

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

Teaching approaches and strategies that work:

Keeping children engaged and achieving in the upper primary school

What did ERO do?

In Term 4, 2016, ERO visited 40 primary schools across New Zealand. These schools were chosen because increased numbers of children were achieving at or above National Standards in reading and writing or mathematics (or both) as they moved through Year 4 to Year 5. In this report the approaches and strategies of 10 schools are shared.

ERO asked leaders at each school what they saw as reasons for their positive achievement trajectory. Leaders 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, children's work, class displays and the school environment.

Why did we do it?

National data shows a decreased rate of progress for many New Zealand children during Years 5 to 8.

The National Monitoring Study of Student Achievement (NMSSA) has found that many more children are achieving at the expected curriculum level in Year 4 than in Year 8.

Recent Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) data indicates reading achievement of New Zealand 15 year olds is on a steady decline, while achievement in mathematics and science is on a trajectory of accelerated

decline. PISA data also shows strong within-school inequality for young people in their opportunities to learn.

What did ERO find?

ERO found useful teaching strategies in the majority of schools. However, in some cases this was visible across the whole school, while in others they were only found in particular syndicates or classrooms.

In schools where effective approaches and strategies were implemented across the whole school:

- leaders could articulate what they were doing that was raising achievement and had successfully implemented agreed approaches across the school
- teachers had a strong sense of collective responsibility for all children, and an urgency to accelerate the progress of those who were behind
- teachers were also seen as learners
- teachers sought perspectives from children and parents
- teachers considered research related to the particular strengths and needs of target children
- teachers rigorously reviewed the impacts on the children who were expected to benefit
- teachers were clear about what actions they would take and the rationale for them
- teachers shared practices and implementation to benefit more children.

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In schools where effective approaches and strategies were found only in some parts of the school:

- the staff were making many changes but were unsure which were contributing to a positive achievement trajectory
- effective change management and monitoring practices were necessary to make sure they were working for teachers and children
- leaders implemented or considered actions without researching how they influenced achievement
- leaders engaged in thinking about vision, wellbeing and relationships, but did not similarly focus on achievement
- leaders did not pay much attention to the past, talking instead about the present and future
- there were some high quality teaching strategies working for children.

What are our findings telling us?

Schools must have organisational structures, processes and practices that enable and sustain collaborative learning and decision making. Some schools have little knowledge of what they are doing that is contributing to improved achievement. It is important for schools to know what is working as well as what the achievement issues are. In some schools it was wrongly assumed that practice was being implemented following professional learning and development. Leaders in other schools undertook regular classroom visits to provide feedback and support for teachers. Ongoing monitoring is essential

to make sure worthwhile strategies are not abandoned because of poor implementation.



ERO Reports used in this publication

2016

[School evaluation indicators: effective practice for improvement and learner success \(2016\)](#)

2015

[Wellbeing for children's success at primary school \(2015\)](#)

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

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

2014

[Raising achievement in primary schools \(2014\)](#)

2013

[Accelerating the progress of priority learners in primary schools \(2013\)](#)



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