National Report Summary

Accelerating the Progress of Priority Learners in Primary Schools (May 2013)

This report presents the findings of ERO's recent evaluation about the extent to which primary schools were using effective strategies to improve outcomes for priority groups of learners. In this report 'priority learners' refers to Māori, Pacific, special needs, and students from low income families, who are not achieving at or above National Standards.

The **findings** show that only 23 percent of schools' actions demonstrated the use of highly effective practices the students needed to catch up with their peers.

The report outlines the features of **schools with highly effective practices** and shows how teachers, leaders and trustees all contributed.

There are several **recommendations** in the report for school leaders, trustees, teachers and the Ministry of Education.

A highly effective school - example

The following example of a full primary school in an urban setting exhibits many of the effective practices discussed in the report. The full text is in the report:

Priority learners are identified by teachers in the first instance. Teachers work in learning hubs with up to 80 children and three teachers. They analyse achievement data together and share information about the students. The analysed information about students needing support is provided to their senior leadership team.

Teachers in the hubs collaboratively plan the learning programmes tailored for the needs and interests of individuals and groups of students. Teachers make specific decisions about how often priority learners need individual or group teaching time and what students need to master next. Teachers in the hubs use 'thinking books' to reflect on their teaching and the students' learning.

Teachers document the individual progress of priority learners in school templates, under the following headings:
- What is the shift that happened?
- What intervention/s caused the shift?
- Where to next?

These templates are filled in as part of review and reflection that occurs at staff meetings. Further charts record every student's progress compared to expectations.

Teachers move children on the chart as part of staff meetings. The process makes accelerating the progress of priority learners a collective responsibility as well as a collective celebration.

The senior leadership team promotes a belief that 'the system needs to fit the child, not the child fit the system'. Staff are provided with ongoing professional development that has included aspects such as:
- why some children make shifts and others don't
- what makes a difference for children's learning
- a parent-led session explaining what it is like to be a parent of a child finding it difficult at school.

The board is well-informed about the achievement and progress of students. Trustees are able to speak about student achievement and progress with confidence, and board decision-making is based on this information.

Self-review questions for schools*

Accelerating the progress of priority learners

These questions can be used to review the actions of boards, leaders and teachers to accelerate the progress of priority groups of learners. In this report 'priority learners' refers to Māori, Pacific, special needs, and students from low income families, who are not achieving at or above National Standards.

Board of trustees

To what extent do the board's processes contribute to improved outcomes for learners, particularly for priority learners?

Review: What does the board know about the achievement of students in their school?

Plan: How has the board used the information they receive to set targets, plan, allocate resources, and develop principal performance agreements?

Monitor: How has the board monitored their progress towards achieving targets for priority learners?

Review: What does the board know about the impact of their decisions on accelerating the progress of these learners?

School leaders

To what extent are leaders' processes and practices accelerating the progress of priority learners?

Review: What processes are leaders using to determine which groups of students and which learning areas should be targeted? Do targets and processes focus on the students whose progress needs to be accelerated most?

Plan: How are leaders extending teachers' capability to accelerate the progress of the identified priority learners?

Implement: How are leaders identifying and monitoring the implementation of agreed strategies?

Report: How are school leaders helping the school's community to understand and contribute to the actions in place for priority learners?

Review: What does the leader know about the impact of the strategies in place to accelerate the progress of priority learners?

Teachers

To what extent are teachers focused on accelerating the progress of priority learners?

Review: What process do teachers use to identify and monitor the progress of the priority learners? Are teachers focused on the students that need to make the most progress? Are teachers focused on the groups of students, for whom the board has set targets for? If not, why not?

Plan: How are teachers involved in developing, or made aware of, strategies they should use to accelerate progress in relation to the school's targets? What PLD have teachers had to support them to accelerate the progress of priority learners in their class?

Implement: What do leaders know about how well teachers are implementing any agreed strategies? How have teachers involved priority learners in understanding what they need to do to accelerate their progress? How have teachers involved parents/whānau in supporting their children to progress?

Review: What do teachers know about how their interventions or strategies are making a difference for priority learners*?*

* Developed from ERO's evaluation indicators. See the report for the full list of questions.

FIND OUT MORE
For more ideas and information, you can read the full report online at **www.ero.govt.nz/national-reports**

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