

# National Report Summary

ERO publishes evaluation reports on education issues of national importance. This handout is a summary of a recent national report – it captures the key points and highlights findings that you may find useful. The full report is available on our website – [www.ero.govt.nz](http://www.ero.govt.nz)

## Keeping children engaged and achieving in reading: Teaching strategies that work

This ERO report is one of a series of reports on teaching strategies that work. ERO visited 40 primary schools across New Zealand from a selection of schools where the proportion of children in the upper primary years achieving at or above the expected standard had increased.

This report shares some of the strategies and approaches used by schools that had focused on improving achievement in reading. It also shares some of the simple strategies used in classrooms where achievement in reading had been accelerated.

### Why did ERO focus on reading programmes?

Reading is a critical skill that enables children to engage with all aspects of *The New Zealand Curriculum*. Children's success in all learning is largely the consequence of effective literacy teaching.

Although many New Zealand children achieve well, by international standards our results are not improving when compared with other countries.

The Progress in International Reading Literacy Study ([PIRLS](#)) results from different groups of children indicate that the decline in mean score is across the board as it is visible in both genders, across ethnic groups, and in children across socio-economic backgrounds.

There is also still variance in children's achievement. Out of English speaking countries New Zealand had one of the largest ranges in reading ability.

[Programme for International Student Achievement](#)

(PISA) data also shows the reading achievement of New Zealand 15-year olds is steadily declining. This decline in secondary school reading results is likely to be influenced by the rate of progress in the upper primary school years.

The 2014 National Monitoring Study of Student Achievement (NMSSA) on English: Reading showed that similar percentages of children at Year 4 and Year 8 scored above the minimum score associated with their expected curriculum levels. This is different to many other curriculum areas where considerably fewer children achieve as well in Year 8 as they do in Year 4. However, Year 4 achievement in all other areas is higher than it is in reading. Overall, children were generally positive about reading. A greater proportion of boys than girls expressed negative views about reading at both Year 4 and Year 8.

Declining rates of achievement in reading must be reversed so children are prepared for the demands of the secondary curriculum.

### What did ERO find?

Schools with considerable improvements in reading achievement in Years 5 and 6:

- undertook carefully considered whole-school or whole-syndicate review and development
- completed assessments that identified challenges for children and teachers
- accessed professional learning and development (PLD) that focused specifically on the teaching that needed to improve.

### FIND OUT MORE

For more ideas and information, you can read the full report online at [www.ero.govt.nz/publications](http://www.ero.govt.nz/publications)

Well-considered improvement plans outlined individual responsibilities, actions and associated timelines. School boards dedicated funds to resource the new programmes and provided for additional staff, and were well informed about the impacts of their funding.

Most schools featured in this report had undertaken an extensive review before beginning their changes. In these reviews leaders and teachers:

- looked at individual children's scores
- looked at groups of children's assessment responses to identify strengths and specific needs
- examined any contradictions between assessment results to identify inconsistency in teachers' expectations or confidence with using the assessment
- included parents' and children's views.

Teachers recognised it was vital to check how well new approaches and strategies were working for children.

Teachers in these schools participated in considerable PLD. Lead teachers accessed a variety of research related to the teaching of reading and selected the approaches and strategies most likely to benefit their children. The rationale for their approach was clear and known by teachers and, at times, known by the children.

Leaders used a variety of strategies to make sure teachers understood the reading processes children experienced across the school. Deliberate teaching actions were outlined, implemented and then monitored by leaders. Teachers focused on implementing consistent strategies that children could build on as they moved through the school.

Many schools trialled new strategies with small groups of children before implementing them more widely. In some cases this practice began when teachers in the school joined the Ministry of Education's [Acceleration Literacy Learning](#) (ALL) project. Teachers observed practices implemented by literacy leaders before applying them in their own core reading programme.

New approaches evident in some schools had vastly improved the confidence and self-efficacy of reluctant readers in Years 5 and 6. Mixed-ability grouping allowed children with different reading ages to work together

and support each other. Teachers grouped children to match their interests rather than their reading ages.

Children told ERO about the reading tasks that contributed to their success. Children:

- liked having choices about texts and activities
- appreciated when the tasks were interesting and complex enough to challenge them
- liked the competitive nature of book challenges or online programs where they could compete against themselves
- enjoyed knowing the purpose of their reading, and knowing when they achieved their goals
- valued specific feedback from their teachers and peers.

### **ERO Reports used in this publication**

#### **2017**

[Extending their language—expanding their world: Children's oral language \(birth—8 years\) \(2017\)](#)

#### **2015**

[Raising student achievement through targeted actions \(2015\)](#)

[Continuity of learning: transitions from early childhood services to schools \(2015\)](#)

[Educationally powerful connections with parents and whānau \(2015\)](#)

#### **2014**

[Raising Achievement in Primary Schools \(2014\)](#)

[Raising achievement in Primary Schools: Accelerating Learning in Mathematics \(ALiM\) and Accelerating Literacy Learning \(ALL\) \(2014\)](#)

#### **2013**

[Mathematics in Years 4 to 8: Developing a responsive curriculum \(2013\)](#)

#### **2012**

[The New Zealand Curriculum Principles: Foundations for Curriculum Decision-Making \(2012\)](#)

#### **2009**

[Reading and writing in Years 1 and 2 \(2009\)](#)

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