Editorial

Tēnā koutou katoa.

Please enjoy the final issue of *Set* for 2025 to wrap up an intense year in New Zealand education. The pace of educational reform has been challenging to keep up with. I know many teachers are feeling weary as proposed or required changes to pedagogy, curriculum, and assessment reverberate through the sector.

As I write this editorial, educationalists are drafting submissions on the Education and Training (System Reform) Amendment Bill, many of whom will give up precious holiday time to meet the deadline early in the new year. Subject associations are asking questions about the knowledge-rich, tightly sequenced draft curriculum and its flexibility to meet the needs of diverse learners in local contexts. Boards of trustees are pronouncing their ongoing commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi and reiterating the value of mātauranga Māori.

Similarly, Issue 3 reinforces that students' and communities' identities matter in shaping teaching and learning. Professor Melinda Webber, Mohamed Alansari and their team share ways to lift the educational trajectories of Māori and Pasifika ākonga. They draw from 7 parallel studies to describe "school-wide conditions and teaching practices that are strengths based, ambitious, and contextually tailored to the needs of Māori and Pasifika ākonga" (p. 3).

Maree Davies and mathematics teacher Abi McKague demonstrate that students who reflect on their identity, how they belong in their communities, and where their beliefs arise from, are well-positioned for statistical reasoning. The article supports that "critical thinking is enhanced when learners engage with real-world, culturally resonant content" and that "understanding your identity is also important in critical thinking because it is key to someone recognising their bias" (p. 17). Both help students to demonstrate insight, a key criterion for attaining NCEA excellence in statistics.

Gender identity is the topic of He Whakaaro Anō. Milla Inkilä explores educators' variable willingness to engage with gender diversity and work towards gender-inclusive education. The results of her small survey sample showed a variety of educator assumptions and beliefs about gender diversity in schools, including "intentional practices that ensure all students feel safe, valued, and able to thrive" (p. 29).

Within the Practitioner Inquiry section Rosemary Erlam and teacher Carolin Dale, share the latter's investigation into the talk time afforded to students who are English language learners. Carolin found that she took up far more of the discussion time within a lesson sequence than she expected. She concludes that her student-to-student talk is preferable to teacher-to-student talk, and that English language learners need "more freedom to speak and more control over what is said in the classroom." (p. 40).

According to research by Frances Edwards and Bronwyn Cowie, teacher-to-teacher talk is key to making the most of assessment data and designing highly responsive teaching and learning. They share a data conversation protocol, adapted by New Zealand teachers, to guide a conversation-rich data analysis process framed by four questions: Here's what? So what? Now what? So then? The teachers found it useful when applied to classroom PAT results, and the process averted "'gap-filling' (Edwards & Cowie, 2024, p. 21) or simply focusing on predetermined next steps and ways of working." (p. 45).

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In Assessment News, Charles Darr explains the role that measurement error plays in standardised tests. To accurately interpret a student's single test result, as well as trends in their test performance over time, teachers need take into account the tool's standard error of measurement. As schools are required to use standardised tests, similar to the call from Edwards and Cowie, Charles encourages a nuanced approach to linking test results to actual achievement levels.

Issue 3 offers a balanced response to the currents flowing in education throughout 2025. It reaffirms the importance of designing teaching and learning to meet the needs of diverse communities, while supporting an informed and collaborative approach to collecting and interpreting data about students' progress and achievement. Let's see what 2026 will bring—keep active in shaping it!

Meri Kirihimete, ā, kia hari te tau hou Pākehā,

Josie Roberts
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References

Edwards, F., & Cowie, B. (2024). Pre-teaching or a fresh choice each day: Teacher data literacy in action. *Set: Research Information for Teachers*, (3), 20–24. https://doi.org/10.18296/set.1562