

**How do we know how well we are doing
and where we are going?**

School review in New Zealand



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New Zealand decentralised education administration in 1989

Each of the 2,610 public schools:

✍ has its own **board of trustees**. Parent majority
✍ power to hire and fire staff

✍ is **funded** separately
✍ funding formula based on

- number of students
- socio-economic profile
- isolation

✍ is **responsible** for

- ✍ meeting legislative requirements
- ✍ quality of education
 - consistent with national curriculum guidelines



Schools are reviewed every 3 years by the Education Review Office (ERO):

- ✍ **Performing schools remain within the 3-year cycle.**
- ✍ **Two-thirds of schools generally in the 3-year cycle.**

ERO reviews were taken seriously because:

- ✍ **Could affect school reputation.**
- ✍ **Lower school reputation could mean loss of students, and funding.**

But ERO reviews were also seen as external imposition because:

- ✍ **At start of NZ reforms, focused on governance and legislation.**
- ✍ **Did not always match school's own goals and focus.**



Issues in mid 1990s

- ✍ **Increased competition between schools.**
 - ✍ **Struggling schools could not improve on their own.**
 - ✍ **No national improvement in student achievement levels.**
 - ✍ Achievement gaps remained between social groups
 - ✍ **Divide between schools and government agencies, “operations” and “policy”.**
- “the education family” ✍ “they never take any notice of us”.**

Changes to the NZ model of school self-management from late 1990s

Ministry of Education support for schools, particularly in low socio-economic or remote areas

- ✍ Covers 15% of schools
- ✍ Includes innovative partnerships with Māori iwi

Ministry of Education leadership in professional development

- ✍ exciting new approaches in literacy & numeracy
 - ✍ combine pedagogy & assessment
 - ✍ whole-school based
 - ✍ use schools' own data
- ✍ new programme for first-time principals
 - ✍ portfolio based
 - ✍ mentors
- ✍ best evidence synthesis of research on effective teaching



Changes to the NZ model of school self-management from late 1990s cont.

Ministry of Education more locally based

- ✍ some reviews of “local” network provision now occurring

ERO reviews more focused on identifying and suggesting areas for improvement


- ✍ emphasis on ongoing self-review
- ✍ provision of set of Educational Indicators schools can use for self-review

New planning and reporting framework for schools

- ✍ student achievement now the heart of school planning & self-review




The new planning & reporting framework

 **Based on individual school responsibility**

 **Developmental approach, not punitive**


 **Allows schools to set their own goals**

 **Decide on the assessment measures they will use**

Initial resistance

A decade of school self-management leaves schools suspicious of government

 talk of “recentralisation”

 suspicion of government using benchmarking against standards or other similar schools to make decisions to intervene in schools, or close them

Tensions around the use of assessment for goal-setting and benchmarking

Consistent research that students make more gains in learning from feedback, not testing.

Experience of countries like England with high-stakes testing:

- ✍ **Narrowed the curriculum**
- ✍ **Less time for learning**
- ✍ **More time on test preparation**
- ✍ **Students learn that learning is about being tested and failing**
 - ✍ not enjoyment, mastery, & effort
- ✍ **national targets did not seem to improve performance**
 - ✍ gaps remain between students, especially for disadvantaged



Research showing that student performance results are not sound basis for accountability

- ✍ Schools vary year to year
 - ✍ Variation in student cohorts
 - ✍ One-off events (e.g. teacher turnover)
- ✍ Greater variability in small schools
- ✍ Can't separate out effective schools from others on basis of single year
- ✍ Teachers have more impact on student performance than schools
- ✍ Value-added approaches are complex and may not give basis for comparisons between schools

Current views of New Zealand approach

- ✍ **Primary school principals see main purpose to set goals for student achievement**
- ✍ **Literacy & Numeracy are the two priority areas for schools setting targets**
 - ✍ **also key focus of government-funded**
 - **professional development**
 - **curriculum-linked assessment tools**



Advantages of New Zealand approach:

- ✍ Avoids “**high-stakes**” trap
- ✍ No “**naming and blaming**”
- ✍ No incentives to focus on league tables at expense of meeting individual student needs
- ✍ Schools more likely to choose meaningful assessments related to curriculum
- ✍ Approach is developmental
- ✍ Occurs within existing processes of self-review
 - ✍ Not external, or additional
- ✍ Student achievement & engagement data connected to school policies & decisions
- ✍ Consistent with research on school improvement
- ✍ Makes good use of information
 - ✍ Encourages more analytical approach



Information used by New Zealand schools that have made improvements and sustained them

- ✍ External reviews
- ✍ Declining rolls
- ✍ Parents and the community
- ✍ Information from students and teachers
- ✍ Professional experience and professional development
- ✍ Student performance data
 - ✍ in relation to national or school-wide benchmarks
- ✍ A combination of internal and external benchmarks
- ✍ Always use multiple benchmarks or sources of information

Uses of information or benchmarking

Set priorities for action

- ✍ school climate
- ✍ visible area of school life
- ✍ rich professional development
- ✍ staff work together

Set curriculum priorities

- ✍ only tackle 2-3 at a time
- ✍ teachers focus more deeply
- ✍ develop and moderate school-wide benchmarks
 - ✍ use benchmarks to:
 - diagnose student needs
 - share strategies to meet student needs

Ultimate benchmark:

School takes responsibility for student learning

- ✍ Student learning is focus and priority for work of the school – the fundamental value
- ✍ Not externally imposed
- ✍ Government & bureaucracy role:
 - X police & judge
 - ✍ provide conditions
 - professional development
 - advice
 - curriculum related resources
 - supportive infrastructure

