

**Preparing to Give
Effect to
The New Zealand
Curriculum**

June 2010

Contents

Overview	1
Introduction	2
Findings	3
School leaders' preparations for giving effect to <i>The New Zealand Curriculum</i>	3
Teaching to promote student learning	11
What factors contributed to effective implementation overall?.....	14
What overall factors hindered the implementation of effective teaching and learning strategies?	16
Conclusions	17
Appendix 1: Methodology	18
Appendix 2: Statistics of schools in the sample for this report	19
Appendix 3: Evaluation Indicators	21
Preparing to Give Effect to <i>The New Zealand Curriculum</i>	21
Appendix 4: Reviewer Synthesis Sheet	23

Overview

This is the third in a series of three evaluations of schools' preparations for giving effect to *The New Zealand Curriculum*. The three reports are based on evidence gathered by the Education Review Office (ERO) during education reviews conducted from Term 3, 2008 to Term 4, 2009. The previous two reports were completed in January and September 2009.

In the September 2009 report on schools' preparations for implementing *The New Zealand Curriculum*, ERO identified curriculum leadership, monitoring and self review, and use of available resources as the most important factors in making progress. ERO concluded that the next priority for school leaders was to give effect to *The New Zealand Curriculum* in their school organisation, thereby promoting student learning through effective teaching.

In this evaluation, undertaken in Terms 3 and 4 2009, ERO investigated school leaders' progress with organising teaching and learning to give effect to *The New Zealand Curriculum*, and implementing effective teaching strategies. Overall, schools continued to move towards implementing *The New Zealand Curriculum*.

This study showed that most schools were in a good position to give full effect to *The New Zealand Curriculum* in February 2010. They had responded positively to the opportunity to designing a curriculum that would match the needs of their students and communities. Many had:

- increased their understanding and appreciation of the intent of *The New Zealand Curriculum*;
- successfully consulted a range of groups in the school's community;
- effectively reviewed their vision and values and integrated these, along with key competencies, into planning and teaching;
- comprehensively reviewed school curriculum documentation, before developing achievement objectives in each learning area and making connections between them across the curriculum;
- made progress with aligning their school systems, policies and procedures to *The New Zealand Curriculum*; and
- engaged staff in implementing teaching strategies that further promoted student learning.

Seventy six percent of schools were either already giving full effect to the curriculum or were making good progress towards giving effect to new school and classroom curricula, by the end of 2009. Only three percent of schools had not yet begun to make any preparation to give effect to the curriculum. In these schools leaders appeared not to have recognised the need to change and felt that the challenges were beyond their control, or someone else's responsibility to address.

Schools that were already giving effect to new school curricula aligned to *The New Zealand Curriculum* had focused professional leaders. These leaders used robust review processes to identify what needed to improve and strategically managed curriculum change. They worked collaboratively with teachers to ensure expectations

of, and support for, teachers were well understood for each development priority and stage. The positive influence of leaders modelling their own actions as learners was also evident.

Another key feature was the centrality of the learner. More school leaders were listening to the students' views as part of curriculum consultation, review and design processes. Many teachers put learner-focused strategies into practice.

An important aspect of progress since the previous ERO report was that more teachers were using student achievement information to reflect on the effectiveness of their teaching.

Introduction

This national evaluation report presents findings from the third stage of ERO's investigation into schools' readiness to give effect to *The New Zealand Curriculum*.

Since 2008, schools have been preparing to give full effect to *The New Zealand Curriculum*, using a range of support materials and resources to guide their progress. In two previous reports, ERO evaluated the extent to which schools had considered vision, values, key competencies, learning areas and principles as part of their own curriculum review and design. In 2008 many schools had already started to implement aspects of *The New Zealand Curriculum*. From the beginning of 2010, however, all schools' curricula are expected to align with *The New Zealand Curriculum*.

This report presents the findings from ERO's investigation under two main headings:

- **School leaders' progress with preparations for giving effect to *The New Zealand Curriculum*** – What aspects were going well and what schools had done to move toward implementation; what aspects were slower to develop and what factors were impeding preparation?
- **Teaching to promote student learning** – In the schools where all or most teachers were aligning practice to *The New Zealand Curriculum*, what were they doing particularly well and what factors contributed to effective implementation; in the schools where teacher actions had yet to reflect *The New Zealand Curriculum*, what were the barriers faced?

In contrast with ERO's previous two reports on *The New Zealand Curriculum*, this third evaluation presents findings from primary and secondary schools together, rather than separating and comparing them. In taking this approach, ERO recognised that all schools were expected to be implementing *The New Zealand Curriculum* by February 2010. It was therefore less useful to compare the two sectors. Differences, moreover, were less apparent than in the previous studies. Where there were contrasts or important differences between primary and secondary, these have been incorporated into the findings as appropriate.

This report focuses on the effective teaching and learning found in the schools studied, and on the associated factors that contributed to or hindered full implementation of *The New Zealand Curriculum*. These factors included activities undertaken to reflect community priorities in schools' own curricula, as well as leaders' progress with reviewing existing frameworks and designing curricula aligned to *The New Zealand Curriculum*.

Findings

Of the 76 percent of schools managing curriculum change well, 63 percent of the 245 primary and secondary schools were making good progress towards giving effect to *The New Zealand Curriculum* and a further 13 percent were already giving full effect to changes.

Of the remaining 24 percent only three percent had not yet begun to give effect to *The New Zealand Curriculum*. In individual classes, in some of these schools, teachers had considered aspects of some of the new processes needed such as integrating new technologies, being guided by the curriculum principles and integrating key competencies.

Considering that schools were not expected to be fully implementing *The New Zealand Curriculum* before February 2010, this overall finding reflects high levels of engagement with the intent and principles of the curriculum.

School leaders' preparations for giving effect to *The New Zealand Curriculum*

Many school leaders were well under way or had begun processes associated with giving effect to *The New Zealand Curriculum*. They fully understood the need to develop a wide range of processes associated with preparations for *The New Zealand Curriculum* and had a clear plan for embedding each process across the school. These leaders acknowledged that although some of the processes were completed or successfully implemented, others required further development.

In some schools there was no evidence that leaders had formally focused on particular processes necessary to give effect to aspects of *The New Zealand Curriculum* by 2010. In these schools some of the processes listed below were evident in individual classrooms but not formalised school-wide.

Table 1 shows the extent of progress made according to indicators based on *The New Zealand Curriculum* framework¹. Those judged as under way were either developing or beginning to develop the following processes.

¹ See Appendix 3.

Table 1: Percent of leaders' progress with processes associated with preparations for The New Zealand Curriculum

Progress with processes	Well under way	Developing or beginning to develop	Not Evident
Reviewing school learning statements	42	52	6
Choosing appropriate achievement objectives	36	54	10
Considering links between learning areas	35	57	8
Integrating key competencies	46	50	4
Aligning assessment processes	29	62	9
Considering progressive learning stages	29	61	10
Integrating new technologies	37	57	6
Being guided by the curriculum principles	42	49	9
Aligning school-wide systems	32	56	12

What aspects were going well?

Schools' progress with the different preparation processes varied according to the priority that leaders had given to each aspect. Integrating key competencies into teaching and learning programmes, for example, was well under way in almost half the schools.

Many leaders had made good progress with other processes such as reviewing learning statements and considering how the curriculum principles would be explored and included in the school's own curriculum.

In the schools where progress towards implementation was well under way, the positive results of effective leadership and organisation were clearly evident. These included:

- timely and useful professional development, led from within the school or provided by an external source, that contributed to shared understanding and school-wide implementation of agreed strategies;
- strong parent, whānau and community involvement in developing the school curriculum, through consultation, whānau groups, cultural and sporting events;
- priority given to recognising and responding to 'student voice,' by giving learners opportunities to contribute to decision making and planning;
- high levels of collaboration among teachers;
- appropriate provision for the integration of information and communication technologies (ICT) into teaching and learning school-wide;
- well-established formative assessment practices, to help students take increased responsibility for their own learning and progress; and

- integration and embedding of school values and key competencies into teaching and learning.

Two schools that were well under way

One of the schools whose leaders were well under way with organising teaching and learning to give effect to *The New Zealand Curriculum* was an integrated Years 7 to 15 secondary school.

Preparations for implementing *The New Zealand Curriculum* began in 2007, when the acting principal and deputy principal attended Ministry of Education road shows for guidance to begin discussions in the school. Curriculum leaders and former students then organised workshops to review the school's values. Later that year, the board surveyed the community as part of the appointment process for the new principal, and also surveyed parents, students and teachers about aspects of school life.

The 2008 strategic plan incorporated the reviewed vision and values and provided for increased ICT capability of staff. The school was also involved in AToL² professional development, which gave a strong foundation for using an evidence-based approach to teaching and embedding effective teaching strategies already evident in parts of the school.

Teachers responded positively to the professional development programmes over the last three years. They had a good base to build on, but the most notable aspect was the way that they were putting the students at the centre of learning processes.

Some of the practices that ERO observed were: personalising the learning for each individual student through one-to-one conferencing, providing constructive feedback about students' next steps in learning, inviting students to share their prior knowledge, and working with students to develop and agree on the learning expectations.

One of the primary schools that was well under way with preparations was a Years 1 to 8 school in a provincial town.

The principal had led the development of the school's curriculum since 2006, when a timeline and processes for designing a framework aligned to *The New Zealand Curriculum* were agreed by the board and staff. Since 2006, annual action plans successively incorporated the strategic priorities in line with the implementation plan.

The 2008 strategic plan reflected the principles of *The New Zealand Curriculum*, with a focus on student learning. The plan incorporated local values, key competencies and learning area priorities identified through extensive consultation with the community and students in 2006 and 2007. By the end of 2008, a conceptual framework for the school's implementation of *The New Zealand Curriculum* was adopted. The school had developed a clear pathway for the full implementation of the curriculum in 2010.

² *Assess to Learn* – a professional development programme that promotes the principles and practices of effective assessment to support learning. A key element is that both learners and teachers respond to the information that assessments provide.

One of the 2009 targets was to move staff from a big picture understanding of *The New Zealand Curriculum* to the adaptation required for their school. Staff worked collaboratively on the development of the school's own curriculum, with a shared understanding of what was required. This work entailed substantial externally facilitated professional development.

Regular board reports included discussions about the curriculum. In November 2009, teachers presented the "School-Based Curriculum," which evolved from the framework of *The New Zealand Curriculum*, the interests of the community and the needs of the students. The comprehensive plan integrated a vision in which students were at the heart of teaching and learning. Specific goals were that students experience success, develop thinking skills, become independent and self-regulated learners, and communicate effectively.

The school's curriculum focused strongly on high quality teaching. This embodied the integration of agreed values and key competencies, ICT, formative assessment practices, evidence-based teaching, cooperative learning and outdoor education. Literacy and numeracy learning was identified as the basis for all teaching. The key competencies of Managing Self and Relating to Others were embedded in the school's plan to give priority to thinking skills, physical activity, and relationship development in their teaching and learning.

The key success factors in this school were leadership, collaboration, professional development, collegial discussion and decision-making, and effectively engaging the board and community.

These two examples demonstrate how leaders had to pull together many of the elements needed for curriculum change in schools where good progress had been made in preparing to give full effect to *The New Zealand Curriculum*.

What schools had done to move towards implementation

Strategic management

Some of the schools that were already giving effect to *The New Zealand Curriculum* had been helped by starting on their preparations early. They had used the long lead-in period effectively, giving ample time to engage in wide consultation and discussion before developing plans and consolidating new ways of thinking about teaching and learning.

In other schools, robust and well-embedded self-review practices meant that alignment to *The New Zealand Curriculum* was 'business as usual.' In a context where collaboration and self review was a feature, it was not a huge leap to use what teachers and leaders already knew about students, their learning and their community's perspectives to plan for giving effect to *The New Zealand Curriculum*.

Many schools had made good progress by following an agreed implementation plan. This approach contributed to steady, continuous development, and ensured that they were ready to give effect to *The New Zealand Curriculum* in February 2010. Effective action plans strategically and clearly outlined detailed steps, timelines and the people responsible for agreed actions.

Consultation

Consultation with parents, whānau and local communities had been an initial step for most of the schools that were already giving full effect to *The New Zealand Curriculum*. These schools used a variety of methods to find out what parents wanted the school to do for their children and what was important in their school's particular context. Feedback and information from surveys, hui and meetings provided a solid foundation for developing a vision, a set of relevant values, key competencies and achievement objectives to integrate into subsequent planning. Schools that succeeded in engaging the interest and support of their communities, including Māori communities, were in a strong position to strategically advance their progress.

Reviewing vision and values

Formulating an updated vision and set of values for the school were typically an early step towards implementation. Often this entailed telling different groups in the school community about the expectations associated with designing a school curriculum that aligned with *The New Zealand Curriculum*. Following consultation, responses from parents and whānau, staff, student and board members were collated, then vision and values statements were developed to encapsulate the most important aspects.

In the schools that were giving effect to *The New Zealand Curriculum*, school leaders included teachers in discussions and decisions about the curriculum from the outset. Effective leadership and school-wide professional development were usually vital in this process. Many schools formed local clusters for this purpose. Clusters gave them the added advantage of understanding shared values and priorities, enabling smoother transitions for students moving between local schools.

The following example of a school's progress demonstrates how effective change management helped move it into a position where it was able to give full effect to *The New Zealand Curriculum* in 2009. The school is a small rural secondary school.

Over a three-year period, broad consultation helped to gain insight from a variety of sources. Parent-teacher evenings had a time for discussion and decisions about *The New Zealand Curriculum*. A meeting of parents took place to establish the school's values and vision and to formulate ideas for the strategic plan. Newsletters continued the information sharing so parents had a clear understanding of the key competencies. The whānau support *rōpū*³ was a valuable forum for consultation with the Māori community.

Over the same time staff surveys and discussions were an important part of the consultation. Meetings and discussions during this period encouraged positive changes in staff attitudes. Consequently, teachers were open to adopting new strategies and to focusing on lifting student achievement.

Professional development was wide-ranging and substantial to promote change in effective literacy teaching, ICT, key competencies, evidence-based teaching, learning strategies, developing a suitable curriculum to suit local needs and developing distance education with video conferencing.

³ Group of people, association.

The board was well informed about *The New Zealand Curriculum*. As part of their regular meetings, trustees had numerous sessions about its implications for them. The board rewrote its charter according to the views gained from the consultation.

As part of cluster activities with other schools, students had wider subject choices through video conferencing. Teachers were up-skilled through subject learning circles in the cluster.

A three-period, daily timetable was trialled to give students more time to engage in their learning. Teachers also trialled units of learning and as result felt more confident about their lessons. Teachers were ready to implement *The New Zealand Curriculum*, with some minor areas to be completed.

One of the schools giving full effect to *The New Zealand Curriculum* in 2009 had placed particular emphasis on developing a learner profile that reflected the local community. This is an urban contributing primary school.

Consulting with parents and the community started in early 2007. Surveys were ineffective, especially for some groups in the community. Instead, the board adopted the strategy of putting up 'graffiti boards' for parents and whānau to contribute anonymously when they were in the school. This proved effective, and rich data were collected. From 2007, school leaders and trustees ran two meetings a term with all parents, and one a term specifically for whānau to discuss *The New Zealand Curriculum*.

Material and feedback gathered were collated and rationalised alongside the ideas of teachers, leaders, trustees, and teacher aides. Several teacher-only days were used to help teachers clarify their understanding of the school's vision and values.

Students brainstormed a learner profile of what a graduate should look like. Parents added to this and the 'T-(school name) Learner' was born. Reporting to parents then included this learner profile. Students, teachers, parents, trustees and community had ownership of the T-Learner. Views and ideas gained during the consultation process were incorporated into the T-Learner profile and curriculum.

Leaders used diagrams to indicate relationships between elements in their school's curriculum. These showed how principles, values and key competencies dovetailed into the T-Learner profile and the learning areas. All groups in the community have knowledge and shared understanding of the school's new curriculum.

In addition to the T-Learner profile, local components of the curriculum included the local history, Māori myths and legends, local geography and problem-solving inquiry activities in the local area.

The T-Learner profile guided all the school's planning and actions and gave a clear sense of direction.

What aspects were slower to develop?

School leaders in around 10 percent of schools had yet to develop some aspects of *The New Zealand Curriculum*. These included:

- aligning the implementation of *The New Zealand Curriculum* with school-wide systems;
- deciding which achievement objectives to give priority to in their long-term teaching plans;
- formulating how students' learning stages or pathways would build on earlier learning or experiences;
- determining how existing assessment processes aligned with the school's curriculum; and
- considering how the curriculum principles were to embed in the school's curriculum.

In one school, reviewers commented that the principal needed to focus on raising the quality of teaching practice in parts of the school. Although there were some examples of high quality teaching, systems such as appraisal needed to be aligned, successive stages of learning and different learning areas needed to be linked, and the curriculum principles needed to be applied across the learning areas. The principal was doubtful about the sustainability of changes made, which highlighted the lack of progress with integrating and embedding new developments.

What factors were impeding preparation?

A variety of factors was associated with some schools' slow progress towards implementation. The major challenges included both internal and external factors that some schools perceived as impediments over which they had no control.

Leadership

Ineffective leadership was a common feature of schools that had made little or no progress with organising teaching and learning. In some schools the principal had insufficient knowledge of *The New Zealand Curriculum*. Other principals were unmotivated and did not think it was important to review their school curriculum, or stated a belief that they were already doing what was required. Alignment to *The New Zealand Curriculum* was not evident in practice.

Having a new principal was seen as a challenge by some schools, but others perceived this as an advantage, as the new leader quickly embarked on a plan of action.

Leadership did not always rest with the principal. In many schools, the changes were managed by a team of teachers or by a distributed leadership structure. However, when principals did not recognise a need for action, they did not formally delegate responsibility or clearly support developments. In these circumstances, getting teachers motivated and fully involved in curriculum review and development was another critical challenge.

Teacher buy-in

Gaining the commitment of the entire teaching staff was mentioned as a challenge in some schools. In some of these schools there remained pockets of apathy and resistance to curriculum change. In others, monitoring was not in place, and leaders did not know the extent to which teachers were starting to align their practice with *The New Zealand Curriculum*.

In some cases, teachers had not been consulted about the school's vision and values and consequently perceived these as imposed on them. In others, teachers were not fully aware of the intent and principles underpinning *The New Zealand Curriculum* and were therefore unenthusiastic about taking on something new and having to make changes to their teaching practice.

Limited understanding and a lack of ownership of the direction that their schools were taking meant some teachers had opted out of development processes. The lack of commitment resulted in an inconsistent quality of teaching evident within and among schools nationwide. With the use of student achievement information to make decisions about teaching and learning programmes and other effective teaching strategies such as formative assessment, the quality of learning for students in these classrooms was at risk in the longer term.

Slow start

In some schools, ineffective leadership resulted in a late start on the preparation processes. Some schools had yet to consult with parents and whānau, staff, students or the community. This meant that reviewing the school's vision and values and considering how best to integrate the key competencies were either delayed or were proceeding without considering the views of the groups that would be affected by changes to the school's curriculum.

Some of the schools that had not yet begun, or had just begun, to give effect to *The New Zealand Curriculum* had not consulted their communities, which meant that they could not respond appropriately to local aspirations and priorities.

Review and design

Some schools had difficulty reviewing their curriculum documentation and designing new frameworks aligned to the learning areas. Leaders in these schools saw this as a complex process: reflecting *The New Zealand Curriculum* principles and local contexts, integrating key competencies and making links across the curriculum. This was a significant challenge for some, particularly where school-wide understanding and commitment were not present. Some schools perceived external factors such as high staff turnover and lack of allocated time as challenges that hindered their progress.

Time

A few schools that had been slow to start were under pressure to complete their preparations by February 2010. Teachers at some small schools expressed concern about time pressures as the work had to be done by perhaps one person, who might also have a full teaching and management load. Even with three teachers, some small schools felt the amount of work needed to move towards full implementation

adversely affected the time they normally devoted to teaching. Some schools felt that the demands made of them in the given time frame were too onerous.

Staff turnover

A few school leaders or trustees said that high turnover of teachers had hindered their progress. Staff who left had gained knowledge, awareness and skills through professional development, and they took these with them. New staff either had limited knowledge of and previous experience with *The New Zealand Curriculum*, or they came with different contextual knowledge from other school settings. In both cases, focused induction processes were required, and not all schools had these.

Only some leaders in schools with high staff turnover recognised the necessity to keep relieving staff informed about developments and changes. When new or relieving teachers were not fully briefed, some schools' overall progress was hindered. Some schools saw staff turnover as a disadvantage as they tried to make progress.

Teaching to promote student learning

An important measure of how well organised schools were was the extent to which effective teaching was evident across each school. ERO's evaluation of each school's readiness, therefore, included an investigation of teaching and learning practice. Reviewers looked for effective teaching with reference to indicators developed from *The New Zealand Curriculum* and the Ministry of Education's *Best Evidence Syntheses*. In particular, ERO wanted to know what proportion of teachers were:

- using student achievement information to make decisions about teaching programmes;
- creating a supportive learning environment;
- making new learning relevant;
- making connections to students' prior learning and experience;
- encouraging reflective thought and action;
- facilitating shared learning; and
- providing students with sufficient opportunities to learn.

Effective teaching practices

ERO categorised schools according to whether all or most, some, or no teachers were putting each of the above indicators into practice. Table 2 shows the percentage of schools in each of these categories in terms of the practices listed.

Table 2: Extent to which teacher actions were promoting learning in each school

Teaching practices	All or most teachers (percent of schools)	Some teachers (percent of schools)	No teachers (percent of schools)
Using an evidence-based approach to teaching	61	32	7
Creating a supportive learning environment	97	3	0
Making new learning relevant	82	17	1
Making connections to students' prior learning and experience	84	15	1
Encouraging reflective thought and action	70	28	2
Facilitating shared learning	78	19	3
Providing sufficient opportunities for students to learn	91	8	1

In well over half the schools, all or most teachers were using the practices listed. In particular, in 97 percent of schools all or most teachers were promoting student learning by creating a supportive learning environment. Many teachers were also making strong connections to students' prior learning and experience and were making new learning relevant.

Less strongly evident overall was teachers' use of student achievement information to plan teaching and learning programmes. Fewer than half of the secondary schools had all or most teachers following this approach. In 64 percent of primary schools, all or most teachers were using an evidence-based approach.

What were teachers doing particularly well?

Schools where all or most teachers were already putting effective strategies into practice were also well advanced with giving effect to *The New Zealand Curriculum*. Many were integrating agreed values and key competencies into their planning and teaching.

The areas of greatest strength in primary schools were different to those in secondary schools.

Primary schools where effective practices were well embedded

In primary schools, teachers were doing particularly well in involving students in their own learning. Increased use of formative assessment practices enabled students to identify their next steps for learning, set realistic targets and take responsibility for their own progress. Gaining and responding to student ideas and views in learning

programmes was widespread, and student-led learning activities were well embedded in many primary schools.

Further strengths in primary schools included: developing planning templates and guiding documents that helped teachers give effect to *The New Zealand Curriculum*, creating a positive learning culture school-wide, integrating ICT, and fostering a collaborative development approach among staff.

Formative and self assessment is effectively used at all year levels. Teachers confidently give oral and written formative feedback to students. Stepping stones in each student's writing book inform them of their current learning level, and next steps are identified in their learning intentions. Students assess their own learning on separate sheets which are attached to their books. *[small rural full primary]*

The school has focused on integrating students' self-management competencies across learning areas. Students confidently talk about their achievement and progress in this key competency. The learning culture is one where students are actively encouraged to take ownership of their own learning. *[large urban contributing primary]*

Teachers have a commitment to developing a school culture in which students are encouraged to be self managing, accountable and responsible for their choices. The culture is characterised by teacher-student relationships that contribute positively to engagement. *[medium- sized full primary in small urban centre]*

Secondary schools successfully giving effect to The New Zealand Curriculum

In many of the secondary schools, teachers benefited from regular, useful professional development related to implementation of *The New Zealand Curriculum*. This was sometimes facilitated internally, either by a leader or teacher with relevant knowledge and skills, or sometimes by an external provider. The main focus in many schools was on the key competencies: understanding them, integrating them into teaching and learning programmes and monitoring them. This involved a major change of approach in many secondary schools where good progress was evident.

Secondary teachers and curriculum leaders were engaged in ongoing review of departmental documentation to align the school's curriculum to *The New Zealand Curriculum* framework. They focused particularly on learning areas, cross-curricular links, and integrating key competencies. In some schools, leaders had developed useful practical planning guidelines for teachers, with the aim of increasing consistency with which high quality teaching was implemented school-wide. The following examples show what teachers were doing particularly well.

Teachers and departments use weekly professional development time to develop a big-picture overview of *The New Zealand Curriculum* and its implications. They have:

- worked in departments reviewing and developing unit plans that reflect *The New Zealand Curriculum* principles, values, key competencies and achievement objectives using a staff-developed common template;
- examined assessment practice and increased opportunities for student choice and goal setting to give students more responsibility for their own learning;

- focused on school-wide learning and cross-curricular integration to help students to see connections between learning areas;
- written cross-curricular schemes of work for an integrated programme in the junior school;
- worked extensively on reflecting on how they teach as opposed to what they teach;
- based professional development on effective pedagogy;
- integrated ICT into planning and programmes; and
- used external research-based evidence to support the extensive whole school professional development led by the principal. *[large urban secondary]*

Senior leaders are making links between appraisal and *The New Zealand Curriculum*, with three goals selected for each teacher directly related to aspects of *The New Zealand Curriculum*. English, science, social science, physical education and languages teachers are trialling evidence-based approaches and modelling for colleagues and students their role of ‘teacher as learner.’ The principal is also sharing in assemblies and newsletters how teachers reflect on their practice and continue to learn so that they can find ways to improve. An increasing number of teachers are promoting a ‘what I’m learning and why’ approach with students.

[medium-sized urban secondary]

What factors contributed to effective implementation overall?

This section focuses on the main influences on the approach taken by the schools that had made the most progress. It builds on an earlier section in this report that looked at what schools had done to move towards implementation of *The New Zealand Curriculum*. The schools that were making good progress or giving full effect to *The New Zealand Curriculum* shared some common factors that contributed to their overall effectiveness.

Three key factors typically associated with good progress towards implementation were:

- strategic professional leadership;
- collaborative staff; and
- clear student focus.

Strategic professional leadership

Many of the school leaders who were open to change and improvement in their school’s curriculum began their preparations for implementing *The New Zealand Curriculum* early on. It was not always the principal who led the way; sometimes the principal delegated curriculum leadership to another senior leader, and sometimes to a nominated group of teachers, in a distributed or extended leadership approach.

Vital tasks were to develop an action plan and establish a culture of professional learning among staff. In schools that had made good progress, these plans specified the steps required to complete each major development area, including timelines and people responsible for their completion. With comprehensive action plans, school leaders were able to consult and inform staff, trustees, students and parents of the

direction the school was taking, what stage they were at, and how different groups in the school's community could contribute. Consequently, school leaders were in a strong position to gain the support and commitment of the whole school community.

Collaborative staff

In many of the schools whose leaders established a clear strategic pathway for the review and development processes, a culture of professional learning had evolved. Teachers knew how they could and would be involved in the preparations for implementation. They had a common understanding of what *The New Zealand Curriculum* expected of them, and they had a say in the design of learning programmes that reflected their local context. Professional learning and development was regular and relevant, supporting teachers as they worked towards implementation.

As a result of these strategies, teachers were at the very least cooperative, and at best enthusiastic and committed. They understood that review and design processes presented them with opportunities to respond more meaningfully to the needs and aspirations of the students and community.

They collaborated in a variety of ways, by:

- working alongside each other to review teaching and learning programmes;
- engaging in professional learning conversations;
- sharing ideas, research and effective practice;
- modelling for colleagues effective strategies, including formative practices; and
- trialling proposed units of learning.

Clear student focus

The centrality of the learner was evident in the culture of schools that had made good progress towards implementation of *The New Zealand Curriculum*. This was reflected at each step of the preparation process, beginning with initial consultation. Students were asked for their thoughts, opinions and suggestions in relation to teaching and learning. They were told about *The New Zealand Curriculum* and what it meant for them. They had opportunities to contribute and comment, and their perspective was valued. Students saw that their views had been considered in decision making.

Teachers' knowledge of and commitment to effective pedagogy meant that they kept the learner in the forefront when planning and implementing learning programmes. Instead of focusing solely on content, they aimed to give effect to strategies known to help students learn.

In some schools, the three key factors contributing to effective implementation (strategic professional leadership, collaborative staff and clear student focus) were interwoven, and combined to form a solid framework for giving full effect to *The New Zealand Curriculum*.

What overall factors hindered the implementation of effective teaching and learning strategies?

Schools that had not yet begun to give effect to *The New Zealand Curriculum* generally had in common a critical factor that had resulted in a slow uptake of effective teaching strategies – ineffective curriculum leadership.

Often, principals who lacked the knowledge, motivation or commitment to lead preparation processes also neglected to delegate this responsibility to others. Consequently no one in these schools provided the stimulus for action or ongoing strategic momentum to change teaching strategies.

Factors associated with ineffective professional leadership were interlinked and included a lack of:

- action (for example, limited professional development);
- shared understanding of vision and values and how these were to be reflected in teaching;
- teacher buy-in to the need for changes in their practice;
- monitoring of teaching practice;
- consistent quality in the teaching across the school; and
- school-wide cohesiveness of teaching programmes.

Each of these contributed to teachers' slow progress towards implementation of effective teaching. In a small number of schools these challenges were compounded by dysfunctional relationships in the school community: between the board and principal, between leaders and staff, or among teachers.

As reported in a previous section, some schools attributed the limited implementation of effective teaching across the school to external factors such as insufficient time, high staff turnover, or a new principal. In a small number of schools leaders and teachers said that the introduction of national standards may put pressure on them or distracted them from work on *The New Zealand Curriculum*. Most schools, however, faced these challenges, responded appropriately to them, and continued to make progress with implementing effective teaching and learning strategies. The fact that these factors were seen as obstacles that could not be overcome was generally a further reflection of ineffective leadership.

Conclusions

Most schools have responded well to the opportunity to design a curriculum tailored to their own students and communities. To a large extent, misgivings expressed by some schools in 2008 have been eclipsed by a greater understanding and appreciation of the intent of *The New Zealand Curriculum*.

At the time of ERO's earlier investigation in 2009, some schools perceived that the process of preparing for implementation was too difficult. Leaders and staff in these schools often lacked sufficient knowledge of *The New Zealand Curriculum* because they had not used the available materials to support preparation. They needed someone to initiate, plan and lead.

By the end of 2009, ERO found that most schools knew what they needed to do and had made some progress towards implementation. Apathy and resistance were generally less apparent, and in many schools, curriculum change had gained a momentum that carried staff forward with enthusiasm and commitment.

In each of the ERO reports about preparations for giving effect to *The New Zealand Curriculum* leadership was the most critical factor in determining how organised schools were to manage such change. Effective leaders focused on how well teachers were promoting student learning by implementing effective teaching strategies aligned to *The New Zealand Curriculum*.

With change of such importance, it is essential that school leaders:

- respond in a timely way to the need for change;
- become familiar with all the supporting material and resources provided;
- in collaboration with other senior leaders in the school, develop a plan of actions and specify timelines and responsibilities;
- tell board members, staff, parents and whānau, students and community groups about developments, and keep them up to date with changes;
- organise relevant and useful professional learning and development for teachers throughout the preparation process;
- monitor how well agreed practices are implemented school-wide;
- align school systems such as appraisal with new frameworks;
- maintain a 'spearhead' role as professional leader; and
- where appropriate, delegate some responsibilities to another leader or group, with reporting and accountability mechanisms in place.

This 2010 report shows that almost all schools were either giving effect to *The New Zealand Curriculum* or making good progress towards giving effect to it. The success factors that these schools had in common are:

- strategic professional leadership;
- collaborative staff; and
- clear student focus.

Appendix 1: Methodology

Primary and secondary schools with an education review in Terms 3 and 4, 2009, were evaluated on their progress, including:

- activities undertaken to reflect local contexts in their vision, values and statements about learning;
- the extent to which school leaders were organising learning and teaching to give effect to *The New Zealand Curriculum*;
- the extent to which teacher actions promoted student learning in the school;
- what teachers were doing particularly well;
- the biggest challenges facing the school; and
- how well the school had progressed overall towards giving full effect to *The New Zealand Curriculum*.

As with ERO's two previous reports on schools' readiness to implement *The New Zealand Curriculum*, evidence gathered in the schools was collated and analysed on a national basis. Both quantitative and qualitative information was included.

In each school, ERO made an overall judgement on how well preparations for implementation had progressed. This information was used to present a national overview of schools' readiness to give full effect to *The New Zealand Curriculum*.

The evaluation had two overarching questions:

- To what extent are schools organising learning and teaching to give effect to *The New Zealand Curriculum*?
- To what extent do teacher actions promote student learning?

ERO developed indicators based on *The New Zealand Curriculum* and the Ministry of Education's *Best Evidence Syntheses*. These were used by reviewers to assist them with their judgement. These are shown in Appendix 3.

Appendix 2 shows statistics of the schools in the sample for this evaluation: type, size, decile and locality.

The synthesis sheet used by reviewers in schools is included as Appendix 4 of this report.

Appendix 2: Statistics of schools in the sample for this report

Table 3: School types

School type	Number	% of sample	National %
Full primary (Y1-8)	124	51	44
Contributing (Y1-6)	77	31	31
Intermediate (Y7-8)	10	4	5
Special School	5	2	2
Secondary (Y7-15)	5	2	4
Composite (Y1-15)	5	2	5
Secondary (Y9-15)	19	8	9
Total	245	100	100

The sample of schools in this evaluation was similar to national percentages for most school types. Full primary schools were over-represented and composite schools under-represented.

Table 4: School locality

Locality	Number	% of sample	National %
Urban	172	70	71
Rural	73	30	29
Total	245	100	100

The sample of schools in this evaluation reflected the national percentages of urban and rural schools.

Table 5: School decile ranges

Decile ⁴	Number	% of sample	National %
Low decile (1-3)	69	28	31
Middle decile (4-7)	95	39	39
High decile (8-10)	81	33	30
Total	245	100	100

The sample of schools in this evaluation was similar to the national percentages of schools in each decile range, with the high range slightly over-represented and the low range correspondingly under-represented.

⁴ 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.

Table 6: School roll size group

Roll size	Number	% of sample	National %
Small (0-150 primary, 0-300 secondary)	100	41	45
Medium (151-300 primary, 301-700 secondary)	80	33	26
Large (301+ primary, 701+ secondary)	65	26	29
Total	245	100	100

The sample of schools in this evaluation included fewer small schools and more medium-sized schools than the national percentages.

Appendix 3: Evaluation Indicators

Preparing to Give Effect to *The New Zealand Curriculum*

This document sets out indicators to inform judgments about the investigative questions. In most instances these indicators are taken directly from *The New Zealand Curriculum for English-Medium Teaching and Learning in Years 1 to 13*, Learning Media, 2007

A: Local context and community priorities reflected in school curriculum through vision, values, and learning areas	
describe the activities the school has undertaken to reflect their local context and community priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Surveys/questionnaires (of whom) • School led hui/meetings • Community led hui/meetings • Internal school review • Facilitated meetings • Discussion with community/parent/whānau groups • other
B: School organisation of learning and teaching to give effect to the NZC – School leaders are	
reviewing learning area statements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviewing the learning areas as a starting point for developing learning programmes suited to students' needs and interests • Reviewing learning areas to reflect the structure of each area (strands) • Considering future focused issues across the learning areas
choosing achievement objectives from each learning area to fit the learning needs of their students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choosing achievement objectives in each learning area • Choosing a mix of achievement objectives that apply to a particular level and across a number of levels • Stating these in ways that help teachers, students and parents to recognise, measure, discuss and chart progress
considering links between learning areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Considering how to structure learning opportunities to make use of the links that occur between learning areas • Considering the links that exist between learning areas and the values and key competencies
Integrating key competencies into learning and teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrating key competencies as part of the review of learning areas • Seeking opportunities for students to challenged and supported to develop key competencies in increasingly wide-ranging and complex contexts <p><i>Thinking, Using language, symbols and texts, Managing self, Relating to others, Participating and contributing</i></p>
determining how assessment will align with the school curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determining how teachers will gather, analyse and use assessment information to improve students' learning and teachers' teaching • Determining how assessment information will inform parents/families/whānau • Determining how assessment information will inform school review and development
describing how students' learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designing the school curriculum to take account learning sequences and pathways

stages or pathways build on earlier stages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designing the school curriculum so that students find the transitions positive and have a clear sense of continuity and direction
considering how e-learning and new technologies will be used as part of teaching & learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Considering how ICT supports traditional ways of teaching • Considering how ICT can open up new and different ways of learning • Considering how ICT can be used to facilitate learning e.g. enabling students to join or create communities of learners that extend beyond the classroom
considering how the curriculum principles influence and inform decisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Underpinning curriculum decision making with the principles • Considering how learning area statements are consistent with the eight principles
aligning The New Zealand Curriculum with school-wide systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Considering how school systems such as strategic planning, appraisal, reporting, professional development, self review will reflect the school curriculum and teaching and learning
C: Teacher actions in promoting student learning. Teachers are	
implementing a <i>Teaching as Inquiry</i> cycle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focusing inquiry on what is important based on where students are at • Deciding what strategies are most likely to help students learn • Inquiring into the impact of their teaching on students • Deciding what implications there are for future teaching
creating a supportive learning environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fostering positive classroom relationships (<i>caring, inclusive, non discriminatory</i>) • Working with parents /caregivers as key partners in children’s learning • Attending to the cultural and linguistic diversity of their students
Making new learning relevant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helping students to understand what they are learning, why they are learning it, and how they will be able to use their learning • Involving students directly in decisions about their own learning (<i>ownership</i>)
making connections to prior learning and experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliberately building on what students know and have experienced • Maximising learning time by avoiding unnecessary duplication of content • Helping students make connections across learning areas and in contexts outside school
encouraging reflective thought and action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encouraging students to think objectively about information or ideas they engage with • Designing tasks and activities that require students to critically evaluate the material they use
facilitating shared learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encouraging a classroom learning culture where challenge, support and feedback are common expectations • Providing opportunities for students to engage in reflective discourse so they can build the language to take their learning further
Providing sufficient opportunities for students to learn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • providing time for students to engage with, practise and transfer new learning • basing decisions about the depth and breadth of curriculum coverage on students’ levels of understanding

Appendix 4: Reviewer Synthesis Sheet

GIVING EFFECT TO THE NEW ZEALAND CURRICULUM

- A. What activities has the school undertaken to reflect local context and community priorities in the vision, values and statements about learning through The New Zealand Curriculum?
- B. To what extent is the school organising learning and teaching to give effect to The New Zealand Curriculum?

School leaders are	Well under way	Developing	Beginning to develop	Not evident
reviewing learning area statements				
choosing achievement objectives from each learning area to fit the learning needs of their students				
considering how links between learning areas will be explored and built on				
integrating key competencies into teaching and learning				
determining how assessment processes will align with the school curriculum				
describing how students' learning stages or pathways build on earlier stages				
considering how e-learning and new technologies will be used as part of teaching and learning				
considering how the curriculum principles will be explored and included				
aligning implementation of The New Zealand Curriculum with school-wide systems (e.g. appraisal, professional development, self review)				

Data indicated some overlap for reviewer judgements about whether school leaders were beginning to develop or were developing each particular processes. In the analysis ERO aggregated the data to combine the categories 'developing and beginning to develop' together.

C. To what extent do these teacher actions promote student learning in this school?

Teachers are	All teachers	Most teachers	Some teachers	No teachers
Using an evidence-based approach to teaching				
creating a supportive learning environment				
making new learning relevant				
making connections to students' prior learning and experience				
encouraging reflective thought and action				
facilitating shared learning				
providing sufficient opportunities to for students to learn				

In the analysis ERO aggregated the data to combine the categories 'all teachers and most teachers' together.

D. In giving effect to The New Zealand Curriculum, what are teachers doing particularly well in this school?

E. What are the biggest challenges facing this school as it moves towards giving effect to The New Zealand Curriculum?

F. ERO's Overall Judgement

How well has this school progressed towards giving effect to The New Zealand Curriculum by February 2010? School leaders and teachers

Are giving full effect

Are making good progress towards giving effect

Are beginning to give effect

Have not yet begun to give effect

Any other relevant comments about school's progress towards February implementation
--