



Working with National Standards:
Good Practice →

June 2012

Foreword

The whakatauki of the Education Review Office (ERO) demonstrates the importance we place on the educational achievement of our children and young people:

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

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

ERO has released a series of reports about the National Standards since their introduction in 2010. This latest report focuses on eight schools that are working well with the standards. Common to all eight is their commitment and collective response to working with the standards. Leaders, teachers, trustees, parents and whanau all have a role to play in the implementation and ongoing use of National Standards.

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



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Chief Review Officer
June 2012

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Overview

This report is part of a series of national evaluation reports ERO is publishing over three years about the implementation of the National Standards in English-medium schools with students in Years 1 to 8.

The eight schools selected for this good practice report were reviewed during Terms 1 to 3, 2011 and were among those considered to be working well with the National Standards. ERO revisited the schools in Term 4, 2011 specifically to explore the schools' practices within the context of their school curriculum and community.

These examples of good practice highlight a clear commitment to working with the National Standards paired with school cultures that are proactive and focus on initiating change. Almost all of these schools started working with the standards early on in the introduction of the National Standards. The schools focused strongly on enhancing good assessment and reporting systems already in place. School leaders looked ahead to identify potential problems. They communicated with their school community about possible changes in reported student achievement, and developed strategic and deliberate implementation plans.

Leaders in almost all of these schools understood the need to frame the National Standards within *The New Zealand Curriculum*. They helped staff fully understand all the concepts outlined in the illustrations of the standards, rather than just fitting nationally-normed results into them. Teacher and board of trustees' understanding of the standards was developed through high quality professional learning and development (PLD) – both internal and external – as well as support and advice from professional networks.

The schools in this report identified areas of their current practice to be reviewed and/or closely monitored to ensure consistent application of the standards. New processes and practices were trialled, and school leaders were conscious of teacher workload. If new processes were developed then these replaced existing processes rather than being additional. School leaders used staff meetings, teacher-only days and classroom release time wisely. They developed new templates and processes with teachers. Smaller schools in this study selectively used available resources rather than develop their own.

The comprehensive use of these processes and templates ensured trustees were well informed about student achievement and progress. Trustees asked informed and knowledgeable questions about reporting and goals. This meant they could effectively use information from overall teacher judgements (OTJs) to set targets, allocate resources, and monitor progress against those targets.

The schools had systems in place to help teachers make consistent OTJs across the school that reflected their shared understanding of the standards. School leaders expected and encouraged teachers to discuss their OTJs with each other. Identifying inaccurate judgements was not seen as a failure on the teacher's part. Moderation at various levels – class, syndicate, leadership team, and cluster – contributed to the strength of OTJs.

Teachers were aware of the school's targets. Some had syndicate and classroom level targets that supported the school-wide targets. This practice highlights the need for teachers to be aware of, and involved in, in-depth analyses of student achievement information. Teaching

was focused and deliberate, and teachers understood what their students' next steps for learning were to progress against the National Standards. Teachers were accepting of their shared responsibility for students' learning and progress. Discussions with students, parents and whānau focused on improving students' progress, particularly that of target students. Students at these schools felt they were well supported to make progress. They were aware of their next steps through goal setting.

The schools had developed or enhanced comprehensive systems to report to parents and whānau. Teachers talked to parents about what they would do for their child, as well as reporting on achievement and progress. This tended to be mostly informal but at times was also done formally.

School personnel at these schools recognised they still have things to improve when working with the standards. They see it is a continual process of trialling and refining. A culture of ongoing improvement supports this process. Many identified next steps focused on these schools continuing to build their knowledge and understanding of the standards. They also aim to continue a strong focus on consistency of OTJs and accelerating student progress.

Introduction

The National Standards came into effect in 2010 for English-medium schools with Years 1 to 8 students. They describe the achievement that will enable all students to achieve success across *The New Zealand Curriculum* and have been designed so a student who meets them is on track to succeed at National Certificates of Educational Achievement (NCEA) Level 2.

In the publication, *National Standards Information for Schools*,¹ the Ministry of Education stated:

In this first year of implementation, schools will:

- *help students understand the standards and their goals in relation to them*
- *assess students' progress and achievement in relation to the standards, using a range of assessment methods*
- *ensure that students understand their progress and achievement and what the next steps are in their learning*
- *provide at least two plain-language reports to parents, family and whānau about their child's progress in relation to the standards*
- *support parents, family, and whānau to understand the process and format of reporting and how they can work with schools to support their child's progress.*

The National Administration Guidelines (NAGs) require schools to report to parents and students progress and achievement in relation to National Standards. From February 2010, schools have been required to report to parents in writing and in plain language, at least twice a year, about how their child is progressing and achieving in relation to the reading, writing, and mathematics standards. The focus of the mid-year report is expected to be on progress towards meeting the standards, with the end-of-year report to summarise individual students' progress and achievement in relation to the standards.

Schools were expected to set targets in their 2011 charters that would enable them to report in their 2012 annual report on:²

- the numbers and proportions of students at, above, below or well below the standards, including Māori, Pasifika and by gender (where this does not breach an individual's privacy)
- how students are progressing against the standards as well as how they are achieving.

This report provides good practice examples of how selected schools implemented National Standards. The eight schools included in this report were selected from those reviewed during the 2011 National Standards evaluation. These schools were identified as working well with the National Standards.

¹ See: <http://nzcurriculum.tki.org.nz/National-Standards/Key-information/Information-for-schools>.

² National Administration Guideline 2A (c).

Methodology

During Terms 1 to 3, 2011 ERO undertook a national evaluation that focused on how well schools were working with the National Standards to promote students' progress and achievement. The eight schools selected for this good practice report were reviewed as part of this evaluation and were among those considered to be working well with the National Standards. ERO revisited the schools in Term 4, 2011 specifically to explore the schools' practices within the context of their school community.

The following questions guided this evaluation:

1. In what ways is the board working with the National Standards?
2. In what ways are school leaders working with the National Standards?
3. In what ways are teachers working with the National Standards?
4. In what ways are parents and whānau involved in and supporting their child's learning in relation to the National Standards?
5. In what ways are students involved in and understanding their learning in relation to the National Standards?
6. What are the next steps for the school to improve how they work with the National Standards as part of their curriculum and associated assessment?
7. What advice would you give other schools about working with the National Standards?

Each example provides some information about the size of the school and the students enrolled. ERO uses the following descriptors for roll size:

- Very small (0-30 primary, 0-100 secondary)
- Small (31-100 primary, 101-400 secondary)
- Medium (101-300 primary, 401-800 secondary)
- Large (301-500 primary, 801-1500 secondary)
- Very large (501+ primary, 1501+ secondary).

Findings

The following are eight examples of schools working well with the National Standards. All of these schools took a positive approach to the standards, started developing their understanding and implementation of the standards early, and built this implementation on good assessment practices. Direct quotes from trustees, school leaders, teachers and students are included in italics.

School A

Context

School A is a medium-sized school with students in Years 1 to 8. At the time of the ERO review, a fifth of students identified as Māori. Few staff changes have helped teachers generate a shared understanding of the National Standards through a managed approach to whole-staff curriculum development. A change management strategy began with PLD for school leaders and teachers in 2009. This helped them develop an overarching awareness of the standards. The development and information sharing process involved teachers, trustees and parents.

School leaders were instrumental in familiarising teachers with the National Standards. Subsequent staff meetings, sometimes including external advisers, provided further opportunities for discussion to clarify teachers' ideas about the standards. Every one attending external PLD shared their learning with their colleagues. The school used a cluster group it was already working with as the starting point for ongoing development and moderation of the National Standards.

Teachers and leaders particularly focused on building on existing practice. They used a range of resources, such as *The Literacy Learning Progressions*³, to connect with the National Standards. They also reviewed their school assessment guidelines and expectations:

“At the beginning of 2010 we looked at the indicators we were using to see what matched the National Standards and where they didn't match, and we adjusted them.” (Leadership Team)

Trustees also attended information sessions about the National Standards given by the Ministry of Education (Ministry) providers, and academics. The principal disseminated professional readings to the trustees. There was considerable board discussion about how best to work with the National Standards.

“We wanted to meet the needs of the children and our community and do everything possible to support the teachers. There is always open and honest debate at our meetings.” (Board Chairperson)

Parents received information from the school about the National Standards in newsletters and at an information evening, which included teachers modelling mathematics teaching strategies.

³ Ministry of Education. (2010). *The Literacy Learning Progressions*. Wellington: Author.

The board of trustees working with the National Standards

Reporting in relation to the National Standards has clarified learning needs across the school for particular groups of students. School staff report achievement trends for boys and girls, Māori and Pacific students to the board. Trustees manage the process so individual students' achievement and progress is not identified.

Trustees use reports presented by lead teachers to decide about resourcing and to review its impact on student achievement and progress. Mid-year reports to the board enable trustees to ascertain progress to date, and end-of-year reports inform decisions about annual targets, PLD and resourcing for the following year. When reports are presented trustees ask pertinent questions. They know how and what to ask. The board has a generous teacher PLD budget to respond to recommendations that are part of each report about students' achievement.

School leaders working with the National Standards

School leaders had already developed a culture where teachers confidently shared and discussed learning and achievement and actively inquired into their teaching. Teachers reflected on barriers to students making progress and on the impact of their teaching. Since the introduction of National Standards, team meetings are more focused on professional matters and use a teaching as inquiry approach. School leaders refer to the National Standards as a planning and assessment tool that sits within the curriculum.

“We identify early on those students not at the standard and set a deliberate action plan/pathway. We always did moderation but realised we needed to look at the standard and develop shared understandings about the level of expectation required.” (Leadership Team)

School leaders and teachers celebrate improved student achievement. In Term 4 there is a celebratory staff meeting where the teachers recognise improved student progress and achievement. Recognising where results have improved helps them to sustain their focus and encourages them to do better.

School leaders decide about which assessment tools will be used school-wide. Leaders guide teachers and support their confidence in making OTJs. A cyclic system of review and discussion about making judgements helps build teachers' confidence.

School leaders attend all PLD sessions thus demonstrating that all staff are learning together. Teachers from the leadership team are regularly in classrooms talking with students and discussing their work. A collaborative focused approach is evident.

“We adopt an approach that combines the best of what we do with the National Standards. We show teachers that we trust them. National Standards have made us focus on quality and has made teaching very specific to each student's needs.” (Leadership Team)

Teachers working with the National Standards

This school's moderation process is strong at team, school-wide and cluster levels. Teachers had specific PLD about moderating judgements. This has enabled them to work together to develop a shared understanding about the expectations for each year level. Moderation at team level involves intense scrutiny and discussion of student work. School-level moderation

helps inform teachers about what achievement looks like at each level of the school. Cluster moderation meetings, involving some teachers from each of the schools, are well established and regular. Teachers have turns attending these meetings. They say their involvement at all levels of moderation has increased their confidence and knowledge.

“Our expectations have lifted and we make levels explicit for kids.”

Each term, syndicate leaders work with the teachers in their team to produce a summary of analysed test results along with the next teaching steps. Lead teachers present these summary reports to the board throughout the year, which contribute to ongoing self review. In addition, each teacher identifies students achieving below the standard in their classroom. These target groups of students become an ongoing focus for the year. Throughout the year each student’s progress is monitored and discussed in syndicates. The process of using data to identify needs, determine teaching strategies, and monitor progress is included in the teacher’s appraisal. Teachers acknowledge that good teaching practice for the target group results in progress for all students.

Parents and whānau involved in and contributing to the National Standards

Parents receive reports on their child’s progress and achievement at parent/teacher/student meetings. Report formats are consistent across the school. All teachers use the same grid to document achievement against the standards for each student. Supporting evidence is shared through annotated samples of work and test results. These discussions focus on current learning, progress and next steps. Parents say teachers are very open to discussing the National Standards and answering their questions at these meetings.

Responses to surveys show parents have a good understanding of their child’s progress and achievement from the school’s reporting process. They are aware that teachers make an OTJ from multiple sources. The goal setting process is well established and parents know their child’s goals, what they are working to improve, and how they can help at home.

The introduction of e-portfolios has helped students and parents to access assessment information at home and enter their own comments.

Students involved in and contributing to the National Standards

Students understand that the National Standards are about improvement and knowing whether they are achieving at the expected level. They know how teachers make these judgements. Students in Years 7 and 8 feel that it is important for them to know how they are going in preparation for secondary school and they understand which standard they are aiming for.

“You’re at the expected standard but you need to work on.... The teacher does this regularly and discusses our results when we have conferences. At mid-year I may have been below but now I’m nearly at the standard. (Student)”

Students talk confidently about their progress in particular curriculum areas, learning goals and next steps. They have charts or tracking sheets in their exercise books to help them monitor their own progress. Teachers and students work together so students are fully involved in understanding their learning needs. In writing, students are involved in decisions

about ‘best fit levels’ for writing samples. This process includes student self assessment against success indicators.

Next steps

ERO asked groups in the school what they had identified as their next steps for working with the National Standards. They identified the following:

Board: The board’s next step is to monitor the impacts of resourcing, the provision of PLD and teachers’ use of target-group teaching through student achievement reports to the board. Trustees aim to keep the National Standards to the forefront when they consider ‘where to next’.

Leaders: School leaders plan to continue to build everyone’s knowledge of the standards. This includes continuing to develop their curriculum through self review. Another area of focus for school leaders is to further develop students’ knowledge of their own progress and achievement, and foster and support their decision making about next steps.

“National Standards are part of the curriculum and we are keeping positive and continuing to source meaningful relevant high quality PLD.” (Leadership Team)

Teachers: Teachers also emphasise the importance of ongoing PLD. They know that further work with moderation is important, especially in mathematics and reading.

Parents: Parents are keen for reports to parents to be developed further to show progress over time, particularly if their child is working towards one of the standards.

Advice

ERO also asked groups in the school what advice they had for other schools.

Trustees, school leaders, teachers and parents all said that whatever they do it is all about the children. Any decisions they make in relation to the National Standards relate to outcomes for students. School leaders talked about the importance of being open and challenging each other’s thinking.

“Open debate is important. We want trustees to highlight and ask searching questions.” (Leadership Team)

Board:

“The quality of reporting to the board is important. It should include analysis and recommendations and should be presented by the person responsible for gathering the information. Formats of reports over time should be similar to help trustees’ understanding of the data. Sending copies of the report to trustees in advance of the meeting is helpful and assists the efficiency and decision making during the meeting.” (Board Chairperson)

Leaders:

School leaders emphasised that advice and support is necessary. They find online resources helpful, such as the Ministry of Education's Te Kete Ipurangi (TKI) website⁴. School leaders are aware of teacher workload, and they aim to do one thing at a time and do it well.

"Keep asking the experts, the right people and other schools, those you trust and each other. Let teachers have input along the way." (Leadership Team)

Teachers:

Teachers are fully involved in making decisions about curriculum development and the National Standards' implementation.

"There's been a lot of work in curriculum development that's led us to where we are now. We've done the work so we own it. Be prepared to trial things and put them aside if they don't work. We constantly revise what's working and what's not. Pedagogical knowledge is important." (Teacher)

Teachers emphasised the need to use information communication technologies (ICT) to document progress and achievement. They recommend using an online facility for planning cooperatively, so teachers can work together easily at any time, as well as having a student management system (SMS) that is user-friendly and internet-based so teachers can easily access it from different locations. Teachers emphasised the importance of trialled school-wide systems and templates for tracking progress and recording information. They say these make it easier and provide consistency for use and reporting to others.

To assist teacher workload they recommend using classroom release time wisely and collaboratively.

"We might have an hour every second week and we use that time for testing or meeting with another teacher." (Teacher)

They also highlighted the advantage of decisions about which assessment tools to use being made at a school-wide level. This means choices have been made about needs at all levels of the school.

"There's no unnecessary assessment. It's purposeful and well used." (Teacher)

⁴ <http://nzcurriculum.tki.org.nz/National-Standards>

School B

Context

School B is a low decile, sole charge full primary school with a very small roll. All families have been, or are currently, board members. Trustees' knowledge of the National Standards is parents' knowledge.

The board of trustees working with the National Standards

The board's knowledge of the National Standards was mostly gained through a managed approach to information sharing facilitated by the principal. Trustees found visual material from a range of sources, and opportunities to discuss their understanding, very helpful. Internet broadband is not available to all families so trustees met at the school for webinars.

"Webinars contributed to some decisions we made such as designing a new cycle for reporting to the board and to parents." (Principal)

Trustees read and discuss the principal's reports on achievement and ask questions about student progress and next steps.

"As trustees we get on well, we're friends and talk to each other about our children. We don't talk about individual children at our board meetings, although we may recognise them within the report." (Trustee)

Resources required to move students forward are included in budgets.

"If a child isn't at the standard, the school needs to get them there." (Trustee)

Trustees say they can clearly see the progress students are making because of this resourcing.

The principal/teacher working with the National Standards

The principal has adopted a straightforward approach to implementing the National Standards. PLD involved working with the Ministry of Education and the local schools' cluster on several occasions.

After the introduction, the principal 'tackled' one thing at a time and used the *Education Gazette* articles, for example, the 'At the Standard-What Does it Mean?' series.⁵

"The board and I talked about one article at each meeting. I used an example of a student's level to show what 'best fit' means. We continued with training over a two year period. We used the MOE [Ministry of Education] overview charts to see the links and how children might fit within the standards."
(Principal)

⁵ <http://www.edgazette.govt.nz/Articles/Article.aspx?ArticleId=8198>,
<http://www.edgazette.govt.nz/Articles/Article.aspx?ArticleId=8213>,
<http://www.edgazette.govt.nz/Articles/Article.aspx?ArticleId=8183>.

The current assessment schedule was developed from an existing document, modified in 2010 and 2011. The review of assessment focused on making sure the process was manageable. At the end of the year, the principal uses a one page grid for each curriculum area to report school-wide achievement against the standards to the board. An explanation is written at the side. Feedback from trustees shows they like these grid-type reports with achievement and progress clearly compared to expectations.

In 2010, the principal, principal's release teacher, and a teacher from another school formed the moderation team for the school. Writing was also moderated across the local cluster of five schools. They worked in groups representing results for junior, middle and senior students. The principal and teachers recognised an increasing confidence in making judgements as they were similar to what the team decided together. The cluster is continuing to focus on writing in 2012.

A different cluster that the school belongs to is focusing on mathematics:

"We are up to collecting data across the cluster, analysing the results and getting ready for discussion. Maths came about from the district principals' meeting to discuss needs. We did asTTle⁶ testing, and then MOE resource people helped with PLD and focusing on that area. It is our common link. Maths is also one of our annual targets." (Principal)

Parents and whānau involved in the National Standards

The process of sharing information with parents began with each family receiving copies of the National Standards booklets written for parents. In this school, helping the board to understand the standards occurred at the same time as the reporting to parents' process.

"Information had to be clear and easily understood. We talked about the content of the National Standards at parent interviews and at board meetings. How Well is my Child Doing is a helpful pamphlet. I've tried to give my board information from all sectors – New Zealand Education Institute (NZEI), from the Ministry and a spread of different opinions." (Principal)

The principal downloaded the suggested report forms from the Ministry's website, and then chose and modified one to suit. The reports are written in language parents relate to. Parents know about their children's progress and achievement from informal discussion, written reports, children's portfolios, and parent-teacher-child interviews. During the interview there is opportunity to talk about the report format.

"I really like it. As a parent it has to be clear and simple. Something that's easy to see quickly." (Parent)

"At the interview we talk about how we can help at home. I talk to the teacher at other times when something crops up." (Parent)

⁶ Assessment Tools for Teaching and Learning (asTTle) gives teachers good information about their students' achievement and progress in reading, writing and mathematics. The tool is specially designed for New Zealand students from Year 4 to Year 12, including those learning in Māori-medium.

The children's goals are clearly displayed in the classroom. Parents help students to revisit their goals when the portfolios are sent home. There is plenty of time for discussion, setting new goals and celebrating when goals are achieved.

Students involved in and contributing to the National Standards

The principal sets goals with each student at the beginning of the year. These goals are in relation to the National Standards and the key competencies in *The New Zealand Curriculum*.⁷ Goals are highly visible as they are displayed on the wall and change as students' needs change. Charts displayed with expectations and exemplars help students decide on their goals. At the end of 2010, once the students' reports were written, the principal discussed the content with each student. Students will be writing their own progress reports in 2011.

"I try to involve the children. Their knowledge builds up over the years. I tell students to be specific. Think about your goal and what you have improved. It's important to find resources that are helpful. I've used charts and The Literacy Learning Progressions with students." (Principal)

Students talk confidently about evidence of their progress: from goal setting, their class work, and assessment folders kept by the teacher. While students couldn't necessarily talk about their exact achievement against the National Standard in every curriculum area, they could show it on a National Standards indicator chart.

"I self assess myself and set goals, I talk to my parents about how I'm doing and then we talk together with my teacher. My parents like this type of reporting." (Student)

When reporting to parents, the principal and students look at where each student is at the start of the year, their progress and whether they have attained their goals. In Term 2, students present evidence to their parents about their progress with their goals set from achievement at the end of the previous year. This reporting and sampling continues through the year.

Next steps

ERO asked the principal what they had identified as their next steps for working with the National Standards. The principal identified the following:

Principal: To use new information, as it is published, about aligning current and new assessment with the National Standards.

Advice

ERO also asked groups in the school what advice they had for other schools.

Trustee: Trust, sound relationships and a willingness to talk things through are important. Asking the principal questions and taking time to build knowledge is essential.

⁷ Ministry of Education, (2007). *The New Zealand Curriculum for English-medium teaching and learning in years 1-13*. Wellington: Learning Media Limited.

Principal: Use the information published from the Ministry and other sources to educate parents and the board. Add to their knowledge through discussion at interviews. *“It’s an opportunity to inform, not to press your own case.”* Be transparent in setting achievement targets. Give trustees and parents as much information as possible and keep them well informed about student progress.

Published templates such as student reports are very useful as a starting point.

Working with a local cluster is very helpful as a collective way of developing resources.

“There is particular value in getting support from people around you, such as the principal release teacher, to help with moderation.”

“Principals at each school in the cluster take responsibility for different things e.g. overseeing the collation, analysis and target setting for Basic Facts across the cluster. A collaborative process supports this and we have a common target against which to practise moderation. This doesn’t take the place of our individual school targets but is one way to use collective wisdom.”

School C

Context

School C is a medium-sized rural composite school. At the time of ERO’s visit, over a fifth of students identified as Māori. The school is divided into three distinct groups: Years 1 to 6 (10 classes); Years 7 to 10 (including four Year 7 and 8 classes); and Years 11 to 13.

In 2009, staff were involved in an Assess to Learn (AToL) contract. This strengthened the teachers’ use of learning intentions and in particular, their focus on success criteria. Teachers now use success criteria extensively to demonstrate what learning will look like. The criteria are also used as a basis for students and teachers to assess achievement and give direction for decisions about next learning steps. Teachers now include the related learning intention and success criteria in students’ work-sample books. This focus on assessment helped the introduction of National Standards. Teachers state that knowing the learning intentions and success criteria helps students take more responsibility for their own achievement and progress.

Ministry-funded external providers supported the school throughout 2010. A lead team within the school was formed to lead staff development and analyse any feedback from parents. The school’s preparation to work with National Standards had two main aspects:

- developing an in-depth and shared understanding of the National Standards
- reviewing and reformatting reporting to parents.

Developing common understandings of the standards was an important part of preparing to work with the National Standards. The initial discussion of the content of each standard was done at the primary teachers’ staff meetings. Teachers then worked in smaller teams and as individuals to discuss the fine points relevant to their own levels. Findings from the smaller group discussions were taken back and discussed at full (primary) staff meetings. A teacher explained the benefits of this practice:

“teachers developed an understanding of what they had to teach. Everyone had to understand and there was consistency across the school.” (Year 1 class teacher)

The process of discussing the illustrations of the National Standards identified areas teachers were not confident and/or knowledgeable about to teach some of the concepts of a particular standard. The leadership team used this information about teacher capability when planning future PLD and setting individual teacher development goals. An important ingredient that helped leaders identify areas for development was that the teachers felt comfortable and safe to communicate their strengths, weaknesses and needs.

A set of *“quality teaching expectations”* were developed as a result of the AToL contract and as part of the preparation to work with the National Standards. One expectation is that overall teacher judgements (OTJs) are based on rigorous evidence from multiple sources. Teachers developed manageable ways to record evidence of individual students’ progress and achievement. For example, in class modelling books teachers recorded the students’ names beside their contributions to discussions of new and/or revisited learning. The modelling books became records of learning for students and teachers to refer back to. Throughout the year the syndicate leaders and assistant principal developed a comprehensive knowledge of all learners in their respective areas. This knowledge was gained through monitoring class planning, viewing student work-sample books and carrying out some assessments. The syndicate leader and the assistant principal in charge of Years 1 to 6 moderate the OTJs at report writing and checking times.

“Teachers have to justify decisions. This evidence is from formal testing, observing students, and exercise books. Many learning activities lend themselves to observing learning behaviour, skills and knowledge. Students have to succeed in multiple ways and in other curriculum areas.” (Years 7 and 8 class teacher)

“Reporting was a key mechanism. It had to be responsive to parents’ wishes and needs. [We had to write] the report in terms of the standard, what has been [achieved by students] and their next steps. There is a lot more detail and description [in the reports]. Teachers have had a lot of PLD on plain language reporting to parents.” (Principal)

At a parent meeting to introduce National Standards, the principal gave information about the changes to reporting and how reports would make students’ progress and achievement clear. Parents gave feedback about the current processes and formats and were asked for suggestions.

“Reports now give next steps clearly and how parents can help. They are quite clear about our children’s progress and achievement. It is evident that parent feedback was reflected in the new reports.” (Parent)

After the 2010 mid-year report, the school asked parents for further feedback. Useful questions were provided to guide this feedback including:

- *Did you feel this report was easy to read and understand?*

- *After reading this report do you have a clearer understanding of where your child is learning?*
- *Is the layout easy to follow?*
- *Is your son/daughter aware of the steps they need to take to further their learning?*
- *Are there any further comments or suggestions that you would like to make?*

As a group, all staff developed a reporting-to-parents format, taking into account feedback from parents and information from their own reflections. They wrote trial reports for four students from each year level using evidence of how the students' achievement fitted within the relevant standard. Teachers deliberated over comments and the length of the reports. They had generous amounts of time to work through this process.

The board of trustees working with the National Standards

Trustees believe the school leaders placed them, as a school, in a better position to move forward by accepting Ministry-funded support to implement the National Standards. The leadership team's knowledge and the support received have given the trustees the confidence to ask the important questions and to set targets for students' progress and achievement.

The board receives analysed achievement and progress information from the principal, including recommendations for review. The reports show student achievement analysed by gender, ethnicity and year groups. Trustees compare achievement from year to year to monitor the progress of cohorts of students over time.

Trustees see PLD as an important way to help teachers build their knowledge of specific learning concepts. Reports about student achievement and progress help the board make decisions about PLD for the teachers. They also help trustees make decisions about setting their annual targets, and deploying teacher aides and resources.

School leaders working with the National Standards

School leaders' analysis of school-wide and year-level achievement information is used to guide:

- specific purchase of resources – e.g. reading books to support teachers and students with specific needs
- decisions about where to deploy teacher aides within the school
- setting charter targets
- class focus groups for reading, writing and mathematics
- specific support for individual teachers.

The assistant principal in charge of Years 1 to 6 classes monitors and tracks students' progress and achievement.

“I really know each student and where they are in their learning. I can ask the hard questions of teachers. I work alongside the teachers to discuss the students in their class and discuss their needs and effective teaching strategies.” (Assistant Principal)

The Head of English, who oversees the Years 7 and 8 classes, sees how the National Standards can help with transition between year levels as they are “*perfect for seamlessness*”. She works closely with the assistant principal in charge of Years 1 to 6 as at the beginning of each year they identify focus areas from the analysed student data. For example, a focus area related to strategies for teaching reading in 2011 was identified from e-asTTle⁸ information and teachers’ OTJs.

The Head of English’s oversight of Years 7 and 8 classes means she has a good knowledge of, and high expectations for, the Year 9 students, and students’ transition between primary and secondary is viewed as seamless. Expectations arise from discussions with teachers and analysis of achievement information. The Head of English has a greater understanding of what students are bringing to Year 9. Over recent years she has found students more knowledgeable and confident about their learning.

Teachers working with the National Standards

Teachers use the National Standards for planning – “*to pitch the learning at the right level*” (Years 5 and 6 class teacher). They have found their teaching is more purposeful and they have become more reflective of their own practice. Planning sheets now include provision for reflection. Teachers use this for reflecting on OTJs and evaluating their practice.

One teacher outlined an example of how teacher reflection resulted in changes to practice:

“Assessment in numeracy showed that students’ knowledge was lacking, so as we were moving into other maths strands, I decided to maintain a focus on knowledge through small-group teaching. I explained the grouping changes to the students. Students know where they have to be – daunting for some, challenging. Their parents help at home. All of them know that the groups change but we have a common goal.” (Teacher)

Teachers are aware of and focused on the school’s annual targets. They see them as their responsibility, along with other staff members, because they relate to the National Standards and have to be achieved. In each primary class, teachers have ‘focus students’. These students have instructional sessions every day, are closely monitored by the class teacher and leaders, and teachers have ongoing conversations about their progress with parents.

Teachers identified many benefits as a result of working with the National Standards.

“I am committed to National Standards and that parents have a right to receive clear reporting. It is about students reaching a standard, addressing needs, showing through teacher action that I am doing everything to address the needs of the individual students in my class. National Standards has meant

⁸ e-asTTle is an online assessment tool, developed to assess students’ achievement and progress in reading, mathematics, writing, and in pānui, pāngarau and tuhituhi. The tool has been developed primarily for the assessment of students in Years 5 to 10, but because it tests curriculum levels 2 to 6 it can be used for students in lower and higher year levels. See <http://e-asttle.tki.org.nz/>

formalising what many of us have been doing for years, tightening assessment, reflecting on our practice and tightening our teaching strategies.” (Years 7 and 8 class teacher)

“Feedback to students is better using National Standards and exemplars. We set challenging goals with students and give them information through the reflection book. This book is a summary of test results, showing progress and I use it when writing reports. It also indicates gaps and students also have to identify reasons for lack of progress and how they can ‘lift their game’. There are more conversations for the teacher and students to work together to improve. We use open-ended reflective questions for students to self assess. We use this information to reflect on our teaching and identify the changes needed, such as lifting achievement or engaging students better.” (Years 7 and 8 class teacher)

“National Standards were very daunting at the start. I can see the benefits in my teaching practice. I am more open and vocal with students about levels and expectations. Parents are more aware and able to help. They know what we are reporting against, - National Standards.” (Years 5 and 6 class teacher)

Parents and whānau involved in the National Standards

Parents are positive about the changes that resulted from the school working with National Standards. As mentioned earlier, reporting to parents is clearer. Parents find the mid-year reporting useful to see what their child still needs to achieve by the end of the year.

Parents have an awareness of how teachers make their judgements; that it is through testing, and analysis of individual students’ sample books that contain evidence of progress and achievement. Children talk to their parents about their achievement and progress as shown in assessments throughout the year.

Students involved in and contributing to the National Standards

Students have a good sense of what is expected of them to succeed in specific areas of learning. Teachers are helping students to achieve this through:

- constructing success criteria with students
- expecting and encouraging students to assess their work against the set criteria, make a reflective comment and set a next learning step
- sharing examples of writing with students. For example, if their goal is to achieve at Level 3 of the curriculum, students compare the Level 3 sample with Level 2 features to identify the shift they have to make
- giving students written feedback, specific to the intended learning, about how to improve their understanding and/or application of new learning.

Students see the term ‘National Standards’ in their written reports and know how they are achieving against them.

Next steps

ERO asked groups in the school what they had identified as their next steps for working with the National Standards.

The principal identified the following next steps they needed to:

- develop their understanding of the specifics of the various National Standards
- collate samples of students' work to determine the degree of consistency.

The assistant principal in charge of Years 1 to 6 teaching and learning identified the need to be aware of transition points (for example, transitioning from Year 6 to Year 7).

Advice

ERO also asked groups in the school what advice they had for other schools.

Principal's advice

- Be committed to working with National Standards.
- Give teachers time and help to develop sound knowledge about the standards.
- Give parents honest and clear achievement and progress information.
- Realise that progress of individual students is critical.
- As a principal, have the challenging discussions with staff.

Trustees' advice

- Work as a team within the school to solve problems.
- Involve parents in seeking solutions, especially when developing reporting formats.

School leaders' advice

- Work on one area at a time (that is, reading, writing or mathematics).
- Think carefully about ways to collect evidence so these processes are manageable and useful.
- Encourage teachers to use data from the previous year to help build their knowledge of individual students.

“Teachers have to manage their teaching time carefully and be organised for their teaching, maximise the learning and teaching times for all students, teach literacy and mathematics every day, and give students opportunities to practise.”

School leaders have to:

- set expectations, and monitor how teachers follow these expectations
- have professional knowledge of each teacher's capability, providing appropriate support when necessary
- promote a whole-school approach and communicate commitment.

Teachers

A class teacher stressed the need for teachers to *“make it work in their own classrooms.”* This involves teachers having a common agreement about the different standards, but understanding that how teachers work with them depends on their students' learning needs and the teacher's teaching style. The teacher stressed the importance of teachers regularly reflecting on student achievement and progress, and on their teaching's impact.

School D

Context

School D is a medium-sized, full primary situated in a semi-rural setting. At the time of ERO's visit Māori students made up 15 percent of the roll.

Principal and school leaders working with the National Standards

National Standards development began after the principal had sought information about requirements and broadened her own knowledge. She developed an action plan to implement the standards. The leadership team critiqued the plan to ensure it was robust and that timeframes were realistic. The principal explained that:

"The action plan was key to making the changes within the short timeframe. It helped keep the momentum with the [existing] curriculum development and the National Standards."

The leadership team attended National Standards workshops offered in their region. Along with the principal they led PLD for teachers through a curriculum-focused lens. During this time of initial change, school leaders held regular PLD meetings with teachers and modelled a positive approach to working with the standards. The principal saw this as a way to minimise teacher anxiety about the implementation.

The leadership team reviewed the reporting process through discussion, research and reflection.

"We knew that our reporting worked well, including the existing three-way conferences. We had to continue to make reporting work for children."
(Principal)

The leadership team's first step was to look at plain language reporting. Each standard was broken down into plain language, which helped teachers become better informed about the standards. Teachers then worked with a colleague, who taught students at a similar year level, to relate the National Standards back to *The New Zealand Curriculum* and give them further meaning. The leadership team then made some key decisions about a draft report to parents before taking it to teachers to be refined. Further development by the junior syndicate related to timeframes for reporting and aligning the School Entry Assessment and the six-year observation survey (Six-year net)⁹ to the National Standards.

The development of moderation processes began in syndicates. Teachers had already worked on writing as a focus during the previous year and transferred this knowledge to their moderation practice. They used a similar process (nationally-normed assessment tools) across the school to make overall teacher judgements (OTJs) in writing. Exemplars were used in the junior school and e-asTTle in the senior school. Following syndicate moderation,

⁹ The six-year observation survey is a comprehensive assessment of each six-year-old child's progress in reading and writing. The six-year net helps teachers to compare how children are progressing with reading levels, alphabet knowledge, word test, writing knowledge. To help teachers compare achievement and progress results are recorded as stanines.

teachers moderated school-wide samples which increased their understanding of different levels of writing.

“There are several benefits. Everyone takes ownership and conversations are critical.” (Principal)

PLD on the teaching as inquiry process has been linked to the making of OTJs. This has promoted better use of data and encouraged teachers to reflect on their practices. Teachers share new ideas and practices that have had positive outcomes for students with their colleagues.

The school has been working in a professional development cluster with four other schools. One area of emphasis in this collaborative work has been the development of cluster moderation in writing and a literacy development officer has been helping the cluster.

“Our moderation practices are more robust especially in regards to analysis. Teaching as inquiry practices have also strengthened.” (Principal)

Progress and achievement data informs their annual target setting. The principal oversees the school-wide data collection and carries out her own analysis.

The National Standards have helped us to be more specific in breaking down our targets. (Principal)

Currently they are strongly focused on the junior school, as cohort tracking indicates a need for greater focus on targeting in this part of the school.

School leaders employ a person to input assessment data into the student management system (SMS) and the principal states that this is to enable teachers to put more time into analysing results for planning their teaching. The principal also helps the teachers to have a view of their own students’ achievement and progress by asking relevant questions of the data.

The board of trustees working with the National Standards

The principal and staff representative on the board were the main sources of information for the board about the National Standards.

“The principal’s information was helpful. Reports to trustees have to be easily understood as we’re not teachers. If we don’t understand, we ask.” (Trustee)

The principal provides useful curriculum reports in reading, writing and mathematics that clearly inform the board about student achievement and progress in relation to the National Standards at all year levels and cohorts. Trustees ask inquiring questions about the data within the reports. Recommendations, arising from the analysis of the National Standards data, are used to set goals and inform student achievement targets.

Teachers working with the National Standards

Teachers became familiar with the National Standards through reading the relevant booklets and handbooks, staff discussion and looking into the standards in depth during their curriculum development. They worked on understanding the alignment of the National

Standards with *The New Zealand Curriculum* and their local school curriculum and resources, including *The Literacy Learning Progressions*. The teachers developed indicators for each year level.

“We realised that the National Standards fitted with our current practice. Then our mindset changed to keeping it simple.” (Teacher)

The junior syndicate carried out significant work to meet reporting requirements and were, and still are, proactive in explaining the system to parents. Currently, they give parents a written report after a child has been at school for six months and one, two and three years on, or near, the student’s anniversary. Parent interviews occur mid-way though the student’s first, second and third year at school, and are clustered to all occur once during the appropriate term. Reporting against the standards at mid-year takes the form of an e-portfolio and a hard copy portfolio of samples of work that make clear the student’s progress towards end-of-year expectations.

Teachers recognise the value of PLD in helping them make OTJs. *“We realised that we always made judgments. But now we are more aware and focused on the next step.”* (Teacher). Teachers have clear expectations as to which assessment tools they should use to inform their OTJs.

Teachers are involved in moderating student writing across four levels: between a teacher and a colleague, within the syndicate, across all staff, and with teachers from other schools in their cluster.

Having different ways of practising moderation has given us growing confidence.” (Teachers)

Moderation, particularly in writing, has increased teachers’ knowledge of what a student should be doing. They take this knowledge back to class and share it with the students.

Teachers are using National Standards in a positive way and as something to aim for.

National Standards are a tool for focussing on what the child can do.” (Teacher)

Parents, whānau and students involved in and contributing to the National Standards

Parents are informed about National Standards through school newsletters and the Ministry of Education pamphlets. They receive information through students sharing their e-portfolios. As part of three-way conferences, teachers also show and discuss assessment results and continuums that inform parents about how well their child is achieving in relation to the National Standards.

End-of-year written reports indicate individual students’ achievement on a continuum related to National Standards. Parents receive their child’s goal sheet that has information about how they can help at home at the start of the following school year. The information used to set these goals comes from their previous end-of-year report against the National Standards and information passed on from their previous year’s teacher. Students discuss with their teachers what their next steps are to achieve these goals, and at mid-year interviews share

their progress towards these goals with their parents. Parents are encouraged by the school to talk with their child regularly about how they are going towards achieving their goals.

Students talk confidently about their learning goals which become part of each student's reflective e-portfolio. They regularly reflect on progress against these goals, often in a blog format. They share samples of their work with their parents at three-way conferences using their e-portfolio. They are keen for teachers to help them further understand their achievement and progress in relation to the standards.

Next steps

ERO asked the staff what they had identified as their next steps for working with the National Standards. The staff identified the following:

- to continue exploring the characteristics of the National Standards
- to continue to refine their reporting to the board
- to strengthen students' knowledge of their achievement in relation to the National Standards. *"To continue supporting students in their ability to articulate and present their learning journey in relation to the National Standards."* (Principal)
- to hold more workshops for parents to share information about the National Standards, including clarifying the reporting system for Years 1 to 3 students
- to collate indicators for each year level into a whole school document. The indicators enable teachers to clearly see what each child has achieved and their next steps
- to further develop transition links with secondary schools for seamless information sharing about achievement in relation to the National Standards.

Advice

ERO also asked groups in the school what advice they had for other schools.

School leaders' advice

- Begin from an informed position and work methodically (slow and thoroughly).
- Look further than just Ministry of Education material - use other sources including school cluster groups, research and outside experts.
- Keep the reporting process and language simple.
- Have the principal read all end-of-year reports and goal setting sheets.

"It's about managing time. This is helped by having an action plan that keeps the momentum going. Go to as many things as possible, like courses, and learn from others." (Principal)

"It's essential for the principal to be hands on and to be informed before leading." (Principal)

Trustees' advice

- Trustees need to understand the National Standards.

They're here and we have to make the best of them. (Trustee)

- use classroom release wisely to assist with management of teacher workload.

Teacher's advice

- Have a good understanding of the curriculum.

The National Standards are clearer if we have a good understanding of the curriculum. They provide a framework for scaffolding teaching and learning.” (Teacher)

School E

Context

School E is a large school catering for students in Years 1 to 8. At the time of ERO's review, the roll included students from many different cultures including just over a tenth of students identifying as Māori.

Working with the National Standards

The school's development with the National Standards started in October 2009. The principal believed that, as the school already had high expectations of achievement and progress, a good transition to working with the National Standards was possible. The principal was strategic in their approach to develop leaders', trustees', teachers' and parents' understanding and practices relating to the National Standards.

Developing professional knowledge was the school's foundation for working with National Standards. This included accessing expertise from external providers. In October 2009 the leadership team extended their knowledge through courses, professional readings and discussions. Two leaders also undertook post-graduate study focused on assessment. The principal joined other principals studying national and international school reporting processes.

The leadership team then presented information about the standards and a proposal to the board and asked trustees for their perspective. The board agreed to support its proposal to work with the standards, which was then taken to the teaching staff. In 2010, each staff member spent between 60 to 80 hours developing their understanding and practices related to the standards. Staff looked at the reporting processes and attended training, including being part of the Assess to Learn (AToL) project and attending PLD about assessment for the standards.

Staff reviewed the school assessment practices and existing expectations. In professional learning circles, they rationalised the National Standards with the existing expectations and looked at how they would apply them across the curriculum.

Our benchmarks were higher in reading and maths and our vision statement expected more.” (Principal)

Overall teacher judgments and moderation

Much teacher development was devoted to increasing the knowledge and skills for making overall teacher judgements (OTJs) and undertaking moderation. Teachers said working together to gain a common understanding was very helpful in building knowledge beyond their own classroom. There were many discussions about assessment tools, and their use and usefulness.

A major feature of the school's moderation practices is teachers moderating within their own teaching level, as well as the year levels on either side of these. They believe this helps them gain consistency of judgments. Teachers developed a report moderation grid which shows the 'above, at and below' criteria at each level of the National Standards in reading, writing and mathematics. Teachers find the grid a useful starting point for making an OTJ. This grid took staff time to develop together as there had to be a shared understanding of OTJs. Discussions from professional-learning circles and new learning from post-graduate studies fed into the decision-making process. The school also worked closely with a neighbouring school as a checkpoint on progress and decisions.

From that initial decision-making (using the report moderation grid) teachers use other assessment information to confirm or challenge initial judgments (first wave of moderation). Judgements for students at the 'top' and 'bottom' and the 'don't knows' are moderated and decided on at a teaching team level (second wave of moderation). The school leaders look at all OTJs and discuss any themes arising from the data (third and fourth waves of moderation). They discuss any discrepancies with teachers by asking 'Tell me why?' Teachers are expected to defend their judgements and show evidence. Students' ability to apply new learning in a variety of contexts across other essential learning areas is significant in making OTJs.

"There is a starting point but all contributions are critical." (Principal)

"The first time we make a judgement about a child is critical, it impacts later on. But – we did acknowledge errors and made changes. We had to explain that to parents." (Leadership Team)

The school leaders acknowledge that assessing writing and making OTJs is challenging because it is subjective, complex and about making comparisons. They have found the following helpful:

- undertaking moderation across the team
- using exemplars and *The Literacy Learning Progressions*
- referring to all published material on National Standards as it becomes available
- using the written language resources on TKI.¹⁰

Using National Standards information

The principal believes the increased dialogue and understanding of a wider variety of data has been the greatest benefit in the school's development of practices associated with the National Standards.

¹⁰ http://www.tki.org.nz/r/assessment/exemplars/eng/teachers_notes/tn_resources_e.php

The principal and board found the end of 2010 data useful for setting targets and determining resourcing.

We picked up trends and patterns and put effort into it including specific PLD and when considering staffing.” (Principal)

The board has targeted funding for things like post-graduate studies in mathematics, which has had a positive influence on teacher capacity and ability. The school also used the data to “*match programmes to need and respond to students’ attitudes.*” (Principal) One example of this was the attitude of girls in the senior syndicate towards maths. The school brought the girls’ mothers into the school for a series of maths lessons and encouraged them to do the homework with their daughters. The school has seen a positive change in attitude for these students.

Teachers and teaching teams use data relating to the National Standards to:

- set “*very specific student goals in relation to National Standards.*” (Principal)
- inform their team’s strategic plan, including team targets
- set classroom programmes to ‘close gaps’. “*Our below kids are moving but not hugely as a group. Our able ones are moving hugely. So the gap is still there.*” (Principal)
- guide PLD decisions
- inform the implementation of some special intervention programmes to accelerate or extend the progress of identified students.

Reporting against the National Standards

The reporting process had previously involved students’ portfolio/sample books going home each term, and parents attending interviews with the class teacher. These included an setting goals early in the year, and a parent interview at mid-year.

With the introduction of the National Standards and the requirement of plain language written reports, the school has added a mid-year written report that explains progress towards achieving the expected standards. Term goals and reflections are kept in the portfolios, along with samples of work from all learning areas. Teachers’ comments in the portfolios are clear about students’ achievement of the learning intention and their next steps.

In preparation for parent-teacher conferences, parents are asked to fill in a form. This includes identifying things going well and any issues from their perspective. At the conference, the class teacher discusses a draft of the student’s report. The area for next learning steps and home support is left blank at this stage. These are completed in consultation with the parents (and student, if present). The conferences last for 20 minutes. This length was decided on to give time to talk through the findings, discuss what they mean, and co-construct the next steps or goals to move the student forward.

The teacher has samples of work and other assessment information to add to the reporting process and content of the written report. They share this information with parents if needed to clarify a point or explain an OTJ. The written reports have:

- assessment results, including reading and spelling ages, writing level, numeracy level, PAT stanines¹¹
- next learning steps
- how parents can support the student at home
- a general comment (attitude and relationships)
- ‘Plunket’ type graphs that are cumulative for time at school that plot progress against the standards in reading, writing and mathematics.

In addition, teachers said the graphs help parents see the progressions, and the interviews give them time to explain the student’s achievement and next steps.

“Teachers now give more personal, specific feedback to parents. There is better parent buy in. Parents and teacher co-construct how to help at home.”
(Teacher)

Parents and whānau involved in the National Standards

Parents were initially invited to a parent meeting, at which the school leaders spoke about National Standards. Parents found this question and answer session useful to clarify their understandings about the standards. At this meeting, leaders shared some of the school’s intentions, in particular those about reporting to parents. All parents also received Ministry of Education resources about National Standards.

The school formed a parent focus group to support teachers, leaders and trustees in developing practices around National Standards. The major role of this group was to gather parent ideas, and the main focus was the language to be used in the report to parents.

Parents feel the current reports provide more detail of their child’s learning. They understand that mid-year reports are progress reports against the expected standards. One parent had noticed her child’s graph at mid-year had ‘dipped’, but after the teacher explained knew it was against a different standard for the current year as the child transitioned from the ‘after three years at school’ standard to the ‘end of Year 4’ standard. Some parents want their children to attend the interviews to hear and be part of the conversations at the interview.

“The talk is to and with my daughter, not about her, and it is about her taking responsibility for her learning.” (Parent)

Students involved in and contributing to the National Standards

A major feature of students’ involvement in their learning is the progressive process of goal setting. Across the school, teachers use the SMART acronym for goals (Specific, Measureable, Achievable, Realistic, Timeframe). In the junior classrooms, students use the SMART prompts in relation to each goal. For each goal they briefly write how they will

¹¹ Progressive Achievement Tests are standardised tests developed by the New Zealand Council for Educational Research (NZCER). There are PATs for Year 4 to Year 10 children in reading comprehension, reading vocabulary and mathematics. There is a listening comprehension PAT for Year 3 to Year 10 students. A stanine indicates a children’s rank in comparison with other children who took the same test. Stanines are expressed as a scale of nine units with a low of one and a high of nine. The scale follows a bell-curve, where 20 percent of the children fit within stanine five, four percent in stanine nine, and four percent in stanine one.

measure it, the time frame and so on. As they progress through the year levels, students use different formats of the SMART prompts, but can still reference their goals and plans for achieving them back to SMART. Generally students set three goals – academic, sporting and special character. They set these at the beginning of each term and students reflect on them at the end of the term. Students talk to their teachers about the reflections and give evidence of their achievement. The level of teacher support depends on age and need.

Students said that the National Standards are “*where you are expected to be at.*” They added that “*twice a year [mid and end of year] we are shown them [the National Standards] and where we are at. Our reports show our progress.*” (Student)

Teachers tell students where they are in their achievement against the relevant standards. Students are aware that teachers decide on their achievement from looking “*at test results and at work over the whole year.*” (Student) They know that if their achievement is below expectation they will receive extra support and help. Teachers share exemplars and success criteria to help students understand expectations.

Next steps

ERO asked groups in the school what they had identified as their next steps for working with the National Standards. They identified that they wanted to:

- continue sharing information
- be responsive to changing needs and being open to new things
- maintain induction of new staff
- continue working on the assessment and moderation of writing.

Advice

ERO also asked groups in the school what advice they had for other schools.

Leadership Team advice

- Have honest discussions with staff and ask questions.
- Have a collective look at OTJs, for example, all Years 5 and 6 teachers, as a second wave/level of moderation.
- Have information based on research before presenting ideas to staff and do not take things for granted.
- Take part in good PLD.
- Use of the National Standards is a cycle – take time, make adjustments.
- Recognise that processes and practices have to suit the school’s context.
- Have honest conversations with parents.

Teachers’ advice

- It is very useful to moderate across teaching teams – that is, teaching teams either side of your year levels.
- To moderate and have a good understanding of the National Standards.
- Take part in PLD and be knowledgeable.

- Use modelling books and record the brief notes of lessons – students use them to refer back to, they are useful for relief teachers, and teachers use them as evidence of student learning just like students’ own workbooks.

Parent advice

“Have communication with teachers, always ask questions. Remember that no question is a silly question, so don’t be intimidated – ask, and don’t get too hung up about National Standards.” (Parent)

School F

Context

School F is a full primary school situated in a large town. The roll is large with just over one fifth of students identifying as Māori. The teaching staff has remained stable over time, and teachers enjoy good relationships with parents and the community. The principal and school leaders provide strong and supportive professional leadership. They are aware of teacher-workload and the expectations of the parent community. The school is part of a cluster, in which most schools have been involved in considerable literacy PLD. The cluster schools have shared ideas for reporting against the National Standards and guidelines for assessment in literacy.

School leaders working with the National Standards

The principal and other members of the leadership team attended initial Ministry of Education sessions designed to help school personnel understand and implement the National Standards. They continue to attend PLD as it becomes available. Numeracy and literacy curriculum leaders also attend some courses. The Ministry’s resources and booklets about the National Standards are used to stimulate considerable debate among staff about people’s understanding of the National Standards. This debate led to extensive whole staff PLD, using the booklets to familiarise everyone with the illustrations of the standards. Teachers continued to work in syndicates, concentrating on the need to lift expectations and making OTJs.

In 2008, writing was identified as an area requiring development and from then to 2010 teachers were involved in literacy PLD. This has resulted in a climate where teachers are continually inquiring into their practice. The leadership team says the National Standards have embedded teacher reflection at the school.

“We realised that we needed to aim higher, to expect beyond the existing national norms for achievement. Our professional knowledge grew. We realised we had to be specialist teachers of literacy and mathematics. We had to enhance our own knowledge to teach more effectively. Teachers have a sense of urgency to have students achieve the standard.” (Leadership Team)

The leadership team adopted a measured approach to bringing teachers on board with the standards. As a group the staff looked at *The Literacy Learning Progressions*, *The New Zealand Curriculum* and the National Standards to consider how they aligned and where they differed. A matrix-based ‘at a glance’ set of sheets was developed for teachers’ ready reference to National Standards. The matrix’s purpose is to make OTJs more accurate

while emphasising the importance of assessment other than just tests. The leadership team have modified the matrix to include other assessment tools as these become better aligned with the standards.

External PLD also extended teacher capability in moderation. The most effective practice occurred when teachers were moderating individually, then in teams, and together as one team. Each phase involved considerable input and support from the leadership team.

“Understanding assessment tools and how to apply and use them consistently was critical. We also reached agreement on the formal tools we use, frequency and annual schedule. Teachers like clear systems and not having to invent things such as templates.” (Leadership Team)

Considerable work has gone into defining what ‘above the standard’ looks like and a ‘summary sheet’ of this is available for teachers. Teachers make the OTJs, which are reviewed by team leaders and then by the principal. The process is particularly robust while teachers are getting to grips with the standards. Teachers can ask the leadership team for help in making particular OTJs and the leadership team can track students’ progress or lack of progress. Moderation across teams requires teachers to consult each other about students whose achievement falls outside their year level. Once OTJs are completed at mid-year, the leadership team plot the results on individual class sheets. End of year judgements are added. OTJs that seem inconsistent with others are obvious and become the basis for discussion.

In parallel with work on making OTJs and moderation, a new school report was developed to include student achievement in relation to the standards. The board recognised the changed expectations and new report format as an investment priority and funded a teacher release day for each staff member.

“This was a lengthy exercise to get it right. We chose to include assessment for Key Learning Areas and mention of Key Competencies to create a well-rounded picture of our students. We included Well Above and Well Below as separate categories. This was to differentiate between Below and Well Below (parents would have been concerned otherwise) and it is important to recognise our high achievers. It became apparent that achievement levels we had previously considered to be average or satisfactory were now considered below.” (Leadership Team)

It was important to the leadership team for parents to understand the National Standards and the associated raised achievement expectations before reports were sent out. The school shared comprehensive information through a newsletter that discussed the increase in student achievement needed and how they would report to parents. A detailed explanation of National Standards and OTJs was also attached to the front of the report form.

“A small number of parents had not read the newsletter or misunderstood the message. Teachers talked to parents at the beginning of the year Meet the Teachers’ meeting and at parent interviews. Our interviews had increased attendance which may have been because of the change.” (Leadership Team)

To maintain the home-school partnership, the school phoned parents of children whose achievement levels had seemingly dropped from average in pre-standards reporting to below,

and provided additional opportunities for parents to meet with teachers. They also enclosed a survey seeking feedback and the Ministry's pamphlet "*How You Can Help Your Child At Home*" with every report. When OTJs do not match those made by a student's previous school, parents are phoned and evidence shared before written reports going out. There is no focus on the previous school but rather a 'looking forward' approach.

These strategies proved very successful. Teachers worked extremely hard during this process and although we were anxious, we were reassured in the knowledge that we had done the best we could. (Leadership Team)

Reporting to parents includes:

- 'Meet the Teachers' at the start of the year
- an interview at the end of Term 1 with data sheets showing the results of formal tests sent home beforehand and including goal setting and how to help at home
- a mid-year written report with the offer of an interview
- a Term 4 written report with the option of an interview.

In addition, interviews follow the School Entry Assessment and the Six-year observation survey (Six-year net), and occur whenever there is concern for a student's progress.

The board of trustees working with the National Standards

"Trustees and teachers decided to embrace the standards and to implement them as best they could." (Trustee)

The principal shared information at board meetings and trustees attended courses as they were available. Trustees were aware that parents needed to be well informed and part of decision-making processes. "*We knew that the benchmarks had moved and we needed to communicate the change.*" (Trustee) The board and parents received considerable, useful information from the principal through newsletters and pamphlets. Parents were surveyed and when concerns were aired, trustees felt confident to talk about the changes. Trustees also felt confident to talk with parents who expressed concerns over an apparent 'drop' in their children's achievement.

The standards have added a further dimension to the school's self review. Well-analysed, standards-based OTJs allowed the board to adjust targets and plan resourcing. At mid-year, progress towards the targets and areas of need are reviewed. Interventions and targets are also reviewed for cohorts of students.

Teachers working with the National Standards

Teachers found the discussions at syndicate and whole-school levels, and during internal PLD, very useful and cyclic in nature. Literacy-focused PLD before the standards were introduced was also very helpful. Teachers used Ministry resources to realign their year-level expectations with the standards. When moderating and making OTJs, individual teachers ask colleagues to look at a particular OTJ that is marginal or confusing and give their opinion. Working collaboratively in syndicates and using samples at each achievement standard helped teachers to clarify their judgements and to look at the evidence for their OTJs.

Evidence for OTJs includes test results, models of students' writing already moderated by the syndicate, records of student achievement against success criteria, notes in school-agreed planning and assessment books and sometimes in modelling books.

Parents and whānau involved in and contributing to the National Standards

Parents find the report formats easy to understand.

They particularly value comments about key competency, as knowing about their children's social and emotional development is very important to them.

Comments attached to the OTJs discuss the child's strengths and areas where the child excels.

"It's very clear about what the school is going to do for the student and how we can help at home. Progress is made clear." (Parent)

Students involved in and contributing to the National Standards

Students in the senior syndicate have various ways of knowing how well they are progressing and achieving.

"In our tests, we challenge ourselves to better our score. At the beginning of the year, our teacher shares our results – we know what they mean. The teacher talks our results through with us." (Year 8 student)

Students choose their own improvement goals at the beginning of each term. The teacher checks them to see they are challenging and they are reviewed at the end of the term.

"We do have to have proof and other students can have input into that evidence." (Year 8 student)

Students in junior year levels understand where they are achieving and what the expectation is for their year level.

Next steps

ERO asked groups in the school what they had identified as their next steps for working with the National Standards. They identified the following.

Principal and leadership team

- Students' attendance at interviews is currently optional. There are plans to extend students' role in reporting their progress and achievement
- While students are used to goal setting, the leadership team intend to increase students' knowledge of the National Standards, including their use of standards-related vocabulary
- Moderation in writing is well established. Further work in mathematics and reading is now needed.

Teachers

- Teachers identified how they planned to write down and talk about what the child can do and their next learning steps when conferencing with parents whose child is achieving

below expectation,. The leadership team helped with strategies when the standards first came in. For example it's appropriate to discuss the change from norms to standards in reporting and show parents how you plan to accelerate progress.

Assure parents about what is in place to advance their child's learning.
(Years 4 and 5 teacher)

They also wanted to:

- 'manage the workload', work from what you already have in place. *"We always did have a standard and provision to extend and assist students. This was a good starting point."* (Years 4 and 5 teacher)
- use Ministry material such as the standard illustrations to become familiar with the actual standard
- give parents good information about how they may help at home. Share some strategies used in class and give them concrete activities to practise.
How parents may help at home has become a powerful part of the interview process. Parents are receptive. (Years 4 and 5 teacher)

Advice

ERO also asked groups in the school what advice they had for other schools.

Principal and leadership team advice

- Consider teachers' workload by providing templates and easily accessible ICT.
- Be very prescriptive after the PLD and discussion phase – teachers want to get it right
- Don't rush and manage change in small steps.
- *"Don't be afraid to make mistakes, admit them and try again – it's a journey."* (Leadership Team).
- Maintain partnerships with parents by 'keeping them close' in decision-making. Use face-to-face meetings, newsletters and phone calls.
- Use the Ministry self-review tool to identify next steps for development.
- Undertake PLD that closely reflects teachers' need to be 'experts' in mathematics and literacy.
- Use two Teacher Only Days for report writing/assessment-related tasks at the middle and the end of the year. Make up the days at the end of the year.

Trustees' advice

- The standards are very useful for identifying areas to be prioritised.
- Teachers' focus should be on teaching and using assessment to plan effective programmes - progress is the key.
- Encourage and support teachers' PLD.

Teachers

- To recall the detail of the standards without referring to booklets
- To break the standards down into more detail. *"The 'after 3 years at school' and the 'end of Year 4' have been tricky for us and required a lot of discussion."*

- To develop tools to gain greater consistency with OTJs.

School G

Context

School G is a contributing, city school with a medium-sized roll. Flexible teaching spaces allow a cooperative teaching model with individual students taught by several teachers. Moderation and determining overall teaching judgements (OTJs) are very much a collaborative process. If parents have a matter to discuss, they approach the team leader who then refers them to the appropriate teacher, for example the child's reading teacher. Students do not have one point of contact but have a relationship with several teachers.

School leaders working with the National Standards

Initially, the principal introduced the National Standards to the board, providing information from different sources. The board could then make decisions from an informed position, and support the leadership team in implementing the standards. School leaders and the board agreed to implement the National Standards in a low key way. They positioned them as part of the curriculum and as a reference point for assessment closely linked to what teachers were already doing. It helped that trustees were already knowledgeable about assessment tools used in the school and their purposes.

The principal placed large display boards around the school which together with school newsletters and Ministry of Education brochures contributed to parents' understanding of the standards.

"The process was a business as usual approach." (Leadership Team)

School leaders and teachers were involved in PLD with an external facilitator. This PLD proved effective for developing teachers' knowledge of, and confidence in using, the standards.

"The curriculum was the vehicle for introducing the National Standards to teachers as part of teachers' assessment practice. It was important that the National Standards sit alongside the curriculum." (Leadership Team)

The process for reporting to parents, using a consistent format school-wide, was already well established. Teachers phone every family before school starts in Term 1. Parents and teachers discuss matters that may have arisen during the holidays and aspects of the student's previous end-of-year written report, including goals for improvement. In Terms 2 and 4 there are student-led conferences. Students share samples of work that celebrate and illustrate progress, and teachers talk in detail about progress and achievement including assessment results.

"Teachers are very clear about the purpose of the conference being to celebrate learning and being improvement focused." (Leadership Team)

Written reports summarising the information are sent home immediately after the conference. When a student's progress is of concern, parents and teachers get together for an additional 'check-in' meeting before the conference. This provides an opportunity for parents and

teachers to discuss specific strategies to accelerate the student's progress at school and at home. In 2011, teachers shared information about the different National Standards expectations at reading and mathematics workshops for parents. The senior school teachers also talked to parents about inquiry learning.

At the end of each year, the teaching team reports aggregated school-wide progress and achievement in relation to the standards to the board. Trustees receive the report before the meeting together with a selection of prompt questions developed by the staff, which helps them prepare for discussion. All teachers attend and contribute to the meeting. They believe this is about being accountable and celebrating what has been achieved.

The teaching team develops targets for the following year, which are part of decision-making discussions. *"We always have one target around underachievement – it may be a cohort identified. This year we have also focused on students we want to move into the exceeding category."* (Leadership Team) Throughout the year, progress is reported against the annual targets as part of curriculum review.

The board of trustees working with the National Standards

Students' progress and achievement is a deliberate focus in the school's strategic plan, and is communicated clearly to parents. Trustees take a measured approach to working constructively with the National Standards, aligned with their commitment to high expectations for student achievement.

Trustees' knowledge of the National Standards grew through conversations in meetings. They found webinars and print resources useful, as was guidance from the principal. The chairperson and the principal engaged in one-on-one conversations with new trustees during their induction. Trustees also developed their knowledge through the school's reporting process.

Trustees are well informed about school-wide achievement. Lead teachers report on progress and achievement through curriculum review reports throughout the year.

"It's been an ongoing improvement-based model. We've committed a lot of funding towards PLD and we know that achieving consistency in moderation is part of this. Presentation of achievement results confirms our decisions about priorities, funding and strategic direction." (Board Chairperson)

Teachers working with the National Standards

Teachers became familiar with the National Standards by attending courses and reflecting on what they meant for their practice.

"Talking as a staff was the most helpful PLD." (Teacher)

Staff were already working with a professional facilitator developing the school's curriculum relating to written language. The facilitator's approach had a significant impact on teachers' attitudes, understanding, and ability to use the National Standards. Assessment practice among teachers was already strong.

When National Standards came along they fitted well with what we already do.
(Teacher)

Teachers have had considerable practice in moderating writing. They feel confident about moderating writing while acknowledging that further work is needed in reading and mathematics. A key aspect of PLD was discussion about how best to use assessment tools, which ones to use, and how to administer the tests consistently.

Decisions about OTJs and report writing involve three to five teachers working as a team. Because they teach as a team, collaboration promotes consistency. Anecdotal notes are made throughout the year and contribute to OTJs.

It's valuable to record things anecdotally during the year to back up your decisions. (Teacher)

Parents and whānau involved in and contributing to the National Standards

Parents learned about the National Standards from informal discussions with teachers and in student-led conferences. *"We are getting to grips with what the National Standards are about."* Parents feel really well informed about their children's achievement and progress. Conferences and written reports are well linked and parents value the next step notes and how to assist at home. They are pleased that written reports include all learning areas, as well as progress and achievement in relation to the National Standards.

Students involved in and contributing to the National Standards

Students speak confidently about their progress and achievement as teachers share assessment information with them. Next learning steps are clear from looking at an analysis of their assessment information and from talking with their teachers. Older students use learning and assessment language confidently and interpret their assessment results knowledgeably. They are aware of their progress and next learning steps.

Students are clear that their learning journal's purpose is to provide evidence of their progress. Students prepare a script for leading the three-way student/parent/teacher conference. These scripts include what the student is proud of, what they have achieved and their next learning step. OTJs are supported by evidence or samples of work from the learning journal. Parents find their children are more confident in leading conferences now that this preparation is part of the process.

Next steps

ERO asked groups in the school what they had identified as their next steps for working with the National Standards. They identified the following.

Principal and leadership team

The current reporting to parents' process is comprehensive and detailed, with two student-led conferences and two written reports. As part of ongoing self review, teachers are exploring different ways of engaging in an active partnership with parents. *"Teachers plan to have more conversations with parents. Written reports will be shorter and show achievement in a diagrammatic form."* (Principal) Any changes are made in full consultation with parents.

Board

We want to lift the level of detail in the end-of-year progress and achievement report so it's more appropriate to a governance model and function. The detail has helped to familiarise the board with assessment. *"Now we're in a process of refining."* (Board Chairperson)

Teachers

Identified that they planned to:

- explore what's happening in other schools
- think about the exchange of National Standards information as opposed to one-off tests as part of the transition to intermediate. Look closely at transition practices with the students' next school – using OTJ and National Standards information rather than a normed test administered in isolation
- look more closely at students' writing across the curriculum and work at what it might look like in relation to OTJs
- give increased focus to moderation in reading and mathematics.

Advice

ERO also asked groups in the school what advice they had for other schools.

School Leaders advice

- Don't let National Standards lead. They are part of the curriculum.
- If your assessment processes are effective they will feed into the National Standards.
- If teachers are analysing results for teaching purposes, you are using National Standards in a good way.
- Think of National Standards as business as usual. Use what you have already and make it fit.
- The culture of your school is important. Teachers need to know that they'll be supported and that expectations are realistic. If you put something in, you take something out.
- Make sure that parents are well informed. Be clear about their child's progress and don't forget the high achievers.

Trustees' advice

- Understand the context for achievement and that judgments are made from many sources.
- If students meet or exceed the standards, guard against complacency.
- Sustainability is important. *"We're never going to get there. It's the journey."* (Board Chairperson).
- Engage with the community and help them to understand the concept.

Teachers' advice

- Work together and have collaborative joint responsibility for each child's learning. OTJs can be a collective decision. Collaboration also helps to address inconsistency. *"We don't think our workload has changed. You just gather everything up and keep it simple."*
- Anecdotal comments recorded throughout the year are very useful when making OTJs.

- Make sure parents understand the school’s assessment process. Be clear about the progress their children have made, including those students exceeding National Standards. Include National Standards information in enrolment packs given to new families.
- Templates used in assessment and reporting should have a consistent format. This helps efficiency.

Parent advice

- Give parents a good range of information, especially about how they can help at home. *“It’s not one size fits all.”*
- Keep communication open so that parents know what’s happening. It’s okay to ask questions. Build a relationship with the school.
- The Ministry’s National Standards leaflets are helpful.

School H

Context

School H is a very small contributing school in a small town. At the time of ERO’s review, over a third of students identified as Māori. The principal has a pragmatic and positive view of the National Standards:

“It has been interesting and easy. The standards are part of the curriculum, not an add-on. We previously used nationally referenced tests as indicators and see the standards as an additional assessment tool.” (Principal)

Parents, teachers and trustees have adopted this approach, and the terms ‘manageable’, ‘logical’ and ‘useful’ are part of adults’ conversations.

Beginning to work with the National Standards

Before implementing the standards and changing report formats, teachers and parents were concerned about differences in report content and the criteria used to summarise students’ progress and achievement. This was particularly evident when students transferred to the school, and parents sometimes received conflicting information about how well their child was doing. Parents wanted specific, clear information about progress and achievement in reading, writing and mathematics. They also wanted to retain comments sections about their child’s social and physical development.

The change process began in 2009 with parents’ meetings to explain the terminology and purpose of various standardised tests such as Progressive Achievement Tests (PATs). The reporting process for students in the junior room changed very little. However, for senior students reports moved to focus on progress, recording beginning of year test results that were then discussed at parent interviews. Goals were set with students and parents towards achieving expected end-of-year results.

Teachers were involved in intensive literacy PLD and, through this, realised the connections between the National Standards and *The Literacy Learning Progressions*.

“We were on the right path to implementing the National Standards. With practices already in place, we agreed that ‘tweaking’ some expectations was all that was needed. We teach the curriculum, not to the standards. Most of our work has been in-house.” (Principal)

In 2010, the two teachers agreed parents should receive a commonly-formatted report regardless of their child’s class level. It was decided to have parent/teacher/child interviews in Terms 1 and 2 with a final report in Term 4. Each reporting session is a discussion based on a written report, supported by evidence in students’ books, samples, and formal assessment results. In Term 1, 2010, teachers introduced the National Standards. An indicator system using arrows on a continuum showed parents what their child was ‘tracking towards’. In Term 2, another arrow was added to indicate any progress. Parents’ understanding was helped by discussion about the standards at the beginning of the interview. The school felt it was important to state that achievement against the standards is based on more than one source of information. Progress was emphasised as teachers explained the end-of-year expectation compared with the student’s current level of achievement. The teachers worked hard to increase parents’ understanding of overall teacher judgements (OTJs) and how they are determined.

In 2011, reports continued to show progress on a continuum. Students’ goals and ways parents may help at home are decided cooperatively at interviews. Reports are acknowledged as evolving with small changes each year. As well as indicating how well the standard has been met, the relevant curriculum level is also reported with a brief explanation of terms used such as a stanine.

Board of trustees working with the Standards

Trustees found information given by teachers most useful in understanding the National Standards. The board has taken a positive approach to information the principal reports and focuses on solutions to help all students meet the required standard.

“We have a role in setting annual targets and we talk a lot about what resources are needed. The principal has encouraged us to ask questions and we do. Targets are high and challenging but the principal has always insisted on that. It’s just a different way of measuring. We know about OTJs and the kinds of tests that are used and how teachers use results. The principal reports progress to us at least quarterly.” (Trustee)

Trustees are aware that PLD has helped teachers to align assessment practice with the standards, especially in reading and mathematics.

Teachers working with the National Standards

“Teachers have to really know the curriculum and realise that the National Standards are part of the curriculum. Literacy and mathematics are passions of mine – it’s all about children’s progress. We have made decisions about the kinds of assessment that work – less is more. If we bring in something new that meets our needs, then we take something out. I take stock regularly, looking at work samples, my notes, analysed test results, what I observe as I teach.” (Junior class teacher)

The junior teacher has a profile for each student to help determine individual achievement and progress towards the standard. The focus is on Year 1 children making the best possible gains against *The Literacy Learning Progressions*. At the end of students' first year at school, a stock-take indicates specific targets for the following year's annual plan. Targets are accompanied by action plans, discussion with parents and learning pathways for individual students. Under-achievement is addressed daily through teaching. There is a strong commitment to early success being essential to later achievement.

OTJs emerge from formal test results, observed learning behaviour, conversations, reference to the curriculum (particularly the relevant National Standard) analysis of completed work, and teachers' professional knowledge.

"We don't need new materials. We have the standards, [Literacy] Learning Progressions and assessment resources from the Ministry website. Our checks and balances are internal at present using discussion and evidence. We also consider how well students apply their learning in other aspects of the curriculum. Our OTJ is helped by that." (Junior class teacher)

Teachers use the indicators from the New Zealand maths website,¹² together with PATs, to contribute to OTJs for strands other than number in mathematics. Reports to parents distinguish between number and other strands.

Individual students' needs are carefully considered. If a student has complex needs, teachers may have more discussion with parents, longer interviews and concentrate on small-steps progress. Target setting and planned interventions reflect this.

"The process for setting annual targets matches our recording of progress for each student. If a particular student or group of students has not made sufficient progress, then they are identified for 'special emphasis.' End of year one results are critical." (Junior class teacher)

Parents and whānau involved in the National Standards

"As parents we feel quite well informed about the National Standards. Teachers explain the reporting process before each interview. It's good to have clear information in every subject and the teacher has test results and other work to share, to illustrate how well our child is progressing. We feel comfortable about asking questions and feel supported by our child's teacher. Talking to the teachers also happens every day." (Parent)

Teachers sent home information booklets about the National Standards, as they became available. In this small school, parents prefer face-to-face discussion. They did not contribute to the report format process, but were asked to comment about the clarity of reporting during the interview. They like being part of the goal setting and the how to help at home process. Once all parts of the report are typed up, they become records of the interview for students and parents.

¹² <http://www.nzmaths.co.nz>

“Teachers have told us repeatedly that the standard is for the end of the year and we are all building towards it. The standards are challenging. From a glance we can see how our child is progressing.” (Parent)

Students involved in and contributing to the National Standards

Students talk about their current learning achievement and next steps. They also understand the strategies that help them achieve those steps. The goals set at the Term 2 interview are based on reflections from Term 1 goals. Students know about their results from the interviews and also from their teachers telling them.

“I move through the stages and my teacher talks about my progress. I need to keep reading. My words are better and I need to work on understanding what I read.” “I don’t struggle as much or ask for as much help. My strategies are better.” (Student)

During ERO’s conversation, other students backed up what these students said and added other thoughts about how the two had improved. They also identified different students’ strengths.

“My teacher tells me how close I am to achieving the standard. I am different from [X and Y].” “I think I will get to the National Standard in mathematics, not as confident in reading and writing.” (Student)

Students could discuss what the arrows on their reports indicated, and their progress. They were pleased, even if below the standard, and showed confidence.

Next steps

ERO asked groups in the school what they had identified as their next steps for working with the National Standards. The principal and teacher identified goals to:

- extend the moderation process; because the roll is small, it would be helpful to work with a large school
- give students more ownership of their learning by clarifying what is required to achieve the standard and by providing exemplars for students to refer to and self assess
- decide on a review process for reporting to parents, more formal perhaps than previous discussion.

Advice

ERO also asked groups in the school what advice they had for other schools.

Principal advice

- Have confidence in yourself and the board.
- Build relationships and trust.
- Believe that if used properly, the National Standards are worthwhile and it is fair that parents know where their children are at.
- Teach to the curriculum and use the standards as indicators.
- Remember it’s about the students.

Teacher advice

- See the standards as part of the curriculum and as another assessment tool
- Be part of the process of creating the documents and supporting material. Work on one curriculum area at a time. Have a formula so all documents have the same format
- Address your teacher-workload by considering your planning. Ask yourself: is it easy to use and is it needed? Question the use of formula-planned units for group reading and mathematics. Instead, plan from what the children can do by identifying next steps from daily observation
- Closely analyse and use assessment data to decide the next teaching step
- Get the environment right so all are on board, people trust each other so they are prepared to make changes, be flexible, trial and experiment
- Be honest with parents, keep them informed so they have no sudden surprises. Make the first contact and keep parents in the loop.

Conclusion

These examples of good practice highlight a clear commitment to working with the National Standards paired with school cultures that are proactive and focus on initiating change. Leaders and teachers understood how the National Standards aligned with and were part of the *New Zealand Curriculum*. They used the standards to help them monitor how each student was progressing and to identify what they need to work on next. In these schools, school leaders, trustees, teachers, and parents and whānau all recognise the part they played in ensuring each learner was achieving and progressing.

Each of the eight schools continues to focus on further improvements. They were all able to identify next steps for working with the standards, recognising that this was an ongoing process of review and refinement. The main next steps themes common across many of the schools included:

- trustees continuing to monitor the impact of PLD and resources on student progress and achievement
- trustees asking better questions about student progress and achievement data
- leaders continuing to build knowledge about the National Standards among all groups in the school, and across clusters of schools
- leaders refining reporting to the board
- leaders and teachers further developing moderation practices and developing clear indicators, expectations and exemplars in relation to the standards
- leaders and teachers refining reporting to parents, both formally and informally, and showing student progress over time
- leaders and teachers developing students' knowledge and understanding of their progress and achievement in relation to the National Standards
- leaders and teachers working to create seamless transitions to and from other schools when sharing students' achievement information
- leaders and teachers managing workloads.

These next steps demonstrate a strong commitment to increasing communication and learning partnerships to ensure each learner in their school can make the best possible progress.

Appendix One: ERO's other reports about the National Standards

ERO has published a series of reports about the implementation of the National Standards:

Working with the National Standards within The New Zealand Curriculum, August 2010.

Working with the National Standards: Raising Student Achievement in Reading, Writing and Mathematics, March 2011.

Working with the National Standards to Promote Students' Progress and Achievement, March 2012.

These reports are available on ERO's website at <http://www.ero.govt.nz/National-Reports>

ERO is currently evaluating the extent to which schools are working with the Mathematics Standards within their mathematics curriculum to promote students' progress and achievement. ERO is also gathering data about whether or not schools are meeting requirements to report to parents about their child's progress and achievement in relation to the National Standards.