professional development, the school has not produced a suitable PLD plan and processes for monitoring, embedding and consolidating new practices. The school has yet to align its strategic focus for improving teaching and learning with its PLD.

Initially I was excited then overwhelmed then I forgot all about it. We need to have constant reminders. We should be moving down the (teaching strategy) list and mastering each one.
Teacher, School G.

The school's way of approaching PLD has not challenged or changed the assumptions of many staff. In literacy professional development, for example, teachers who led school-wide literacy development have been hesitant about trying to change practice in their own departments. Some have experienced resistance.

The school's future planning for PLD requires it to build up its evidence base about teaching and learning at the school. There is very little data about student achievement at Years 9 and 10 and the school's analysis of NCEA results needs to be extended to all staff involved and subsequently used to inform decisions about PLD. Teacher appraisals and observations need to be used so that they inform school planning priorities.

Where to next for this school?

The principal and senior staff are aware of the need to improve many of areas identified during its ERO review. The next steps involve school leaders improving their planning for PLD and reviewing the extent to which their 'invitational' philosophy is maintained.

This will depend on the evidence the school develops about the quality of teaching at the school and the specific strengths and weaknesses of students, as identified through a more substantial analysis of student achievement across the school.

School leaders face a potentially big challenge in changing staff perceptions of PLD and establishing a culture with more emphasis on staff participation in school-wide priorities. Once they have developed more momentum in their school-wide PLD, they should be able to focus on a suitable approach to monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of their approach.

Role of Ministry of Education contracts and national professional development initiatives

The Ministry of Education has several large professional development initiatives operating in New Zealand schools. In recent years these initiatives have included particular focuses on literacy and numeracy, assessment (*Assess to Learn - AtoL*), improving Māori student engagement and achievement (*Te Kotahitanga*), improving student engagement (*Student Engagement Initiative - SEI*) and information and communications technologies (*ICT clusters for schools*). These initiatives have been evaluated for the Ministry of Education.²⁷

Schools from all three groups had participated in several of these national initiatives. Participation does not, in itself, mean that schools will have developed an effective approach to managing their PLD.

Another challenge relates to the degree of alignment between each of the professional learning initiatives. Many schools are involved in more than one of these initiatives. Although there is related learning to be had from each, it is not clear whether the overlapping concepts about teaching and learning are always recognised by teachers participating in these. If the relationships could be made clearer to teachers they would be better able to consolidate the knowledge and understanding gained from these initiatives.

Given the importance of effective use of assessment data at both individual and collaborative teacher level, greater consideration could be given to assessment-focused professional learning initiatives such as AtoL. A stronger focus on building teachers' capability in assessment could give teachers a more cohesive framework for participation in other initiatives.

School H (Group 3)

Context

School H is a large, low decile, secondary school. Over half of School H's students are Māori, a quarter are Pākehā/European.

In 2007, the school's NCEA results at Level 1 were below that of schools of similar decile. Their Level 2 results were comparable with similar schools and their Level 3 results were slightly higher. The school's leaver qualifications were cause for concern. Since 2002 more students have left with little or no formal attainment than is the case in other schools of a similar decile. The proportion of Māori students leaving with little or no formal qualifications is higher than the average rates for schools of a similar type and decile.

More positively, some students have achieved success in national and regional competitions including mathematics, science, hospitality, music, drama and sports. The school's arts festival and drama performances are valued events. Many students take on leadership roles in supporting and mentoring other students, and in organising school activities.

The school is involved in several major professional development and learning initiatives. At the time of its ERO review, the school was engaged in Ministry of Education initiatives for Te Kotahitanga, CPaBL, literacy and numeracy. It had also taken part in professional development in differentiated learning and restorative justice, as well as continuing its professional development in ICT. Despite the fact that School H is in four Ministry of Education initiatives, its 2007 spending for PLD was over \$1,000 per teacher. A similar amount was budgeted for 2008.

²⁷ See for example an evaluation of the Literacy Professional Development Project <http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/literacy/16821> and the Advanced Numeracy project http://www.tki.org.nz/r/literacy_numeracy/professional/eval_anp2002.pdf

Too much too soon?

Although the school has made some progress with its PLD since its previous ERO report in 2006, its 2008 ERO review found that the school still needed to consolidate aspects of its extensive professional development and learning programme in order to make a difference for students.

Areas of good performance included the way PLD projects were incorporated into the board's annual planning and reporting of school goals; and regular opportunities that were given to staff for professional reflection and dialogue. Opportunities for dialogue had contributed to the development of a positive learning culture amongst staff, which had included some teachers sharing good teaching practice and planning classroom programmes collaboratively.

Some staff reported that Te Kotahitanga had a positive impact on their teaching practice. The numeracy project had shown teachers in the mathematics department how to use a greater variety of teaching methods. The school's NCEA and Year 9 data indicated promising improvements in student achievement in numeracy.

Despite these good efforts, ERO found several places where the school could improve its PLD demonstrating the need for the school to build a sustainable plan and culture for PLD.

The 2008 ERO review found that the school had yet to develop a shared vision for professional learning and development. The lack of a school-wide vision was evident in the comments made by teachers. Some teachers suggested that school leaders took on PLD initiatives because of the associated financial benefit and had little knowledge of the initiative or of its intended impact on teaching and learning.

Some staff felt overwhelmed by the significant amount of school-wide professional development in recent years. They were frustrated that the professional development programme did not acknowledge their current skills or address their specific development needs.

The school's approach to Te Kotahitanga also raised questions about how this initiative was led, organised and managed. The lead facilitator was a relatively inexperienced teacher and a first time leader of a major school-wide professional development initiative. Moreover neither the initiative nor the facilitator had received adequate support from school leaders.

The school's culture was not well aligned with the goals and aspirations of Te Kotahitanga, particularly critical aspects such as the consistency with which the Māori values of manākitanga and whanaungatanga were part school practice. Behaviour management in some classes, and generally across the school, tended to be punitive rather than supportive. The achievement of Māori students was low and high numbers of Māori students had been suspended and stood down. The school's environment was also not welcoming for students and their families. The lack of these key attributes mediated against the success of the initiative.

ERO's report also indicated that the school's evaluation of PLD needed to improve so that it could support decision-making in the school. In particular School H needed to build its evaluation through analysis of student achievement, student feedback and a collation of teachers' reflections about the effectiveness of PLD.

The role of appraisal

Information from the survey documents completed by principals and teachers for this evaluation indicated that appraisal data did not significantly influence how decisions about PLD were made. Only four secondary school principals noted that teacher appraisals were one of the three most important factors influencing their school's decisions about PLD. Approximately three percent of teachers noted that appraisal comment or development goals were one of the three most important factors that influenced their professional development programme.

The relatively minor influence played by appraisals in making decisions about PLD is consistent with ERO's previous findings.²⁸ There are several possible reasons for appraisals having a seemingly limited effect on school decisions about PLD. In the first instance appraisals often follow, more than lead, the school's strategic intent for PLD. Subsequently, where a school expects particular teaching practices to be used, these may be included as appraisal goals for staff.

This was a feature of some of the Group 1 schools, where important aspects of the school's professional learning were integrated into the appraisal process. This links elements of the school-wide PLD directly back to the performance of staff. It is also a way of underlining the developmental steps for each teacher.

For other schools, appraisals were less connected with their strategic objectives and developmental goal-setting, and more concerned with compliance with their personnel requirements, including attestation and registration. Evidence from schools indicated that appraisals were used to ensure that staff had reached a minimum standard of performance, and there was limited developmental scope to the comments given to the teachers being appraised.

Some schools used a different approach to giving staff developmental feedback. This included peer mentoring or the sorts of observations and feedback that occur in PLD initiatives that are strongly linked to classroom activity.

Conclusion

The purposes of professional learning and development are to improve the quality of teaching and to improve student outcomes. While many different forms of training and development are undertaken by teachers, including updating curriculum knowledge or developing particular technical skills, improving what happens in the classroom is the dominant rationale for PLD.

PLD represents a substantial investment in time and money. The findings of this report indicate that much of the time and money put into PLD in secondary schools does not necessarily improve teacher practice or student outcomes.

For secondary schools to successfully manage PLD, they need to have a coordinated approach and forward planning that is well led, well informed and able to be sustained. Planning needs to draw on professional development processes that are consistent with those in educational research about the characteristics of high quality professional development. In particular, PLD should challenge teachers' assumptions about their practice, it should be connected with classroom teaching, it should be informed by analyses of student achievement and relevant educational research, and it should be engaging for teachers and coordinated with departmental and school-wide support for teachers and learners.

In the secondary schools reviewed for this evaluation, good quality school-wide professional development initiatives were more likely to lead to improved teaching and learning than less coordinated approaches, involving one-off course attendance. Well-managed departmental or school-wide projects are more likely to incorporate the types of professional learning and processes educational research has acknowledged as effective. This is not to say that there is no place for

²⁸ Education Review Office. (2000). *In-service Training for Teachers in New Zealand Schools*. Wellington: Education Review Office.

individual teacher development, but it suggests that schools that manage PLD effectively do so by using high quality school-wide initiatives as a key platform.

ERO found that schools from a variety of deciles and locations had different ways of managing PLD well. Many of these schools faced challenges in terms of their school situation and/or the location of their school relative to professional development providers. The cost of their PLD was not more expensive than that of the other less well-performed schools. Those that did best tended to be more prudent in their choice of PLD programme. They were less likely to choose a variety of one-off courses for teachers, thereby spending less per teacher, and focusing more on the benefits of school-wide programmes. Where benefit was gained from conferences and courses, it formed a well-planned part of the school's overall PLD strategy.

Managing secondary school PLD can create tensions as school leaders accommodate the potentially different needs and aspirations of departments and teachers. The dynamic relationship that exists between school improvement and PLD means that this is a particularly important part of school planning. Developing a sound rationale for PLD and systems that link PLD to the school's goals and targets is critical. PLD should be responsive to well-directed analysis so that the focus is on improving teaching and learning rather than reacting to what courses or initiatives happen to be available.

For most of the schools in this evaluation, improving their monitoring and evaluation of PLD was essential to improving their management. The establishment of good systems for monitoring and evaluation provides a framework for schools to know what is working, and where school leaders should place their future efforts. Analyses of student achievement as well as timely feedback on classroom teaching are key evidence bases from which to manage effective PLD.

Schools with good systems to manage their PLD were able to demonstrate the impact their programmes were having on improved teacher practice and student outcomes. However, variability in the quality of PLD management signals a place for Ministry of Education guidelines to support schools in managing their PLD programmes.

The self-review questions included in each section of this report are intended to provide a basis for regular reflection at senior leader and at departmental level.

Recommendations

Schools

ERO recommends that principals and senior managers:

- assess the quality of their management of professional learning and development with reference to the findings discussed in this report;
- develop a vision and plan for professional learning and development that is aligned with school planning priorities and has a focus on improving teaching and learning;
- establish a system to embed and sustain new practice; and
- review and/or establish a process for evaluating the effectiveness of the school's professional learning and development programmes.

Ministry of Education

ERO recommends that the Ministry of Education consider producing guidelines to support secondary schools in their management of professional learning and development.

Self Review: Questions for schools

These questions have been prepared to help schools reflect on PLD. They could be read alongside the indicators of PLD in *Appendix 1* of this report, as well as the Ministry of Education's *Best Evidence Synthesis Teacher PLD*.

Overall effectiveness

1. In which of the above groups would we place our own school?
2. How well do the teachers at our school understand the school's strategy or approach to PLD?
3. What do we think are strengths and weaknesses of our school's approach to PLD?
4. What impact has our school's PLD had?

Planning and decision-making

5. What evidence have we used in our school's plan for PLD?
6. What do we expect to happen as a result of our school's plan for PLD?
7. How will we know if our PLD plan is effective?
8. How does our school's PLD plan relate to our school's overall efforts to improve teaching and learning?

School culture and practices

9. To what extent do our teachers collaborate to achieve the school's focuses for PLD?
10. How do our senior leaders influence the quality of the school's PLD?
11. To what extent are our staff, other than senior leaders, leading aspects of the school's PLD?
12. How do our teachers get good quality feedback about their classroom teaching?
13. How often do teachers at our school use analysis of student achievement data in their classroom planning and activities?

Monitoring and evaluating

14. To what extent does our school routinely collect evidence about the effectiveness of our PLD?
15. What other evidence could we draw on to evaluate our PLD?
16. How well does our analysis of student achievement information provide insight into the effectiveness of PLD? What could we do to enhance this analysis?
17. How can we tell that changes have occurred in classroom teaching as a result of PLD?
18. What does our school need to do to evaluate the effectiveness of PLD for different groups of students, including Māori, Pacific and students at risk of failing?

Impact

19. What is influenced by or is the direct result of, PLD?
20. What are the most effective types of PLD for our school?
21. Which have been less effective and/or useful for us?

Barriers and challenges

22. What are the main barriers or challenges to our school developing an effective approach to PLD?
23. To what extent does our school use school-based PLD as opposed to one-off courses and conferences?
24. How sustainable is our school's approach to PLD, both financially and in terms of teachers' time?
25. What is our school doing to embed professional learning in teaching practice and strategies?

Spending

26. What are the main costs of our PLD?
27. What value for money are our teachers and students getting from our schools PLD?
28. What trends are apparent in our school's spending on PLD? What do these trends suggest in terms of our future spending on PLD?

Appendix 1: The evaluation of PLD by schools

Schools need to ensure that their PLD is effective. Evaluating PLD provides schools with a valuable tool for understanding if teachers are becoming more effective practitioners. It can also help identify how beneficial a professional development initiative has been, including whether it has justified the board's investment of time and money.

The evaluation of PLD poses a considerable challenge for schools. In the first instance, PLD initiatives take place in a complex context where many different variables affect the performance of teachers and students. School personnel may also be uncertain about what sorts of evidence to collect about the effectiveness of PLD and how this evidence might be analysed so that it informs school decision-making.

The work of Thomas Guskey provides a pragmatic and useful approach to such evaluation. Guskey's approach provides support and guidance for school staff to undertake worthwhile evaluative activity, without the need for them to be trained in complex evaluative techniques. In his book *Evaluating Professional Development*²⁹ Guskey sets out a basic checklist, or framework, for school leaders to use when planning and evaluating their professional development programme. The key aspects of this checklist focus on:

- clarifying the PLD goals;
- assessing the value of these goals;
- analysing the school's context (teacher and organisation strengths, weaknesses and characteristics);
- estimating the programme's potential to meet the school's goals;
- determining how the goals can be assessed;
- outlining the strategies for gathering evidence;
- gathering and analysing evidence of:
 - participants' reactions;
 - participants' learning;
 - the school's organisational changes;
 - participants' use of new knowledge and skills;
 - student learning outcomes; and
 - preparing and presenting evaluation reports.

There are several details underlying each of these steps. While it is not possible to discuss these details here, there are some important principles of this approach that can be emphasised.

One of these principles is the need for school personnel to collect a range of evidence about the effectiveness of a professional development activity, such as changes in student social or academic outcomes, and information about how teachers have changed their teaching. In a New Zealand context, schools should investigate how a professional development initiative has impacted on specific groups of students, including Māori, Pacific and underachieving students.

²⁹ Guskey, T. (2000). *Evaluating Professional Development* (pp 91). Corwin Press, California.

Other forms of data that can be collected and analysed include information on teacher attitudes to PLD initiatives and changes to classroom and departmental planning documents. However, teacher attitudes to PLD should not be the sole evidence used to evaluate PLD.³⁰

In judging the influence of PLD on teaching and learning, school personnel also need to consider the role played by other initiatives, such as attempts to build closer links with families or improve student attendance. In this sense, it needs to be emphasised that PLD takes place in a complex context and, the evidence school personnel need to make their judgements about PLD with the understanding that PLD is not the only factor influencing teacher and student outcomes.

By making sound judgements about the effectiveness of PLD, school personnel are able to make informed decisions about the future. This knowledge can help build a sustainable approach to PLD and ensure that the benefits gained through one PLD are continued through later initiatives.

Good school-based evaluation is a flexible and manageable process. It needs to adapt, along with the PLD activity and should be integrated into the PLD activity to enable the collection of different sources of information. The following example from Thomas Guskey provides one approach to evaluation for use by school personnel. This example sets out the formal and informal steps taken by these teachers in their PLD.

Suppose for example, that two teachers receive support to participate in a special summer seminar sponsored by a local university that is designed to improve teaching and learning in middle grade mathematics classes. During the seminar they engage in a variety of stimulating learning experiences, develop a deeper understanding of advanced mathematics, and plan numerous changes in their lessons and instructional strategies. During the following school year, they implement their plans and strategies, keeping careful records of the changes they make and the resulting impact on students. With the support of the school principal, they meet regularly throughout the year to discuss results and to continue planning activities. When occasional problems arise, they contact university staff members, who offer additional assistance.

At the end of the year, these teachers summarise the information they gathered in a brief evaluation report. Their report shows that compared to previous years, average scores on classroom examinations rose dramatically, students' test scores on standardised achievement assessments improved, more students earned A's and B's, the number of students who received failing grades was reduced to zero, and attendance rates improved.³¹

³⁰ As Helen Timperley has noted "The popularity of particular professional development programmes is not necessarily matched by their impact on students." Timperley, H. (2008). *Teacher Professional Learning and Development*. International Academy of Education.

³¹ Guskey, T. (2000). *Evaluating Professional Development*. (p 253). California: Corwin Press.

Appendix 2: ERO's indicator framework for the review of school management of PLD

Indicator	Characteristics
School goals for PLD ³²	<p>The school goals for PLD are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • focussed on improving student educational achievement (knowledge and skills) and/or <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ improving student engagement; ○ developing student social skills (including values and competencies); • represent a potentially valuable improvement in student performance; • realistic and achievable; • take into account any 'supply' problems that may occur in delivering quality PLD (including accessing quality providers, travel, affordability and isolation); • measurable in some form or another;³³ • are understood and accepted by the staff and board; • provide an opportunity for most (if not all) teachers to improve their practice; • have been informed by an analysis of the school context including a balanced understanding of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ wider school planning and development, (including the interests of the board); ○ relevant educational research, ○ teacher interests and needs (including the development needs as identified through the appraisal process), ○ school self-review and evaluation; ○ the interest and needs of families, whānau and the wider community; and ○ student social and academic needs (including student achievement results).
School planning for professional development	<p>The school's planning for PLD:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reflects the school goals for PLD; • demonstrates a realistic process and timeline for the school PLD goals to be achieved; • takes into account any 'supply' problems that may occur in delivering quality PLD (including accessing quality providers, travel, affordability and isolation); • is affordable and manageable in terms of teacher time and resources;

³² School goals could include school-wide, departmental, syndicate and individual teacher goals depending on the context.

³³ Although 'attribution' may be more complex.

Indicator	Characteristics
	<p>and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • clearly sets out the key steps, processes, timelines and responsibilities.
Decision-making	<p>The school's decisions about how school PLD <i>will actually proceed</i>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reflect the school-wide goals and plans for PLD (and all that is outlined in these indicators above); especially the school's analysis of its: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ wider school planning and development, (including the interests of the board); ○ educational research, ○ teacher interests and needs (including the development needs as identified through the appraisal process), ○ school self-review and evaluation; ○ the interests and needs of families, whānau and the wider community; and ○ student social and academic needs; (including student achievement results). • adequately manages any barriers or challenges to achieving the school's goals and plans for PLD; • takes into account any 'supply' problems that may occur in delivering quality PLD (including accessing quality providers, travel, affordability and isolation); and • takes into account any PLD opportunities that may present, without compromising the importance the need to inform the school's PLD plan with evidence from the above list.
School PLD culture ³⁴	<p><i>Context for Professional Learning and Development</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers have time for engaging with the professional learning material. • Teachers' assumptions about learning are challenged. • The school uses external expertise for important aspects of their professional learning and/or development. • Teachers collaborate in planning and evaluating each others classroom teaching. • There are regular opportunities for reflection and dialogue with other teachers. • Aside from senior management, there are teachers who lead the staff in elements of PLD. • School leaders are active participants in regular professional activities and discussions. • There is a shared vision and focus on improving student achievement. <p><i>The content of PLD</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a well-developed integration of educational research, (theory), practice and assessment information;

³⁴ See also Helen Timperley, Aaron Wilson, Heather Barrar & Irene Fung. (2008). *Teacher professional learning and development: Best Evidence Synthesis* Ministry of Education (Wellington)

Indicator	Characteristics
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PLD is aligned to well developed school goals for improving teaching and learning. • Professional activities are strongly linked to changes in classroom activity. • Emphasis is placed on the importance of teacher/student relationships; and • There are analyses of student achievement information to help understand the impact of new classroom activities. <p><i>Activities to promote professional learning</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are a variety of professional activities that engage teaching staff. • The content and nature of PLD is discussed and negotiated with staff. <p><i>Learning processes and teachers' responses</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is evidence that teachers have changed their ideas about student learning.
School-wide professional development	<p><i>Context for Professional Learning and Development</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers have time for engaging with the professional learning material. • Teachers are challenged on their assumptions about learning. • The school uses well-regarded external facilitators for important aspects of their professional learning and/or development. • Teachers collaborate in planning and evaluating each others classroom teaching. • There are regular opportunities for reflection and dialogue with other teachers. • Aside from senior management, there are teachers who lead the staff in elements of PLD. • School leaders are active participants in regular professional activities and discussions. • There is a shared vision and focus on improving student achievement. <p><i>The content of Professional Learning and Development</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a well-developed integration of educational research, (theory), practice and assessment information. • PLD is aligned to well developed school goals for improving teaching and learning. • Professional activities are strongly linked to changes in classroom activity. • Emphasis is placed on the importance of teacher/student relationships; • There are analyses of student achievement information to help understand the impact of new classroom activities. <p><i>Learning processes and teachers' responses</i></p>

Indicator	Characteristics
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is evidence that teachers have changed their ideas about student learning. • There is evidence that students have benefited (socially and/or academically) from changes to classroom learning.
Individual teacher PLD programmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual teacher PLD programmes have been informed by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ school PLD goals; ○ wider school planning and development, (including the interests of the board); ○ educational research; ○ personal and professional interests and needs (including the development needs as identified through the appraisal process); ○ school self-review and evaluation; ○ the interests and needs of families, whānau and the wider community; and ○ student social and academic needs (including student achievement results). • The individual teacher PLD programmes support the school to achieve the school goals for PLD. • The individual PLD programmes are sustainable in terms of school finances and teacher workload.
The monitoring and evaluation of PLD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school's monitoring and evaluation of PLD collects evidence about the impact of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ school-wide PLD; and ○ the development programmes of individual teachers. • Impact information includes possible changes to the school's organization and structure, teacher attitudes and practices and student social skills, engagement and achievement. • Schools are not expected to have systems for definitively establishing the impact of PLD, but rather processes that help them understand what, if any changes have occurred in the educational context, and, to a reasonable extent, how PLD is likely to have contributed to these changes. (<i>Evidence not proof.</i>) • The school's monitoring and evaluation of PLD is able to inform the school's approach to future PLD activities.
The sustainability of PLD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The schools' approach to PLD is likely to develop and maintain improvements in teaching practice. • The school's approach to PLD is also likely to be affordable as well as practical in terms of teacher workload and the induction of new staff.

Appendix 3: Methodology

Schools in the overall study

ERO evaluated how well schools managed PLD in 361 primary and secondary schools in Terms 1 and 2 of 2008. The evaluation took place as part of each school's ERO education review. Of the 361 schools, 317 were primary schools and 44 were secondary schools.

The 317 primary schools fell into the categories of full primary (164), contributing schools (133) and intermediate schools (20). This sample is similar to the national percentages in both full primary and contributing schools and replicates exactly the national percentage for intermediate schools. Thirty percent of schools were rural.

The proportion of primary schools in the mid and high decile bands was similar to national percentages with a slightly lower proportion in low the decile band. There were 80 low decile primary schools (25 percent), 139 mid decile schools (44 percent) and 98 high decile schools (31 percent).

When considered by size, the sample included 130 small schools³⁵ (41 percent), 78 medium sized schools (25 percent) and 109 large schools (34 percent). The sample is slightly weighted towards larger schools when compared with a national sample.

Of the 361 schools, 44 were secondary or composite schools. This latter group comprised 25 Years 9 to 15 schools, ten Years 7 to 15 schools, and nine Years 1 to 15 schools. Thirty-seven were located in urban areas and seven were rural.

The proportion of secondary schools in each decile band was similar to national percentages. There were 15 low decile secondary schools (34 percent), 19 mid decile secondary schools (43 percent), and 10 high decile secondary schools (23 percent).

Thirteen of the secondary schools³⁶ (30 percent) were small, which was very similar to the national percentage (31 percent). There were just nine medium-sized secondary schools (20 percent), which is below the national average of 33 percent. There was, a higher proportion of large secondary schools with 22 (50 percent) compared to the national average of 36 percent.

Evaluation approach

ERO gathered and analysed information in response to the following evaluation questions:

- How well is PLD managed for the benefit of teachers and students?
- What is the quality of the school's planning and decision-making for PLD?
- How well does the school's implementation of PLD support ongoing teacher development?
- What changes have occurred for teachers and students as a result of PLD?

³⁵ Small primary schools are those with less than 150 students. Medium sized primary schools have 150-300 students. Large primary schools have over 300 students.

³⁶ Small secondary schools are those with less than 300 students. Medium sized secondary schools have 300 to 700 students. Large secondary schools are those over 700 students.

The BES document *Teacher PLD* provided the basis for the indicator framework review officers used to evaluate the management of PLD at each school. Because PLD can vary in its design from school to school, the flexibility of this framework allowed review officers to consider various forms of good practice while answering the questions above.³⁷

ERO did not evaluate the quality of specific professional development initiatives undertaken by schools. For instance, where a school or a department in a school had been engaged in a particular professional development initiative, ERO did not evaluate the effectiveness of this programme, but rather focused on the school's management of all PLD especially in relation to goals for improving student achievement.

ERO judgements were further informed through a school questionnaire and individual surveys from some or all of the teachers at each school.³⁸ The school questionnaire collected data on the school's planning and spending on PLD; the nature and broad outcomes of any school-wide PLD initiatives; as well as any barriers or challenges the school faced in accessing high quality PLD.

The teacher survey provided information from staff members on the types of PLD undertaken, including an indication of the most effective PLD undertaken in the last 18 months; the decision making processes teachers used to choose their PLD programme; and an outline of the teacher experience of school PLD practices (for instance how often informal and formal PLD events occurred, what these involved).

Both the school questionnaire and the teacher survey material have been aggregated to provide a national perspective.

³⁷ Appendix 2 has a summary of this indicator framework

³⁸ Review teams used the surveys to help get a picture of professional learning and development across the staff. The number of surveys therefore varied between schools, although a maximum of 25 surveys was set as a guideline.