

**Working with the  
National Standards  
ERO's interim findings  
for Term 3, 2010**

**November 2010**



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## Introduction

In August, 2010 the Education Review Office (ERO) published the first of a series of evaluation reports to be published over the next three years about the implementation of the National Standards in schools with students in Years 1 to 8.

ERO is currently collecting information to be published in the second national evaluation report early in 2011. This interim report is based on information from 80 schools for which data was analysed during Term 3, 2010.

ERO's evaluation of the National Standards takes place in the context of each school's assessment practices and its progress in implementing *The New Zealand Curriculum*. Schools are expected to review and design their curriculum to respond to what they know about their students. The National Standards give schools reference points to assess students' progress and achievement with a focus on raising achievement in reading, writing and mathematics. The standards are to be used in conjunction with assessment practices developed by each school to help with this process.

ERO has evaluated schools' current assessment practices and what they know about student achievement. In this second cycle of data gathering (Terms 3 and 4, 2010) ERO has been asking specific questions about:

- how schools are aligning their school assessment practices to use the National Standards and focus their teaching
- how schools are reporting to parents in plain language
- how they are preparing to use National Standards information to set targets in their 2011 charter
- the understanding and preparedness of school leaders, teachers and trustees to use the standards.

## ERO's Findings: Term 3, 2010

The schools in this study were those scheduled for an ERO education review in Term 3. Of the 80 schools reviewed, 93 percent (74 schools) were either well prepared or had preparation under way to work with the National Standards. School leaders continued to be the group with the most understanding of the standards, with leaders in 95 percent of the 80 schools having good or some understanding. Trustees were still the group with the least understanding of the standards.

### Preparation to work with the National Standards

ERO evaluated the preparedness<sup>1</sup> of each school to work with the National Standards. Of the 80 schools, 27 (34 percent) were found to be well prepared. Preparation was under way in 47 schools (59 percent), and six schools (7 percent) were not yet prepared to work with the standards.

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<sup>1</sup> Schools that are well prepared will be making good use of assessment information for learning; be in the process of developing moderation processes and supporting teachers to make overall teacher judgements based on multiple sources of data.

This data shows an increase in the percentage of schools that were well prepared to work with the National Standards, up from 19 percent (as reported in August 2010), to 34 percent. The data also showed a decrease in the percentage of schools not yet prepared to work with the standards, from 20 percent in August 2010 to 7 percent. The percentage of schools that were still preparing to work with the standards remained similar.

### ***Schools that were well prepared to work with the standards***

In the schools that were well prepared to work with the standards ERO identified common themes similar to those reported in ERO's August 2010 report.

Strong, professional leadership in the well prepared schools meant that leaders and teachers were positive about working with the National Standards as part of their school curriculum and assessment practices. School leaders facilitated professional development with teachers and trustees. In many of these schools it was the leaders who were accessing external support and passing on to staff and trustees information that was relevant and fitted with the needs of their school.

Robust and purposeful self review featured in most of these schools. Most were making good progress towards setting targets in their 2011 charters. Progress included having an assessment schedule, and established systems for monitoring student progress and achievement.

These schools had aligned achievement expectations in reading, writing and mathematics to the National Standards. They were working on building teachers' confidence to make judgements about student achievement and most had processes in place to support a collaborative approach to moderation. In some of the well-prepared schools, National Standards information gathered for reporting to parents was also being used as a basis for determining 2011 targets.

Many of these schools had developed a school culture that was conducive to working with the National Standards. Teachers were encouraged to engage in discussion about student achievement data, inquire into and reflect on their practice and share effective teaching strategies. Such a culture helped teachers to make overall teacher judgements and moderate their judgements about student achievement.

Most of these schools had the systems and processes in place to enable teachers to work with the National Standards as part of the school curriculum. Expectations were regularly reviewed, well understood and useful in guiding teaching and assessment practice. Many had reviewed the way they reported to parents. Some had also sought feedback from parents about the usefulness of their reporting practices.

Half the schools that were well prepared to work with the National Standards were involved in cluster activities with other schools. Moderation was the most common focus for clusters, along with professional learning and development in relation to literacy teaching, assessment and understanding the National Standards.

Schools judged to be well prepared varied in the extent to which students were helped to understand their progress and achievement against the National Standards and involved in goal setting based on next steps for learning.

In the well prepared schools, although leaders facilitated some professional learning and development about the standards, trustees did not always understand them well. In just under a quarter of these schools trustees had a good understanding of the National Standards.

### ***Schools with preparation under way to work with the standards***

In the schools where preparation was under way ERO found a range of approaches and practices that reflected the stage each school was at in terms of developing its curriculum and aligning assessment practices with the standards.

Common aspects included:

- school leaders and teachers accessing support to increase their understanding of the National Standards, and increasing their confidence to work with them
- improving analysis and use of achievement information
- aligning existing assessment practices and achievement expectations to the National Standards
- improving teacher capability in formative assessment, particularly in using assessment data to focus teaching and involving students in assessing their learning and setting goals
- developing a more collaborative school culture that supported teacher inquiry and reflection
- trialling formats for reporting to parents about their child's progress against the standards.

A few of these schools are working on developing strategies for reporting to parents where students were below or well below National Standards.

### ***Schools that were not well prepared to work with the standards***

This review identified six schools that were not yet prepared to work with the National Standards. A range of factors contributed to this situation for these schools, including:

- a lack of progress with reviewing and designing their school's curriculum
- issues regarding assessment practice, for example poor quality data, limited analysis and use of data by teachers and school leaders, and limited reporting of achievement information
- leadership capability.

In two of the six schools ERO found that the main factor contributing to lack of preparation to work with the standards was opposition from the principal. In both of these schools developments were under way that would enable the schools to work with the standards should leadership towards this end be forthcoming.

### **Understanding of the National Standards**

ERO evaluated how well school leaders, teachers and trustees understood the National Standards. Understanding for each group in these 80 schools is greater than those ERO reported on in August 2010.

School leaders continued to be the group with the best understanding of the standards. In 56 percent of the schools the standards were well understood by school leaders (compared with 38 percent in August 2010).

Understanding by teachers in the 80 schools was variable, with the standards being well understood by teachers in 32 percent of the schools (compared with 15 percent previously).

Although school trustees continued to be the group with the least understanding of the National Standards, there was a shift in understanding, with the standards now well understood by 10 percent of trustees (compared to four percent previously). The data suggests that trustees, many of whom were new to their role, were largely reliant for their understanding of the standards on discussions at board meetings and through reports they received from their principal.

### **Support to work with the National Standards**

ERO looked at the nature of the support these schools had received to work with the National Standards. All schools reported they had access to some form of support to increase their understanding about the National Standards.

Over half the schools had used the available online support, and nearly 90 percent had attended Ministry of Education meetings or workshops. Six schools had not accessed any professional learning and development (PLD) specifically related to the National Standards.

In a small number of schools teachers and leaders made comments about the quality of the PLD provided by people from outside the school. In eight schools the PLD was seen to be improving or was very useful. In another eight schools the PLD was not seen as helpful as messages were not consistent and facilitators did not appear to be confident in their knowledge of the National Standards.

Leaders and teachers in over half the schools considered they needed additional support. Some schools reported that although they had learnt about reading, writing or mathematics standards, they did not know enough about all three areas. Schools also wanted to increase teachers' understanding about overall teacher judgments and moderation. Leaders sought more time to be able to share and fully discuss within the school the messages gained through PLD.

### **ERO's Evaluation: Term 4, 2010**

ERO is continuing to evaluate how schools are using the National Standards in their curriculum and through self review, to raise student achievement in reading, writing and mathematics. ERO is discussing with schools how they are reporting to parents against the standards and how they are preparing to set targets in their 2011 charters based on information about students' progress and achievement in relation to the standards.

The information gathered in Terms 3 and 4 will be aggregated and reported early in 2011.