

# Briefing report

## Education Review Office (ERO): Keeping children engaged and achieving in writing: strategies that work

Date	24 May 2019
Security Level	N/A
ERO Priority	Medium
ERO Reference	M19-18
Date requested	ERO initiated
Date due	ERO initiated
Proactive release	Recommended

Addressee	Action sought	Deadline
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**Minister of  
Education**

It is recommended that you:

- a) **note** the attached national evaluation report on *Keeping children engaged and achieving in writing: strategies that work*, along with a two-page summary
- b) **note** the attached media release
- c) **note** that ERO intends to release this report on its website in June 2019.



Attachments:

***Education Review Office (ERO):  
Keeping children engaged and  
achieving in writing: strategies that  
work***

**Minister's Office to complete**

Noted

Seen

Approved

Referred to:

Date signed by Minister: 28.5.19



Comments:

Our Ref: M19-18

24 May 2019

**Hon Chris Hipkins**  
**Minister of Education**

### **Keeping children engaged and achieving in writing: strategies that work**

#### **Background**

1. Attached is ERO's national evaluation resource: *Keeping children engaged and achieving in writing: strategies that work*.
2. This resource is the sixth in a series of reports derived from a national study of teaching approaches and strategies used in schools where there has been a significant increase in the number of students at or above the expected level in the upper primary school years (Years 5 to 8). Such achievement patterns differ from the trend in the majority of New Zealand primary schools.
3. National achievement data shows that while many New Zealand children make good progress during their first three to four years at primary school the rate of progress generally slows during Years 5 to 8. Recent ERO publications have identified variability that results in children experiencing widely divergent opportunities to learn, both within and across schools.

#### **ERO's evaluation**

4. ERO evaluators visited 40 full primary or contributing primary schools across New Zealand. These were selected from a database of 129 schools, all with rolls over 200. These schools were chosen because increased numbers of students were achieving in reading and writing or mathematics (or both) as they moved through Years 5 to 8. This is an exception to the situation in most schools.

5. At each school, ERO evaluators asked leaders what they saw as the reasons for their positive achievement trajectory. They then looked for evidence of the approaches and strategies used, and the outcomes, by:
  - talking with children, parents, teachers, leaders and, where possible, trustees
  - observing in classrooms
  - looking at documentation, student work, class displays and school environment.
6. In this resource, we share some of the strategies and approaches used by six schools who had focused on improving achievement in writing.
7. The six schools are:
  - Northcross Intermediate School
  - Papakura Central School
  - Fairfield Primary School
  - East Taieri School
  - Hokuwhitu School
  - Oratia School

### **Key findings**

8. The schools with the greatest improvements in writing achievement in the upper primary school had actively sought professional learning and development (PLD) that specifically targeted the writing aspects they wanted to improve.
9. Developing high quality writing programmes across all levels of the school was a priority in these schools. Leaders wanted to make sure all teachers understood and were able to respond to the different stages children move through to become successful writers. It was not about doing more in writing; it was about evaluating what was working, and discarding things that demotivated children and got in the way of their learning.
10. Children's perspectives were valued, and they were surveyed or interviewed to help identify their strengths and needs. Children were often really clear about their challenges that limited their progress in writing and what was needed to help them improve.

### **Working with Ministry of Education**

11. In December 2018 we worked with the Ministry of Education to co-design and co-facilitate a one-day workshop to discuss the draft outcomes of this evaluation report about writing. Attendees included a range of experts in the field from Initial Teacher Training, universities, PLD providers and the Ministry of Education.
12. The workshop was used to share some ongoing issues evident in the teaching of writing. Participants carried out a root-cause analysis of why these issues might exist and defined which actions could shift practice. The Ministry is using the outcomes of this workshop to define which actions should be prioritised and develop and deliver revised approaches and guidance for schools.

## Recommendations

13. ERO recommends that you:

- a) **note** the attached national evaluation report on *Keeping children engaged and achieving in writing: strategies that work*, along with a two-page summary report **noted**
- b) **note** the attached media release **noted**
- c) **note** that ERO intends to release this report on its website in June 2019. **noted**



Nicholas Pole  
Chief Review Officer

NOTED / APPROVED



Hon Chris Hipkins  
Minister of Education

28 / 5 / 19