

# 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)

## What Drives Learning in the Senior Secondary School?

### What did ERO do?

ERO invited 12 schools to contribute to this report following consultation with the Ministry and regional ERO offices. This consultation identified schools that reference *The New Zealand Curriculum* (NZC).

The schools were selected because they had made clear connections between the curriculum and the key competencies of NZC in their school documentation.

ERO wanted to find out how they developed a senior curriculum which was coherent, delivering *The New Zealand Curriculum* (NZC) while also making the best use of National Certificate in Educational Achievement (NCEA) to demonstrate achievement. The report discusses how effectively the schools provided students with opportunity to develop their knowledge, values and competencies in the senior years of schooling. This evaluation was designed and jointly funded with the Ministry of Education (the Ministry).

### Why did we do it?

We did it to inform the Ministry's current review of NCEA. Since its introduction in 2000, NCEA has been used by many schools as a framework providing the content for teaching and learning at senior levels. This was never the intention and in many secondary schools the NCEA framework has displaced the NZC for seniors. The NZC describes a vision for young people to be, among other things, confident, connected, actively involved, lifelong learners. The NZC defines:

- principles as the foundations of curriculum decision making
- values to be encouraged, modelled and explored
- key competencies as capabilities for living and lifelong learning
- learning areas important for a broad education

- effective pedagogy to promote student learning
- how to design and review the school curriculum.

ERO wanted to find out what effective practice looked like in the schools which implemented a coherent curriculum. The NZC defines coherence as occurring when:

*The curriculum offers all students a broad education that makes links within and across learning areas, provides for coherent transitions and opens up pathways to further learning.*

### What did ERO find?

While the schools were working towards a clear vision for a coherent senior curriculum, only a minority achieved it. These few schools showed it was possible to plan and implement senior learning pathways based on the principles, vision, values and competencies, outlined in the NZC. They were able to show broader outcomes than achievement in NCEA, outcomes indicating deeper learning. They maintained a balance between appropriate learning pathways for seniors and careful management of NCEA assessment.

The schools which successfully provided a coherent curriculum had these conditions in common:

- a clear shared vision, implemented throughout the school
- leadership with moral courage to adhere to the vision
- appropriate curriculum design which respects and enhances learners' identity, language and culture
- professional practice within a high trust model in the school
- high quality relationships for learning across the school community.

Leaders played a critical role. They managed the changes in professional practice and the systems within the school to support coherence, and realise their school vision.

Students and teachers understood that learning was the focus of their curriculum and that assessment, while important, did not drive the programme. Teachers maximised opportunities for deep learning. Importantly, the senior curriculum was NZC led.

*Here they fit the NCEA into the learning rather than the learning into NCEA. If the kids are interested and engaged, they will get the results without counting the credits.*

Year 12 student, Logan Park High School

The foundations for the emphasis on learning were usually established in Years 9 and 10. Teachers deliberately taught the skills, competencies and capabilities of the NZC, so that learners extended their knowledge and learning experience, developing their sense of self and confidence as a learner. Several schools changed practice by integrating the curriculum, which also promoted teacher collaboration.

*If we hadn't had a change in pedagogy and relationships we wouldn't have improved results.*

Principal, Waitakere College

Strong learning relationships and responsive curriculum were evident. Students were actively involved in their learning.

*Our teacher-student relationships are based on culturally responsive and relational pedagogy.*

Principal, Rotorua Girls' High School

Several schools work with students to select the most appropriate assessment(s) for their learning, often identifying standards across more than one learning area.

### What else did ERO find?

ERO found that even though some schools had a clear vision of what they wanted in terms of implementing the NZC they still had barriers to successfully achieving that. Examples include:

- helping parents/whānau to see the importance of the NZC in promoting the skills and attitudes which support achievement in NCEA
- timetable inflexibility restricting course choices
- streaming of classes which restricted students' knowledge and so access to higher study
- resistance to lowering the number of NCEA credits students attempted

- insufficient academic and careers counselling
- form/whānau times that were too short for teachers to understand and support each student's progress, achievement and wellbeing
- learning times too short to necessitate changes in teaching and increased learning opportunities.

*We want teachers to be interested in 'who' as well as 'what.' We want to foster deeper learning, related to the real world. We need to know students as learners.*

Principal, Wellington East Girls' College

### NCEA

ERO found concerns about NCEA, detailed in the report. Key ones relate to:

- credit collecting, University Entrance UE constraints and scholarships often negatively influenced course selection
- over assessment
- teachers lacking understanding and confidence to write authentic assessment tasks
- issues with moderation of tasks
- external standards becoming less generic, requiring specific context and language.

School leaders found it difficult to balance the NZC with NCEA while still providing meaningful pathways for students. They saw the need for:

- national level decisions about NCEA Levels 1, 2 and 3, including guidance about the number of credits gained
- national leadership to help the public better understand the importance of the NZC with NCEA
- sound professional guidance for leaders and teachers to plan and implement the senior curriculum and subsequent assessment.

The report includes some clear recommendations and the findings will help to inform the Ministry of Education's public consultation regarding its review of NCEA.

**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)