

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

CONTENTS

Executive summary	1
Recommendations.....	2
Introduction.....	3
Methodology.....	5
Findings.....	6
Using <i>The New Zealand Curriculum</i>	6
Use of assessment data by teachers	8
Use of student achievement information by school leaders.....	12
Preparing to work with the National Standards within <i>The New Zealand Curriculum</i>	13
Examples of how schools were preparing to work with the National Standards	21
School A.....	21
School B.....	23
School C.....	25
School D.....	27
School E	29
Conclusions	32
Recommendations.....	32
Appendix 1: Questions used to guide this evaluation.....	34
Appendix 2: Statistics for sample of schools.....	35
Appendix 3: Report feedback form	37

Executive summary

This is the first of a series of evaluation reports that ERO will publish over the next three years about the implementation of the National Standards in schools with students in Years 1 to 8.

ERO evaluated how well prepared school leaders, teachers and trustees are to work with the National Standards as part of *The New Zealand Curriculum*. The evaluation was undertaken in 228 schools¹ reviewed in Terms 1 and 2, 2010.

All schools are expected to develop and implement a curriculum for students in Years 1 to 13 that is consistent with the principles, values and key competencies as outlined in *The New Zealand Curriculum*. In 2009, ERO completed a third evaluation of schools' progress in giving effect to *The New Zealand Curriculum* which found that most schools (76 percent) were in a good position to do so by February 2010. ERO's findings in this evaluation are similar to those in 2009, with 78 percent of the 228 schools found to be giving effect or making good progress.

Schools are expected to review and design their curriculum to respond to what they know about students. The National Standards give schools reference points to assess students' progress and achievement with a focus on raising achievement in reading, writing and mathematics. The standards are to be used in conjunction with assessment practices developed by each school to help with this process.

ERO found that most of the 228 schools were well prepared (19 percent) or had preparation under way (61 percent) and the remainder (20 percent) were not yet well prepared to work with the standards.

Schools that were well prepared to work with the standards were generally those that were well advanced in reviewing and designing their curriculum, and had robust self-review processes based on good quality student achievement information. Most of these schools had strong professional leadership. Leaders and teachers had been involved in ongoing, planned and targeted professional learning activities that focused on curriculum design and review to align their school's curriculum with *The New Zealand Curriculum*, on literacy and numeracy teaching and learning; and on increasing capability to gather, collate, analyse and use assessment data at all levels of school.

A sense of 'business as usual' prevailed in many of the well-prepared schools, with developments focusing on leaders and teachers working together to align existing benchmarks and expectations with the standards. Conversations were about the information teachers were using to make judgements about students' progress and achievement in relation to the standards, and how these judgements would be moderated using existing moderation processes. Many had already reviewed how they would report to parents and whānau against the standards.

¹ This refers to any schools with students in Years 1 to 8 and therefore also includes Year 7 to 15 schools and composite schools with students in Years 1 to 15.

Over half the schools (61 percent) had preparation under way to embed the standards as part of their curriculum. These schools were at various stages in working on their curriculum and reviewing assessment practices in order to use the standards. Some were focused on exploring the standards to understand better how they might fit with their current achievements expectations. Other schools were working on strengthening assessment practices in relation to the selection of assessment tools, making overall teacher judgements and moderation processes.

In schools that were not well prepared to work with the National Standards (20 percent), ERO found a range of contributing factors. Some had considerable work to do to use *The New Zealand Curriculum* and to improve assessment practice, particularly in relation to the collection and use of student achievement information as part of school self review. In others, poor leadership, high staff turnover and/or governance issues affected their progress. In a few of these schools there was opposition to implementing the National Standards.

It was of concern that only 30 percent of all schools in this evaluation had well-established practices throughout the school that involved students in assessing their learning, setting relevant learning goals and knowing about their next steps for learning. Student ownership of their learning and active involvement in knowing about and monitoring their own goals is central to working with the National Standards and reporting against them.

ERO found that three-quarters of schools had used some form of external support to help them understand the standards, with workshops or seminars being the most common. Despite concerns from a few schools, the range of support available was helping to increase awareness and understanding of the standards. Ongoing support is needed for school leaders, teachers and trustees as they continue to understand and work with the standards as part of their day-to-day curriculum implementation, assessment practice and wider school self review.

Recommendations

ERO recommends that schools:

- improve formative assessment practice to increase the opportunities students have to be actively involved in assessing their learning, setting goals and identifying their next steps for learning
- continue to use external support for leaders, teachers and trustees to help them understand and work constructively with the standards to raise the achievement of all students in reading, writing and mathematics
- use self review to work with the standards, specifically to review the robustness and dependability of their data in relation to the standards
- review the extent to which their curriculum is responsive to all students, including students identified as needing support to achieve success.

ERO will work with the Ministry of Education to identify individual schools and help them to address some of the challenges and issues highlighted in this report.

Introduction

The New Zealand Curriculum is a statement of official policy related to teaching and learning in English medium New Zealand schools. It was revised in 2007 and sets out a framework for schools to develop their own curriculum and teaching programmes. From the beginning of 2010, all schools are expected to develop and implement a curriculum for students in Years 1 to 13 that is consistent with the principles, values and key competencies as outlined in *The New Zealand Curriculum*. The process of design and review should be ongoing and responsive to each school's context.

Assessment is integral to each school's curriculum and is primarily about improving teaching and learning. To be effective² assessment should:

- benefit students
- involve students
- support teaching and learning goals
- be planned and communicated
- be suited to the purpose
- be valid and fair.

In October, 2009, the Government published National Standards in reading, writing³ and mathematics.⁴ These standards came into effect in 2010 for Year 1 to 8 English-medium schools. They have been aligned to *The New Zealand Curriculum* and are intended “to focus the education system on foundation skills and link expectations about student progress and achievement to the demands of *The New Zealand Curriculum*.”⁵ The standards 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*⁶, the Ministry of Education stated:

In this first year of implementation, schools are expected to:

- *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;*

² Ministry of Education. (2007). *The New Zealand Curriculum for English-medium teaching and learning in years 1-13*. Wellington. Learning Media Limited. Page 40.

³ Ministry of Education. (2009). *The New Zealand Curriculum - Reading and Writing Standards for years 1-8*. Wellington. Learning Media Limited.

⁴ Ministry of Education. (2009). *The New Zealand Curriculum - Mathematics Standards for years 1-8*. Wellington. Learning Media Limited.

⁵ See: <http://nzcurriculum.tki.org.nz/National-Standards/Key-information/Information-for-schools>

⁶ See: <http://nzcurriculum.tki.org.nz/National-Standards/Key-information/Information-for-schools>.

- *ensure that students understand their progress and achievement and what the next steps are in their learning;*
- *provide at least two plain-language, written reports to parents, family and whānau about their child's progress in relation to the standards; and*
- *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 findings of this evaluation highlight what helps schools to use the National Standards as an integral part of teaching and learning and of self review, and identifies some of challenges and next steps for schools.

Methodology

This is the first of series of national evaluation reports to be produced over the next three years that evaluate how schools use the National Standards to raise student achievement in reading, writing and mathematics.

This evaluation involved 228 schools where ERO carried out an education review in Terms 1 and 2, 2010. The types of schools, roll size, school locality (urban or rural) and decile groups of the schools are included in Appendix 2.

ERO gathered the data for this evaluation in the context of the major evaluation question for education reviews in 2010:⁷

How effectively does this school's curriculum promote student learning: engagement, progress and achievement?

ERO sought information about schools' progress with using *The New Zealand Curriculum*, their individual levels of understanding of, and how well prepared they each were to work with the National Standards.

ERO was interested in each school's current assessment practices and what school leaders and teachers knew about student progress and achievement. In particular ERO asked about how schools' current practices enabled:

- teachers to use assessment data to provide focused teaching, particularly the use of data to focus teaching on identified groups of students
- teachers to involve students in setting and understanding their learning goals
- teachers to make judgements about student achievement and rates of progress
- teachers to moderate judgements to ensure consistency and reliability
- school leaders to benchmark achievement information and use it as part of their self review to make resourcing and programme decisions to support student learning, progress and achievement.

The questions used in this evaluation are included in Appendix 1.

All data was collected by ERO review officers in the normal course of their review activities. ERO's *Draft Framework for School Reviews* sets out the process for education reviews.⁸

⁷ See: <http://www.ero.govt.nz/Review-Process/For-Schools-and-Kura-Kaupapa-Maori>

⁸ See: <http://www.ero.govt.nz/Review-Process/For-Schools-and-Kura-Kaupapa-Maori>

Findings

This evaluation has been undertaken in the context of each school's assessment practices and their progress in using *The New Zealand Curriculum*. This section presents the findings in relation to:

- schools' progress in giving effect to, and using, *The New Zealand Curriculum*
- teachers' use of assessment data
- school leaders' use of student achievement information
- how schools were working with the National standards within *The New Zealand Curriculum* including:
 - how well school leaders, teachers and trustees understood the standards
 - awareness and use of the Ministry of Education self-review tool⁹
 - schools' overall preparedness to work with the National Standards.

Using *The New Zealand Curriculum*

The New Zealand Curriculum sets the direction for student learning and is the framework each school uses to design and review its curriculum. Schools tailor their curriculum to suit their own particular context and improve student achievement.

In looking at each school's preparations to work with the National Standards, ERO considered their progress in using *The New Zealand Curriculum*.¹⁰

What did ERO ask?

How is this school progressing towards giving effect to The New Zealand Curriculum?

What did ERO find?

Just over three-quarters of schools (78 percent) were either giving effect to *The New Zealand Curriculum* (29 percent) or making good progress in this regard (49 percent). This is similar to the findings of ERO's June 2010 report *Preparing to Give Effect to The New Zealand Curriculum*, which reported that 76 percent of schools were either giving full effect or making good progress.

ERO's findings indicate that the more progress schools had made in giving effect to *The New Zealand Curriculum*, the more likely they were to be well prepared to work with the National Standards.¹¹

⁹ See: <http://nzcurriculum.tki.org.nz/National-Standards/Self-review-tools>.

¹⁰ Schools that are giving effect to *The New Zealand Curriculum* have designed their school curriculum within the framework of *The New Zealand Curriculum* and this is evident in school and classroom practice. These schools have also developed systems for ongoing review of their curriculum.

¹¹ The differences in ratings for progress with curriculum and preparedness to work with the National Standards were checked for statistical significance using a Mann Whitney U test. The level of statistical significance for all statistical tests in this report was $p < 0.05$.

Many schools that were well advanced in designing and reviewing their curriculum had been engaged in this process for some time. A few were beginning to review the effectiveness of their curriculum and others were taking some time to consolidate recent developments.

Although schools that were giving effect to *The New Zealand Curriculum* had approached their design and review processes in different ways, ERO identified some common practice. This included:

- having well-developed and ongoing self review
- undertaking extensive consultation in the school community
- embedding the principles, values, vision and key competencies of *The New Zealand Curriculum* in ways that were clearly articulated in the school's curriculum
- working collaboratively to ensure shared understandings and ownership of curriculum decisions
- aligning assessment practices to *The New Zealand Curriculum* and the National Standards.

The schools that were making good progress towards giving effect to *The New Zealand Curriculum*, were using a range of approaches and starting at different points to review and design their curriculum. Some had put extensive time into consultation and working on what schools referred to as the 'front end' of the curriculum. This enabled them to establish a framework based on the school's vision and values from which they could develop more detailed plans and expectations to guide teaching practice. Others were focused on aligning curriculum statements with *The New Zealand Curriculum* and were yet to look at integrating the key competencies and principles, or aligning assessment practices.

Seventeen percent of schools were just beginning to give effect to *The New Zealand Curriculum*. In some of these schools, the principal was newly appointed or a high level of staff turnover had a negative impact on curriculum development. In others, a lack of leadership meant that progress was slow. Many were exploring ways to consult their community about their school curriculum.

Five percent of schools had not yet begun the process of reviewing and designing their school's curriculum. This was largely due to poor leadership, or a lack of professional development to support curriculum review and design. In some cases other priorities, for example improving behaviour management, meant that progress related to curriculum development was slowed.

Challenges for all schools in reviewing and designing their curriculum related to:

- finding ways to integrate the key competencies
- developing assessment and reporting practices that aligned to *The New Zealand Curriculum*
- consulting parents and whānau in meaningful and responsive ways
- managing the turnover of school leaders and/or teachers to minimise the impact on progress with curriculum design and review

- shifting teaching practice to being more student centred
- supporting teachers to inquire into their own practice
- accessing relevant professional development to help with curriculum decision-making and the use of assessment tools aligned to *The New Zealand Curriculum* and the National Standards.

Next steps

Ongoing review and design of each school's curriculum in relation to *The New Zealand Curriculum* is crucial to ensuring that teaching and learning programmes are responsive to what schools know about students' progress and achievement against the National Standards. Schools need support to implement robust self review that enables them to make their curriculum responsive to all students.

Use of assessment data by teachers

In order to make sound judgements about students' overall progress and achievement, teachers use a variety of assessment tools and strategies. At particular points in time teachers use this evidence to make an overall judgment about a student's progress and achievement against the standards.

Schools are expected to engage in moderation processes to increase assessment dependability. School leaders have a key role in helping teachers develop confidence in discussing and moderating their judgements. Moderation involves teachers sharing their expectations and understanding of standards with each other to improve the consistency of their decisions about student learning. It may involve teachers in a group, within and across a school or from different schools in professional discussions about the judgements they have made and the evidence that supports these.

Students' involvement in assessing their learning, goal setting and identifying their next steps is at the heart of formative assessment. The Ministry of Education notes that "*good assessment practice should identify what next teaching and learning steps are achievable, and enable the teacher and student to move from the student's current state of learning towards their learning goals.*"¹²

What did ERO ask?

- *How do school practices enable teachers to use assessment data to focus their teaching?*
- *How do school practices enable teachers to use assessment data to involve students in setting and understanding their learning goals?*
- *How are teachers preparing to make their overall judgements about student progress and achievement against the National Standards?*

¹² See: <http://assessment.tki.org.nz/Assessment-in-the-classroom/Assessment-for-learning/Principles-of-assessment#2>

- *How are school leaders and teachers preparing to moderate assessment data (in reading, writing and mathematics) to ensure consistency and reliability?*

What did ERO find?

Teachers' use of assessment data

In almost all schools (88 percent), teachers were using assessment data in their teaching. However, ERO found that the use of data was highly variable.

In just over a third of the 228 schools, data was well used by teachers. Many of these schools had a strong focus on building teacher capability and confidence in working with and using data as part of their day-to-day teaching practice.

Where assessment data was being used well, teachers used it to:

- discuss students' progress with other teachers, in teams or syndicates
- moderate teacher judgements
- monitor students' progress
- identify teaching strategies for individuals or groups of students
- involve students in goal setting and deciding their next steps for learning
- monitor the progress of students in relation to school targets
- share information with parents and whānau
- identify professional development priorities
- critique and reflect on teaching practice.

In some of these schools, teachers benefited from discussions about patterns and trends identified from the collation and analysis of school-wide achievement information. Teachers were able to look at school-wide data and reflect on the implications for their practice.

In about half of the 228 schools, teachers were making some use of assessment data in their teaching. However, this was generally limited to identifying or targeting students for support or extension programmes, for grouping/cross-grouping students for teaching, planning programmes and reporting to parents. Some schools were working on developing expectations and guidelines to increase teachers' use of assessment data. In a few schools, teachers provided data for leaders to use to analyse patterns and trends, but did not use it in their teaching. For example teachers provided data about the achievement of Māori and Pacific students, but did not use it to inform their teaching.

In a few schools, teachers' use of assessment data was limited. This often led to practices such as whole class teaching, students needing support not being identified, or a mismatch between a teacher's planning and students' strengths and needs.

Preparing to make overall teacher judgements

In a fifth of schools, teachers were confidently making judgements about students' achievement in reading, writing and mathematics. Existing assessment practices enabled teachers to make judgements about student achievement in relation to school

expectations or benchmarks and/or curriculum levels. Many of these schools already had processes to gather good quality data using a range of assessment tools and other practices. Some had been involved in professional learning programmes to improve leaders' and teachers' ability to analyse and use achievement information. Some had also aligned school expectations with the standards and used existing resources such as *The Literacy Learning Progressions*.¹³

In just under half the schools, teachers were well on the way to being able to make overall judgements about students' progress and achievement. In many of these schools, leaders and teachers were working, some with external support, to align existing expectations and benchmarks with the standards. Teachers were engaged in discussions with colleagues about what assessment tools they were using, what information they had about student achievement, and what they needed to do to make judgements about student achievement in relation to the standards. A challenge for some schools related to balancing information gathered from formal assessment tools with less formal information teachers had about individual students, such as samples of work and everyday classroom observations. Some were also exploring how to determine and report on students' progress against the standards.

In a third of schools, teachers were less prepared to make overall judgements about students' progress and achievement in relation to the standards. Many of these schools did not have good quality, dependable achievement information to align to the National Standards.

Preparing for moderation

Moderation was most successful when it took place in a culture of school self review that included regular professional learning conversations about assessment data. Some schools were in the process of developing and documenting guidelines for moderation.

Two thirds of schools had some moderation processes already in place. Moderation of assessment data in writing was most common. Schools were using resources such as the *Literacy Learning Progressions* and school-developed exemplars to moderate student achievement in writing. Some had also developed moderation processes for reading and mathematics.

Some of these schools were also working with others on moderation, either through existing cluster activities or by developing relationships with other schools for moderation purposes. Just under half were small schools that were finding it useful to work with other schools to moderate their data.

Some schools had also worked with an external facilitator to develop moderation processes as part of planned professional learning and development in literacy and numeracy. Professional discussions at team or syndicate meetings also created a forum for moderation.

¹³ See <http://literacyprogressions.tki.org.nz/>

Eighteen percent of schools were just beginning to look at moderation and 15 percent had not yet considered how to moderate teacher judgements about student achievement in reading, writing and mathematics.

Challenges for all schools to improve moderation included:

- becoming familiar with available assessment tools and how these align to the standards
- moderating assessment data for strands of the mathematics curriculum other than number
- accessing suitable professional development to help with moderation
- finding ways to extend moderation, wider than their own school.

Involving students in their learning

Formative assessment practice, that involves students in assessing their learning and setting and monitoring learning goals, has been a focus of professional learning and development for some time. Despite this, only 30 percent of schools had well-established practices for involving students in setting and understanding their learning goals. When schools involved students in their learning, this was evident in the following practices:

- student-led conferences with their teacher and parents and whānau
- regular self assessment and peer assessment that is built into learning programmes
- teachers sharing assessment data with students
- students regularly reviewing their goals with peers, teachers and parents
- student portfolios providing evidence of progress towards and achievement of learning goals
- teachers sharing learning intentions, exemplars and success criteria with students.

ERO found variable practice for involving students in their learning in 20 percent of schools. In these, some teachers or year levels of a school were using formative assessment practices. Practice was often isolated and not supported by school-wide expectations or guidelines to ensure all students had the opportunity to assess their learning and make decisions about their goals.

Half the 228 schools were either at an early stage of developing practice (38 percent) or had not yet begun to involve students in goal setting (12 percent). In some of these schools, teachers were beginning to involve students in goal setting, moving from having general class goals to more specific individual student-relevant goals. They were also introducing student-led conferences and sharing learning intentions and assessment criteria with students.

Next steps

School leaders need to consider how well assessment practices guide and support teachers to gather and make good use of data in their teaching. They also need to support teachers in developing confidence in the sources of evidence they are using to

make overall judgements about student progress and achievement against the standards.

School leaders need to review the extent to which assessment practices actively involve students in assessing their learning, setting relevant learning goals and identifying their next steps for learning.

Use of student achievement information by school leaders

Self review is vital to implementing the National Standards successfully. An integral part of self review is using student achievement information in school decision making, and for schools to know what is working well and what could be further improved to raise student achievement.

School leaders, teachers and trustees need to know the impact of programmes and practices on student learning, and what this means for students' progress and achievement in relation to the standards.

ERO's draft *Evaluation Indicators for School Reviews*¹⁴ state that: *It is important that schools gather, collate, analyse and use valid and reliable information on students such as their achievement, progress and attitudes to learning. This information is used to inform decision making at a school-wide, cohort, classroom, group and individual level.*

What did ERO ask?

How do school leaders use achievement information to inform their self review, set targets and make resourcing decisions to support students learning, progress and achievement?

What did ERO find?

In 42 percent of the schools, leaders were found to be making good use of student achievement information. They used information to:

- target groups of students needing support with their learning
- set and monitor targets to improve student achievement
- set increasingly challenging targets
- identify school-wide patterns and trends in student achievement
- identify recommendations or next steps for improvement as a result of systematic self review
- identify school-wide curriculum priorities
- report to boards of trustees and the wider community
- set high expectations

¹⁴ See: <http://www.ero.govt.nz/Review-Process/Frameworks-and-Evaluation-Indicators-for-ERO-Reviews>.

- decide professional development priorities for individual staff and for a school-wide focus.

In just over a third of schools, leaders were making some use of student achievement information. In these schools, achievement information was mostly used for setting targets, making resourcing decisions, reporting to the board and identifying professional development needs for staff. Challenges for these schools included:

- making better use of information to identify and target support for specific groups of students
- improving school leader and teacher capability to analyse and interpret data
- making use of data beyond target setting
- using data to evaluate specific strategies and initiatives
- increasing the use of student achievement information as part of ongoing self review.

Eighteen percent of schools were found to be making limited use of achievement information. This was largely because of issues associated with the collation and analysis of data. Many of these schools had limited information about student achievement. Poor collation and analysis of what data they had often resulted in broad or generalised reporting. School targets were not always based on achievement information, and in some cases focused on all students and did not include the groups that most needed support.

In the four percent of schools not using student achievement information, ERO found that:

- student achievement information was not collected and/or analysed
- there were reliability issues with data
- targets were not evidence based and were general and difficult to measure
- trustees did not have access to information to inform their decision making
- self review was non-existent or largely informal.

Next steps

Schools are expected to use information about student achievement against the National Standards to set their targets for 2011. ERO findings indicate that while some schools will be well placed to do this, just over a fifth will need to improve the quality and analysis of student achievement information in order to set useful targets to raise student achievement in reading, writing and mathematics.

Preparing to work with the National Standards within *The New Zealand Curriculum*

Raising student achievement is a key priority and the National Standards provide schools with reference points or signposts that describe the achievement in reading, writing, and mathematics that will enable students to achieve success across *The New Zealand Curriculum*.

The National Standards came into effect at the beginning of 2010 and schools were expected to be working with them from then. ERO investigated each school's capacity to work with the standards, including the extent to which school leaders, teachers and trustees understood them.

What did ERO ask?

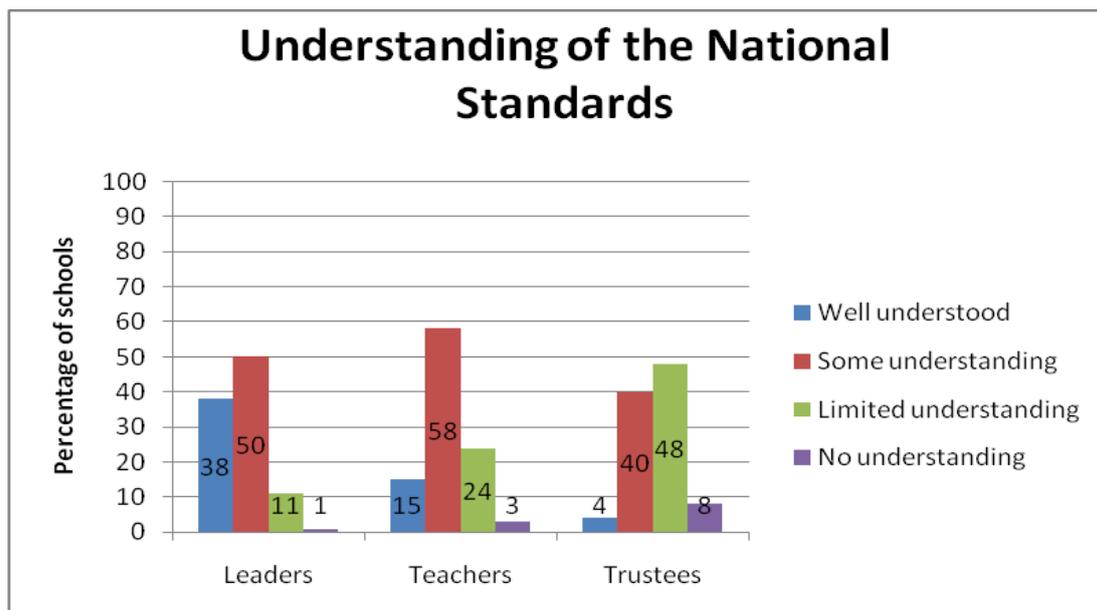
- *To what extent are the National Standards understood by teachers, school leaders and trustees?*
- *How aware are teachers, school leaders and trustees of the Ministry of Education self-review tool to support the National Standards?*
- *What support have teachers, school leaders and/or trustees accessed to help them to work with the National Standards?*
- *What impact has this support had?*
- *What support do teachers, school leaders and trustees need to support them to work with the National Standards?*
- *How prepared is this school to work with the National Standards as part of its teaching and learning in the New Zealand Curriculum?*

What did ERO find?

Understanding of the National Standards

ERO investigated the extent to which the National Standards were understood by school leaders, teacher and trustees.¹⁵

Figure 1: Understanding of the National Standards by school leaders, teachers and trustees



¹⁵ The National Standards will be well understood when the purpose and nature of the standards is known and their use within *The New Zealand Curriculum* and associated assessment practices is understood by school leaders, teachers and trustees (in their respective roles).

As indicated in Figure 1, school leaders were found to have the best understanding of the National Standards. Understanding the standards enabled these school leaders to take a planned approach to their implementation as part of school curriculum design and review processes, and to align their existing assessment practices to the standards. These leaders were also able to keep trustees and parents informed and to work with teachers to look at the implications for their classroom assessment practices. In some schools, leaders were more confident in their leadership as a result of their increased understanding of the standards, and of what their introduction meant for their school. Where leaders had limited or no understanding, this had a negative effect on the schools' preparation to work with the standards.

Teachers' understanding of the standards was evident in nearly three-quarters of schools. It enabled some schools to focus on specific aspects of working with the standards, in particular how teachers were going to make overall judgements, what these judgements would be based on, and how to include moderation processes. Where teachers had limited, or no, understanding of the standards, as for school leaders, this limited the school's capacity to work with the standards.

Trustees had the least understanding of the standards, with just over half having limited or no understanding. When the data for this evaluation was being gathered, board of trustee elections were imminent or had just taken place and this is likely to have contributed to ERO's findings. In most of the schools that were well prepared to work with the standards, trustees had some understanding of the standards.

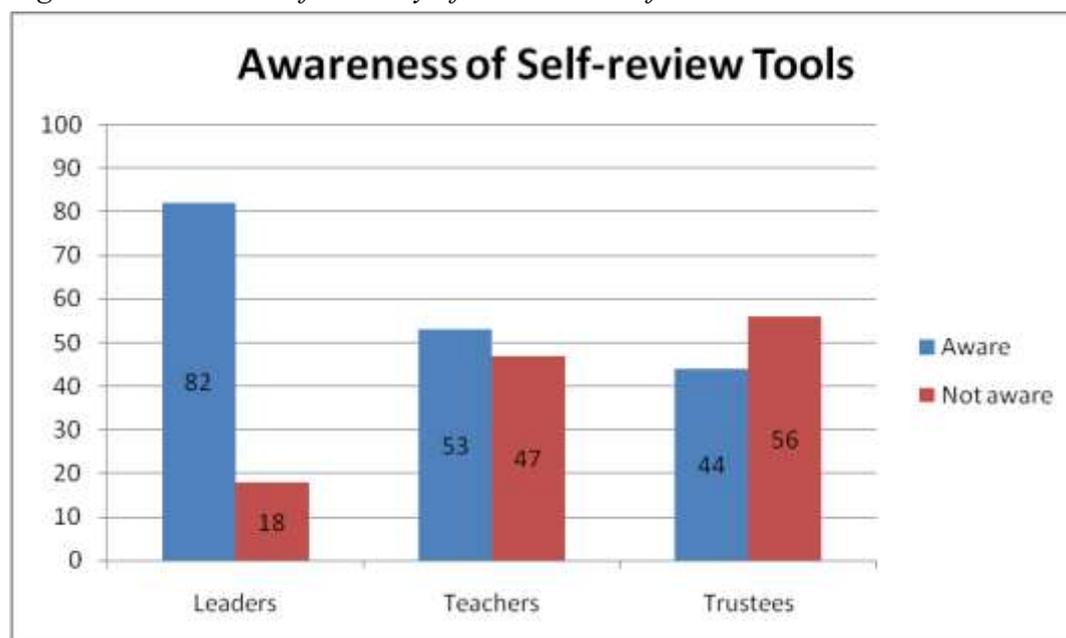
Use of Ministry of Education self-review tools

The Ministry of Education has also developed self-review tools to support schools in implementing the National Standards. Separate tools have been developed for leaders, teachers and trustees. They are intended to help them identify their professional strengths and learning needs in relation to the National Standards. The tools are based on a set of key questions and can be used collaboratively in schools as part of regular self review. They can also be used when schools are working with external facilitators.

ERO investigated how aware school leaders, teachers and trustees were of the Ministry of Education's self review tools¹⁶ and if they had been used. Awareness and use of the tools varied across schools. As shown in Figure 2, school leaders were the group with the most awareness (80 percent).

¹⁶ See: See: <http://nzcurriculum.tki.org.nz/National-Standards/Self-review-tools>

Figure 2: Awareness of Ministry of Education Self-review Tools



Many school leaders used the tool, specifically developed for their use, to assess how well they were progressing in their understanding and use of the standards. Some were using it as a basis for discussion at management and/or staff meetings. In some schools, leaders were aware of the tool, but were not yet using it.

In just over half the schools, teachers were aware of the self-review tool (for teachers), and it was mostly used to discuss what the standards might mean for their practice.

Trustees had slightly less awareness of the self-review tool than leaders and teachers. Its use by trustees was also largely informal. In a few schools, trustees found out about the tool during workshops or seminars related to the standards. The self-review tool was also discussed at board meetings or introduced to new trustees by the principal.

When the data was gathered for this evaluation, many school personnel were just finding out about the availability of the self-review tools. So while awareness was increasing, their use was more limited. School personnel found out about the tools when attending seminars and workshops, or through their ERO review where its use was discussed.

Support to work with the National Standards

A range of support is available to help schools use the National Standards, including professional development and printed and online resources.

Three-quarters of schools had used some form of external support to help them to understand and work with the National Standards. The most frequently accessed forms of support were professional development workshops and cluster meetings. Many schools had used more than one form of support and had supplemented

attendance at workshops with print and online resources, participating in web seminars and seeking the expertise of external facilitators.

Where schools had used external support, the impact was largely positive. Many school leaders and, teachers and trustees in some schools, reported greater awareness of what the standards were about and increased confidence in working with them.

As a result of external support schools were:

- improving the alignment between existing school assessment practices and the National Standards
- reviewing and refining reporting to parents
- developing a planned approach to using the standards as part of *The New Zealand Curriculum*.

In a few schools, leaders, teachers and trustees raised concerns about the quality of professional development seminars, workshops and meetings they had attended. Concerns included:

- facilitators being unable to answer questions or issues raised by school personnel
- more confusion than clarity of understanding from information presented
- meetings being dominated by participants who opposed the standards.

ERO also identified areas where further support is needed to help school leaders, teachers and trustees understand and work with the standards as an integral part of their curriculum. These include support to:

- align the standards with existing assessment practices
- help teachers increase their confidence in using multiple sources of evidence to make judgements based on the standards
- moderate teacher judgements about student progress and achievement against the standards
- work with other schools to moderate achievement information
- report to parents and whānau in ways that builds on existing reporting practice and meets parents' and whānau need for information
- enable trustees to more clearly understand their role in relation to the standards.

Schools highlighted the need for support to be ongoing and particularly focused on helping teachers understand and work with the standards. A few schools wanted more detailed guidance in particular areas such as, having more exemplars for writing aligned to the standards and about reporting to parents for students in Years 1 to 3.

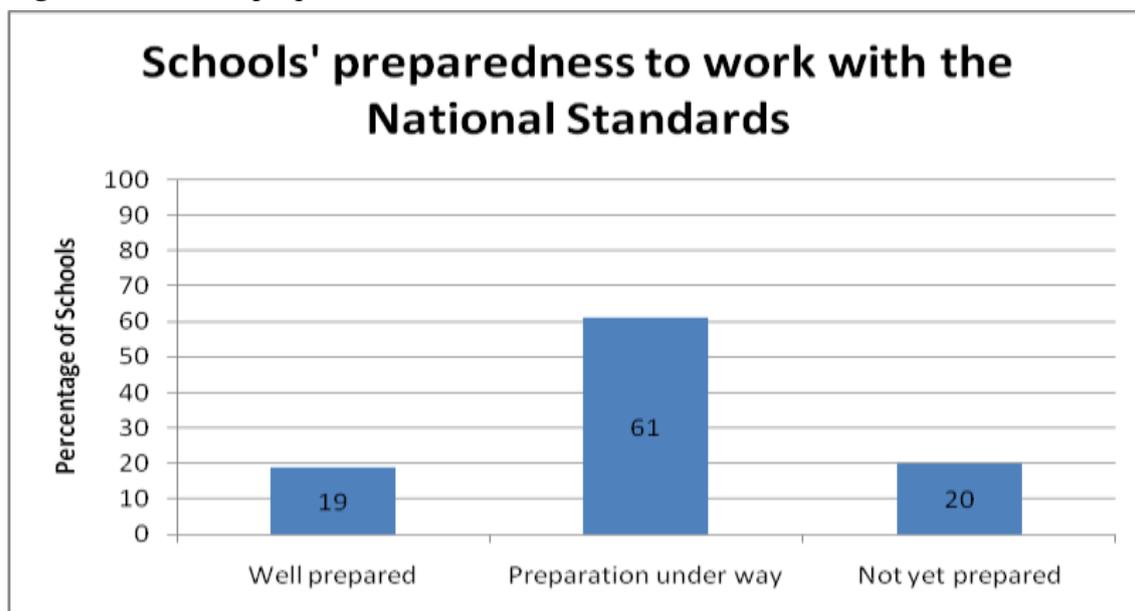
Preparation to work with the National Standards

ERO evaluated each school's preparedness¹⁷ to work with the National Standards. As

¹⁷ Schools that are well prepared to work with the National Standards will be making good use of assessment information for learning; be in the process of developing moderation processes; and supporting teachers to make overall judgements based on multiple sources of data.

shown in Figure 3, the majority of schools were either well prepared or making good progress towards working with the National Standards as part of their curriculum.

Figure 3: Schools' preparedness to work with the National Standards



Nineteen percent of the 228 schools in this evaluation were well prepared to work with the National Standards as part of their curriculum and associated assessment practices. ERO identified factors that contributed to the confidence leaders and teachers were developing in using the standards as part of the ongoing review and development of their assessment practices and curriculum.

Strong professional leadership was highly evident in most of these schools. Leaders were both driving and managing change, often sharing responsibility for development by creating leadership opportunities at all levels of the school. Planned professional learning and development was integral to progress and improvement in these schools over several years. In many of them, leaders were supporting ongoing development by adopting a planned approach to working with the standards.

A common feature of these schools was their progress in using *The New Zealand Curriculum* to design and review their school's curriculum. Almost all of these schools were found to be making progress towards or giving effect to it. The few that were not, had the capacity to undertake this work. Many schools had worked with their communities, undertaking extensive consultation about aspects of their curriculum such as vision, values and determining priorities.

Schools that were well prepared to work with the National Standards also had well-established practices for gathering, collating, analysing and using information about student achievement at all levels of the school. Expectations and guidelines were documented that enabled teachers to systematically gather and use data for a range of purposes. These included using data for professional discussions between teachers, at syndicate/team meetings and by school leaders as an integral part of school self review.

Schools had established, or were in the process of developing, formative assessment practices that focused on strengthening students' involvement in their learning. Teachers discussed learning intentions and criteria with students and talked with them about evidence of their progress towards specific learning goals.

Another feature common to these schools was the way in which boards of trustees were kept informed through regular reporting on student achievement and other aspects of school performance. Most trustees in these schools had some understanding of the standards, and were seeking support to better understand their role in relation to them. School leaders and trustees were proactive in keeping parents informed of developments through meetings and newsletters in many of these schools.

Teachers in these schools were well placed to make overall teacher judgements about students' progress and achievement against the standards. Many had already been doing this using school-developed expectations and benchmarks for achievement at different curriculum levels or year groups. Having a good understanding of the standards and the implication for their use enabled school leaders and teachers to adjust and fine tune their practices to align with national expectations as set out in the standards.

School leaders and teachers in these schools were involved in moderation as a professional activity. Moderation was already happening in aspects of literacy and/or numeracy in these schools and some were working with other schools through existing clusters or setting up moderation opportunities with neighbouring schools or ones of a similar size and type.

Most of these schools had focused on aligning existing practices to the standards, especially in the area of assessment. This included building on what teachers were already doing. For example, when schools were already using *The Literacy Learning Progressions* and *The Number Framework* they were looking at how expectations in these documents related to the standards. They were also identifying what to review, what to cull or stop, and what to continue doing. A strong feature of many well-prepared schools was their focus on continuous improvement supported by a culture of self review, critical reflection and collegial trust.

In the schools where preparation was under way (61 percent), ERO found a range of approaches and practices that reflected where each school was at in designing and reviewing its curriculum and aligning its assessment practices with the standards. Some were taking a planned approach to aligning assessment practices to the standards, and others were targeting areas for specific development such as supporting teachers to make overall judgements about students' progress and achievement and having discussions about how to moderate teacher judgements.

In many of these schools, leaders and staff had put time and effort into reviewing their reporting to parents about their child's progress and achievement against the standards. A few schools were exploring how to incorporate reporting against the standards for Year 1 to 3 students¹⁸ as part of their regular reporting cycle.

¹⁸ Schools are required to report on these students after one, two and three years at school.

The wide variability of practice in schools where preparation to work with the standards was under way, meant that their next steps were school specific. Some needed to continue work on aligning their schools' curriculum with *The New Zealand Curriculum* and other needed to improve their assessment practices. A few were waiting to attend workshops or seminars specifically about the standards before deciding what their next steps would be. School leaders' ability to plan ahead was crucial to making progress.

In schools that were not well prepared to work with the National Standards (20 percent), a common challenge was the need to improve current assessment practice through the use of a range of assessment tools in reading, writing and mathematics. Teachers and school leaders needed to improve the systematic collection, analysis and use of achievement information to improve student learning. Half of these schools also needed support with using *The New Zealand Curriculum* to design and review their school's curriculum.

Other issues that adversely affected schools' preparedness to work with the standards included:

- a high turnover of school leaders and/or teachers
- difficulties accessing workshops
- a lack of relievers to enable teachers to attend workshops
- school leaders' capability to lead change
- governance issues
- opposition to the implementation of the standards.

Examples of how schools were preparing to work with the National Standards

The following examples highlight how five schools have been preparing to work with the National Standards. The examples reflect the features common to schools that were ERO found to be well prepared to work with the National Standards. The common features include:

- professional leadership
- robust self review
- giving effect to *The New Zealand Curriculum*
- school leaders' use of student achievement information
- good use of assessment data by teachers
- preparation undertaken to work with the standards, and the next steps identified by each school to continue this work.

School A

Overview

School A is a large, urban contributing primary school that provides a high standard of education for students. Trustees, staff, students, and parents work in partnership to manage the school in an environment in which students are valued and able to flourish.

Leadership

Professional leadership in this school is strong. Leadership is demonstrated at all levels of the school. Senior and team leaders work together to provide comprehensive support for teachers and ensure the positive outcomes of professional learning programmes are embedded in teaching practice.

Self review

Self review is used for critical reflection by school leaders and teachers. Input is sought from staff, students and the community as part of the reviews carried out in the school.

The board uses student achievement data as part of its self review. This is so trustees can get a good understanding of achievement levels in the school and a better understanding of progress being made in relation to school initiatives. The board has changed meeting schedules so that there are four meetings a year that focus on student achievement and four that focus on other operational matters. Review findings from one year contribute to the next annual plan.

School leaders use achievement data to inform achievement targets in the annual plan. They have differentiated targets that are directed towards groups of students in all the achievement bands, including for those in the highest achievement bands.

Giving effect to *The New Zealand Curriculum*

The school's curriculum is well documented and gives clear guidelines to teachers. Good use is made of the strengths of staff and the organisation of the school day to deliver a broad curriculum. The school's curriculum gives significance to the school values, and the key competencies and principles of *The New Zealand Curriculum*. It promotes teaching as inquiry. Senior students are members of the curriculum focus teams. They actively participate in curriculum review, decision making and reporting. Students are aware of the contribution they make to helping ensure the curriculum is responsive to their needs.

Use of data by school leaders

Team leaders use achievement data as part of professional learning discussions with teachers about teaching strategies to promote student progress. Ongoing assessment is timetabled throughout the year. The school has clear guidelines for teachers in a well documented assessment schedule. Leaders closely monitor student progress throughout the year. Team meetings at the year levels are centred on using data to promote discussions about teaching strategies to promote progress for individual students. Teachers share professional practice and have a sense of a shared responsibility for raising student achievement.

Use of data by teachers

Teachers closely monitor the progress of students in their class. Assessment data is shared with students and most are able to talk about their writing level, reading age, and number strategy level. In writing and numeracy rubrics are being shared with students so they know what they have to do to achieve the next level and where they are aiming to go.

Preparation to work with the National Standards

A management unit has been allocated to one teacher who is responsible for setting up school systems to implement National Standards. This person has been able to gather all the information about the standards together, make sense of it and develop an assessment implementation plan for the school.

The principal has kept the board well informed about the standards through regular reports. Senior leaders have attended workshops about the standards, and curriculum leaders are to attend a second workshop provided for a cluster of schools.

This school was a trial school for the Ministry of Education's self-review tools. Team leaders gave feedback on the questions used in the self-review tool, and then used the tool with the whole staff. The self-review tool has also been used to evaluate school's own capacity to implement standards.

The school's progress in working with the National Standards includes:

- undertaking a staff survey
- providing professional reading for staff
- aligning the school's assessment timeline and teaching plans with standards; and reporting requirements

- aligning assessment tools with the standards
- developing success criteria exemplars
- developing a process to guide teachers in making overall teacher judgements
- keeping parents informed.

The next steps identified by the school include:

- overlaying the school's curriculum, with curriculum exemplars, and the learning progressions and ensuring these match
- finding ways to moderate teachers' overall judgements between schools. The school is considering establishing a sister school relationship to help with moderation.

School B

Overview

School B is a medium-sized, contributing primary school catering for students in Year 1 to 6. This school has a rich history and a tradition of high levels of community involvement.

Leadership

The principal provides responsive and consultative leadership and is well supported by senior managers. The distribution of leadership roles recognises and values staff strengths and contributions and makes good use of expertise to promote professional learning and development.

Self review

Processes for strategic planning and self review are well established. Detailed reporting on curriculum programmes, student achievement, and good use of annual review, enables the board to identify strategic priorities. Trustees have a good knowledge of school operations and are well placed to make sound governance decisions.

Giving effect to *The New Zealand Curriculum*

The school's curriculum is clearly based on the community's values, fosters key competencies for learning, and reflects a focus on literacy and numeracy learning. The curriculum provides an effective base for promoting students' learning. The board, managers and teachers take collective responsibility for student achievement and make good provision for learning support where this is required. Students, teachers and parents have a strong sense of belonging to the school.

Consultative practices are evident and the school is responsive to the outcomes of these. Whānau have been closely involved in curriculum development and the school is responsive to their aspirations for their children.

The school's curriculum promotes the key competencies for learning and these are a key feature in teachers' unit plans. The principles, values and key competencies of

The New Zealand Curriculum are well considered and clearly articulated in the school's curriculum. The curriculum offers good guidelines for teachers.

Use of data by school leaders

School leaders analyse numeracy and literacy data and pinpoint patterns and trends. They ascertain the next steps for school planning. They also use the data to monitor and track the progress of groups of students. Data is used in an ongoing way to modify school achievement targets over time; monitor the effectiveness of intervention programmes; make decisions on resourcing in response to the analysis; and compare school performance with national norms. Māori and Pacific students are identified in the analysis of achievement information at the leadership level.

Use of data by teachers

The school's assessment schedule enables teachers to use assessment data to identify early those students who are at risk of not achieving. Teachers use assessment information to group students for instruction and to inform the content of programmes. Assessment information is also used as part of the school's self-review systems to look at effectiveness of their teaching and the quality of programmes. Teachers monitor individual student's progress and identify students for target groups aligned with school targets. An action plan sets out strategies to support the achievement of targets. Progress against these is tracked regularly through the year.

Teachers are well versed in making "best fit" judgements for reporting to parents against curriculum levels in literacy and mathematics. They collect assessment data and information from teacher observations and present findings on a grid that clearly shows several types of assessment have contributed to the final judgment.

The school's assessment schedule specifies the use of reliable assessment tools. Professional development is available for teachers in the use of these tools. Moderation is carried out within syndicates and recently some sharing is happening at school cluster level.

The school has also developed matrices for students to see their progress through learning progressions, and to help them plan their next steps in writing and numeracy.

Preparation to work with the National Standards

School leaders and teachers have a good understanding of the National Standards and they are well placed to make sound judgements about students' performance against the standards. The school already has high quality assessment practices for numeracy and literacy. School benchmarks are aligned to levels of *The New Zealand Curriculum* and so align well to the National Standards. Teachers are used to making overall teacher judgments based on a range of assessment information.

The senior leadership team has accessed an online webinar, the Ministry of Education's website¹⁹ and Te Kete Ipurangi (TKI) website.²⁰ The team has attended a workshop on the standards and found some of the messages they received confusing. Leaders and teachers have read and discussed the National Standard documents issued to schools. They found this information clear and easy to understand. Although trustees are yet to access support, the standards have been discussed at board meetings, led by the principal.

The next steps identified by the school include:

- considering how to manage reporting to parents, in particular what children know and their next steps; and
- seeking more guidance in relation to reporting for students in Years 1 to 3.

School C

Overview

School C is small, contributing primary school catering for students in Years 1 to 6. It has a roll of 41 students, 13 of whom are Māori. A strong community and family atmosphere is highly evident in all aspects of school operations. A safe, respectful and supportive climate has been developed where students and their families feel welcome and have a strong sense of belonging.

Leadership

The principal provides effective leadership for curriculum development and school management, with a particular focus on promoting professional learning to improve student learning outcomes. Ongoing, whole-school professional development has been provided for teachers in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technologies (ICT). An inclusive and consultative leadership style encourages team decision-making and supports staff in developing their leadership capabilities. Collegial teamwork contributes to the school's high quality teaching programmes. Trustees are well informed through the principal's reports and this helps them to make resourcing decisions and develop targets based on achievement information.

Self review

Self review is ongoing and informs decisions about learning initiatives. There are direct links between the interpretation of school-wide achievement information and the setting of targets to raise student achievement levels. The school's annual and strategic plan is based on student achievement information and is also linked to professional development priorities for teachers.

¹⁹ See: www.minedu.govt.nz

²⁰ See: <http://www.tki.org.nz/e/tki/>

Giving effect to *The New Zealand Curriculum*

The school has revised its curriculum implementation practices and aligned the achievement expectations for reading, writing and mathematics to the National Standards. The school has designed its school curriculum within the framework of *The New Zealand Curriculum*, and this is evident in school and classroom practice.

Use of data by school leaders

The principal closely monitors all student achievement information and teacher assessment practice across the school. Regular whole staff meetings enable professional dialogue about classroom assessment practice and a sharing of ideas for consistency of understanding of achievement standards. Trends and patterns in student learning are identified and, when required special programmes are put in place to support these students.

Use of data by teachers

High quality assessment data is used by classroom teachers to plan the next steps for learning for individual students. Teachers skilfully use assessment information to inform planning and provide individualised programmes for children. Formal assessment folders, together with comprehensive written reports provide parents and students with a wealth of information about progress and achievement.

Students in Years 4 to 6 are aware of the purpose of lessons, the learning intentions and associated success criteria. They have developed goals that are specific and include what they need to do, how they are going to do it, and how they will know they have achieved their goals.

Preparation to work with the National Standards

Teachers are well on the way to showing how children are achieving in relation to National Standards. Comprehensive reports only need refinements in wording to show parents how well their child is achieving in relation to the standards. Assessment folders also keep parents well informed of their child's progress and achievement in all curriculum areas.

The principal has been to several workshops about the standards and found some aspects of these useful. The school is already using specific assessment tools that are aligned to the National Standards. The principal has also accessed Ministry websites and feels confident to work with the standards.

Teachers have been involved in staff meeting discussions. They feel they are already experienced with using assessment tools and in analysing and interpreting data to make overall judgements about student progress and achievement.

The next steps identified by the school include:

- aligning the school's expectations with the standards
- making clear the links between the assessment tools they are using and the standards.

School D

Overview

School D is a small rural school full primary school catering for students in Years 1 to 8. A clear and coherent vision for learning and achievement at the school is a result of extensive consultation among staff, the board, parents and the community.

Leadership

The principal sets clear expectations for teaching and learning that are well understood and help drive curriculum planning, assessment and reporting. Staff work as an effective team under the thoughtful and innovative leadership of the principal. The school has good systems for sustainability and improvement.

Self review

The board makes student achievement discussions the main part of their meetings. All students' achievement information is collated and those with extension needs and those at risk of not achieving are identified. There is a group of students in the middle achievement band that the board would like to have greater information about to ensure that they receive the support that they need to make progress.

Reading and basic facts reporting to the board is honest and accurate and used by the board in their decision making about funding staff, resources and professional development opportunities for teachers. Information is clearly set out with graphs and written explanations to ensure that data is easily understood.

Giving effect to *The New Zealand Curriculum*

School leaders, staff, board and the community have all had input into the developments of the school's curriculum. All involved in the school are working towards providing the best learning opportunities for students.

School leaders have worked extensively on the front end of the curriculum and have consulted widely with staff, students and community to ensure that all opinions have been considered. There is a common understanding of the school's vision and values. The principal acknowledges that they have been over-ambitious about how much they have been able to achieve in developing and reviewing their curriculum statements and programmes of work. They are happy with what they have completed in mathematics and are currently reviewing the English learning area.

Curriculum areas beyond literacy and numeracy are taught in an integrated approach and as teachers plan together there are provisions for levels 1 to 4 within the units. Students' feedback is sought at the end of each unit and this is collated by the principal and reported to the board.

Use of data by school leaders

The principal collates all student achievement information from each teacher and produces a report for the board of trustees. This is sent out the week before board meetings to allow trustees to read and reflect. The board then discuss the results and makes decisions about how it can support teachers in addressing any identified needs. An example of this was the results of basic facts tests. The board was concerned about the results. It arranged for the deputy principal to be released from class to teach targeted groups of students, and provided funds for the purchase of additional resources.

Use of data by teachers

The school has a wide range of student progress and achievement information that has been collected over time. Teachers work closely together and understand the school's values, vision and procedures. Good guidelines promote consistently high quality programmes and assessment practices.

All students are involved in three way-conferences where personal learning goals are set. In writing students have individual goal cards. These cards are level based and are used for students to assess themselves and for teachers to evaluate students' achievement. The principal has plans to develop these goal cards into other areas of literacy and mathematics.

Teachers moderate writing samples and have guidelines about assessment requirements. The use of standardised testing gives some level of consistency. Team work is strong and communication is a key factor in staff working together.

Preparation to work with the National Standards

School leaders do not have any major concerns about National Standards. Teachers make judgements about student achievement using professional judgments backed by information from a range of standardised tests. The standards are seen as business as usual in this school.

Teachers have recently consulted parents on redesigning their reports. The information reported is clear and uses easily understood language.

The school has good systems to ensure sustainability improvement and progress for all students. School leaders, staff, board and the community have all had input into the developments of the school curriculum. All involved in the school are working towards providing the best learning opportunities for students. The board is focused on learning and ensures that student achievement discussions are the main part of its meetings.

As a rural school, it has some difficulty in sourcing good quality ongoing professional development and specialist support. The next step for this school is for school leaders to attend a workshop about the National Standards (they were enrolled to attend this just after their ERO review).

School E

Overview

School E is a new contributing primary school catering for students in Years 1 to 6. The school provides a welcoming and inclusive learning environment for all children and their families.

Leadership

The principal and deputy principal provide skilled and effective school leadership. They have high expectations of themselves, the staff and the students and are knowledgeable about good practice in curriculum and assessment. Highly collegial and collaborative staff, parent and student relationships underpin ongoing development in the school. Strategic leadership opportunities help staff to grow through targeted professional development. Internal and external expertise is utilised and development is guided by the school's strategic plan, curriculum priorities and robust performance management system.

Self review

Self review is a strength of the school. Self review occurs at many levels of the school and is inclusive of the leadership team, staff, parents and the board. It is clearly based on student achievement information. Resource decisions, including intervention programmes, reflect the needs of students. The school is focused on improvement.

Comprehensive information about student achievement at each year level is reported to the board and based on some standardised tools and teachers' professional judgements. This information is used for resourcing purposes to support students and improve achievement. The school has also compared its data with the National Standards as at the end of 2009, and included this in the board's analysis of variance.

Giving effect to *The New Zealand Curriculum*

The school began working on its curriculum from the time it was established. A strong focus has been on developing solid foundations in numeracy and literacy through internal and external professional development. A 2010 strategic goal is to develop their own school 'learning model' closely linked to the school's values programme and inquiry.

The deputy principal is the school's curriculum manager and has an overall responsibility for planning, assessment and evaluation. Systems have been developed, in consultation with the principal and middle managers, which promote student progress and achievement and allow teachers to become increasingly reflective. These systems include: individual student learning plans; learning analysis evaluations; and planning and assessment sheets.

Use of assessment data by school leaders

School leaders and the board use achievement information well to inform their strategic plan. Progress and recommendations based on achievement information are noted in the strategic plan to inform the analysis of variance. The leadership team has established systems and structures that help teachers to identify students' strengths and needs. As a leadership team, these practices are monitored by them as part of the schools performance management and quality assurance system.

The information collected is of high quality. Well documented reporting is analysed at each year level, for girls and boys, and for Māori and Pacific students. The data is based on a range of standardised tools being used (especially in literacy) and teachers overall professional judgements.

Use of assessment data by teachers

Teachers use assessment information to differentiate their teaching programmes. They also identify target students for extra support. Some of these students also benefit from involvement in additional targeted support programmes. The impact of these programmes is reported to the board.

Twice yearly, teachers complete a comprehensive learning analysis evaluation. This evaluation is completed in all learning areas and includes self-review questions regarding the future direction of the school. Teachers respond to two key questions: "what are students good at?" and "what are their next steps for learning?" The document is also used by the principal to inform strategic planning.

Preparation to work with the National Standards

The school is well prepared to work with National Standards based on the good understanding members of the senior leadership team have of them and their enthusiasm to implement them. Leaders have developed a school culture of moderating assessment through the learning conversations and have school moderation processes in place. They see the standards sitting alongside their current practice and that the standards will only enhance their focus on self review and student achievement. The leadership team is responsive to emerging needs and trends and have a highly collaborative and inclusive approach to building school capacity.

The leadership team worked alongside staff at the end of 2009 to help them develop the confidence to make overall judgements about student progress and achievement against the National Standards in reading, writing and mathematics. These judgements were based on a range of information collected. The information about student progress and achievement against the standards compared well with what they already knew.

Senior leadership team members have attended workshops and used the Ministry of Education's resources, including the self-review tools. They found the tools useful, easy to understand with good examples to assist with preparation. Leaders have also kept the board informed and are about to provide further training for teachers. The use of the Ministry's self-review tools, the school's electronic system and data input by teachers has strengthened their preparation to work with the standards. The board

of trustees has also reviewed the school's 'Curriculum Delivery and Assessment policy' in regard to National Standards.

The next steps identified by this school include:

- seeking clarity about reporting for students in Years 1 to 3 in relation to their birth date and end-of-year reporting
- seeking further support to help manage processes around major assessment checkpoints that factor in time for teachers to make their overall judgements about students' progress and achievement against the standards.

Conclusions

At the time data was gathered for of this evaluation report (Terms 1 and 2, 2010), schools were at varying stages in working with the National Standards. The Ministry of Education was offering a range of support to schools to help them understand and use their self review to identify what they needed to do to review, refine and align existing practices with the standards.

Schools that were well advanced with their curriculum review process and where teachers and professional leaders were confident in gathering, analysing and using student achievement information, were more likely to understand the standards and align them with existing practices.

This evaluation highlights many challenges and next steps for schools as they continue to become familiar with and use the standards. Continued support is essential for this to be successful for all schools.

The findings of this report show that most schools had used some form of external support to help them understand the purpose and nature of the standards. Schools now need ongoing assistance and guidance to take this understanding and use it constructively in their own context to work with the standards.

Schools that need additional support:

- are not well advanced in designing and review their curriculum
- do not yet have systems in place to enable teachers to make good use of assessment data to focus their teaching, make overall judgements about student progress and achievement, and actively involve students in their learning
- have leaders who need to increase confidence and capability in using self review to collate, analyse, interpret and use achievement information for ongoing school improvement.

ERO is continuing to evaluate how schools are using the National Standards within their curriculum and through self review to raise student achievement in reading, writing and mathematics. In Terms 3 and 4, 2010 ERO will continue to focus on how schools are using the standards. ERO will also be discussing with schools how they report to parents against the standards and how they are preparing to set targets in their 2011 charters based on information they have about students' progress and achievement in relation to the standards.

Recommendations

ERO recommends that schools:

- improve formative assessment practice to increase the opportunities students have to be actively involved in assessing their learning, setting goals and identifying their next steps for learning
- continue to use external support for leaders, teachers and trustees to help them understand and work constructively with the standards to raise the achievement of all students in reading, writing and mathematics

- use self review to work with the standards, specifically to review the robustness and dependability of their data in relation to the standards
- review the extent to which their curriculum is responsive to all students, including students identified as needing support to achieve success.

ERO will work with the Ministry of Education to identify individual schools and help them to address some of the challenges and issues highlighted in this report.

Appendix 1: Questions used to guide this evaluation

ERO sought specific information in relation to the following questions:

- *How do school leaders use achievement information to inform their self review, set targets and make resourcing decisions to support students learning, progress and achievement?*
- *How do school practices enable teachers to use assessment data to focus their teaching?*
- *How do school practices enable teachers to use assessment data to involve students in setting and understanding their learning goals?*
- *How are teachers preparing to make their overall judgements about student progress and achievement against the National Standards?*
- *How are school leaders and teachers preparing to moderate assessment data (in reading, writing and mathematics) to ensure consistency and reliability?*
- *How is this school progressing towards giving effect to The New Zealand Curriculum?*
- *What support have teachers, school leaders and/or trustees accessed to help them to work with the National Standards?*
- *What impact has this support had?*
- *What support do teachers, school leaders and trustees need to support them to work with the National Standards?*
- *How aware are teachers, school leaders and trustees of the Ministry of Education self-review tools to support the National Standards?*
- *To what extent are the National Standards understood by teachers, school leaders and trustees?*
- *How prepared is this school to work with the National Standards as part of its teaching and learning in the New Zealand Curriculum?*

Appendix 2: Statistics for sample of schools

This evaluation involved 228 schools in which ERO carried out an education review in Terms 1 and 2, 2010. The types of schools, roll size, school locality (urban or rural) and decile ranges of the schools are shown in Tables 1 to 5 below.

Table 1: School types

School type	Number	Percentage of sample	National percentage ²¹
Full Primary (Year 1-8)	104	46	48
Contributing Primary (Year 1-6)	82	36	36
Intermediate (Year 7-8)	15	7	6
Special School	4	1	2
Secondary (Year 7-15)	10	4	4
Composite (Year 1-15)	11	5	4
Restricted Composite (Year 7-10)	2	1	<1
Total	228	100	100

Table 1 shows that full primaries and special schools in the sample were slightly under-represented, in comparison to national figures. Intermediates, and composite schools in the sample were slightly over-represented, in comparison to national figures. The differences were not statistically significant.²²

Table 2: Roll size

Roll size ²³	Number	Percentage of sample	National percentage
Very small	25	11	9
Small	69	30	24
Medium	76	33	38
Large	38	17	19
Very large	20	9	9
Total	228	100	100

²¹ The national percentage of each school type is based on the total population of schools as at May 2010. For this study it includes full and contributing primaries, intermediates, special schools, secondary, composite and restricted composite schools with students in Years 1-8. This applies to locality and decile in Tables 2 and 3.

²² The differences between observed and expected values were tested using a Chi square test.

²³ Roll sizes for full and contributing primary schools, special schools and intermediates are: very small (between 1-30); small (between 31-100); medium (101-300), large (301-500); and very large (500+). Roll sizes for secondary, composite and restricted schools are: very small (1-100), small (101-400); medium (400-800); large (801-1500); very large 1501+).

Table 2 shows that small and very small schools in the sample were over-represented, and medium and large schools were under-represented, in comparison to national figures. This difference was not statistically significant.

Table 3: School locality

Locality²⁴	Number	Percentage of sample	National percentage
Main urban area	110	48	51
Secondary urban area	9	4	6
Minor urban area	17	8	11
Rural	92	40	32
Total	228	100	100

Table 3 shows that the numbers of main urban, secondary urban and minor urban schools in the sample are under-represented and rural schools over-represented in comparison to national figures. This difference was not statistically significant.

Table 4: School decile ranges

Decile²⁵	Number	Percentage of sample	National percentage
Low decile (1-3)	58	25	29
Middle decile (4-7)	90	40	40
High decile (8-10)	80	35	31
Total	228	100	100

Table 4 shows that low decile schools in the sample were under-represented and high decile schools were over-represented, in comparison to national figures. This difference was not statistically significant.

²⁴ Based on location categories used by the Ministry of Education and Statistics New Zealand as follows: Main Urban population > 30,000; Secondary Urban 10,000 to 30,000; Minor Urban 1,000 to 9,999; Rural < 1,000

²⁵ A school's decile indicates the extent to which a school draws its students from low socio-economic communities. Decile 1 schools are the 10 percent of schools with the highest proportion of students from low socio-economic communities, whereas decile 10 schools are the 10 percent of schools with the lowest proportion of these students.

Appendix 3: Report feedback form

Working with the National Standards within *The New Zealand Curriculum*

The information in this box is optional

Name: _____

School/Institution: _____

Your role: _____

(for example, Teacher, Parent, Trustee, Researcher, Principal)

Address: _____

Please help ERO evaluate the quality of this report. By sending ERO your views on this report you are contributing to the quality of future national reports.

*Please send you comments by email to info@ero.govt.nz; by fax to the following number: 0-4-499 2482; or post to: **Evaluation Services, Education Review Office, Box 2799, Wellington 6140** (Freepost authority number 182612).*

1. How readable was this report? (language, structure and content) Indicate one of the following:

Highly readable		Fair		Not very readable
5	4	3	2	1

2. Were there any aspects or sections of this report that were difficult to understand?

Yes / No

If **yes**, what sections or aspects were difficult to understand?

