

What Drives Learning in the Senior Secondary School?

May 2018



Ko te Tamaiti te Pūtake o te Kaupapa

The Child – the Heart of the Matter

www.ero.govt.nz

What drives learning in the senior secondary school?

Published 2018

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ISBN 978-0-478-43877-2



New Zealand Government

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Contents

Overview.....	4
Introduction.....	5
Findings.....	7
Section One.....	8
Section Two.....	15
Section Three.....	30
Conclusion.....	34
Recommendations.....	35
Provocations for the future.....	36
Appendix 1: Comparative terms used in this report.....	37
Appendix 2: What ERO knows about curriculum design in secondary schools.....	38
Appendix 3: ERO’s evaluation framework.....	43



Overview

The New Zealand Curriculum (NZC) defines coherence as occurring when:

The curriculum offers all students a broad education that makes links within and across learning areas, provides for coherent transitions and opens up pathways to further learning.

The NZC makes a clear connection between pedagogy, curriculum and effective assessment:

The primary purpose of assessment is to improve students' learning and teachers' teaching as both students and teacher respond to the information it provides.

This report studies effective practice in schools' senior curriculum. The report contributes to the review being undertaken by the Ministry of Education (the Ministry) of the [National Certificate of Educational Achievement](#) (NCEA). The Ministry-led review focuses on the implementation of NCEA as the national assessment system for the senior years of secondary schooling.

ERO invited 12 schools to contribute to this report following consultation with the Ministry and regional ERO offices. This consultation identified schools that reference *The New Zealand Curriculum*. The schools referred to the NZC in curriculum outlines on their websites and in school prospectus information. The schools were selected because they had made clear connections between the curriculum and the key competencies of NZC in their school documentation.

ERO looked at the ways these schools provided a coherent curriculum, rather than one dominated by assessment requirements.¹ We found a minority of these schools showed it was possible to plan and implement senior learning pathways based on the principles, vision, values and competencies, outlined in the NZC. These schools were able to show student progress towards broader outcomes that amount to deeper learning. Other schools in the sample were well on the way to full coherence, with some aspects of a coherent curriculum still to be developed. In most of the schools, ERO found elements of curriculum planning and delivery that are useful as examples for other schools to consider.

The schools with a coherent senior curriculum had established practices that contributed to coherence through:

- the principal's leadership of professional practice
- the principal's capacity to address community perceptions about the value of NCEA together with NZC
- leaders' support of curriculum and assessment development that aligned with the school's vision and direction
- career guidance that contributed to school-wide decisions about providing student pathways
- the willingness of leaders and teachers to review teaching practice and school systems, in order to help students progress towards deeper learning
- students who were respected participants in their own learning and could recognise their own development of the competencies outlined in NZC.

¹ See Appendix 1 for comparative table.

Generally, the schools we visited had reviewed learning and teaching, and school systems, to better align the curriculum to the requirements of NZC. Some schools had not yet fully established this coherence in their curriculum, and assessment continued to drive senior curriculum planning. Most of these schools, however, recognised the barriers they needed to address, to provide a fully coherent senior curriculum.

Such barriers included reluctance by some teachers to give up the content of their subject specialty to integrate learning areas and assessment. Another barrier was the view of some students that they needed or wanted to achieve a higher number of NCEA credits than are required for achievement at each level. Some teachers were not knowledgeable or confident enough about assessment to be able to respond to individual students' strengths interests and needs in the context of their learning.

Schools gave specific examples of the frustrations they experienced in implementing assessment and responding to moderation by the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA), and to issues they believed to be the responsibility of the Ministry. ERO found some schools had worked through the barriers effectively, some were addressing the barriers and a few had yet to do so.

Introduction

NCEA is the national qualification for secondary school students in New Zealand.² Since its introduction in 2002, NCEA has been used by many schools as a framework, not only for assessment, but to provide the content of teaching and learning at senior levels. Findings from ERO reports and research information from a variety of agencies indicate that in the senior school (Years 11+) the majority of schools and wharekura focus largely on subject-specific skills and knowledge. Generally, schools' senior curricula do not clearly demonstrate the relationship between the principles, values, and key competencies of NZC and programmes of teaching and learning that contribute to achievement of NCEA.

In the past decade, the Ministry, as the standard setting body, and NZQA have revised aspects of NCEA to include course and subject endorsement, and literacy and numeracy requirements. From 2009 to 2012, achievement standards were revised to better align with outcomes from NZC. The emphasis on alignment focused many teachers on reviewing the content of learning areas and subjects.

NZC outlines a vision for young people to be, among other things, confident, connected, actively involved, lifelong learners. NZC also outlines:

- principles as the foundations of curriculum decision making
- values to be encouraged, modelled and explored
- key competencies as capabilities for living and lifelong learning
- learning areas important for a broad education
- effective pedagogy to promote student learning
- the school curriculum, how to design and review it.

² <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/ncea/>

Secondary schools have implemented the national curriculum to a lesser extent than primary schools, particularly the key competencies identified in the NZC. This is a concern as these curriculum requirements gain increasing significance at senior levels of schooling preparing students to transition to the next stage of their learning or employment, beyond secondary school.

In 2017, the Ministry set up an inter-agency group to identify key issues for consideration, and the context and framing of those key issues to form part of the review of NCEA.³ The considerations of this group are informed by research carried out by the [New Zealand Council for Educational Research](#) summarising the themes in recent NCEA literature. This research found that general support for NCEA has increased over the last decade but it also identified a number of issues of concern about NCEA to be addressed in the Ministry review. A key concern was that secondary schools have used NCEA assessment standards as the default curriculum, rather than as it is intended to be used: to identify student achievement. Schools have not consistently used NZC as the framework for curriculum planning at senior levels. This means students are not given opportunities to develop the values and key competencies of the NZC.

The Ministry and ERO agreed to jointly fund an evaluation of senior curriculum planning and implementation in a sample of 12 schools whose documentation indicated the intention to integrate NZC and NCEA. In this report ERO discusses the strategies these secondary schools used to implement NZC and NCEA assessment in their senior school curriculum, with specific emphasis on the key competencies of NZC.

The scope of the findings is limited to identifying how secondary schools provide a coherent senior curriculum and the steps taken to align NZC and NCEA. This report describes the practice in the schools visited by ERO. The findings about these schools contribute to the wider review of NCEA. This report provides examples of how the vision, policy, structures and curriculum provision of these schools have aligned with the requirements of NZC.⁴ It considers how these schools developed their curriculum and the extent to which they have balanced assessment requirements at the senior level with the requirement to implement NZC.⁵

While the focus of the report is on senior secondary schooling, the evaluation team also considered how schools managed student transition into senior schooling. ERO has provided a literature review of what ERO already knows about secondary schools' curriculum. See Appendix 2.

³The Ministry has worked closely with the NZQA, Tertiary Education Commission, Education Review Office, Education New Zealand and Education Council, with support from the New Zealand Council for Educational Research to shape these potential approaches.

⁴ *The NZC, together with the Qualifications framework, gives schools the flexibility to design and deliver programmes that will engage all students and offer them appropriate learning pathways. The flexibility of the qualifications system also allows schools to keep assessment to levels that are manageable and reasonable for both students and teachers. Not all aspects of the curriculum need to be formally assessed, and excessive high-stakes assessment in Years 11-13 is to be avoided.* [New Zealand Curriculum](#).

⁵ The main curriculum guide for all the schools in this evaluation was NZC. Two schools referred to [Te Marautanga o Aotearoa](#), the Maori-medium curriculum document, in their planning.

Findings

ERO focused on how and how well the selected secondary schools achieved coherence in the senior curriculum. The basis for the evaluation was the premise that in these schools the NZC drives senior programme content and pathway planning, and that NCEA shows achievement from Level 1 upwards on the New Zealand Qualifications Framework.

We looked at how the schools offer students experiences that deepen their learning through providing meaningful pathways, and provide students with opportunities to develop their knowledge, values and competencies in the senior years of schooling. Assessment that shows how well students have developed their knowledge and skills was also critical, as an indication of their progress and achievement.

ERO found that of the 12 schools visited, a minority had planned and implemented senior learning programmes that related to the principles, values and competencies outlined in the NZC, and led to coherence in curriculum provision. Others were well on the way to full coherence, with some aspects still to be developed. Some schools were yet to put in place the necessary systems and practice to allow them to offer a senior curriculum that purposefully included all the components of NZC. In all these schools, ERO found elements of practice that were useful examples for other schools to consider.

The report findings are presented in three sections: section one discusses the degree to which schools provide coherence in the senior school curriculum; section two provides summaries of practices that exemplify how these schools brought about curriculum coherence. The third section discusses the issues and challenges schools identified as they tried to give due attention to both NZC and NCEA in their senior school curriculum.



Section One

What were the characteristics of schools that showed a high level of coherence in their senior curriculum?

The schools where coherence of NZC and NCEA in the senior school was most evident shared important characteristics. These characteristics contributed to a curriculum that promoted deeper knowledge and learning for students. The aspects of the schools that were effective in providing a coherent curriculum related to:

- leadership and moral courage
- clarity of the school's vision
- appropriate curriculum design
- professional practice
- relationships for learning.

Leadership and moral courage

"We ask ourselves, what does achievement look like? Is that person a better citizen?"

Principal, Waitakere College

Leadership in schools that provided coherent curriculum set a clear vision for learning and explicit expectations about the desired outcomes for students. These schools were committed to the requirements of NZC as a priority rather than allowing NCEA to drive the curriculum.

In these schools, senior leaders understood NCEA qualifications were important for their students and community, but they also showed a commitment to a broader, agreed definition of successful outcomes for their students that reflected the principles of the NZC.

Principals in these schools shared a sense of urgency to improve outcomes for the students currently in the school as well as working to meet longer-term improvement goals. Several principals spoke to ERO about the 'moral courage' required to lead the school in a direction focused on building student learning and deep knowledge, rather than predominantly focusing on attainment of credits.

These principals were not embarrassed or afraid to talk about 'soft' skills, or competencies and human values. They showed commitment to keeping the focus on students' personal qualities and growth. They also understood that high expectations and high quality systems were fundamental to the school's role in supporting students to achieve their potential, at school and in the future. They did not shrink from requiring high quality teaching practice to achieve this.

Principals strategically articulated and put into practice the actions necessary to build and sustain coherence. Through a distributed leadership approach, other leaders in the school were also active in implementing the agreed strategies.

In all schools, the principal acted as the face of the school in the wider community. The leader's role was pivotal in establishing and maintaining the trust of the wider community in the school's approach to curriculum delivery.

In some cases, this proved to be a significant challenge; when a community was not well informed about the place of NCEA with NZC, or when approaches such as integrating the curriculum were not readily accepted by a community that expected a more traditional approach to schooling.

"[You need] moral courage to manage change. If you do the right thing you'll get the right outcome. Schools have lost the moral courage to grow young people."

Co-principal, Logan Park High School

Clear direction

Where a coherent curriculum was evident, leaders identified compelling reasons for aligning the school's curriculum to NZC and made changes accordingly. The secondary schools developed vision statements and strategic goals that included reference to NZC and achievement targets. In some schools ERO saw clear alignment between the school's vision, structures and practices. In these schools, the principles of the NZC, the foundations of curriculum decision making, were clearly evident in practice. Teachers taught according to these key educational principles, to meet the particular needs, interests and circumstances of the school's students.

Schools' deliberate reference to the principles, values and competencies of NZC in the curriculum came about for various reasons, such as: recognition of the importance and relevance of NZC; the need to plan new learning spaces; concern about student achievement; change following a network review; or long-term planning for student achievement that was constantly reviewed and improved.

The schools that were most successful had kept the focus on student learning needs and providing interesting, challenging and relevant programmes for students. They maintained a balance between providing appropriate senior pathways and demonstrating achievement through the careful management of assessment for NCEA.

Leaders based their actions on relevant, up-to-date research about education and constant self-evaluation. They addressed issues of wellbeing, timetabling, course access and academic/pastoral guidance for students. Leaders gathered appropriate data to review how successful they were. All practice was aligned to the school's strategic direction.

Identity

The schools that clearly planned in accordance with the requirements of NZC supported students in their identity, language and culture. The focus of the school's curriculum was on students' understanding and valuing their own identity and background, their relationship to others in Aotearoa/New Zealand, and how they understood the wider world. These schools benefited from professional learning programmes that gave teachers greater awareness about the need to know their students as culturally located learners, and increased their ability to design relevant learning opportunities for their students.

Teachers were competent in practising culturally responsive teaching. Students told ERO they had noticed and valued this. The schools built strong relationships with their Māori and Pacific communities through genuine conversation and careful listening. Staff developed a collective responsibility for student success, seeing all students as 'our students'.

The example of Rotorua Girls' High School shows how a school centred its practice on the cultural responsiveness of its curriculum.

Rotorua Girls' High School successfully met the NZC requirement to fully acknowledge the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi and the bicultural foundations of Aotearoa/New Zealand. The school referred to *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa* in establishing the school's vision of "crafting future leaders." The school's goal is to raise achievement, and to embed good practice in teaching that engages all students in meaningful learning as connected, critical thinkers. Their intent to enact the full Treaty partnership guided their vision.

"Our teacher-student relationships are based on culturally responsive and relational pedagogy."

A unique initiative in the school was the explicit and direct connection from students and teachers to an inspirational Te Arawa woman, Te Ao Kapurangi.

"We looked for a great woman leader and didn't have far to go to find one. Who is she for us? She gives the school an anchor."

Te Ao Kapurangi epitomised the qualities the school and community wanted for their students. They wanted to:

- make the cultural change needed to view education through a Māori lens
- locate students in the school's culture so they would be confident to be citizens for the world.

Research about what equity and excellence look like for "Māori succeeding as Māori" informed changes.

From this starting point, the principal, senior leaders and the iwi (Te Arawa) identified seven areas as the focus for development of the curriculum and for teaching and learning: Mana Mokopuna; Mana Tangata; Mana Mātauranga; Mana Tikanga; Mana Reo; Mana Wairua; Mana-a-kura.

The outcomes of these areas were described in the graduate profile. A graduate:

- is a citizen for this world; is confident in her language, culture and identity
- puts service before self
- is humble
- takes risks to achieve excellence in all her endeavours
- is strong and proud of her whakapapa to Rotorua Girls High School
- is resilient, empathetic, respectful and acts with integrity
- honours mana wahine and mana wairua

Leaders and teachers deliberately embedded practices that provided opportunities for students to fulfil these outcomes that derived directly from the NZC.

Professional practice

“If we hadn’t had a change in pedagogy and relationships we wouldn’t have improved results.”

Principal, Waitakere College

Schools where the curriculum and assessment were most coherent showed evidence of leadership for learning at all levels of the school. Leaders of schools with a coherent curriculum had developed a high trust model of professional practice in the school. This model allowed for innovation, fast failure, collegial discussion and critique, and genuine reflection on teaching practice. Leaders encouraged and made use of expertise at all levels of the school.

Senior managers accessed and planned PLD targeted to the school’s vision and desired outcomes. They set and monitored clear expectations for teachers and offered timely and useful support. Leaders challenged teachers’ prior beliefs and supported them to deepen their understanding of the curriculum, and pedagogical and assessment practices that promote students’ learning. Appraisal systems, teacher inquiry and self-evaluation focused on students’ development of knowledge and competencies and on the needs of teachers to reflect on and improve the practice that contributed to such development.

Teachers’ working relationships were collegial and respectful. The high level of professional sharing evident in these schools contributed significantly to coherence in the curriculum.

“Teachers are generous with time with each other...share practice...high level of trust.”

Co-principal, Logan Park High School

Relationships for learning

A strong feature that led to coherence was the high quality of learning relationships between teachers and students, students and students, as well as teachers and teachers. Frequent contact with home and opportunities for useful conversations between teachers, students and parents about student progress and learning pathways were a feature of these schools. Community engagement effectively connected with students’ wider lives and engaged support from students’ families. Students confidently reviewed and discussed their own progress.

The following example shows how Logan Park High School developed a cohesive approach to curriculum coherence and students’ success.



The stated purpose of the curriculum, teaching and learning at Logan Park is to make sure: “our students acquire and develop the knowledge, skills, tools and values expected of a well-educated person and life-long learner.” The curriculum is based on the principles of Excellence, Creativity and Community, Heritage, Equity, Integrity and Environment.

The school’s approach to curriculum delivery is student centred, inclusive and flexible. It takes account of the diversity and richness of the school’s community. The development of the curriculum has been ongoing since 2007, and is under constant review.

Shared language and student agency are at the core of the school. Students have a say about their learning and the school. Student feedback about their classes is shared with teachers. Students, teachers and the community have discussed what is special about the school and have identified the values that drive the curriculum.

“NZC is aspirational. We are making it our own. We have grappled with the Key Competencies. We have lots of robust discussions about what success looks like.” Co-principal

Students said they want to be at school as social beings, to discuss, argue and develop their ideas and knowledge. The main aim in class was to teach students to think critically about what they learnt. Teachers planned courses with the express intention of covering more content than would be assessed, so that “learning becomes the focus”.

“We want our students to be open, thoughtful and to take risks. Students who trust their own thinking.” Senior leader

“...assessment becomes transparent but invisible, it is important but in the background.” Senior leader

In the senior school classes are not streamed, and there are no alternative classes. No NCEA credits are offered in Years 9 and 10. The school offers extension rather than acceleration, showing students and parents the depth of work students are capable of, given the opportunity. Reports on student dispositions and learning habits are sent home weekly and students are awarded a junior diploma that indicates their progress in key competencies. The criteria for this diploma have been refined over time to make the expected behaviours explicit and understood by all.

Heads of department meet frequently to share ideas and strategies for learning. Teachers have shared their understanding about inquiry, to put this into practice in a genuine way. Some teachers work together on inquiries based on student needs. They also collaborate in writing tasks for achievement standards used across subjects. Senior leaders compensated teachers for the extra time they put in by reducing their responsibilities in other areas.

“Teachers are amazingly generous with their time. They assist with assessment, sometime for students in other subjects.” Senior leader

"[There are] lots of emails and documents where students discuss their learning with teachers."

Senior leaders value the extra time given by teachers and look for ways to compensate staff with time "to do what is important."

Students who spoke to ERO recognised and applauded the school's values:

"Within my first day, after I came from another school, I learned about 'respectful, motivated, inclusive' [the school values]. All year levels are together and teachers talk to students without barriers."

"The vibe of the school is service to others."

"It can be scary not doing things for credits - what's the point? But now I'm excited about learning - I love it again."

"[Here] we fit NCEA into learning rather than fit learning into NCEA."

Students understand the purpose of the standard they will be assessed against. They use the language of standards and can choose those that are appropriate to their own pathways. Students have been able to cross-credit assignments in subjects such as English and media studies, history and music.

The school has achieved results in New Zealand Scholarship significantly above those of any other school in the region. Senior leaders attribute this success both to the way the school highlights the KCs and how it provides a curriculum that engages students in learning, and develops their capacity for self-motivated learning. Teachers offer tutorials on an opt-in basis for students who wish to attempt scholarship. There are no formal scholarship classes timetabled at junior or senior levels.

"School results prove that our approach works. We have no special scholarship classes...biggest number of scholarship in the province. We see the school values in scholarship: open, thoughtful, taking risks - students who trust their own thinking." Senior leader

Schools that have taken steps towards coherence

Some schools had taken steps towards fulfilling their vision of NZC as the curriculum, and NCEA as the assessment process, but they tended still to be NCEA led. ERO found elements of planning and practice these schools had in common with more successful schools, but other important characteristics were not evident. Coherence was not yet realised for a variety of reasons. These reasons included a lack of:

- integration of learning
- community agreement/understanding about the school's direction
- clear student pathways
- understanding of NCEA

Integration of learning

Some schools integrated content and achievement objectives from several learning areas, to provide more engaging and authentic learning activities. Teachers had started this in Years 9 and 10 and they wanted to move integration, including deliberate attention to key competencies, into Year 11 and beyond. They had carried out small trials of inter-subject planning to facilitate deeper learning at junior and senior levels. Some had developed ways to share teaching approaches and information about what worked for individual students.

In most cases, the school had not persisted with integrating learning areas beyond Year 10. In some schools, leaders and teachers were not sure how to proceed with building key competencies into the senior courses and relied on NCEA achievement standards to provide programme content, in conjunction with pastoral time to provide support for key competencies.

Leaders at some schools identified they would like to place more emphasis on integrated curriculum as a way to give greater weight to the requirements of NZC, but were concerned about community perceptions if they did not follow traditional subject choices. They had also not yet dealt with the reluctance of some teachers to reduce the content of their own subject, in order to plan learning based on achievement objectives from across learning areas.

Student pathways

Some schools did not make decisions in response to student choice and planned pathways. 'Banded' or 'streamed' classes meant students in the lower bands or streams often did not have access to the knowledge required for some senior and tertiary courses. This meant these courses were closed to them. In other schools, the timetable reduced students' options. This was in stark contrast to schools where timetable flexibility and teachers' solutions-focused approach catered for every student. A few schools saw [University Entrance](#) (UE) as the school-wide measure of success and expected students to take subjects in the senior school that led to UE. In one case, the school did not recognise [Vocational Pathways](#) as a valid direction for students, in the belief that attainment of UE was an appropriate target. This not only restricted student choice but also demonstrated a lack of understanding about how Vocational Pathways works.

Understanding about NCEA

In some schools, the focus on gaining excess NCEA credits limited opportunities to fulfil all the NZC requirements. Sometimes students themselves drove credit competition, in spite of the aim of leaders to reduce the numbers of credits available to them, and in spite of teachers' desire to implement deeper learning programmes. Leaders knew the progress they wanted to make in the school but were not clear, direct and relentless about the focus required to relate NZC and senior curriculum content. In addition, teachers in some schools were not confident about adapting learning tasks to meet the requirements of NCEA achievement standards.



Section Two

What did a coherent curriculum look like in practice?

The following commonalities were evident in schools where the senior curriculum was effectively addressing the requirements of NZC and NCEA:

- responsive curriculum
- authentic contexts for assessment
- providing a sound foundation for senior learning - Years 9 and 10
- sense of self and place - wellbeing
- empowering learners
- careers education and relevant pathways
- working with the community.

Responsive curriculum

The successful schools took steps to address the restraints of timetabling and resisted or confronted the potential impact on student learning of 'siloes' subjects. Students and teachers understood learning was the focus and although assessment was important, it did not drive the programme. Students were engaged in learning they were interested in and/or led to their chosen pathway. They had genuine choice about and within their courses.

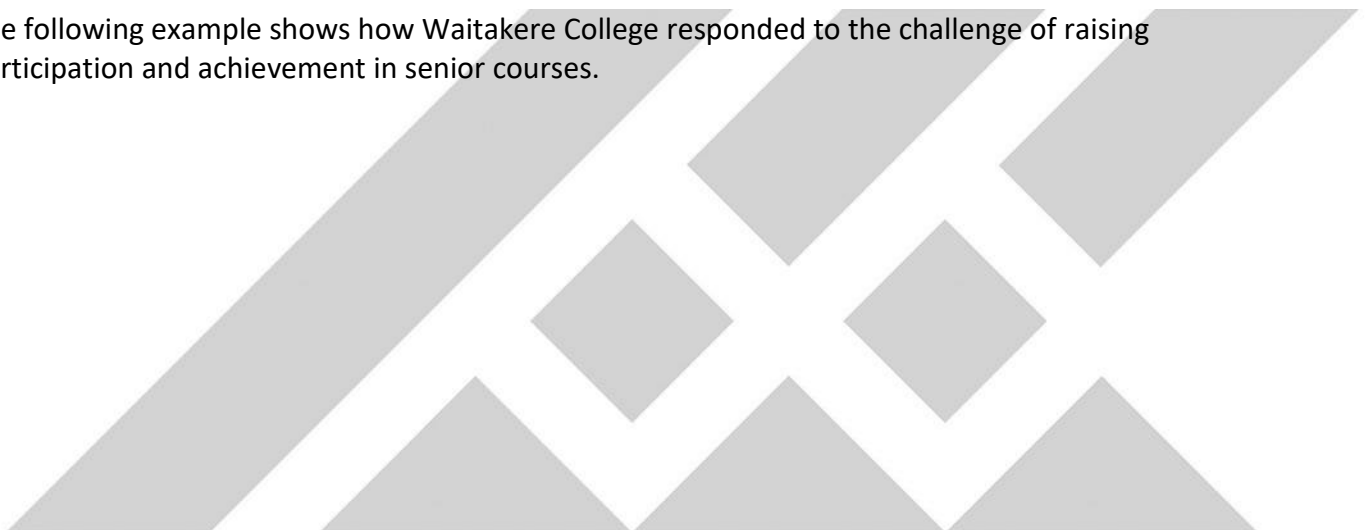
In these schools, a responsive and flexible timetable allowed students to access the course they needed. Teachers reviewed course content and pedagogy to respond to the students in front of them, rather than 'dropping' standards or excluding students from the subject of their choice. These schools did not require prerequisites (specified grades or levels of achievement) so that students had open entry into the senior subjects they wanted to study.

"School is here to serve the students. The system exists to help them move through society. Credits are for the school." Year 12 student, Logan Park High School

"Here they fit the NCEA into the learning rather than the learning into NCEA. If the kids are interested and engaged, they will get the results without counting the credits." Year 12 student, Logan Park High School

It is interesting to note that the schools visited by ERO had made varying decisions about senior programmes of study. In some cases, schools had trialled integrated programmes but this was not widespread. On the whole, senior subjects remained separate disciplines, with content and assessment that led to University Entrance.

The following example shows how Waitakere College responded to the challenge of raising participation and achievement in senior courses.



Serving the student-pathways

Staff at Waitakere College reviewed and improved senior courses that allowed students to keep their options open. Teachers were aware teenagers change their minds about their further learning or career, but wanted to enable this flexibility without students needing to 'drop' a subject. Mathematics, English and science classes were organised to give students the knowledge required, at the level required, to access further education in that discipline. The school had been active in responding to the Waitakere District Health Board initiative promoting health sciences as a pathway for Pacific and Māori students. Teachers addressed the perception that physics was a difficult subject by revising the content of courses and reviewing their approach to presenting the necessary content. The student-centred approach resulted in multiple physics classes in Year 12 where previously only one class existed, and a lift for this group of students in NCEA achievement at Year 11.

Teachers at Te Puke High School trialled a cross-subject class for students in Year 11.

Integrating subjects in the senior school

In 2017, two teachers at Te Puke High School trialled an approach where science and mathematics teaching was combined and students were assessed using standards from both subjects in one Year 11 class. Teachers planned together and determined who would take the lead in a particular aspect of the curriculum. When reviewing the approach the teachers found they had attempted to cover too much subject content. They had tried to include all the standards from each subject offered to other Year 11 students. The teachers concluded this approach provided a potential model for developing cross-curricular delivery in senior school.

In 2018, one of these teachers offered a course combining technology and science, where the assessment was contextualised to build on students' ideas and interests. The teacher interviewed students about their interests and passions and grouped them together to complete a major task matching their ideas. They and their teachers looked at the matrix of standards available and selected those relevant to the task the students had chosen. Students who spoke to ERO could explain why they had chosen specific standards from science, technology, history, legal studies and geography. Students also focused on self-management, entrepreneurialism and collaboration, which were competencies local businesses had identified as desirable.

Students explained: *"we were able to pick our own group and group task, then found the standards/credits that would fit. We understood what was in the standard. It was pretty much what we were doing in our activity."*

However, these students maintained they still wanted to learn things covered in other, traditional classes. *"But I like doing a maths class and English as it is important to get the credits."*

Timely and relevant assessment

Most schools understood the relationship between their curriculum and the competencies of the NZC. They took steps to integrate and deepen learning at senior levels, although this often occurred in academic counselling times when students discussed their progress with their tutors. Schools made serious efforts to apply assessment only at stages that suited the contexts for learning. Some schools successfully used standards across different areas of the curriculum: within subjects and across subjects.

This more innovative approach seemed to depend on the confidence and experience of teachers to understand the purpose of a standard and to be able to design tasks that showed students' skill and knowledge in an appropriate task. Not all teachers had such experience or confidence. Innovative approaches also depended on the understanding and support of NZQA moderators to confirm the validity of assessment tasks they were not familiar with.

"[As a system] we tried to stuff NCEA into subjects right from the beginning - now we risk stuffing it into integration. We need to revisit what NCEA was there for and the value given to key competencies."

Principal, Te Puke High School

The following example illustrates how the rūmaki at one school offered students learning and assessment in real-life contexts.

Using standards in authentic contexts

The rūmaki at Western Springs High School provided a model of how subjects could be integrated and how achievement standards could be used flexibly to support student learning and pathways. Students in the rūmaki followed a curriculum that located them in their environment. In Years 11 and 12, students took some classes in the wider school, outside the rūmaki. In Year 11, students predominantly took internal standards because they offer greater creativity, rather than "learning for exams [external standards]."

One teacher ERO spoke with was a specialist in science and Te Reo who supported Te Reo speakers acquiring specialist science knowledge and language (English) in the senior school. The teacher aims to have students transition confidently between Te Ao Māori and Te Ao Pākehā, and proceed to tertiary or employment with cultural intelligence and competency.

The teacher approached science from the Māori perspective, as a way to show relevance to the students and to locate their learning in their own culture. The teacher used the flexibility of NCEA in biology where students could relate it to their day-to-day living. They used local examples/context for the curriculum, including contemporary issues such as kauri dieback. Tasks to assess the standard were modified to suit the issue the students had pursued. Moderation of assessment was written in Māori and English.

Senior students undertaking science courses in the rūmaki were assessed using standards from disciplines other than science, such as English, philosophy and geography. Students were deliberately taught to fashion their work to meet the different requirements of each subject's standard. The teacher saw that presenting work in two or three different areas was not an issue. Students gained from the experience of understanding the conventions of different disciplines.

"They think about it differently and broaden their horizons." Teacher

Staff in the rūmaki established an active partnership with whānau. Family members attended the school to support students with their learning.

Sound foundation for senior learning - Years 9 and 10

In the schools where the senior curriculum was coherent, programmes in Years 9 and 10 included deliberate teaching of the skills, competencies and capabilities of the NZC. This was achieved in many cases through a collaborative approach to learning. Teachers planned together and included key competencies in their teaching. Some schools had integrated the curriculum at Years 9 and 10 and were attempting to move this integration into the senior school. They saw the potential and benefits for students in a programme that transferred knowledge and skills between learning areas. A few schools offered NCEA in Year 10 but the schools where the focus on NZC competencies was most evident had a policy of extending students' knowledge and learning experience rather than on accelerating their achievement of NCEA credits. These schools did not offer NCEA in the junior school.

Leaders provided teachers with release time to work together planning programmes and discussing the outcomes of this planning in relation to student achievement and progress. These meetings identified how well students were acquiring skills and competencies, rather than subject content.

Southland Girls High School had taken a unique approach to planning the junior curriculum as shown below.

Starting with the junior curriculum

Southland Girls' High School's curriculum review began in 2004, following a Ministry-led network review that changed the school's status to include Years 7 and 8 students. For senior leaders this was a "catalyst for wholesale change" to design the curriculum from Year 7 upwards to Year 10. It was important to reassure the community about twenty-first century learning possibilities for students in the newly established school. The most innovative aspect of the curriculum was the implementation of 'learning packages' at Years 7 and 8. These packages included achievement objectives to provide authentic learning. The packages covered a big idea or theme where skills and knowledge could transfer from subject to subject. The school extended this approach to Years 9 and 10 where students could choose their 'option subjects' and the levels of mathematics, science, and English, depending on their needs, interests and abilities.

One course students could select in Year 10 focused on global issues. Students told ERO they followed their own interests in this course and gained insights into issues around them and in the wider world. They enjoyed thinking widely about things that affected society.

"It definitely takes us to other areas of learning and furthers our knowledge."

"Teachers can then see that we are more confident learners." Students

A different approach to the junior curriculum, below, illustrates how a school integrated subjects to increase students' engagement and achievement in Years 9 and 10. Leaders wanted every student to have the necessary skills and capabilities to succeed in the senior school.

Integration for learning

At Te Puke High School, teachers designed an integrated curriculum to enable students in Years 9 and 10 to increase their engagement in learning, and to sustain the strategies for learning they had experienced in the contributing school. Leaders consulted teachers, students as well as teachers from the contributing school, and the wider business community.

Leaders planned the changes over several years, to take advantage of new learning spaces designed as part of a significant rebuild of the school. Well-considered planning prepared teachers and students for the new approach in an innovative environment. Some teachers found the change challenging. Leaders understood the urgent need to undertake good planning for the open learning spaces, and provided PLD to set the context for integrated learning with teachers.

Leaders gave teachers increased release time for collaborative planning, and encouraged teachers to think of the whole student and the whole school, beyond focusing only on their specialist subject.

A timetable change provided longer learning periods enabling teachers to give students a greater variety of activities and opportunities for deeper learning. Sixty to 70 students and their teachers worked together in each learning space. Teams of Years 9 and 10 teachers from English, mathematics, social studies, physical education and health and science were timetabled in the same line so that these subjects were taught in collaboration. Teams undertook evidence-based inquiry about the learning needs of their students to improve the attention given to each student's learning.

Assessment included student self-assessment that allowed for reflection on their wellbeing. NCEA assessment was not used in the junior school. Teachers saw the inclusion of key competencies as vital to the junior curriculum. One senior leader was continuing to build on and embed previous PLD about relational pedagogy. The intent was to inform improvements to the curriculum through research and extending culturally responsive pedagogy.

The approach of a teacher at another school shows how key competencies could be the focus of a programme to develop students' ability to manage their learning through contexts they were highly interested in.



A focus on competencies

At Amuri Area School, students' choices of learning contexts increased their engagement in learning. ERO observed a Year 10 social sciences class, where students chose the topics for study and the contexts they would focus on. The teacher's planning for the topics took account of the overall goals of the unit of study and the key competencies and capabilities students would focus on during the term's investigation.

The teacher displayed an outline of the year's programme, highlighting the overall goals and key competencies for each term, which students referred to. The focus on skills and capabilities constituted an important part of the assessments of students' achievements. The teacher determined which capabilities should be formally assessed and which could be completed as observations in class. The teacher encouraged students to see deeper connections between this subject and other learning areas.

Changing school structures

In many of the schools, systems helped teachers to support students' progress through school. Leaders had developed appropriate structures such as whānau/ako times, academic counselling and career education at all levels of the school. Typically, the traditional 15 minute form time had become a 30-35 minute period, several times a week, with a lower student-to-teacher ratio. In addition, teachers had undertaken PLD about how to make use of these extended times to understand and support each students' progress, achievement and wellbeing. Teachers knew students as learning and social individuals.

As well as longer times for academic counselling, these schools had introduced longer learning times. In the longer learning periods, teachers trialled and reviewed different approaches to make good use of this time. Students who spoke to ERO noticed the positive shift in teacher practice in these extended periods. The classes gave students more hands-on experience, and greater opportunity for discussion. It allowed more time for the teacher to work with individuals or groups of students. The following example shows how Wellington East Girls' College reworked the timetable and teacher planning to implement the revised junior curriculum. Leaders were strategically moving the new systems into the senior school.



Changing the school structures to allow for innovation in practice

In 2007, the newly appointed principal of Wellington East Girls' College, with senior leaders, began the revision of the curriculum. Having to demolish and replace school buildings to meet building codes for earthquakes was an unexpected challenge in 2011. This provided an opportunity to review teaching and learning in the school. Leaders identified strategic priorities to provide learning that was student centred, personalised, authentic, contextualised, involved students as active learners, and fostered student agency.

The school's timeline for full implementation of new teaching approaches started with students in Years 9 and 10. 'Hubs' were formed to enable multi-level, collaborative teaching. Teams of 'core' subject teachers planned together and worked to reinforce student learning, based on knowledge of student needs. Before starting collaborative teaching, subject teachers identified the essentials of their subject. These discussions determined which skills and competencies were most important and subject content was secondary. Teachers were then able to identify where skills and competencies could be foregrounded to students consistently, and transferred across the subject areas. Leaders then challenged teachers to employ this approach in their specialist subjects in the senior school.

Hub teachers discussed individual students' strengths, interests and needs across the subject areas. They began to talk about "our class". This developed a growing emphasis on the student at the centre and shared responsibility for students.

"We want teachers to be interested in 'who' as well as 'what.' We want to foster deeper learning, related to the real world. We need to know students as learners."

"The Hub is a lever. We had just done consultation, in 2007, and written the first strategic plan. We wanted to be less teacher focused, more authentic, use real-life settings, offer more choice and break down subject siloes. This gave enough room to consider special design and curriculum design." Principal

Students have considerable opportunities to follow their interests through the topic choices in hub classes and in later years. Students enthusiastically recalled opportunities they had to learn about social issues such as disadvantaged groups in New Zealand, and institutional racism and homelessness in the city. Shared internet sites and parent portals allowed teachers, students and parents to follow the progress of the class.

Early on, staff identified the timetable as one of the barriers to providing a modern curriculum. Longer learning times and changes in teaching approaches have resulted from these discussions. Students recognised how teaching improvements made learning more engaging for them.

"We've noticed the difference. All classes this year are engaged for the 90 minutes - more time to practise and to review. Lots of class is discussion based. A lot more collaboration - maths, more variety, making a video explaining a concept - we can look back later for exams. The teacher tries different ways to have us understand."

“There are no exams in Year 10. We eased into NCEA in Year 11. It isn’t a huge step up.”

Students

This approach was supported by the formation of ako (tutor) groups, which included deliberate attention to addressing the continuation of focus on key competencies into the senior school.

“The hubs and ako groups are designed to make each student visible to themselves and adults to know the student as a learner, all in the hub will work with you and your needs - teachers plan together over and over again, during the week. The aim of this is that all students will move into Years 11 and 12 with barriers to their learning [identified, addressed] and resolved, with the student and family, i.e. they will have equitable access to the senior school.”

Principal

Sense of self and place - wellbeing

An evident feature of the curriculum in schools that combined subject content with competencies was the approach the school took to supporting students to develop key competencies through their sense of belonging and connectedness. The junior programme (mostly Years 9 and 10) in these schools focused deliberately on students’ knowledge and perception about their own place in society, built a sense of belonging, and then moved outwards. A combination of strong social sciences programmes and the pastoral support offered by whānau or ako groups appealed to students and actively included attention to the values and competencies of NZC.

In several schools with a coherent senior curriculum the social sciences learning area connected students strongly to their own identity and to wider social issues. Students told ERO they valued this connection and encouragement to think deeply about issues affecting their lives and the lives of others. In senior years, the curriculum in some schools enabled students to focus their learning on the wider community and global issues. Teachers provided contexts for learning which allowed student choice. This approach heightened students’ sense of the relevance and importance of the curriculum and they valued the opportunities to discuss, argue and to learn from others. This approach clearly enacts the vision and values of the NZC.

An example from Wellington East Girls’ College illustrates the effectiveness of this approach. A class explored the experience of young women refugees in the school, involved the community in this learning, and produced a play based on these experiences. Students found this learning very engaging.

The way teachers in the Rūmaki at Western Springs focus the curriculum and student achievement on local, relevant topics successfully locates students as learners in their own environment and culture. Similarly, students at Rotorua Girls’ High School experience a curriculum that connects them to the qualities of their local role model, building their own sense of identity. Both examples are described in detail earlier in the report.

The senior English courses offered at Waitakere College mean students choose to learn in relevant, current contexts with which they identify.

Students enjoyed deep learning in authentic context. Changes in senior English arose from the head of department examining Year 10 students' reports and discussing their interests and preferences with them. This identified that boys, in particular, tended to receive positive comments more frequently in physical education and health. Subsequently the English teachers established a Sports/ English course to engage these students. The department offered other themed English courses according to students' interest. Year 10 teachers talked to their students about the English courses on offer, such as Pacific Voices, Digital English, Classical Literature, and Humanities English about social justice and social change. The Humanities English course was popular with students and linked to the school's vision of having "our graduates recognised as thinkers, contributors and participants in the local, national and global community." Classes were not streamed, as teachers differentiated their approach for the different abilities within the class. These changes, made in 2016, resulted in an increase of about 20 percent in overall achievement at Level 2.

At Years 9 and 10, the English course deliberately focused on making reading and English interesting and rewarding. Students were encouraged and expected to make decisions for themselves, and not rely on teachers. Courses did not mirror NCEA, instead they prepared students for future success by making sure students had the skills and dispositions to succeed.

Shirley Boys High School provides an example of making sure students have a sense of belonging at school. This has been a priority for the school.

A focus on wellbeing

Shirley Boys' High School vision outlines a commitment "to providing high quality learning that prepares each young man for their world." At the forefront of this vision is "The Shirley Man, the concept that requires learning to be at the centre of everything we do." This vision explicitly includes a focus on students developing the school's stated values of: curiosity and opportunity, personal resilience, improvement, positivity, the community, and Manākitanga. The idea of the Shirley Man had been in the school for some time. However, it had recently become the focus for a systematic curriculum development to highlight the qualities and competencies young men should acquire while at the school. Leaders considered aspects of the NZC such as "all round, confident, connected lifelong learner" and sought to look deeply at what that meant in practice for the school, for employers and for further study. The school's timetable was altered to provide an extended tutorial time to enable students to fully explore the features of the Shirley Man. A sequential programme was planned for the full year and was supported by PLD for teachers about building and measuring wellbeing.

Students learned to explore values, to develop relationships, set goals for their learning and receive career guidance and course counselling. The expectation was that these competencies were part of learning in the senior school, in classes and in the wider school curriculum. Students spoke about the benefit of older students passing on what they know about the school values to younger students in this house-based system.

*"Once you step into Shirley Boys' you are not just in a school. You are in a brotherhood."
"Building relationships is the most important aspect of the school." Students*

Empowering learners

Schools where the curriculum most effectively demonstrated coherence in the senior school supported students to reflect on their own learning and their developing competencies. The students had opportunity to reflect on teaching practices and schools systems. In some cases, the school made good use of these reflections: responses and information gathered from students were acted on by teachers to improve their delivery and to improve aspects of the school. Students were able to contribute to course planning, to their own progress and pathways and, in some cases, to designing their own assessments, because they knew what was expected and were encouraged to have a say in decisions affecting them.

ERO found students in some schools understood the NCEA standards well. They were familiar with the purpose of the standard and, with support from their teachers, could vary the assessment tasks they completed to match their direction and interests. In these cases, students benefited from the flexibility of NCEA. This guided approach to managing their pathway, assessment and credits meant students were more likely to value their learning and understood assessment could be applied in a variety of contexts.

Effective academic counselling /ako programmes clearly added to the sense students had of being in partnership with teachers about their own learning. Students spoke to ERO about how they valued these interactions with their teachers.

The following examples show how different schools engaged students in their own learning.

Students tracking their own progress

Teachers at Southland Girls' High School identified the need to establish whether a student had made a year's worth of progress in a year. As a result, leaders and teachers put a plan in place to more accurately support students to know how they were achieving and progressing. Each learning area took responsibility for identifying what would be a measurement of a year's progress at each level. In some subject areas, such as languages, this involved considerable effort to identify suitable, valid measures of progress. The languages department staff worked together to identify and describe progressions for speaking, listening, reading and writing in each of the languages taught at the school. They designed a framework of indicators students used to reflect on their progress and in discussion with their teachers to set future learning goals. This promoted self-management.

The process of working out indicators of progress has changed over time in some learning areas as teachers improve their skills in identifying the knowledge and skills required to show a year's progress.

Empowering learners

Albany Senior High School aims to nurture, inspire, and empower students through relationships, responsibility and respect. A distinctive feature of the school that remained a central component of the curriculum is the **impact project** where students design their own projects. The **impact project** was timetabled for Wednesday so a whole day could be devoted to the project. Some students identified Wednesday as the most important day because they could follow their own interests into projects well outside their usual courses.

Every project had a designated mentor (teacher) and experts from the community could work with students in specialist areas. Four principles guided the impact project development:

- student ownership and agency
- substantial learning beyond the classroom
- quality product
- participating and contributing with the community.

For each principle, teachers developed rubrics to show student progress towards the planned outcome, for both the quality of the project, and the skills developed.

Students did not enter for NCEA credits in their projects, with the exception of a small number of students who chose Gateway on Wednesday to pursue their interest in a pathway, without disrupting their specialist subjects. Teachers and students considered not using NCEA assessment allowed for creativity in the impact projects. Some students ERO spoke with felt credit-driven in their specialist subjects and did not want this in their impact projects.

A key element of the school's commitment to students developing their self-management for ongoing learning was evident in the school's tutorial programme.

Tutorials

At Albany High School considerable time was given to tutorials that enable students to develop a learning relationship with a significant adult who also built a relationship with the student's family. Tutorials arose from the need for a school-wide approach to catering for each student. Leaders identified that some students arrived in the school with pre-conceived ideas of themselves as a failing learner. Tutors generally mentored their group of 15 to 18 students from the time they arrived at the school until they left. Where possible a teacher from each faculty took a tutor group in each of the physical spaces so students could consult them about their work.

The timetable provided 200 minutes in the week when tutors and students could have "conversations that matter about learning." Over time, the tutorial had developed specific structures and milestones to underpin what happened during this time. Discussions covered planning, goal setting, and choosing the right subject so the student had an academic map/plan in place. This was an opportunity for teachers and students to develop and share language about learning.

Set tutorial requirements were followed to check each students' progress throughout the year, review learning goals, and report to parents. The tutor also liaised with students' specialist subject teachers to build a rounded picture of each individual, over time.

The way a teacher at Rotorua Girls' High School designed the course and arranged assessment shows how flexibility is possible when students understand the standards.

Reviewing programmes in response to students' needs

At Rotorua Girls' High School, a teacher successfully took account of students' experiences when reviewing and improving a senior course. Recently, the teacher in charge of art and technology realised students who were taking more than one subject in the learning area were burdened with completing several portfolios in Term 4. She subsequently undertook an inquiry to identify ways to adjust her approach to solve the pressure point for students. The solution was to organise the completion of design assignments earlier in the year and to assess the work, using standards appropriate to the student's interests and direction. The teacher was familiar with standards that could be applied as assessment at different levels and for different tasks.

The design course started with skills, which were tracked, then later, student progress was tracked against the task and the standards selected for that student. This tracking meant the teacher knew who needed more support and what skills they could develop and be assessed against.

"We don't do one standard at a time. We do a project that brings in all the standards into one final task. This means the project provides deeper learning. In the first term the learning is all about the skills and not assessment. Having students do one project that matches their interests and strengths, and encompassed 20 credits in one task meant the leader monitoring students credits had to trust that I didn't have credits coming in all through Terms 1 and 2 but we would succeed by the end of Term 3. It also meant students then had more time to work on other art or photography portfolios they were trying to complete."

Teacher

The design course was open entry, so the teacher had to differentiate the programme to accommodate this. Students could refer to video clips the teacher had recorded to learn and practise specific tasks, at their own speed. This meant some students could catch up and others could extend their learning.

Careers education for relevant pathways

An important feature of the success in providing a coherent curriculum in these schools was the status and importance given to careers education. Careers knowledge, competencies and career advice were seen as powerful components of course planning and of ensuring successful outcomes for students at senior levels. The career curriculum in these schools was embedded in the timetable from Years 9 to 13, with students' development of competencies monitored over that time. These schools, and students and parents, saw the connection between the careers programme and NZC competencies. Careers teachers were included in leadership meetings about curriculum and were able to share their knowledge of individual student pathways and aspirations to groups that made decisions about school systems, structures and pedagogy.

These schools also took responsibility for ensuring students could access relevant pathways beyond secondary school.

The example below shows how Amuri Area School successfully provided relevant pathways and skills through working with the community.

Amuri Area School made curriculum changes in response to increased student retention at senior levels, and to increase engagement of students from Year 10. The senior curriculum combined school-based, online and real-life, contextual learning for students. These ways of learning increased student self-motivation.

As part of the recent curriculum development, the school values were identified and rubrics developed to outline “what it looks like, sounds like, and feels like” when the values were lived. The rubrics were linked to key competencies. Students used a self-evaluation tool to track their own progress in developing school values, as the starting point for discussions about their goals.

The school had an innovative approach to providing learning experiences for students who were not following a pathway to university. The career teachers had established a longstanding arrangement with Ara Polytechnic allowing students ready access, from Year 11, to relevant courses. The school timetable was revised to provide long blocks of time for learning, and to allow students to be out of the school without jeopardising their other subjects. Students had employment opportunities in the community, with local industries. The school worked hard to provide relevant opportunities in a small, rural community.

“We are breaking down the exterior walls of the school.” Careers teacher

Albany Senior High School’s career programme shows the positive impact its approach had on student progress.

Senior students took on significant leadership roles supporting younger students to understand possible career pathways at Albany Senior High School. Year 13 students were trained by the head of the careers department as associate tutors to provide career guidance to students in Year 11. These student leaders were observed and mentored by the tutor teacher. Careers staff identified that the younger students were highly engaged during the career education facilitated by their older peers. The practice also helped Year 13 students to deepen their knowledge of career pathways.



This example from Waitakere College illustrates the importance of a sound careers programme.

Senior students at Waitakere College were very well supported to make informed decisions about their courses. The Vocational Pathways department now includes careers and Gateway staff, as well as staff from various academies. This ensured students, parents and teachers were familiar with the processes to support decisions about course selection and applied them consistently. Careers programmes were taught at every year level and the staff were in frequent contact with leaders of learning areas about curriculum decisions. When students went for guidance about pathways, they could speak to anyone in the department and receive well-informed advice. These teachers also carried out interviews with each Year 11 student and their families as part of their Year 12 course selection processes. During these interviews, staff worked with the student and their family to back map from the student's aspirations to develop course possibilities and goals for subsequent years.

Each student participating in a Vocational Pathways course had an independent programme designed to respond to their strengths and interests monitored by the department. A broker interviewed students, their teachers and prospective employers to match the student to the best employment opportunity. "What does the student need to be successful?" This resulted in high levels of credibility in the community about the readiness of students to have employment experience. The Vocational Pathways staff worked closely with the nearby polytechnic to review teaching approaches for younger students and to help students adjust to requirements at tertiary level. The department successfully sought additional funding to help students post-school, in the belief that finding "funds from so many pockets" was not the child's concern.

Working with the community

Aotea College offers an example of how the school built relationships with its community to improve coherence.

Building community collaboration

The appointment of a new principal and provision of new buildings provided the catalyst for curriculum development at Aotea College. The principal's initial priority was to establish close relationships with the local iwi, Ngāti Toa, and with other educational institutions in the Porirua area. Listening to the concerns of iwi about education then moving to action as a result of this consultation helped the college improve cooperation and collaboration across the secondary schools, as well as with iwi, Te Wananga and local polytechnics. School goals and direction are now aligned to the Ngāti Toa education strategy. The school's curriculum leaders and teachers reviewed their department's vision and purpose and aligned these with the school's charter.

At the same time, the school developed a locally based curriculum, connecting students with parts of their community they are not always familiar with. This provided authentic learning contexts and also enables a more seamless transition for students into tertiary study as they become more familiar with institutions and learning in real-life contexts. Senior students are accessing learning in local tourism at NCEA Levels 3 and 4, health science with links to the local School of Nursing and carpentry at NCEA level 2.

Forensic Science is offered in Year 9 and this course makes use of the college's close proximity to the Police College.

The community and teachers contributed to decisions about the design of learning spaces. In preparing for the new learning spaces, the leaders carefully considered the types of spaces needed to achieve the desired learning and teaching outcomes and this informed the design brief. Leaders worked with the whole staff to design learning for new Hui Ako/whānau classes, based on the principles, values and key competencies of the NZC. Consultation with local iwi representatives from the beginning of the design process helped with decisions about how the NZC should be enacted in the school, and in naming the newly established whānau groups.

The college is a relatively young college (40 years) and is part of a very young city – Porirua city (50 years). The curriculum provides an opportunity to deepen the connection between young people and the values, people and history of their community.



Section Three

Issues and concerns about NCEA

ERO visited these 12 schools because they were identified as having made NZC more visible at senior levels of the school. While not all schools had made as much progress at senior levels as others, these schools have worked to integrate the values and principles of the NZC in their school curriculum. Several school leaders reported the challenges they experienced in implementing the NZC with the NCEA. Some schools did not mention some of the issues.

Knowledge about NCEA requirements

Communication between the Ministry, NZQA and teachers appeared to be an issue for teachers in many of the schools. This had led to variable understanding about the principles and implementation of standards-based assessment. Some teachers were familiar with standards and confident about moderation procedures. Others were not confident about implementing NCEA assessment.

Writing assessment tasks

ERO noted a range of experiences and attitudes to writing assessment tasks. Some teachers used only [Te Kete Ipurangi](#), NZQA, or commercial exemplars because they were not sufficiently confident to produce their own tasks. Several teachers spoke to ERO about wanting to use one task for standards from different subjects but were unsure about how to do that. In some cases, teachers focused on tasks without showing understanding of intent of the standard.

Teachers raised the difficulties faced by some teachers, who are the only teacher of a subject in a school or who work in a remote area of the country, to increase their knowledge or gain confidence in setting and marking tasks.

Teachers with confidence in their knowledge of the subject specific standards and in task writing tended to choose from a wider variety of standards to complement their curriculum.

Moderation

The apparent differences between NZQA's intent and teachers' understanding and experiences of NCEA raised concerns about the effectiveness of communication between the two groups. In different schools and in different regions, teachers expressed frustration with moderation practices. They were concerned they received little or no information about why a task did not meet the standard or level required. They:

- wanted to use moderator feedback as part of their inquiry - but the feedback had insufficient detail
- perceived that responses from moderators were inconsistent from year to year in relation to the same task
- perceived the moderator was familiar with tasks from exemplars but not new tasks designed by the school and consequently less inclined to accept new tasks
- challenged requirement for students to use subject-specialist language to achieve a standard, as this encouraged teaching to the standard, as opposed to students being able to demonstrate their knowledge in their own words
- were already concerned about the assessment requirements and moderation procedures for the new Digital Technologies & Hangarau Matihiko curriculum.

NZQA priorities

Teachers in several schools commented on the apparent shift in focus outlined at [Principal's Nominee seminars](#): schools had worked towards online assessment, and were then told the focus now was on the STEM target for Māori and Pacific students. They were concerned that Māori and Pacific students were already committed to courses, so the timeframe for reaching the target set was unreasonable. An added frustration was the reduction of online options for assessment.

Support and PLD

Teachers who are new to their subject and/or work in remote schools do not feel supported to understand the standards or write suitable assessment tasks in their subject areas. They are concerned such support is left to subject associations or the initiative of teachers in some regions, with the result that teachers' knowledge and practice are variable.

Some teachers reported that some of NZQA's Best Practice workshops, including online workshops, had been cancelled in their region. Teachers who were involved in or who wanted to consider cross-subject teaching could not access support for writing relevant tasks.

Standards not fitting the achievement objective or front of the NZC

Some teachers raised concern that moderation of assessment in specific subjects now required reference to specific contexts and this prevented their use of local contexts for learning.

Standards and credits - influencing decisions

Some students and their parents made decisions based on credit value, rather than the relevance of the content of the subject, that is, they looked at performance rather than learning. In some cases, students selected external standards because they offered most credits. They were motivated to gain high numbers of endorsements.

Students' approach to gaining credits and how they perceived their value varied. A few students expressed the view that internals were 'easy' and they had gathered a high number of credits without feeling their course had been a valid pathway. Others said it was inequitable that some students had gained endorsements from 'easy' credits.

In spite of the attempts by senior leaders in most of the schools to limit the numbers of standards/credits gained by senior students, ERO found some incidents of 'credit creep', where teachers felt they should offer more than the minimum and/or students felt they should achieve a higher number than required for each level of NCEA.

Teachers also expressed the concern that some students may not be learning essential features of a subject because they do not attempt externals; that the learning is not valued for itself but rather for the credits that were available.

Some teachers thought the marking schedules were not available for scrutiny and voiced the concern that standards were being scaled by means of the marking schedules. This is clearly not the intention of NCEA and highlights the need for improved communication with teachers.

Parents learning the system from their child

Although all the schools held parent information evenings, there was concern parents were receiving information about NCEA, particularly about the number of credits and endorsements, from their child, which might contribute to credit-gathering. Parental and community knowledge of what NCEA was designed to achieve and what constituted success was a frequently identified concern in these schools.

University requirements-backwash right to Year 9

Some schools identified that the requirements at Level 3 and UE, set by universities, was having an effect on curriculum development and course selection as far back as Year 10. While schools were prepared to back map from Level 3 and possibly UE to inform pathway planning and students' course decisions, they were not convinced that universities should have such a strong influence on their curriculum. Examples raised included that, for UE, students needed to have 14+ credits in three subjects. Currently, it is possible to aggregate only maths, science, technology standards to count as one domain for the purposes of the 14 credit requirement, whereas the logical combination for a health science pathway of social science and biology does not count.

Schools also raised the issue of university-specific scholarships that motivated students to achieve particular standards and levels in NCEA because of the sums of money involved rather than to follow their own learning pathway.

"Weird pressures come on students to decide what university gives what scholarship...drives credit acquisition. Universities need to catch up."

SLT member, Logan Park High School

Subject senior curriculum guides not up to date

Teachers commented that teaching and learning guides for subjects are outdated. They recognised the potential of these documents as useful resources in planning curriculum and wanted to receive up-to-date guidance.

Unintended consequences

Several principals and teachers commented on the effect on student progress and achievement of the Better Public Service target, 2012-2017, for 85 percent of 18 year olds to have attained NCEA Level 2, by 2017. Schools responded to the requirement to reach this target in a variety of ways, such as:

- identifying groups of students who were at risk of not achieving NCEA for extra support
- monitoring student achievement of credits
- revising courses to make Level 2 more accessible.

These interventions resulted, in many cases, in lifting achievement of NCEA Level 2. In the best cases, they also improved teachers' knowledge about individual student needs, interests and aspirations. The result in some schools, however, was that the balance of curriculum and achievement was tilted towards achievement, with less regard for meaningful student pathways and for development of key competencies.

Limiting credits - wellbeing

Each of these schools had taken steps to manage the workload of students and of teacher with regard to numbers of assessments and credits. There remains, however, a justifiable concern that each school is alone in making such decisions and there were risks in being seen to diminish the rigour of assessment if the school could not report high rates of success in credit numbers and endorsements. Schools universally agreed there is too much assessment for students in their senior years. There was no clear conclusion from the schools about whether removing Level 1 would be a useful solution. Several schools suggested that credit numbers at each level should be revised.

Schools were looking for national leadership about the time needed to educate and assure the community about any changes, at a system level, rather than school by school, and not leaving the responsibility to fall on any one school to justify their decisions. Schools were concerned such decisions, that benefited individual students, risked negative judgments about the school.

Cost in money and time for curriculum and PLD

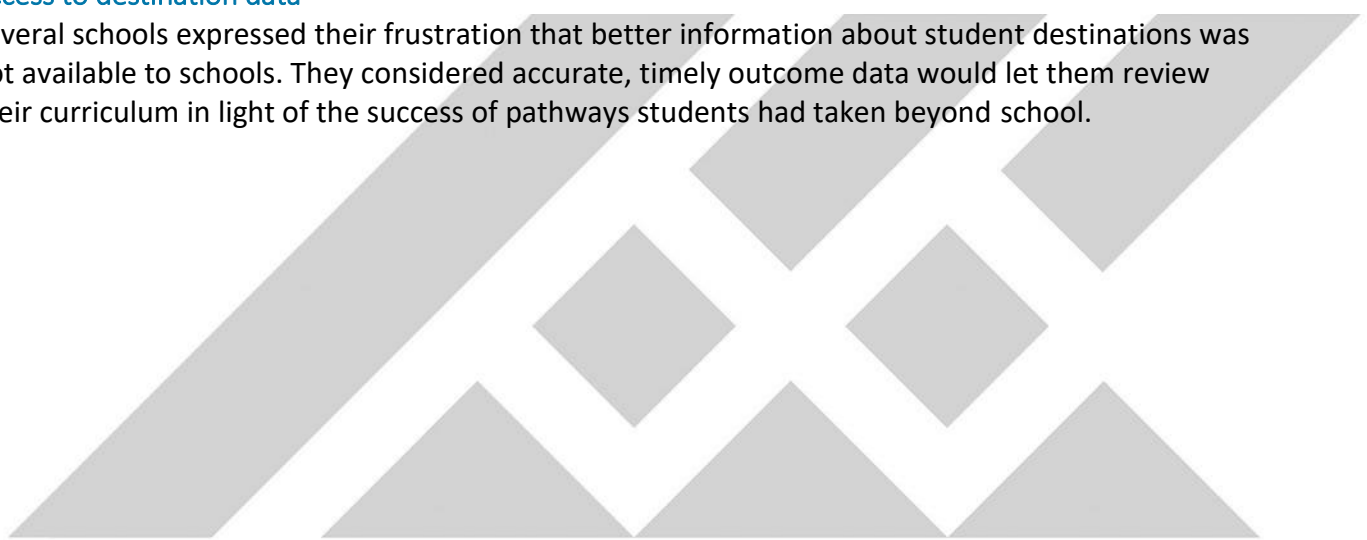
These schools had given considerable thought and time to developing their curriculum to implement the NZC so they challenged and supported students to develop the key competencies. Their approach arose from the determination to provide student-centred curriculum, based on the principles of NZC.

Schools were concerned about the extent to which they had to seek out PLD to support this implementation. Schools had sent staff overseas and to other schools, and purchased commercial PLD programmes, all at considerable cost. Allowing time for teachers to meet was important but a cost to staffing. Teachers needed time to discuss initiatives: what they had tried, what they had learnt, and what to do next to improve their pedagogy.

Hosting other schools who wanted to understand what they had done was equally consuming of time and professional attention. Schools questioned the appropriateness and efficacy of PLD that they agreed was important, such as improving the progress of priority groups, or targets related to the Community of Learning, but wanted this PLD set in the context of their school-wide priorities. For example, schools wanted PLD on how to make the best use of innovative learning areas and integrating learning. This was particularly the case where new learning spaces were being designed.

Access to destination data

Several schools expressed their frustration that better information about student destinations was not available to schools. They considered accurate, timely outcome data would let them review their curriculum in light of the success of pathways students had taken beyond school.



Conclusion

This report indicates how successful secondary schools in this sample have been in designing a coherent senior curriculum. It also identifies difficulties faced by schools as they attempted to provide coherence. Evidence from this evaluation shows it is possible for schools to provide a coherent, flexible and inclusive senior curriculum for their students that supports them to progress towards broader outcomes that amount to deeper learning. In these schools, leaders and teachers understood the benefits to individual students and to wider society of deliberately addressing the principles, values and competencies of the NZC, along with purposeful assessment. They built relationships with parents, whānau and community that focused on learning. School leaders and teachers reviewed and revised their practice in response to student needs and interests. They focused on the key competencies in the curriculum, in the belief they shared responsibility for the development of the whole student. These schools showed significant progress could be and has been made in response to concerns about NCEA-led curriculum, credit gathering, and the relevance of pathways. Previous ERO reports identify these concerns.

Not all the schools we studied were successful in implementing NZC in the senior curriculum. The most successful approaches were evident when the vision was clear and leaders managed frequent and responsive communication amongst teachers, students and parents to support student learning and progress in a broad sense. Some schools had clearly integrated key competencies in the junior school but were less successful in achieving this outcome at the senior level. In other schools, assessment prevailed as the driver of the senior curriculum, and credit acquisition had become the marker of success.

The findings indicate most schools reviewed and improved school systems to better focus on supporting students to choose relevant and challenging pathways and to understand standards for assessment. Career and academic guidance assisted students to reflect on the trajectory of their own learning. In some schools, the system changes did not extend to teachers reviewing and improving their practice. Most of the schools studied need to place a greater emphasis on student agency, linking systems and teaching practice to the principles of NZC.

Schools expressed the sense of doing it alone when it came to achieving coherence in the senior curriculum. They expressed a desire for better public understanding about the NZC and NCEA, nationally, and for sound professional guidance for leaders and teachers who plan and implement the school's senior curriculum and subsequent assessment.

Most schools were struggling to find reliable ways to define, note and report on the competencies students developed as they moved through senior school. They were confronting the challenge of describing and recognising success in a way that genuinely shows both the progress and achievement of students. A broader definition and indicators of success are needed to help build a picture of the young person as a learner and as a social being to inform the community about successful outcomes of secondary schooling.

Schools wanted some decisions to be made at a national level, rather than left to individual schools. This included decisions about the value of three levels of NCEA and guidance about numbers of credits.

They were convinced about the need to improve support for teachers writing assessment tasks for an integrated curriculum and for individual subjects; for consistent moderation practice across regions; for PLD to give teachers confidence about both curriculum planning and assessment practice; and support to deliver a coherent curriculum, implement the NZC and use assessment appropriately.

The NZC outlines aspirations for young people in Aotearoa New Zealand. It is evident that some schools can achieve a balance through a coherent curriculum as they address these aspirations. The findings and recommendations in this report provide a basis for future consideration of how the balance of NZC and NCEA assessment in secondary schools can be achieved.

Recommendations

ERO recommends schools:

- review and improve how well their school's vision and values align with the NZC and are implemented in practice
- review and improve how well the principles, values, and key competencies from NZC are addressed in their senior curriculum
- review and improve the balance between monitoring students' achievement and improving teaching to make sure all students are engaged and succeeding
- reduce barriers that limit students' access to courses they need to succeed in their chosen career pathways, such as streaming and restrictive timetabling
- ensure careers education and advice are at the forefront of curriculum planning and contribute to responsive pathways for students
- ensure students have ready access to careers education and advice.

ERO recommends the Ministry of Education:

- update Senior Curriculum Guidelines
- support teachers to understand the intent of the standards and to write assessment tasks that highlight their students' learning
- develop ways to help schools and communities understand success as a learner in terms of deep learning, wellbeing and qualifications
- review its processes for PLD provision to extend beyond target student groups and Communities of Learning to provide centralised support to raise teacher capability in implementation of the NZC and promoting learning in Innovative Learning Environments
- work with universities to reduce the negative impacts of their demands on secondary schools' curriculum
- ensure teachers and students quickly know and understand the standards for assessment of the new Digital Technologies & Hangarau Matihiko Curriculum
- review how well standards reflect the NZC Achievement Objectives.

ERO recommends NZQA:

- support moderators' confidence with new types of assessment tasks across multiple standards.

Provocations for the future

This report describes current practice in the schools visited and evaluates the extent to which the schools provided a coherent senior curriculum. The findings have implications for the wider review of NCEA and future planning. These implications for further consideration in the review relate to:

- developing ways to help schools and communities understand and value success as a learner in terms of deep learning, wellbeing as well as qualifications
- the need for KCs to be included within the curriculum, achievement standard assessment in relevant contexts, not in isolation from learning contexts
- whether there should be compulsory foundational learning in Years 9 and 10 to build learners' capacity and confidence preparing them for senior study
- further consideration of how to spread the practice identified in successful schools, where learning was the focus and assessment embedded in a coherent programme
- the need to increase support from the across the sector (subject associations, Ministry, NZQA) and for this support to be coherent and consistent
- how to manage the unintended negative consequences that UE and scholarships offered can have on pathway choices
- addressing the effect of high-stakes assessment when this works against developing a coherent curriculum and how KCs can be included
- whether to set an absolute limit on credits attempted or gained at each NCEA level
- whether NCEA assessment should be avoided in Years 9 and 10 as it detracts from the coherent learning programme development and has a flow on effect to subsequent years.

It is important to note that school leaders expressed the wish for national leadership in these matters.



Appendix 1: Comparative terms used in this report

The following table shows what we mean in the report when, for example we refer to MOST schools we mean 10 of the total 12 visited.

TERMS USED	PERCENTAGE	NUMBER OF SCHOOLS
All	100%	12
Almost all	91% – 99%	11
Most	75% – 90%	10
Majority /Generally/Many	50% – 74%	6-9
Minority/Less than half/Some	15% – 49%	3-6
A few	less than 15%	1-2

Adapted from Education Scotland



Appendix 2: What ERO knows about curriculum design in secondary schools

ERO has reviewed schools' implementation of *The New Zealand Curriculum* (NZC) since the draft curriculum was released to schools. In all the evaluations, considerable variability was identified in leaders' and teachers' focus and implementation of the curriculum.

Preparing to implement NZC

In 2009, ERO found over half of the secondary schools reviewed were well underway with preparations to implement the NZC. In these schools, teachers and curriculum leaders were engaged in ongoing review of departmental documentation to align the school's curriculum to the NZC framework. They focused particularly on learning areas, cross-curricular links, and integrating key competencies.

In the other secondary schools, limited understanding and a lack of ownership of the direction their schools were taking meant some teachers had opted out of development processes. Gaining the commitment of the entire teaching staff was a challenge where pockets of apathy and resistance to curriculum change remained. In other instances, leaders did not know the extent to which teachers were starting to align their practice with NZC. In some cases, leaders had not consulted with teachers about the school's vision and values and consequently perceived these as imposed on them. A lack of commitment led to an inconsistent quality of teaching evident in schools nationwide.

Curriculum principles

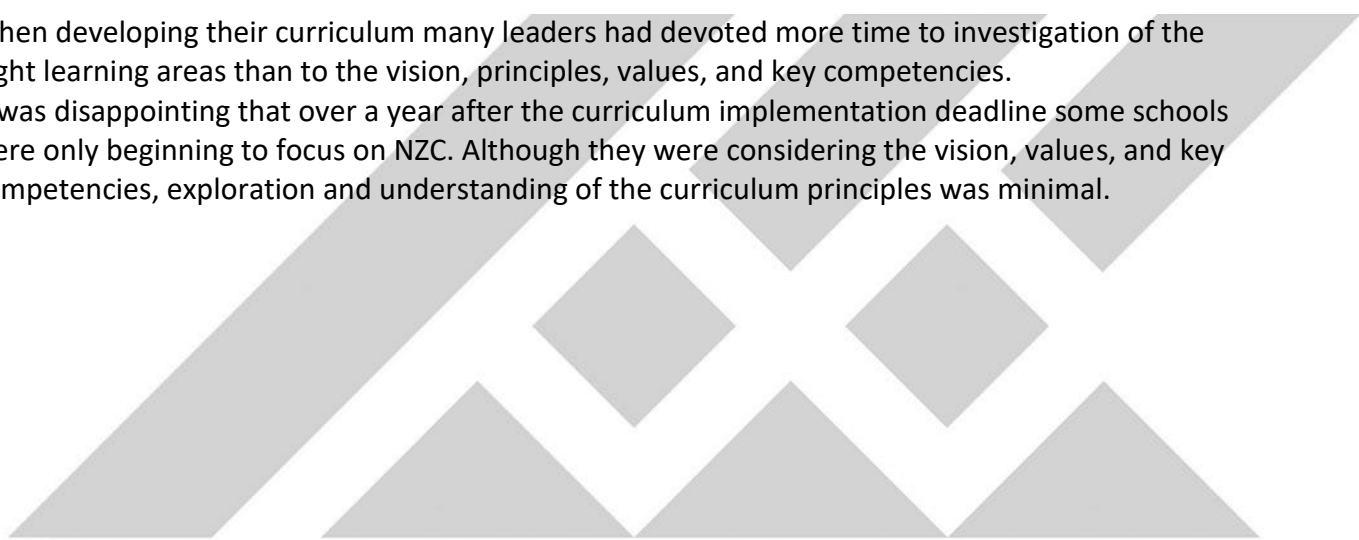
Later, in 2011 and 2012, when ERO focused on how schools were engaging with the principles outlined in NZC, variability of implementation continued. Where the principles were highly evident, they were described in teaching and learning guidelines and/or in schools' charters and mission statements. In a small number of schools, a clear alignment between the charter, NZC, teaching and learning guidelines, performance appraisal and PLD was evident.

In many secondary schools the vision, principles, values, and key competencies were treated as an integrated 'package' that created a coherent approach to curriculum development. The key competencies, or the vision and values were given greater priority than the curriculum principles. The relatively lesser focus on principles in curriculum development processes related to schools' perceptions that:

- their existing values served as a useful proxy for the principles and therefore no further work was required to develop the principles separately
- the principles were taken for granted in the curriculum and required little further exploration or unpacking.

When developing their curriculum many leaders had devoted more time to investigation of the eight learning areas than to the vision, principles, values, and key competencies.

It was disappointing that over a year after the curriculum implementation deadline some schools were only beginning to focus on NZC. Although they were considering the vision, values, and key competencies, exploration and understanding of the curriculum principles was minimal.



Pathways for students

In 2013, ERO investigated how well 74 secondary schools prepared their students for future education, training and employment. Ten schools were identified as having a school curriculum that was effective for a large majority of the students enrolled. These schools had processes and practices that encouraged the individualisation of student pathways through an extensive range of vocational and academic options. Senior students had a variety of academic, careers and pastoral systems that worked together to support them. Individual course and school-wide initiatives encouraged students to develop leadership and self-management skills. Purposeful partnerships with others in the community also fostered student learning and development.

The remaining schools were less innovative in responding to each student and did not consistently target their individual strengths, needs and interests. Few examples of curriculum innovation for academic learning programmes were found. Schools usually opted for traditional subject disciplines that operated in year-long courses. Few schools attempted to develop academic courses that spanned two or more curriculum areas.

The reasons for such low levels of innovation included challenges in the traditional departmental structure in secondary schools that encouraged a continuation of conventional subject disciplines. These structures made it difficult to develop the sort of inter-disciplinary learning and assessment promoted in the New Zealand Curriculum. The perception in some of the schools was that many parents and students had an expectation that subject disciplines, along with formal summative assessment tasks, are necessary for an academic programme. Another perception was that curriculum innovation, which breaks away from traditional subject silos and teaching approaches, was seen as inferior to academic education.

One of the noticeable trends across the schools in 2013 was the prevalence of vocational programmes. Gateway, Youth Guarantee, work experience and other school and polytechnic linked programmes diversified what was offered in secondary schools to enable many more students to succeed. However, some schools saw vocational programmes as a way to increase qualifications for Māori and Pacific students, particular for the boys. While many students experience the benefits of these vocational courses, very few schools were developing academic courses specifically to increase the numbers of Māori and Pacific students who are able to enter university. Teachers in some schools needed to raise the expectations for these students to make sure their curriculum and systems enabled all Māori and Pacific students to achieve to their potential.

Increasing achievement

During 2013 and 2014, ERO reported on secondary schools' focus on increasing the numbers of students achieving NCEA. Schools had implemented a variety of targeted interventions to support a target cohort of Year 12 students. Close tracking and monitoring of individual students was central to schools identifying and responding to the needs of their students.

Although the developments focused on NCEA gains, rather than on the implementation of NZC, some new practices aligned with aspects of NZC. Most of the schools developed their relationships with their target cohorts by providing a mentor or support teacher who closely monitored student progress. Staff in these mentor roles were more likely to use a 'problem-solving' approach with students, rather than a critical or punitive manner. From this basis, staff concentrated on helping students to develop positive attitudes and raise their expectations for achievement.

However, in 2014 when ERO took a broader approach to how secondary schools responded to achievement data, only a quarter of schools in the sample had effectively inquired into achievement information and introduced changes that had made a noticeable difference to student success. The changes made by these schools were mostly based around improvements to their pastoral care and support initiatives. There was less emphasis placed on developing innovations in the curriculum. While some of these schools had effective and/or innovative curriculum initiatives in place, the curriculum modifications most of these schools made were relatively minor.

Students' wellbeing

In 2015, ERO reported on the wellbeing of students in secondary school, recognising that wellbeing is central to their success as confident lifelong learners. Approximately a sixth of the schools sampled were well placed to promote and respond to student wellbeing through cohesive systems aligned with their school's values. A further half of the schools had elements of good practice that could be built on and the remaining schools had a range of major challenges that affected the way they promoted and responded to student wellbeing.

In schools that were well placed to promote and respond to student wellbeing, principals had systems to ensure school values, curriculum and responses to wellbeing issues were designed in consultation with the school community. Leaders in many of these schools gave teachers and students opportunities to discuss and develop a shared understanding of the schools' values. Students were clear about the importance of the values to the quality of their school experiences.

In other schools, teachers did not always have the same beliefs about what the values meant. Their curriculum or care issues and systems often did not match the expressed values. Some students knew the values, but did not consistently experience them. In a few schools, teachers and leaders were unsure what the school values were and so did not know how to promote and embed them.

Some schools were exploring ways they could deliberately support the development and use of the key competencies across learning areas and through academic counselling. One way was by stating explicit key competencies in the planning and reporting for each learning area. However, not all of these schools had aligned key competencies across learning areas, so again it was left to students to make sense of the different messages.

ERO found many students experienced an assessment driven curriculum, which caused them much stress and anxiety. Only a few schools recognised this and were responding to the detrimental effect on student wellbeing, especially in Years 11 to 13. In one school, traumatic incidents for individual students due to assessment anxiety led to a review of school culture and how teachers could reflect desired aspects of wellbeing.

ERO identified students would benefit from more teachers and leaders asking them about their experiences and involving them in decisions about the quality of their school life. Even though schools sought 'student voice', its meaning varied from school to school. In some schools, it meant only gathering student views through surveys or focus groups while in other schools it meant setting up structures for students to participate in school decision making. The difference depended on how well the school promoted student leadership and students being in charge of their learning.

The focus on Years 9 and 10

ERO also investigated schools' approaches for engaging students in Years 9 to 11. About a third of schools used a wide variety of effective curriculum and pastoral initiatives to support student engagement. These schools demonstrated effective teaching, supportive guidance structures and inclusive school cultures. Relationships were good between staff and students and the school communicated well with parents and whānau. The leadership and staff demonstrated high levels of commitment to meeting individual student needs and a flexible approach in supporting each student so they could stay at school and succeed. The NZC was being strongly enacted for students in Years 9 and 10 in these schools.

ERO identified several areas for development to improve the other schools' engagement of students that included focusing on the inconsistent quality of teaching; student truancy; student engagement in classrooms and increasing student voice in school-wide and classroom programmes.

Careers Information, Advice, Guidance and Education (CIAGE)

ERO's evaluations of secondary schooling indicate that student success is more likely when curriculum, pastoral and careers systems work together. ERO evaluated the approach of 44 secondary schools to CIAGE, and found four schools with high quality approaches to CIAGE. Their innovative school-wide approaches focused on helping students identify, plan and strive for their aspirations for the future. CIAGE was a central component of both curriculum and pastoral systems. The school-wide focus on student futures at these schools meant that students were motivated to achieve their goals and had frequent opportunities in the curriculum to develop self-awareness, reflect on their goals, explore options and develop career management competencies.

The remaining schools in this evaluation had a more conventional approach to careers that centred on the work of a careers department. While staff understood the need for students to develop career management competencies, this was not a top priority for the school. Students did not have the same day-to-day opportunities to consider their personal developmental and vocational goals, or opportunities to develop career management competencies.

Conclusion

These ERO reviews identify that many secondary schools have work to do to fully focus on the aspirations of the NZC as outlined at the front of NZC document. Generally, too many schools have concentrated almost solely on the learning areas, without much emphasis on the NZC vision, values, key competencies and principles.



ERO publications used in this report

ERO (2009). *Readiness to Implement The New Zealand Curriculum*. Wellington: Education Review Office.

ERO (2011). *Directions for Learning: The New Zealand Curriculum Principles and Teaching as Inquiry*. Wellington: Education Review Office.

ERO (2011). *Alternative Education: Schools and Providers*. Wellington: Education Review Office.

ERO (2012). *The New Zealand Curriculum Principles: Foundations for Curriculum Decision-Making*. Wellington: Education Review Office.

ERO (2012). *Literacy and Mathematics in Years 9 and 10; Using Achievement Information to Promote Success*. Wellington: Education Review Office.

ERO (2012). *Careers Information, Advice, Guidance and Education (CIAGE) in Secondary Schools*. Wellington: Education Review Office.

ERO (2013). *Secondary Schools: Pathways for Future Education, Training and Employment*. Wellington: Education Review Office.

ERO (2013). *Increasing Educational Achievement in Secondary Schools*. Wellington: Education Review Office.

ERO (2014). *Raising Achievement in Secondary Schools*. Wellington: Education Review Office.

ERO (2015). *Wellbeing for Young People's Success at Secondary School*. Wellington: Education Review Office.



Appendix 3: ERO’s evaluation framework

ERO invited 12 schools to contribute to this report following consultation with the Ministry and regional ERO offices. This consultation identified schools that reference *The New Zealand Curriculum*. The schools referred to the NZC in curriculum outlines on their websites and in school prospectus information.

The schools were selected because they had made clear connections between the curriculum and the key competencies of NZC in their school documentation.

Two evaluators visited the schools to discuss the vision, programmes, planning and outcomes for students with senior and middle leaders, teachers and students. The evaluators also considered school documentation of systems and self-evaluation. They evaluated the successes and challenges identified in the selected secondary schools in relation to their use of NZC and NCEA to design senior programmes, and considered how senior courses provided opportunities for students to engage in deep curriculum and conceptual learning across subjects.

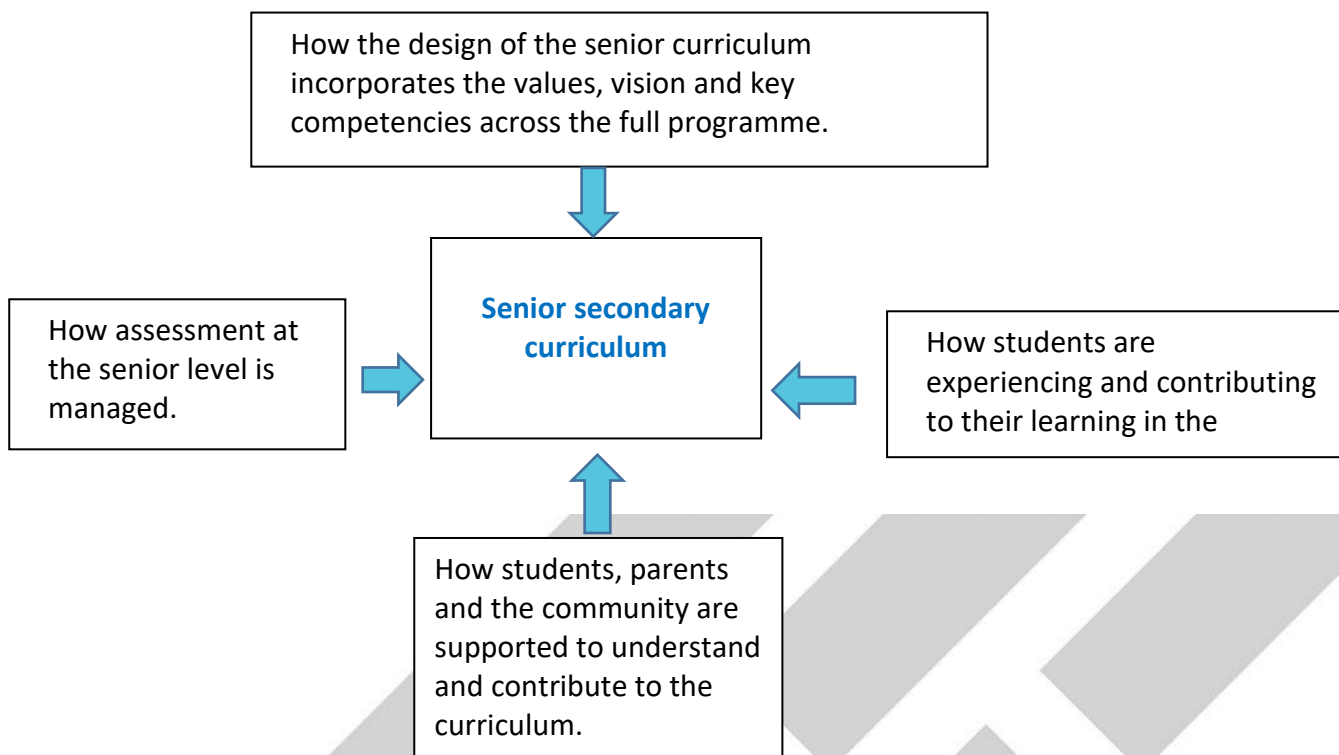
Evaluation framework and evaluation prompts

The evaluation addressed the following overall evaluation question:

Framework for on-site discussion:

The evaluation drew on indicators of effective practice from all six domains outlined in the [School Evaluation Indicators: Effective Practice for improvement and Learner Success](#).

The investigation focused on the following four aspects:



The following questions were used to prompt relevant, detailed and useful information about the school's policy and practice, with an emphasis on **'why', 'what' and 'how'** decisions were made, systems put in place to support the curriculum, and how the school would continue to develop its curriculum.

Questions/prompts for leaders

- Tell us about the rationale behind changes and decision you have made at senior course levels.
- Tell us about the features of your school's curriculum and how these work for your students and community.
- Tell us how you went about developing and implementing the current curriculum.
- How have you involved the students and community in the development and implementation of your curriculum?
- What successes and challenges have you experienced during the development implementation of the curriculum?
- How do you manage ongoing review and development of your curriculum?
- What do you know about how well the curriculum is benefitting students?
- What future possibilities are there for your curriculum design and implementation?

Questions/prompt for teachers

- What is your understanding of this school's senior curriculum-how it relates to the school's vision and strategic direction?
- How were you involved in the development of the curriculum?

Question for career teacher/s

- How does the career advice and guidance programme in your school contribute to:
 - course planning, particularly at senior levels of the school, and
 - guidance for individual students about their learning pathway, at school and beyond?

Questions/prompts for students

- Tell us how you chose your school courses and your experience of assessment and the senior curriculum.

