

Briefing report

Education Review Office (ERO): Proposed Operating Model For School Reviews

Date	12 November 2020
Security Level	N/A
ERO Priority	Medium
ERO Reference	M20-37
Date requested	ERO initiated
Date due	ERO initiated
Proactive release	Not recommended

Addressee	Action sought	Deadline
Associate Minister of Education with responsibility for the Education Review Office	<p>It is recommended that you:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) note that ERO has engaged in an extensive consultation process with the sector about proposed changes in its work with schools b) note that ERO is responding to feedback received and iteratively improving the proposed school operating model as a result c) note that ERO has commenced a trial of the proposed approach with 75 schools across New Zealand d) note that the new approach strongly links evaluation findings with the school planning and reporting process e) note the list of leadership partners and schools in Appendix 1 f) agree to discuss the contents of this paper with ERO officials g) note that this briefing is not recommended for proactive release. 	



Attachments:

**Education Review Office (ERO):
Proposed Operating Model For
School Reviews**



Comments:

Minister's Office to complete	
Noted	<input type="checkbox"/>
Seen	<input type="checkbox"/>
Approved	<input type="checkbox"/>
Referred to:	
Date signed by Minister:	

Our Ref: M20-37

12 November 2020

Hon Jan Tinetti
Associate Minister of Education
with responsibility for the Education Review Office

Proposed Operating Model for School Reviews

Purpose

1. This briefing note, responds to your request, and follows our briefing to you as the Incoming Minister with responsibility for the Education Review Office where we outlined key shifts in our approach to working with New Zealand State Schools. We previously briefed Minister Hipkins on these changes in May 2020, *Proposed New Operating Model for School Reviews* (M20-14). That briefing outlined our progress in developing a new school reviews operating model and our intention to begin implementing the new model in the 2020/2021 financial year.
2. The new approach adopts a more differentiated and collaborative approach to external evaluation and is focussed on supporting school improvement.
3. This briefing updates you on our progress in the development of this work, summarises key themes which have come through the consultation and outlines some of the key features of the proposed approach which still require decisions. This includes the nature of any external reporting that we might produce as a consequence of the process.

Background

4. Our briefing report 'Proposed New Operating Model for School Reviews' (M20-14) was provided to Minister Hipkins in May 2020. The briefing identified a number of key features of the new model.
5. The 2019 review of Tomorrow's Schools, *Supporting all Schools to Succeed: Reform of the Tomorrow's Schools System* asked ERO to strengthen both its focus on system-wide evaluation and review, and its support for continuous improvement. In response ERO reviewed its operating model resulting in a model with a significantly different focus and requiring substantial changes in the way ERO engages with schools and in the reporting that results. Considerable internal consultation along with input from sector representation occurred in the framing of the proposed new school operating model. The Minister asked ERO at the time to extend its external consultation with the sector.
6. Under the proposed new operating model, ERO will move to a differentiated approach, allowing it to work more intensely with those schools that require more

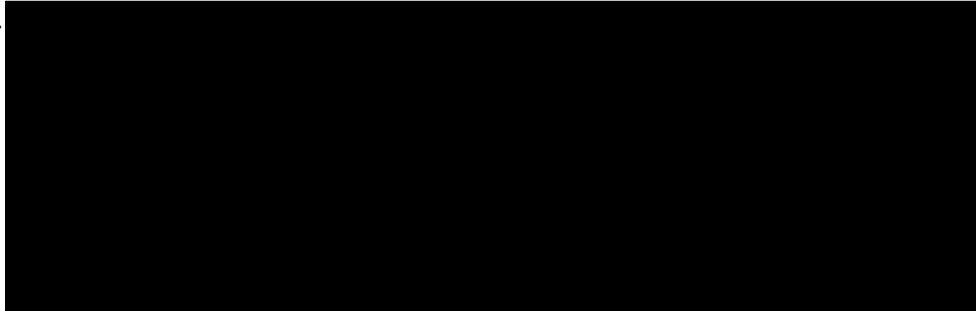
intensive support. Through this proposed model, ERO will shift from event-based external reviews to supporting schools in a process of continuous improvement.

7. ERO is committed to equity and excellence for all students. We have a strong evidence base about what matters most in improving outcomes for all learners and the evaluation practices that influence and lead to sustainable organisational improvement.

Key features of the new model

8. ERO shifts to a more developmental approach to evaluation, supporting each school's improvement over time, rather than the reviews being a 'one-off' event.
9. An "ERO evaluation" partner will work alongside the school over time. The evaluation partner builds a professional relationship and will use their education and evaluation expertise in understanding the context and needs of the schools they work with.
10. The schools' strategic planning both informs the evaluation focus and direction. ERO's evaluation role becomes critical to and connects with the school's strategic planning and reporting cycle as part of an ongoing improvement journey.

11.



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12. In addition to those listed above, we have also consulted and engaged 13 of our Leadership Partners in shaping the direction of the new approach (see Appendix 1). These partners are practicing Principals or DP's currently released from their schools to assist ERO in its review work.

13. At the heart of our proposed approach

- A continuous improvement cycle driven off evaluation for accountability and improvement.
- Implementation of a more participatory and collaborative approach to evaluation to improve the quality of evaluation findings and enhance their use for improvement.
- The model is intended to improve outcomes for students by embedding evaluation for improvement into schools' strategic planning and reporting cycle.
- There is a strong emphasis on schools working with their communities and engaging them with the improvement journey.

Evaluation Improvement Cycle

14. There are several phases to the model. Following the schools and ERO's initial engagement, an evaluation panel comprising school leaders, an evaluation partner and other partners as agreed, such as a Leadership Partner jointly identify the key

priorities, targets and strategies that will make the most difference to improving outcomes for all learners.

15. The use of the school's strategic and annual planning process is a critical element of evaluation improvement cycle so that ongoing monitoring, evaluation, adjustments are purposeful and timely.
16. Working with schools in this way enables ERO to be in the unique position to provide significant insight and expertise in the redevelopment of strategic and annual planning requirements at a systems level.
17. Depending on the conditions within the school, ERO may also recommend to the Secretary for Education interventions as outlined under the Education and Training Act, or that additional supports be made available to the school to support improvement. We are presently exploring with the Ministry whether this might include the establishment of a change or improvement team involving relevant stakeholders and expertise.
18. There are several opportunities for internal or external reporting to different audiences.

What doesn't change

19. While this is a different model, ERO will continue to:
 - put the child at the heart of everything we do
 - hold schools to account where there are serious failures.

External Consultation: Sector Response and Engagement

20. ERO is committed to consulting widely with a range of stakeholders and incorporating this feedback into the design and implementation of the new school evaluation approach.
21. A comprehensive consultation process to engage with the sector about the proposed New Operating Model for School Review has involved over 1500 principals and senior leaders, and representatives from most regional Ministry of Education offices. Groups of trustees, parents and other interest groups have been engaged in the consultation process. ERO continues to seek and use the feedback received.
22. There has been a high level of engagement and professional interest expressed by the sector. Feedback from the sector includes:
 - An appreciation of ERO's consultative approach to the development and implementation of the proposed new operating model for school reviews.
 - High levels of support for the proposed model and affirmation for the school and ERO working together in partnership.
 - The value added of leadership partners, from the sector, being involved in the approach.
 - A positive response to an approach that is tailored to each school's contexts, strengths and needs.
 - Strong support for ERO to hold schools to account where they are not serving the needs of their learners.
 - The reporting function maintains trust and confidence in the approach and relationship with ERO.

23. The sector largely sees the potential of the approach. Questions were mostly about the operationalisation of the model. They recognise the proposed new approach is very different in terms of the skills evaluation partners will need and are interested in how ERO is building capability.
24. There is considerable interest from school leaders in wanting to take part in the new approach. This also extends to a high level of interest from school leaders in becoming leadership partners. ERO has provided the briefing note, ERO Leadership Partners Initiative (M20-41). The sector sees this as an opportunity to contribute back to the education system, gain skills in evaluation and strengthen their own capabilities while supporting their colleagues with school improvement.

Implementation of the new schooling approach

25. ERO will begin implementation of the new approach with a group of 75 schools in this term (Term 4, 2020). Schools include varying sizes and types to ensure a cross-section of the New Zealand school system. This will allow us to learn as we go and get real time feedback from schools and our evaluators. Staging the roll out with selected schools nationally allows for iterative adjustments to the approach so that we are ready for full implementation in 2021.
26. Key sector stakeholder groups will be working with us to provide feedback on the changes. This feedback will provide refinement of the model and inform other changes needed for successful implementation across the sector.
27. ERO has engaged an external provider to evaluate what is working well and what is needed to support the approach moving forward.

Internal and External Reporting Options

28. ERO has an important role in public reporting and accountability in the system. This transparency ensures that New Zealanders maintain confidence in their schools and services, particularly in a highly devolved system. There are however tensions in this. Firstly, reporting requirements can dominate the evaluation approach we adopt and secondly, judgements in relation to poor performance can work to undermine the trust in the evaluator and potentially undermine a strength based and improvement orientation by the provider to addressing findings. We are also aware that there are multiple audiences for our reporting (parents, school boards and leadership teams, the Ministry, NZSTA etc.). Historically, feedback has indicated that we have not necessarily got this balance between audiences right.
29. ERO is exploring a range of reporting options that align with our role and function as the government's education evaluation agency. All reporting models will be tested with the sector and focus on evaluation for improvement.
30. Approaches to reporting need to be fit for purpose and audience. Concepts under consideration include:
 - iterative reporting during the phases of the evaluation
 - formative reporting to support decision-making for improvement over time, to ensure an understanding of what's working, what's not, for whom and why, and what needs to be prioritised to make the most difference to outcomes for learners
 - summative reporting to provide point in time judgements to track improvement, effectiveness and outcomes over time

- use of a rubric to collaboratively make decisions about learner outcomes and the conditions that support learner success.

Recommendations

31. It is recommended that you:

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|--|-----------------------|
| a) note that ERO has engaged in an extensive consultation process with the sector about proposed changes in its work with schools | noted |
| b) note that ERO is responding to feedback received and iteratively improving the proposed school operating model as a result | noted |
| c) note that ERO has commenced a trial of the proposed approach with 75 schools across New Zealand | noted |
| d) note that the new approach strongly links evaluation findings with the school planning and reporting process | noted |
| e) note the list of leadership partners and schools in Appendix 1 | noted |
| f) agree to discuss the contents of this paper with ERO officials | agree/disagree |
| g) note that this briefing is not recommended for proactive release. | noted |



Nicholas Pole
Chief Executive

NOTED/APPROVED



Hon Jan Tinetti
Associate Minister of Education
with responsibility for the Education Review Office

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Appendix 1



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