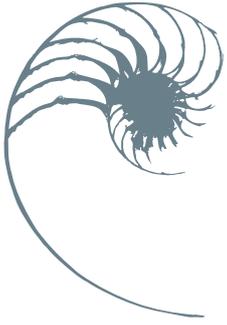




MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

Te Tāhuhu o te Mātauranga



New Zealand Curriculum Update

What it looks like when it's going well ...

This *Update* illustrates what we are seeing in schools when they are successfully implementing *The New Zealand Curriculum*. It is one of a number of resources being provided by the Ministry of Education to support English-medium schools with implementation. Further *Updates* will continue to be published in the *Education Gazette*.

21 September 2009



We can be flexible in how and what to teach our children. We can make learning more meaningful and purposeful, can apply it to our country school, and ... phase things in our own way.

Primary teacher

Schools that have been working effectively with *The New Zealand Curriculum* for some time have shown there's no one starting point for exploring the document and developing their own curriculum. Their experience also shows that:

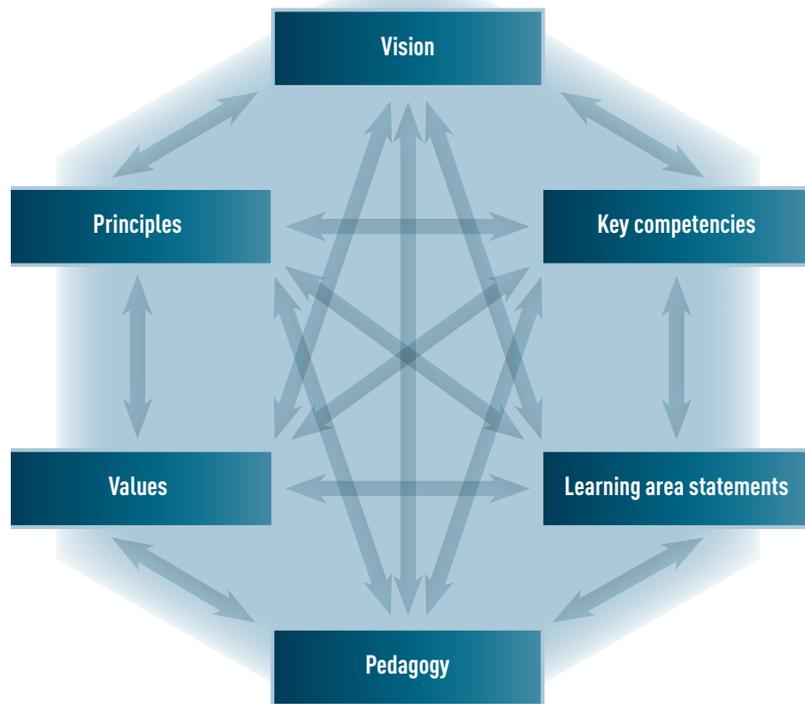
- It's important just to start. Learning about one part of the curriculum invariably leads to thinking about the other parts.
- It helps if you build on what's already happening in the school, for example, professional learning about ICT or assessment.
- Teachers need time to explore and reach a shared understanding of the curriculum.
- Strategic leadership is vital.

- The curriculum is as much about the "how" and "why" of learning as it is about content.
- Change is complex – you won't necessarily find what works best right away.
- It helps to embed small changes and then build on them.
- It's important to think about whether school structures are supporting change or are getting in the way.

That's what we think is exciting about this new curriculum ... it's about unpacking how things happen and why things are. And that takes time. So you're not going to have surface content coverage, but I think you're going to have more successful people in society as a result of this curriculum.

Secondary principal

A connected curriculum

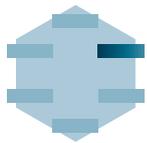


Much of the content in this issue is drawn from the Curriculum Implementation Exploratory Studies (CIES) research summaries, which can be found under the heading Research and Development at <http://nzcurriculum.tki.org.nz/Archives/Implementation-project-overview>

CIES involves case-study research into a variety of “early adopter” and other schools. The schools include a variety of deciles and ethnic make ups.

(Under the terms of the research projects, names of teachers and schools cannot be published.)

Different starting points



School A has only recently begun its implementation journey. This is already a school which has worked hard to ensure that each child is known and cared about as an individual. Seeing the links between this and the intent of the curriculum helped the staff get started. They are determined to take the time to work out exactly what the curriculum will mean for their school and not copy others’ ideas. They are beginning by exploring the **key competencies** and by looking for ways to involve their wider multicultural community.



School B started with the social sciences **learning area statement** – their next planned school-wide focus. They read this in the light of the curriculum’s “front end” – the principles, values, and key competencies. They felt that they would understand the implications for the other learning areas if they really understood what the changes looked like for social studies.



School C began by reviewing their own **vision statement** in relation to the curriculum and then involved their community in the process. The possible changes they came up with led into a wide-ranging discussion about what it means to be a lifelong learner.

We wanted to ensure that the whole school (community, staff, children) had a shared understanding of the meaning of the key competencies – for example, relating to others – in or out of school. When we clicked on to how powerful this understanding was, we realised it was worth taking our time on the key competencies.

Primary principal

What we do in our classroom hasn’t changed, but perhaps how we do it has ... I would never have used words like key competencies, learning intentions, and success criteria with my students before, but now I do ... in maths and how to read and write ...

Primary teacher (years 1–2)

The new curriculum will open education up from the industrial age through to the information age and not put things in boxes. Students need to be adaptable to work across society. The curriculum is not solely about subjects ... its focus is on skills across subjects and how they work together.

Secondary teacher

“We need to do something for kids ...”

I would have said our core business was learning. I now see the importance of “deep support” to enable the learning to happen. What happens to the 10 to 20 percent of students at any level who don’t achieve or underachieve is an ethical consideration ... I tried to keep my ear to the ground, tried not to move too fast. It is a process, and I have learned not to beat myself up when things need to be slowed down or adjusted. That is the nature of it – the uncertainty ... I didn’t have a concrete plan of what it would look like, but we need to do something for kids. Not doing anything is no longer an option.

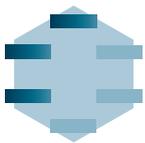
Secondary principal

Teaching as Inquiry (page 35 of the curriculum) puts the spotlight on inquiring into the impact of teaching and then fine-tuning teaching approaches so that all students can “achieve personal excellence, regardless of their individual circumstances” (page 9).

Māori students and their communities are often an untapped resource for schools. Implementing the national curriculum is an opportunity for schools to reconsider how they consult with and include Māori students and their communities in decision making. Evidence shows that schools that have stronger, respectful relationships with whānau and iwi achieve better outcomes for their Māori students.



School D is an area school. The school involved the local iwi and whānau in its implementation process early on. Everyone worked together to find **effective ways to engage the students in their learning**. The school changed the semester timetable to longer periods and offered an options programme both to give the students more choices and to strengthen the focus on internal assessments for NCEA. Teachers were supported to encourage students to focus on *why* and *how* they learn, to shift from a model of remedying deficits to a strengths-based model of achievement, and to emphasise democratic approaches to decision making. Subject leaders and teachers worked together to design programmes grounded in local contexts that reflected the students’ interests and needs. The achievement gains are now beginning to be reflected in improved NCEA results.



School E chose to focus on the **vision, values, and the learning to learn principle**. They encourage and support all their students to see themselves as successful learners by celebrating their different successes. The teachers also use “learning minutes” to keep everyone focused on making effective use of learning opportunities as they happen during the school day. (A learning minute is a short pause in which the class stops to reflect together on the learning that has just been taking place.)

Schools will find it beneficial to curriculum implementation to consult *Ka Hikitia – Managing for Success*. The following text is drawn from a speech made by Secretary for Education Karen Sewell to a recent education conference.

Our system does work well for many, but not for all.

Ka Hikitia – Managing for Success is the Ministry's strategy for improving system performance for Māori. It encompasses the whole education journey from early childhood through to tertiary.

"Ka hikitia" means to "step up", "lift up", or "lengthen one's stride". It means we have to do better. Our system is not successful if some of our young people are not engaged and successful.

Ka Hikitia aims to ensure that Māori enjoy education success as Māori. It clearly states that recognition of language, culture, and identity is the key.

So what are the actions we need? As a minimum, we want to see performance goals related to raising Māori achievement, much better use of data and evidence, a focus on teacher-student relationships, and iwi involved in school planning.

- A number of schools have begun to turn negative statistics for Māori students around.
- They are analysing achievement data and responding to what it reveals.
- They are enquiring into the impact of their teaching practices and working to change teacher expectations.
- They are ensuring that learning contexts are relevant, authentic, culturally responsive, and supportive.
- They are listening to what iwi want for their school and their young people. From these conversations, relationships are being formalised and schools and whānau are working together on identified needs.

Programmes like Te Kotahitanga and resources like *Te Mana* are providing further focused support. As we make what we learn from these programmes more widely available, we are realising that what works well for Māori works well for everyone.



Three key messages

The research team observing the “early adopter” schools identified three key messages from the schools (see below). They also encountered some anxieties about accountability or compliance.

They note that “We know schools are asking ‘What do we have to do to show implementation by the due date?’ It is OK to ask this question. It is also important to realise that there is no one right way to do [things], and you can’t always wait for an answer.”

Both accountability and the bigger picture are important: “People often begin with a focus on accountability. The challenge is to keep the learning journey going so that schools explore the deeper layers over time.”

Three key messages from the early adopter schools

- 1. Making connections:** The parts of the curriculum all potentially interact with each other. It’s important to explore these links when working out what implementation will look like for your students. Piecemeal interventions won’t help you to manage necessary change or to construct a coherent school curriculum. *Building a more coherent school curriculum is one of the eight curriculum principles.*
- 2. Continuous improvement:** Implementation is process and journey, not product and end point. *Ongoing improvement links to the principles of learning to learn and future focus.*
- 3. Change as a community endeavour:** You can’t take people with you if they don’t understand where you are going and why. They won’t come with you if you don’t expect them to have something to contribute. *This last message reflects the principles of whānau and community engagement and high expectations.*

We have moved on from looking at the key competencies as separate entities because the teachers have a good understanding of what they’re about – now they’re [becoming] part of the learning experience; they’re not something separate. The same [applies] with the values ... so we’ve gone from the principles, the values, the key competencies, to the learning statements, to actual planning and implementation of the curriculum. We are working very much now at integrating the two ends of the curriculum into actual learning experiences.

Primary principal

We are committed to creating an environment that doesn’t burn staff out but takes them forward. The next challenge is creating an environment for greater student voice and having students take a lead in our very diverse community. I think the directions are fine. We now need to take the time to bed this down ...

Secondary principal

The tables below illustrate how a curriculum implementation process focused on the three key messages might evolve. The tables cover three important areas: pedagogy, school leadership, and school structures.

Table 1: An evolving focus on pedagogy

	Starting out could look like ...	Strengthening pedagogy could look like ...
Making connections	"Why?", "How?", and "What?" are separate conversations.	The why, how, and what of teaching are all considered in relation to each other.
Continuous improvement	Teachers start by following the latest "good idea".	Teachers inquire into the impact of their teaching on their students, and pedagogy school-wide is refined and deepened through this classroom-based teacher inquiry.
Change as a community endeavour	Teachers work together to consider pedagogy.	Teachers and students work together to develop shared approaches to pedagogy and learning.

Table 2: The nature of leadership

	In the past: leading for accountability	Strengthening leadership: leading for learning
Making connections	Leaders organise a series of separate professional learning activities.	Leaders guide and facilitate an open-ended learning process that includes revisiting, adapting, and renewing earlier learning.
Continuous improvement	The focus is on doing the "right" thing, working to external expectations.	The focus is on fostering a safe culture for change, risk taking, and ongoing learning for everyone – getting it right.
Change as a community endeavour	Leadership is linked to position in the school hierarchy.	Leadership is distributed across all those with expertise and enthusiasm (students, teachers, board, parents ...).

Table 3: Changing structures

	In the past: juggling structures	Developing a structure that supports improvement
Making connections	One thing at a time is changed (timetable, planning, reporting, appraisal, PD ...).	Multiple changes are considered with an intention to align and streamline.
Continuous improvement	The focus is on improving the culture and practices of the school.	The focus is on "improving the improvement" through reflective cycles of change and learning.
Change as a community endeavour	Leaders make changes, then inform and consult.	Everyone takes on responsibility for ongoing change and improvement.

What does ongoing implementation look like?

Here, in no particular order, are some indicators for each key message discussed on pages 5 and 6. Not all of these things would be happening in any one school at one time.

Making connections

1. The ideas in the curriculum are linked to an existing focus, for example, inquiry learning, formative assessment, or Te Kotahitanga, or to recent professional learning, for example, in ICT, literacy, or numeracy.
2. Professional learning sessions support staff so that they can engage with the ideas in the curriculum and build a shared view.
3. Professional learning encourages teachers to challenge and debate assumptions and come to new understandings.
4. Teachers work in discussion groups with people they might not normally work with so that they can draw on many different viewpoints.
5. Processes such as appraisal are aligned with curriculum implementation and help teachers to identify their own next learning steps.
6. Planning is dynamic and responsive. The needs and interests of students and of the local community, including whānau and iwi, drive it. It takes account of wider school processes and structures, not just classroom programmes.

Continuous improvement

1. The school and/or department develop overarching policies and plans that set in place what is valued in the school. These larger policies and plans become a reference point for specific teaching, learning, and assessment plans and actions that meet the needs of different classes and students.

2. Schools make small changes, bed them in, and build on them.
3. Leaders sustain a strong focus on student learning and on developing a shared vision for how that learning will be achieved.
4. Leaders support risk taking in an environment based on trust and ongoing collaborative dialogue about effective practice.
5. Teachers and leaders are encouraged to think about themselves as learners and to reflect on their practice and the ways it might need to change.
6. Processes for inquiring into classroom practice are based on knowledge about good practice and the evidence gathered by teachers.

Change as a community endeavour

1. The school community, including whānau and iwi, appreciates that understanding and implementing the curriculum is a non-linear process with no end point. Teachers deepen their understandings, revisit previous implementation decisions, and improve things as they go.
2. Local schools work together to discuss the intent of the curriculum and the implications for their practice.
3. Leaders build up strong networks and connections with other teachers and with groups that provide professional and personal support.
4. Members of the school community, including whānau and iwi, are involved early in the process and stay engaged.
5. Everyone in the school is involved.
6. Students are actively involved in curriculum decision making and help to engage their families and whānau, for example, by telling parents about the school vision.

The best thing we did was not say “We’re finished” as different aspects of practice were reviewed. Staff now see constantly evolving approaches as a hallmark of educational practice.

Primary principal

Helpful resources

The New Zealand Curriculum Online

<http://nzcurriculum.tki.org.nz>

This site includes information relating to the two implementation packs distributed in each of 2008 and 2009 at <http://nzcurriculum.tki.org.nz/Implementation-packs-for-schools>

Key Competencies

<http://keycompetencies.tki.org.nz>

Specific guidance on integrating the competencies into a school's daily activities and teaching programmes

New Zealand Assessment

<http://www.tki.org.nz/r/assessment>

Research and readings, online workshops, tools and links, including links to asTTle (Assessment Tools for Teaching and Learning) and NEMP (the National Education Monitoring Project)

See also Consider the Evidence, which promotes evidence-driven decision making for secondary schools, and *Directions for Assessment in New Zealand*, an overview by Michael Absolum, Lester Flockton, John Hattie, Rosemary Hipkins, and Ian Reid (available as Word or PDF files).

Support for Secondary Middle Managers

<http://nzcurriculum.tki.org.nz/Support-for-secondary-middle-managers>

Support for curriculum implementation and effective pedagogy

Ka Hikitia – Managing for Success: The Māori Education Strategy 2008–2012

<http://kahikitia.minedu.govt.nz/default.htm>

Te Kotahitanga

<http://www.tekotahitanga.org.nz/>

Shifting to 21st Century Thinking

<http://www.shiftingthinking.org>

A spur to thinking about the shape and direction of education through blogs and links relating to community engagement, future-focused issues, shifting literacies, and shifting schooling and teachers' work

NWREL (Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory)

<http://www.nwrel.org/scpd/scc/studentvoices/importance.shtml>

An organisation, representing groups in the north-west American states, that offers useful ideas on eliciting student input

Partnership for 21st Century Skills

<http://www.21stcenturyskills.org>

An American advocacy organisation (business people, education leaders, policy makers) aiming at ensuring that young people succeed as citizens and workers in the 21st century

Change Learning

<http://www.changelearning.ca>

A Canadian perspective: "Our world and our understanding of how humans learn and develop has changed drastically since public education was introduced, over 150 years ago. To effectively deal with the challenges of the 21st century, we must transform the way we understand and structure education in this country – rethinking the model based on up-to-date information and current world realities."

Print

The Kick Starts series

- *Key Competencies: The Journey Begins* includes a series of pamphlets for staff beginning to explore the role of key competencies in curriculum change. Two classroom posters (one primary, one secondary) each illustrate one specific aspect of thinking that might be taught. (These can be purchased separately.)
- *Key Competencies: The Water Cycle: A Science Journey* illustrates how key competencies might change the way a familiar primary science topic is taught. The student game in this pack (an "object to think with") could be used to explore possible learning changes in other contexts. (Tear-off pads of twenty games can be purchased separately.)
- *Key Competencies: Exploring the Potential of Participating and Contributing* includes a series of "dilemma cards" to stimulate discussion about what counts as participating and contributing. The posters are designed to extend this discussion to include students.

Visit the NZCER website at www.nzcer.co.nz to view all publications.

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